

**PRESS RELEASE****DepEd, Ateneo de Zamboanga partner for inclusive education**

ZAMBOANGA CITY, July 14, 2018 – The Department of Education (DepEd) and Ateneo de Zamboanga University (AdZU) collaborate to ensure that quality, accessible, relevant, and liberating basic education reach more out-of-school youths (OSYs) in the city.

On June 25, AdZU's SUGPAT-Adolescent Development and Participation Program (ADAPP) gathered key education stakeholders from partner organizations and local government units to strengthen learning interventions for OSYs, such as the SUGPAT Alternative School for Peacebuilding and the Arts (ALSPA), which integrates DepEd's Alternative Learning System (ALS), AdZU's peace education curriculum and the creative arts.

Assistant Secretary for Public Affairs Service and ALS G.H. Ambat, joined by DepEd IX Regional Director Isabelita Borres, conveyed her gratitude to the AdZU and its partners: "We, in DepEd, are very grateful with this kind of partnership and innovation. We recognize how you are greatly impacting the lives of our learners, especially the OSYs. We hope that we can collaborate further so that it [SUGPAT-ALSPA] can also be replicated in the other parts of Mindanao and the country."

SUGPAT, which is also a local term that means "to connect or bring together," was established in 2015 through the initiative of AdZU Center for Culture and the Arts, in partnership with the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF). This was two years after the 2013 Zamboanga Siege that caused an emerging need for programs to address the growing number of OSYs in Zamboanga City.

Program monitoring

Ambat also visited Madrasah Education Program (MEP) implementing schools and ALS learning centers in Zamboanga City and in Isabela City, Basilan last June 26 and 27 to gather inputs from the field that shall help the Department in devising mechanisms to address challenges in implementation.

This effort is also geared toward further opening opportunities for OSYs and other learners which is one of the priority concerns of the Department under the leadership of Education Secretary Leonor Magtolis Briones.

In her talks with the ALS learners in Zamboanga City and Basilan, Ambat reminded them to study well and prepare seriously for the next Accreditation and Equivalency (A&E) Test, especially that they are the last batch that can go straight to higher education after passing the said test.

Some of the schools and learning centers visited were Zamboanga Central School, Don Gregorio Evangelista Memorial School, Sta. Barbara Central School, Talon-

Talon Central School, Taluksangay Elementary School, Mulu-Muluan Elementary School, Canelar Learning Center, and Mercedes Learning Center in Zamboanga City; and Badjao Floating Elementary School in Isabela City, Basilan.

Ambat also visited ALS learners in the Bureau of Jail Management and Penology (BJMP) in Zamboanga City and graced the graduation of BJMP ALS completers in Isabela City.

END

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