

**PRESS RELEASE****DepEd upholds IP learners' right to basic education**

*PASIG CITY, October 25, 2019* - With more than two and a half million indigenous people (IP) learners in the public school system, the Department of Education (DepEd) reaffirmed its commitment to protecting the rights of IPs to basic education.

DepEd Secretary Leonor Magtolis Briones assured the IP communities and learners that their right to basic education is upheld and protected as the Department joins the celebration of the National Indigenous Peoples' Month.

The national data as of SY 2018-2019 showed a total of 2,593,555 IP learners enrolled in 39,994 public schools; 253,113 IP learners in 10,980 private schools nationwide.

"We care about the 2.6 million IP learners all over the country spread in 31,000 schools. We care about them and we care about what are taught, who their teachers are, what their activities are and what they do after, before or after the schooling," Briones said in a press conference on October 17, 2019.

In the case of the former students of Salugongan schools, 1,000 are already enrolled in nearby DepEd schools. Parents of affected IP learners who have yet to enroll in DepEd schools are encouraged to bring their children to school.

"The issue is about protecting the children's right to quality education as mandated by the Constitution. DepEd is doing exactly that. Children are in schools; they go to regular classes; they are with their parents," Briones added.

Secretary Briones also pointed out that DepEd is continuously working for the welfare of the marginalized group through the National Indigenous Peoples Education (IPEd) Program.

Initiated in 2013, the IPEd Program has strengthened the enabling conditions for culture-based education while promoting the value of indigenous identity, knowledge, competencies, and other aspects of their cultural heritage.

The program's initiatives include establishment of dialogue mechanisms with IP communities, personnel hiring and capacity development, and responding to access concerns.

Curriculum contextualization and Mother Tongue-based Multilingual Education (MTB-MLE) implementation have been prioritized in support of the development of culturally appropriate learning resources and environment.

Currently, there are more than 90,000 IP learners are directly being served through contextualized lesson plans and 112 IP languages are used in developing MTB- MLE prerequisites.

Sixteen Regional Offices including the Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (BARMM) and 117 divisions have been provided IPEd Program Support Fund (PSF) and technical assistance.

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