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**PRESS BRIEFING OF MS. DAPHNE OSEÑA-PAEZ
WITH DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH SECRETARY TED HERBOSA
AND DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL WELFARE AND DEVELOPMENT
JUNE 13, 2023 [11:00 A.M. – 11:51 A.M.]**

MS. OSEÑA-PAEZ: Magandang umaga, Malacañang Press Corps. Welcome sa ating press briefing ngayon, June 13th.

Updates on the Department of Social Welfare and Development's food stamp program were discussed during the sectoral meeting this morning where President Ferdinand Marcos Jr. approved the pilot and full implementation of the projects under this program.

Aside from this, the President also tasked the DSWD, in coordination with the health department, to look into the nutritional value of the food that would be given to the program beneficiaries.

Bukod sa target beneficiaries na bottom one million households, pinatitiyak din ng Pangulo na mapabilang sa programa ang mga single parent, pregnant and lactating women para ma-address ang first 1,000 days advocacy.

To give us more details about this, we are joined by DSWD Secretary Rex Gatchalian and recently appointed Health Secretary Dr. Ted Herbosa.

Secretary Herbosa previously served as an undersecretary of the DOH from 2010 to 2015, and was a special adviser to the National Task Force Against COVID-19. Well, good morning, Secretary Gatchalian and Secretary Herbosa. Good morning. I guess we could start with the food stamp program, Secretary Rex?

DSWD SEC. GATCHALIAN: Well, as mentioned, when I came to visit TV4, we had this program of feeding our food-poor families – a million of them. So as mentioned by Daphne, the President approved the run of the pilot which is fully funded through grants – grants from the ADB, JICA and the French Development Agency. So that will be US\$3 million all in all.

There's a provision to expand it; ADB is still working on other trust fund so that we can expand the pilot. But other than that it's all green lights, go na, for the pilot which will take place shortly. From the pilot, we will see the nuances – what needs to be improved, what needs to be enhanced, what needs to be discontinued; it will run for six months.

We are doing the pilot so that we don't end up with wasteful spending. We want to make sure that when we do expand the program on its regular run, even if the President already approved, we want to learn from the pilot and we want to start right – that was the take away.

Speaking with the economic team last Friday, the main takeaway is, tighten the design. Importante we start the program right, and that is the takeaway. But second, kanina, as mentioned by Daphne, the President also wants to bring in pregnant, lactating mothers kasi we have to start looking at stunting in this country, and the first 1,000 days program is very important.

If you look at the family of programs in DSWD, and I'm sure si Secretary Ted will also explain in DOH, there are ongoing first 1,000 days programs already. But ang gusto ng ating Pangulo, i-synchronize natin itong mga programa na ito sa isang pamilya ng mga programa wherein hindi siya parang silo na isa-isa kung hindi pagtapos sa Program A, pupunta siya Program B, pupunta siya sa Program C. Alam natin iyong problema ng stunting is very important and very crucial na masugpo natin if we are to invest in human capital.

Kaya nga magko-collaborate kami ni Secretary Herbosa dahil mayroon tayo, kung natandaan ninyo, iyong PMNP o iyong Philippine Multi-sectoral Nutrition Program. It's a program that was launched mga 60 days ago with the World Bank's backing. Seventy-percent of that program is with DOH in implementing nutrition specific programs. Kami naman sa DSWD, nutrition sensitive programs. Kasi alam naman natin na hindi lang pagkain ang tinitingnan natin pagdating sa paglaban sa stunting kung hindi iyong overall well-being ng isang ina pati na rin ng kabataan, kasama diyan iyong wash facilities, kasama diyan iyong making sure na may enough facilities for child development katulad ng mga daycare center. So paiigtingin natin iyang programa na iyan para ma-synchronize naman natin siya dito sa upcoming natin na food stamps program.

Uulitin namin: Ang marching order ng Pangulo, dapat malabanan natin ang stunting at ang kagutuman; pagsanib puwersa ng mga iba't ibang programa ng gobyerno para hindi sila piece by piece ang turing sa mga programa.

MS. OSEÑA-PAEZ: Okay. Thank you. Let's hear from Secretary Herbosa.

DOH SEC. HERBOSA: Magandang umaga sa inyong lahat. At thank you for coming here in the program.

It's my first Cabinet meeting so it's very interesting. Of course, I did know the planning of this, but hearing it, it actually jives 'no, na tulong talaga sa poorest one million, be able to give them food stamps so that they will have nutritious food. So that was the first question of the President, make sure that the food that is given is of nutritional value. So that's our role. So we have the National Nutrition Council, the FNRI that can actually take care of studying this.

The second question to Secretary Rex is, hunger and being poor are very subjective ideas, and how do you measure them objectively? This President wants it measured objectively, so I countered, "Sir, actually, we've been working with DSWD. Health actually is the measure of stunting and malnutrition."

So what happens if there is a feeding program, for example, like the food stamp program, we will locate through our partners and the LGU, locate who are the mildly malnourished, moderately malnourished and severely malnourished; and there are medical parameters of who to say they are, we use the weight, the height and the Mid-Upper Arm Circumference or the MUAC. And what we'll do is to make sure that we monitor that the food stamp program is changing the people that are severely malnourished. Well, after sometime of this food stamp will become moderately, mildly until they're no longer malnourished.

And this is very important, I told the President, most of these programs isn't recovered, the effects of malnutrition and stunting, you don't recover it like a wound that heals; it's a permanent. That's why if you want a human capital or mga tao, citizens na magtatrabaho, and they are intelligent, they will pass school, you really need to feed them well during their early life years kasi doon iyong growth and development na kailangan nila.

So I think we will be in full support and, I think my seatmate, Secretary Benhur said, kami ang gagawa niyan. Sabi niya, “kami ang gagawa niyan” kasi the implementation of the food stamp is at the local chief executive. So nagtuhug-tuhog na, and we will all help each other with this really good program for food stamps and hunger.

DSWD SEC. GATCHALIAN: If I can just add again as an emphasis: The new dimension that we bring to the table today is folding in the first 1,000 days into the program. Kung natatandaan ninyo, noong pumunta ako dito nang unang beses, pinag-usapan natin ay labanan ang kagutuman, pero ang gusto ng Pangulo natin is to add that dimension of stunting into the picture kasi irreversible iyon and, uulitin ko, this is an investment to human capital. So if you are to invest in human capital, we have to fight stunting. Iyan iyong iko-collaborate namin, not just support but work closely with the DOH, that was the instruction of the President kasi nga, it's both a social welfare issue and a health issue.

MS. OSEÑA-PAEZ: So just to reiterate, the first 1,000 days is to address the nutrition of the mother because it is believed that the intelligence and the well-being of a child starts at the first 1,000 days from pregnancy, so inside the womb. So this program will also support that.

Now, you mentioned the whole of government approach, you have the DILG, we also have the Department of Agriculture. Maybe Secretary Rex wants to mention the role of the DA here.

DSWD SEC. GATCHALIAN: Yes, ‘di ba, the whole concept of the food stamp program is trying to bring rural produce ‘di ba; we are rich in that aspect. But ang problema ng mga farmers natin lagi is the lack of market place, so what we plan to do there is work with the DA also. Another dimension is para hindi nabubulok or nasasayang iyong mga produce natin.

And remember, last Monday, if I am not mistaken, Congressman Salceda made that statement nga na 30% of farmers are actually poor, and they will benefit two-fold into this program: Not only do they get nutritious, delicious, affordable food; but iyong pino-produce din nila ay may bibili na all of a sudden. So it's a captured market so to speak. A million Filipino families who are hungry will be your captured market.

And again, working with the FNRI, working also with the DOH, in that program stage na four years, we want to create a behavioral change in our households. Kailangan maturuan natin sila, ang ating mga beneficiaries, na ang mura ay puwedeng maging masarap, puwedeng maging masustansiya. It's mura, masustansiya, masarap na pagkain para sa hapag ng bawat pamilyang Pilipino.

So it's an exciting program kasi it's multidimensional. And alam ninyo naman kapag multidimensional, it's no longer a DSWD program by itself. But the President emphasized na it's not a standalone program rather the Department of Agriculture, Department of Health, DILG, DTI – kasi ‘di ba may work component ito, may work requirement – and then the other agencies like TESDA, FNRI. It's now a bigger program that is no longer standalone.

Kanina nga nasabi ko parang kung dati single singer iyong programa, ang gusto natin it's a choir – singing the same song. And that choir is going to say, we're going to end hunger but at the same time, we're going to end stunting.

MS. OSEÑA-PAEZ: Okay. Let's open the floor to questions. Eden Santos, Net 25.

EDEN SANTOS/NET25: Good morning po, Secretaries. May I know kung mayroon po kayong exact figure kung ilan iyong mga stunted children sa Pilipinas? And then, existing na po iyong feeding program even sa mga barangays? Kanina nabanggit ni Secretary Herbosa na DILG ay magiging implementing agency din. Iyon po bang programa ng mga barangay/local government units are separate po dito or mas palalakasin ninyo na lang iyong kanilang existing program para po doon sa feeding program ng mga bata para mas ma-target po natin iyong mga stunted saka iyong mga malnourished? Figures po muna. Thank you.

DOH SEC. HERBOSA: Okay. I don't have the figures, but I can tell you for a fact that the targeted population of one million poorest Filipinos has the highest rate of stunting and highest rate of malnutrition – thus, he's doing the correct thing.

Pero iyong figures, I can give that to you later. I have my—there she is... she has data. Maybe she can tell me what the data is. I have the head of the National Nutrition Council Assistant Secretary Dayanghirang to actually tell us that data. Bigyan na lang ng mic para she can state it.

DSWD SEC. GATCHALIAN: Now, so while she's taking that data, Eden, iyong tanong mo kung—siyempre may autonomy ang ating mga local government units para patakbuhin ang kanilang mga programa; complementary itong mga national government programs. Katulad iyong binanggit ko na sa inyo, iyong PMNP (Philippine Multisectoral Nutrition Project) – I think a lot of you who ran stories on that when the President launched it in Manila Hotel 60 days ago—roughly 60 days ago. The PMNP is a—kasi iyong mga karamihan sa mga programa natin are facility-based. Like iyong feeding program ng DSWD, daycare age na iyon eh. Ibig sabihin may assumption na iyong bata, na-capture lang natin during pagpasok na niya – ganoon din sa Kinder all the way to Grade 6 sa DepEd.

So ang problema natin is iyong first one thousand days mula sa pagbubuntis hanggang sa pagpapasuso – iyong lactating mothers – crucial iyong period na iyon kasi nga may mga studies that show na by the time na makarating sila ng daycare, iyong stunting nangyari na so irreversible na. Ang paradigm shift natin sa administrasyon na ito kung kaya ko sabihin siguro, iyong attacking the problem doon pa lang sa first one thousand days. For the longest time, 'di ba, maaaring marami sa inyo nagtatanong, *"Eh ang dami nang feeding program."*

Let's not get confused ha. The feeding programs—majority of the feeding programs natin – majority, I'm not saying all – sa national government are facility-based feeding program. Na-capture na natin sila, naglalakad na iyong bata so to speak. Pero iyong nasa tiyan, nasa sinapupunan pa lang siya, wala pa tayong ganoon ka-aggressive na programa. And if I may boldly say, it is in this administration that we're going to tackle the problem even before they get to our facilities.

DOH SEC. HERBOSA: Siguro I can give you the figure now and I'm shocked... I'm really shocked. The stunting rates are: For ages 0 to 23 months old, it's 21.6% - that's one in five children. It's actually very high; for ages under five, it's 28.7% - that's high. I'm depressed now. I'm a doctor so when I see figures of people, you know... when you go to the doctor and you [overlapping voices] lab results, we really need to do this.

DSWD SEC. GATCHALIAN: Yeah, if I can just add again ha. People may ask what happened to all the feeding programs, how come the numbers are the same – that's why nga I have to—si Sec. Ted can explain na most of our programs are facility-based programs. Probably at the daycare age of three years old or four years old before government comes into the picture. But

there are successful LGU programs like the one that Sec. Benhur ran when he was a mayor in Mandaluyong wherein they tracked down iyong mga lactating and pregnant women.

So those were programs that we may scale up now, and through PMNP, at the same time through working with Sec. Ted—and ako, I can just speak for the DSWD. Remember we have city links and municipal links? Sila iyong mga nagmu-monitor sa ating mga 4Ps beneficiaries. So gagamitin natin sila ngayon to track down all our pregnant women and lactating mothers so that we can scale up the program ng LGU ng Mandaluyong so that the necessary inputs are given at the first one thousand days.

DOH SEC. HERBOSA: Siguro I'll add to that 'no. The President wanted a more cohesive approach, this problem of hunger and addressing the poor. And he was asking, "*I don't want duplication...*" kasi nga baka paulit-ulit lang iyong ibang agency nagpi-feeding program – mayroon sa LGU, mayroon sa DepEd, mayroon sa DSWD, mayroon sa DOH. So we're trying to now put them all together in one unified life stages approach, so iyon ang pinropose ko sa President. I think the way to approach it is a life stage and umpisa doon sa buntis.

In fact doon sa buntis, ang comment ng President is "Who's taking care of the pregnant teenager who needs to understand what micronutrients to take when they're pregnant, what type of foods to eat?" Wala eh. So that's another thing that's been—parang nautos na rin sa akin iyan; that's going to be the Department of Health's activity.

Second, pagdating mo sa—when they're walking na and they can go to daycare, that's DSWD. Then when they go to school age, the DepEd feeds them – may feeding program. Pero ang partnership namin, we are the one measures the health status – sino iyong batang ipi-feed sa school age; sino iyong batang ipi-feed sa daycare kasi hindi naman sila lahat malnourished. But I see doon sa statistics it's about 20%, so one in five kids I need to feed properly with correct nutrients.

So ang sabi ko sa President, pagdugtung-dugtungin natin iyan parang barbeque – safety net iyong huli. Kasi iyong sa school age which is the emphasis before of the past administration, huli na ang brain development kaya mababa ang IQ ng mga Pilipino; naalala ninyo iyong statistics noon naiinsulto tayo dahil mababa? Eh kaya pala, ganoon pala. The best answer of this is the first one thousand days coalition because brain development starts in the womb and then it continues with mandatory breastfeeding. So if I'm feeding the mother correctly through the voucher program or the food stamp program, makakakain si mommy, mabi-breastfeed niya iyong baby niya up to six months and, by the time the baby is more than six months, kaya na ng oral feeding iyon, they should also get nutrients.

Uy, mataas din iyan ha *[laughs]*. So for the pregnant nutritionally at risk, that means payat na sila, they were malnourished even before they got pregnant – teenager in this socioeconomic level is 16.4% that means—I mean, if all of you who'd been pregnant before, you're actually feeding two people that's why you're advised by their obstetrician to take this and what food to take. But our people need education on this, health education and then they have to be watched – their weight is actually followed. If you're in the higher socioeconomic level, they can visit the obstetrician all the time; but the poor can't do that – so we end up with kids that are born already stunted – low birthweight at the time they are born.

And the focus of the past [programs] have been the school age. Brain development is like the first seven years; you fully develop adult brain already by the time we go to school. So even if I do feeding, the damage has happened. So I like the fact that Rex likes the first one thousand days –

sa buntis pa lang, papakainin ko na siya nang tamang nutrients. Actually hindi lang food iyon eh, it's about the micronutrients – folic acid. Napansin ninyo ang vitamins ng buntis, iba sa vitamins ng ordinaryong tao? Kasi nakapasok na doon iyong folic acid, iron and several things that the baby needs.

So iyon 'yun and, we're going to make sure that all pregnant women whether they're teenage, unplanned pregnancies, should be able to get that. And I think that's the message I think I'm asking from media kasi most of these unplanned pregnancies, nakatago iyan until lumabas nang malaki iyong tiyan. By that time, nag-develop na iyong fetus – huli na naman kami. And iyon, may [text] na naman iyong aking kasama, they're saying that the food insecurity prevalent – that means the amount of people that cannot eat the right food and have moderate to severe, iyon talagang wala talagang makain. Ha, totoo iyan? 33.4% - that's high.

And these are facts ha, these are Philippine data – this is a PSA-submitted data ito 'no, ma'am? So, yeah... it's just a national nutrition survey which is done regularly for several years, so this assesses the nutrition part. So I'm glad this President and Secretary Rex are focusing on food stamps and hunger because I will have less problems in health. Kasi tandaan ninyo, nutrition is related to wellness – that means, ito rin iyong mga batang magkaka-TB, magkaka-bronchopneumonia, maoospital. So, if I have good nutrition in children, hindi mapupuno ang ospital kasi malulusog iyong mga bata. Makakapasok sila sa eskuwela, ga-graduate sila ng K-12, puwede silang magtrabaho at hindi sila sakitin.

Siguro kayo, may mga kasama sa trabaho na sakitin, laging absent. Baka sila iyong nandoon sa statistics na minention ko. So that's really very important, and I heard the President clearly say he wants this problem solved.

MS. OSEÑA-PAEZ: Sec. Ted, I just want to drive the message of the President earlier when he said that an investment in nutrition especially in the first 1,000 days and in the feeding program is an investment in our future because when we have the children who are properly nourished, they grow up and they got to college and have the brain capacity to further their education and have better jobs and this eventually will benefit our economy. So, this is in keeping with the Philippine Development Plan, on how we want to develop and be progressive, okay.

Sec. Gatchalian?

DSWD SEC. GATCHALIAN: Daphne, we always say in the department now na whenever we talk about investment it's not just gravel and sand, hindi lang siya puro imprastraktura but rather what the President saying is, investment to human capital is probably the best investment we can make. So, that's the thrust of the morning's meeting – investment in human capital.

DOH SEC. HERBOSA: By the way, nagpaalam ako sa—sa byline kasi ng DSWD “Bawat buhay, mahalaga.” Sabi ko, puwede ko bang gamitin din iyan sa Department of Health, gagawin kong “Healthy Pilipinas...Bawat buhay, mahalaga.”

MS. OSEÑA-PAEZ: May tagline na tayo. Okay. Alvin Baltazar.

ALVIN BALTAZAR: Secretaries, magandang umaga po. Para malinaw na lang, ano po ba iyong magiging composition noong masusustansiyang pagkain na isasama natin doon sa stamp food program in specific?

DSWD SEC. GATCHALIAN: Remember napakita ko noong...I think we showed it early on na kumunsulta ang DSWD sa FNRI, kaya kaninang umaga nandoon si Director Imelda ng FNRI. They identified first the components: 50% carbs, 30% protein, 20% food fats – no healthy fats. And then from within that food group, sila will identify. But of course—that's why DA has to be reeled into the picture kasi may mga supply components moving here.

Bottom line naman, this country is rich in production, what we may just have to make sure is link them up with the market place. So, kapag carbs we'll have FNRI identify which carb types there is. All of these you will see in the pilot stage which we're about to unveil. And then you know there are nuances like 'di ba recently there was news about squash na nasisira 'di ba – so those can be added into the picture. Kung mayroong oversupply ng certain produce that's healthy we can also put them into the menu that they will buy or I mean, the food credits that will avail of.

ALVIN BALTAZAR: Secretary, doon sa nabanggit ninyo kanina about the Department of Agriculture at iyong sa mga magsasaka, ibig bang sabihin nito may possibility na iyong mga supply ng pagkain na gagamitin natin sa stamp food program ay bibilhin ng DSWD?

DSWD SEC. GATCHALIAN: Well, ang konsepto is 'di ba, remember we will organize more of the Kadiwa ng Pangulo. Ang Kadiwa ng Pangulo kasi are grassroots community markets or bagsakan iyan eh. So, the DA has organized a lot of these and then we will keep on organizing more para iyon ang unang tangkilikin ng ating mga benepisyaryo. So, in a way we help our rural poor, our farmers, and at the same time we help our poor urban poor or iyong mga beneficiaries na bibili noong pagkain na iyon.

DOH SEC. HERBOSA: Gusto kong dagdagan siguro iyong comment on iyong type of food kasi that's a very important question in many years in the health sector. What I've found is that many people think that vegetables are not healthy especially in the poor kasi gusto nilang kainin iyong kinakain noong mayaman – iyong fast food, iyong meat, iyong fish; tapos iyong mga mayayaman binibili iyong mga mahal na gulay na organic para maging healthy and fit.

So, I think I need your help. As Secretary of Health, I need the help of media to improve health literacy; mukhang hindi naiintindihan. Akala noong mahirap iyong gulay ay pangmahirap 'di ba hindi nila alam healthy iyon – iyong malunggay; at iyong mga rich naman iyon ang gustong kainin 'di ba – salad, salad with dressing and everything. So, I think there's something wrong in the messaging, 'di ba. And tapos iyong mga fast food nag-change na sila, dinagdagan nila iyong vegetables. Tapos what saddens me is when I see in the news all these vegetables are rotting; dapat kinain ng Pilipino iyon – kamatis, kalabasa. Kamatis is healthy. I can tell you, I can give a lecture here, I'm a professor. So, I can give a lecture on the nutrients of kalabasa, and to see them nabubulok at the bedside where farmers had a hard time to harvest them, sayang. So, I love this program.

DSWD SEC. GATCHALIAN: Si Sec. Herbosa will also love the concept of the food nutrition classes. Remember, may conditionality ito? We want to elicit behavioral change na iyon iyong sinasabi niya na may konsepto kasi tayo minsan na kapag mura, hindi masustansiya o hindi masarap. So, tuturuan natin...iyong FNRI and the private sector they have those cookbooks already to prove na as low as 53 pesos, as high as 86 pesos kaya mo nang magluto para sa pamilya ng lima ng masustansiya, mura at masarap na pagkain.

So, in that four years that they part of the program we have to elicit also a behavioral change in what we buy and how we cook at home.

MS. OSEÑA-PAEZ: Okay. Tuesday Niu, DZBB.

TUESDAY NIU/DZBB: Good morning, Secretaries, Ma'am Daphne. Sir, sabi ninyo kanina iyong stunting rate ages natin zero to 23 months – 21.6%; iyong under five years old – 28.7%. So, itong program natin na ito, sir, mga ilang porsiyento iyong target ninyong maibaba diyan hanggang sa matapos iyong termino ni Pangulong Ferdinand Marcos Jr.?

DOH SEC. HERBOSA: Well, that was one of the discussions, the long discussion ng what is quantifiable kasi the program is nice 'di ba, subjectively it will stop hunger and will help the poor, pero sabi niya "But I want quantifiable measures," kaya ako nagsalita, sinabi ko "Actually, sa health po napupunta iyan."

So, mag-uusap kami ni Secretary Rex, we'll of course promise what is doable kasi depende iyan pilot pa lang tayo but if you ask me, I want to hit 50% of that decreased para talagang pababa and then hindi mo naman masi-zero iyan eh kasi there will hard to reach areas. But you know it's a nice target, Sec. Rex, is to say at the end of this program 50% na lang iyong, I mean ma-cut to half iyong problema natin on stunting and poor nutrition.

DSWD SEC. GATCHALIAN: Tuesday, let me just qualify again some more, huh. Stunting cannot be eradicated overnight but we can start it. To layer the program and i-settle natin siya na siya lang ang solusyon, I think is not the whole idea of tying down all the programs ng gobyerno to fight it.

This program, alam natin ang stunting may ibang nutrition specific at ibang nutrition sensitive interventions. Kahit pinapakain mo iyan ng masustansiya pero wala namang wash facilities, magkakasakit din siya. Very complex ang nutrition issue. So, we have to also say na hindi lang itong programa na ito ang susugpo kundi ang pamilya ng mga programa na nasa arsenal ng gobyerno. Binanggit ko, paulit-ulit ako, iyong Philippine Multisectoral Nutrition Program, kasi may mga lugar tayo sa fourth, fifth class and sixth class municipalities walang wash facilities. So, kahit na bigyan mo nang bigyan ng pagkain iyan pero mamayang kaunti unhygienic iyong living conditions, ganoon din.

Another case in point, nutrition sensitive: Mayroon din tayong mga lugar pa na maaaring kulang sa daycare centers o iyong child stimuli. So, bahagi iyan, alam ni Secretary ito, siya iyong kasama doon sa program na iyon – hindi ninyo puwedeng sabihin itong programa na ito ay susugpo kaagad but rather ang sinasabi natin lahat ng programa ng pamahalaan – PMNP, itong proposed food stamp program, in-school feeding program, iyong K-to-6 feeding program, iyong mga iba pang interventions like teenage pregnancy intervention programs – kailangan itahi natin sa isang kuwento para masigurado natin na nasusugpo ang programa.

Tuesday, ayaw ko kasi na after ng pilot ay titingnan kaagad natin "Oh, bumaba ba ng 50%?" Kasi alam naman natin na hindi naman pagkain lang ang solusyon. Pero may mga identifiable matrixes na kaagad tayong makikita at iyan ang ipauubaya namin sa DOH. Pero uulitin ko ha, ang nutrition, ang stunting is a multifaceted problem that requires multidimensional solutions. Tatagalugin natin iyon: Malalim ang problema ng stunting, kailangan ng all-of-government approach para masugpo natin ito.

DOH SEC. HERBOSA: Gusto ko lang i-reiterate 'no, the fight for hunger and nutrition (against hunger and malnutrition) is the number two priority of the sustainable development goals of 2030. Kasama iyan sa global program for all the people in the world so that we can reach them.

The other one I'd like to explain is baka hindi klaro. Bakit iyong wash related doon sa food? Ganito iyan, ang itinuturo namin, "maghugas kayo ng kamay bago kumain," siguro naman the poor magkakamay iyan 'di ba kapag kumain iyan. Pero kung wala kang toilet facilities nanggaling ka sa palikuran, kakain ka – ano ang mangyayari sa inyo, magda-diarrhea ka. Once you have diarrhea, even if I give you nutritious food it will not be absorbed, patay iyong programa niya.

Naintindihan ninyo na iyong pagkadugtong ng public health sa nutrition program. Even, if let's say I go to place walang running water, walang sabon, walang places to keep the food clean – I may be giving them food stamps but they're having diarrhea – payat din iyan at stunted din sila.

There is a GI tract problem that we'll create but I won't lecture you on that anymore. But suffice it to say, that this is a really interconnected problem, it's a very complex one, kumbaga sa Facebook, it's complicated. But there are solutions.

MS. DAPHNE OSEÑA-PAEZ: I remember my—because I worked in this sector and in this advocacy, severe acute malnutrition in children below five, severe acute malnutrition is not really caused by lack of food, it's the wrong food, and a lot of the babies that are severely malnourished were sick with diarrhea. And kapag ang bata ay nagka-diarrhea, nakakamatay siya kapag hindi ma-intervene.

DOH SEC. HERBOSA: Alam ba ninyong UNICEF ambassador ito before her job? So, I have been working with them because I do some charity work as well. So, I know, she is a previous UNICEF Ambassador.

DSWD SEC. GATCHALIAN: Enlisting her again.

MS. DAPHNE OSEÑA-PAEZ: Yeah, volunteer. Sagarin ko na. Ang importante talaga ang breastfeeding, not just you know breast feeding, exclusive breastfeeding from birth to six months. Exclusive means ang bata ay hindi kailangan ng tubig, breast milk lang and this can help prevent illness and also improved brain development.

DSWD SEC. GATCHALIAN: Daphne, can I just add? Balik ako nang balik doon sa PMNP, kasi you might want to revisit your stories on that. Sa World Bank loan, 70% went to DOH, 30% went to us, sa DSWD. Mayroon siyang dalawang component doon – nutrition specific, nutrition sensitive. But we let the community identify their needs. Mayroong isang community nga who is proposing, hindi kami ang magsusubo ng proyekto. May isang community nagpo-propose ng Milk Banks as one of their infra projects, kasi mayroon itong mga infra component. Ano sila, community development initiative siya, they identify it. They, the community together with all the stakeholders, they identify the problem, they identify the solution, they procure the project and they implement the project.

So, tama si Daphne, there is a community out there, I just forgot the name na ang initial salvo nila is iyong makukuha namin diyan sa grant na iyan, ang nutrition sensitive namin sana na programa na isusulong, community breast milk banks kasi wala silang storage facility. So, kahit na ano pang gawin nila, talagang maliliit pa rin iyong mga bata doon. So, iyong ganoong mga interventions ang gusto naming itali doon sa programa.

DOH SEC. HERBOSA: So let me concretize the concept 'no, kasi nagpakita ng video si Secretary Rex after. At natuwa ako doon sa video, in the pilot [unclear] in Siargao, and sabi noong ini-interview na nakakuha ng food stamp, sabi niya, ayaw namin ng gulay kasi natatanim namin iyan eh, so ang kailangan niya ay asukal, iyong bigas. So with the food stamp, alam nila ang bibilhin,

kasi ang ipinakita doon, may kanya-kaniya silang grocery path using the food stamp na ibinigay sa kanila. So, it becomes personalized, kung ano iyong kailangan mo sa bahay. But then we need to educate them kung ano iyong tamang nutrisyon. So, this will be augmented by home urban agriculture, 'di ba. Kasi iyong gulay natatanim mo sa bahay. I just need to teach them na iyong gulay na tinanim ninyo, healthy iyan, green leafy vegetables and everything. Iyan iyong mahal ang ibinabayad noong mga nakatira diyan sa mga exclusive subdivision na lalagyan mo lang ng kaunting olive oil ang salad ay mahal na ang bayad.

MS. DAPHNE OSEÑA-PAEZ: Coconut oil. Maricel Halili.

DOH SEC. HERBOSA: Natatawa kayo, mahilig kasi kayo sa salad.

MS. DAPHNE OSEÑA-PAEZ: Nagugutom na kami. Maricel Halili, TV5.

MARICEL HALILI/TV5: Hi! Magandang umaga po, Sir Rex. Quick follow up lang po, papaano natin pipiliin iyong mga pregnant women?

DSWD SEC. GATCHALIAN: Hindi ba ang una kong discussion point sa inyo was income, remember, the poorest one million in our Listahanan? So kung one million iyon, malamang sigurado ako na may matitisod at matitisod tayo sa isang milyon na iyon na buntis at nagpapasuso. Pero iyong nabanggit ko kanina, sa loob ng departamento namin, marami ring running programs na may mga mekanismo para maka-identify pa tayo.

Babalik-tanaw ako, iyong 4Ps program natin, remember sa 4Ps mayroon iyong tinatawag na city link at municipal link, mga indibidwal ito na Contract Of Service sa departamento na nakakalat sa buong bansa para i-monitor iyong mga 4Ps beneficiaries. We are thinking of enlisting them already para makuha natin iyong datos na updated pagdating sa sino ang buntis at nagla-lactate sa lugar nila.

Kasi tama nga ang Pangulo kanina, kung self-registration iyan, sa dami ng ginagawa ng mga pamilya natin, baka hindi sila magpa-register for the lack of information kasi liblib na pook iyon.

So, ang importante ngayon is to enlist our ground troops in DSWD, mga city link and municipal link officers namin. Marami iyan and they are paid by your taxes already to make sure that they also bring in lactating and pregnant women.

Maaari kasing sabihin ng tao, eh magkaiba iyong 4Ps, pang-edukasyon, iyon ang mino-monitor nila. But nothings stops us from adding new dimensions to not what the 4Ps is about but iyong trabaho noong gumagawa noon.

MARICEL HALILI/TV5: Okay, thank you. Sec. Ted, medyo lilihis lang po ako ng isyu. Iyong tungkol lang po sa bivalent. Mayroon na po ba tayong update, kailan po natin sisimulan iyong pagbibigay ng bivalent and sino po iyong una nating bibigyan?

DOH SEC. HERBOSA: So dumating na iyong 390,000 doses of bivalent COVID-19 vaccines which came from COVAX. So, it's a donation, hindi ito prinocure. And as of this moment as we speak, I think they have already been redistributed to the different regions of the Department of Health. So, it's going to be, parang may depots, kasi may cold chain ang vaccine, so kailangan that's kept at a right temperature.

And then after that, alam ko, majority went to NCR and then the rest of all the region will get—kulang na kulang po itong 390,000. So what we will have to do is to prioritize who needs it first: So number one, the elderly; number two, iyong may comorbidity; number three, iyong health care workers na paso na iyong kanilang—kasi hindi ba inuna rin natin iyong health care workers, so nag-wane na siguro iyong immunity nila, we need to protect them also.

Pero we were also negotiating to acquire more. There are more that want to donate. There are probably some procurement that we need to do. So mayroon lang snag and issues kasi nawala iyong public health emergency na eh. So the issues of the vaccine in terms of the EUA so to procure it, kailangan ma-i-rehistro sa ating FDA. So mayroong snag doon, but we are trying hard to get all these bivalent.

Remember we are not the only country that wants the bivalent, huh, lahat ng country nag-aagawan din dito. So, para itong deja vu sa akin, because I was with the vaccine cluster. Nakita naman ninyo ako, kasama ako lagi sa airport, sinasalubong iyong mga “Hay Diyos ko, may bakuna na naman kami, para may maibigay.” So, it’s going to be the same story, might be a little bit more difficult.

But just to give you an idea, when let say I order, the Philippines orders the vaccine from the vaccine manufacturer, hindi iyan from off-the-shelf na akala ninyo kukunin, ilalagay sa eroplano, [isa-submit]. Hindi. That’s the only time they will produce it. Iyong iba nanghihingi pa ng deposit ng bayad diyan na kontra sa COA natin, ‘di ba, kailangan kasi i-deliver muna bago bayaran.

But because it’s an international procurement, may mga terms of reference ng payment diyan. That’s the only time they will manufacture the vaccine para pagdating noon—maiksi kasi ang shelf life noon. Kasi kapag ang binili ko iyong nandoon na, makikita ninyo iniisyuhan ninyo ako na nag-expire iyong bivalent vaccines, kasi six months lang ang shelf life niyan, wala nang gamit. So kapag binili mo iyan out off the shelf, like this one, this donation they end in November 23, that’s the expiry date. So, I need to start vaccinating people immediately.

MARICEL HALILI/TV5: Sir, kailan po?

DOH SEC. HERBOSA: Dapat magtuloy na iyan with the LGUs. Once it’s there, puwede na iyan in the center. So, I will check after this meeting, that’s a very important question. I will check if the distribution has been done. Ang nag-i-inject kasi hindi DOH, di ba, ang nag-i-inject LGU. Nakita naman ninyo iyong partnership dito so, I think you understand, kami ang magdi-distribute, nasa regional hubs and then we expect the DILG to actually implement this and help us implement, inject.

I am very sure, if I bring this out, ubos kaagad ito. In the Cabinet meeting lang, may dalawa na kaagad Cabinet secretary na lumapit sa akin and of course they are qualified, kasi they are elderly and they have comorbidity. So, of course, I will give them. They are in the category.

Pero just be patient, the vaccine is not our only weapon. We have learned so much in our pandemic. Some of you are wearing masks. So you understand this disease is airborne. We also understand that if you have symptom, sa bahay kayo, huwag na kayong magtrabaho.

And I think that is what I want to give as a message, tama na iyong COVID-19, ekonomiya muna tayo, mga bawat buhay, iyong mga nahirapan strict measures. We, doctors already know how to treat you kapag nagka-COVID. And wala na kayong nadidinig masyadong namamatay, ‘di ba.

Because we already have the medicines – Molnupiravir, Remdesivir and we know how to treat COVID, so hindi na siya bago. So the story is not the same.

But we will continue to push for people to get vaccinated because it will prevent you, especially if you are high risk, from dying. Kasi ngayon ang usapan na hindi iyong numero ng nagka-COVID. Naalala ninyo nitong mga nakaraang linggo, tumataas iyong test positivity rate, may ni-report ba kaming mga namatay? Even my hospital, in PGH, kasi I was head of ER, isa o dalawa lang ang naoospital and sila iyong may comorbidity. And sometimes, kung may mamatay na isa o dalawa, it's because of that comorbidity kasi mas malala ang condition niya.

So, huwag tayong matakot diyan. Me as a Health Secretary of this country, my feeling is, it's now a disease under surveillance, which is what the public, the WHO said. It's just like your influenza-like illnesses wherein it's any like airborne respiratory infection – flu, cough and cold, etc. So I would like to treat it that way.

I've traveled abroad before coming to as to my post madaming—other countries don't even wear mask and I'm really happy nga sa Philippines nagma-mask pa tayo, which is extra protection. Kasi we don't have the health system that is robust enough to address you kapag nagkaroon ng malaking outbreak. So continue wearing your mask, it is now your own decision. I will not mandate it. Kesyo nagtatago na siya, no! It is a personal choice, parang advice sa iyo ng doctor “Uy, mag-ingat ka” hindi ba. Pag may TB ka mag-mask ka baka makahawa ka ng iba. So, the decision to take care of your health is with the information I will give, that you guys will write in your articles and tell the people “Ito ang sitwasyon natin.” And if you will get sick, we will accept you and our hospitals and treat you properly so that you won't die. Ganoon lang iyon sa akin.

MS. OSEÑA-PAEZ: Thank you. We have time for one more question or two? Nestor Corrales, Philippine Daily Inquirer.

NESTOR CORRALES/ PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER: To Secretary Herbosa. On an equal important issue, *any update on the 12.57 billion worth of emergency allowances that the medical frontliners have yet to release?*^[sic] Why was it delayed because the Department of Budget and Management said it was already released to the DOH?

DOH SEC. HERBOSA: Yes. It was already given. Though it happened before my time, I'm sorry I just have to tell you hearsay evidence because this is what they told me. So the report to me is that most of the benefits have already been given out. There are some those who have not received have some technical issues with the hospital administration or directors of them, and I was told it was mostly private hospitals.

So sa government nabigay lahat iyan. So make sure—kasi you know why? The private hospitals don't have the same processes we do in government. Lahat ng papel iyong bago gagawa ka, alam noong mga government director hospitals na mako-COA sila every centavo niyan, so the distribution was right.

Kasi may mga hinihingi eh: Nag-duty ka ba talaga doon sa COVID ward? Ilang days ka nag-duty doon? Iyong documentation noon, I think those were not distributed is the problem. Pero kawawa iyong nurse, to me, kawawa iyong nurse, proseso ito. But I also cannot change the process, makukulong naman ako kung sasabihin ng nurse “Doctor Herbosa, wala ba akong benefit, o ito ang benefits mo”. Because there's a process, and their hospital directors and their regional directors should actually follow. So that's the good thing.

Alam mo parang 90 percent nakita ko nai-distribute na eh. But I'll get correct facts with you, medyo ang dami pala talagang isyu as a secretary of Health, mas madali ang trabaho ko noong undersecretary. But I'm telling you I will get on top of this, because I feel the nurses are our real priority, and I'm going to tell this in national TV. I really love the nurses, because they are our healthcare system. Sila ang nag-aalaga sa inyo kapag naospital kayo. Sila iyong nasa tabi ninyo 24/7, kaming doctor hindi naman 'eh.

So, I really think that if nurses need to be paid, they should be paid. And the other thing is I don't want them to leave the Philippines because we need them for the programs that the Department of Health will want to deliver. If I want good health services, I will need all the nurses I get. And that's why they are pirating our nurses. What does that mean? Our nurses are the best in the world kasi binabayaran talaga nila.

Ang sabi nga sa akin ni Presidente noong nag-uusap kami, the first time he offered me the job, sabi nga niya "Oo nga Ted", when I told him about that problem "Oo nga Doctor Ted, every meeting a president, a head of state approaches me, ang unang hinihingi, "Can you provide as nurses?" So ako—that's good in a way kasi magagaling ang nurses natin, totoo naman iyon hindi ba. Kapag nagkasakit kayo, aalagaan—the problem is we can't lose all of them. So I have several press releases. You've probably read it in the news.

And we are really trying to solve this with a more lateral approach, lateral thinking approach and more innovative ideas in trying to get them to stay in the Philippines. The sad part is there are 4,500 vacant plantilla items in the Department of Health alone. I'm not going to count the LGU hospitals, kasi walang nurse na nag-a-apply. Bakit walang nurse na nag-a-apply? Nasaan na sila? So, hinahanap ko ngayon iyong mga board eligible, hinahanap ko iyong mga nagtatrabaho sa BPO, hinahanap ko iyong nurse na nasa flight industry, iyong nasa sales industry, mga medrep.

Shout out, doon sa inyo—For those that are licensed, there are 4,500 items but that's all over the Philippines ha. So hindi lang sa Metro Manila.

MS. OSEÑA-PAEZ: Okay, so we have Nestor, and then Cathy Valente and Mela Lesmoras.

NESTOR CORRALES/PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER: Sir, you mentioned there are still remaining unpaid medical frontliners, how long will they wait, what's your timeline, what's your assurance to them that this will be given to them the soonest possible time?

DOH SEC. HERBOSA: As long the documentation is there, they should be paid.

MS. OSEÑA-PAEZ: Okay, Cathy Valiente Manila Times.

CATHY VALENTE/THE MANILA TIMES: Good afternoon sir. Kay Sec. Gatchalian, po. Sir, update lang po sa ongoing food distribution sa Albay, since the permanent danger zone has been expanded, mas marami na ang evacuees, kumusta po ang ating mga evacuees, sir?

DSWD SEC. GATCHALIAN: Okay. First of all, the president is monitoring the situation carefully. We've been in constant communications since last week, almost on a daily or hourly basis about his directives on making sure that lahat ng mga na-evacuate ay may pagkain.

Alam naman natin ang pagpapatakbo ng evacuation centers are the responsibilities of the local government units. But the DSWD, upon instruction of the president, will give them or gave them

the necessary logistic support. I was there last Saturday, met with Governor Grex Lagman, together with the nine affected or will be affected LGUs to include the City of Legaspi.

So, ang naging agreement namin doon, the first five waves ng pagkain, a wave is three days. At that time ang target natin is 8,000 families, that will be around close to 26,000 – 27,000 na food packs, nabigay na natin sa kanila, so meaning it's already with them. So the first five waves, they are covered na. I can do the math lang, medyo mahina ako diyan, but it's in here: 8,000 families iyan all in all; five waves already accounted for. So, nasa kamay na ng mga local government units natin iyan—38,000, sorry, it's around 38,000 na food packs ang hawak na ng various local government units to include the provincial government.

Now, bakit first 15 muna? Kasi iyong next six naman na days, provincial government ang sasagot. So ang sabi nila we want to complement each other's resources rather than overlapped each other's resources.

Now, pagtapos ng six days nila, that's brings to 21 days, papasok ulit ang DSWD with another fifteen days. So, it's wave after wave; that would bring us close to forty-five days, which is historically the minimum or minsan nangyayari pa iyong eruption na hanggang 45 days lang.

Now, what if it protracts to 90 days? The DSWD will again sit down with the LGU to make sure na mayroon ulit kami na arrangement as who feeds on what days. So, bottom line natin dito, lahat ng nilikas ng mga lokal na pamahalaan na nasa evacuation center, hawak na ng kanilang mga alkalde ng kanilang mga local officials iyong foods for the next fifteen days, and then after which, the provincial government will step in.

Now, alam natin na iyong mga food pack na iyan, eh hindi naman iyan lahat ng pangangailangan mo nandoon sa loob kasi tipikal iyan 'eh. Pero so—again balik tayo kung mayroon kang anak na maliit na kailangan ng gatas so on and so forth, nag-uusap na rin kami ng local government, upon the instruction of the president, na baka kailangan sustentuhan o ayudahan natin ng financial assistance. So nag-uusap at mag-uusap pa kami ulit ni governor, kung paano at kailan natin ipapamahagi ang financial assistance at kung magkano.

We are always in communication with Governor Grex Lagman. We are also talking to the congressional representation of Albay to get all the varying inputs, kung paano pa tayo makakatulong.

MS. OSEÑA-PAEZ: Okay, last question Mela Lesmoras PTV4.

MELA LESMORAS/ PTV4: Hi good morning po Secretaries and Ms. Daphne, just a follow up question about Albay. Sa sectoral meeting napag-usapan din po ba kung ano pa ang magiging effort like DOH may madadagdag ba? And thus, Secretary Gatchalian, are you planning to go back din po sa Albay? Si Pangulong Marcos din kaya ay bibisita doon ano po iyong future—mga dapat pang asahan ng mga taga-Albay ngayon ngang may banta ng Mayon sa kanila?

DOH SEC. HERBOSA: Salamat Mela. Actually noong Sabado I got a message on my twitter account, kasi siguro hindi pa alam ni Secretary Rex iyong telepono ko, pero magka-follower kami sa twitter. [He] messaged me, sabi niya – we follow each other even before – nag-mention siya sabi niya ganoon, there are some problems in the evacuation centers. So nag-call ako ng command conference on the following day, Sunday. So I talked to the RDs and all the provincial health officers. And I discovered, many of the evacuation centers are getting overcrowded and they need wash facilities, kasi kapag-dumadami ang tao diyan palikuran ang kailangan. So,

padadalhan natin—I think napadala na ang aming wash team, mayroon kaming tinatawag na wash team sa Department of Health-Health Emergency Management Bureau, or iyong Disaster Risk Reduction Management Office.

Pagkatapos nanghingi din sila ng pera, kasi medyo isang linggo na ito eh hindi ba, so kinukulang na iyong pera. I'll be trying to send with the proper documentation additional funds to the region. And I asked the question, kumusta na ang mga tao? Kasi in any disaster—that's my field by the way, I am a disaster medicine specialist. Take care of your health workers, sabi ko alagaan ninyo kasi make sure na walang burnout, walang anxiety. So those are my instruction to them. And I will send another team para ma-augment sila kagaya noong alternating with waves. So, we need to send more health teams to the area. Ang sabi sa akin mga 90 days pa daw. So, it looks like this is a long drawn-out activity.

DSWD SEC. GATCHALIAN: And it's a whole-of-nation approach again. Secretary Gibo Teodoro was also talking to me last Saturday. Ang exact words niya, "If the department needs the logistics ng DND, it is to our disposal." And then noong nandoon ako, na meet ko rin nandoon iyong OCD people natin kasi ang naging concern is potable drinking water. So dinala na ng OCD lahat ng kanilang filtration machines na nasa Metro Manila, nandoon na.

As we speak, kanina kausap ko si Secretary Abalos, ipapadala rin iyong mga sa MMDA. And then also I'd like to take this opportunity to thank Secretary Abalos for facilitating – and the royal family of the United Arab Emirates, kasi nag-facilitate si Secretary Abalos sa counterpart niya doon, who happens to be part of the royal family – ng 50 tons of various food items na dumating kahapon; 24 hours lang iyan minobilize. The 50 tons composes of rice, milk, iba-iba.

So, as we speak right now, na-mobilize na rin ng DSWD iyon and it should arrive Albay later on tonight. And then more are coming in and the assurance of the department is all in kind donation that's course through us will get to Albay in the fastest possible time. So every machineries of the government, I think, is already moving. DOH has the mask.

DOH SEC. HERBOSA: Thanks to you. Ni-request mo rin pala iyon, the facemask additional because there are emissions.

MS. OSEÑA-PAEZ: Thank you so much. This is been a great and wonderful press conference. And welcome on your first presscon here in Malacañang Press Corps.

DOH SEC. HERBOSA: I just like to say, I'm really honored to be given this task to serve and the government and the Philippine people and I thank the president for the opportunity.

MS. OSEÑA-PAEZ: Okay. Thank you very much, Malacañang Press Corps. Have a good afternoon.

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