

**PRESIDENTIAL COMMUNICATIONS OFFICE
PRESIDENTIAL NEWS DESK
REF: DIR. ROBERTZON F. RAMIREZ**

**SPEECH BY PRESIDENT FERDINAND R. MARCOS JR. AT THE CEREMONIAL SIGNING
OF THE JOINT CIRCULAR ON THE ESTABLISHMENT OF CHILD DEVELOPMENT
CENTERS BY THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT UNITS**

[Delivered at the Ceremonial Hall, Malacañan Palace in Manila | 03 April 2025]

Thank you to Executive Secretary, former Chief Justice Luc Bersamin, for your introduction.
[Please take your seats.]

The Education Secretary, our Education Secretary Sonny Angara; Interior and Local Government Secretary Jonvic Remulla; Budget and Management Secretary Amenah Pangandaman; the legislative arm of this whole effort led by Senator Sherwin Gatchalian, Senator Koko Pimentel, Representative Roman Romulo; Representative Jude Acidre; and the Union of Local Authorities of the Philippines, Governor Dakila Carlo Cua, Dax Cua; local chief executives of the different cities and municipalities of the Philippines; fellow workers in government; distinguished guests; ladies and gentlemen, good morning.

At the outset, I will ask your understanding for being a little bit late coming up. I was downstairs doing a book reading for three to five year olds in commemoration of what we are doing here.

And I have to admit I was having too much of a good time. *[laughter]* So, I actually asked if I could just stay there all day. But apparently duties call.

But nonetheless, it's always a joy to see the Palace filled with a new energy, with a new laughter, the curiosity of children. As I'm sure you understand, sometimes the Palace is a very serious, very formal place. And when children come in, it reminds us what we are doing – why we are doing what we are doing.

Earlier, I read a story entitled “*Ang Limang Tuta*” to these children, written by Eugene Y. Evasco, illustrated by Almar Denso.

It is a heartwarming tale about kindness and compassion for animals—showing us that no one is too young to make a difference in someone's life.

I unfortunately probably made a mistake by bringing two of my dogs *[laughter]* and losing my audience immediately. *[laughter]* Three to five year olds are not the easiest audience to keep anyway. And I immediately brought my own distractions and that's why you will have to excuse my trousers are full of shedded hair of our toys downstairs.

But now, let me tell you another story.

Sometime in the 1860s, a small boy sat by candlelight with his mother learning to read Spanish. That boy was not paying attention to his lesson, and the mother decided to read the boy a fable—translating it from Spanish to Tagalog. It was about a young and an old moth and the young moth's fascination with the flame.

The moral of the mother's story was to listen to one's elders, but the young boy learned a far more poignant one—that the light was the most beautiful thing in creation, and that sacrificing one's life for it was worthwhile.

That boy grew up to become our national hero, Dr. Jose Rizal. He inspired our nation to fight for its freedom.

This story also emphasizes the importance of reading in building the educational foundation of our children. Reading to children improves their language, develops their cognitive skills, and allows them to appreciate learning.

According to various studies, early high-quality education supports children's physical and emotional development, which they need for school readiness.

In 1990, Congress passed Republic Act No. 6972, which required each *barangay* to have at least one Child Development Center. However, due to limited resources, the early childhood care and development or ECCD Council reported that as of March this year, 3,800 *barangays* in the country have yet to have CDCs.

Too many children do not have the structured care that they need in their formative years. These challenges have been accumulating for the past 30 years and cannot be solved overnight. But that does not mean we should not begin. It should no longer be the case.

Today we gather with one goal: to create a better and brighter future for our children.

Today, our agencies are working hard to make our education system right for our students.

Last March 04, I directed the DBM to prioritize and to fund the establishment of Child Development Centers or CDCs, especially in the more remote *barangays* of Mindanao and other low-income municipalities.

Our local government units will now shoulder additional costs as part of their counterpart obligation to complete the project.

Sa pamamagitan ng suporta natin sa mga lokal na pamahalaan na may limitadong kakayahan na magtayo ng sarili nilang CDCs, mapapabuti natin ang edukasyon ng mahihirap nating mga kababayan.

These CDCs are venues for the implementation of Early Childhood Care and Development Center programs and services, especially the Early Learning Programs and Family Support Program.

Sa mga centers na ito, maaaring makapaglaro, makapagbasa, at makapag-aral ang ating mga kabataan.

It can also be used as a resource center for developmentally appropriate learning materials and a laboratory for conducting research, data gathering, and innovations about early childhood.

Sa pamamagitan ng mga CDCs, magkakaroon ng maayos na pundasyon ang ating mga anak na siya namang magpapatibay sa pundasyon ng ating bansa.

For this year, we have identified 328 low-income *barangays* that will now be provided with funding for them to access early childhood development initiatives.

Of this number, 89 will be in Luzon, 106 will be in the Visayas, [and] 133 in Mindanao, including BARMM.

However, CDC is just a piece of the puzzle.

We must ensure that the foundations for the full development of our children are met.

We are providing the First 1,000 Days cash grant under the *Pantawid Pamilyang Pilipino Program* that aims to improve children's health, nutrition, and development during the first 1,000 days of life.

This ensures that our youth are on the right track towards proper cognitive development. I am glad to report that as of February 2025, more than 68,000 households nationwide have received the F1KD grants and we intend to reach even more.

We are also pursuing the *Supplementary Feeding Program* [and] the *School-Based Feeding Program*, which work together to provide our children with at least one nutritional meal for their daily endeavors.

In addition, we have implemented the *Walang Gutom Program*. This gives P3,000 in food credits monthly to the nation's most vulnerable families.

My fellow Filipinos, we recognize that education goes beyond what happens just inside the classroom.

The government continues to find ways to support our children so they can grow, they can thrive, and reach full potential. Through health and community programs, we remain committed to helping them become productive members of our society.

The Nigerian proverb "It takes a village to raise a child," emphasizes the importance of a whole-of-society approach in giving our children the tools they build to face their future.

To our LGUs, we need your full commitment to ensure the success of the project. You must provide our childhood development teachers and workers with the support and resources that they need while encouraging our community members to take an active role in the CDCs.

To every official and worker who believes in the power of this endeavor, I am confident that your work here will positively impact our children, our families, and then our communities.

To our parents, especially those who have young children, take the time to read stories to your children. It is time well invested.

It may be a small step. But it is a crucial one in looking after [for] those who will inherit our motherland.

Sa ating lahat, ipakita natin sa ating kabataan ang pagiging Bagong Pilipino: disiplinado, mahusay, at mahal ang bayan.

Let us carry on with our work so that every child can grow up knowing that they are valued, knowing that the hands that guide them belong to the ones who are unyielding in their love for this country.

Maraming salamat po at mabuhay ang Bagong Pilipinas! [applause]

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