



PGMA launches anti-poverty program exclusively for 'extremely poor' Filipinos

OZAMIZ CITY, Misamis Occidental, Jan. 9 (PGON) — President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo formally launched here today the Conditional Cash Transfer (CCT) under “*Ahon Pamilyang Pilipino*,” a poverty reduction program crafted exclusively to benefit the “extremely poor” Filipino families. The CCT provides money to extremely poor Filipino families to enable them to meet certain basic human development goals set by the government. The formal launching of the antipoverty program was held this morning at the Ozamiz City School of Arts and Trade (OCSAT) in this city.

The “*Ahon Pamilyang Pilipino*” program was launched last Sept. 19 in Malacanang with the signing of a Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) between the Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD) and the municipalities of Esperanza and Sibagat in Agusan del Sur, the cities of Pasay and Caloocan in Metro Manila, and Lopez Jaena and Bonifacio in Misamis Occidental.

The program seeks to break the poverty cycle by addressing the problems of low educational achievement, high levels of maternal and infant mortality rates, high malnutrition rate and the high rate of child labor among the poor. Under the program, beneficiaries are identified based on a scoring system utilizing the socioeconomic characteristics of a household such as non-ownership of assets, appliances, type of housing unit, level of education achievement of household head and nonaccess to water and sanitation facilities.

The APP offers health and education cash grants to beneficiaries who have been determined to meet certain requirements. Under the health package, a household is entitled to P6,000 a year or P500 a month for preventive health checkups and vaccines. The education cash grant, on the other hand, provides P3,000 for 10 months or P300 monthly per child for school needs. The grant covers a maximum of three children per household.

To ensure that the children go to school, the beneficiary-family is required to acknowledge that they have received the money, present proof of enrolment and regular attendance of their children at least 85 percent of school days. For the health and nutrition grants for mothers and children, receipt of money depends on their regular visits to health centers for immunization and preventive healthcare as well as improvement in the nutritional status of the children and regular visits of pregnant women to their physicians.

The DSWD, the lead implementing agency of the APP, explained that grants extended to the “very poor” families are not dole-outs but are designed to achieve long-term poverty reduction. The DSWD added that the strict conditionalities governing the grant preclude any abuse of the program by the beneficiaries. Initial figures showed that 1,115 families will benefit from the APP in Lopez Jaena and Bonifacio, Misamis Occidental. They will be represented by: Aniceto and Vilma Intod, Diomedes and Anita Uy, Orlando and Gina Villariguez, Reneboy and Mila Cantona and Alejandro and Sherlita Manus for Lopez Jaena. For Bonifacio, Marcelo and Estrelita Quiamson, Reynaldo and Estrelita Genobaga, Florencia and Gina Sanoy, Cerelo and Loreto Gerundio and Carlito and Norma Cotto will represent the municipality.

The President personally distributed Cash Cards to the above-mentioned families and wished them luck in their endeavors. The cards resemble Automated Teller Machine (ATM) cards and can be used to withdraw their money from Land Bank of the Philippines (LBP) ATMs and its affiliate banks all over the country. All APP beneficiaries will receive their cash assistance for five years, or until 2012. #

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