



## ***Pres. Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo underscores importance of education in fight against poverty***

**MANILA, March 13 (PinoyGlobal) -** President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo underscored today the important role quality education plays in liberating the next generation from poverty and promoting a life of hope, optimism and prosperity. Thus, the President said in her message before some 1,000 students and youth who took “a unity walk” to Malacanang this afternoon to “express their weariness of politics of division and despair.”

She said the government has placed education on its top priority list and this could be gleaned from the P1.227 trillion 2008 national budget that she signed into law last Tuesday. “Education, in particular, is taking a front seat in our budget this year,” the President said as she informed the students and youth that this year’s budget invests in the three E’s—Economy, Education and Environment—“the essential building blocks of our nation.”

The President said the “social payback” of an improved economy started last year when budget allocation for infrastructure and social services increased due to improved revenue collections as a result of the tough economic and fiscal reforms implemented by her administration. “And, education is included in this social payback... because no other issue is more important to Filipinos now than education. The opportunity to avail of quality education affords you, the youth, who belong to the next generation, to live a prosperous life,” the President said in Filipino.

And, since “education is a core value of the Philippine society and family life” that every parent is willing to make sacrifices to be able to send their children to school and get a college diploma, the President said the government has allotted some P200 billion for education this year. “This is the biggest part of the budget that was allotted to education,” the President said to the cheers of the students and youth who benefited from the many programs and projects on education, that include high school scholarships, skills/vocational training from the Technical Education and Skills Development Authority (TESDA), among many more.

The President said the more than P200-billion budget for education allows the government to invest in the following areas:

- Day Care Centers would slowly be converted to pre-schools;
- Some 30.5 million poor pupils in pre-school will receive rice under the Food-for-School Program;
- P6 billion is allotted for 11,000 new classrooms;
- Some 35.5 million new textbooks would be procured;
- The hiring of some 10,000 new teachers;
- P1 billion is allotted for teacher training in Math, Science and English;
- A provision for salary increase for teachers that would be realized in the middle of the coming school year;
- More than 60,000 students nationwide would be awarded GASTPE (Government Assistance to Students and Teachers in Private Education) scholarships under the Education Service Contracting program;
- Increase in the value of high school voucher from P5,000 to P10,000;
- The Commission on Information and Communications Technology (CICT) would procure some 1,000 computer laboratories for public schools;
- P3 billion, including some P350 million for Business Process Outsourcing training and P1 billion worth of scholarships for the poor, is allocated for vocational training;
- P700 million, including P300 million for science, is allotted for college scholarships; and,
- More than P1 billion for post-graduate studies (masteral and doctoral degrees).

“We have accomplished much but there is much more to be done. We plan on working hard the next two years until the day my term ends in 2010 to fulfill our Philippine Reform Agenda. We must and we will press forward with more reforms. We will fight for the Economy, Education, and the Environment,” the President said. #

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