



Committee Daily Bulletin

DISCUSSION WITH AGENCIES/ENTITIES

COMMITTEE	SUBJECT MATTER	DISCUSSIONS
Agriculture and Food	Update on the Department of Agriculture's (DA) programs and initiatives amidst the COVID-19 pandemic	<p>The Committee, chaired by Rep. Wilfrido Mark Enverga (1st District, Quezon), listened to the DA's report on its programs and initiatives amidst the COVID-19 pandemic.</p> <p>At the outset, Rep. Enverga said that the government, with the DA at the forefront, must continually work to ensure that the basic nutritional needs of the people, especially the underprivileged, are substantially met, thereby assuring their well-being during the crisis. He also recognized the need to assist the farmers by providing their basic needs and farm inputs to capacitate them as they continue to put food on the tables of Filipinos.</p> <p>DA Secretary William Dar said that the threat of hunger is as real as the threat of COVID-19. He maintained that food production and manufacturing must continue amidst the COVID-19 pandemic, with proper observance of health and quarantine measures imposed by the government.</p> <p>The Agriculture Secretary presented the measures that DA has initiated in response to the challenges brought about by the pandemic. One of which is the creation within the Department of a food resiliency task force that will ensure the availability, affordability, and accessibility of food during the pandemic.</p> <p>Dar also reported that based on a study on the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic and the concomitant enhanced community quarantine (ECQ) on the agriculture sector, 14% of the respondents experienced disruptions in their agricultural activities, while 35% were not able to market their yield, particularly high-value crops. The study was conducted by an anticipatory and forward planning group of the Interagency Task Force on Emerging Infectious Diseases (IATF) headed by the National Economic and Development Authority (NEDA) and participated in by DA.</p> <p>Dar pointed out that during the initial days of the ECQ in Luzon, the movement of food supplies was greatly hampered by various restrictions at checkpoints in different municipalities and barangays. But the situation improved with the DA's issuance of food passes to food producers, manufacturers, and traders to allow an unhampered delivery of food and other agricultural commodities during the enforcement of the ECQ.</p> <p>The DA also implemented the <i>Kadiwa ni Ani at Kita</i>, which brought fresh farm produce direct to consumers at low prices, benefiting not only the consumers but also the farmers. Dar said the DA hopes to continue the Kadiwa program even beyond the ECQ. The DA also launched its Urban Agriculture Project in Metro Manila, distributing free seeds and seedlings and other inputs through the local government units (LGUs) to allow residents to plant vegetables in their backyards or in their community.</p> <p>Dar also reported that under its Social Amelioration Program in Agriculture (SAPA), the Department has extended financial assistance and subsidy to farmers and fisherfolk who were adversely affected by the ECQ. Likewise, under the DA's Survival and Recovery</p>

<p>Continuation...</p> <p>Agriculture and Food</p>		<p>(SURE) Aid Program, small farmers and fisherfolk adversely affected by the ECQ may avail themselves of a loan of up to P25,000 at zero percent interest, payable within 10 years.</p> <p>On rice sufficiency, Dar said that the DA is continuously prepositioning rice stocks in Metro Manila to ensure that there will be enough supply during the ECQ. He added that the National Food Authority (NFA) has sufficient buffer stock good for 15 days stored in NFA warehouses in Metro Manila. His advice, however, is for LGUs to not totally depend on NFA for their rice relief requirements and to procure directly from the local rice producers in their respective areas or in nearby provinces.</p> <p>Replying to Rep. Estrellita Suansing's (1st District, Nueva Ecija) query on reports that NFA rice has a foul smell, Dar denied that NFA sells that type of rice. It must have been the result of poor storage by those who purchased the rice, Dar explained. Nonetheless, he promised that the DA will investigate into the matter.</p> <p>Rep. Micaela Violago (2nd District, Nueva Ecija) asked about the policy interventions of DA in ensuring the affordability of rice and palay during and even after the ECQ.</p> <p>Dar admitted that the prices of palay and rice really went up during the COVID-19 pandemic. He said that the pandemic affected the global economy, hence adjustments in the prices of commodities can be expected. The DA will coordinate with the Department of Trade and Industry and other concerned government agencies to sustain a favorable market price for palay and rice.</p>
<p>Energy</p>	<p>Update on the actions taken by the energy sector relative to the planned mitigating measures since the start of the enhanced community quarantine (ECQ) due to COVID-19 and on its plans for the "new normal"</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Department of Energy (DOE) 	<p>The Committee, chaired by Marinduque Rep. Lord Allan Jay Velasco, listened to the briefing conducted by various agencies from the energy sector on their respective mitigating measures since the start of the ECQ and their plans for the "new normal."</p> <p>Rep. Velasco underscored the importance of having a democratic access to reliable, sufficient, sustainable, and affordable energy in this time of the pandemic. He said that the mitigating measures of the energy sector are crucial in ensuring continuous services nationwide and cushioning the adverse effects of the ECQ on the sector.</p> <p>DOE Secretary Alfonso Cusi and Undersecretary Felix Fuentebella assured the body that power sector operations are sustained and power and fuel supply is sufficient amidst the COVID-19 pandemic, attributing these to the immediate implementation of emergency response measures. Cusi added that passes issued by the Inter-Agency Task Force on Emerging Infectious Diseases (IATF) to essential personnel in the energy sector, allowing them to pass through checkpoints, enabled the continuity of services in the sector.</p> <p>According to Fuentebella, the DOE will continue to pursue its power sector roadmap with the overall objective of ensuring quality, reliable, affordable, and secure power supply; transparent and fair playing field in the power industry; and total electricity access in the country by 2040.</p> <p>He also informed the body of the issuance of DOE's Department Circular No. 2020-04-0008 on April 6, which effectively directs the utilization of Energy Regulations 1-94 (ER 1-94) funds to help local government units (LGUs) in their fight against the virus. The amount of P212.7 million has already been transferred to host LGUs since March 16.</p> <p>Under the ER 1-94 program, host communities to energy generation facilities and/or energy resource development are entitled to P0.01 per kilowatt-hour (kwh) of the total electricity sales of generation</p>

<p>Continuation... Energy</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Energy Regulatory Commission (ERC) National Electrification Administration (NEA) Power Sector Assets and Liabilities Management Corporation (PSALM) Philippine National Oil Company (PNOC) Other power agencies Business Sector 	<p>companies and energy resource developers to finance electrification, livelihood, and development projects.</p> <p>ERC Executive Director Floresinda Digal reported on the ERC's efforts to cushion the effects of the ECQ, which include: extending the deadline for Luzon distribution utilities (DUs) to file their over or under recoveries applications from March 31 to April 30; ensuring the continuous operation of the Wholesale Electricity Spot Market (WESM) amidst the pandemic; suspending Feed in Tariff Allowance Collection to lower electricity rates by P0.04/kwh; extending expiring Provisional Authorities to Operate, Certificates of Compliance, Renewable Energy Sources License in Luzon; and providing a one-month extension of payment of electricity to generation, distribution, and transmission companies.</p> <p>NEA Administrator Edgardo Masongsong apprised the body that pursuant to RA 11469 or the Bayanihan to Heal as One Act, the NEA has committed the remittance of P1.35 billion unused subsidies and dividends to the Bureau of Treasury (BTr) as requested by the Department of Finance (DOF) to support efforts of the national government to mitigate the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic.</p> <p>The NEA has also created its own Energy Committee that will work with the DOE in developing a plan to conserve the use and regulate the distribution of fuel and energy resources and ensure adequate supply of the same during this period of national emergency.</p> <p>NEA has crafted a "New Workplace Re-Entry Plan for the New Normal" which establishes standards and protocols for the protection of its employees, stakeholders, and business partners from the disease, while ensuring the restoration of its services.</p> <p>PSALM President and CEO Irene Garcia said that PSALM has disbursed ER 1-94 funds amounting to P293.7 million to six independent power producer (IPP) plants, P50.2 million to seven Agus-Pulangi hydro-electric powerplants, and P1.7 million to two host LGUs of the Malaya Plant in Pililla, Rizal. These power plants are responsible for remitting to host LGUs the funds necessary to finance electrification, livelihood, and development projects in response to the COVID-19 pandemic</p> <p>In response to President Duterte's call for government-owned and controlled corporations to fund the government's Social Amelioration Program (SAP) and other measures to mitigate the spread of COVID-19, PNOC President and CEO Reuben Lista disclosed that the PNOC has remitted P5 billion to the BTr in the form of dividends.</p> <p>National Power Corporation (NPC) President and CEO Pio Benavidez, National Transmission Corporation (TransCo) President and CEO Melvin Matibag, and Philippine Electricity Market Corporation (PEMC) President Oscar Ala reported on the donations or remittances they made to support the implementation of the Bayanihan to Heal as One Act.</p> <p>Meanwhile, National Grid Corporation of the Philippines (NGCP) Deputy General Counsel Ronald Concepcion and Independent Electricity Market Operators of the Philippines (IEMOP) President Richard Nethercott gave assurance that they will continue to operate in accordance with approved operating standards and budget.</p> <p>Resource persons from the following entities also gave their respective ECQ mitigating measures and "new normal" plans: Manila Electric Company; Panay Electric Company, Inc.; Aboitiz Power Corporation; First Gen Power Corporation; Energy Development Corporation; Philippine Energy Efficiency Alliance; Philippine Electric</p>
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<p>Continuation... Energy</p>		<p>Power Plant Association; Philippine Independent Power Producers Association, Inc.; Philippine Rural Electric Cooperatives Association, Inc.; and the National Association of General Managers of Electric Cooperatives (NAGMEC).</p> <p>In the ensuing discussion, Committee Vice Chair Rep. Jericho Jonas Nograles (Party-List, PBA) asked the NPC on the funding source of its P4 billion donation to the Bayanihan to Heal as One Act Fund. Benavidez answered that it was sourced from the 2019 and early 2020 dividends of the NPC and funds for its deferred projects. The NPC, TransCo, and PEMC were requested to submit in writing the details of the source of their donations to support the Bayanihan to Heal as One Act.</p> <p>Reacting to the issue raised by Committee Vice Chair Rep. Presley de Jesus (Party-List, PHILRECA) relative to the recent electric bill spike, NAGMEC President Allan Laniba said that the spikes affected mostly residential consumers, which can be explained by the increased consumption due to the hot weather and because people are mostly home due to the ECQ.</p> <p>With regard to Executive Order 113 issued by the President on May 2, which temporarily imposes an additional 10% import duty on crude oil and refined petroleum products to raise funds to combat the COVID-19 pandemic, DOE Assistant Secretary Leonido Pulido III said that only about P4 to 6 billion will be collected due to the significant decrease in the demand for petroleum products at this time.</p> <p>He also mentioned that the EO will only be implemented during the ECQ period and that the DOE will monitor and inform the DOF if there are unintended increases in the price of petroleum products so that proper adjustments can be undertaken.</p> <p>Reps. De Jesus, Sergio Dagooc (Party-List, APEC), and Godofredo Guya (Party-List, RECOBODA) suggested that the electrification fund should not be realigned to other purposes so as not to derail the rural electrification program. A separate Committee meeting with the DOE was requested by the Congressmen to discuss the matter.</p> <p>Rep. Velasco commended the energy sector for their remarkable efforts in mitigating the effects of the ECQ and for their respective disease prevention initiatives to lessen the transmission of COVID-19.</p>
<p>Welfare of Children</p>	<p>Report on the situation and welfare of children during the COVID-19 pandemic and the implementation of and suggested amendments to RA 10821, otherwise known as the Children's Emergency Relief and Protection Act by the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD) 	<p>The Committee, chaired by Rep. Yedda Marie Romualdez (Party-List, TINGOG SINIRANGAN), will draft a bill incorporating the amendments to RA 10821 proposed by concerned government agencies and non-government organizations (NGOs).</p> <p>Rep. Romualdez said that during this time of COVID-19 pandemic, children are most vulnerable to abuse, exploitation, hunger, anxiety, poverty, trauma, and violence even inside their homes. She said that several issues affecting children have been raised during the meetings of the Social Amelioration Cluster of the Defeat COVID-19 Ad Hoc Committee (DCC) which have to be addressed.</p> <p>DSWD-Disaster Response and Management Bureau (DRMB) Director Clifford Cyril Rival confirmed that during the ECQ, the Department received reports of unaccompanied children in homes because their parents were arrested by local law enforcement officers or parents cannot travel back home due to the ECQ; children denied access to basic services because their households were not included as beneficiaries in the Social Amelioration Program (SAP); and children at risk in their own homes due to child abuse. He added that crimes such as online sexual abuse and exploitation of children as well as forced labor among children were also reported.</p>

<p>Continuation... Welfare of Children</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Council for the Welfare of Children (CWC) 	<p>One of the measures undertaken by the DSWD to protect children, Rivalal said, is the establishment of a helpline that receives reports on child abuses and provides psychosocial support to victims. He added that the DSWD is in close coordination with the Women and Children Protection Desk and Cybercrime Group of the Philippine National Police (PNP), where increasing cases of online sexual abuses are referred.</p> <p>Rivalal suggested that RA 10821 be amended to clearly define emergency foster care guidelines, especially during ECQ. He likewise said that the DSWD is revisiting the policies under the Comprehensive Emergency Program for Children (CEPC) to include a mechanism that will ensure the protection of children's rights and welfare during the COVID-19 pandemic and similar health crises.</p> <p>Rep. Arlene Brosas (Party-List, GABRIELA) said that the protection of children during the pandemic should have been widely considered and implemented by the COVID-19 Inter-Agency Task Force (IATF) considering that the ECQ has been imposed for almost two months now.</p> <p>Meanwhile, Rep. Diego Ty (1st District, Misamis Occidental) requested DSWD to give priority to the solo parents and lactating mothers as recipients of the second tranche of the SAP subsidy. Rep. Ruth Mariano-Hernandez (2nd District, Laguna), on the other hand, suggested that the DSWD must also include families that have malnourished children as SAP beneficiaries.</p> <p>CWC Executive Director and former Caloocan representative Mary Mitzi "Mitch" Cajayon-Uy said that the Council has issued guidelines on protecting children during the pandemic and is also reporting and monitoring violations of laws concerning children. Likewise, the CWC conducts regular profiling and updating of COVID-19 cases involving children.</p> <p>Cajayon-Uy also mentioned that the Department of Education (DepEd) has already issued guidelines governing the remainder of School Year (SY) 2019-2020 as well as the start of classes for SY 2020-2021. The DepEd also launched DepEd Commons – an online platform which was designed to give teachers and students access to online review materials and open educational resources (OERs) during class suspensions and other similar circumstances.</p> <p>Rep. Joy Myra Tambunting (2nd District, Parañaque City) raised the importance of providing milk to infants and children while the ECQ is in effect.</p> <p>Reacting to this, Dr. Anthony Calibo of the Department of Health (DOH) explained that milk formula donations are prohibited pursuant to Executive Order 51 of 1986, or the Philippine Milk Code, and DOH Administrative Order 2007-0017 (Guidelines on the Acceptance and Processing of Local and Foreign Donations During Emergency and Disaster Situations). However, due to the health emergency caused by COVID-19, the local government units (LGUs) may procure and donate infant milk formula in coordination with and upon the recommendation of the local nutrition officer, Calibo added.</p> <p>Recognizing the limited manpower of the CWC, Deputy Speaker Evelina Escudero (1st District, Sorsogon) said that the budget for personnel services of the CWC must be increased to enable it to hire more employees.</p> <p>DOH Epidemiology Bureau (EB) OIC-Director IV Ferchito Avelino said that most children infected by COVID are asymptomatic or silent spreaders. He confirmed that as of to date, there are 591 children</p>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Department of Health (DOH) 	

<p>Continuation... Welfare of Children</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Commission on Human Rights (CHR) 	<p>who contracted the virus, 33% of whom are aged 15 to 19 years old. The regions with the highest number of confirmed COVID-19 cases among children are Central Visayas, National Capital Region (NCR), and CALABARZON (Region IV-A).</p> <p>On the query of Eastern Samar Rep. Maria Fe Abunda on how children may have medical check-up during the pandemic, Calibo said that the DOH strongly encourages doctors and patients to adopt or use telemedicine, or the practice of caring for patients remotely to avoid contracting the disease. For scheduled medical treatment, like chemotherapy, and during emergency cases, there must be proper coordination with the <i>Barangay</i> Health Emergency Response Team (BHERT) so that the patient will be brought to the nearest health facility.</p> <p>In response to Rep. Brosas' statement that some government hospitals are allegedly refusing to give emergency treatment to patients, Calibo said that the DOH will conduct proper investigation on the matter.</p> <p>Atty. Julie Ann Regalado, Division Chief of Child Rights Center of the CHR, urged the government to undertake measures to protect children during the ECQ, citing the number of cases involving violation of children's rights and endangering children's welfare.</p> <p>Regalado also lamented that there exists a "secret pandemic" which is the rise of online child exploitation. Because of the worsening economic situation, some parents are lured to push their children to engage in online sexual activity. Also, due to suspension of classes, children are more exposed to the Internet where perpetrators of online sexual abuse and exploitation are waiting for their next prey, she added.</p> <p>UNICEF Philippines' Social Policy Section Chief Anjanette Saguisag explained that the socio-economic impact of the disease and the delay in achieving the Sustainable Development Goals will result in more children falling into poverty, will give rise to a learning crisis, and will increase the risks on children's health and safety.</p> <p>The UNICEF, Center for the Prevention and Treatment of Child Sexual Abuse (CPTCSA), Save the Children, and the Plan International Philippines gave their respective recommendations on how to improve the implementation of RA 10821.</p>
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