

**COMMENTS OF SEN. LEILA M. DE LIMA ON THE 4th WEEKLY
REPORT OF THE PRESIDENT DATED 20 APRIL 2020**

DATE: 22 April 2020

I humbly submit my comments on the President's 4th weekly report dated 20 April 2020, in compliance with Section 5 of Republic Act No. 11469:

- 1) There is no substantial progress in the actual distribution of emergency subsidy to the 4Ps families. From last week's account, a mere additional 300,000 households were added in the latest report making the total at 4 million. Within a full month of reporting under RA 11469, still, about 400,000 4Ps families – the poorest of the poor – have yet to receive the needed subsidy. This is simply unacceptable.
- 2) As for the remaining 14 million families under the social amelioration program (SAP), the DSWD has reported that it has already downloaded about 91% of the allotted budget to LGUs in the amount of around PhP 73.8 billion. But one fact remains: the program has a very slow distribution rate. For a month now since the enactment of RA 11469, more than 14 million families are still waiting for the much-needed cash assistance from the national government. Apart from this report about prepositioning of funds with the LGUs -- coupled with the administrative steps of forging agreements with cities and municipalities, of training barangay and LGU employees, and of soliciting assistance from the military and the police in the eventual distribution of aid -- the DSWD has yet to commence the actual pay-out for this alarmingly large number non-4Ps families, notwithstanding the thousands of households that are excluded from the target beneficiaries given DSWD's "quota system" per LGU.
- 3) This serious backlog in the distribution of emergency subsidies both to 4Ps and non-4Ps families is fomenting social unrest. It is high time for the DSWD and the AITF to consider several good proposals to expedite the process, e.g. the optimum use of *Listahanan*, the cross-referencing with DOF's list of households eligible for TRAIN law refund, the adoption of "pay now, verify later scheme" complemented with the community audit of published lists of families, among others.
- 4) What is practically staving off the unrest (so far) in the communities are the resourcefulness and creativity of the LGUs, as well as the generosity and civic-mindedness of the private sector, through their separate relief operations and donation drives. The national government should urgently step up in the distribution of economic aid and relief packs.
- 5) There is no update as to the supposed commitment stated in the 3rd weekly report regarding the raising of more than PhP 60 billion to

cover lower-middle income families who should also receive some form of emergency subsidy. It will be good if future reports can provide updates on this.

- 6) As regards the economic aid given to formal sector workers, the 4th weekly report just unceremoniously announced the scrapping of CAMP under DOLE to be replaced by the Small Business Wage Subsidy (SBWS) program jointly administered by the Department of Finance (DOF), Social Security System (SSS) and the Bureau of Internal Revenue (BIR). This new program budgeted at PhP 51 billion is set to benefit around 3.4 million workers.

What was relayed to the media last week was that DOLE was just suspending CAMP due to the near depletion of its P1.6 billion budget. The agency promised to look for an alternative program, with the help of Congress. For transparency's sake, DOLE, DOF, SSS and BIR are urged to urgently make the proper announcement and explanation to the public. Likewise, these agencies are further requested to extend the deadline to avail of the SBWS program as the application period mentioned in the 4th weekly report is almost scandalously short: April 16-30, 2020 *only*.

- 7) On the issue of medical supplies and equipment, nothing is said again of any particular inventory of PPEs, its current distribution among public and private hospitals, and the projected volume required by the ongoing crisis. We are interested to know about any procurement plan in this regard.
- 8) The 3rd weekly report boldly targeted 300,000 tests to be conducted supposedly in the next three (3) months. However, the report this week is conspicuously silent about this. We are hopeful – nay, insistent – to know if we are indeed on track in the plan to proceed with mass testing.
- 9) As regards the issue of PhilHealth coverage, it is commendable that most of the workforce in our health sector and other frontliners (engaged in responding to the current crisis) are being accommodated in the approved benefit packages. PhilHealth is urged to also consider including in the coverage the temporary health workers and volunteer frontliners who are likewise handling various aspects of our response to the pandemic.
- 10) On the issue of releasing low-risk inmates, particularly those who are old or sickly, the DOJ, DILG, BuCor and BJMP are urged to formally state their respective position on the matter, especially since a related petition is pending with the Supreme Court.

Likewise, in light of a recent order of the Supreme Court for lower courts to consider releasing on bail some overstaying detainees, and to provisionally dismiss cases where there is failure to prosecute, the DOJ -- through the Prosecutor General and the Chief of the Public

Attorney's Office (PAO) -- is urged to report on the steps it is taking in this regard.

- 11) Finally, as with the previous reports, there was *no* accounting of public funds in the latest submission of the President. While there appears to be breakdowns of different budgets that were supposedly reprogrammed or realigned, and eventually released or downloaded to the various departments or agencies, there was really *no* explanation whatsoever however as to: where all these money was actually sourced; which programs, activities, projects were discontinued; what general purpose funds and GOCC-held money were used, if any; and, how these government funds were utilized and liquidated. Full and thorough accounting of fund sourcing and utilization should be done in future or separate reports.

For your consideration, please.

Thank you very much.

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