

MESSAGE OF MINISTER MOHAGHER IQBAL
Ministry of Basic Higher and Technical Education

**WASH in Schools (WinS) Orientation and Planning Activity/
Training of Trainers (ToT)**

December 1 to 4, 2019, Marco Polo Hotel, Davao City

Asalaamu Alaikum warakmatulahi taala wa barakatuh.

I want to welcome the esteemed officials of the Department of Education and the Ministry of Basic Higher and Technical Education, including the participants from the nine (9) school divisions in the Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (BARMM). My courtesies to the resource persons and partners from UNICEF, GIZ, and Save the Children. Other guests, ladies, and gentlemen, Magandang Umaga sa ating lahat!

It is my privilege as Education Minister, to attend the opening program of this significant workshop with an equally important message: ensuring quality health services in our schools.

As stipulated in the Bangsamoro Organic Law, the Ministry of Basic, Higher, and Technical Education's (MBHTE) overarching goal is to improve the Bangsamoro educational system. Meaning, we aim to provide quality, holistic, and relevant education to every learner and also ensure the quality of our teaching and learning infrastructures.

I want to emphasize that we are not only referring to their intellectual, moral, and spiritual development, but also their physical and mental growth. No doubt, it would be difficult for our students to take on curricular and extra-curricular activities if they are not healthy.

To contribute to their physical development, it is critical, therefore, for the Education Ministry to promote quality and context-based health, hygiene, and sanitation practices in Bangsamoro schools. Moreover, we are also keen to provide essential facilities for the application of these standards, including access to clean water.

Investing in water access, hygiene, and sanitation (WASH) practices and facilities are part of the Education's comprehensive health program in Bangsamoro schools, which is one of my 12-point priority agenda. To ensure that no child in the Bangsamoro gets left behind,

we need to guarantee that they are not only well-educated but have access to proper health and sanitation services.

However, in reality, our children are affected by health-related issues that ultimately impedes their learning. For instance, our students would miss school days, get behind in their lessons, or drop-out due to poor health. This picture is unacceptable, as problems stemming from inadequate WASH facilities can be remedied.

One modality is the adoption of the DepEd National's holistic program for personal health care and environmental sanitation.

In this regard, the Education Ministry will develop a set of comprehensive standards that covers not only conventional health practices but also "water, sanitation including food and handling preparation, hygiene including menstrual hygiene management."

In addition to the adoption of the program mentioned above, we will also push for health education and capacity building, as well as complementing existing standards to ablution activities of Islam learners and cultural practices of students from indigenous peoples (IP) communities. I understand this is the main objective of our weeklong planning activity and trainers' training.

By conducting this WINS workshop, the Education Ministry and the BARMM are keen to end a serious problem plaguing our children and communities – absenteeism and poor school performance and completion rate of learners. We are fortunate that there are accessible programs and existing partnerships that can assist us in this regard. The Education Ministry and the BARMM do not have to start from scratch, and we can adopt comprehensive programs to address our people's needs adequately. Guided by the principle of Moral Governance, the Education Ministry will endeavor to ensure our children will stay in school for their learning and development and would have access to proper facilities that will provide better learning outcomes.

I often say that education and health will help our children and youth to take on the challenges of leading the Bangsamoro nation in the future. A healthy body produces a healthy and sound mind, which is critical in their decision-making process and nation-building. I am therefore grateful for this collaboration with the Department of Education, GIZ, Save the Children, UNICEF, and the School Divisions of the BARMM. I also want to thank

the Health and Nutrition Unit of the Education Ministry, led by Nurse Gizeel Amara Ali, RN, for spearheading this event.

I understand that by the end of this workshop, the participants will draft an action plan for the roll-out, orientation, and implementation of the WinS/TSA in the Bangsamoro. I look forward to receiving this plan and the other results of this workshop. Once we begin rolling-out the WinS Program and other education plans, the Ministry intends to introduce modalities that will ensure its proper implementation. For instance, the Ministry has organized monitoring teams in the assigned to the different divisions and districts. The monitoring teams will give us feedback on the status of programs and activities, as well as the utilization of public funds.

I should report that the Bangsamoro Transition Authority recently approved the Bangsamoro Appropriations Act, which is the BARMM's budget for 2020. The highest budget belongs to the Ministry of Basic Higher and Technical Education, amounting to around PHP 19 Billion. With this budget, plus our existing partnerships with different peace and development partners, the Education Ministry is in a better position to ensure that no Bangsamoro child will be left behind.

Thank you again for your assistance and participation. With your cooperation, we will be adding another critical milestone for the BARMM and make a vital program work for the benefit of our communities, especially our children.

WABILLAHl TAUFIQ WAL HIDAYAH. Maraming Salamat po at Magandang Umaga sa ating lahat!



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