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**PRESS RELEASE**  
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## **Save the Children Philippines Calls on Parents to be the First Teachers on Adolescent Sexuality**

Save the Children Philippines on Thursday called on parents to take active role in educating adolescent children on reproductive health due to steady rise in teenage pregnancies in the country.

Three in every 50 pregnant women in the Philippines are teenagers aged 15 to 19. These girls face health problems and are at risk of falling into a cycle of poverty, according to Save the Children Philippines CEO Albert Muyot.

The Philippines has one of the highest rates of teenage pregnancies in Southeast Asia and the problem has not changed in the last 10 years.

Save the Children Philippines launched early this year the program: Heart to HEART (which stands for Healthy, Empowered, Responsible Teen) as a new and innovative approach to foster dialogue between parents and their adolescent children.

The six month curriculum uses activity-based methodologies to engage small groups of parents with very young adolescents (VYA) or those 10 to 14 years old in reflection and learning on gender norms, puberty, pregnancy prevention, and sexually-transmitted infections.

It uses practical skills-building approaches to build parents' comfort and communication skills, and engages VYAs through structured parent-adolescent dialogue and practice sessions.

Save the Children Philippines also supports the call of the United Nations Women to inspire girls to innovate and take charge of their own future during the celebration of the International Day of the Girl Child, being celebrated every October 11.

Muyot who served as undersecretary of the Department of Education (DepEd) said the agency needs to widen access of teenage mothers to Alternative Delivery Modes (ADM) to prevent them from dropping out of school.

The ADM allows learners including teenage pregnant to continue studies even at home. It is originally designed to address problems of seasonal absentee learners and congested classrooms in schools.

“Education is a right of every individual”, said Muyot. “To allow a teenage pregnant to drop out of school violates that right.”

Teenage mothers face health risks including poor nutrition, bleeding after delivery, eclampsia and other complications. Their babies are also at risk of premature birth, low birth weight and neonatal death.

Save the Children Philippines works closely with local communities, particularly poor barangays to increase access to Adolescent Sexuality and Reproductive Health (ASRH) services.

“We align our programs with Department of Health and Department of Education priorities which aims to increase access of adolescents to quality child-friendly information and services to prevent teen pregnancy and sexually transmitted infections, including HIV,” said Muyot.

Save the Children gives technical assistance to DepEd in developing learning materials on Comprehensive Sexuality Education to promote positive sexual behaviors among teenagers.

## **MEDIA CONTACT**

**Lei Tapang**, *Campaigns and Media Coordinator*

+63 917 873 3448 | Phone No: +63 2 853 0215 Ext. 128 | [Lei.Tapang@savethechildren.org](mailto:Lei.Tapang@savethechildren.org)



**Save the Children**