

PRESS RELEASE
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Save the Children Philippines sees taller and healthier children with enactment of First 1,000 Days Law

Save the Children Philippines lauded the signing of the First 1,000 Days law, now Republic Act 11148 that addresses infant and maternal deaths as well as malnutrition among millions of children of poor families.

Lawyer Albert Muyot, Chief Executive Officer of Save the Children Philippines said at least 95 children below 5 die every day due to preventable diseases caused by undernutrition.

“We welcome the enactment of the First 1,000 Days law, to be known as 'Kalusugan at Nutrisyon ng Mag-Nanay Act,' that will ensure children of poor families will have access to quality health and nutrition services to help them achieve optimum growth and development,” said Muyot.

The First 1,000 Days law was signed by President Duterte on November 29, 2018, nine days after the 29th year anniversary of the signing of United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child. It was co-authored by Senator Risa Hontiveros and Rep. Angelina Tan of Quezon province.

There are 3.6 million stunted children in the Philippines, which is ranked 9th in the list of 10 countries in the world with the highest number of stunted children, along with famine and war

stricken countries in sub-Saharan Africa. At the same time, there are around 800,000 malnourished children in the country.

Malnutrition has four indicators: stunting ("bansot") or below standard height for age, underweight, wasting or below standard weight for height, and low birth weight or newborns with below 2,500 grams weight.

In a 2015 study titled "Sizing Up," Save the Children cited that "stunting" is not a racial and genetic trait but a result of lingering problem of chronic malnutrition among millions of Filipino children.

Muyot said stunted and underweight mothers are found to have higher risks of giving birth to underweight offspring; wasting and stunting prevalence are also higher among poor households, an indication that malnutrition persists through generational transfer alongside intergenerational transmission of poverty and the enactment of this law will ensure all children and pregnant women, particularly in the poor provinces will have access to proper healthcare and nutrition.

Dr. Amado Parawan, Health and Nutrition Advisor of Save the Children Philippines, hopes the law will prioritize key areas where there is high concentration of malnourished children and pregnant mothers who have no access to health and nutrition services.

Save the Children Philippines provided technical support in the drafting of the First 1,000 days bill to both Senate and House of Representatives based on its existing programs on health and nutrition for babies and lactating mothers.

The First 1,000 Days law implements program and support before, during and after a mother gives birth, nutrition program. It also supports the baby training for barangay health workers

support and training for mothers on how to ensure her and her child's health and nutrition.

“With the enactment of the law, we are one step closer in making sure that millions of Filipino children will have a healthy start in life, “ Parawan said.

Save the Children Philippines implemented in 2016, the Maternal, Newborn and Child Health Nutrition (MNCHN) program poor families in Caloocan, Navotas and Malabon to provide quality basic services to children suffering from severe acute malnutrition (severely wasted) infections and diseases to prevent their deaths.

Early this year, the group launched Project NURTURE (Nutrition among Urban Poor Through Unified Response) to reduce deaths among malnourished children in eight impoverished barangays in Navotas. The project provided nutrition and health services including supplements for pregnant and lactating mothers, feeding programs, treatment of severely malnourished children and social protection support through conditional cash transfer.

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