

10 December 2024

STATEMENT OF SAVE THE CHILDREN PHILIPPINES ON THE PASSAGE OF THE BASIC EDUCATION MENTAL HEALTH AND WELL-BEING PROMOTION ACT

Save the Children Philippines applauds the signing of Republic Act No. 12080, the Basic Education Mental Health and Well-being Promotion Act. The passage of this law is a crucial step in addressing key child rights issues, including every child's right to a safe, secure, and inclusive learning environment and access to quality education.

Alarming, Filipino learners face significant challenges: declining sense of belonging at school, pervasive bullying affecting 43% of girls and 53% of boys monthly (2022 PISA results), and an acute shortage of mental health professionals, with many schools having little to no access to trained counselors.

Mental health challenges have also taken a tragic toll, with the Department of Education (DepEd) reporting 404 student suicides and 2,146 suicide attempts between 2021 and 2022 underscoring the urgent need for accessible and responsive mental health services. Through this law, schools will be equipped to provide essential mental health programs, enabling learners to navigate challenges, build resilience, and reach their full potential.

Save the Children Philippines CEO Alberto Muyot pledges the organization's unwavering support for the effective implementation of the law.

“Save the Children Philippines commits to supporting the implementation of the Basic Education Mental Health and Well-being Promotion Act. We will continue to advocate for policies and programs that prioritize the mental health and well-being of children, particularly those who are marginalized and vulnerable.

This law will be the framework of the mental health interventions and crisis response we provide to learners, teachers, parents, and community members which include training, capacity building, psychosocial support, counseling, peer support, referral systems, and promotion of social-emotional learning foundation in schools.”

Save the Children has been at the forefront of implementing mental health and psychosocial support (MHPSS) through our Education in Emergencies and Child Protection in Emergencies programs. We are also engaging other national agencies in developing MHPSS such as the Department of Social Welfare and Development's 4Ps program.

In support of the passage of the Basic Education Mental Health and Well-being Promotion Act, Save the Children is ready to provide technical expertise in crafting its Implementing Rules and Regulations (IRR). We aim to co-develop innovative and inclusive mental health programs with the DepEd that respond to the diverse needs of learners and foster stress-responsive learning environment that provides adequate and relevant emotional and social support to children in crisis. This will be coupled with a strong focus on child protection and child participation, ensuring a holistic approach to combatting the daily challenges that pose threats to children's mental health.

Our commitment extends to generating evidence to inform and refine mental health interventions with the DepEd. By building a robust evidence base, we can ensure that programs and services remain responsive, effective, and sustainable in addressing the mental health needs of all children.

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FOR MORE INFORMATION:

Mr. George Oliver De La Rama

Director of Advocacy, Campaigns, Communications, and Media

Save the Children Philippines

Mobile: +63917-570-0523

Email: george.delarama@savethechildren.org