

PRESS RELEASE

April 12, 2023

On a mission: MAP launches campaign against malnutrition and child stunting ***MAP supports a multi-sectoral approach to address malnutrition and child stunting***

Manila, Philippines - In line with its mission to create a positive impact in nation-building, the Management Association of the Philippines (MAP) has launched its campaign against malnutrition and child stunting in the country. Heeding the urgent calls to help solve this persistent societal problem that can imperil children's ability to achieve a better quality of life, MAP has laid out initiatives that will complement the Philippine Multi-Sectoral Nutrition Project (PMNP). The goal is to contribute to the improvement of the overall nutritional status of Filipino children.

"As a business group, we can have greater impact acting collectively in the fight against malnutrition and child stunting," said MAP President and BDB Law Founding Partner, Atty. Benedicta "Dick" Du-Baladad in a press conference with MAP partners, and members of the media.

"We at MAP hope to expand our role beyond fund generation and philanthropy to a shared responsibility in addressing malnutrition in the country, participating in the programming and governance of nutrition strategies and interventions. It will be a shift from a transactional to a transformational partnership with the government," said Atty. Du-Baladad.

According to Du-Baladad, MAP's presence in the food, retail, healthcare, education and logistics industries, as well as other sectors could help leapfrog progress through interventions and actions that can contribute in addressing the country's malnutrition problems effectively and sustainably. "We will do our share and engage the private firms, organizations, and individuals to heed this call, starting with our own MAP members and expanding the circle to other groups so that together we can all work in building a more progressive future for the country," she added.

Dr. Cielito 'Ciel' F. Habito, Governor-in-Charge for MAP's Cluster on Resilience and Recovery, discussed the magnitude of the problem and offered solutions that can be done to move forward.

"Child stunting is a major threat to the nation's future," Dr. Habito shared. "MAP's ecosystem is diverse and can potentially muster the collective strength of the private sector to mobilize and help the government achieve the country's nutrition objectives. As we are among the leading employers in the country, MAP can strategically influence its network of employees in the delivery of support services like nutrition literacy."

The Impact of Child Malnutrition

According to the World Bank, the Philippines has one of the worst cases of child stunting in the world, ranking fifth with the highest stunting prevalence among countries in the East Asia and Pacific Region, and is among the 10 worst countries in the world¹.

¹ <https://www.worldbank.org/en/country/philippines/publication/-key-findings-undernutrition-in-the-philippines>

The World Health Organization (WHO) clarifies that stunting is a growth and development impairment of children resulting from poor nutrition, repeated infection and inadequate psychosocial stimulation.² When this happens specifically during the first 1000 days from birth to 2 years of age, it can lead to adverse consequences that will limit a child's ability to reach his full mental, physical and economic potential.

“We should be worried”, said Du-Baladad, “If the problem is not addressed in an urgent and decisive manner, we will be placing our country's future in the hands of stunted children becoming adults whose capacity to be productive, competitive and creative are limited, thus affecting national development and progress.”

Addressing malnutrition and child stunting requires a strong focus on governance, involving coordinated actions by many actors across sectors and across levels of government according to the Scaling Up Nutrition (SUN) Movement³. As such, the recent infusion of resources from the World Bank is expected to boost the PMNP with timely and critical support. The PMNP underscores the importance of holistic nutrition-sensitive programs that address key underlying determinants of nutrition. This includes food security, access to services, and environment, as well as nutrition-specific interventions or those that deal with the immediate causes of maternal and child malnutrition such as micronutrient deficiency, underweight, stunting, wasting and obesity.

The road ahead

MAP is committed to harnessing the contributions that various industries and sectors can extend to intensify the efforts towards reduction of child stunting. It will reach out to the agencies overseeing the national malnutrition program, such as the Department of Health, the National Nutrition Council, and the Department of Social Welfare and Development, and will pursue ways on how the private sector can further support the PMNP in reversing child stunting trends in the country.

MAP will actively seek for the government's declaration of child stunting as a priority national agenda and concrete actions that will be cascaded at the community level. Such national support can enable budget to be allocated to the initiative and resources can be made available to reorient feeding programs with greater emphasis on maternal nutrition, babies and toddlers, and form competition policy in agriculture and food value chains, among others.

Most importantly, MAP recommends an active pursuit of tripartite partnerships - business sector, government and community - for a whole-of-society approach in fighting malnutrition and child stunting and its adverse effects.

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² <https://www.who.int/news/item/19-11-2015-stunting-in-a-nutshell#:~:text=Stunting%20is%20the%20impaired%20growth,WHO%20Child%20Growth%20Standards%20median.>

³ <https://scalingupnutrition.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/12/Scaling-Up-Nutrition-Quality-national-plan-checklist.pdf>