

**COMMENTS OF SEN. LEILA M. DE LIMA ON THE 3rd WEEKLY
REPORT OF THE PRESIDENT DATED 13 APRIL 2020**

DATE: 16 April 2020

I humbly submit my comments on the President's 3rd weekly report dated 13 April 2020, in compliance with Section 5 of Republic Act No. 11469:

- 1) Worthy of commendation are the following significant developments:
 - a) The local government units (LGUs) are now given the prerogative of submitting additional lists of proposed beneficiaries under the Social Amelioration Program (SAP) to accommodate those who will not be covered by the present allocations;
 - b) For families in the lower middle and middle income brackets, there is a commitment to also cover them with a projected budget of about PhP60 billion;
 - c) The DOH confidently foresees that they can conduct up to 300,000 tests (as the capacity increases) in the coming three (3) months; and
 - d) The DOH reports on additional testing sites and quarantine centers, while the DPWH provides some updates on converted public buildings as isolation facilities.
- 2) There remains, however, a huge backlog in the distribution of emergency subsidy to the targeted 18 million poor households. Only about 3.7 million families have been given their share. They are a segment of the 4.4 million total of families under the 4Ps program. So, even with an established system of distribution through Landbank ATM network, still, around 700,000 have yet to get their 4Ps subsidies. This is unacceptable.
- 3) As for around 14 million more families under SAP (non-4Ps households), there appears to be serious bottlenecks that hamper the aid distribution (primarily caused by lack of reliable and updated databases and efficient system of validating the lists generated by the LGUs.) On this score, the DSWD may consider the following suggestions from experts:
 - a) Full use of DSWD's *Listahanan*, a masterlist of some 15 million low-income households;
 - b) Reference to DOF's list of about 10 million households who received unconditional cash transfers under the TRAIN Law; and
 - c) Adoption of "pay now, verify later" approach, complemented by a community audit process anchored on published list of

families that local leaders, civil society organizations and even ordinary citizens can check.

4) On the issue of emergency procurement of goods and supplies, the Government Procurement Policy Board (GPPB) reported that *“advance payment is one of the most pressing concerns in the procurement of medical supplies and PPEs during the ECQ as suppliers tend to prioritize buyers who are willing to make partial or full payment upon placing their orders.* This is disturbing, which should be worth looking into. This seems uncharacteristic of the general trend of a cooperative private/business sector. If true, this should be promptly remedied. It may be recalled that, perhaps precisely because of such a scenario, there is a provision under RA 11469 that the President may direct private business establishments to prioritize contracts that deal with the production of medical and health supplies and equipment, which are necessary to carry out the government policies in response to the COVID-19 crisis.

5) The BuCor and BJMP have reported about their stringent protocols in the prisons and jails, detailing even the requirements of social physical distancing and sanitation. This is commendable. However, we are likewise interested to know about the administration’s views on the proposal for the release of low-risk prisoners and other qualified persons deprived of liberty (PDLs) given our overly congested jails and detention centers.

6) Finally, no accounting of funds was still done in the 3rd weekly report. Yes, there were breakdowns of budgets that were supposedly reprogrammed/realigned, and eventually released or downloaded to several departments/agencies, but there were still no indications where the money was actually sourced, which program/activity/project (PAP) was discontinued, which general purpose fund and GOCC-held money was used, and how were all of these funds actually utilized. This is a vital object of reporting under Sec 5 of RA 11469. We hope to see this in future or separate reports.

For your consideration, please.

Thank you very much.

LEILA M. DE LIMA
Chairperson
Committee on Social Justice,
Rural Welfare and Development