

## Winning the

# WAR VS. HUNGER



Public attention is now focused on how the government would deal with hunger after the Social Weather Stations (SWS) revealed last February that more Filipinos have been experiencing involuntary hunger over the previous three months.

What isn't widely known is that the drive against hunger has long been a government priority and is the goal of the Medium-Term Philippine Development Plan (MTPDP) 2004-2010.

Recently, President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo released PhP1 billion for the immediate implementation of various anti-hunger projects under the Department of Health (DOH), through the National Nutrition Council, and other government agencies.

The fund released by the President shall be used for the government's food-for-school and food-for-work programs as well as for the various feeding programs of different public and private groups. It will also provide financial help in the creation of barangay food terminals, or "bagsakan" centers, where the poor can buy cheap food and basic commodities in depressed areas in Metro Manila.

To address the problem in the medium and long term, the President ordered a stronger push on the Accelerated Hunger Mitigation Plan (AHMP), a strategy under the MTPDP 2004-2010. This program aims to answer the causes of hunger: poverty, unavailability of food to eat, and a large family size.

### Plan Against Hunger

Put simply, the AHMP aims to intervene in both the **supply side** or the production of food; and the **demand side**, or the means of people to obtain sufficient food.

Accordingly, the program's strategies on the supply side are: (a) the production of more food; and (b) the enhancement of logistics and food delivery. For the demand side, the strategies are: (a) generation of income and employment; (b) promotion of good nutrition; and (c) the management of the population.

Many of the projects included in the AHMP are already being implemented.

For the **supply side**, there is the *Food for School Program* of the Department of Health (DOH).

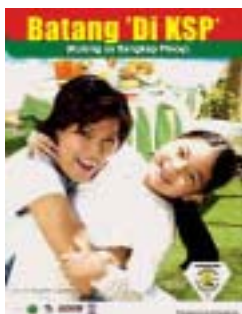
This is an immediate intervention that provides a daily ration of one kilo of rice to families of Grade 1 pupils, preschool and daycare center children. In 2006, about 294,172 day care children and 609,252 Grade 1 children benefited from the program.

Another program is the *Tindahan Natin (TN) Project* of the National Food Authority and the Department of Social Work and Development (DSWD). A “tindahan” sells low-priced but good quality rice and noodles and can serve 250 families. As of December 2006, there were already 2,394 TNs in operation, translating to 598,500 families served.

There is also the *Gulayan ng Masa*, or backyard gardening, as well as the *Barangay Food Terminal* program of the Department of Agriculture – both of which aim to provide alternative food sources.

For the **demand side**, there are the *emergency public work* and *food for work* programs of the Department of Public Works and Highways. The former is a nationwide program wherein workers from poor areas are hired to clean and maintain the country’s roads and highways.

The DSWD also maintains the **Self-Employment Assistance – Kaunlaran** (SEA-K) program. Since 1997, 12,496 SEA-K Associations consisting of 280,698 families were given seed capital worth PhP1.2 billion to finance micro- and small-scale livelihood programs. Of these, 773 SEA-K projects worth PhP72 million served 15,400 families in 2006.



In the area of nutrition, the DOH-National Nutrition Center has embarked on an information and advocacy program, including the development, printing and dissemination of nutrition-related communication materials.

The DOH, in partnership with the local government units (LGUs), has also been promoting responsible parenthood to encourage family planning. Use of modern contraceptive methods thus increased to 36 percent in 2006 from 35.1 percent the previous year. Moreover, the

Philippine Responsible Parenthood Program (PRPP) was revised to highlight natural family planning, breastfeeding and birth spacing to aid the government’s population program.

## Future Efforts vs. Hunger

Additional programs have been developed. These include the expansion of the Food for School Program, Tindahan Natin and Gulayan ng Masa in order to reach more beneficiaries. Rice vouchers are also being considered as an option for poor families without Grade 1 children.

The bulk of future programs are wholistic in approach and tend to dig into the causes of the problem of hunger. For example, DA has its family farm program, called *Pagkain at Gulay sa Mesa Abot-Kaya 2006-2010* which expands on the Gulayan ng Masa concept.

The government’s support of micro, small and medium enterprises (MSMEs) is another step in this direction and is aimed at promoting job creation. From July 2004 to September 2006, a total of 2.152 million MSMEs were established nationwide, requiring the release of PhP76.21 billion in loan assistance.

Various government and private organizations reported that 801,462 new jobs were created through the microfinance subsector during the past two years.

The KALAHI-CIDSS, considered the government’s flagship project for poverty alleviation, continues to make changes in the lives of its beneficiaries. The program, which organizes and trains poor communities in livelihood and other capability-building activities, covers the country’s poorest 42 provinces. Since its launching in 2003, the project has already been implemented in 4,216 barangays and 183 municipalities nationwide. - *John Anthony Geronimo and Edwin P. Daiwey*

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Sources:  
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MTPDP 2004-2010  
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