



"Health, Nourishment, Shelter: Ensuring Every Child's Right to Life"

Every November, the Philippines commemorates National Children's Month to promote and raise awareness of children's rights, as embodied in the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (UN CRC). The Convention recognizes the fundamental human dignity of all children and the pressing need to ensure their well-being and development. It outlines the rights that must be realized for children to reach their full potential.

The 2023 National Children's Month theme, "Healthy, Nourished, Sheltered: Ensuring the Right to Life for All," underscores the critical importance of providing every child with access to basic necessities such as healthcare, nutrition, and shelter. It also emphasizes the need to protect children from violence, abuse, and exploitation.

Regrettably, the 2022 Report of the Council of the Welfare of Children (CWC) revealed that approximately 9,000 children suffered from all forms of abuse, including physical and humiliating punishments. The Philippines is one of the 134 countries lacking legislation to curb physical and humiliating punishment against children. Moreover, undernutrition remains a significant public health concern in the country. According to UNICEF Philippines, a third of Filipino children are stunted, or short for their age. Stunting, the most prevalent form of undernutrition, is now seen as a major impediment to human development and is recognized as a well-established marker of poor child development. It affects children's ability to learn and causes them to perform at a lower level in schools. This serves as a stark reminder of the challenges we still face in protecting our children. These situations need to be addressed seriously, as we all know that education plays a pivotal role in the economic, social, and political development of a nation.



E-Net Philippines calls upon the government to uphold its responsibility to respect, protect, and fulfill children's rights.

We call for the immediate passage of the **Positive Parenting Bill**, legislation that protects children's rights, promotes positive discipline, and prohibits all forms of corporal punishment, regardless of severity. Positive discipline contributes to the creation of a supportive and inclusive learning environment. Students feel valued, heard, and respected, fostering a sense of belonging crucial for both academic and emotional growth.

Furthermore, a larger budget allocation must be given so that the school feeding program can target and cover a greater number of underfed school children. E-Net Philippines recommends an increase in the actual food budget allocation and suggests that inflation-adjusted increases be considered as warranted. Instead of P18/meal/child, we recommend P35/meal/child. E-Net Philippines supports the proposal to **expand the coverage of the National Feeding Program to undernourished children in secondary schools and recommends expanding coverage to the Alternative Learning System (ALS)**, which specifically targets Out-of-school Children and Youth (OSCY) from marginalized sectors (children and youth with disabilities, Muslim and indigenous children and youth, children and youth in situations of disaster emergencies and conflict) and communities (rural and urban poor). The potential benefits of feeding programs, such as school-based feeding programs, are maximized when they are designed as multi-sectoral interventions and integrated into broader development programs for wider socioeconomic benefits, as the amendment provides.

We recognize that our children are the torchbearers of our future, and it is our collective duty to provide them with the love, care, and protection they deserve. **Together, we can create a better world for our children and for generations to come.###**