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Local focus pushed for MDGs

THE GOVERNMENT will focus on poverty alleviation efforts at the local level in a bid to achieve more of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) by 2015, a Cabinet official said yesterday.

Speaking at the local launch of the United Nations' 2010 Stand Up, Take Action Campaign, Social Welfare and Development Secretary Corazon J. Soliman said this is the only way to make more gains towards the eight MDGs, namely: eradicating extreme poverty and hunger; achieving universal primary education; promoting gender equality and empowering women; reducing child mortality; improving maternal health; combating HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases; ensuring environmental sustainability; and developing a global partnership for development.

"The present government is aware and recognizes that while national figures present specific data, what is really happening is that these double, triple, or even quadruple in different areas in the country," Ms. Soliman said, referring to the latest official estimate of a 32.9% national poverty incidence in 2006.

Falling behind

Data of the National Statistical Coordination Board show that 13 of the country's 17 provinces had poverty rates worse than the national incidence that year.

UN and the government itself have determined that the country has fallen behind in achieving five of the eight MDGs, namely: eradicating extreme poverty and hunger, achieving universal primary education, promoting gender equality, improving maternal health, and combating HIV/AIDS.

In the same event, Social Watch lead convenor Leonor M. Briones cited the need "for citizen monitoring and shadow reports to confirm what is claimed by officials and what the people really feel."

Last Tuesday, Socioeconomic Planning Secretary Cayetano W. Paderanga, Jr. had said the National Economic and Development Authority (NEDA) will incorporate the MDGs as a focus in the Medium-Term Philippine Development Plan for 2010-2016.

"NEDA is already starting the next planning cycle and we will, of course, include the MDGs as we try to coordinate planning for the next six years," a statement then quoted Mr. Paderanga as saying.

He added that NEDA will "determine which regions are lagging behind in terms of achieving the MDGs" and will break down plans and targets to the regional level. "It makes sense to explore regional dimensions in order to facilitate inclusive growth and address problems of inequity," he said. -- **MJKRC**

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