

## Speech of the Secretary **Enrique T. Ona**

Health Leadership and Governance Program (HLGP) Learning Forum

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To our distinguished guest from the European Union, USAID, UNFPA, DILG, ULAP, LMP, LPP, Gov. Pimentel, Mayor Banares, Mayor Germino, Mayor Libayao, Department of Health Central office and Regional Directors, Regional Office Staff, *isang magandang umaga sa inyong lahat.*

Through the years, the management of our health system has always been a challenge. Despite numerous efforts, inequity still exists and access to quality health facilities and services are still difficult, especially, for the poor and the most vulnerable segment of our population, the mother and children.

Maternal and infant deaths have remained high. Factors contributing to maternal and infant death need to be addressed. Is there a safe and accredited facility where the mother can deliver? Are there enough medical supplies? Are there trained health personnel to help? With 2015 fast approaching, there is a need to intensify our efforts to achieve the Millennium Development Goal.

Various strategies and interventions are being applied, such as, building facilities, deployment of valuable health personnel like nurses and doctors, procurement of supplies and equipment but these were not enough. There is a need for good leadership and governance to oversee and manage the whole system, especially in the local level.

It was in May of last year when we formalized the partnership between Zuellig Family Foundation for the Health Leadership and Governance Program. Like a mother giving birth, it was not an easy task. As you have all mentioned in your reports, there were numerous challenges encountered from funding source, to procurement policies, to overlapping schedules, to Rationalization plan, to unclear policies and even natural and man-made disasters. But still, the program has survived it all accomplishing a total of 263 municipalities or 43% of the target trained as of February of this year.

The positive response of the regions and local chief executives to join the program, coupled hard work they put together with their Regional Account Officer from Zuellig, have all been contributory in surpassing the challenges encountered. Still, we believe that this program is essential and we remain optimistic that the partnership will continue to work for our mutual advantage. The training will surely help us achieve our vision and mission for it was crafted in such a way that the knowledge learned in the experience becomes very useful in our work and, also, in our personal lives. We all wanted to be bridging leaders who will make a difference in our respective communities. In this program, we have seen DOH Representatives who are now coaches to their assigned municipalities and Municipal Health Officers working hand-in-hand with their Mayors. Local Chief Executives have realized that this is not only important that we acknowledge the problem and that we are part of it but take a step farther by being part of the

solution. Here lies the importance of partnerships for co-creation to achieve better health outcomes.

The internal shift in our mindset is incomplete without the other critical interventions that are needed to achieve the MDGs. One is the Facility. We are currently doing an inventory of the 609 municipalities that need assistance thru the Health Facility Enhancement Program. Our goal is not just to have structures built but to have health facilities that are functioning to serve the community, complete with manpower and services and accredited by Philhealth. Also, we are now moving toward the expansion of Philhealth coverage to 14.7M families. This, as you know, is one of the strategic thrust of *Kalusugan Pangkalahatan*.

Once the facility is built and functioning, as bridging leaders in the municipalities in the municipalities, the Local Chief Executives need to issue policies and ordinance that would support the use of these facilities, encourage the poor to avail of the services thru incentives and established a functional referral and gather all the needed data for planning and improvement of the system.

All the critical interventions you mentioned during the gallery walk are expected to lower the number of maternal and infant deaths and, therefore, help us achieve our target MDGs. As you have shown in the past year, we have already reached almost half of our target number of Local Chief Executives trained. Our combined efforts will bring us to our desired vision where no more mother or children suffer or die from lack of facilities, equipment or services needed. Thank you for all the hard work and support to this program.

What this program is showing us now is that public-private partnership is a good strategy toward the achievement of our goals. Together, we must continue to work hand-in-hand. Together we can do it. *Matatamo ang Kalusugan pangkalahatan kung lahat tayo ay magtutulungan.*

*Maraming salamat at mabuhay!*