

Education Secretary Bro. Armin Luistro Wednesday night said Zamboanga City is a fitting example of President Aquino's battle cry "walang mahirap kung walang corrupt" because of its transparent implementation of projects specifically education-related infrastructures.

Luistro said this, as he graced the inauguration and turnover of P7.7 million worth education-related projects that included the construction of a new 2-storey 6 classroom building, rehabilitation of a 2-storey 6 classroom building and rehabilitation and construction of 2 fence facilities.

Mayor Celso Lobregat saw to it, just like what he does every time he turns over projects to the end users, that every detail of each project unveiled will be announced and publicized by the contractor/contractors in charge of the project.

"I took note of the way the turnover of the projects was done because it speaks of transparency and monitoring and I think it is one of the most important elements of good governance", the secretary said stressing "It is a wonderful way of reporting to the people how and where the money for the city goes and we are grateful for good governance in the city of Zamboanga, which will never happen if there will be no money and if there is no good and prudent stewardship of the city's resources".

He continued further: "That is what the president always emphasizes "walang mahirap kung walang corrupt", maraming salamat po for the good example that you show us".

In terms of the school buildings and other education-related projects being undertaken by the Lobregat administration, Secretary Luistro cited two features of Zamboanga projects in education that stand out with those implemented in other areas.

One, he said, the city does not only build functional classrooms but build school buildings and campuses that show pride and culture and the investment in education of the city. Specifically, the Education official was amazed at what he termed as "beautiful harmony of in the design" of the different school buildings constructed and under construction at the Recodo National High School.

"Our schools cannot just be functional, schools will have to be a showcase of how much we plan in education and it is also the way the school is set up, the architectural design and I am very pleased to see the beautiful designs because this speaks much of the kind of investment that the city gives to education", he emphasized.

Unlike in other areas, Sec. Luistro said, Zamboanga City is way ahead of the Department of Education (DEPED) in terms of investments in education "I am happy mayor, that unlike in other areas, nauuna kayo sa amin at ang DEPED ang humahabol and we will take that as a challenge, we know that the national government has a lot catch up with".

At this stage, he said the DEPED is only encouraging LGUs to follow the example of

Zamboanga and also to provide a counterpart fund with the department in implementing projects. He said the department has been talking with the League of Province, City and Municipal Mayors but for the past 3 to 4 months only around 16 cities and provinces have signed up and agreed to partner with DEPED.

“I am happy to be the one running after the city and I will keep using this example (of Zamboanga City) to encourage more LGUs to follow the city's example,” he added.

He likewise expressed amazement at the swift implementation of the projects, which came barely a year after the unfortunate incident last October 22, 2010 when an ex-convict ran amuck, took the students and teachers hostage and in the process killed 3 persons and wounded 6 others.

Mayor Lobregat said the P7.7 million worth of infrastructure projects unveiled at the Talisayan Elementary School form part of the city's over P700 million investment in education since 2007.

The city government, he said, has taken the cudgels of funding education-related projects for the benefit of the young children, as the DEPED, though it gets the highest share of the budget from the national government, spends over 90 percent of its budget for personnel services with very little left for capital outlay.

Also present during the turnover ceremony Wednesday at the Talisayan Elementary School were Councilors Myra Paz Abubakar, Rudy Lim, Noning Biel, Nonong Guingona and Jaime Cabato, Ateneo de Zamboanga President Fr. Tony Moreno, DEPED-9 Director Walter Albos, School principal Georgette Nodado, Talisayan chairperson Josephine Pareja, Acting City Schools Superintendent Pedro Natividad, district supervisors and principals, City Engr. Luis Despalo and several others. — Sheila Covarrubias