

## National Summit 16 November 2010

### Collaborative Partnership Towards Enhancing the Dignity of Persons Deprived of Liberty

Honorable José Midas Marquez, Court Administrator

Bishop Pedrigo Arigo, Chairman CBCP

Police deputy Director General Perfecto Palad

Director Rosendo Dial Chief of Bureau of Jail Management and Penology

Guests, ladies and gentlemen:

Magandang umaga sa inyong lahat!

- First of all, I would like to thank you for giving me the opportunity to address this audience.
- On behalf of the ICRC, I would like to extend our sincere congratulations to the BJMP and more specifically to Director **Dial** for organizing this very important National summit on Collaborative Partnership Towards Enhancing the Dignity of Persons Deprived of Liberty.
- Since the first visits the ICRC made to people detained in the Philippines - in 1959 - and more particularly since the establishment of the ICRC's delegation in the Philippines 28 years ago, one of the ICRC's primary goals has been to address the conditions of detention in the jails and prisons of this country. **Indeed a prime concern.**
- In this regard, the BJMP is a significant partner for the ICRC. For instance in the ICRC's CALL FOR ACTION initiative, together with the DILG, the DOJ, the DOH, PTSI, the DOF, the DBM, the Supreme Court, the Philippine Judicial Academy, the Integrated Bar of the Philippines, and the committees on justice and human rights of the Senate and of the House of Representatives.
- Launched by the ICRC in 2007, the Call for Action process aims to mobilize government agencies to respond to humanitarian issues such as those linked principally to the overcrowding observed in detention facilities throughout the Philippines. The Call for Action process has received remarkable support from all agencies concerned; from the legislative and executive branches of government, as well as from the Philippine judiciary. The real partnership between all concerned agencies has been crucial to achieving today's results.
- The initiative aims to address both
  1. The causes: delays in the criminal justice process and sometimes inadequate facilities and

2. Their consequences on the health and living conditions of detainees.

In that frame, 3 working groups facilitated by the ICRC were set up to address 3 main areas of concern:

1. TB management in jails and prisons
2. Penal infrastructure
3. Slow legal process of inmates (Criminal Justice System)

Now, let me briefly give you some updates on the work made by these 3 working groups

- **TB management in jails and prisons**

Objective:

Achieve full implementation of National Tuberculosis Programme in Philippine Jails and Prisons

***Current achievement:***

7 pilot sites are able to identify and manage inmates suffering from TB in full compliance with NTP standards. This means that some 30,000 inmates are covered by NTP as of Jan 1, 2010.

Sustainability is assured through the guidelines of (DoH) and those of (BJMP, BuCor), and through the forging of local agreements (MoUs) with (LGUs) facilitated by the Bureau of Local Government Development.

Given the very positive results recorded so far, this process will be extended as for next year to 21 sites in NCR region

- **Jail and prison infrastructure**

The working group focuses on the introduction of technical standards on living conditions in BJMP jails based on internationally recognized principles and recommendations.

The working group prioritizes the jails where the need for improvements is greatest and supervises the implementation of projects for the rehabilitation of premises and improvement of access to basic services - such as water, sanitation, ventilation and food hygiene.

***Progress to date:***

- Renovation projects have been carried out in 51 jails, benefiting some 26'000 inmates.
- Over 60 BJMP specialists have been trained in internationally recognized standards.
- Coaching has been provided to BJMP engineers during the design and implementation phase of renovation projects in jails.
- An ongoing assessment of all BJMP jails allows the selection of priority projects
- Last but not least: the publication of the annex to the BJMP manual on technical standards in Prisons which will be part of the manuals launched this noon

- **Slow legal process of inmates (Criminal Justice System)**

One of the main causes of congestion in jails is the slow processing of inmates' legal cases.

Enhancing the functioning of the criminal justice process cannot be a task shouldered by one Agency alone. The criminal justice stakeholders and the ICRC agreed on the need to find practical solutions within the existing budget, to improve the criminal justice process for inmates. The **Manila City Jail Working Group** was created in September 2009 as a Pilot Project to bring together all implementing agencies at the local level and when needed at the national level

The Working Group aims only at complementing the efforts of the existing initiatives to decongest jails, such as the justice on wheels process. It seeks to avoid unnecessary duplication.

***Progress to date:***

The objectives of the Manila City Jail Working Group are twofold:

1) To discuss urgent concerns stemming from legal cases of inmates and identify how to resolve them. Four lists of a total of 252 individual pending legal cases were submitted to the WG, among which 134 cases were addressed.

2) To show how coordination and the sharing of resources and information at the local level could address some of the most urgent challenges of the criminal justice system. 6 working sessions gathering all the stakeholders of the criminal justice system were held. During these sessions, each agency presented its challenges in dealing with the legal process of inmates which were then discussed as a group in order to eventually find practical solutions to them. It is expected that in 2011, a synthesis of the work and recommendation of the MCJ Working Group will be issued to the national authorities which could hopefully contribute to the general effort in addressing jail congestion at the national level.

The ICRC will remain committed to facilitating the Call for Action process for the foreseeable future. Given the positive outcomes of the MCJ working group, similar initiatives will be expanded to other jails, starting with the creation of Tacloban City Jail Working group in December

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We consider this summit an important milestone and an opportunity to create the necessary momentum among the most distinguished authorities of this country in addressing the humanitarian challenges for persons deprived of their liberty. Such comprehensive venture should necessarily lead to concrete decisions and effective implementation for the benefit of the entire jail system of the country, the inmates and the authorities of the Philippines.

I wish you all the best for a fruitful work during these two days summit.

- Maraming salamat po.