

WHO lauds DoH on breastfeeding

By JENNY F. MANONGDO

The World Health Organization (WHO) recently lauded the Department of Health (DoH) for its efforts on strengthening and increasing the public's awareness and practices on breastfeeding.

In a letter written by Dr. Jean Marc Olive, WHO country representative to President Arroyo last month, Olive praised the Philippine government and the DoH for their efforts in updating Executive Order No. 51 or the Milk Code in order to meet international standards.

"We are very grateful for these recognitions as it affirmed our dedication to champion the health of Filipino mothers and children notwithstanding the opposition and barriers that come our way," Health Secretary Francisco T. Duque III said.

The letter cited the advantages of breastfeeding in terms of reducing health expenditures by ₱100 million, infant milk formula expenditures by ₱21.5 billion, and hospitalization at ₱280 million. Olive said it has also lessened the tendency of children to be sickly thus reducing absenteeism of parents in the workplace by one billion pesos.

WHO said the improved breastfeeding practices in the country is an important step to attain the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) on reducing infant mortality by two-thirds by 2015.

Olive said increasing breastfeeding rates to 80 percent in the next 10 years will bring the Philippines closer to this goal by 61 percent and the ten-point development agenda.

Last May, the DoH passed the revision of the implementing rules and regulations of the local Milk Code.