

**PRESIDENT FERDINAND ROMUALDEZ MARCOS JR.'s  
SPEECH AT THE AWARDING CEREMONY OF THE  
2024 WALANG GUTOM AWARDS**

Ceremonial Hall, Malacañan Palace

June 26, 2024

[00:00:00]

Thank you, Secretary Rex Gatchalian, for your comments and introduction.

Please take your seats.

Your Excellency Hae Kyong Yu, the Ambassador of Australia to the Philippines; of course, the Asian Development Bank Country Director, Pavit Ramachandran; and the Special Assistant to the President, Secretary Anton Lagdameo; of course, Galing Pook Foundation Chairperson Mel Sarmiento; DSWD Undersecretary Ed Punay; and local chief executives who have joined us here this morning, not only the awardees but all of local government officials, as this really is dependent upon you, as usual, to bring these programs to the ground level; and of course the 2024 participants to the Walang Gutom Awards; my fellow workers in government; ladies and gentlemen. Good morning.

It is a day today filled with promise and opportunity, as we address a matter of utmost significance that affects millions, still, of fellow Filipinos --- and that is the problem of hunger.

According to data from the DSWD, nearly 12% of Filipino families around three million households, still experienced hunger at least once over the last three months of 2022. One in three Filipino children under five years old is still suffering from stunted growth due to malnutrition. Our ranking in the Global Hunger Index or GHI is also far from ideal, with the country scoring 14.8 or moderately hungry, which fares below the regional score of East and Southeast Asia of 8.2.

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We are aware of the challenges that we face but we see the potential to change this situation. We see this in our NGOs and social workers; our partners from the diplomatic corps; and the different international agencies, the social workers who are reaching out to help as much as they can; in our many communities coming together so that we can feed the hungry and the less fortunate; and in every Filipino working hard to provide food for themselves and for their families.

To add to these efforts, last October, I signed Executive Order No. 44, Walang Gutom 2027: the Food Stamp Program. Implemented through the DSWD, it provides monetary assistance for targeted beneficiaries to purchase food commodities from eligible partner merchant stores.

More than that, it provides the government with valuable data to monitor the progress of our beneficiaries in addressing their food problems, ensuring that their families are getting the food and the nutrition that they require.

However, even as the national government is more than willing to take the lead in helping address this problem of hunger, through these programs, we acknowledge that we also need to tap and partner with our local governments. As we always do when it comes to making a program reach the grassroots level.

As agents of the government on the ground, our LGUs not only have a better knowledge and have good insights on the incidence of hunger in their localities but also provide --- maybe perhaps better programs, better strategies, or approaches to address hunger, specific to the areas that their constituents lie.

And that is why, today, we confer the Walang Gutom Awards or the WGA to recognize the local governments that have been exceptional in addressing hunger in their communities. Evaluated on the criteria of impact, of inclusivity, innovation, resilience, sustainability and efficiency, these LGUs have implemented fresh, new and exciting ideas in their respective food programs. As well as brought renewed impetus in our collective drive against hunger in our country.

I thank the Galing Pook Foundation and the DSWD, led by Secretary Rex Gatchalian, for coming up with this initiative. To all the 17 finalists of this year's Walang Gutom Awards, I salute you! Each of you has already won and have been included in the prestigious list of nominees.

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I likewise acknowledge, of course, the 101 local government units --- from barangays to municipalities and cities, to provinces --- that filed their application and participated in this year's pilot program implementation.

Your involvement in the process means a lot to the national government, especially as we aim to put an end to hunger that has been causing suffering to the vulnerable and marginalized in the Philippines for many, many decades. You are already Walang Gutom Champions in the hearts and minds of our people. And I hope that you will continue to sustain or even improve upon your noteworthy programs.

Indeed, we need more LGUs like you to achieve our mission of "Walang Gutom" by 2027 and I pray that this year's awards will also spur and inspire other LGUs to replicate your successes across the country.

So now, I invite all our LGUs to look at these outstanding programs of our nominees. See how and why their programs worked and examine whether you can adopt or improve these further to apply them in your communities. The national government will also be taking notes to see what more can be done at the national level.

So, our takeaway from this event should be that each and every one of us can contribute to the success of our campaign against hunger. If we are truly to succeed in this endeavor, we must put in a whole-of-nation approach to create a lasting solution to this great challenge.

I call upon our government and our partners from the private sector, from the non-profit organizations, citizens, our friends from the international community and citizens to work together as a united front and Walang Gutom advocates.

I remember, it is topical that we speak of this now, I remember sitting on that spot and being interviewed, very early on --- I think it is my third day in office and I was being interviewed and the interviewer asked me: "What would you like to be your legacy for your presidency, for your administration?" And it was a question that I was not prepared for. It is a question that I had not actually thought about. But the answer came to me in an instant: Wala nang gutom. Wala nang gutom na Pilipino. That is my dream, no hungry Filipino.

[applause]

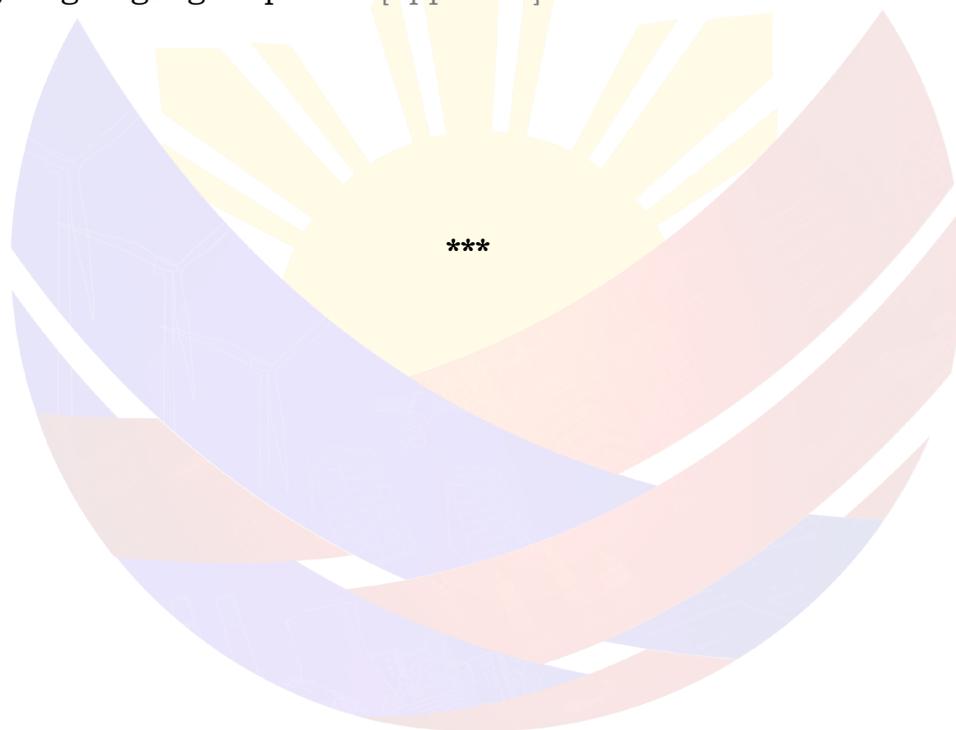
So, thank you for being part of that effort. It is as noble a cause as we can possibly have --- is to make sure that every single Filipino, each and every one of whom we love like a family member, never again feel the pangs of hunger. And that I think, if we can achieve that, then I think we can claim to have led a good life.

So, let us move forward with determination, with compassion, and with purpose to build a Bagong Pilipinas where food is not only affordable but plentiful; where every Bagong Pilipino leads a good, healthy and productive life.

Once again, congratulations to our nominees and to our awardees.

Mabuhay ang Bagong Pilipinas! [applause]

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**BAGONG PILIPINAS**