

QC, Manila, Makati LGUS prioritize social services for 2020

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I am impressed to see the young chief executives of Makati, Quezon City and Manila working very hard to improve the lives of their constituents.



In these local government units' (LGUS) respective budgets for 2020, I noticed that almost half had been allocated for social services, eschewing the “easy money infrastructure projects racket.”

But in assessing their efforts, we must recognize that in terms of population, Quezon City Mayor Joy Belmonte has over one million more residents compared to Manila Mayor Francisco “Isko Moreno” Domagoso. Quezon City is also three times more populous compared to Mayor Abby Binay’s Makati City. In terms of land area, Quezon City is four times bigger than Manila and eight times larger than Makati.

Quezon City has 2.9 million residents scattered over its land area of 165.4 square kilometers. Manila has 1.78 million residents over 42 sq km while Makati has only 629,331 residents in 21.5 sq km.

Forty-eight percent of Manila’s “ambitious” P17.857 billion budget will go to social services or around P8.52 billion which includes P1.2 billion for the pension of senior citizens.

In Quezon City, 45 percent of next year’s P27.8-billion budget has been allocated for social services, with the budget for free medicine up from this year’s P500 million to P2 billion.

Makati City, despite being the smallest in land area but richest in terms of assets, has earmarked 44.7 percent of its P18.04-billion budget for social services. This includes P2.4 billion for free patient care and P1.27 billion for the “Libreng Gamot” of Makatizens.

Belmonte also asked councilors for a P27.8-billion budget in 2020 for the creation of a “township” to house all identified 215,000 informal settlers in Quezon City. The “in-city housing” will include mid- to highrise buildings made affordable for poor beneficiaries.

Moreno also announced his 42-sq-m “decent and beautiful” housing project for the poor in Vitas and Delpan in Tondo. He is working on a housing project in Malate for City Hall employees. Moreno believes tenements or vertical housing are the solution to the squatting problem in the city.

Mayor Abby Binay is continuing the city’s partnership with Gawad Kalinga with 411 houses built for poor Makatizens at Dreamlandville in San Jose del Monte, Bulacan

province. She also teamed up with a Shanghainanjin group last year for a PPP mass housing project for all 5,217 informal settlers in the city.

All these efforts by the three city mayors deserve praise from the public.

— — — — Around 18,000 solo parents in Manila will receive a monthly pension of P500 in 2020.

This is the first-ever direct assistance for people raising their children single-handedly by a local government unit, nine years after the Solo Parent Welfare Act (Republic Act No. 8972) was passed. Last year, single parents in Quezon City were given a 20-percent discount on restaurant bills (not more than P2,000) with the enactment of Ordinance No. SP2766, thanks to Belmonte, then the vice mayor. Valenzuela Mayor Rex Gatchalian also enacted Ordinance No. 147-2014 giving solo parents financial and medical aid.

I hope other mayors replicate these initiatives.