

QC's pandemic response funding reaches P18.1 B

The Philippine Star · 2 Nov 2021 · 8 · Social Transformations:

Since the start of the pandemic in early 2020, the **Quezon City government** has spent over P18.1 billion for a multitude of programs to fight COVID-19.



Of the amount, at least P1.5 billion was used to purchase medicines, COVID test kits and vaccines. More than P3.2 billion was spent for livelihood assistance and social amelioration program (SAP) and over P2.5 billion was spent for educational aid.

The local government spent about P5.7 billion on food allowance for frontliners, with the balance allocated to other COVID-related expenses.

Mayor Joy Belmonte pointed out that the pandemic aid, with the help of the dedicated city hall personnel, laid down a solid foundation for the city's post-pandemic recovery plan.

"We are so proud of our city hall staff, medical teams and other frontliners who gave their all to help our QCitizens during this pandemic," Belmonte said.

She also emphasized that the programs implemented during the early months of the pandemic proved to be crucial.

Four days after the imposition of the first enhanced community quarantine, Quezon City opened the 54-bed Hope 1, the first quarantine facility to be launched by a local government.

This was followed by the opening of Hope 2 with 215 beds; the 84-bed Hope 3 for lactating mothers, infants and their families, and 300 more beds with the launch of Hope 4. Hope 5 and 6 ensured a buffer of at least 375 beds on standby, in case of a surge in COVID cases.

Hope bed capacity now stands at 1,733, with about 50 percent utilization rate. The city government also opened quarantine facilities in the barangays with over 900 beds.

To date, Quezon City has more than 2,600 COVID beds with 50 percent utilization rate.

The city's molecular laboratory conducts 1,000 COVID tests daily for free.

The local government's contact tracing ratio is now at 1:15, or 15 close contacts of each infected person are located, interviewed and tested within 24 to 48 hours. This is more than twice the number of traces as per the national average of 1:6.

To date, over 400,000 RT-PCR tests have been done by the local government.

The Kalingang QC livelihood assistance program provided aid to workers and businesses affected by the pandemic.

The local government also gave ayuda to indigent families in addition to the national government's SAP and lockdown assistance.

"We are not yet out of the woods, but we are making good progress. We are on our way to reach, and even exceed, our vaccination target. As they say, steps turn into strides, and strides turn into a sprint. At present, I think we are racing toward our recovery plans for the city," Belmonte said.

About 1.9 million Quezon City residents have received a first dose of COVID-19 vaccines.

The local government will achieve its target of fully vaccinating 1.7 million residents by Oct. 23.

Given this trend, it is likely that almost two million QCitizens will be fully vaccinated by the end of the year, according to the local government.

With Quezon City being the largest and most populous city in the country, local government units may benefit from a recap of the best practices of the city's administration to defeat COVID, as a whole-of-city approach would be the best way forward toward recovery.

"The size of QC's economy arguably helped it and proved that the effective and efficient management of resources is crucial. Understandably, there was a period of adjustment, but the QC government learned quickly, and applied data-driven and evidence-based plans for its successful pandemic response," Gino Trinidad, an instructor at the Ateneo de Manila University's Political Science Program and managing editor of Journal of the Global South, said.