



PhilHealth Spearheads Alaga KA Activity to the Indigenous People of Sitio Mapita, Aguilar, Pangasinan

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Through the years, PhilHealth has been reaching out to its members through ALAGA KA (Alamin at Gamitin Para sa Maayos na Buhay) campaign - a barangay-based Information, Education and Communication (IEC) activity aimed at ensuring that members are aware of PhilHealth services and benefits. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, onsite ALAGA KA activities were put on hold and were replaced by webinars and virtual orientations. But as PhilHealth transitions to the new normal, it is gradually resuming visiting remote areas and spreading the value of being bonafide PhilHealth members.

To jumpstart, PhilHealth Western Pangasinan Local Health Insurance Office (LHIO) and

Mangatarem PhilHealth Satellite Office (PSO) personnel, headed by LHIO Chief Abraham A. Ballares, visited an Indigenous People's community situated along the Daang Katutubo in Sitio Mapita, Barangay Laoag, Aguilar, Pangasinan on April 03, 2022. Daang Katutubo, which some described as one of the most breathtaking roads in Pangasinan, was constructed by the government to provide them with better access to basic social services in nearby towns. The community, which is 50 kilometers away from the LHIO and 30 kilometers away from the PSO, is populated by three ethnic groups Ibaloi, Kalanguya and Kankanaey. Most of them are members of the Pantawid Pamilyang Pilipino Program (4Ps) which automatically qualifies them to the PhilHealth Indigent Program, some are senior citizens with automatic coverage under RA 10645 (an act providing for the mandatory PhilHealth coverage for all senior citizens) with a few self-earning individuals.



After travelling the steep ascending road with seemingly endless zigzags en route Sitio Mapita, the PhilHealth staff were warmly welcomed by their tribal chieftain Pablo T. Bacayat and tribal leader Lita Macay. With them were 83 indigenous people who were very eager to learn about their PhilHealth benefits.



During the ALAGA Ka activity, the Indigent and senior citizen members were reminded of the state insurer's "No Balance Billing" (NBB) Policy where no other fee or expense shall be charged to the member in basic

ward accommodation. For the voluntary and self-earning individuals, payment of monthly premium contributions was also expounded. For those who do not have the capacity to pay their PhilHealth contributions, they were reminded to avail of the Point of Service (POS) Program by requesting a Certificate of Financial Assessment from their respective LGU's Social Worker Officer (SWO) or by going to a government hospital where they shall be assessed by the assigned Medical Social Worker (MSW) as provided for in PhilHealth Circular 2019-0010. Out-patient and in-patient benefit packages were also discussed, particularly the COVID-19 benefit packages.

Despite the distance and remoteness of the community, it has always been PhilHealth's pleasure to serve and educate the members of their benefits especially the indigent and indigenous people for them to become more empowered members of the Program. *"It is through our compassion and dedication to public service that we fulfil the mandate of Universal Health Care which is to include everyone and exclude no one"*, Ballares said. ###

