Summary Statement

The fight against illegal drugs is not a matter of choice as it is a must, if we are to leave behind a just and liveable society for this and future generations. Neither is it a stand-alone action that diminishes the importance of our war against poverty and inequality.

The Cebuanos are solid behind the call of President Rodrigo Duterte to be at the forefront of bringing lasting change in the lives of the Filipino people.

“The fight against criminality and illegal drugs and corruption will be relentless and sustained. I call on the police, (military), local chief executives and those occupying seats of power and authority not to lower their guard.” – President Rodrigo R. Duterte.

Indeed, we cannot afford to lower our guard in this One Big Fight (as the Ateneo community would shout it out) to provide lasting solutions to the nagging problems, and sustain the gains that we already have.

On behalf of the Cebuanos, let me express our sincere gratitude to the organizers of this knowledge sharing forum to be able to contribute our own humble experiences and learning in Cebu.

As a lawyer and governor, I do not and will never take this campaign against illegal drugs short and easy. We are with the national government all the way in ensuring law and order in our respective communities to protect and keep our families safe.

That is the least that we can do.

We believe firmly in the rule of law; we do not (need), and will not condone extra-judicial killing.

Introduction

In 2013, at the onset of my first term in office, I called for consultations with various sectors and conducted a stakeholder summit to help us identify and understand the different issues, define our priorities, and design our provincial development agenda.
We focused on 6 key areas: agriculture and countryside development; health and social protection; education and technical vocational training; tourism investment and infrastructure development; environment, disaster risk reduction and climate change; and, law and order.

Our development roadmap, particularly on law and order, is a shared responsibility.

While there are national government agencies tasked to address lawlessness, the local government units are equally accountable in maintaining peace and order as provided for under the general welfare provision of the Local Government Code.

In Cebu, we partner with these agencies to have a unified and functioning mechanism that addresses illegal drugs, as well as criminality, human trafficking, child pornography and disruption of public order.

Aggressive campaigns against illegal drugs have been initiated and sustained led by our Cebu Provincial Anti-Drug Abuse Council (or CPADAC, now CPADAO, a full-pledged office created through a provincial ordinance), which has been working with various sectors of the community in broader and intensive effort against this menace.

CPADAO was created to serve as a lead coordinating agency in the province, which assists the Office of the Governor and the Sangguniang Panlalawigan develop effective and efficient anti-drug abuse programs.

We nurture a strong partnership with the private sector, civil society and nongovernment organizations, the Department of Education, and regional offices of the Dangerous Drugs Board-Philippine Drug Enforcement Agency, the Department of Justice, and the PNP’s Cebu Provincial Police Office in pursuit of anti-drug abuse programs in the entire province.

At the Cebu Provincial Detention and Rehabilitation Center, we provide opportunities to the inmates (around two thirds are illegal drug cases) to reform themselves, guided by the principles of human transformation, as productive members of the community despite the challenges we have in addressing the complex situation.

Our programs include provision of livelihood projects and access to education through the Alternative Learning System. Apart from the well-known dancing inmates, the CPDRC now has boxing teams, bakeshop, and auto repair shop.

It is hoped that these reforms are sustained to make their living conditions better.

Indeed, the government’s ability to ensure peace and order has direct impact on inclusive and sustained development of our communities.
Rationale

The high drug affectation and peace and order conditions that greeted us and the results of our stakeholder summit prompted the provincial government to reactivate and push for a functional anti-drug abuse body in Cebu. We did not want this to worsen and make our communities more vulnerable to lawlessness and discontent.

At that time, among the specific problems identified were (i) non-compliance with the provisions of RA 9165, directives and programs of Dangerous Drugs Board; (ii) lack of coordination among various offices; (iii) inactive DDB; (iv) lack of resources and budget; (v) limited PNP operational budget against drug lords; (vi) no focal person; and (vii) absence of systematic advocacy programs and monitoring system.

In Cebu, out of 1,066 Barangays in the entire province, only 132 Barangays are not threatened by drug affectation. A total of 934 Barangays or 88% are affected by illegal drug activities (14 of these are seriously affected).

Together with member agencies (PDEA, PNP, and DOJ), CPADAC scored modest gains at the beginning of our campaign, unlike the enforcement-centered approach of the national government, which yielded overwhelming results in terms of the number of surrenderees and illegal drugs destroyed.

This augurs well to the success of the national campaign, but it has also raised alarming concerns from other sectors due to the number of drug-related deaths and killing during police operations nationwide.

Various sectors have expressed different opinions on the results of this intensified war against illegal drugs. In Cebu, we focus on our problems and address them based on our capabilities and resources.

We follow and do what is right.

Guided by the DILG’s response to the President’s pronouncements, we support strengthening of local and barangay-based institutions, like the Local Peace and Order, and Barangay Anti-Drug Abuse councils; and, harnessing the participation of community and church-based organizations, like the Ugnayan ng Barangay at Simbahan (UBAS), and civil society, nongovernment, and peoples organizations.

We also believe that the drive against illegal drugs, criminality and corruption will not succeed without LGUs, communities and national government working together.

Actions and Programs

Various reports from the Regional Anti-Illegal Drugs Special Operation Task Group 7 and our CPADAO have shown encouraging results.
Our present surrenderees under the Oplan Tokhang or kaTOK HANGyo (knock and plea) have reached 31,956, with 29,736 Users and 2,220 Pushers based on the records of the Philippine National Police.

The number of illegal drugs confiscated in 2015 almost doubled compared to year 2014 with 15,925 grams of shabu having a total DDB value of 188 million Pesos. Of the 2,286 anti-drug operations conducted, 3,344 persons were arrested and 4,123 cases were filed in court, according to Task Force report.

We are currently implementing demand or harm reduction efforts to reduce the use of illicit drugs, which include both sanctions and incentives. These include functionality of ADACs, implementation of LGU policies and necessary legislative measures on anti-drugs abuse, participation of schools and parents-teachers associations, community-based drug prevention and health care, and social and economic sphere to fight delinquency and substance abuse.

These are also used to measure and monitor the performance of our Cebu LGUs in their respective anti-illegal drugs campaign under the Sugbo Kontra Droga (SUKOD), formerly the JSN or Just Say No (to Drugs) program.

The SUKOD program is a province-wide, year-long campaign to persuade the LGU’s to perform their functions under the law, to increase public awareness, develop ADACs, and strengthen network through the use of combined strategies of a performance based ratings, grant of incentives, encouraging collaboration and joint activities.

We are also undertaking drug supply reduction strategies, which provide necessary support and incentives to the PNP/CPPO in the Implementation of RA 9165 and other Anti-illegal Drugs Program.

A very important initiative we have gained significant success is the Limpyo Probinsya Project, which is a time-bounded law enforcement operations led by the CPPPO that has resulted to the arrest of 473 offenders, recovery of 67 assorted firearms, and confiscation of 3,386 grams of shabu DDB value of almost 40 million Pesos in its 5 planned operations to date.

In our own back yard, not less than 20 employees of the provincial government found positive during frequent random drug tests, and guilty of substance abuse were dismissed from the service.

Recently, we have designed a Community-Based Crisis Intervention Program in response to the growing needs to complement the national government’s Oplan Tokhang.

This program seeks to address the welfare of the surrenderees in partnership with various sectors with the following levels of intervention:
- First Level: Control and Rehabilitation on Substance Abuse (CoR-SA), which deals with immediate processing in the form of profiling, assessment & screening, referrals, and initial treatment through Barangay Treatment Centers, such as Psycho Education Treatment (with estimated period of 3 months treatment)

- Second Level: Drug Proofing the Barangay: Facilitate reintegration of surrenderees back to mainstream of community and family life through therapy counselling, conflict resolution and psycho education

- Third Level: After Care Program, which deals with sustaining treatment and reintegration through livelihood and skills training

**Other Efforts Taken by the Provincial Government**

In our continuing engagement with the different stakeholders, we are undertaking a number of initiatives that help sustain our programs.

We have forged partnership with the national government, private sector, the religious groups, and members of the civil society in the construction of rehabilitation centers for drug surrenderees.

Together with the Provincial Women’s Commission headed by Vice-Governor Agnes Magpale, we are now offering scholarship grants through our *Paglaum* program for qualified applicants, particularly those who have experienced drugs abuse belonging to the marginalized sectors.

Both our Provincial Health Office (PHO) and CPADAo have been tasked to conduct trainings for barangay health workers (BHWs) and staff of provincial hospitals to assist drug surrenderees needing medical attention.

**Concerns and Challenges**

Our tasks are continuing and evolving. Narcopolitics has no place in our society.

We need to be engaged positively with various stakeholders, particularly the private sector, nongovernment organization, and various government institutions, in developing an enduring partnership to address effectively the critical problem of illegal drugs, including inter-local cooperation among LGU’s to pool resources and personnel.

We have to build a stronger and more transparent partnership with the PNP in our anti-illegal drugs campaigns, including proactive leadership and stricter control and supervision by local chief executives on peace and order, safety and security issues.
Moving Forward

I subscribe that no standalone policy option is going to solve immediately the illicit drug problem. The extent of the current drug crisis, however, compels us to seek a balanced and more thorough examination of the advantages and limitations of all the available policy options – our included, as we are also having our own learning curve.

In particular, it is important to recognize the joint responsibility of both the government and the community, and, therefore, the need for shared and coherent policy approaches.

It is my humble submission that policy strategies must address the causes of the problem rather than its symptoms: drug abuse is often linked to dysfunctional family ties, lack of education and employment opportunities, poor housing and health care in marginal communities, and even fleeting moments of fame and glory.

We may also attribute drug problem to the failure of our justice and law enforcement agencies to arrest illicit drugs trade, prosecute and put behind bars erring government officials. But, this does not help at all if we are to sit and just watch as the spectacle unfolds.

We must do and contribute something concrete to a lasting solution to this critical problem that is tearing apart the fabric of our nation.

We hope that by sharing our own narrative in the province of Cebu we are able to contribute our little share as we move forward to bring back the pride and humility of a Filipino we have always.

Again, thank you very much. Daghang salamat.

God bless our country. God bless us all.

Mabuhis kitang tanan.

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