

Amando M Tetangco, Jr: We are all wealth watchers

Speech by Mr Amando M Tetangco, Jr, Governor of Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas (BSP, the central bank of the Philippines), at the Wealth Watch Book Launch, Manila, 3 July 2015.

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This is the second time this week that we are launching a document related to financial empowerment. Just two days ago, we launched the National Strategy for Financial Inclusion, the document signed by 13 government agencies (including the BSP) which sets the strategic map for a unified national financial inclusion landscape. It is a living document that is meant to be populated by tactical plans of each of the agencies involved. And it is envisioned that following the launch, significant partnerships among government agencies as well as with the private sector would ensue.

As you know, we had the Queen of the Netherlands, the UN Secretary General's Special Advocate for Financial Inclusion for Development, Queen Maxima, witness that occasion as our special guest. While we do not have a queen with us today, we are most privileged to have you our most significant partners in this journey of financial literacy and education and consumer protection to share this occasion with us.

Today, we launch a different document. A book. In fact, a "wealth book". Unlike the NSFI, this Wealth Watch Book is not authored by 13 government agencies, but the book is authored by those "closer to home" – by our very own BSPers from the Financial Consumer Protection Department (FCPD).

The book is not for those who have no access to financial products and services but, it is for those who have a little bit more than others well, perhaps significantly more but who may need to be just as "watchful"

In many respects, however, this book and the NSFI are about the same. Because like the NSFI, our Wealth Watch Book deals with information, and how you can make that information "work" for you. It is about stewardship of what you have. It is about preparing for unexpected events. It is about growth and growing what you have so you can have more.

Our launch today brings to mind the NBA Draft. At each draft, media would focus on how those towering "boys" who've been drafted would now move from "living within tight college budgets" to becoming and I quote from Yahoo Sports "money making machines".

Sadly, however, we so often hear of stories of athletes with successful careers but who experience financial ruin when their careers end.

Fortunately, among all these sad stories, there is one about an NBA superstar who retired a few years back. His spending habits were legendary – he is rumored to have spent one million dollars, in less than half an hour! His wise banker supposedly warned him to "get it together" or else he end up broke like many other former successful athletes.

As the story would have it, the NBA superstar decided to become educated in money and finance. He went back to school, got his bachelor's degree, a Master of Business Administration and eventually went on to earn his Doctor of Education in Human Resource Development.

This is the story of Dr. Shaquille O'Neal. As we know of him today, he has several restaurants, car washes, fitness centers, a shopping center, a movie theater while he continues to be a product endorser and NBA TV analyst. By all accounts then, he is financially secure and if the popular story is accurate, it all goes back to his early "turn-around" and eventual commitment to manage his finances.

I share this story not to say that the value of financial literacy is for those fortunate enough to become millionaires. Instead, I use it to highlight that even for those who have much, financial literacy matters also.

But financial literacy is not just for them. Financial literacy is also for the Juan and Juana Dela Cruzes who, even if they do not have million-dollar paying jobs are conscious of preparing for a future that offers no guarantees.

If we accept that tomorrow always holds some uncertainty, we have to accept as well that there is no switch that we can turn “on” or “off” to rectify an unexpected development. The issue before us is whether or not we are sufficiently aware and adequately empowered to manage our personal finances today.

While the BSP already has several financial education outreaches, we know that much more can be done towards empowering our financial consumers.

And we are committed towards this goal. This afternoon’s book launching is a concrete manifestation of this commitment.

For this endeavor, let me thank the authors of the articles. The readers of our Wealth Watch Book will certainly benefit from your “wealth” of experiences as practitioners in the field of finance.

Let me also thank our Financial Consumer Protection Department that always tries to think outside of the box in designing new and innovative means of delivering our key financial literacy messages.

Ladies and gentlemen. I hope you will find answers to your many questions on wealth management in this book. I hope also that you will find new insights and practical tips on how you can make money work for you.

The Wealth Watch book is not just a compilation of individual writings. It is a collective output that is far larger than its parts.

Thank you all for joining us today. Happy Anniversary. Thank you and good afternoon.