



REFLECTION GRID WORLD WOMEN'S DAY 2021

“In 1975, during International Women's Year, the United Nations began celebrating 8 March as International Women's Day”

Why dedicate a day exclusively to the celebration of the world's women?

- to recognize the fact that securing peace and social progress and the full enjoyment of human rights and fundamental freedoms require the active participation, equality and development of women;
- and to acknowledge the contribution of women to the strengthening of international peace and security.

For the women of the world, the Day's symbolism has a wider meaning: It is an occasion to review how far they have come in their struggle for equality, peace and development. It is also an opportunity to unite, network and mobilize for meaningful change.



“Women in leadership: Achieving an equal future in a COVID-19 world.” (UN theme)

The theme celebrates the tremendous efforts by women and girls around the world in shaping a more equal future and recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic.

Women stand at the front lines of the COVID-19 crisis, as health care workers, caregivers, innovators, community organizers and as some of the most exemplary and effective national leaders in combating the pandemic. The crisis has highlighted both the centrality of their contributions and the disproportionate burdens that women carry.

Women leaders and women's organizations have demonstrated their skills, knowledge and networks to effectively lead in COVID-19 response and recovery efforts. Today there is more acceptance than ever before that women bring different experiences, perspectives and skills to the table, and make irreplaceable contributions to decisions, policies and laws that work better for all.



Most countries that have been more successful in stemming the tide of the COVID-19 pandemic and responding to its health and broader socio-economic impacts, are headed by women. For instance, Heads of Government in Denmark, Ethiopia, Finland, Germany, Iceland, New Zealand and Slovakia have been widely recognized for the rapidity, decisiveness and effectiveness of their national response to COVID-19, as well as the compassionate communication of fact-based public health information.

The Philippines is among the few countries in the world with a specific constitutional provision for women. From the first suffrage bill for women in 1907 to its legalization 30 years after, women in the Philippines have indeed come a long way. According to the World Economic Forum Global Gender Gap Report 2020, the Philippines remains the most gender-equal country in Asia. The country has been at

the forefront of women's rights movements in Asia. It already has two women presidents, women chief justices, women legislators, women judges and lawyers, women in law enforcement, women business leaders and practically in all sectors and professions. Many successful stories are being written and at the same time, sadly, many instances of physical, mental, sexual, psychological abuse and violations.

A new study by humanitarian and girls' rights organization Plan International Philippines reveals how the COVID-19 pandemic systematically impacts the lives of girls and young women – from magnifying existing social inequalities, disrupting education and work, increasing vulnerabilities to violence, to affecting their mental health and wellbeing.

Asia and the Pacific

Author: Louie Pacardo, UN Women (May 6, 2020)

Koronadal City, Philippines – When Philippines started lockdowns to control the spread of COVID-19, Charmaine Ladot, 40, was among the millions of business owners who were hurt. But she didn't just bow down in despair. Instead, Ladot is now tirelessly leading volunteers who are helping protect front-line medical workers and poor people from the virus – even though she has systemic lupus, an autoimmune disease that increases her risk of infections and of more severe symptoms from infections.

Ladot's group Bulig Kontra COVID-19 -- Help to Counter COVID-19 -- has become one of the most organized, privately led anti-COVID-19 movements in the region, with a network of volunteer groups

On March 13, Ladot led a group chat with four friends working at the local tourism council and at the city government. Bulig Kontra COVID-19 was born. Now its members also include restaurant owners, artists, members of business organizations. Most of them are women.

The group organizes donation drives and distributes the donations – personal protective equipment, disinfectant mist sprayers, other goods and cash – to those on the front-lines of the anti-virus battle. It coordinates with the local government to get help to where it is needed and to tell people via social media how they should protect themselves and where to get services.

"For women like me, it is ... a chance to show our strength for our household and for the community," she said. "But it is still hard as our enemy is invisible. Nevertheless, whatever the crisis may be, we are always given the opportunity to extend a hand to those who need us."

Ladot also is involved in efforts to give counselling to mothers and young girls who are anxious and depressed because of the COVID-19 emergency, and to teach young people how to stay mentally healthy.

"Everyone is having a hard time but women suffer the most," she said. "This situation calls for addressing too and ... it should be included in a community-based response for this pandemic." Ladot said she worries most about the mothers. Parents have lost jobs, so mothers are doubly hit by the COVID-19 impact.

"I can imagine mothers crying because they cannot feed their children right, some women will be more prone to abuse as they will be locked up in one roof with the wrong person."

"But we are here as women to help other women and the community in general in these trying times ... even with our vulnerabilities and limitations," she said.

References:

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