



## **WE Make Change Work for Women**

### **PCW Message for the 2017 National Women's Month Celebration 1-31 March 2017**

During last year's National Women's Month Celebration (NWMC), the Philippine Commission on Women (PCW) called for the inclusion of women's issues and concerns in the development agenda of the incoming government. The call continues to reverberate this year as we endeavor to ensure that the reforms that the government espouses will work for both women and men. After all, true compassion and real change can only be achieved when women and men work hand-in-hand to foster an environment that is empowering to both sexes. Thus, our theme for this year's observance is "WE Make Change Work for Women."

In making these changes work for ***Juanas***, we need to foster an environment that enables women to pursue her passion and be able to meaningfully engage in whatever endeavor she hopes to achieve. Thus, we call on our development partners, both from government, non-government and private sectors to promote citizen-centric governance and make change a conscious effort to know, understand, and provide what all citizens need. If we inform and engage women and girls as our stakeholders, we make the fruits of change real and relevant in their lives.

Every woman has innate potentials that can only be unleashed if she embraces her own empowerment to make positive changes. Thus, women should never be afraid of change; instead, let us harness our abilities and become innovators and potent agents of positive and significant changes in society. Many Filipino women and girls have already broken gender stereotypes and have succeeded in various fields. Let us remember, honor and thank them for helping us become one step closer to gender equality. Let change unravel our strength and resilience by making us wiser and compassionate through time.

But the challenge does not stop here; making changes and working for development is not solely a woman's responsibility. Men, especially those who are in power and decision-making positions, must also consider that women and girls, especially those from the marginalized and vulnerable sectors, have the right to participate and engage in all development efforts. Mutual respect, solidarity, peace, and human dignity is at the core of a progressive nation that we all want to achieve.

Lastly, there is no better way to women's empowerment and gender equality than the full implementation of the Magna Carta of Women (MCW) down to the barangay level. We have to make women's rights real in the lives of women and girls. We cannot rest if we still see an increasing number of cases of violence against women.

We cannot talk about quality healthcare if Filipino women still die of pregnancy-related causes. We need to create not only jobs, but also provide access to finance, technology, and training in order to expand women's economic opportunities. We need to revisit what young people learn in school so that stereotypes that reinforce inequalities are removed from our educational materials and modules. Women's voices, their experiences and perspectives, must be heard in discussions about rural development, peace, urban development and housing, resiliency and disaster risk reduction, climate change, access to justice, and overall national development. There is no better way to do this than having more women in top level and decision-making positions in government and in the private sector. And as the UN-Women theme says -- "Women in the Changing World of Work: Planet 50-50 by 2030!"

Thus, we call on our partners in government, in non-government and civil society organizations, academe and the private sector to continue working for the elimination of abuse and exploitation, discrimination and disparities. Let us re-commit to the full implementation of the Magna Carta of Women and all women-related laws. Let us work for true CHANGE through Compassionate and Harmonized Actions and Networks for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of all women and girls. Our CHANGE shall move towards attaining our AmBisyon 2040 of a strongly rooted (matatag), comfortable (maginhawa), and a secure (panatag) life for all Filipinos.

Let us continue to become agents of change and become the change which we envision to see!

Isang Maligaya't Makabuluhang Pagdiriwang ng Buwan ng Kababaihan!

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