

# INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY

Women in Leadership - Asia and the Pacific

8 March 2021

**International Women's Day, Women in Leadership- Asia and the Pacific, 2021**

Copyright © United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat), Regional Office of Asia and the Pacific.

**Graphic Design:** UN-Habitat, Lydia Ogden (2021).

**Coordinator:** Lydia Ogden

**Author:** Lydia Ogden



# WOMEN IN LEADERSHIP: Achieving an Equal Future in a COVID-19 World



Sustainable Development Goal 5 is to Achieve Gender Equality and Empower All Women and Girls.

The COVID-19 pandemic has had a disproportionate impact on women and girls globally.

Women continue to play a huge role in fighting the Coronavirus. Globally, women account for 70% of health and social workers. However, many women remain vulnerable, occupying a disproportionate number of roles in the informal sector, compared to their male counterparts. On average, women spend three times as many hours in unpaid domestic and care work as men. Globally, lockdowns have increased the risk of violence against women and girls. In some countries, levels of domestic violence have increased by 30%. Despite levels of public representation slowly rising, women only represent 36% of pandemic-related leadership roles in local government and 25% in national parliaments globally.

This publication is a celebration of the work of women leaders in the built environment from across Asia and the Pacific. Leaders from across the region have come together to share their achievements, discuss the importance of women's leadership during the COVID-19 pandemic, and share their vision of a gender-equal future.

**"I am Najma A. Daramimbang, from the Philippines, I am the president of the Lumbaca Madaya Unity Homeowners Association. My family was among those displaced by the gun battle between the government forces and militants in 2017."**

"In Marawi, it is usually men who are chosen to lead. Being the elected president of Lumbaca Madaya Eternity Homeowners Association (HOA) and chairperson of Lumbaca Madaya Eternity Credit Cooperative is already a big achievement for me as a Muslim Maranao woman.

Having a passion to make things better and easier for others is one of my contributions. Our association works in partnership with UN-Habitat for permanent shelter, livelihoods, community development, and peace-building. This entails many challenges, so it is all the more important that I, as their leader, keep everyone motivated so we are able to reach our goal of establishing our new community.

On various occasions, I have been chosen to speak at gatherings on the situation of the internally displaced persons (IDPs), to call the attention of the authorities to our plight. Lending my voice is another of my leadership tasks that I willingly do for and on behalf of my fellow IDPs.

When you see your community stable and community members have better relationship with each other, you can say that you are a good leader and have contributed to the fullest of your ability".

(Najma's own words)



# MARYLIN

**"I am Marylin M. Pintor from the Philippines and I am the Undersecretary of the Department of Human Settlements and Urban Development."**

"Although I am a newly appointed Undersecretary of the DHSUD, I bring with me my vast experience in advocating women's rights and women empowerment within and outside of the Philippines. I have served several terms as Chairperson of the Gender and Development (GAD) Coordinating Committee of the Caraga Regional Development Council (RDC), which was instrumental in the institutionalization of the Regional Gender and Development Committee in all the RDCs in the country.

The inter-agency committee is responsible for coordinating GAD programs and activities of the different government and non-governmental organizations, including Local Government Units, to advance gender equality and women's empowerment.

I am also active in women's non-government organizations, having held leadership positions and been recognized for my achievements in advancing the UN Security Council Resolution 1325.

My commitment and experiences have given me opportunities to share successful stories of women. As a GAD champion, my first agenda is to institutionalize the Gender Focal Point System (GFPS) as mandated by the Philippine Magna Carta of Women, which will be responsible for mainstreaming gender policies inside and outside of the department.

I strongly believe that women's empowerment plays a crucial role in nation-building, and increases women's self-worth, independence, opportunities, and leadership".

(Marylin's own words)



# ELVISA

**"I am Elvisa Mabelin from the Philippines, I am the Assistant Department Head of the City Local Environment and Natural Resources Office."**

"In my decades of experience in government and public service, especially in the city environment office, I can attest that women play an important role in managing environment and natural resources - whether in the family, community, or city.

nurture our environment. As a mother myself, I want to care for Mother Earth to leave healthy and sustainable environment and natural resources for generations to come.

During this pandemic, I took the most challenging role of managing the dead infected with the virus in our city. It is tough, yet has proved that a woman like me is up for the challenge and can efficiently deliver results. This reinforces my conviction that healthy environments support healthy people and communities.

It is my dream that more empowered women take the lead in environmental rehabilitation, protection and conservation, whilst sustainably utilizing local natural resources towards climate resilient and sustainable communities and cities. No gender should be a prevented from harmonizing growth and development with people and planet".

(Elvisa's own words)

My passion to preserve, conserve, develop, and protect the local environment, allows me to inspire and empower local women to care and



# SITTIE

**"I am Sittie Asmaliya Gauraki Hadji Omar, from the Philippines. I lead the Canvassing Committee of Agus Malangas Homeowners Association (HOA)."**

"The Maranao culture is considered one of the most conservative among the Muslim communities in the Philippines - I never would have imagined taking a lead role in the canvassing of construction materials for permanent houses. This is the kind of task that is usually reserved for men as dictated by our culture.

I have three children who are used to having me around all day long - I had to find ways for them to be taken cared of while I performed my tasks for the community. I am lucky my husband understands that what I do for the HOA is not only for our family but for all the member-families of our HOA.

But the rebuilding of Marawi requires that men and women alike contribute the best way they can. With the trainings and guidance of UN-Habitat Technical Staff, I learned how to scrutinize the quality of construction materials, negotiate with suppliers for favorable prices, and ensure proper canvassing documents for the Purchasing Committee to use.

Now, the construction of our permanent houses are being completed and soon we will be bringing our families to live in our new community which we named, Hadiya (meaning 'Gift') Village".

(Sittie's own words)



# INGRID

**"I am Ingrid Macabare from the Philippines. I am a registered nurse and am currently working as the Solid Waste Management Head of the Environment and Natural Resources Office in Ormoc City."**

"As a child, I have dreamed of becoming a woman who will achieve more than what other people expect of her.

Being a public health nurse is truly fulfilling. However, I've always felt a tiny gap and thought, "I can do more than this." That was until I was assigned to the Environment and Natural Resources Office. In my new role as Solid Waste Management (SWM) Head, I was able to promote community and public health through the improvement of environmental health.

I am proud that through teamwork, respect, and collective decision, we developed the Ormoc City 10-year SWM Plan. Garbage collection and landfill operations were improved, and barangays (villages)

were empowered to build their own SWM plans. We implemented City Solid Waste Management Policies and Ordinances, including, just recently, the regulation of single-use plastics.

Moreover, I am able to lead our team who reach out to communities and teach them proper solid waste management, 4Rs, and strategies for waste diversion. We've also started collaborating with other city offices and agencies to implement barangay initiatives and projects that address SWM problems and concerns.

I am Ingrid, a proud woman leader for a cleaner and greener Ormoc City today and tomorrow".

(Ingrid's own words)



# CHRISTINE

**"My name is Christine Mallam, I am originally from a remote Fijian village but I currently live in Samoan Settlement in the Greater Suva Area. I am one of three women Advisory Councillors in my region".**

"My job is to link informal settlements and villages with government initiatives. It can be very challenging to mobilise informal settlements and these communities are often not aware of the programmes that they can access. My role is to make sure people in informal settlements are included and participate in initiatives, and women in particular have a way to voice their opinions. As a women in this role of leadership, I am most proud when I see how my work has led to people accessing government assistance to improve their lives. I feel privileged to hold this position as I love working with people and making them smile. I believe my friendly and open personality is what has enabled me to succeed in my role as a leader for not only my family and my community but also for the informal settlements I work with.

Last year, a key responsibility of mine was to carry out awareness-raising on COVID-19 in informal settlements. What I observed during this period was the role women played as the "pushers" (advocates) in their households and communities. When COVID-19 restrictions began to impact these communities, I saw women being proactive in finding solutions to the economic challenges their families were (and still are) faced with. One example of this that I witnessed across many informal settlements, was women starting backyard farms so they could feed their families. Women are the nurturers in their families and this role came out even more strongly as the impacts of the global COVID-19 pandemic became increasingly severe in Fiji".

(Christine's own words)



# SHABANA

**“My name is Shabana, I teach in a girl’s high school and am the head of a cluster at the council which was established by the Afghanistan Urban Safety and Security Programme (AUSSP).”**

“My vision in life is to advocate for women’s rights and create jobs and educational opportunities for women and girls.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, doctors were advising people to do exercises in open spaces, but in our community, we did not have these open space facilities accessible for women and girls.

When AUSSP came and planned to start the work in Jalalabad city, I started my campaign to convince all men and women to vote for the women’s park project, and finally, I did it. Now 90% of construction works have been completed, and female residents of Jalalabad city can use the park for exercises and other sports activities.

This was a huge innovation in this problematic and challenging city. It was difficult, but if we have more female leaders we can advocate for our own rights.

I am delighted by and thankful for UN-Habitat for providing this opportunity for Afghan women to lead their communities”.

(Shabana’s own words)





The Jalalabad City Women's Park has been realised through the campaigning of Shabana for open green spaces for women and girls during the COVID-19 pandemic.

# ARIUNSAIKHAN

"I am Ariunsaikhan Bulganaa from Mongolia and I work as a chef at a kindergarden in Bayanzurkh District. I also lead "Khamtiin khuch -27" primary group in my community. I am a mother of 5 boys aged between 2 to 15. I love being a mom because of all the happiness as well as challenges mothers go through".

"In 2019, under UN-Habitat Flood Resilience in Ulaanbaatar Ger areas (informal settlement) project I was selected as a leader of one of the 11 primary groups at the Bayanzurkh District of Ulaanbaatar city. I was a full-time housewife and a mother before I became the leader of the primary group.

I attended several capacity building trainings organized through the project. During this time, I became a trainer for disaster preparedness events. Subsequently, I organized 2 trainings on disaster preparedness and mitigation with assistance from the project social mobilizer to a group of 64 people (majority was women) in total.

As a trainer and leader of the community I noticed that my interpersonal communication has improved significantly. Living in a ger area, being unemployed, and being mother of 5, I had never been presented with the opportunity to engage with others in my community before. Being part of the project and my primary group was helped me to gain the confidence I needed to share my ideas and feelings with others freely.

Learning these skills helped me become a better role model for my children during their upbringing. I feel that if we women are trained and empowered, we can bring a better future to our children and communities. Trust yourself, if there are young women in your community, encourage and empower them!"

(Ariunsaikhan's own words)



"I am Naz Gull, fighting against COVID-19 in Nili city of Daikuni province in Afghanistan and a civil society activist. The City for All (CFA) programme of UN-Habitat has combated COVID-19 in vulnerable urban neighbourhoods".

"Based on the CFA assessment in Nili city, our Gozar/neighbourhood was one of the vulnerable Gozars. UN-Habitat colleagues established the community leaders group in our Gozar to select projects that our community needs. The women's group makes decisions for Nili women and choose projects for women's economic empowerment.

(1)The project would economically empower those involved; (2)This would provide facemasks to the community during the pandemic; (3) the project would decrease social tensions and stresses during the quarantine period (as women in their homes were occupied producing facemasks).

Having this passion for making decisions for our people was one of my contributions to my community with UN-Habitat's support. For the first time, we females were sitting together, discussing and solving our problems, making decisions related to our community's needs. After many discussions with other community groups, we decided to recommend a tailoring project for three reasons;

Finally, with the project approved, the CFA distributed 105 tailoring machines, including all the necessary materials to community members. We are very happy and thankful to UN-Habitat for their honesty, hard work and providing the opportunity for Afghan women to make decisions as leaders in their communities".

(Naz's own words)



UN-HABITAT ROAP-Fukuoka  
ACROS Fukuoka Building, 8th Floor  
1-1-1 Tenjin, Chuo-ku, Fukuoka 810-0001, Japan

[habitat.fukuoka@un.org](mailto:habitat.fukuoka@un.org)

**UN**  **HABITAT**  
FOR A BETTER URBAN FUTURE