



ICW-CIF Statement to Commemorate the International Women's Day

March 8, 2021

The International Council of Women (ICW-CIF) wholeheartedly embraces the theme for International Women's Day, 2021 promoted by UN Women: "Women in Leadership: Achieving an equal future in a COVID-19 world". ICW-CIF stands, since its inception some 133 years ago, for women's empowerment and leadership by helping women to help themselves, to take initiatives, to promote their status and wellbeing and to promote understanding between women everywhere, irrespective of race, color or creed.

It must be noted, however, that this past year the COVID-19 pandemic has laid bare social and economic inequalities and vulnerabilities around the world. It has demonstrated once again, that in periods of crisis, women's livelihoods and jobs are at far greater risk than men's. To overcome this, the situation requires the exploration of community resilience and coalition building, to achieve an equal future, creativity, and the finding of new possibilities.

This requires a strong alliance among all sectors of society. Above all, people must be given the tools to meet the conditions and challenges to improve their lives through mutual support, self-help, and empowerment. Unfortunately, despite the fact that women generally stand in the frontlines of meeting the challenges posed by COVID-19, all too often governmental responses are not gender-responsive and are inadequate to address the additional burdens faced by women. It is therefore essential for governments to put gender equality at the core of their objectives in government stimulus and rebuilding actions.

COVID-19 has highlighted the need for greater funding to ensure effective and immediate community response. Accordingly, at a time when policy-makers need to secure social and economic stability and growth, resilience and inclusive rebuilding should include the achievement of an equal future, by reinforcing the role of women in leadership positions.

ICW-CIF encourages women to pick the right opportunity, analyze strategies and proceed with their implementation, keeping in mind that creation and creativity, which share the same roots, are built-in genes in women....

ICW-CIF asks to see women leaders grow in every aspect of society, not only under normal circumstances, but also under difficult conditions, such as those imposed by the pandemic. Transformative and normative change necessary to challenge gender inequalities requires meaningful participation of women and women-led organizations.

Taking into account the insights learnt from COVID-19, ICW-CIF requests that its members and supporters assist policy-makers in harnessing the economic power of women in driving the economic recovery from the pandemic, and in supporting gender-inclusive growth, advocating in the following areas:

- Accelerating the prevalence of women's leadership and women's involvement in decision-making
- Investing in social infrastructure and family-friendly policies
- Eliminating all forms of violence against women and girls
- Accelerating advances in developing women's workforce competencies through enhanced professional and vocational training
- Encouraging women's entrepreneurial initiatives

More than ever, this is the time to firmly march forward in our movement toward equality while, at the same time, providing invaluable support in conquering the severe impact of the pandemic. This can be realized through increasing the numbers of women in important leadership positions and improvement in women's organizations practices, policies and programs, so as to create an enabling and rights-based environment in which women can enjoy equal rights and opportunities while engaging as responsible actors and innovators in helping to solve societal problems.