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U.S. Government Supports Improved Education, Employment Opportunities and Human-Rights Conditions for Deaf People in the Philippines

ROCHESTER, N.Y., October 9, 2014 — As part of a two-year program supported the U.S. Embassy Manila’s United States Agency for International Development (USAID), Discovering Deaf Worlds (DDW) Executive Director Davin Searls, along with program specialists Howard Rosenblum, CEO, National Association of the Deaf, and Heather Harker, Director of Programs, Third Sector New England and incoming chair, Gallaudet University Board of Trustees, will travel to the Philippines on October 19-28 to implement training on the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD), governance and government relations.

Through the U.S. Government’s \$300,000 grant, DDW is implementing the “Expanding Participation of People with Disabilities in the Philippines Program” in partnership with the Philippine Federation of the Deaf (PFD) to advance the rights deaf communities through local capacity building. The trip will mark the third of six visits to the Philippines for DDW.

USAID Mission Director Gloria D. Steele said, “The U.S. Government is pleased to support initiatives that promote the welfare of people with disabilities and provide them with opportunities that will help them succeed in life.”

Since the program’s inception, 152 persons with disabilities have been trained and an additional 313 individuals will be targeted by the program’s completion in September 2015. PFD members have also conducted 10 of the projected 33 advocacy campaigns, expanding the protection and promotion of the rights of Persons With Disabilities. “We are making strides and looking forward to growing our reach and furthering our efforts,” Searls said. “This training on disability law and organizational governance will further educate the Filipino Deaf community on how to leverage disability rights, laws and policy implementation.

Rosenblum and Harker will utilize their expertise in disability law, organizational management and leadership, and will co-lead a series of workshops over the 10-day visit, which will include the legal and political motivations that form the basis for protection of human rights, leveraging the UNCRPD, leadership succession, and organizational communication systems. In addition, the workshops will enhance PFD’s capacity to work with the government on developing better educational programs, interpreter training, and overall accessibility for Filipino deaf people in line with UNCRPD’s objectives.

Harker: “I’m looking forward to a mutually beneficial learning opportunity with PFD and its member organizations to advance its governance and advocacy efforts. It will be

exciting to share with one another and then to support the creation of PFD focused action plans to leverage their impact. I also expect to arrive back in the US with some new ideas to share with colleagues.”

Rosenblum: "This wonderful DDW project is inspirational and will provide all participants with the opportunity to learn from one another. I look forward to working with the Filipino Deaf community to promote our civil and human rights, and in the process acquire better cultural understanding of our respective countries and governments."

For more information about the DDW program, please contact DDW International Programs Director David Justice (U.S.-based) at djustice@discoveringdeafworlds.org or 585-690-6737, or PFD EXPAND Program Logistics Coordinator Patrick Ablaza (Philippines-based) at pb.ablaza@gmail.com, or visit www.discoveringdeafworlds.org.

About the United States Agency for International Development (USAID)

The American people, through the United States Agency for International Development, have provided economic and humanitarian assistance worldwide for more than 50 years. In the Philippines, USAID works in partnership with the national government in creating a more stable, prosperous and well-governed country through programs that foster sustainable and inclusive growth; strengthen governance and combat corruption; improve access to water, energy, health and education services; and increase environmental resilience and natural resource management capabilities. For more information, visit www.usaid.gov/philippines or email infoph@usaid.gov.

About Discovering Deaf Worlds

Discovering Deaf Worlds is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization dedicated to advancing the self-determination of signing deaf communities through local capacity building in developing countries. In the past six years, DDW staff members have volunteered more than 30,000 hours to connect with more than 250 deaf schools and organizations from 50 countries, creating one of the largest international deaf-advocacy networks in the world. DDW's work is now focused on capacity building partnerships with deaf leadership teams in the U.S., Philippines and Costa Rica, which are working to improve education, employment opportunities, and human-rights circumstances for deaf people in those countries.

About the Philippine Federation of the Deaf

Formed in 1997, the Philippine Federation of the Deaf (PFD) works to empower Deaf people, making them independent, united, equal and productive members of society; and also represents Deaf groups in national and international meetings/forums and legislative bodies. PFD provides training to its grass roots self-help Deaf member- organizations specifically on organizational management, community organization, advocacy techniques, leadership training, values formation and other skills necessary for their development. PFD's activities include close monitoring with government/non-government agencies on the implementation of Deaf people's basic rights and equalization of opportunities especially on employment to ensure that they are given just and equitable treatment. PFD is a national member of the World Federation of the Deaf.