

PRESS RELEASE

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WASHINGTON, D.C. — The Philippine Embassy in Washington, D.C. was among the advocates who joined the 2nd Annual Benefit Gala of Discovering Deaf Worlds (DDW) held at the National Press Club at this city on 05 November 2016.

“This time last year, then Philippine Ambassador to the United States Jose L. Cuisia, Jr. gave an overview of the Philippines’ policies with regard to the people with disabilities (PWD) sector. These policies are underpinned by the fundamental belief in inclusiveness and equality – two principles that ensure a happy, healthy, and prosperous society. Flowing from these policies is a good number of programs and initiatives to ensure the full participation of and equality of rights and opportunities for all PWDs, including the deaf,” said Minister Patrick A. Chuasoto, Embassy Chargé d’Affaires, a.i., in his remarks.

He noted that the Philippines observes Deaf Awareness Week from November 10 to 16 every year.

“The national observance of Deaf Awareness Week is mandated by the need to focus public attention on the nature, prevention, rehabilitation of deafness. It also goes a long way in mainstreaming not only the concerns, but also the vital contributions of the Filipino deaf community to the country’s overall development. These aims neatly align with those of Discovering Deaf Worlds, whose work is dedicated to advancing the empowerment of the signing deaf communities,” he added.

Discovering Deaf Worlds is a non-profit international deaf advocacy organization with a mission to advance the self-determination of signing Deaf communities through local capacity building in developing countries. It has a network of over 300 organizations in 50 countries and is a recognized international member of the World Federation of the Deaf.

In his speech, DDW Executive Director Davin Searls highlighted the effective collaboration among DDW, the Philippine Federation of the Deaf (PFD), USAID and the US Department of State, in providing leadership and organizational development skills training to over 1,700 deaf Filipinos over the past few years.

“Our most recent successes have taken place in the Philippines. The Philippine Federation of the Deaf successfully lobbied their government to provide sign language interpreters on TV inserts for presidential elections. Last year, PFD hosted a national leadership conference for its 28 member organizations in 13 provinces— run by and for Deaf people. And just a few months ago, PFD received a grant that they wrote and secured completely on their own. This is the first time in the 18-year history of PFD that any of these things have happened,” Mr. Searls said.

He further remarked, “It tells us that PFD, which has gone through its fair share of struggles and suspensions over the years, has achieved a new level of independence and sustainability to carry out their advocacy work with the government, Department of Education, health care system, media, and community at large.”

“The new Administration in the Philippines calls on all Filipinos to be ‘partners of change,’ in recognition of every citizen’s role in the growth and prosperity of their country. In return, the state guarantees the rights and freedoms of all citizens, regardless of their politics, religion, gender, race, ethnicity, and abilities. Thank you, Discovering Deaf Worlds for being our faithful partners in fulfilling this mission. Thank you all for being tireless advocates, and for the constant reminder that every single one of us should be a stakeholder in the future of our world,” Minister Chuasoto concluded.

The program also featured speeches by Mr. Colin Allen, President of the World Federation of the Deaf and International Disability Alliance; Ms. Judith Heumann, Special Advisor for International Disability Rights at the US Department of State; and Ms. Roberta Cordano, President of Gallaudet University. ###

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