

Media Alert

For Immediate Release

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Becoming Better Allies to Each Other: Celebrities and community advocates share diversity, equity and inclusion lessons and experiences at Manulife webinar

Resource speakers included Angel Locsin, Ian Veneracion, Brina Kei Maxino, G3 San Diego, and Dr. RJ Naguit

Manila — The Philippine arm of global life insurer Manulife recently organized a free webinar titled, “Becoming Better Allies to Each Other,” which highlighted the importance of fostering diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI), through the real-life stories and experiences of staunch advocates and members of diverse communities.

The webinar featured actress Angel Locsin, who is a champion for women empowerment and other causes; actor Ian Veneracion, who is an ally for positive parenting; Brina Kei Maxino, a UNESCO Global Champion for Inclusive Education and Special Olympics Ambassador & International Global Messenger; Dr. RJ Naguit, Board President of the Youth for Mental Health Coalition; and G3 San Diego, journalist and LGBTQIA+ member, who also served as moderator.

“Now more than ever, each of us has a role to play in ensuring that we help create more safe spaces in our communities. At Manulife, we are committed to cultivating an environment where people can be their true selves, and they are heard, valued, supported, and respected, no matter our differences,” shared Richard Bates, President and Chief Executive Officer, Manulife Philippines. “To stay true to our commitment to make every day better for Filipinos, Manulife extends its DEI learning journey to our broader community, so we can all come together, have meaningful conversations and lift each other up.”

“We likewise extend our DEI initiatives to the way we serve our customers, which is why Manulife Philippines honors domestic LGBTQIA+ partners as beneficiaries and offers insurance solutions that cater to gender-inclusive needs. This enables us to embed DEI across our business, and help drive greater inclusion in our communities,” Bates added.

“In this webinar, we focused on becoming better allies to one another. Being an ally means listening to, learning from, and seeking to understand one another, so that we can reach out, build bridges, and grow together. For us at Manulife, allyship is about shared responsibility and accountability, and being proactive in building strong, inclusive communities,” Melissa Henson, Chief Marketing Officer and DEI lead of Manulife Philippines, also shared. “We need better allies, because this is one way by which we can ensure and create safe spaces for each other and foster true inclusion.”

Embracing our differences to build a better world with safe spaces



At the webinar, Locsin shared what it means to be an empowered woman, and what she learned throughout her career and life journey. She also shared how women can explore and express their authentic selves. “Women should always be true to themselves. A successful woman, for me, is capable of choosing her own path. We only have one chance, one life, and one shot. *Sayang naman kung sasayangin lang sa kung anong opinyon ng ibang tao.* Do what is right and what is best for you.”

Locsin also said women can be like Darna. “Always remember that Darna won’t exist without Narda’s selflessness. If you put others before yourself, *may pagmamalasakit ka sa kapwa*, *may kapasidad ka* to be selfless, *at tumutulong ka sa mga naaapi*, then you are a hero.”

When asked what makes her proud to be an ally, Locsin said: “To be an ally to a community driven by love is an honor. It is about being one with others, and making them feel *na hindi sila nag-iisa.*”

Meanwhile, Veneracion also shared his lessons as a father of an LGBTQIA+ member, and how parents like him can become more encouraging allies to their children. “I see my daughter as a human being, just as she sees herself. We have to avoid judging and putting each other in boxes. We have the capacity as human beings to expand our consciousness and progress forward – to see with fresh eyes the beauty and uniqueness of everyone.”

He added that parents should help prepare their children in dealing with the challenges of life. “The best way I can keep them safe as a parent is to help them become strong amid adversities. We have to teach our children to be responsible for their thoughts, words, and action. Their self-respect must have good foundation, and must not depend on external validation.”



San Diego also shared her own coming-out story and how she found the courage and resolve to champion for and represent her community. “Having a supportive environment matters for people like me. Before, when you were a transwoman, people thought you either worked in a salon or beauty pageants. While there is nothing wrong with that, and there are many distinguished women in these industries, we can occupy other spaces and be successful there, too.”

San Diego added: “Growing up, and until now, I have yet to watch accurate representation of transgenders in the media, so I try to be more visible in the spaces I occupy. We may love or look differently, but at the core of all of us, is the same humanity.”

Moreover, Maxino highlighted how being born with Down Syndrome did not deter her from fulfilling her ambitions. “I have had Down Syndrome since I was a baby. I was told I wouldn’t live long. But my parents did everything they could so that I’d be able to extend my life. Now, I am already 25 years old -- fulfilling my dreams and empowering others like me to do the same.” Maxino said that people with special needs are capable of so much more, “Bullying is very discouraging. My role is to remind people to treat people like us with dignity. We can do more and be more.” Aside from graduating from a regular high school as class valedictorian, Maxino also finished three degrees in college. As the first Filipina teenager among the 10 Special Olympics Sargent Shriver International Global Messengers, she also dined with former US President Barack Obama at the White House.

Lastly, Dr. Naguit emphasized the importance of having DEI conversations and initiatives to promote mental health and overall wellbeing, whether at home or in the workplace. “Stigma, discrimination and stereotypes create barriers, and create division among people. *Mas lalong lumalala*, as it creates a general sense of “othering” -- treating others as less because they are different, or discriminating against them. These walls affect our ability to seek support around us.”

Dr. Naguit added: “The first step to become a better ally is to recognize that we are all connected. This way, we become more empathetic. Empathy is a muscle that grows with exercise. The more we learn to listen and understand others’ stories, struggles, and pains, the more we cultivate our empathy.”

Across its various markets around the world, Manulife’s Professionals Reaching Out for Unity and Diversity (PROUD) promotes an inclusive workplace for LGBTQ+ employees to encourage their full and unencumbered contributions at work and educate the wider community about the importance of equality, acceptance, and allyship. Manulife also has the Ability group, which is a community of employees committed to building a positive and inclusive environment for employees of all abilities, and the Global Women’s Alliance (GWA) that supports and encourages the recruitment, development, and advancement of women throughout the organization across countries it operates in.



Last year, the United Nations (UN) Women 2020 Asia-Pacific Women's Empowerment Principles (WEPs) Awards honored Manulife as one of the Philippines' most gender-inclusive workplaces, and the only insurance brand to have been recognized in the awards.

For those who missed the webinar, you may watch this on [Manulife's Facebook page](#) or [visit manulife.com.ph](#).

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About Manulife Philippines

The Manufacturers Life Insurance Company opened its doors for business in the Philippines in 1907. Since then, Manulife's Philippine Branch and later The Manufacturers Life Insurance Co. (Phils.), Inc. (Manulife Philippines) has grown to become one of the country's leading life insurance companies. Manulife Philippines is a wholly-owned domestic subsidiary of Manulife Financial Corporation, among the world's largest life insurance companies by market capitalization. Learn more about Manulife Philippines by visiting their website www.manulife.com.ph and following them on Facebook (www.facebook.com/ManulifePH), Twitter (@ManulifePH), and Instagram (@manulifePH).

About Manulife

Manulife Financial Corporation is a leading international financial services provider that helps people make their decisions easier and lives better. With our global headquarters in Toronto, Canada, we operate as Manulife across our offices in Canada, Asia, and Europe, and primarily as John Hancock in the United States. We provide financial advice, insurance, and our global wealth and asset management segment, Manulife Investment Management, serves individuals, institutions and retirement plan members worldwide. At the end of 2020, we had more than 37,000 employees, over 118,000 agents, and thousands of distribution partners, serving over 30 million customers. As of June 30, 2021, we had CAD\$1.3 trillion (US\$1.1 trillion) in assets under management and administration, and in the previous 12 months we made \$31.3 billion in payments to our customers. Our principal operations are in Asia, Canada and the United States where we have served customers for more than 155 years. We trade as 'MFC' on the Toronto, New York, and the Philippine stock exchanges and under '945' in Hong Kong.

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