



Republika ng Pilipinas
Kagawaran ng Katarungan
Tanggapan ng Manananggol Pambayan
(PUBLIC ATTORNEY'S OFFICE)

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**ACCOMPLISHMENT REPORT
OF THE PUBLIC ATTORNEY'S OFFICE
FOR THE YEAR 2020**

PREFATORY STATEMENT

Through the Public Attorney's Office (PAO or Office), the fundamental human right of every individual to free access to justice, guaranteed by our Constitution, is given life. Specifically, the PAO's mandate is to independently render, free of charge, legal representation, assistance, and counselling to indigent and other qualified persons in criminal, civil, labor, administrative, and other quasi-judicial cases.

Taking this noble purpose in mind, the personnel complement of the Office, from the top management down to the lowest ranking clerk, consistently strives to contribute their part in fulfilling the mandate of the Office. The year 2020 is no exception. Battered left and right by the calamities that wreaked havoc to our country one after another, the Office remained true to its mandate and guaranteed that urgently needed legal assistance is provided to its indigent and other qualified clients.

To fulfill its tremendous duty in the midst of the ongoing coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic with minimal risk to its personnel, the Office innovated its processes and adopted alternative no-contact modalities in delivering its services. In cooperation with the courts and other government agencies, the Office was likewise able to make use of information technology to hurdle the difficulty posed by the strict implementation of physical distancing rules.

In addition, the Office ensured effective communication of office protocols, objectives, and targets to all personnel; and attended to the needs

of its various regional and district offices, through frequent virtual meetings. This move ensured that everyone's focus and actions were maintained in line with the overall thrust of the Office, that is, the uninterrupted delivery of competent legal services to its clients with minimal risk to its personnel, while working zealously toward its ideal target, that is zero morbidity or incidence of illness relative to COVID-19 in the Office.

To boost the employee morale during these trying times, the Office continued to hire new employees, and promoted deserving employees who exemplify the ideals of the Office (via Zoom oath taking and orientation). Online seminars and trainings were also provided to employees to enhance their work competencies.

Through these combined strategies, the Office was able to serve a significant number of clients despite the pandemic and other calamities that hit the country in 2020. For the year 2020, the Office was able to serve **6,687,630 clients** and handle **752,196 cases**. This includes **57,002 persons deprived of liberty** represented by the Office who were released from detention since the start of the pandemic. In proportion to its **2,287 public attorneys**, this translates to roughly **2,924:1** ratio of clients to public attorneys, and **329:1** ratio of cases to public attorneys.

Moreover, the Office was able to secure **84.62%** favorable disposition rate for its cases, which is even higher than the previous year's achievement. Some of the notable decisions secured by the Office for its clients include the resolution of the Supreme Court granting the transfer of venue and raffle of the *Dengvaxia* criminal cases to a single branch of the Family Court in Quezon City, and the resolution of the National Prosecution Service in the second batch of *Dengvaxia* cases finding probable cause to charge majority of the respondents with Reckless Imprudence Resulting in Homicide and Violation of the Consumer Act of the Philippines.

Perhaps, it is for these reasons that the PAO and the Chief Public Attorney had received numerous recognitions for the year 2020 including, among others, the *Hero of the Year Award* from the Gawad Filipino Awards, and the *Special Award in Recognition of Selfless Work During the Time of COVID-19* from the Aliw Awards Foundation.

The foregoing considered, it is with great honor and pride for the undersigned to present the PAO's accomplishments for the calendar year 2020.

I. THE OFFICE

Republic Act No. 9406 of 2007, entitled "An Act Reorganizing and Strengthening the Public Attorney's Office (PAO)," established the PAO as an independent and autonomous office attached to the Department of Justice (DOJ) *only* for the purpose of policy and program coordination. Thus, the new PAO was born to be not under the control and supervision of the DOJ — in consonance with the ***UNITED NATIONS (UN) Guidelines and Principles on Access to Legal Aid in Criminal Justice Systems.***¹

The PAO Law of 2007 expanded the mandate of the PAO to include providing free legal services and assistance to indigent clients, other qualified persons, and in the exigency of the service, when called upon by proper government authorities, to render such service to other persons, subject to existing laws, rules and regulations, in all criminal, civil, labor, administrative, and other quasi-judicial cases.

Since 1996, the PAO-Central Office is located at the DOJ Agencies Building, NIA Road corner East Avenue, Diliman, Quezon City. The regional and district/sub-district offices, on the other hand, are strategically located nationwide to effectively respond to indigent clients from **17** regions, **81** provinces, **146** cities, **1,488** municipalities, and **42,046** barangays;² all of which are in dire need of legal assistance.

Currently, the PAO has **17 regional offices, 336 district offices, five sub-district offices, two Regional Special and Appealed Cases Units (RSACU) located in Cagayan de Oro City and Cebu City, and two satellite offices.** Most of these offices are situated at the Halls of Justice nationwide along with the courts and other offices involved in the administration of justice.

¹ Accessible at https://www.unodc.org/documents/justice-and-prison-reform/UN_principles_and_guidelines_on_access_to_legal_aid.pdf

² *Philippine Standard Geographic Codes (PSGC) as of 30 September 2020*, accessible at <https://psa.gov.ph/classification/psgc/>

However, some district offices are housed at rented office spaces like the PAO-Manila District Office, and the like.

II. PUBLIC ATTORNEYS, THE REGIONAL AND DISTRICT OFFICES, AND THE COURTS

Despite the high turn-over rate of public attorneys, primarily due to resignation purposely to engage in private law practice, transfer to the National Prosecution Service (NAPROSS), to the judiciary, or to other government agencies and government owned and controlled corporations (GOCCs), and also due to heavy workload, among others, the PAO has a total of **2,287 public attorneys**, who actively handle criminal, civil, labor, administrative, and other quasi-judicial cases before the courts and quasi-judicial bodies nationwide.

About **96** of them devote themselves, as counterparts of the lawyers from the Office of the Solicitor General (OSG), to special and appealed cases filed before the Court of Appeals (CA), the Supreme Court (SC), and the Office of the President (OP). However, the handling of cases and representation of clients in courts and other quasi-judicial bodies as above-stated is only a portion of the public attorneys' functions. They also render quasi-judicial and non-judicial services, including mediation, jail visitation, documentation, and administration of oath, as will be shown hereafter. All of these PAO services are available at no cost to the clients.

Below is a table indicating the number of existing offices and assigned lawyers in each region as follows:

REGION	DISTRICT / OTHER UNITS	NUMBER OF PUBLIC ATTORNEYS
Central Office	One Central Office (with six services)	100
National Capital Region	16	339
Cordillera Administrative Region	23	133
Region I Ilocos Region	22	104

Region II Cagayan Valley	16	67
Region III Central Luzon	36	221
Region IV-A CALABARZON	38	246
Region IV-B MIMAROPA	14 / one satellite office	61
Region V Bicol Region	29 / one sub-district	142
Region VI Eastern Visayas	24	151
Region VII Central Visayas	19 / one RSACU	156
Region VIII Western Visayas	26	122
Region IX-A BARMM	4 / one sub-district	51
Region IX-B Zamboanga Peninsula	15 / one satellite office	97
Region X Northern Mindanao	16 / one RSACU & three sub-district offices	95
Region XI Davao Region	14	66
Region XII SOCCSKSARGEN	12	84
Region XIII CARAGA	12	52
TOTAL	345	2,287

Table No. 1

The establishment of district offices in different regions of the country complements the agency's mission to provide litigants free access to courts and quasi-judicial agencies by rendering legal assistance without cost. The PAO envisions the establishment of adequate district offices to enhance the accessibility of its services to its clients so that justice could efficiently be delivered despite geographical fragmentation.

III. SIGNIFICANT ACCOMPLISHMENTS

1. CLIENTS ASSISTED AND CASES HANDLED

The statistical figures below show the total number of indigent clients assisted and the total number of cases (judicial and quasi-judicial) handled by the PAO and its proportionate relation to the **2,287 lawyers** for the period covering January to December, 2020.

Total No. of Clients Assisted	6,687,630
Total No. of Cases Handled	752,196
Average No. of Clients Assisted by Each Lawyer	2,924
Average No. of Cases Handled by Each Lawyer	329

Table No. 2

2. ORGANIZATIONAL OUTCOME AND PERFORMANCE INDICATORS

In line with Republic Act No. 11465 or the General Appropriations Act (GAA) of 2020, the PAO adopted the following organizational outcome and performance indicators with positive results, to wit:

Organizational Outcome: Accessible, efficient, high quality, and effective legal service to indigents and other qualified persons assured.

PUBLIC LEGAL ASSISTANCE PROGRAM	FY 2020 TARGETS	FY 2020 ACCOMPLISHMENTS
A. Outcome Indicators:		
1. Number of available lawyer's time spent for each service	24 hours	24 hours
2. Percentage of cases, including the appealed cases, that were favorably disposed	81.34%	84.62% (241,763/285,697)
3. Public attorney to court ratio	1:1	1:2*

B. Output Indicators:		
1. Percentage of hearings for which no postponement is sought by the PAO legal representative	100%	100.00% (494,094/494,094)
2. Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR) success rate	92.75%	90.38% (74,658/82,605)
3. Percentage of request for non-judicial assistance acted upon within two hours	100%	100% (2,442,919/2,442,919)

Table No. 3

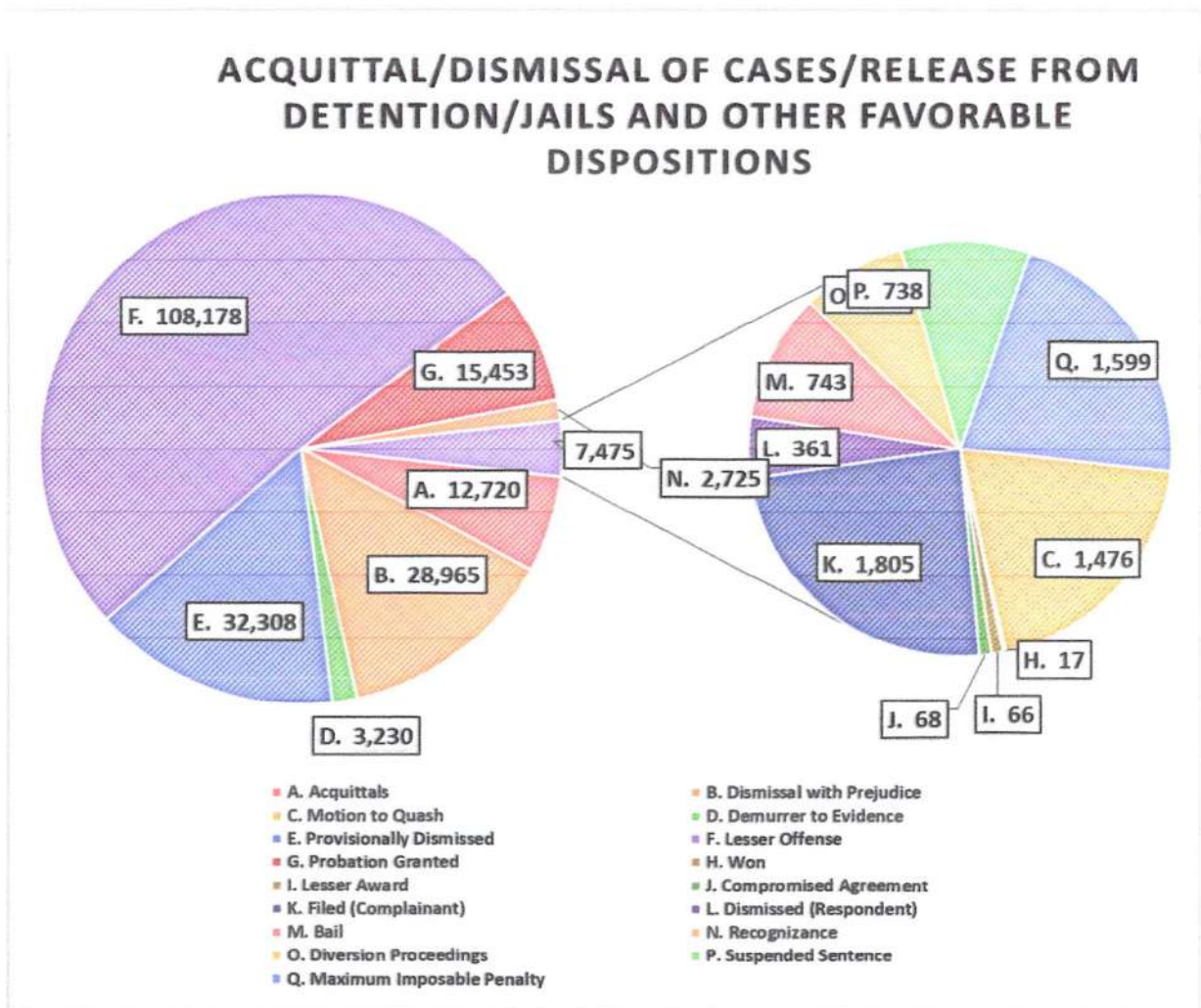
* There are only **2,427** authorized positions for public attorney *vis-a-vis* **2,465** organized courts reported by the Court Management Office of the Supreme Court as of 30 November 2020. Note further that there are public attorneys assigned to handle appeals before appellate courts, cases before quasi-judicial agencies, and criminal cases before the Sandiganbayan, and appear in special interest cases; for instance, the ones assigned at the Executive Support Staff (ESS), Legal Research Service (LRS), Field Operations and Statistics Service (FOSS), and Special and Appealed Cases Service (SACS) at the PAO Central Office, as well as those assigned at the Regional Special and Appealed Cases Units (RSACU) in Cebu City and Cagayan de Oro City. Those handling appeals are the counterparts of the solicitors from the Office of the Solicitor General, and those appearing before the Sandiganbayan are counterparts of the Office of the Ombudsman prosecutors.

The courts and quasi-judicial agencies to which said public attorneys are assigned are not included in the number of organized courts currently being used to check compliance with the 1:1 ratio. Hence, additional plantilla positions are needed in order to realize the intent behind the 1:1 ratio of public attorney to an organized sala as prescribed by the PAO Law.

● **CLIENTS ASSISTED AND CRIMINAL CASES HANDLED**

Undaunted by the overwhelming caseload, public attorneys ably represented indigent clients who are accused in court. Public attorneys skillfully facilitated the release and favorable disposition of cases of indigent clients by way of acquittal, dismissal of case, or other reasons. Their cases were favorably disposed, as shown in the succeeding graph.

The graph below shows the figures of acquittal, dismissal, and other favorable dispositions in criminal cases pending before trial courts that were handled by the Office for the period covering January to December 2020, totaling **211,054**.



Graph No. 1

- **WINNING APPEALED CASES**

For criminal cases alone, a total of **1,107 cases** were favorably disposed during the period of January to December 2020 by the PAO-SACS and the two RSACUs stationed in Cebu City and Cagayan de Oro City.

The table below shows the breakdown of figures, to wit:

Acquittals from Reclusion Temporal	241
Acquittals from Reclusion Perpetua	749
Other Favorable Dispositions	117
TOTAL	1,107

Table No. 4

Aside from criminal cases, the PAO-SACS and the two RSACUs also handled civil and special cases such as appeals from decisions of the National Labor Relations Commission (NLRC), Social Security System (SSS), and Government Service Insurance System (GSIS). From January to December 2020, **913** civil and special cases handled by the PAO were terminated. Of the terminated cases, **505 were favorably disposed** in favor of the clients of PAO.

- **JAIL VISITATION AND DECONGESTION PROGRAM**

This non-judicial service rendered by the Office to persons deprived of liberty (PDLs) has been strengthened by the PAO-Central Office Legal, Medical, Dental, and Optical Jail Visitation Program. The program started in 2007 and is now being continuously conducted in various jails in the Philippines. However, due to the COVID-19 pandemic, physical jail visitation was significantly restricted to prevent the spread of the disease in jails and detention facilities. In lieu of physical jail visitation, legal consultation and representation was conducted through electronic means, which was commonly referred to as *e-dalaw*. The tables below show the output of the project for the year 2020, to wit:



Regular Monthly Jail Visitation of District Offices Nationwide:

No. of PDLs	Monthly Jail Visitation of District Offices Nationwide
Interviewed & Assisted	246,901
Provided Legal Representation in Court	250,710
Released	43,490

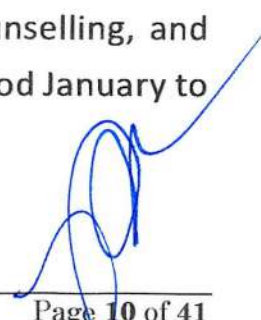
Table No. 5

- **LEGAL/INQUEST PROCEEDINGS ASSISTANCE**

On their scheduled duties, public attorneys and staff of the PAO-Central Office have been providing legal and inquest proceedings assistance even during night time, weekends, and holidays since October 2009. For this purpose, the PAO hotline (02) 8929-9436 (*local 106 or 107 during office hours and local 159 after office hours*) is open to the public 24/7.

In September 2010, the coverage of this program was expanded to serve the clients assisted by the regional and district offices of the PAO nationwide. Since then, the said offices have been rendering *legal assistance* (e.g. giving legal advice and attending to the legal needs of suspects in the police stations within the territorial jurisdiction of the concerned PAO regional/district offices) up to 10:00 P.M. every day (including weekends and holidays). Further, the assigned PAO inquest public attorneys and staff therein remain on call, even beyond 10:00 P.M., to attend to inquest calls in police stations nationwide. Even during the height of the COVID-19 pandemic, public attorneys and staff were directed to remain on call and ready to respond to urgent requests for legal assistance.

A total of **90,691 clients** benefited from the services provided by the PAO consisting of inquest assistance, legal advice/counselling, and documentation at the above duty stations covering the period January to December 2020.

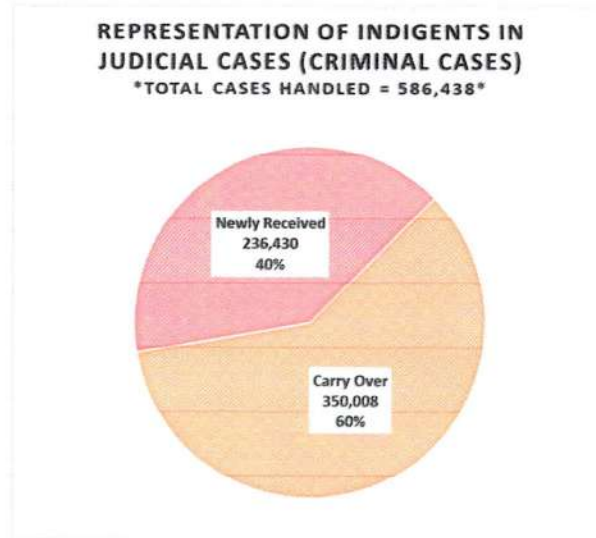


IV. CASE LOAD, STATISTICAL REPORT, AND ACCOMPLISHMENT

A. RENDITION OF JUDICIAL SERVICES

1. Regular Services

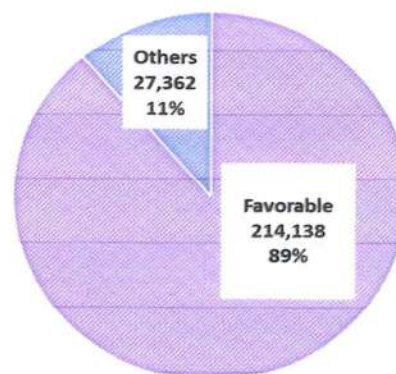
a) CRIMINAL



Graph No. 2

For the year 2020, the PAO handled a total of **586,438 criminal cases**. Of this total, **236,430** cases were newly received cases and **350,008** cases were carried-over from the previous year.

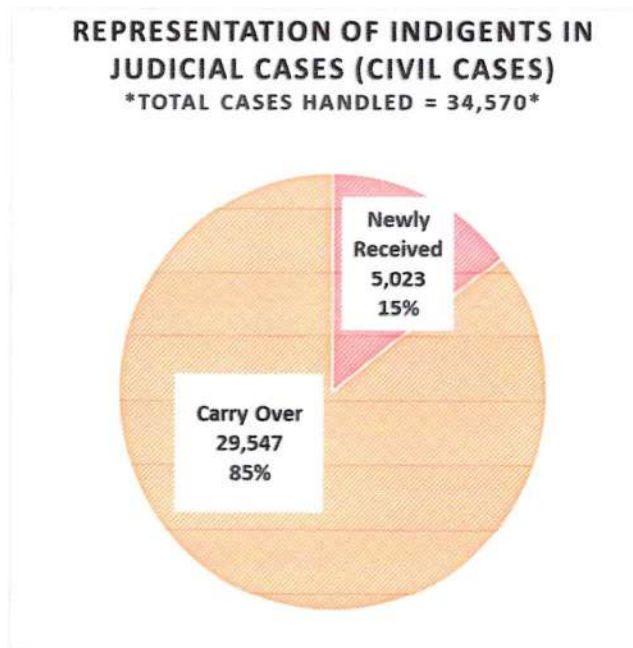
REPRESENTATION OF INDIGENTS IN JUDICIAL CASES (CRIMINAL CASES)
TOTAL TERMINATED CASES = 241,500



Graph No. 3

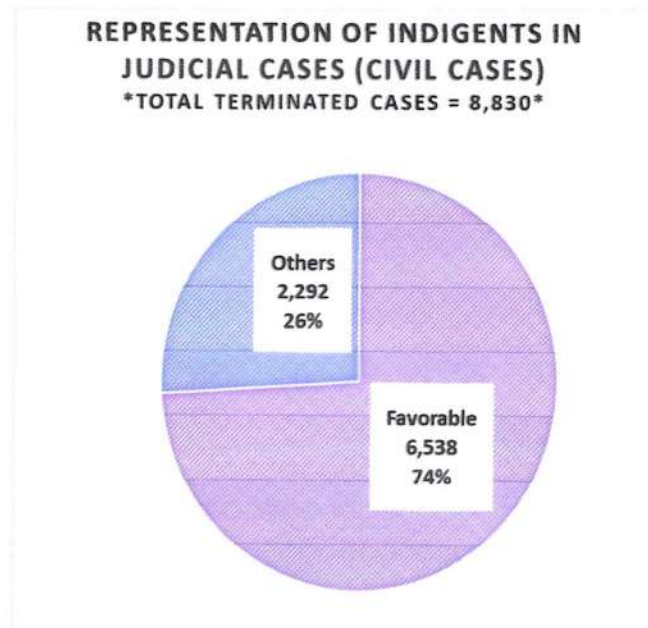
Out of the **241,500** terminated criminal cases from January to December 2020, **214,138 cases or about 88.67% thereof were favorably disposed** by the respective public attorneys assigned to handle the same.

b) CIVIL



Graph No. 4

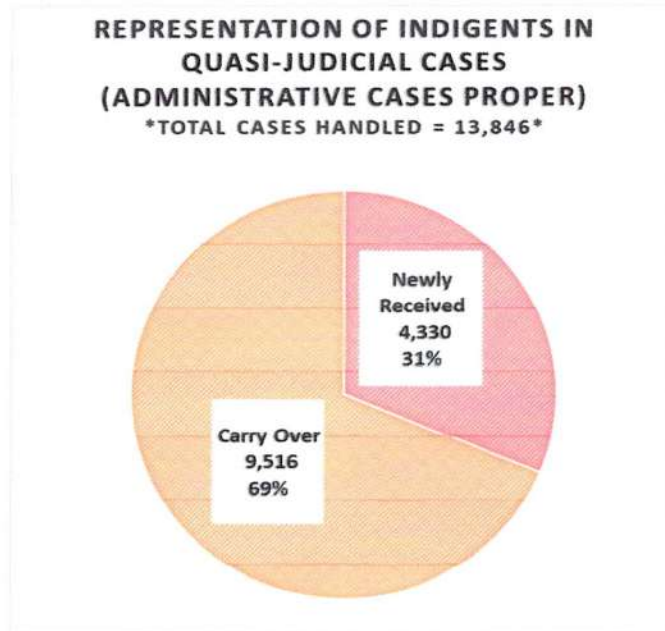
For the year 2020, the PAO handled a total of **34,570 civil cases**. Of this total, **5,023 cases** were newly received cases and **29,547 cases** were carried-over from the previous year.



Graph No. 5

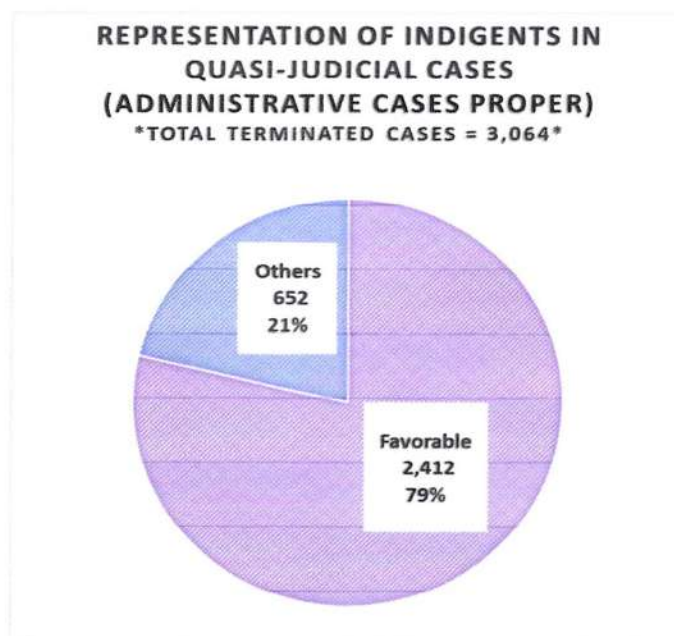
Out of the **8,830** terminated civil cases from January to December 2020, **6,538 cases or about 74.04% thereof were favorably disposed** by the respective public attorneys assigned to handle the same.

c) ADMINISTRATIVE CASES PROPER



Graph No. 6

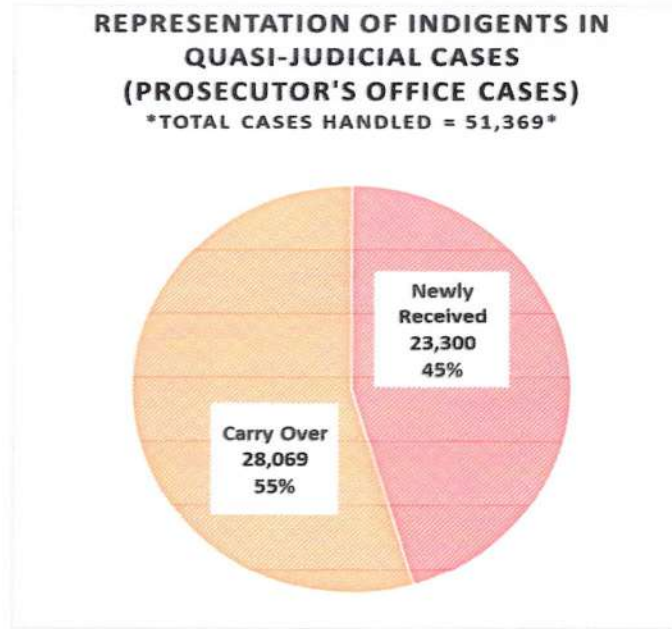
The PAO handled a total of **13,846 administrative cases** (i.e. those which involve the exercise of quasi-judicial powers of administrative authorities such as cases before the Professional Regulation Commission and Energy Regulatory Commission) consisting of **9,516** carry-over cases and **4,330** newly received cases from January to December 2020.



Graph No. 7

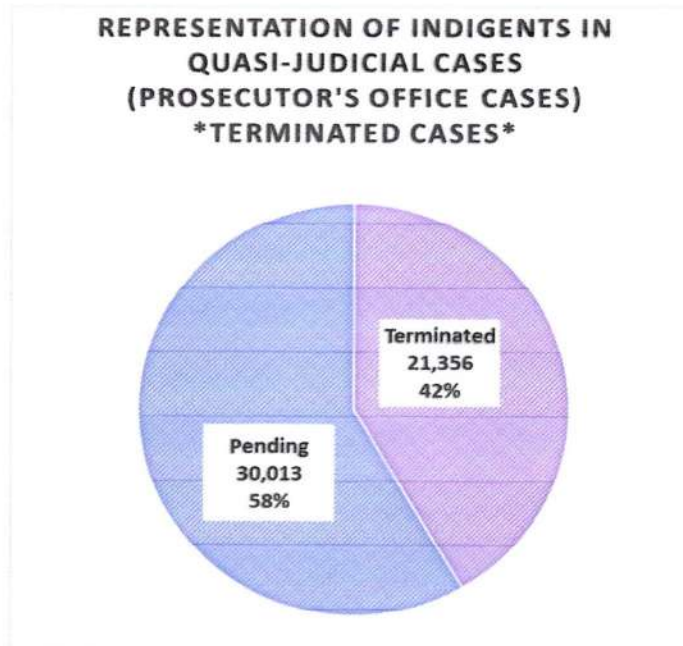
Out of the **3,064** terminated administrative cases proper from January to December 2020, **2,412** cases or about **78.72%** thereof were favorably disposed by the respective public attorneys assigned to handle the same.

d) PROSECUTOR'S OFFICE CASES



Graph No. 8

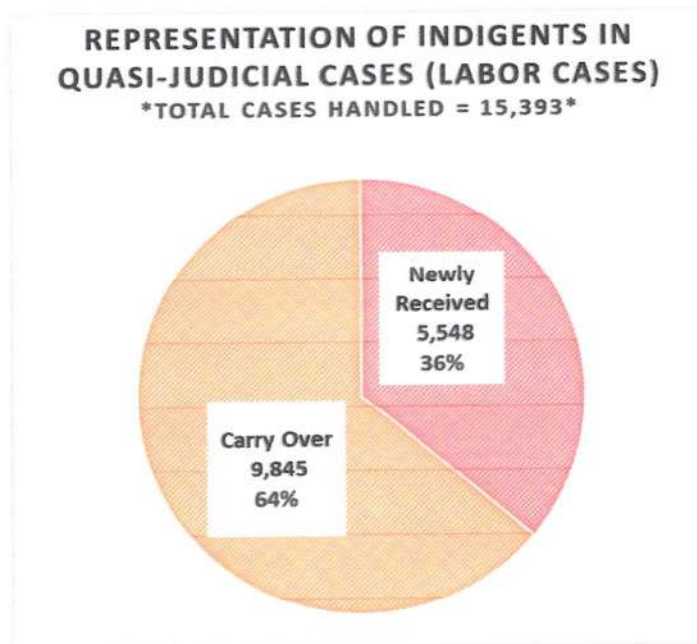
For the year 2020, the Office handled a total of **51,369 cases** at the Prosecutor's level, **23,300** of which were newly received and **28,069** were carried over from the previous year.



Graph No. 9

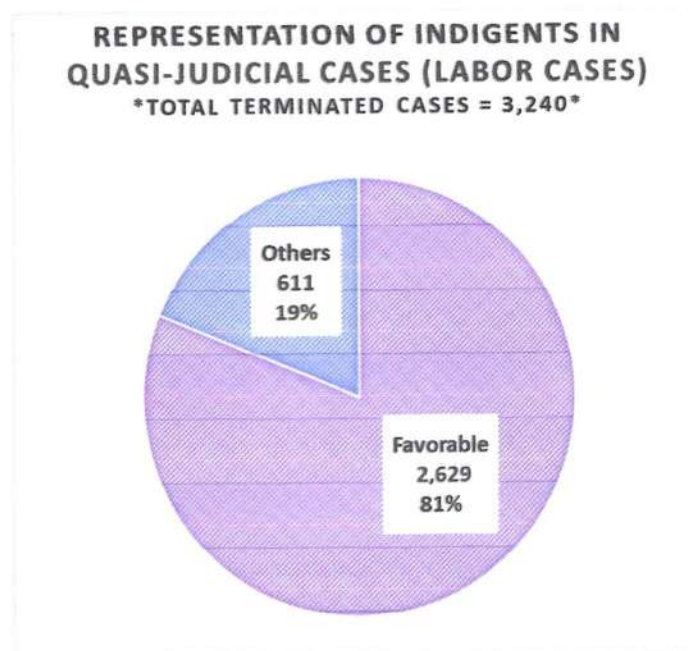
For the same period, **21,356** cases were terminated by the respective public attorneys assigned to handle the same.

e) LABOR CASES



Graph No. 10

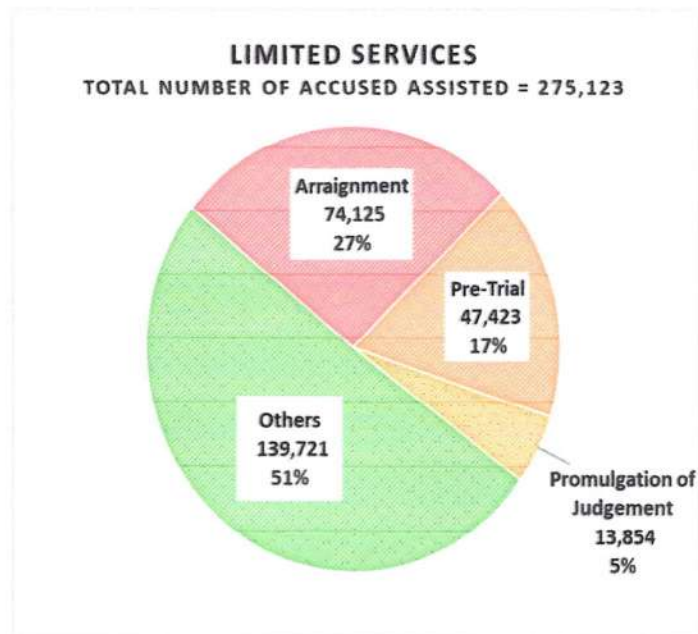
In labor cases, the PAO was able to handle a total of **15,393 labor complaints** from January to December 2020, **3,240** of which were disposed within the year.



Graph No. 11

Out of the **3,240** terminated labor cases from January to December 2020, **2,629** cases or about **81.14%** thereof were **favorably disposed** by the respective public attorneys assigned to handle the same.

2. Limited Services



Graph No. 12

The PAO extended limited services to accused in criminal cases specifically on the stages of arraignment, pre-trial, promulgation of sentence, and in such other stages of the case where the PAO was sought to engage. It assisted a total of **275,123** accused from January to December 2020.

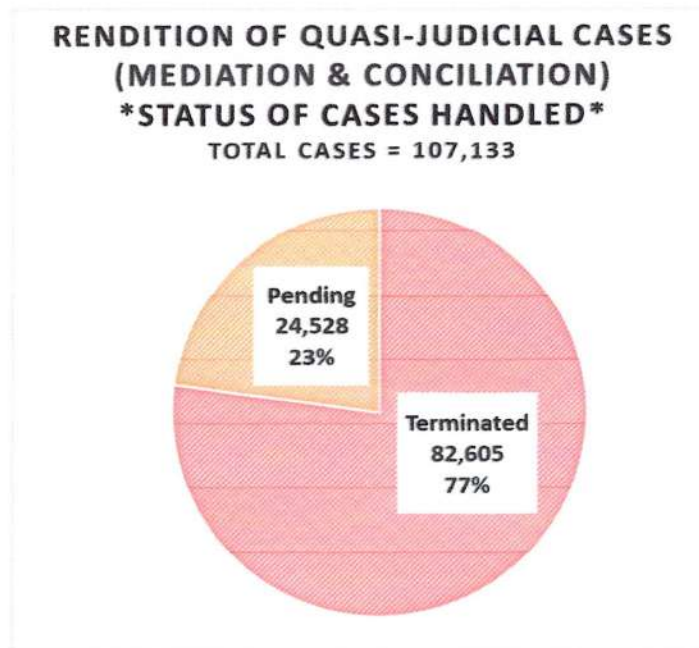
3. Special Legal Services (Pursuant to Sec 14-A of R.A. No. 9406 and Memoranda of Agreement)

From January to December 2020, the PAO served a total of **4,670 clients** under Special Legal Services.

"SEC. 14-A Powers and Functions. - The PAO shall independently discharge its mandate to render, free of charge, legal representation, assistance, and counselling to indigent persons in criminal, civil, labor, administrative and other quasi-judicial cases. In the exigency of the service, the PAO may be called upon by proper government authorities to render such service to other persons, subject to existing laws, rules and regulations."

B. RENDITION OF QUASI-JUDICIAL SERVICES

1. Mediation and Conciliation



Graph No. 13

It is worthy to take note that the Office also renders mediation and conciliation services as part of its quasi-judicial function. For the period covering January to December 2020, the PAO handled a total of **107,133** disputes and resolved a total of **82,605** thereof.

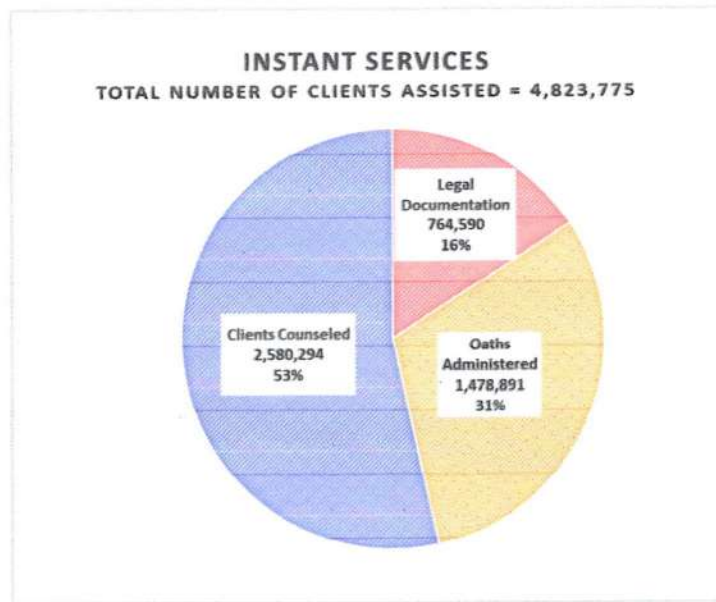
2. Investigation

For the year 2020, the PAO conducted a total of **47 investigations** of cases involving torture. The Office is mandated to assist in torture cases through Sec. 11 of Republic Act (R.A.) 9745 or the Anti-Torture Act of 2009, viz:

“Section 11. Assistance in Filing a Complaint. - The CHR and the PAO shall render legal assistance in the investigation and monitoring and/or filing of the complaint for a person who suffers torture and other cruel, inhuman and degrading treatment or punishment, or for any interested party thereto.”

C. RENDITION OF NON-JUDICIAL SERVICES

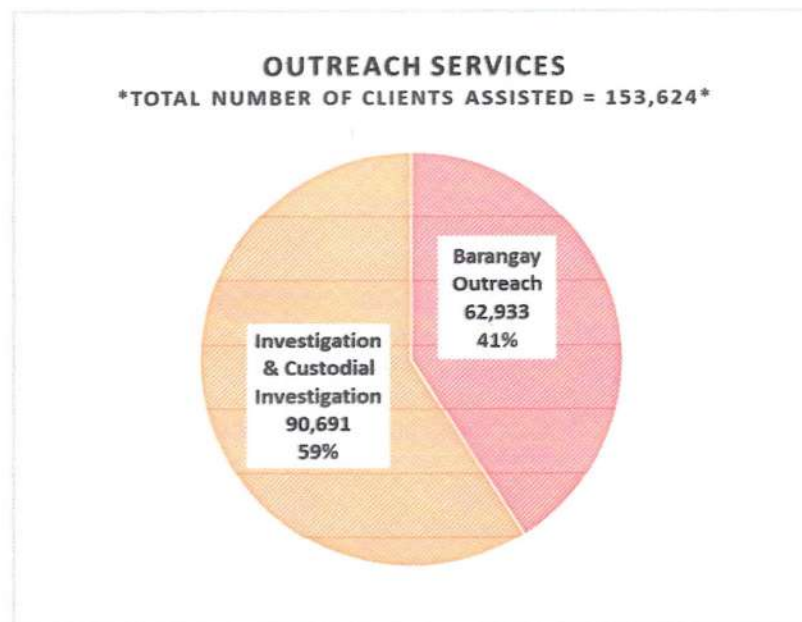
1. Instant Services



Graph No. 14

The PAO rendered instant services to **4,823,775 clients** that include legal documentation, counselling, and administering of oaths for the period covering January to December 2020.

2. Outreach Services



Graph No. 15

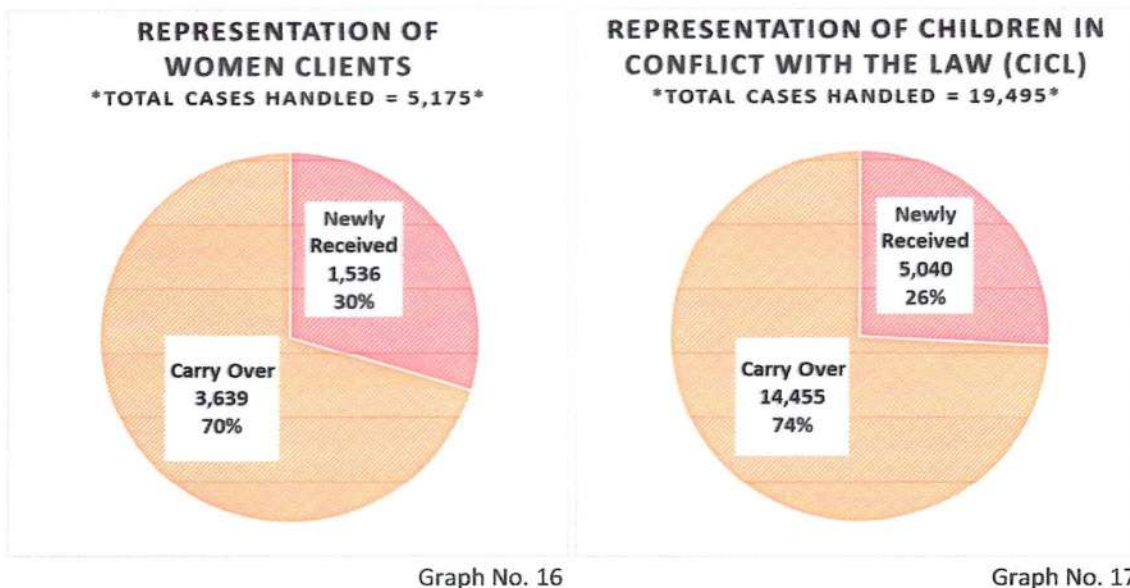
In the *barangay* outreach activities conducted by the Office from January to December 2020, it assisted a total of **62,933 clients**.

Moreover, for the same period, the PAO assisted a total of **90,691 clients** during inquest investigations and custodial interrogations.

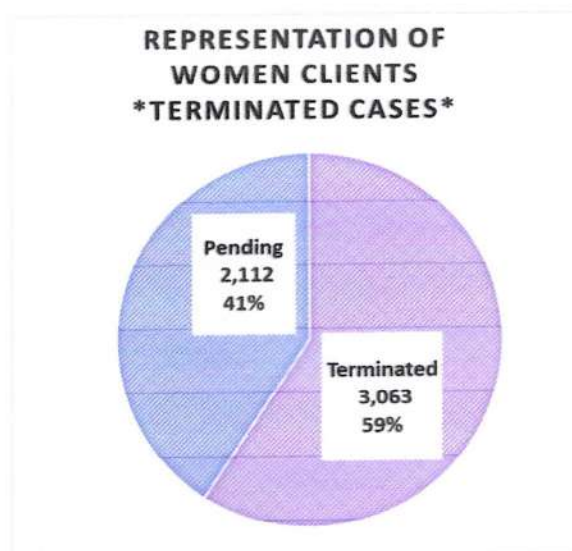
WOMEN CLIENTS AND CHILDREN IN CONFLICT WITH THE LAW

Under R.A. No. 9262, otherwise known as the Anti-Violence Against Women and their Children (VAWC) Act, and R.A. No. 9344, otherwise known as the Juvenile Justice and Welfare System Act, as well as the subsequent pertinent issuances, the PAO is specifically mandated by law to extend legal assistance to women and their children who are victims of violence and to facilitate the release and proper disposition of cases involving Children in Conflict with the Law (CICL), particularly those who were **15** years old or below at the time of the alleged commission of the crime.

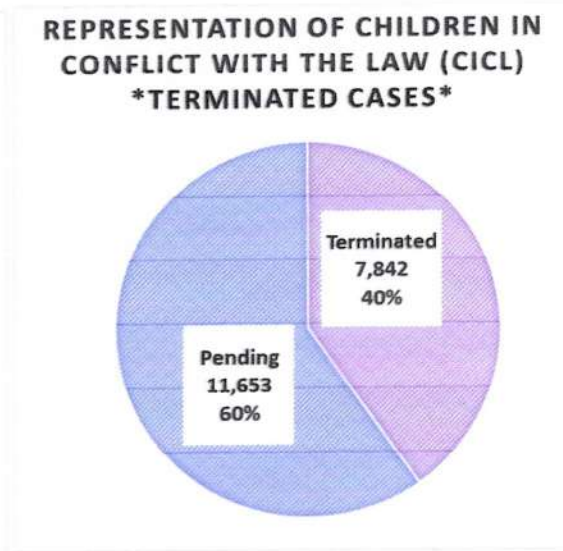
To this mandated task, the PAO continuously gives special attention to the cause of women and children, in so far as the criminal justice system is concerned.



The graphs above show the number of women and children assisted by the PAO for the year 2020. From January to December 2020, the Office handled a total of **5,175 and 19,495 cases** involving **women and CICL**, respectively.



Graph No. 18



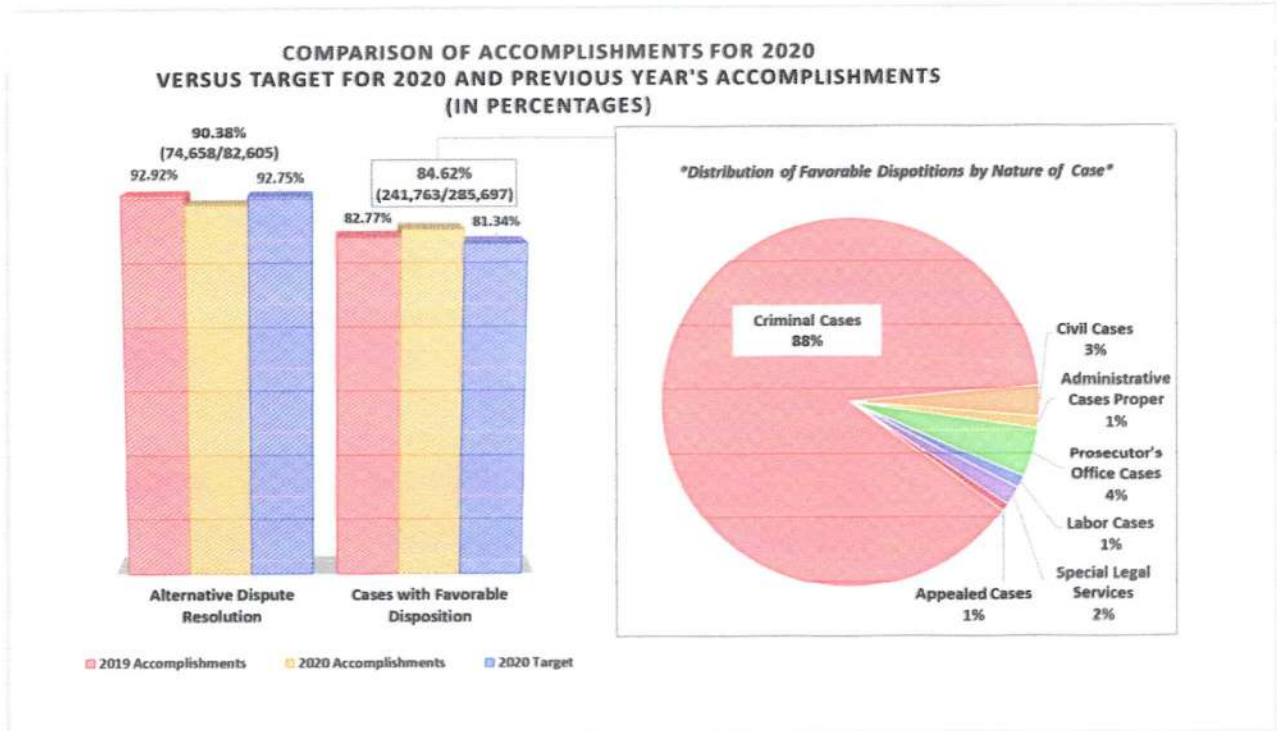
Graph No. 19

For the same period, **3,063** and **7,842** cases were terminated involving women and CICL, respectively.

The above-shown data is a testament to the continuous trust, confidence, and faith of the people in the performance of the agency.

It is viewed that when the agency performs its duties and responsibilities with the highest standard of efficiency and dedication, it gives its humble share in converting and transforming public apathy and chaos into trust, confidence, and faith to the criminal justice system and ultimately to the entire administration.

V. COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF ACTUAL ACCOMPLISHMENT vs. 2020 TARGET AND 2019 PERFORMANCE



Graph No. 20

Overall, the PAO achieved **84.62%** favorable disposition rate for the cases it handled for the calendar year 2020, which is equivalent to **241,763 favorable dispositions** out of **285,697** terminated cases. This feat surpassed the target favorable disposition rate of 81.34% (based on the GAA of 2020) by **3.28%**, translating to **9,370** cases with favorable disposition above the target. The 2020 disposition rate also exceeded last year's (2019) actual disposition rate of 82.77% by **1.85%**.

The **241,763** cases with favorable disposition for the calendar year 2020 is broken down as follows: **214,138** criminal cases = **88%**; **6,538** civil cases = **3%**; **2,412** administrative cases = **1%**; **10,459** prosecutor's office cases = **4%**; **2,629** labor cases = **1%**; **3,975** special legal services = **2%**; and **1,612** appealed cases = **1%**.

The COVID-19 pandemic significantly reduced the number of terminated cases for the present year, as expected given the lengthy community lockdown, intermittent lockdown of offices and courts, and fewer court hearings. Nonetheless, the Office was able to achieve its

favorable disposition rate, due in part to its enhanced jail visitation program with focus on allowing the release of its PDL clients, which was complemented by the Judiciary's admirable effort to decongest jails and other detention centers.

With respect to performance in ADR for the calendar year 2020, the Office garnered a **90.38%** ADR success rate, which is equivalent to **74,658 cases successfully terminated through ADR** out of **82,605** terminated cases for ADR. This number is 2.37% short of the 92.75% target success rate (based on the GAA of 2020) and 2.54% short of last year's (2019) actual success rate of 92.92%. The decrease was mainly due to the Office's strict adherence to the rule on social distancing. Given that mediation / conciliation entails face-to-face encounter, this remedy was availed only in instances where the risk of exposure to COVID-19 virus was relatively low. In contrast, majority of PAO cases are set for mediation in the past years to give the parties ample opportunity to amicably settle their dispute.

VI. THE OFFICE OF THE CHIEF PUBLIC ATTORNEY

- I. The Office of the Chief Public Attorney **received/answered 27,408 communications** from January to December, 2020. The breakdown is as follows:

I. Communication to / from CPA Rueda-Acosta	<i>Total No. of Communications</i>	27,408
A. Communication from Executive Support Service		11,633
1. Appointments	1,603	
2. Memorandum	538	
3. Memorandum Order	180	
4. Memorandum Circular	0	
5. Office Order	99	
6. Reassignment Order	68	
7. Travel Order	97	
8. Special Order	16	
9. Detail Order	0	
10. Travel Authority	104	
11. Other Communications		
11.1. Signed by CPA	130	
11.2. Signed by Executive Lawyers	8,798	
B. Communication from Other Services		
1. Executive Support Staff		68

C. Communication from Other Services		3,280
1. Administrative Service	1,843	
2. Legal Research Service	951	
3. Field Operations and Statistics Service	211	
4. Financial Planning and Management Service	51	
5. Special and Appealed Cases Service	224	
D. Communication from Regional Offices		4,452
1. Region I	200	
2. Region II	145	
3. Region III	588	
4. Region IV-A	806	
5. Region IV-B		
6. Region V	250	
7. Region VI	393	
8. Region VII	206	
9. Region VIII	202	
10. Region IX-BARMM	104	
11. Region IX-ZMB		
12. Region X	222	
13. Region XI	126	
14. Region XII	145	
15. Region XIII/CARAGA	115	
16. CAR	252	
17. NCR	698	
E. Communication from OP, OVP, Senate & HOR		38
F. Communication from Other Offices		1,112
1. Department of Justice	30	
2. Supreme Court	13	
3. Court of Appeals	22	
4. Other Offices	660	
5. Applicants	387	
G. Publications		851
1. <i>Dear PAO</i> , Manila Times	366	
2. <i>Magtanong kay Attorney</i> , Bulgar	356	
3. <i>Say Mo, Attorney?</i> , People's Tonight	77	
4. <i>Daing Mula sa Hukay.. Hustisya</i> , Bulgar	52	
H. EMAILS		5,379
1. Legal Assistance	4,104	
2. Applicants	29	
3. Others emails	464	
4. Emails from PAO-District Offices	782	
I. Communications on Special Cases		595

Table No. 6

II. The Office of the Chief Public Attorney actually served a total of **35,383 clients and other persons** during this period.

III. The Chief Public Attorney, together with the PAO Special Panel of Public Attorneys, ***personally handled and/or led*** the following cases, ***and/or rendered legal assistance*** to the following individuals, *inter alia*, to wit:

A. Forensic & medico-legal examination, and legal assistance rendered to the parents/relatives of the dead Dengvaxia victims

The surviving families of **161 persons** (as of 31 December 2020) who had all been inoculated with *Dengvaxia* vaccine, and died after mass indiscriminate inoculation without screening and blood test, sought the assistance of the PAO for forensic examinations and legal assistance. Their requests were acted accordingly by the PAO and the PAO Forensic Team, pursuant to DOJ Order No. 792 dated 12 December 2017, issued by then Secretary of Justice Vitaliano N. Aguirre II. For the year 2020, **nine dead Dengvaxia vaccinees** were examined by the PAO Forensic Team.

Relative thereto, criminal complaints for Reckless Imprudence Resulting in Homicide, violation of the Anti-Torture Law, violation of the Consumer Act of the Philippines, violation of the Pharmacy Law, and Obstruction of Justice before the DOJ, as well as civil cases for damages before the Regional Trial Court (RTC) of Quezon City, were filed against those responsible, both public servants and private persons, for the deaths of the inoculated victims.

The criminal complaints were filed before the DOJ, which formed special panels of prosecutors (DOJ Panel) to handle the preliminary investigation of the *Dengvaxia* complaints.

On 11 February 2019, the DOJ Panel handling the first batch of *Dengvaxia* cases issued its Resolution and indicted the majority of the respondents for Reckless Imprudence Resulting in Homicide. The NAPROSS filed the cases in the first level courts, and not with the family court, which has jurisdiction over the case. This prompted the complainants to file an Extremely Urgent Petition to Transfer Venue and Consolidate Cases in one Regional Trial Court before the Office of

the Court Administrator of the Supreme Court. On 26 August 2020, the First Division of the Supreme Court partially granted the petition and ordered the transfer of venue of the cases to a family court in Quezon City, with further directive to raffle the cases to a single branch for further proceedings.

Meanwhile, the PAO preliminary investigation of the second batch of criminal complaints concluded. On 4 March 2020, the PAO received a copy of the Joint Resolution of the handling DOJ Panel. Similar to the first batch, the DOJ Panel found probable cause to charge the majority of respondents with Reckless Imprudence Resulting in Homicide and violation of the Consumer Act of the Philippines.

As of 31 December 2020, **157** criminal complaints and **51** civil cases were filed against the persons responsible for the death of the inoculated victims composed of minor children, together with two public servants consisting of one police officer, and one medical doctor.

IV. The Chief Public Attorney received the following prestigious **awards** and recognitions, among others, to wit:

- A. ***Hero of the Year Award*** conferred by the Gawad Filipino Awards during the 15th Gawad Filipino Awards on 27 December 2020 at the Aberdeen Great Eastern Hotel on Quezon Avenue in Quezon City;
- B. ***Special Award in Recognition of Selfless Work During the Time of COVID-19*** given by the Aliw Awards Foundation during the 33rd Aliw Awards on 15 December 2020 at the Fiesta Pavilion of the Manila Hotel;
- C. ***Lady of Excellence in Public Service Award*** given by the 3 Stars Production, in connection with its 2nd Edition of Laguna Excellence Awards, personally conferred to the Chief Public Attorney on 26 November 2020 at the PAO-Central Office; and

D. *Most Outstanding Filipino Achiever in 2020 Award* to be conferred by the Golden Globe Awards for Business Excellence and Filipino Achiever on 8 May 2021 at the Manila Hotel. (The ceremony was postponed several times due to the COVID-19 pandemic.)

VII. OTHER SIGNIFICANT ACCOMPLISHMENTS

On the Organization and Administration of PAO

A. *Adapting to the New Normal*

From the start of the COVID-19 pandemic, the Office consistently complied with the rules and regulations issued by the Inter-Agency Task Force (IATF) for the Management of Emerging Infectious Diseases. This includes regular disinfection and sanitation of offices, strict observance of physical distancing rules, wearing of face mask and shields, and use of no-contact thermometers. PAO offices nationwide likewise took the initiative to provide hand sanitizers or alcohol bottles for use by both personnel and clients.

Nonetheless, the Office ensured that both its operation and services are sustained even during the period when the country was placed under enhanced community quarantine (ECQ). During the said period, the Office maintained on-call services in all its regional and district offices, while the Central Office maintained a skeletal work force to attend to vital administrative concerns. Thus, during the said period, the Office was able to provide legal services in the form of: court representation of litigants in urgent and critical cases; filing of necessary motions and pleadings aimed at securing the immediate liberty of PDLs; assistance in inquest proceedings, which mostly involve charges for violation of ECQ protocols, among others; preparation and notarization of affidavits involving claims under the Social Amelioration Program, bail bond undertaking, and other urgent legal matters; jail visitation to identify and assist PDLs who have legal grounds to be immediately released from detention; and legal counselling mostly

through text message, phone call and electronic mail (e-mail), including addressing the legal queries of clients through publication.

With the transition to general community quarantine (GCQ), the Office implemented alternative work arrangement schemes, taking special consideration of the vulnerable group, i.e. pregnant personnel and those with underlying medical conditions. Additional protocols were advised such as placing of barriers, use of information technology to render service including *e-dalaw*, online hearing, and legal consultation through e-mail or using virtual meeting application.

The undersigned likewise regularly conducted virtual meetings with key and senior officials of the Office, down to the lawyers and staff of all regional and district offices nationwide. Through this strategy, the concerns of various offices were made known and addressed to ensure the smooth operation of the Office. More importantly, everyone's focus and actions were maintained in line with the overall policy and thrust of the Office – the uninterrupted delivery of competent legal services to its clients with minimal risk to its personnel.

B. Innovating the Human Resource Management System

In line with its policy and commitment to adapt to global changes in information technology systems in order to be more effective and efficient in responding to the dynamic legal needs of its clients, the Office initiated the implementation of its Human Resource Management Information System (HRMIS) Project.

In partnership with the Department of Information and Communications Technology (DICT), the Office adopted the HRMIS Version 1.0 software of the DICT. It is a standard software package which has been specifically designed to automatically execute identified major functions of a human resource unit which include *plantilla* maintenance, 201 maintenance, training maintenance, attendance monitoring, and compensation processing. With the assistance of the DICT, the Office was also able to purchase the complementary ICT equipment to effectively implement the project.

C. PAO, an ISO Certified Office

The Office successfully passed its second ISO surveillance audit with flying colors. *TUV Nord Philippines, Inc.*, an ISO accredited certification body, conducted the surveillance audit in November 2020 at the Central Office and ISO-certified regional and district offices. Similar to the previous surveillance audit, the auditors did not find any non-conformity, either minor or major, to the established documented processes. Significantly, the auditors found several good practices, including the commendable top management commitment and leadership for the continuous effective implementation of the management system, and the continued provision of urgently needed services even during the height of the COVID-19 pandemic.

To recall, PAO was issued a **Quality Management System (QMS) (ISO 9001:2015)** Certification by *TUV Nord Philippines, Inc.* on 27 December 2018 with a validity period of three years.

On the Services Rendered by the Office

D. PDLs Released During the COVID-19 Pandemic

The PAO intensified its existing jail decongestion program even before the Supreme Court issued pertinent circulars aimed at decongesting jail and other detention facilities. Thus, from the beginning of ECQ on 16 March 2020 to 31 December 2020, the PAO was able to secure the release of **57,002 PDLs** for various legal reasons. Some of the notable legal bases for release include release on recognizance after service of minimum sentence, release due to imprisonment equal to maximum imposable penalty or complete service of sentence, allowance and posting of bail / reduced bail, plea bargaining, grant of demurrer, dismissal with prejudice, and grant of probation.

E. Continuing Assistance to PDLs in Consonance with Republic Act No. 10951

As of 31 December 2020, public attorneys nationwide have already assisted a total of **9,323 PDLs** by assessing their respective cases and pursuing the necessary legal remedy, if applicable. Of this number, **1,124**

PDLs have been released or are pending release by virtue of a granted petition, while **620 PDLs had their sentence reduced**. The rest are either awaiting the resolution of their petition, in the process of filing their petition, or the petition of the PAO is not applicable (e.g. application is not favorable, PDL has a private counsel, etc.).

F. PAO Cares – Voluntary Humanitarian Assistance to Communities Affected by Calamities that Hit the Country

Over and above their duties as public servants, PAO officials and personnel of the Central, regional and district offices extended their hand to help alleviate the hardships faced by our fellow Filipinos because of the calamities that struck our country. From the eruption of Taal Volcano in February of 2020, followed by the COVID-19 pandemic, to the typhoons that wrecked havoc and caused widespread flooding, the various offices of the PAO voluntarily rallied to raise cash and gather food packs, supplies, hygiene kits, protective personnel equipment, school modules, medicine, clothes, and blankets to help those in dire need. In their own little way, they were able to help frontliners such as healthcare professionals, police officers, border guards, grocery attendants and garbage collectors, school children and CICLs, PDLs, local government units, religious organizations, and urban and rural poor members of our society.

VIII. ADMINISTRATIVE CONCERNS

The PAO, in the delivery of its mandated mission, is complemented by several administrative units that render support to its technical operations. Altogether, they managed to carry out its operations with utmost efficiency and dedication throughout the year.

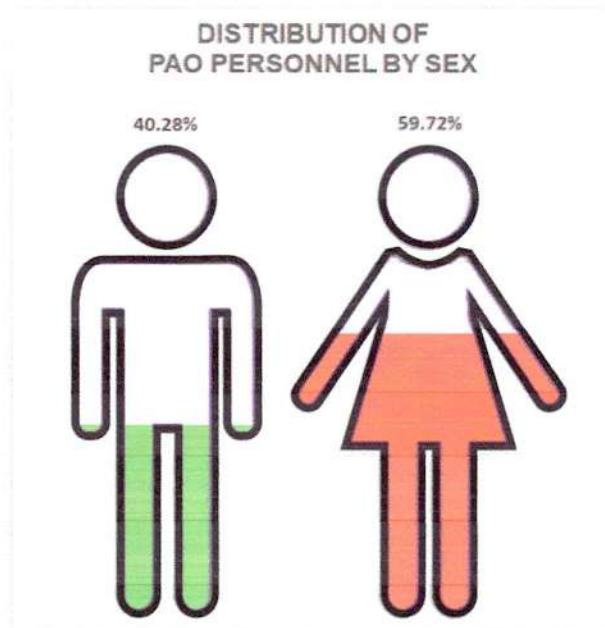
● **PERSONNEL COMPLEMENT**

The table below shows the number of authorized, filled, and unfilled positions in the PAO for the year 2020, to wit:

Position	Authorized	Filled	Unfilled
Lawyers	2,427	2,287	140
Support Personnel	1,043	975	68
TOTAL	3,470	3,262	208

Table No. 7

Female personnel outnumber the male personnel of the Office. Specifically, the Office has **1,948 female personnel**, which is equivalent to **59.72%** of the total personnel complement of the Office, vis-à-vis **1,314 male personnel (40.28%)**. Hence, the ratio of female to male personnel is 1.48:1.



Graph No. 21

Out of the total personnel complement of the Office, **2,345 (71.89%)** occupy supervisory positions. This includes all public attorneys, and other personnel with salary grade of 18 or above and supervise other staff. The remaining **917 (28.11%)** occupy staff positions.

Position	Male	Female	TOTAL
Supervisory	1,022	1,323	2,345
Staff	292	625	917
TOTAL	1,314	1,948	3,262

Table No. 8

Majority of the personnel complement of the Office are relatively new with **1,807 personnel (55.40%)** rendering four years of service or less. This is due in part to the high turnover of public attorneys who either resign for personal reasons or transfer to other government offices. Those who have

been with the Office for 20 or more years comprise the **365 personnel (11.19%)**. The remaining **1,090 personnel (33.41%)** belong to the group that has already rendered 5 – 19 years of service.

Years in Service	Male	Female	TOTAL
0-4	716	1091	1807
5-9	233	350	583
10-14	172	192	364
15-19	73	70	143
20 & up	120	245	365
TOTAL	1,314	1,948	3,262

Table No. 9

As to age distribution, majority of the personnel complement of the Office are within the reproductive age of 18 – 44 years old, comprising of **2,605 personnel**, which is equivalent to **79.86%** of the total personnel complement. They are followed by the group who could retire within the next 10 years (50-59 age bracket) and the 45-49 age bracket with **325** and **211 personnel**, respectively. The smallest age group is comprised of those who are already entitled to retirement (60 and up age bracket) with **121 personnel**.

Age	Male	Female	TOTAL
18-44	1,024	1,581	2,605
45-49	126	85	211
50-59	132	193	325
60 and up	32	89	121
TOTAL	1,314	1,948	3,262

Table No. 10

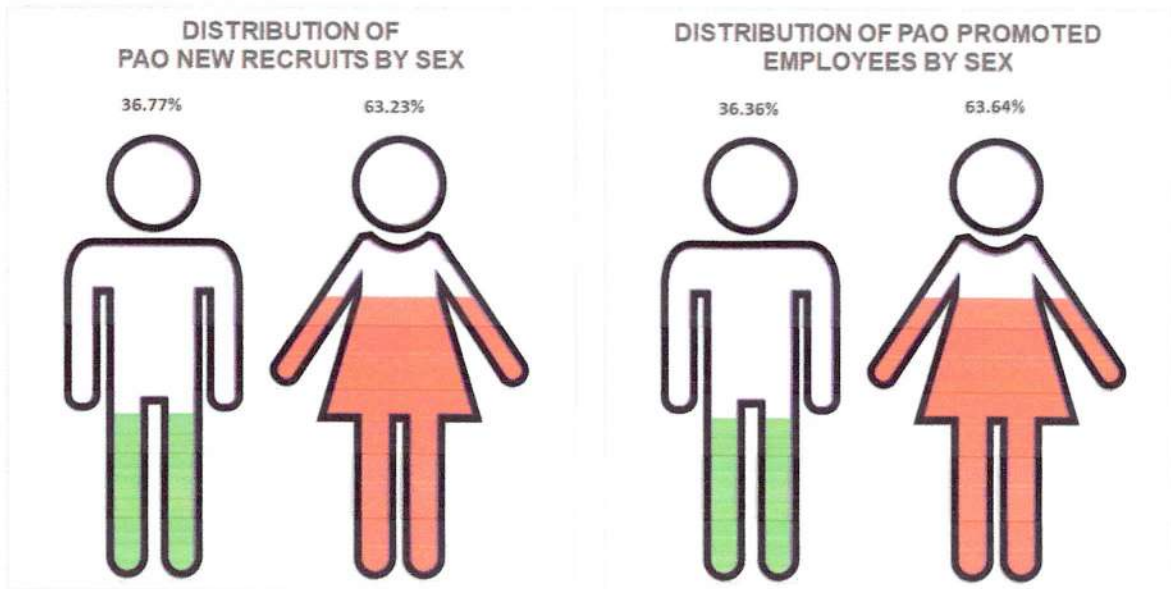
● PERSONNEL MOVEMENT

From January to December 2020, the movement of personnel in the PAO is shown here below:

	Lawyer	Support Staff	TOTAL
Recruited	157	66	223
Promoted	131	67	198

Table No. 11

For the year 2020, there are more female than male new recruits at **141 (63.23%)** and **82 (36.77%)**, respectively. Similarly, in terms of promotions, females lead the list. For the year 2020, there are **126 (63.64%)** females who received a promotion, compared to **72 (36.36%)** males who got promoted.



Graph No. 22

Graph No. 23

- **PERSONNEL ENHANCEMENT**

The PAO conducts seminars to enhance the capability, knowledge, and professional skills of participants in order to mold them into efficient and truly competitive legal counsels and support personnel.

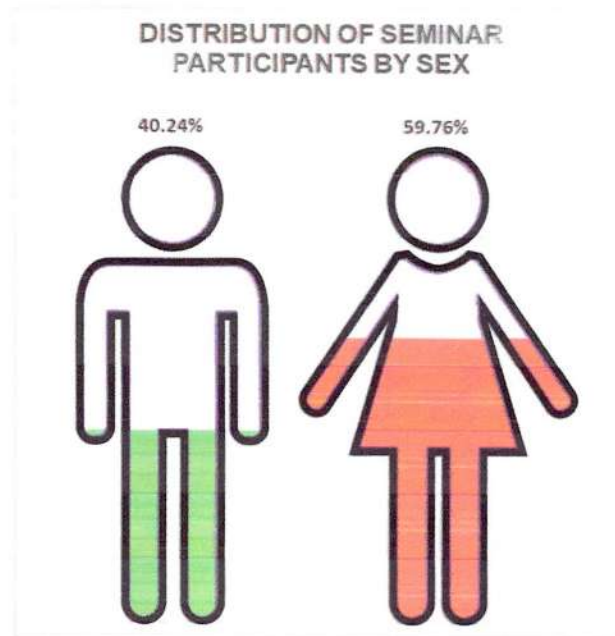
It has been the PAO's practice to provide continuous seminars and training programs to its personnel, specifically lawyers, to keep them abreast with the recent developments in law and jurisprudence; thus, ensuring the efficiency and capability of the public attorneys in protecting the rights of the oppressed, indigents, and other qualified clients of the Office.

Aside from the training programs and seminars conducted by the Office, lawyers and support personnel from the PAO have likewise attended other trainings, seminars, workshops, and conferences upon invitation of other government and non-government organizations.

From January to December 2020, the PAO was able to conduct/participate in **29 seminars**. A total of **927 personnel** attended the seminars.

Out of this number, **794** are public attorneys, while the remaining **133** are support staff.

It should be noted that majority of the participants are female personnel. Specifically, there are **554 female** seminar participants for the year 2020, which is equivalent to **59.76%** of the total number of seminar participants for the said year. The remaining **373** participants, equivalent to **40.24%**, are male PAO personnel.



Graph No. 24

- **FINANCIAL RESOURCES**

The approved appropriation, with corresponding release, for FY 2020 (per GAA) is Four Billion Two Hundred Three Million and Fifty-six Thousand Pesos (**Php 4,203,056,000.00**) and the corresponding Retirement and Life Insurance Premium (RLIP) of Forty-five Million Seven Hundred Fifty-eight Thousand Two Hundred and Fifty Pesos (**Php 45,758,250.00**) to cover operational funding requirements of the PAO. In addition, the total amount of Four Hundred Six Million Seven Hundred Twenty Thousand and One Pesos (**Php 406,720,001.00**) was released for payment of the following: a) Terminal Leave and Retirement Gratuity Benefits of retired PAO lawyers (Retirement and Pension Differential), b) Performance-Based Bonus, and c) Salary and Other Compensation of newly hired lawyers. The total obligations for FY 2020 amounted to Four Billion Six Hundred Thirty-eight Million One Hundred

Seventy-seven Thousand One Hundred and Fifty-one Pesos (Php 4,638,177,151.00);³ thus, resulting to a hundred percent (**100%**) utilization rate.

- **LIBRARY SERVICES**

The PAO, through its library services, envisions giving better and more efficient means of assisting its clientele through the use of modern and advanced information-assisted technology such as the internet, modern fax machines, and telephone units for seamless transmission of output.

Due to the lockdowns, strict quarantine rules, and cost-cutting measures implemented to address the threats and needs arising from the COVID-19 pandemic, the library was not able to add a legal book or basic reference material to its collection for the year 2020. Nonetheless, the PAO library, through its personnel, was able to collate a total of **282 news releases** from **15 various broadsheets and tabloids** for the year 2020, concerning the Office, its cases, and various programs and projects.

Through its tri-media linkages, the PAO has continuously been rendering legal advice to the general public through the newspaper columns *Say Mo Attorney?*, published in *People's Tonight*; *Dear PAO*, published in *The Manila Times*; and *Magtanong Kay Attorney*, published in *Bulgar*. In April 2018, the Chief Public Attorney opened a weekly column in *Bulgar* (*Daing mula sa hukay...Hustisya!*). A total of **46 articles** for *Say Mo Attorney?*, **337 articles** for *Dear PAO*, **284 articles** for *Magtanong kay Attorney*, and **40 articles** for *Daing mula sa hukay...Hustisya!* were published and clipped into file from January to December 2020.

³ Net of Bayanihan Act (DBM National Budget Circular No. 580 dated 22 April 2020)

● **OFFICE EQUIPMENT**

For the period covering January to December 2020, the PAO purchased and distributed⁴ the following office equipment and semi-expendable properties, to wit:

● Air Conditioner	56 units
● Biometric Time Recorder	27 units
● Water Dispenser	2 units
● Desktop Computer	514 units
● Computer Printer	472 units
● Universal Power Supply (UPS)	178 units
● Projector	25 units
● Scanner	9 units
● Fax Machine	1 unit
● Wall Fan	1 unit
● Filing Cabinet	51 units
● Office Chair	113 units
● Office Table	46 units
● Monoblock Chair	126 units
● Gang Chair	9 units
● Gorilla Shelves	9 units
● Safety Vault	1 unit

For its HRMIS Project, the PAO purchased the following equipment and softwares:

● Camera for DTR Capturing	357 units
● Fingerprint Scanner	357 units
● Desktop computer	95 units
● UPS	95 units
● Office Productivity Software	95 units
● Anti-virus software	1400 units
● External Hard Drive	1 unit

Since the assumption to office of the undersigned Chief Public Attorney, it has been her battle cry to put into oblivion the traditional impression of public offices littered with office supply and obsolete and / or worn out office equipment. With the purchase of the foregoing office

⁴ Excluding the lease of 30 copier machines for the year 2020

furnishings, such as chairs, filing cabinets, and tables, the PAO personnel were able to perform their duties in a more office-friendly environment.

The drive to modernize conventional management and recording systems, starting with the human resource system, is a testament to the policy of the PAO of adapting to global changes in information systems in order to be more effective and efficient in responding to the dynamic legal needs of its clients. Needless to say, it somehow contributed to the continuously swelling public trust in the services of the PAO.

IX. TECHNICAL OPERATIONS

1. PAO-NLRC SUB-STATION

By virtue of a Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) between the PAO and the NLRC, the Office maintains its sub-station at the NLRC, located in Banawe, Quezon City, to serve its clients.

The sub-station facilitates the rendition of legal assistance to complaining workers before the NLRC and aims to expedite the proceedings; hence, it makes its services more accessible to complaining workers. However, with the closure of the NLRC office, strict adherence to physical distancing rules, and shift to the use of information technology during this COVID-19 pandemic, the sub-station was temporarily closed. Needless to say, complaining workers may still seek legal assistance from PAO by visiting its Central Office, or any of its district offices.

The efficiency and effectiveness of this strategy has been proven for years. During its operation from January to March 2020, a total of **5,410 clients** were accommodated and given legal assistance under this agreement.

2. RESEARCH AND COMMUNICATION

For the year 2020, a total of **3,931 research works** were duly accomplished by the PAO through the LRS.

For the said period, the PAO, through the LRS and ESS, was able to answer a total of **707 legal queries**, which were published in newspapers of national circulation. It includes legal questions from the public that were either directly addressed or referred to the PAO. The continued surge in the number of research works was brought about by the increasing public trust coupled with consistent tri-media linkages as means of education and information dissemination of the PAO. Perhaps, the accessibility of the undersigned Chief Public Attorney, personally, to the reach of the public has, for one reason, made a great difference.

3. ADMINISTRATIVE COMPLAINTS AGAINST THE PAO EMPLOYEES

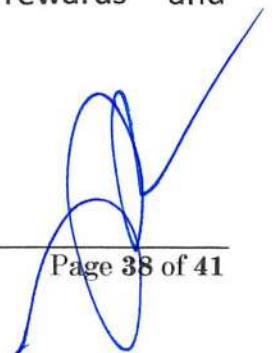
From January to December 2020, **117 cases were resolved and terminated** out of **229 active administrative complaints** received by the PAO-LRS. As a result of these cases, several PAO personnel received administrative sanctions after due notice and hearing, pursuant to the Revised Rules on Administrative Cases for the Civil Service.

This further proves the PAO's thrust in fulfilling its mandate effectively, even to the extent of disciplining its own ranks. This shows that misconduct or unacceptable behavior will not be tolerated; especially since the PAO — through the mantle of fortitude of the undersigned Chief Public Attorney — has been trying to preserve the integrity, not only of the entire agency, but of every lawyer and personnel appointed in the Office.

X. CONTINUING PLANS AND PROGRAMS

- A. Coordinate with the Department of Public Works and Highways (DPWH) and National Housing Authority (NHA) for the construction of the new PAO Central Office's building.

- B. Development of an internal operating system to address all information technology (IT) concerns, for the rendition of prompt and more effective legal services to the indigents;
- C. Organization, establishment, and maintenance of database, case management, and monitoring system for all cases handled by the PAO nationwide;
- D. Establishment and maintenance of Closed-Circuit Television (CCTV) in all regional and district offices of PAO;
- E. Maintain compliance with ISO 9000 and the Government Quality Management Systems Standards (GQMSS), pursuant to Administrative Order No. 161, dated 5 October 2006;
- F. Maintain and upgrade the PAO Forensic Laboratory Division for the furtherance of investigations being conducted relative to cases handled by this Office, pursuant to Republic Act No. 9745 (Anti-Torture Act of 2009), Republic Act No. 9262 (Anti-Violence Against Women and their Children Act of 2004), Republic Act No. 8353 (Anti-Rape Law), and other existing laws mandating the PAO to assist the victims or accused on a first come-first served basis;
- G. Development of talents of personnel through trainings and support to the PAO-Chorale members;
- H. Establishment of a training program that will enable seasoned public attorneys to pass or share their legal knowledge, strategies, and experience to new public attorneys;
- I. Integration of PAO's human resource systems and practices (recruitment, selection and placement of employees, learning and development, performance management, and rewards and recognition program) into one unified program;



- J. Policy advocacy and coordination for the enhancement of the PAO Victims' Assistance Unit;
- K. Continuously carry out activities and outreach programs for the welfare of PDLs such as the PAO's Legal and Medical Jail Visitation and Decongestion Program;
- L. Continuous promotion of good governance, professionalism, and anti-corruption measures;
- M. Continuous improvement of communication facilities and other office equipment;
- N. Vigorous efforts to implement compensation scheme, financial incentives and retirement benefits of the public attorneys to further motivate them in discharging their duties and/or stay in the service pursuant to R.A. No. 9406 (PAO Law);
- O. Increase the number of lawyers and support staff assigned in each of the Regional Office and District Office for a more effective and efficient delivery of services pursuant to Republic Act 9406 (PAO Law);
- P. Continuous coordination with the tri-media for the advancement of the PAO outreach activities, more particularly, dissemination of free legal advice, counselling, and mediation;
- Q. Vigorously pursue the rendition of prompt, effective, and adequate legal services to the indigent sector;
- R. Maintain programs and policies in achieving virtues of excellence, integrity, professionalism, and moral values of all public attorneys and staff;
- S. Achieve the ideal situation of **one** public attorney being assigned to **one** court for a more effective and efficient representation of clients;

- T. Empowerment of the PAO's capacity in promoting Gender and Development (GAD) Program of the government such as the creation of projects and activities that will promote gender sensitivity;
- U. Close coordination with international organizations and non-government organizations in addressing the plight of the poor, marginalized, and underprivileged members of our society;
- V. Continuous active participation of the PAO in the on-going anti-drugs, anti-corruption, pro-poor, and social justice programs of the Duterte administration;
- W. Continuous cooperation with the courts in the case decongestion program being spearheaded by the Supreme Court; and,
- X. Development of more effective communication systems and lines between public attorneys and their respective qualified clients for smooth and timely provision of legal assistance, counselling, and court representation despite the present global pandemic.

Concluding Statement

All told, this Accomplishment Report contains a consistent attestation and affirmation of all the hard work, dedication, persistence, and commitment of the PAO in its pursuit to represent and empower the poor and underprivileged members of society. Though faced with tight deadlines and overcrowded lines, the PAO was able to render exemplary service, compliant with the mandate of the law. All these accomplishments and awards throughout the year are incomparable to the trust reposed by the Filipino people in the PAO.

As always, the PAO has never failed to improve and innovate despite its minimal workforce of **3,262**. It was able to serve **6,687,630 clients** with **84.62%** favorable disposition rate for its cases. Essentially, the government merely spent Six Hundred Eighty-Six Pesos and 70/100 (**Php 686.70**) as legal

fees for every client of the PAO, reflecting its efficiency and practical use of taxpayer's money.

Rest assured, the PAO will maintain its commitment to assist in the government's objective of pursuing swift, effective, and fair administration of justice.

Signed this 14th day of January, 2021, in Quezon City.

DR. PERSIDA V. RUEDA-ACOSTA, DSD
Chief Public Attorney

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