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Tanggapan ng Manananggol Pambayan
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ACCOMPLISHMENT REPORT OF THE PUBLIC ATTORNEY'S OFFICE FOR THE YEAR 2021

PREFATORY STATEMENT

Access to justice with effective free legal aid is a fundamental human right. It is an essential component of the rule of law for without it, rights cannot be enforced and remedies cannot be pursued. Our Constitution reinforces this basic right by affirming that "free access to the courts and quasi-judicial bodies and adequate legal assistance shall not be denied to any person by reason of poverty." (Section 11, Article III, 1987 Constitution)

The *United Nations Principles and Guidelines on Access to Legal Aid in Criminal Justice Systems* states that:

Legal aid is an essential element of a fair, humane and efficient criminal justice system that is based on the rule of law. Legal aid is a foundation for the enjoyment of other rights, including the right to a fair trial, as defined in article 11, paragraph 1, of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, a precondition to exercising such rights and an important safeguard that ensures fundamental fairness and public trust in the criminal justice process.¹

The *Global Study on Legal Aid Global Report*, page 14 provides that:

"Legal aid is a fundamental human right. Whenever someone is deprived of his right to counsel and he feels that he is a victim of

¹ accessible at https://www.unodc.org/documents/justice-and-prison-reform/UN_principles_and_guidelines_on_access_to_legal_aid.pdf, last accessed on 7 January 2022; citation omitted

injustice, that person may run away to the mountains or turn into a rebel [...] That is why we must assist everyone who has grievances to seek redress through peaceful and legal means [...] I've been saying that if States are willing to spend billions of dollars on anti- terrorism or counter-insurgency measures, they should spend just as much on strengthening the legal aid system."

- Persida Acosta, Chief, Public Attorney's Office, Philippines²

The fulfillment of this noble duty falls upon the men and women of the Public Attorney's Office (PAO or Office). As the principal law office of the government mandated to extend free legal assistance to indigent persons and other qualified clients in criminal, civil, labor, administrative, and other quasi-judicial cases (Section 2, Republic Act No. 9406), the PAO assures that those who have less in life are afforded the opportunity to be heard, and to assert their claims and defenses before a court of law.

The fulfillment of this noble task is no easy feat, and the persistence of the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic made it even harder. The risks and restrictions brought along by the current pandemic curtailed the delivery of face-to-face legal services to indigent and other qualified clients. Nonetheless, the pandemic also opened opportunities for the PAO to further develop its capacity and to adapt its processes to keep up with the changing demands of the "new normal." Focusing on exploring these opportunities, 2021 became a year of innovation for the PAO.

Working on the changes implemented on the previous year, the PAO continued to innovate its processes and procedures. As a testament thereto, the PAO was able to secure its first recertification for ISO 9001:2015 upon the recommendation of TUV Nord Philippines, Inc. after conducting an external audit on 17-18 November 2021 at the Central Office, and ISO-certified regional and district offices.

Further, this year, the communication line between public attorneys and their clients was strengthened via official work phones and conduct of home visits to clients with special needs. Now, clients need not come to the

² accessible at https://www.unodc.org/documents/justice-and-prison-reform/LegalAid/Global-Study-on-Legal-Aid_Report01.pdf, last accessed on 7 January 2022

office every time they wish to speak to their lawyer. A simple text or phone call would suffice.

To support its operation, the PAO continued to hire, promote, and train public attorneys and staff despite the pandemic. This was done with minimal risk to everyone's health and safety as the activities were conducted virtually or via the internet. From the written examination, to the interview, and up to the oath taking, everything was facilitated online through applications that allow for virtual meet up. The same mode was used to conduct orientations and participate in other trainings and workshops. Thus, despite the strict physical distancing protocols in effect, the PAO was able to recruit a total of 258 new personnel, promote 251 existing personnel, and send 2,519 personnel to attend trainings/seminars during the current year.

In addition, the Local Area Network Infrastructure Project was inducted during the latter part of the year. The project aims to connect the various regional and district offices of the PAO located in different parts of the country to the Central Office through a safe and secured network system, and to consolidate the existing information and communication technology (ICT) capabilities of the Central Office into an integrated working network system. This year, the PAO was able to complete the procurement of all the hardware and software components needed for the project.

Among the improvements made during the year, the completion of the *2021 Revised Public Attorney's Office (PAO) Operations Manual* is perhaps the most significant, owing to its impact on the qualification of clients who wish to avail of the free services of the Office. Under the latest revision, the net income threshold was increased from P10,000.00 – P14,000.00 to P20,000.00 – P24,000.00 depending on the residence of the prospective client. As such, more people will be able to avail of the free legal services of the PAO, and seek legal assistance without worrying about the costs usually entailed in hiring a lawyer.

Nonetheless, the most innovative project that was implemented in 2021 is the #PALA (Persida Acosta's Legal Advice) Program. #PALA is an online legal counselling and legal information dissemination program that is broadcasted live and posted on Facebook, and also uploaded to YouTube,

which allows the undersigned to directly interact with clients, and render legal advice on queries sent by followers/viewers and legal opinion and teachings on day-to-day legal concerns typically encountered by the general population. It transcends physical barriers in delivering legal services, building a virtual bridge that connects the different parts of our country and of the world to the PAO, and reaches out to a greater number of people coming from all walks of life. #PALA successfully launched on 30 July 2021 with positive feedback. On 17 December 2021, it even received the ***Outstanding Public Service Program of the Year Award*** from the 3Stars Productions and Onesimo Foundation during the conferment of the Diamond Excellence Awards 2021 at the Grand Ballroom of Okada Manila.

Meanwhile, the undersigned also received ten other awards and recognitions, including the ***Most Outstanding Public Servant of the Year Award*** from the *Gawad Filipino Awards* during the 16th *Gawad Filipino Awards* held on 27 December 2021 at the Aberdeen Great Eastern Hotel, Quezon City.

Through these innovations and the continued commitment of its personnel complement, the PAO was able to significantly increase the number of clients served in 2021. For the year 2021, the PAO was able to serve **9,707,274 clients** and handle **787,124 cases**. This includes **76,364 persons deprived of liberty (PDLs)** represented by the Office who were released from detention in 2021 alone. In proportion to its **2,328 public attorneys**, this translates to roughly **4,170:1** ratio of clients per one public attorney, and **338:1** ratio of cases per one public attorney. Moreover, the Office was able to secure **83.05%** favorable disposition rate for its cases, surpassing the 81.34% target set under the *General Appropriations Act (GAA) of Fiscal Year (FY) 2021*, by 1.71%.

The foregoing considered, it is with great honor and pride for the undersigned to present the PAO's accomplishments for the calendar year 2021.

I. THE OFFICE

Republic Act (R.A.) No. 9406 or the PAO Law 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 (Section 2, R.A. No. 9406). 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.***³

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. (*ibid*)

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;⁴ all of which are in dire need of legal assistance.

Currently, the PAO has **17 regional offices, 339 district offices, five sub-district offices, two Regional Special and Appealed Cases Units (RSACUs) located in Cagayan de Oro City and Cebu City, and two satellite offices.** Most of these offices are situated at the halls of justice of local government units (LGUs), along with the courts and other offices involved in the administration of justice. However, some district offices are housed at rented office spaces like the PAO-Manila District Office, and the like.

³ See note 1.

⁴Philippine Standard Geographic Codes (PSGC) as of 30 June 2021, accessible at <https://psa.gov.ph/classification/psgc/>, last accessed on 7 January 2022

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 **2,328 public attorneys**, who actively handle criminal, civil, labor, administrative, and other quasi-judicial cases before the courts and quasi-judicial bodies nationwide.

About **92** of them devote themselves to special and appealed cases filed before the Court of Appeals (CA), the Supreme Court (SC), and the Office of the President (OP). These public attorneys are the counterparts of the lawyers from the Office of the Solicitor General (OSG). 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, investigation, legal counselling, documentation, administration of oath, etc. as will be shown hereafter. All of these PAO services are available at no cost to the clients.

The number of existing offices and assigned public attorneys in each region are as follows:

REGION	DISTRICT / OTHER UNITS	NUMBER OF PUBLIC ATTORNEYS
Central Office	One Central Office (with six services)	112
National Capital Region	16	351
Cordillera Administrative Region	23	65
Region I Ilocos Region	23	124
Region II Cagayan Valley	17	101

Region III Central Luzon	36	227
Region IV-A CALABARZON	38	252
Region IV-B MIMAROPA	14 / one satellite office	62
Region V Bicol Region	29 / one sub-district	139
Region VI Western Visayas	24	159
Region VII Central Visayas	19 / one RSACU	161
Region VIII Eastern Visayas	26	122
Region IX-A BARMM	5 / one sub-district	50
Region IX-B Zamboanga Peninsula	15 / one satellite office	96
Region X Northern Mindanao	16 / one RSACU & three sub-district offices	99
Region XI Davao Region	14	70
Region XII SOCCSKSARGEN	12	89
Region XIII CARAGA	12	49
TOTAL	349	2,328

Table No. 1

The establishment of district offices in different regions of the country complements the agency's mission to provide all indigent and qualified litigants, wherever they may be, 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 and other qualified clients assisted and the total number of cases (judicial and quasi-judicial) handled by the PAO and its proportionate relation to the **2,328 lawyers** for the period covering January to December, 2021.

Total No. of Clients Assisted	9,707,274
Total No. of Cases Handled	787,124
Average No. of Clients Assisted by Each Lawyer	4,170
Average No. of Cases Handled by Each Lawyer	338

Table No. 2

2. ORGANIZATIONAL OUTCOME AND PERFORMANCE INDICATORS

In line with R.A. No. 11518 or the GAA of FY 2021, 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 2021 TARGETS	FY 2021 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%	83.05% (248,963/299,781)
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% (612,565/612,565)
2. Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR) success rate	92.75%	89.43%** (19,031/21,281)
3. Percentage of request for non-judicial assistance that are acted upon within two hours	100%	100% (2,977,826/2,977,826)

Table No. 3

* There are only **2,427** authorized positions for public attorney *vis-a-vis* **2,466** organized courts reported by the Court Management Office (CMO) of the Supreme Court as of 31 October 2021. Note that the number of organized courts reported by the CMO only includes the first and second level courts. It does not include the appellate and other special courts, such as the Supreme Court, Court of Appeals, and *Sandiganbayan*, as well as the various quasi-judicial bodies that adjudicate and resolve legal issues between opposing parties, including the National Labor Relations Commission (NLRC) and its various regional arbitration branches nationwide, National Police Commission (NAPOLCOM), Professional Regulation Commission (PRC), etc.

With the expanded mandate of the PAO, it is imperative to assign public attorneys to handle such cases before the appellate and other special courts, and quasi-judicial agencies, as well as to appear in other 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 (RSACUs) in Cebu City and Cagayan de Oro City. Those handling appeals serve as the counterparts of the solicitors from the Office of the Solicitor General, while those appearing before the *Sandiganbayan* serve as the counterparts of the prosecutors from the Office of the Ombudsman.

Given the current number of public attorneys *vis-a-vis* the combined courts and quasi-judicial agencies wherein the PAO represents indigent and other qualified clients, it is crystal clear that additional plantilla positions are needed in order to realize the intent behind the 1:1 ratio of public attorneys to courts aspired under the GAA and prescribed by the PAO Law.

** The persistence of the pandemic made it especially difficult for the PAO to achieve a 92.75% ADR success rate primarily because the mediation and conciliation service of the PAO is essentially a face-to-face service, which is hampered by IATF protocols. Specifically, the difficulties encountered by the Office are as follows:

- 1) There are significantly fewer cases set for mediation for this year due to the lockdowns, movement/travel restrictions, and observance of physical distancing rules. With fewer cases set for mediation, there are less opportunities for public attorneys to encourage disputing parties to settle;
- 2) The lack of ample office space in various district offices of the PAO also bars the conduct of mediation and conciliation. In some district offices, clients even had to be assisted outside the office (in booths or through windows) due to limited office space. Note that there will be at least three parties in a mediation meeting (the public attorney, complainant, and respondent) so ample space is required in order to comply with physical distancing rules;
- 3) There is a minimal turnout or attendance in scheduled mediation proceedings since the pandemic started. Mediation is set by sending out a notice to the adverse party inviting him or her to come to the office. Per internal procedure, the public attorney may send three notices but if the adverse party will not appear or will refuse to settle, then the proceedings will be terminated (as unsuccessful) and the next appropriate legal course of action will be taken. The PAO can only surmise that the pandemic discourages the adverse party to heed the notice and attend the mediation for fear of his or her health and safety. Note that the PAO has no power to compel the adverse

party to attend the mediation. It can only invite the adverse party who is free to accept or refuse the invitation;

- 4) Transition to the use of internet and information technology (IT) cannot be effectively taken due to the limited resources of the indigent clients and their oftentimes limited access and knowledge on using the internet, especially those who live in far flung areas. The resources and capacity of the adverse party is also a concern as both parties must be technologically capable for online or remote mediation to work; and,
- 5) Mediation requires a human element. To be effective, a mediator must not only be competent, but must also build rapport with both parties. This is difficult to do if you have to distance yourself, limit speech, or if the mediation will be conducted online to comply with physical distancing rules.

As a result of the foregoing, the number of cases set for mediation was reduced from 161,891 in 2019 (pre-COVID year) to 82,605 in 2020 and 53,171 in 2021. Correspondingly, the number and percentage of successful mediation likewise fell.

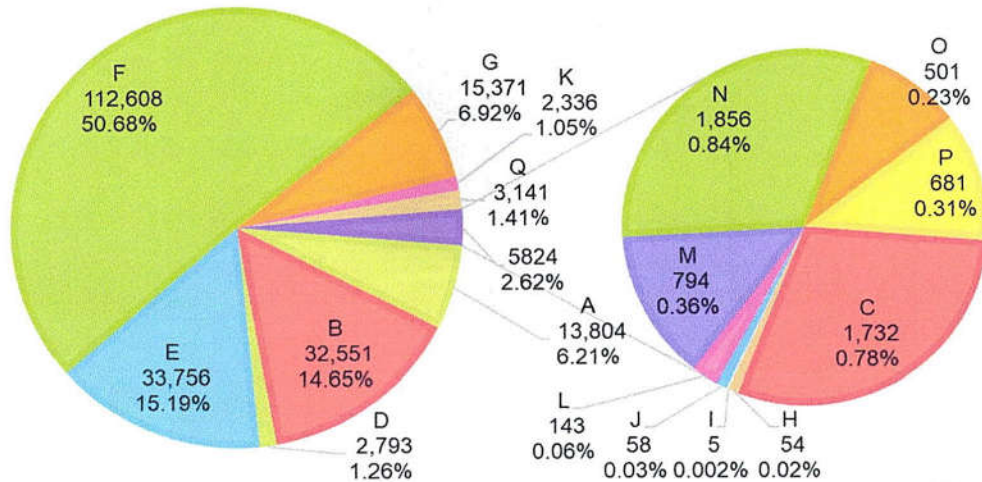
- **CLIENTS ASSISTED IN CRIMINAL PROCEEDINGS AND CRIMINAL CASES HANDLED**

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

The succeeding graph 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 2021, totaling **222,184**.

ACQUITTAL/DISMISSAL OF CASES/RELEASE FROM DETENTION/JAILS AND OTHER FAVORABLE DISPOSITIONS

- A. Acquittals
- B. Dismissal with Prejudice
- C. Motion to Quash
- D. Demurrer to Evidence
- E. Provisionally Dismissed
- F. Lesser Offense
- G. Probation Granted
- H. Won
- I. Lesser Award
- J. Compromised Agreement
- K. Filed (Complainant)
- L. Dismissed (Respondent)
- M. Bail
- N. Recognizance
- O. Diversion Proceedings
- P. Suspended Sentence
- Q. Maximum Imposable Penalty



Graph No. 1

● WINNING APPEALED CASES

For criminal cases alone, a total of **1,164 cases** were favorably disposed during the period of January to December, 2021 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	178
Acquittals from Reclusion Perpetua	835
Other Favorable Dispositions	151
TOTAL	1,164

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, Social Security System, and Government Service Insurance System. From January to December 2021, **2,420** civil and special cases handled by the PAO were terminated. Of the terminated cases, **463 were favorably disposed** in favor of the clients of PAO.

- ## JAIL VISITATION AND DECONGESTION PROGRAM

This non-judicial service rendered by the Office to 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 table below shows the output of the project for the year 2021, to wit:

Regular Monthly Jail Visitation of District Offices Nationwide:

No. of PDLs	Monthly Jail Visitation of District Offices Nationwide
Interviewed & Assisted	173,814
Provided Legal Representation in Court	324,019
Released	76,364

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 or 160 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 arrested persons in the police stations within their territorial jurisdiction)

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.

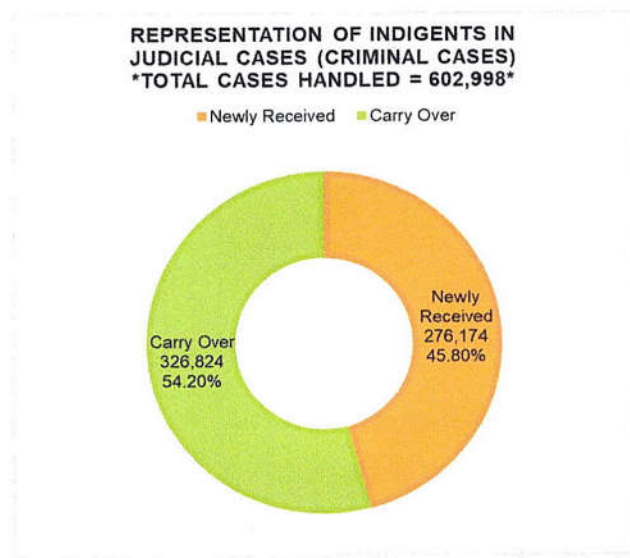
A total of **85,533 clients** benefited from the services provided by the PAO consisting of inquest assistance, legal advice/counseling, and documentation at the above duty stations covering the period January to December 2021.

IV. CASE LOAD, STATISTICAL REPORT, AND ACCOMPLISHMENT

A. RENDITION OF JUDICIAL SERVICES

1. Regular Services

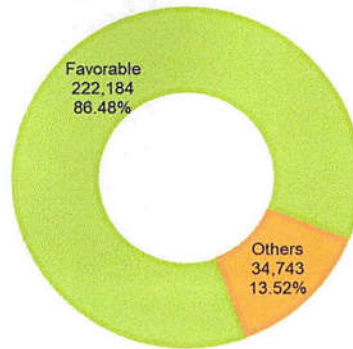
a) CRIMINAL



For the year 2021, the PAO handled a total of **602,998 criminal cases**. Of this total, **276,174 cases** were newly received cases and **326,824 cases** were carried-over from the previous year.

REPRESENTATION OF INDIGENTS IN JUDICIAL CASES (CRIMINAL CASES)
TOTAL TERMINATED CASES = 256,927

■ Favorable ■ Others



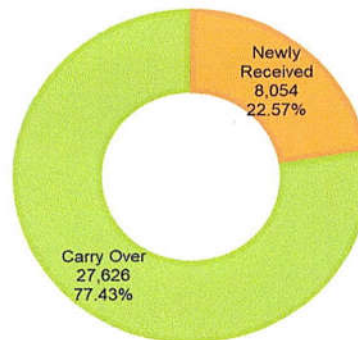
Graph No. 3

Out of the **256,927** terminated criminal cases from January to December 2021, **222,184 cases or about 86.48% thereof were favorably disposed** by the respective public attorneys assigned to handle the same.

b) CIVIL

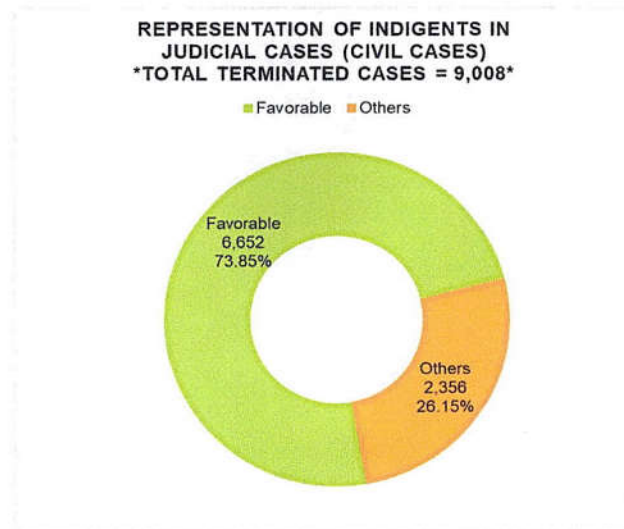
REPRESENTATION OF INDIGENTS IN JUDICIAL CASES (CIVIL CASES)
TOTAL CASES HANDLED = 35,680

■ Newly Received ■ Carry Over



Graph No. 4

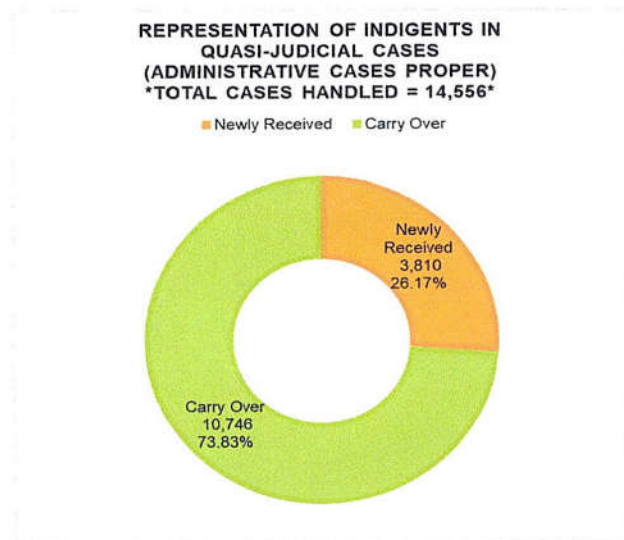
For the year 2021, the PAO handled a total of **35,680 civil cases**. Of this total, **8,054 cases** were newly received cases and **27,626 cases** were carried-over from the previous year.



Graph No. 5

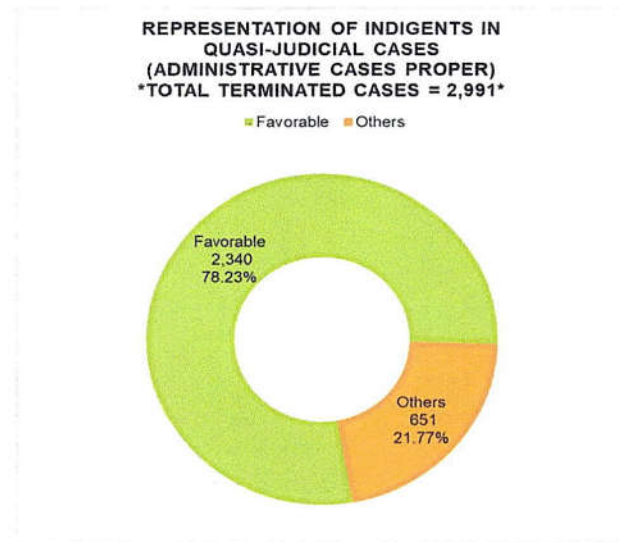
Out of the **9,008** terminated civil cases from January to December 2021, **6,652 cases or about 73.85% thereof were favorably disposed** by the respective public attorneys assigned to handle the same.

c) ADMINISTRATIVE CASES PROPER



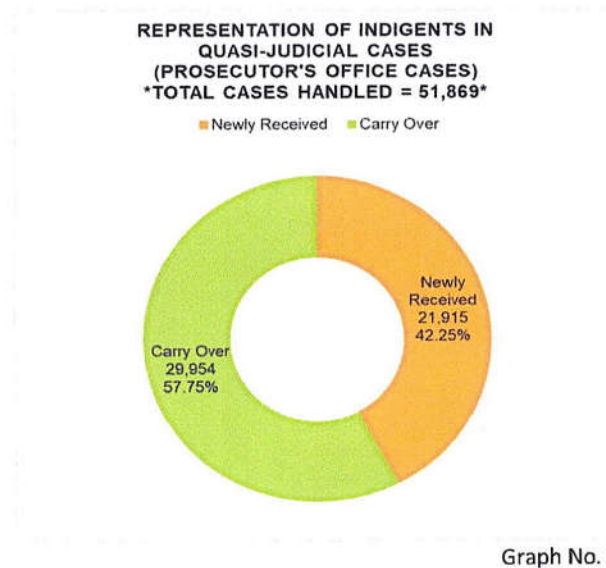
Graph No. 6

The PAO handled a total of **14,556 administrative cases** (i.e. those which involve the exercise of quasi-judicial powers by administrative authorities such as cases before the PRC and NAPOLCOM) consisting of **10,746** carry-over cases and **3,810** newly received cases from January to December 2021.

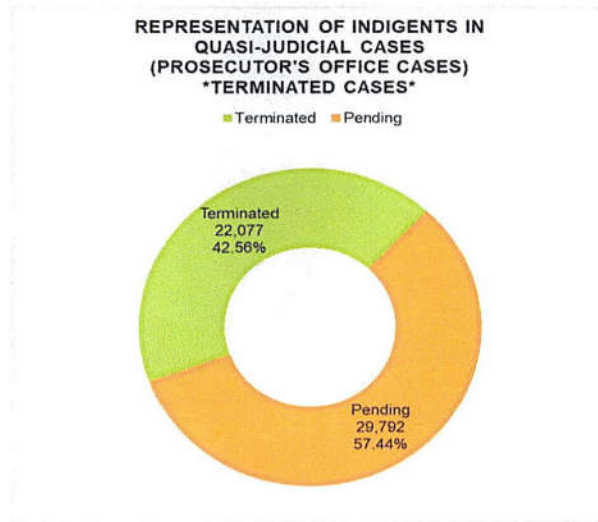


Out of the **2,991** terminated administrative cases from January to December 2021, **2,340 cases or about 78.23%** thereof were **favorably disposed** by the respective public attorneys assigned to handle the same.

d) PROSECUTOR'S OFFICE CASES



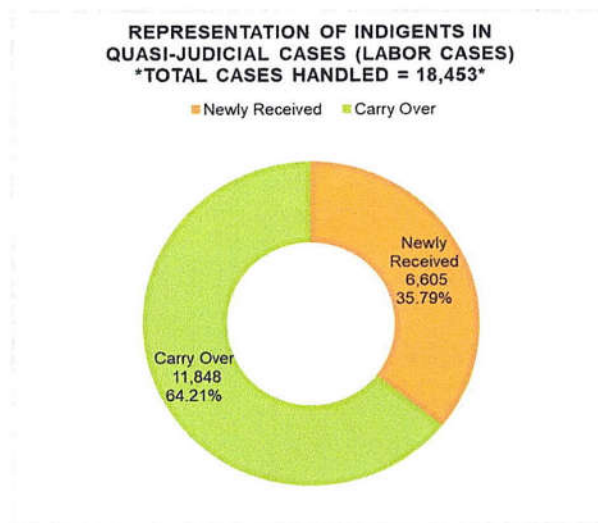
For the year 2021, the Office handled a total of **51,869 cases** for preliminary investigation at the prosecutor's office level, **21,915** of which were newly received and **29,954** were carried over from the previous year.



Graph No. 9

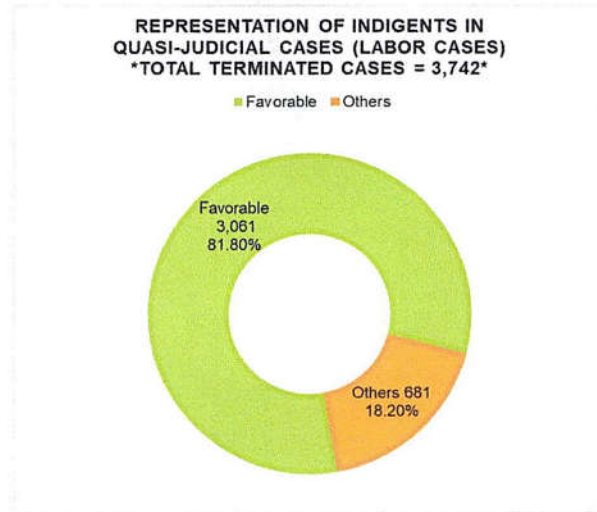
For the same period, **22,077** cases were terminated by the respective public attorneys assigned to handle the same.

e) LABOR CASES



Graph No. 10

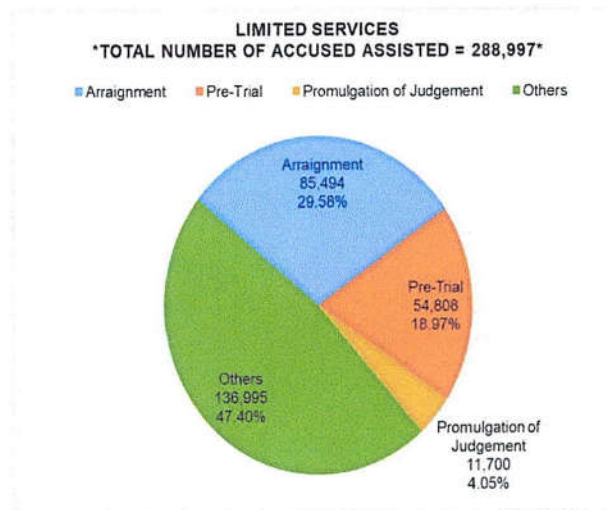
As to labor cases, the PAO handled a total of **18,453 labor cases** from January to December 2021. Of this number, **6,605** were newly received, while the remaining **11,848** were carried over from the previous year.



Graph No. 11

Out of the **3,742** terminated labor cases from January to December 2021, **3,061 cases or about 81.80% 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 clients in judicial cases specifically on the stages of arraignment, pre-trial, promulgation of sentence, and in such other stages of the case where the PAO was either directed or sought to represent clients. It assisted a total of **288,997 clients** from January to December 2021.

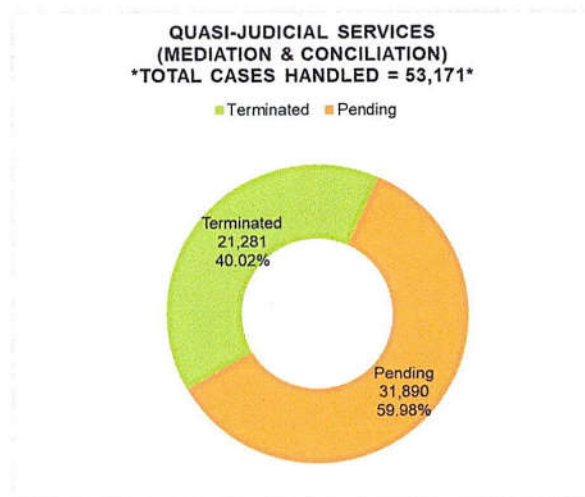
3. Special Legal Services (Pursuant to the PAO Law and Various Memoranda of Agreement (MOAs))

From January to December 2021, the PAO served a total of **2,020 clients** provided with Special Legal Services pursuant to the PAO Law, as well as various MOAs entered into by the PAO with other government offices. **Sec. 14-A of R.A. No. 9406** specifically provides that:

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 and in support of our government's drive to promote alternative dispute resolution mechanisms in settling disputes between contending

parties. For the period covering January to December 2021, the PAO handled a total of **53,171 disputes** involving **57,842 clients**, and terminated a total of **21,281** thereof.

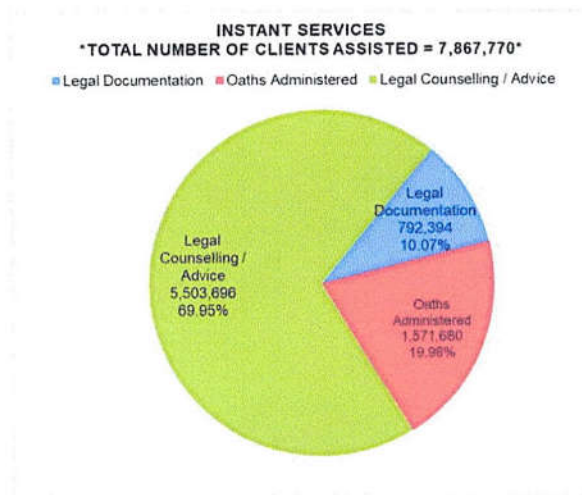
2. Investigation

For the year 2021, the PAO conducted a total of **114 investigations** of cases involving torture. The Office is mandated to assist victims of torture by **Sec. 11 of R.A. No. 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

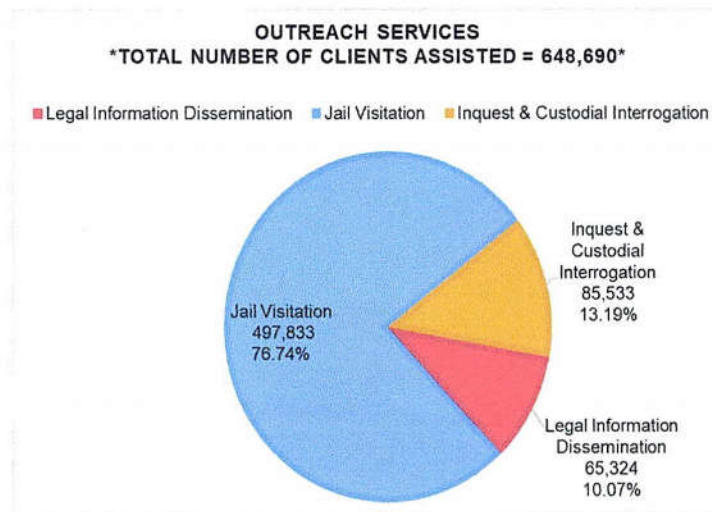
1. Instant Services



Graph No. 14

The PAO rendered instant services, composed of legal documentation, counselling, and administering of oath, to **7,867,770 clients** for the period covering January to December 2021.

2. Outreach Services



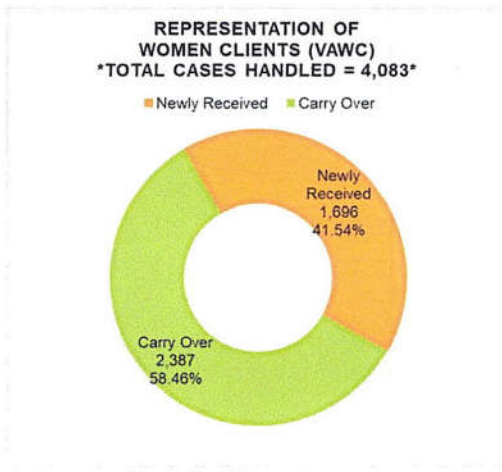
Graph No. 15

In the outreach activities conducted by the Office from January to December 2021, it assisted a total of **648,690 clients** broken down as follows: **497,833 clients** for jail visitation, **85,533 clients** for inquest investigation and custodial interrogation, and **65,324 clients** for legal information dissemination.

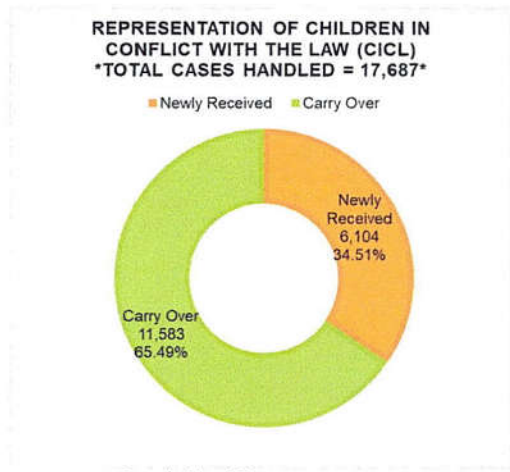
WOMEN CLIENTS AND CHILDREN IN CONFLICT WITH THE LAW

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 subsequent pertinent issuances, the PAO is specifically mandated by law to extend legal assistance to women and their children who become victims of violence, and to facilitate the release and proper disposition of cases involving children in conflict with the law (CICLs), particularly those who were **15** years old or below at the time of the alleged commission of the crime.

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

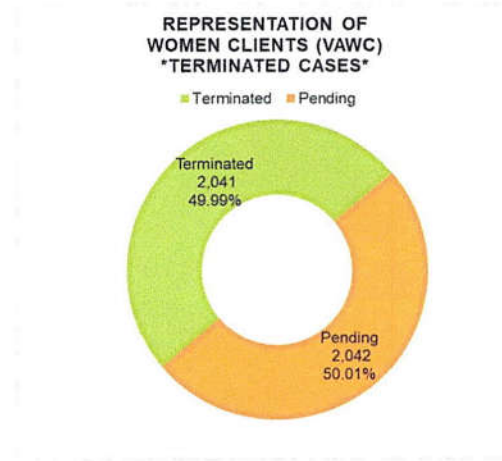


Graph No. 16

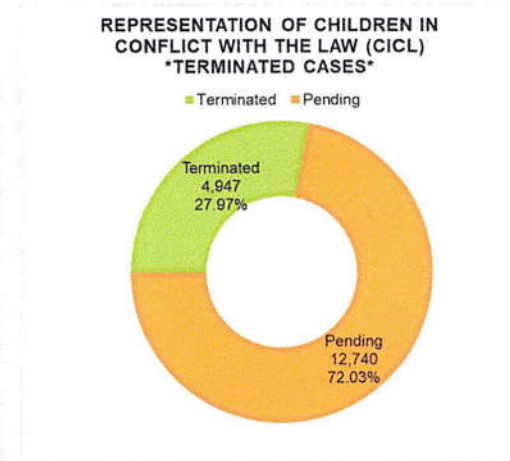


Graph No. 17

The graphs above show the number of women and children assisted by the PAO for the year 2021. From January to December 2021, the Office handled a total of **4,083** and **17,687** cases involving **women and CICLs**, respectively.



Graph No. 18

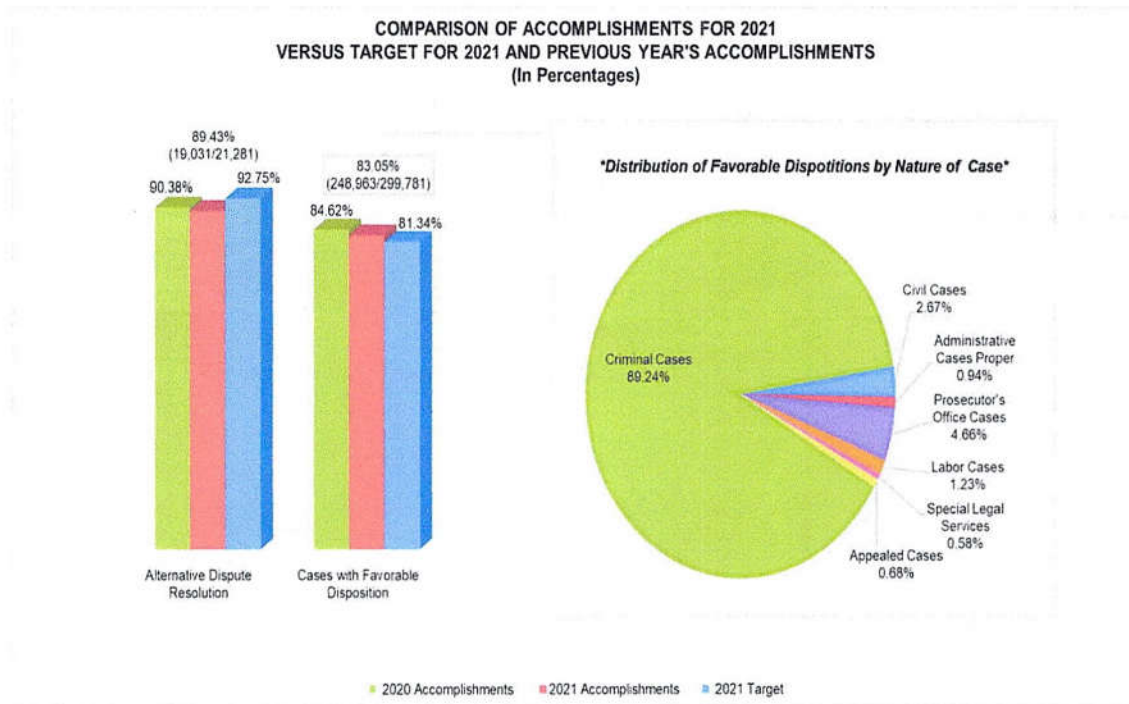


Graph No. 19

For the same period, **2,041** and **4,947** cases were terminated involving **women and CICLs**, respectively.

The above-shown data is a testament to the continuous trust, confidence, and faith of the people in the Office and the fulfillment of its mandate. 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 in the criminal justice system, and ultimately, in the orderly administration of justice.

V. COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF ACTUAL ACCOMPLISHMENT vs. 2021 TARGET AND 2020 PERFORMANCE



Graph No. 20

Overall, the PAO achieved **83.05%** favorable disposition rate for the cases it handled for the calendar year 2021, which is equivalent to **248,963 favorable dispositions** out of **299,781** terminated cases. This feat surpassed the target favorable disposition rate of 81.34% (based on the GAA of FY 2021) by **1.71%**, translating to **5,126** cases with favorable disposition above the target. The 2021 disposition rate is lower than last year's favorable disposition rate, but is well above the target.

The **248,963** cases with favorable disposition for the calendar year 2021 is broken down as follows: **222,184** criminal cases = **89.24%**; **6,652** civil cases = **2.67%**; **2,340** administrative cases = **0.94%**; **11,589** prosecutor's office cases = **4.66%**; **3,061** labor cases = **1.23%**; **1,435** special legal services = **0.58%**; and **1,702** appealed cases = **0.68%**.

The persistence of the COVID-19 pandemic kept the number of terminated cases down for the present year, as expected given the strict

quarantine levels, 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 and the increase in online hearing of cases.

With respect to performance in ADR for the calendar year 2021, the Office garnered **89.43%** ADR success rate, which is equivalent to **19,031 cases successfully terminated through ADR** out of **21,281** terminated cases for ADR. This number is 3.32% short of the 92.75% target success rate (based on the GAA of FY 2021) and 0.95% short of last year's (2020) actual success rate of 90.38%. The decrease was mainly due to the significant drop in the number of cases set for mediation, which is down from 161,891 in 2019 (pre-COVID year) to 82,605 in 2020 and 53,171 in 2021. This is due to a combination of external factors such as community/office lockdowns, movement and travel restrictions, observance of physical distancing rules, minimal attendance in scheduled mediation, and the parties' lack of knowledge and access to the internet; and internal factor of lack of ample office space in various district offices of the PAO. The foregoing difficulties encountered by the PAO significantly decreased the opportunity for public attorneys to encourage disputing parties to settle, which resulted in the non-achievement of the target ADR success rate.

VI. THE OFFICE OF THE CHIEF PUBLIC ATTORNEY

- A. The Office of the Chief Public Attorney **received/answered 44,345 communications** from January to December, 2021. The breakdown is as follows:

I. Communication to / from CPA Rueda-Acosta	No. of Communications	
A. Communication from Executive Division		17,776
1. Appointments	1,556	
2. Memorandum	1,234	
3. Memorandum Order	267	
4. Memorandum Circular	3	
5. Office Order	143	
6. Reassignment Order	67	
7. Travel Order	57	
8. Special Order	7	

9. Detail Order	2	
10. Travel Authority	1	
11. Other Communications		
11.1. Signed by CPA	116	
11.2. Signed by Executive Lawyers	14,323	
B. Communication from Other Divisions		190
1. Executive Support Staff	190	
C. Communication from Other Services		5,040
1. Administrative Service	3,031	
2. Legal Research Service	1,247	
3. Field Operations and Statistics Service	239	
4. Financial Planning and Management Service	66	
5. Special and Appealed Cases Service	457	
D. Communication from Regional Offices		4,925
1. Region I	223	
2. Region II	173	
3. Region III	592	
4. Region IV-A	776	
5. Region IV-B	186	
6. Region V	246	
7. Region VI	460	
8. Region VII	165	
9. Region VIII	221	
10. Region IX-BARMM	75	
11. Region IX-ZMB	223	
12. Region X	248	
13. Region XI	125	
14. Region XII	108	
15. Region XIII/CARAGA	105	
16. CAR	151	
17. NCR	848	
E. Communication/Emails from District Offices		1,580
II. Communication to / from FMD / CASH		6,734
A. Cash Advance	250	
B. Purchase Order	177	
C. Requisition and Issue Slips	1,934	
D. Vouchers and Checks	4,373	
II. Communication to / from DCPA Mosing		786
A. Clearance (from Personnel Section)	428	
B. Authority to Travel	9	
C. Exec-LRS Cases	229	
D. LRS 8888	120	
IV. Core Process		
A. Communication from OP, OVP, Senate & HOR		57
B. Communication from Other Offices		1,240
1. Department of Justice	22	
2. Supreme Court	19	
3. Court of Appeals	26	
4. RTC / MTC / MCTC / Sandiganbayan	21	
5. Other Offices	624	

6. Applicants	528	
C. Publications		797
1. Dear PAO (Manila Times)	364	
2. Magtanong kay Attorney (Bulgar)	351	
3. Daing Mula sa Hukay..Hustisya	50	
4. Sabi ni Doc..	32	
D. EMAILS		4,499
1. Legal Assistance	3,781	
2. Applicants	37	
3. Others emails	681	
E. Communications on Special Cases		721
TOTAL NO. OF COMMUNICATIONS		44,345

Table No. 6

- B. The Office of the Chief Public Attorney actually served a total of **3,062,311 clients and other persons** during this period.
- C. 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:

1. Forensic & medico-legal examination, and legal assistance rendered to Dengvaxia victims and their families

The surviving families of **167 persons** (as of 31 December 2021) who had all been inoculated with *Dengvaxia* vaccine, and got injured and/or died after mass indiscriminate inoculation without screening and blood test, sought the help of the PAO for forensic examination and analysis, 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 2021, **four 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.

As of 31 December 2021, **157** criminal complaints and **76** civil cases were filed against the persons responsible for the injury and/or death of the inoculated victims composed of minor children, together with two public servants consisting of one police officer, and one medical doctor.

Of the 157 criminal complaints, 16 are already pending in court, while the rest are still pending before the DOJ either for preliminary investigation or for review. Following the resolution of the First Division of the Supreme Court ordering 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, five criminal cases are already consolidated before the RTC – Branch 107, Quezon City. Meanwhile, 58 out of the 76 civil cases are already consolidated before the RTC – Branch 216, Quezon City.

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

1. ***Outstanding Public Service Program Host Award*** from the ASEAN Excellence Achievers Awards 2021, Luminare Events and Production Management, Inc., and its media partner, Sonshine Media Network International (SMNI), given on 28 December 2021 at the Grand Ballroom of Okada Manila;
2. ***Most Outstanding Public Servant of the Year Award*** from the *Gawad* Filipino Awards during the 16th *Gawad* Filipino Awards held on 27 December 2021 at the Aberdeen Great Eastern Hotel, Quezon City;
3. ***#PALA (Persida Acosta's Legal Advice)*** is the recipient of the ***Outstanding Public Service Program of the Year Award*** from the 3Stars Productions and Onesimo Foundation during the conferment

of the Diamond Excellence Awards 2021 at the Grand Ballroom of Okada Manila on 17 December 2021;

4. ***Outstanding Filipino Achiever Award*** from the Golden Globe Annual Awards for Business Excellence and Outstanding Filipino Achievers 2020 & 2021 awarded on 10 December 2021 at the Grand Ballroom Fiesta Pavilion, Manila Hotel;
5. ***Most Admired Leader Award*** from the *Dangal Ng Lahi Awards* conferred on 27 November 2021 at Okada Manila;
6. ***Most Admired Woman of Substance and Influence of the Year Award*** from the *Kagawaran ng Gintong Parangal* held during their *Gabi ng Parangal* on 26 November 2021 at the Manila Hotel;
7. ***Hall of Fame Award*** from the Volunteers Against Crime and Corruption (VACC), given virtually on the occasion of the VACC's 23rd Founding Anniversary, held on 11 November 2021;
8. ***Gems of UE Award*** from the University of the East (UE), "in recognition of her continued success, exceptional attainment and dedicated service to her profession, society and country thus giving honor to her Alma Mater and its legacy of producing life champions whose tomorrow begins in the East," conferred virtually during the UE's 75th Foundation Day on 25 September 2021;
9. ***Leadership Achievement in Public Service Award*** given by the Elite Business & Leadership Awards, "for her success and victory worthy of commendation and emulation, and for her excellence in her chosen field of service," conferred on 21 May 2021 at the Grand Plaza Ballroom of the Sofitel Philippine Plaza Manila;
10. ***Gawad Mariveleña (Parangal sa mga natatanging kababaihan sa panahon ng pandemya)*** from the Office of the Municipal Mayor of Mariveles, Bataan, given on 31 March 2021 at the Mayor's Conference Room, LGU of Mariveles Compound, Brgy. Poblacion, Mariveles, Bataan; and,

11. Plaque of Appreciation given by the Quezon City Press Club Inc., “for her exemplary support, invaluable service and dedication in her 20 years as chief of the Public Attorney’s Office and for her bravery and commitment to help millions of its indigent clients,” on 1 February 2021 at the Public Attorney’s Office (PAO)-Central Office.

E. The Chief Public Attorney served as **Speaker/Resource Person** in the following events:

1. Resource Speaker, Commission on Appointments’ Online Seminar About the “Safe Spaces Act” (Republic Act No. 11313), conducted on 9 December 2021;

2. Speaker, Webinar Series Via Zoom: “Empowering Women Leaders and Scholars for Peace and Security in Mindanao,” organized by the Association of Lady Shari’ah Counselors-at-Law of the Philippines, Inc., held on 6 July 2021; and,

3. Panelist/Speaker, International Conference on Globalisation of Professional Legal Education Constitutional Conspectus, hosted by the School of Law of Bennett University, Greater Noida, India on 3 April 2021.

F. The Chief Public Attorney’s lecture, entitled **“International Collaborations: Enhancing Legal Aid and Legal Education (Practices and Experiences of the Public Attorney’s Office in the Philippines)”** which she delivered during the above-mentioned online conference, the **“International Conference on Globalisation of Professional Legal Education: Constitutional Conspectus,”** was chosen for publication (together with the papers of other international resource persons/experts) in the book entitled, **“Globalisation of Professional Legal Education Constitutional Conspectus,”** edited by Nuzhat Parveen Khan and Garima Tiwari, and published by **Bloomsbury India** on 28 October 2021.

VII. OTHER SIGNIFICANT ACCOMPLISHMENTS

On the Organization and Administration of the PAO

A. Continuing Innovation to Adapt to the “New Normal”

The PAO has consistently strived to upgrade and innovate in order to adapt to the changing needs of its clients, and it continues to do so even during this COVID-19 pandemic. With the best interest of its clients in mind, the PAO strengthened its policy of maintaining a communication line between the clients and their assigned counsels. For this purpose, public attorneys were instructed to give their official work cellphone numbers to their clients. (PAO Office Order No. 012, s. 2021 dated 26 January 2021 *re: Submission of Permanent Cellular Phone/Mobile Number*) Through this simple yet highly effective strategy, clients are able to reach their counsels and get updates on their cases with minimal risk as both physical interaction and travel outside of one’s residence are dispensed with.

Addressing the special needs of certain clients, the Office authorized the conduct of home visit to persons with disability, abandoned children, and senior citizen clients who need urgent legal assistance but could not come to the office, with strict instruction to public attorneys to comply with duly issued health and safety standards. This is authorized for case conference, preparation for trial, and execution of affidavits and other legal documents, among others. (PAO Office Order No. 053, s. 2021 dated 27 May 2021 *re: Personal Visit to Handicapped and Other Similarly Incapacitated Clients*)

Finally, the Office further extended its reach during the pandemic by engaging its clients through social media. The innovative #PALA Program, an online legal counselling program that is broadcasted live and posted on Facebook, and also uploaded to YouTube, allowed the Chief Public Attorney to directly interact with clients, and render legal advice on queries sent by followers/viewers (from the Philippines and other countries as well) and legal opinion and teachings on day-to-day legal concerns typically encountered by the general population. The first

episode of #PALA was aired on 30 July 2021 with positive feedback. As of 31 December 2021, a total of **40 episodes** have been aired over Facebook, which can still be accessed by netizens.

Through these innovations, the undersigned Chief Public Attorney only hopes to lighten the burden of the PAO's clients, aggravated by the pandemic.

B. Completion of the 2021 Revised Public Attorney's Office (PAO) Operations Manual

Following a series of meetings and consultations, capped by a final review conducted by the top management of the PAO where each and every provision under consideration were meticulously deliberated, the *2021 Revised Public Attorney's Office (PAO) Operations Manual* was finally signed on 14 December 2021. Among the key revisions made on the said manual, the increase in the net income threshold for the indigency test takes precedence. Under the latest revision, the net income threshold was increased from P10,000.00 – P14,000.00 to P20,000.00 – P24,000.00. To be precise, upon its implementation, the following persons shall be considered as indigent:

1. If residing in cities or municipalities within the National Capital Region (NCR), persons whose individual net income does not exceed Twenty-four Thousand Pesos (P24,000.00) a month;
2. If residing in other cities outside the NCR, persons whose individual net income does not exceed Twenty-two Thousand Pesos (P22,000.00) a month; and,
3. If residing in municipalities outside the NCR, persons whose individual net income does not exceed Twenty Thousand Pesos (P20,000.00) a month.

For easier understanding by the general public, a Filipino version of the *2021 Revised Public Attorney's Office (PAO) Operations Manual* was issued together with the English version. The english version of the *2021 Revised Public Attorney's Office (PAO) Operations Manual* was published

on 20 December 2021 and took effect fifteen days thereafter on 4 January 2022. On the other hand, the Filipino version was also published on 4 January 2022 .

C. Induction of Local Area Network (LAN) Infrastructure Project

This year, the Office was able to complete the procurement of all the hardware and software components of its LAN Infrastructure Project. This project aims to connect the various regional and district offices of the PAO located in different parts of the country to the Central Office through a safe and secured network system. It likewise targets to consolidate and organize the existing ICT capabilities of the Central Office into an integrated working network system capable of handling its current operational needs, with ample room for expansion to address its foreseeable ICT requirements, and to complement the Human Resource Management Information System Project implemented during the previous year.

Once fully implemented, the Office will have a more efficient internal communication line between and among its various units, and bring the PAO one step closer to achieving its goal of modernizing its internal management systems through the use of information technology.

D. Successful ISO 9001:2015 Recertification

This year, the PAO successfully completed one full certification cycle and applied for ISO 9001:2015 recertification, through **TUV Nord Philippines, Inc.**, an ISO-accredited certification body. The external audit was conducted on 17-18 November 2021 at the Central Office, and ISO-certified regional and district offices. It yielded positive result, with the auditors concluding that all conditions for recertification were fulfilled, without any non-conformity finding. Significantly, the auditors even found several good practices, including the implementation of programs in response to the COVID-19 pandemic, recognitions awarded by distinctive individuals and organizations, and continuous conduct of comprehensive management review. Thus, TUV Nord Philippines, Inc.

issued a new ISO 9001:2015 Certificate to PAO, which is valid for a period of three years from 21 December 2021 to 20 December 2024.

On the Services Rendered by the Office

E. PDLs Released During the COVID-19 Pandemic

The persistence of the COVID-19 pandemic called for the continued attention of the PAO in guarding not only the legal rights of its clients, but also their health and safety. This is especially true in the case of its PDL clients who face tremendous risk in congested jails and detention facilities. With the vigilance of our public attorneys, the PAO was able to secure the release of **76,364 PDLs** for the whole year 2021. Some of the notable legal bases for release of PDL clients 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.

F. Continuing Assistance to PDLs in Consonance with R.A. No. 10951

For the year 2021, public attorneys nationwide assisted a total of **6,827 PDLs** relative to R.A. No. 10951, entitled "An Act Adjusting the Amount or the Value of Property and Damage on Which a Penalty is Based and the Fines Imposed Under the Revised Penal Code, Amending for the Purpose Act No. 3815, Otherwise Known as "The Revised Penal Code", as Amended", by assessing their respective cases and pursuing the necessary legal remedy, if applicable. Of this number, **1,353 PDLs have been released** or are pending release by virtue of a granted petition, while **782 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.). From the passage of the said law on 29 August 2017 up to 31 December 2021, the PAO already assisted a total of **31,031 PDLs** through legal advice, documentation service, and legal representation, when necessary.

G. Acquittal of Members of Indigenous Group Charged with Violation of the Anti-Terror Law

On 21 August 2020, Mr. Japer Gurung and Mr. Junior Ramos, both Aeta farmers, were arrested in San Marcelino, Zambales and accused of being members of the New People's Army (NPA) who fired at soldiers of the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP). Upon their arrest, they were allegedly carrying ammunitions and grenades. As such, they were charged with Violation of R.A. No. 11479, known as the "Anti-Terrorism Act of 2020", among others. Their case is the first involving the controversial law, which faced constitutional challenge filed by various groups.

As their counsel of choice, the PAO-Olongapo City District Office represented Mr. Gurung and Mr. Ramos during the proceedings before the RTC – Branch 97, Olongapo City. After the presentation of the prosecution's evidence, the PAO filed a Demurrer to Evidence on the ground of failure to prove their identity as the perpetrators of the crime of terrorism. On 15 July 2021, the court issued a decision granting the demurrer and ruling further that the arrest of Mr. Gurung and Mr. Ramos, as well as the seizure of the alleged ammunitions and grenades found in their possession, are illegal. Consequently, all cases filed against them were dismissed, and they were released from detention.

H. Assistance to the Father of Ten-Year Old Raymark Mariano

Ten-year old Raymark Mariano went viral on social media after his heartbreaking story was featured on *Kapuso Mo, Jessica Soho (KMJS)* in May 2021. Despite his young age, he was forced to plow rice fields to support his aging grandparents in the absence of his father, Rene Boy Mariano, who absconded to evade a criminal case.

Upon referral of the case, the PAO-Isulan, Sultan Kudarat District Office immediately acted. It determined that the charge against Rene Boy is for illegal possession of firearms. Efforts were then made to encourage him to submit to the jurisdiction of the court so that his case can proceed; to which he acceded. Upon his voluntary surrender, the

Office secured the reduction of his bail by one-half from One Hundred Thousand Pesos (P 100,000.00) to Fifty Thousand Pesos (P 50,000.00), and assisted in posting his reduced bail so that he may avoid jail time while his case is being heard. At present, his case is set for arraignment and pre-trial under the guidance of the judge-at-large who recently took over the case.

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.

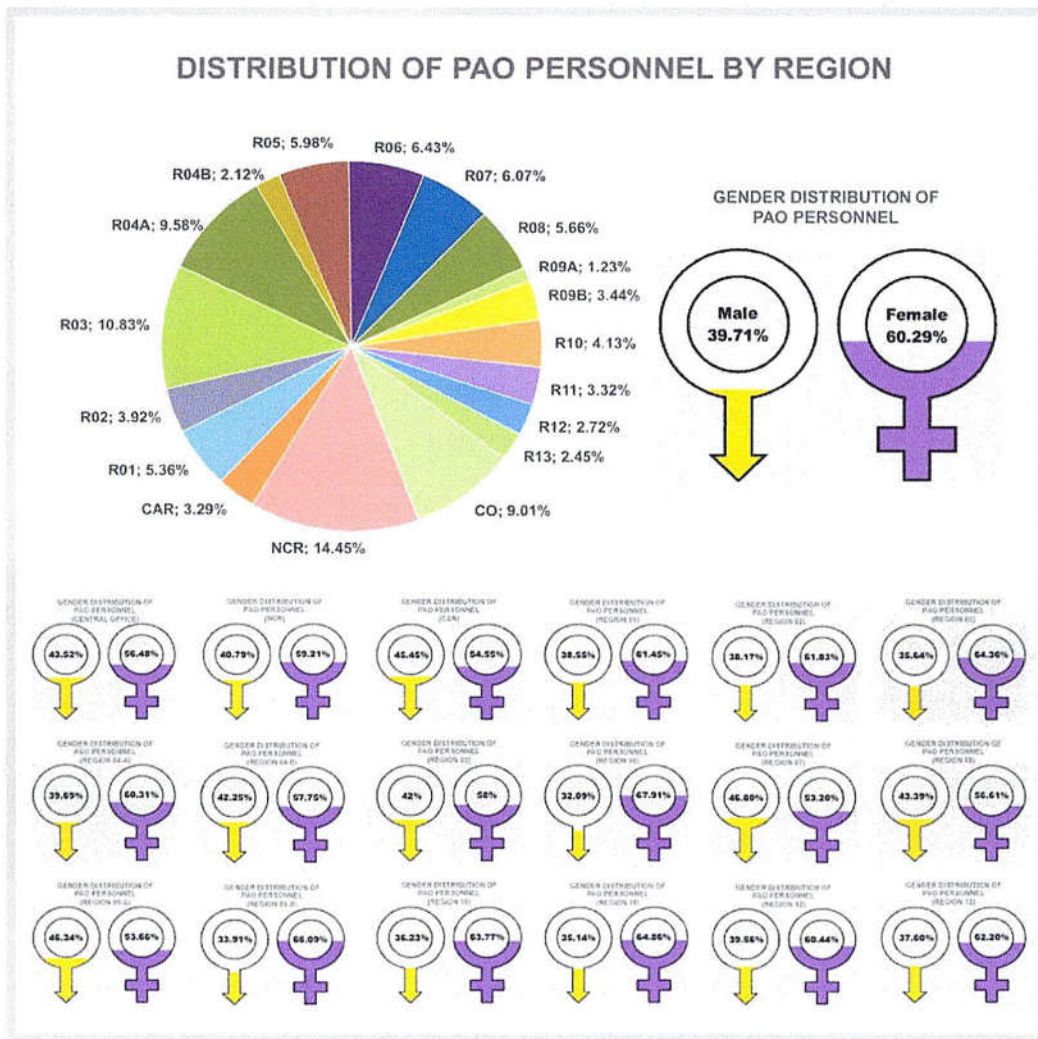
- **PERSONNEL COMPLEMENT**

The table below shows the number of authorized, filled, and unfilled positions in the PAO for the year 2021, to wit:

Position	Authorized	Filled	Unfilled
Lawyers	2,427	2,328	99
Support Personnel	1,043	1,014	29
TOTAL	3,470	3,342	128

Table No. 7

Similar to the previous year, there are more female personnel than male personnel. Specifically, the Office has **2,015 female personnel**, which is equivalent to **60.29%** of the total personnel complement of the Office, vis-à-vis **1,327 male personnel (39.71%)**. Hence, the ratio of female to male personnel for the year 2021 slightly increased from 1.48:1 to 1.52:1.



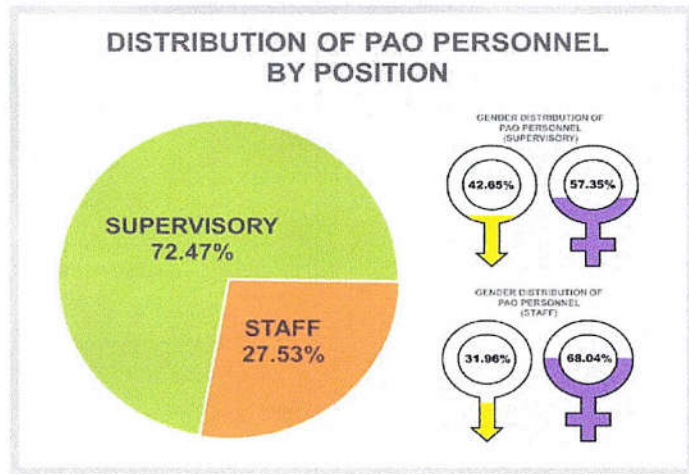
Graph No. 21

Out of the total personnel complement of the Office, **2,422 (72.47%)** occupy supervisory positions. This includes all public attorneys, and other personnel with salary grade of 18 or above who supervise other staff. **1,389 (57.35%)** of supervisory personnel are female. The remaining **1,033 (42.65%)** are male.

Meanwhile, **920 (27.53%)** personnel occupy staff positions. They are the rank-and-file employees of the PAO who perform various functions to support its operation. The sex distribution of staff positions is **626 (68.04%)** female and **294 (31.96%)** male.

Position	Male	Female	TOTAL
Supervisory	1,033	1,389	2,422
Staff	294	626	920
TOTAL	1,327	2,015	3,342

Table No. 8



Graph No. 22

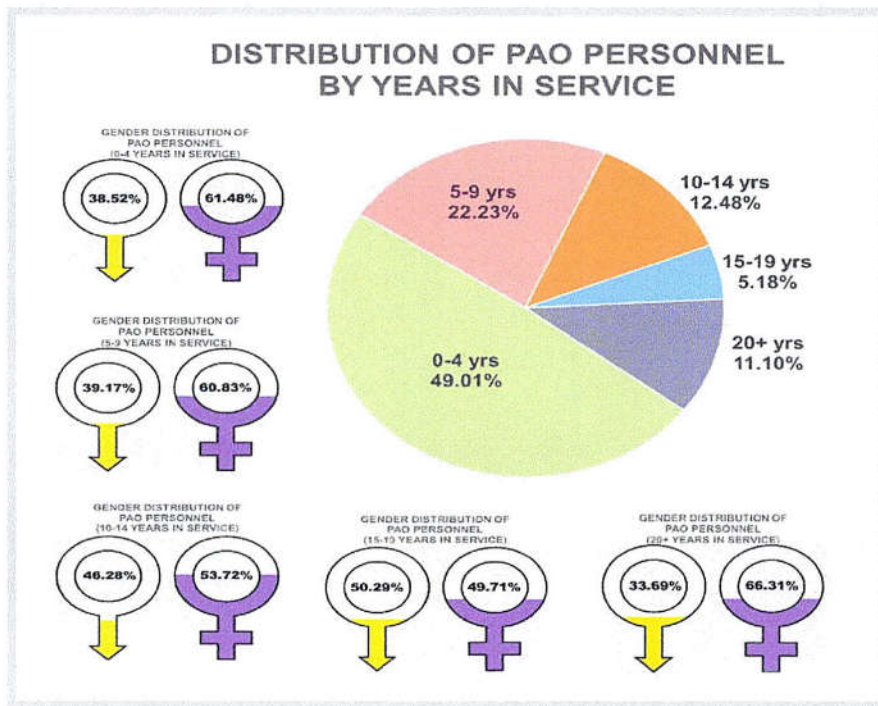
A considerable portion of the personnel complement of the Office is relatively new with **1,638 personnel (49.01%)** rendering four years of service or less. This is due in part to the high turnover of public attorneys who either resign for personal reasons or transfer to other government offices. Nonetheless, personnel belonging to this category decreased, in terms of number and percentage of total personnel, compared to last year's, indicating that a lot of personnel completed five years of service with the Office this year.

Those who have been with the Office for 20 or more years comprise of **371 personnel (11.10%)**. The remaining **1,333 personnel (39.89%)** belong to the group that has already rendered 5 – 19 years of service.

The females eclipse the males in all service year categories, except for the 15-19 years of service bracket where the males outnumber the females by one.

Years in Service	Male	Female	TOTAL
0-4	631	1,007	1,638
5-9	291	452	743
10-14	193	224	417
15-19	87	86	173
20 & up	125	246	371
TOTAL	1,327	2,015	3,342

Table No. 9



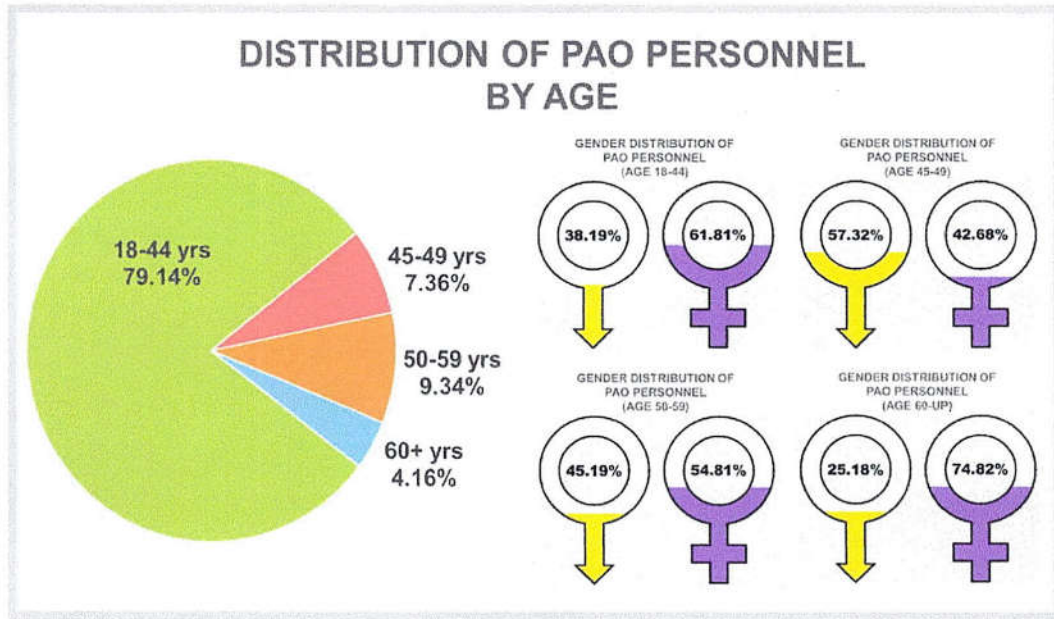
Graph No. 23

As to age distribution, majority of the personnel complement of the Office are within the reproductive age of 18 – 44 years old, comprising of **2,645 personnel**, which is equivalent to **79.14%** 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 **312 (9.34%)** and **246 (7.36%) personnel**, respectively. The smallest age group is comprised of those who are already entitled to retirement (60 and up age bracket) with **139 (4.16%) personnel**.

The females dominate all the age categories, except for the 45-49 age bracket where the males outnumber the females by 36.

Age	Male	Female	TOTAL
18-44	1,010	1,635	2,645
45-49	141	105	246
50-59	141	171	312
60 and up	35	104	139
TOTAL	1,327	2,015	3,342

Table No. 10



Graph No. 24

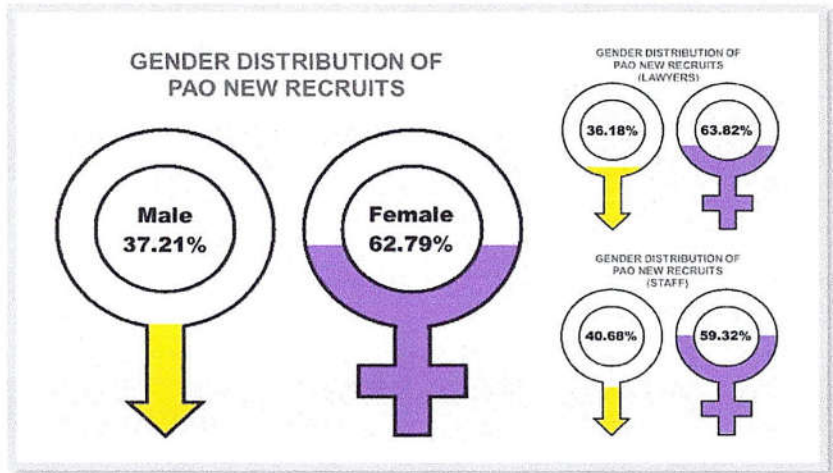
● PERSONNEL MOVEMENT

From January to December 2021, the movement of personnel in the PAO is as follows:

Type of Appointment	Lawyer		Support Staff		TOTAL
	Male	Female	Male	Female	
Recruited	72	127	24	35	258
Promoted	77	92	29	53	251
TOTAL	149	219	53	88	509

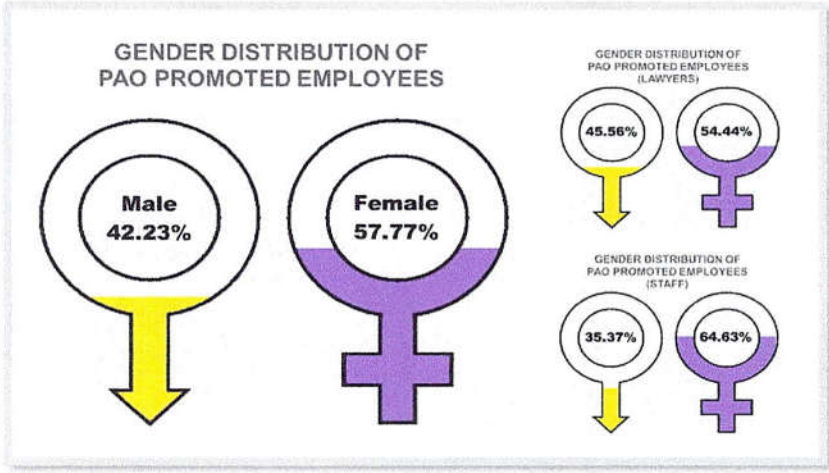
Table No. 11

For the year 2021, the Office recruited a total of **258 personnel**, majority of whom are female. To be specific, there are **127** new female lawyers and **35** new female support staff, which is equivalent to **62.79%** of all new recruits. The remaining **96** new recruits or **37.21%** are male. With the existing personnel complement and current hiring pattern of the Office, it is reasonably expected that the females will continue to outnumber the males in the coming years.



Graph No. 25

Similarly, in terms of promotion, females lead the list. For the year 2021, **145 (57.77%)** female lawyers and staff received a promotion, while **106 (42.23%)** male lawyers and staff got promoted.



Graph No. 26

- **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.

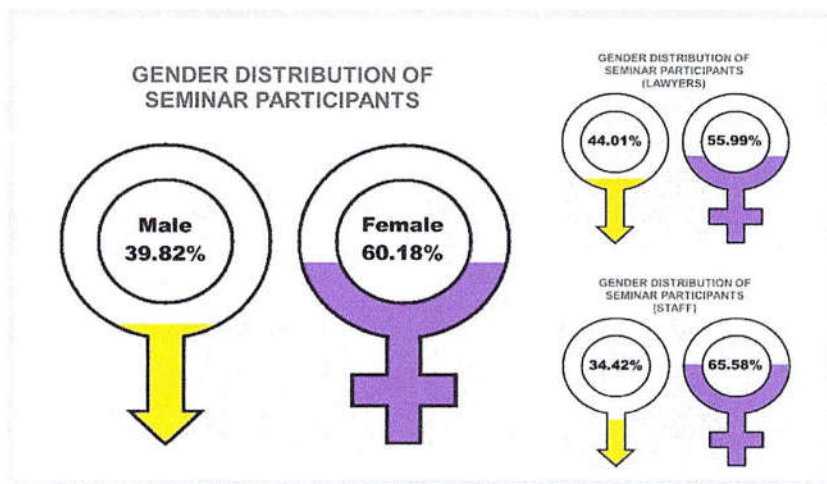
It has been the PAO's practice to provide a continuing seminar and training program to its personnel, specifically lawyers, to keep them abreast

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 offices and non-government organizations.

From January to December 2021, the PAO was able to conduct/participate in **55 seminars**. A total of **2,519 personnel** attended the seminars. Out of this number, **1,418** are public attorneys, while the remaining **1,101** are support staff.

It should be noted that majority of the participants are female personnel. Specifically, there are **1,516 female** seminar participants for the year 2021, which is equivalent to **60.18%** of the total number of seminar participants for the said year. The remaining **1,003** participants, equivalent to **39.82%**, are male PAO personnel.



Graph No. 26

- **FINANCIAL RESOURCES**

The approved appropriation, with corresponding release, for FY 2021 (per GAA) is Four Billion Six Hundred Fifty-Seven Million Three Hundred Fifty-

Six Thousand Pesos (**Php 4,657,356,000.00**) and the corresponding Retirement and Life Insurance Premium (RLIP) is Two Hundred Million Two Hundred Fifteen Thousand Nine Hundred Fifty Pesos (**Php 200,215,950.00**) to cover operational funding requirements of the PAO. In addition, the total amount of Two Hundred Seventy-Two Million Five Hundred Fourteen Thousand Nine Hundred Eighty-Two Pesos (**Php 272,514,982.00**) 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 for FY 2019, and c) Salary and Other Compensation of newly hired lawyers. The total obligations for FY 2021 amounted to Five Billion One Hundred Thirty Million Eighty-Six Thousand Nine Hundred Thirty-Two Pesos (Php 5,130,086,932.00); 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.

For the year 2021, the library purchased a number of legal books and basic reference materials, with a total amount of Two Hundred Ninety-One Thousand Four Hundred Thirty-Five Pesos (P291,435.00), which were distributed nationwide to the PAO regional and district offices as well as the PAO central library for the use of lawyers and staff. Moreover, the PAO library, through its personnel, was able to collate a total of **275 news releases** from **14 various broadsheets and tabloids** for the year 2021, concerning the Office, and its various cases, programs and projects.

Through its tri-media linkages, the PAO has continuously been rendering legal advice to the general public through the newspaper columns *Dear PAO*, published in *The Manila Times*; and *Magtanong Kay Attorney* and *Daing Mula sa Hukay... Hustisya!*, both published in *Bulgar*. In July 2021, the Office opened another column in *Bulgar* entitled *Sabi ni Doc* which features medical advice from Dr./Atty. Erwin P. Erfe, the Director of the PAO Forensic

Laboratory Division. A total of **807 articles** were published and clipped into file from January to December 2021 composed of **352** articles for *Dear PAO*, **365** articles for *Magtanong kay Attorney*, **50** articles for *Daing mula sa hukay...Hustisya!* and **40** articles from *Sabi ni Doc*.

• OFFICE EQUIPMENT

For the period covering January to December 2021, the PAO purchased and distributed the following office equipment and semi-expendable properties, to wit:

• Air Conditioner	35 units
• Biometric Time Recorder	400 units
• Computer Printer	135 units
• Fan	14 units
• Scanner	2 units
• Television	1 unit
• Universal Power Supply (UPS)	136 units
• Water Dispenser	5 units
• Filing Cabinet	81 units
• Gorilla Shelf	11 units
• Office Chair	114 units
• Office Table	70 units

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

• Access Point	6 units
• Access Switch	6 units
• Anti-Virus Software	2,400 units
• Core Switch	1 unit
• Distribution Switch	2 units
• External Hard Drive	1 unit
• Firewall Appliance	1 unit
• Multi-Function Network Printer	29 units
• Network Attached Storage	1 unit
• Network Cabling Services	1 package
• Server	2 units
• Server/Data Cabinet (For access switches)	6 units
• Server/Data Cabinet (For server room)	1 unit
• SQL Standard 2019	8 units
• UPS	2 units

- Visualization Technology Software 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 supplies, and obsolete and/or worn-out office equipment. With the purchase of the foregoing office furnishings, the PAO personnel were able to perform their duties in a more office-friendly environment.

The drive to modernize LAN infrastructure to better serve its growing client base 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 MOA between the PAO and the NLRC, the Office maintains a sub-station at the NLRC, located in Banawe, Quezon City, to serve its clients.

The sub-station facilitates the rendition of legal assistance to workers who file their complaint before the NLRC and aims to expedite the proceedings of labor cases; thus, making the services of the Office 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 the PAO by visiting the Central Office, or any of its district offices.

2. RESEARCH AND COMMUNICATION

For the year 2021, a total of **4,740 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 **807 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 consistent tri-media linkages coupled with the use of non-traditional media as means of education and information dissemination of the PAO. An example of the latter is the innovative *#PALA* Program, which is an online legal counselling and legal information dissemination program that is broadcasted live and posted on Facebook and uploaded to YouTube. 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 2021, **196 cases were resolved and terminated** out of **395 active administrative complaints** received by the 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 R.A. No. 9745 (Anti-Torture Act of 2009), R.A. No. 9262 (Anti-Violence Against Women and their Children Act of 2004), R.A. 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 R.A. No. 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, challenges brought about by COVID-19, and the demands of the public in the new normal, 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 **3,342**. It was able to serve **9,707,274 clients** with **83.05%** favorable disposition rate for its cases. Essentially, the government merely spent Four Hundred Ninety-Six Pesos and 81/100 (**Php 496.81**) 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.

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