



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

DOJ Agencies Building, NIA Rd. cor. East Ave. 1104 Diliman, Quezon City
Telephone Nos. 929-90-10/929-94-36; FAX Nos. 927-68-10/ 926-28-78

**ACCOMPLISHMENT REPORT
OF THE PUBLIC ATTORNEY'S OFFICE
FOR THE YEAR 2022**

Executive Summary

❖ **Clients Assisted and Cases Handled**

- Total No. of Clients Assisted 11,729,353
- Total No. of Cases Handled 850,753
- Average No. of Clients Assisted by Each Lawyer 4,887
- Average No. of Cases Handled by Each Lawyer 354

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

PUBLIC LEGAL ASSISTANCE PROGRAM	FY 2022 TARGETS	FY 2022 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	82.57%	82.69% (288,752/349,185)
3. Public attorney to court ratio	1:1	1:2 ¹

¹ There are **2,505** authorized positions for public attorney *vis-a-vis* **2,504** organized courts reported by the Office of the Court Administrator (OCA) of the Supreme Court as of 31 May 2022. Note that the number of organized courts (2,504) reported by the OCA 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.

Considering that there are no additional plantilla items for the said appellate courts, NLRC, and other quasi-judicial bodies, which equally require legal representation from the PAO, the public attorneys in the field offices nationwide are still overworked. This results in the exodus of a number

B. Output Indicators:		
1. Percentage of hearings for which no postponement is sought by the PAO legal representative	100%	100.00% (789,542/789,542)
2. Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR) success rate	92.75%	91.35% ² (23,898/26,162)

of public attorneys who could no longer withstand the heavy burden of handling cases not only in courts, but also in quasi-judicial bodies.

To the dismay of most of the public attorneys, whenever the Congress creates additional courts, there is no automatic creation by the DBM of **additional public attorney and staff plantilla items** as counterpart thereof. However, Section 7 of R.A. No. 9406 (PAO Law), a mandatory provision states that:

SEC. 7. Ratio of Public Attorney's Position to an Organized Sala. - There shall be a **corresponding number of public attorney's positions** at the ratio of one public attorney to an organized sala and the corresponding **administrative and support staff** thereto.

With the expanded mandate of the PAO, it is imperative to assign public attorneys to handle such cases pending 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. To be clear, these public attorneys are assigned to handle cases in courts or quasi-judicial agencies that are not included in the number of courts reported by the OCA.

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 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.

² The persistence of the pandemic made it especially difficult for the PAO to achieve a 92.92% 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 fewer cases set for mediation for the year 2022 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 (3) 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

3. Percentage of request for non-judicial assistance acted upon within two hours	100%	100% (4,009,026/4,009,026)
--	------	-------------------------------

❖ Total No. of Winning Appealed Criminal Cases <i>(For Court of Appeals and Supreme Court only)</i>	1,083
• Acquittals from Reclusion Temporal	140
• Acquittals from Reclusion Perpetua	738
• Other Favorable Dispositions	205
❖ Total No. of Winning Appealed Civil and Special Cases <i>(For Court of Appeals and Supreme Court only)</i>	456
❖ Acquittals and Other Favorable Dispositions <i>(RTC & MCTC/MeTC)</i>	263,335
No. of Cases with:	
A. Acquittal	26,393
B. Dismissal with Prejudice	39,997
C. Granted Motion to Quash	1,432
D. Granted Demurrer to Evidence	5,257
E. Provisional Dismissal	49,228
F. Conviction to Lesser Offense	117,830
G. Granted Probation	13,818
H. Pre-trial Releases and Other Favorable Dispositions	
H.1. Released on Bail (Non-bailable offense)	1,149
H.2. Released on Recognizance	2,080

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 60,641 in 2022. Correspondingly, the number and percentage of successful mediation likewise fell. Nonetheless, for the first time since the pandemic started, the number of cases set for mediation increased from 53,171 in 2021 to 60,641 in 2022. The ADR success rate also increased from 89.43% in 2021 to 91.35% in 2022. Although the result is still below the target, it shows that the PAO is on its way to achieving its target, owing to improving conditions and the continuous training of public attorneys in the field of ADR.

H.3. Diversion Proceedings/Intervention	897
H.4. Suspended Sentence	950
H.5. Maximum Imposable Penalty Served	4,304
❖ Limited Services	326,216
Arraignment	97,953
Pre-Trial	59,509
Promulgation of Judgment	16,589
Others (As <i>counsel de officio</i> , direct or cross examination during trial in the absence of private counsel, motion for bail, etc.)	152,165
❖ Special Legal Services (Pursuant to Sec. 14-A of <i>Republic Act (R.A.) No. 9406</i> and MOAs)	1,821
❖ Rendition of Quasi-Judicial Services	68,141
Mediation and Conciliation	68,101
Investigation (<i>R.A. No. 9745</i> or Anti-Torture Law)	40
❖ Instant Services	9,573,453
Legal Documentation	1,002,640
Oaths Administered	1,997,974
Clients Counseled	6,572,839
❖ Outreach Activities	868,546
Inquest Investigation & Custodial Interrogation	98,545
Legal Information Dissemination	127,657
Jail Visitation	642,344
❖ Assistance to Person Deprived of Liberty (PDL) Clients	721,949
Interviewed and Assisted	235,933
Provided Legal Representation in Court	398,439
Released:	
Released on Recognizance After Service of Minimum Sentence	1,913
Released Due to Provisional Dismissal of Case	10,603

Released on Account of Preventive Imprisonment Equal to Maximum Imposable Penalty (Case is Still Pending)	1,757
Released Due to Complete Service of Sentence (Case is Already Terminated)	23,895
Released for Other Legal Reasons	49,409

❖ **Legal/Inquest Proceedings Assistance** **98,545**

On their scheduled duties, public attorneys and staff of the Public Attorney’s Office (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.

❖ **Case Load**

Out of **305,396 terminated criminal cases**, there were **263,335** or about **86.23% favorable dispositions** obtained by the public attorneys from representing indigent and other qualified clients.

• Total No. of Criminal Cases Handled	655,286
• Total No. of Terminated Cases	305,396
• Terminated Cases Favorable to Clients	263,335
• Total Percentage of Winning Criminal Cases	<u>86.23%</u>

Out of **9,015 terminated civil cases**, there were **6,289** or about **69.76% favorable dispositions** obtained by the public attorneys from representing indigent and other qualified clients.

- Total No. of Civil Cases Handled 38,724
- Total No. of Terminated Cases 9,015
- Terminated Cases Favorable to Clients 6,289
- Total Percentage of Winning Civil Cases **69.76%**

Out of **2,642 terminated administrative cases proper**, there were **1,711** or about **64.76% favorable dispositions** obtained by the public attorneys from representing indigent and other qualified clients.

- Total No. of Administrative Cases Proper Handled 16,048
- Total No. of Terminated Cases 2,642
- Terminated Cases Favorable to Clients 1,711
- Total Percentage of Winning Administrative Cases **64.76%**

Out of **53,775 cases** handled at the prosecutor's level, **21,689** were **terminated**.

- Total No. of Prosecutor's Office Cases 53,775
- Total No. of Terminated Cases 21,689

Out of **5,842 terminated labor cases**, there were **4,789** or about **81.98% favorable dispositions** obtained by the public attorneys from representing indigent and other qualified clients.

- Total No. of Labor Cases Handled 37,432
- Total No. of Terminated Cases 5,842
- Terminated Cases Favorable to Clients 4,789
- Total Percentage of Winning Labor Cases **81.98%**

With respect to cases involving violation of **R.A. No. 9262** (Anti-Violence Against Women and their Children Act of 2004), **4,884 cases** were **handled** by the PAO, among which **2,277 cases** were **duly terminated**.

- Total No. of Cases Involving Women Victims of Violation of R.A. No. 9262 4,884
- Total No. of Terminated Cases 2,277

On the other hand, with respect to cases involving **children in conflict with the law** (CICLs) as defined under **R.A. No. 9344** (Juvenile Justice and Welfare Act of 2006), **19,267 cases** were **handled** by the PAO, among which **6,759** were **duly terminated**.

- Total No. of Cases Involving CICLs 19,267

- Total No. of Terminated Cases 6,759

❖ Comparative of Actual vs. Target

Overall, the PAO achieved **82.69%** favorable disposition rate for the cases it handled for the calendar year 2022, which is equivalent to **288,752 favorable dispositions** out of **349,185** terminated cases. This feat surpassed the target favorable disposition rate of 82.57% (based on the GAA of FY 2022) by **0.12%**, translating to **430** cases with favorable disposition above the target. The 2022 disposition rate is slightly lower compared to last year's favorable disposition rate, but is still above the target.

The **288,752** cases with favorable disposition for the calendar year 2022 is broken down as follows: **263,335** criminal cases = **91.20%**; **6,289** civil cases = **2.18%**; **1,711** administrative cases = **0.59%**; **11,089** prosecutor's office cases = **3.84%**; **4,789** labor cases = **1.66%**; and **1,539** appealed cases = **0.53%**.

Calendar year 2022 marked the first time since the COVID-19 pandemic started that the Office saw a significant increase in the number of favorable dispositions, as well as terminations, in the cases it handles. To be precise, the number of favorable dispositions increased from 248,963 to 288,752, or 39,789 more favorable dispositions compared to last year. This represents a 15.98% increase in the number of favorable dispositions for year 2022. Perhaps, this is owed to the gradual loosening of social distancing restrictions because of improving conditions, which allowed the members of the justice sector, including the PAO, to perform their duties more effectively and efficiently.

With respect to performance in ADR for the calendar year 2022, the Office garnered **91.35%** ADR success rate, which is equivalent to **23,898 cases successfully terminated through ADR** out of **26,162** terminated cases for ADR. This number is 1.57% short of the 92.92% target success rate (based on the GAA of FY 2022), but is 1.92% higher than last year's (2021) ADR success rate of 89.43%. The non-achievement of the target is still mainly due to the COVID-19 pandemic, which limited the PAO's ability to effectively render mediation services to its clients. However, the improved performance of the PAO in this year evinces its commitment to serve its clients with utmost diligence even in the midst of the pandemic. If the general condition continues to improve, the PAO expects to achieve its target next year.

- ❖ **Total No. of Research Work and Legal Opinions** for Queries from the Public that were Directly Addressed or Otherwise Referred to the PAO

4,538

❖ Library Services

No. of News Releases from Various
Broadsheets and Tabloids Concerning the
Office, and its Cases, Programs and Projects **668**

❖ PAO Equipment

For the period covering January to December, 2022, the PAO purchased and distributed the following office equipment and semi-expendable properties, to wit:

• Air-conditioning Unit	46 units
• Chair	148 units
• Table	67 units
• Filing Cabinet	99 units
• Gorilla Rack	30 units
• Uninterruptible Power Supply	757 units
• Printer	826 units
• Water Dispenser	2 units
• Stand Fan	6 units
• Two-way Radio	32 units
• Monoblock Chair	50 units
• Industrial Air-cooler	3 units
• Scanner	3 units
• Desktop Computer	500 units
• Video Camera	1 unit
• Lapel	2 units
• Teleprompter	1 unit
• Gang Chair	5 units
• Conference Table	7 units
• Photocopying Machine	250 units
• CCTV Camera	30 units
• MS Office License	500 units
• Laptop Computer	2 units
• Pro License 200	3 units
• Adobe After Effects License	1 unit
• Adobe Acrobat PDF Reader	1 unit

I. **Training Participants** **4,172**
 Lawyers **3,295**
 Support Personnel **877**

• Training Sessions and Seminars **61**

The Office of the Chief Public Attorney

- ❖ The Office of the Chief Public Attorney **received/answered 52,600 communications**, in addition to **52,034 replies/answers** to queries from the public, from January to December 2022;
- ❖ The Office of the Chief Public Attorney actually served a total of **4,655,006 clients and other persons** during this period;
- ❖ 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 **168 persons** (as of 31 December 2022) 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 Department of Justice (DOJ) Order No. 792 dated 12 December 2017, issued by then Secretary of Justice Vitaliano N. Aguirre II. For the year 2022, **one dead Dengvaxia vaccinee** was 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 2022, **157** criminal complaints and **139** 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. Meanwhile, 134 out of

the 139 civil cases are already consolidated before the RTC – Branch 216, Quezon City as of the end of the year.

2. *Petition to Protect Minors from Mandatory Inoculation of COVID-19 Vaccine*

On 3 February 2022, parents of minors who are at risk of being vaccinated with COVID-19 vaccine against their will, through the PAO, filed before the RTC of Quezon City an *Extremely Urgent Petition for Certiorari, Prohibition, Declaratory Relief, and Injunction* enjoining the Department of Health (DOH) from rolling out the COVID-19 vaccination program for children five (5) to eleven (11) years old. A day after the filing of the petition, the DOH amended its interim guidelines on the administration of COVID-19 vaccine on minors to remove the contested provision that allows the State to give consent to vaccination if the parents refuse to permit it. The case then proceeded with the presentation of the evidence for the petitioners.

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

1. ***Most Outstanding Public Servant*** from the Gawad Dangal Filipino Awards 2022 given on 28 December 2022 at Eurotel Hotel - North EDSA, Quezon City;
2. ***Award of Excellence (As one of the Philippine Men and Women of Integrity and Honor)*** from the Gawad Dangal Filipino Awards 2022 given on 28 December 2022 at Eurotel Hotel - North EDSA, Quezon City;
3. ***Hero of the Year*** awarded during the Gawad Pilipino Heroes Awards 2022, from Gawad Pilipino on 27 December 2022 at Novotel Hotel and Resorts, Cubao, Quezon City;
4. ***Certificate of Recognition for being a "Top Inspiring Personality"*** from Aspire Magazine awarded on 21 December 2022 at Windmills and Rainforest, Quezon City;
5. ***Outstanding Public Servant***, conferred during the Metro Excellence Leadership Awards (MELA) 2022, by MELA on 18 December 2022 at the Main Ballroom of the Villamor Air Base Golf Club, Villamor Air Base, Pasay City;
6. ***The Outstanding Filipino Award for Justice and Law*** from The Outstanding Filipino Awards (TOFIL) given on 12 December 2022 at Rizal Park Hotel, Manila;

7. **Legacy Award in Public Service** awarded during the 35th Aliw Awards by the Aliw Awards Foundation, Inc. on 5 December 2022 at the Fiesta Pavilion of The Manila Hotel, Manila;
8. **Hall of Fame Award** conferred during the 4th Philippine Faces of Success 2023 by the Philippine Faces of Success on 3 December 2022 at Teatrino, Promenade, Greenhills, San Juan City;
9. **Iconic Attorney of the People** awarded during the Global Iconic Aces Awards 2022 by the officers (headed by President Bennilyn Amigo-Molina) and organizers of the Global Iconic Aces Awards 2022, held on 26 October 2022 at Okada Manila, Parañaque City;
10. **Ace Public Servant of the Year** awarded during the Global Iconic Aces Awards 2022 by the officers (headed by President Bennilyn Amigo-Molina) and organizers of the Global Iconic Aces Awards 2022, held on 26 October 2022 at Okada Manila, Parañaque City;
11. **Outstanding Public Service Host Award (For #PALA-Persida Acosta's Legal Advice)**, awarded during the 2nd Diamond Excellence Awards by the 3Stars Productions and Diamond Excellence Awards on 27 September 2022 at Okada Manila, Parañaque City;
12. **Outstanding Public Servant of the Year** given during the Icon of the Year Awards by the Gawad Pilipino Awards and EUROTV Philippines on 17 September 2022 at the Metropolitan Theatre, Manila;
13. **6th Outstanding Woman of the Philippines Award** conferred during the 6th Outstanding Men and Women of the Philippines 2022 by the RDH Entertainment Network on 27 August 2022 at Teatrino, Promenade, Greenhills, San Juan City;
14. **Most Outstanding Individual Achievement as Public Servant in Legal Practice Award** from the Asian Sterling Awards 2022 and the NCO Events Management & Advertising Co., Inc. given on 26 August 2022 at the Metropolitan Theater, Manila;
15. **Leadership Achievement in Public Service Award** during the 9th Elite Business and Leadership Awards awarded by Triumph International Events Innovation and Marketing Co.

on 15 July 2022 at Sofitel Philippines Plaza Manila, Pasay City;

16. **Maharlikang Parangal Sa Larangan Ng Serbisyo Publiko** from the Maharlikang Filipino Awards 2022 conferred on 17 June 2022 at Okada Manila, Parañaque City;
17. **World Class Achiever Lifetime Award (Outstanding in Public Service and Legal Jurisprudence)** from the World Class Excellence Japan Awards (WCEJA), awarded on 15 June 2022 at the Heritage Hotel Manila, Pasay City;
18. **Philippine Fashion Circle Awards (PFCA) Woman of Significance Award (Plaque of Recognition for Outstanding Vision, Personal Contribution, Dedication and Commitment to Excellence)** from the 2022 PFCA conferred on 2 May 2022 at Okada Manila, Parañaque City;
19. **Outstanding Woman Leader Award** from Crystal International Women's Awards given on 30 March 2022 at Okada Manila, Parañaque City;
20. **Philippine Empowered Men and Women of the Year 2022 Award** from the Philippine Empowered Men and Women Awards conferred on 26 March 2022 at Teatrino, Promenade, Greenhills, San Juan City;
21. **Plaque of Recognition** from the Philippine Charity Sweepstakes Office (PCSO), as the PCSO's **Honoree**, in recognition of her contributions and unwavering support to Gender and Development (GAD) advocacies and her sustainable inclusive actions towards women empowerment and gender equality, awarded on 7 March 2022 at the PCSO Conservatory Building, Shaw Boulevard, Mandaluyong City; and,
22. **Plaque of Appreciation** (in grateful recognition as Guest of Honor and Speaker during the Joint Commencement Exercise of the Justice Colleges of the Philippines) conferred on 5 March 2022 at The Manila Hotel, Manila.

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

1. **Organizer and Speaker, 7th MCLE-Accredited National Convention of Public Attorneys**, held on 10-14 October, 2022 at the Philippine International Convention Center, Pasay City;

2. **Resource Speaker, “Think Like A Lawyer: Webinar Series | Public Attorneys,”** conducted by the Dr. Jovito R. Salonga Center for Law and Development, Silliman University, and Silliman University College of Law on April 30, 2022;
3. **Guest of Honor/Speaker and Awardee, The Philippine Charity Sweepstakes Office’s (PCSO’s) Traditional Monday Flag Honoring & Awarding to Dr. Acosta as the First Honoree to be Awarded by the PCSO in Line with Its Month-Long Observance of the National Women’s Month Celebration,** held on 7 March 2022 at the PCSO Conservatory Building, Shaw Blvd. Mandaluyong City
4. **Guest of Honor and Speaker, Justice Colleges of the Philippines Joint Commencement Exercises (Batch 2019-2020 and Batch 2020-2021), Bachelor of Science in Criminology,** held on 5 March 2022 at the Rigodon Hall, Manila Hotel, Manila.

❖ **Other Significant Accomplishments**

On the Organization and Administration of PAO

1. 7th Mandatory Continuing Legal Education (MCLE) – Accredited National Convention of Public Attorneys

After several postponements due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the PAO was finally able to successfully conduct its 7th MCLE – Accredited National Convention of Public Attorneys on 10-14 October 2022 at the Philippine International Convention Center, Pasay City. With around 2,400 public attorneys in attendance, it is the biggest convention ever organized by the PAO. Legal luminaries imparted their knowledge and shared their experience in the practice of law to the participants during the five-day convention. Guests of honor/awardees who supported the PAO in the past years and contributed to its success also graced the event. Among them were Vice President Sara Z. Duterte, Chief Justice Alexander G. Gesmundo, and several members of the Senate and House of Representatives.

2. Creation and Upgrading of District Offices

One of the strategies of the PAO in reaching its clients in far-flung areas is to bring its district offices closer to the community. This need was further highlighted during the pandemic when strict movement and physical restrictions were imposed, which made it especially difficult for clients in remote areas to visit the

office. As such, the creation of additional district offices became imperative. For the year 2022, three additional district offices were created, to wit: Villaverde, Nueva Ecija District Office, Tayum, Abra District Office, and Dingras, Ilocos Norte District Office. This brings the total number of new district offices to 13 since the pandemic started.

Meanwhile, the continued partnership between the Provincial Government of Lanao del Sur and the PAO bore new fruit as the PAO-Wao, Lanao del Sur District Office was finally able to transfer to its new office building in the first quarter of 2022. The Provincial Government of Lanao del Sur funded the construction of the two-storey multi-purpose building for the exclusive use of the PAO, which it turned over on 27 March 2022.

3. Execution of Memorandum of Agreement or Understanding (MOA/MOU) with Important National Agency Partners

This year, the PAO also signed MOA/MOU with two important national government agency partners, viz.: the Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD) and the Office of the Vice President (OVP). Both provide for strengthened referral system and provision of free legal assistance to persons who visit the two offices to ask for help, which falls within the jurisdiction of the PAO.

The MOA with the DSWD was signed on 19 September 2022 supplemented an earlier MOA with focus on single parents who wish to ask for legal support for themselves or their child/ren, and the assignment of an on-site duty public attorney to the DSWD Central Office. On the other hand, the MOU with the OVP was signed on 16 November 2022, and it strengthened the tie between the PAO and the OVP in terms of delivery of free legal services to indigent clients who seek assistance from the OVP.

4. PAO and Public Attorneys are the Most Trusted Among the Justice Sector Actors

The publication of the *GOJUST II Access to Justice Philippines Final Report* completed on 25 July 22 affirmed the people's trust in the PAO. The accompanying *Justice Needs Survey 2021* conducted by SWS for the GOJUST2 shows that the PAO obtained the highest trust rating from the participants who came from all three main islands of the country, established justice zones, and the 3 poorest provinces. As the SWS assessed, the PAO is the most trusted of the twelve justice institutions, while public attorneys obtained the highest net trust rating among the seven justice system professions. GOJUST2 is a project of the European Union, in partnership with our

government, which aims to improve access to justice for all Filipinos in order to contribute to inclusive and sustainable socio-economic development

On the Services Rendered by the Office

1. Continuing Innovation of #PALA

To consistently engage the general public, segments were added to #PALA, PAO's online legal counselling program that is broadcasted live and posted on Facebook, and also uploaded to YouTube, to showcase different facets of the PAO, such as #PALAtawag which is a teleconsultation with the Chief Public Attorney concerning one's legal problem, *May batas #PALA* which provides information on existing laws and jurisprudence that the general public may not be aware of, and *PAO ng Mamamayan* where the Chief Public Attorney interviews individuals from various walks of life to highlight their contribution to our society and to inspire others to emulate them. For the year 2022, a total of **38 episodes** spread over three seasons were aired on Facebook, which can still be accessed by netizens.

2. 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 **87,577 PDLs** for the whole year 2022. 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.

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

For the year 2022, public attorneys nationwide assisted a total of **7,902 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, **892 PDLs have been released** or are pending release by virtue of a granted petition, while **1,168 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 2022, the PAO already assisted a total of **38,933 PDLs** through legal advice, documentation service, and legal representation, when necessary.

4. Assistance Relative to the Enhanced Comprehensive Local Integration Program (E-CLIP)

In support of our government's E-CLIP, the PAO has been assisting FRs/FVEs who desire to surrender and be reintegrated into the community. For the year 2022, the PAO handled **296 cases** involving FRs/FVEs, and provided counselling, documentation, and administration of oath services to **893 FR/FVE clients**. A total of **1,323 participants** also benefited from the seven legal outreach activities conducted by the PAO involving FRs/FVEs.

5. Justice for Slain Youth Victims (Kian Delos Santos, Carl Angelo Arnaiz and Reynaldo "Kulot" De Guzman)

To recall, Kian Loyd Delos Santos (Kian) is a 17-year old minor who died on 16 August 2017 during an anti-illegal drug operation of the Caloocan City Police in Caloocan City. The police alleged that Kian drew a gun ("*nanlaban*") when they accosted him, prompting a shoot-out, which eventually led to his death. A CCTV footage and the findings of the PAO Forensic Team showing that he sustained three gunshot wounds - 2 in the head which may have been inflicted while he was on the ground on a prone position and 1 in the back – tell otherwise. This prompted the parents of Kian to file a criminal complaint against those responsible for their son's death. After trial of the case, three cops were convicted of Murder on 29 November 2018, which the Court of Appeals recently affirmed on 14 December 2022.

Meanwhile, 19-year old Carl Angelo Arnaiz (Carl) and 14-year old Reynaldo De Guzman (Kulot) were last seen hanging out before they went missing on 28 August 2017. Days after, their lifeless bodies were found. Caloocan City Police claimed that Carl drew his firearm ("*nanlaban*") when they accosted him for committing robbery. An eye witness and the findings of the PAO

Forensic Team that he was shot while kneeling with raised hands disproved such claim.

With the assistance of the PAO, the parents of Carl and Kulot filed criminal complaints for the death of their sons. On 10 November 2022, the Regional Trial Court – Branch 122, Caloocan City convicted the accused for Torture and Planting of Evidence. Meanwhile, the Murder case is set for promulgation of judgment on 11 March 2023.

6. *Free and Instant Access to the PAO Lawyer Assigned to a Client*

The PAO Management religiously allocates from its savings a monthly amount of Five Hundred Pesos (Php 500.00) for every public attorney, which represents telephone/communication expense, so that the latter could conveniently convey important matters to their clients, such as the status of their case, calendar of hearings, documentation, and other response to queries.

