



## ACCOMPLISHMENT REPORT OF THE PUBLIC ATTORNEY'S OFFICE FOR THE YEAR 2023

### *Executive Summary*

#### ❖ Clients Assisted and Cases Handled

- Total No. of Clients Assisted 12,516,668
- Total No. of Cases Handled 833,279
- Average No. of Clients Assisted by Each Lawyer 4,997
- Average No. of Cases Handled by Each Lawyer 333

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

PUBLIC LEGAL ASSISTANCE PROGRAM	FY 2023 TARGETS	FY 2023 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	83.05%	83.55% (290,855/348,113)
3. Public attorney to court ratio	1:1	1:2 <sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> As of 31 December 2023, there are **2,505** authorized positions for public attorney *vis-a-vis* **2,543** organized courts reported by the Office of the Court Administrator (OCA) of the Supreme Court. Note that the number of organized courts (2,543) 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, which include, among others, the National Labor Relations Commission (NLRC) and its various regional arbitration branches nationwide, National Police Commission (NAPOLCOM), and Professional Regulation Commission (PRC).

B. Output Indicators:		
1. Percentage of hearings for which no postponement is sought by the PAO legal representative	100%	100.00% (815,725/815,725)
2. Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR) success rate	92.92%	92.97% (23,238/24,996)
3. Percentage of request for non-judicial assistance acted upon within two hours	100%	100% (5,003,153/5,003,153)

❖ <b>Total No. of Winning Appealed Criminal Cases</b>	<b>1,077</b>
<i>(For Court of Appeals and Supreme Court only)</i>	
• Acquittals from Reclusion Temporal	782
• Acquittals from Reclusion Perpetua	123
• Other Favorable Dispositions	172

❖ <b>Total No. of Winning Appealed Civil and Special Cases</b>	<b>685</b>
<i>(For Court of Appeals and Supreme Court only)</i>	

Considering that there are no additional plantilla items for the said appellate courts, NLRC, and other quasi-judicial bodies— whose indigent litigants are equally deserving of legal representation and assistance from the PAO, the public attorneys in the field offices nationwide are still overworked. This results in the exodus of a number of public attorneys who could no longer withstand the heavy burden of handling cases not only in courts, but also in quasi-judicial bodies.

Sadly, 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.



<b>❖ Acquittals and Other Favorable Dispositions</b> (RTC & MCTC/MeTC)	<b>266,069</b>
No. of Cases with:	
A. Acquittal	25,241
B. Dismissal with Prejudice	43,612
C. Granted Motion to Quash	1,221
D. Granted Demurrer to Evidence	6,324
E. Provisional Dismissal	53,750
F. Conviction to Lesser Offense	106,306
G. Granted Probation	23,335
H. Pre-trial Releases and Other Favorable Dispositions	
H.1. Released on Bail (Non-bailable offense)	491
H.2. Released on Recognizance	2,149
H.3. Diversion Proceedings/Intervention	572
H.4. Suspended Sentence	661
H.5. Maximum Imposable Penalty Served	2,407
 <b>❖ Limited Services</b>	 <b>235,962</b>
Arrest	80,259
Pre-Trial	47,374
Promulgation of Judgment	11,790
Others	96,539
(As <i>counsel de officio</i> , direct or cross examination during trial in the absence of private counsel, motion for bail, etc.)	
 <b>❖ Special Legal Services</b>	 <b>1,599</b>
(Pursuant to Sec. 14-A of Republic Act (R.A.) No. 9406 and MOAs)	
 <b>❖ Rendition of Quasi-Judicial Services</b>	 <b>45,521</b>
Mediation and Conciliation	45,504
Investigation	17
(R.A. No. 9745 or Anti-Torture Law)	
 <b>❖ Instant Services</b>	 <b>10,332,949</b>
Legal Documentation	6,504,133
Oaths Administered	1,160,947
Clients Counseled	2,667,869

<b>❖ Outreach Activities</b>	<b>1,029,014</b>
Inquest Investigation & Custodial Interrogation	88,615
Legal Information Dissemination	228,135
Jail Visitation	712,264
<b>❖ Assistance to Person Deprived of Liberty (PDL) Clients</b>	<b>712,264</b>
Interviewed and Assisted	260,469
Provided Legal Representation in Court Released:	364,139
Released on Recognizance After Service of Minimum Sentence	2,438
Released Due to Provisional Dismissal of Case	10,931
Released on Account of Preventive Imprisonment Equal to Maximum Imposable Penalty (Case is Still Pending)	1,163
Released Due to Complete Service of Sentence (Case is Already Terminated)	23,304
Released for Other Legal Reasons	49,820
<b>❖ Legal/Inquest Proceedings Assistance</b>	<b>88,615</b>

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 **307,594 terminated criminal cases**, there were **266,069** or about **86.50% favorable dispositions** obtained by the public attorneys from representing indigent and other qualified clients.

- Total No. of Criminal Cases Handled 648,355
- Total No. of Terminated Cases 307,594
- Terminated Cases Favorable to Clients 266,069
- Total Percentage of Winning Criminal Cases **86.50%**

Out of **9,566 terminated civil cases**, there were **6,832** or about **71.42% favorable dispositions** obtained by the public attorneys from representing indigent and other qualified clients.

- Total No. of Civil Cases Handled 41,166
- Total No. of Terminated Cases 9,566
- Terminated Cases Favorable to Clients 6,832
- Total Percentage of Winning Civil Cases **71.42%**

Out of **2,375 terminated administrative cases proper**, there were **1,797** or about **75.66% favorable dispositions** obtained by the public attorneys from representing indigent and other qualified clients.

- Total No. of Administrative Cases Proper Handled 16,244
- Total No. of Terminated Cases 2,375
- Terminated Cases Favorable to Clients 1,797
- Total Percentage of Winning Administrative Cases **75.66%**

Out of **51,423 cases** handled at the prosecutor's level, **18,633** were **terminated**.

- Total No. of Prosecutor's Office Cases 51,423
- Total No. of Terminated Cases 18,633

Out of **5,620 terminated labor cases**, there were **4,509** or about **80.23% favorable dispositions** obtained by the public attorneys from representing indigent and other qualified clients.

- Total No. of Labor Cases Handled 26,493
- Total No. of Terminated Cases 5,620
- Terminated Cases Favorable to Clients 4,509
- Total Percentage of Winning Labor Cases **80.23%**



With respect to cases involving violation of **R.A. No. 9262** (Anti-Violence Against Women and their Children Act of 2004), **4,857 cases were handled** by the PAO, among which **1,982 cases were duly terminated**.

- Total No. of Cases Involving Women Victims of Violation of R.A. No. 9262 4,857
- Total No. of Terminated Cases 1,982

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), **18,240 cases were handled** by the PAO, among which **5,807 were duly terminated**.

- Total No. of Cases Involving CICLs 18,240
- Total No. of Terminated Cases 5,807

❖ **Comparative of Actual vs. Target**

Overall, the PAO achieved **83.55%** favorable disposition rate for the cases it handled for the calendar year 2023, which is equivalent to **290,855 favorable dispositions** out of **348,113** terminated cases. This feat surpassed the target favorable disposition rate of 83.05% (based on the GAA of FY 2023) by **0.50%**, translating to **1,747** cases with favorable disposition above the target. The 2023 disposition rate is also higher by 0.86% than last year's favorable disposition rate of 82.69%.

The **290,855** cases with favorable disposition for the calendar year 2023 is broken down as follows: **266,069** criminal cases = **91.48%**; **6,832** civil cases = **2.35%**; **1,797** administrative cases = **0.62%**; **9,886** prosecutor's office cases = **3.40%**; **4,509** labor cases = **1.55%**; and **1,762** appealed cases = **0.60%**.

With respect to performance in ADR for the calendar year 2023, the Office garnered **92.97%** ADR settlement rate, which is equivalent to **23,238 cases successfully terminated through ADR** out of **24,996** terminated cases for ADR. This number is 0.05% higher than 92.92% target settlement rate (based on the GAA of FY 2023), and is also 1.57% higher than last year's (2022) ADR settlement rate of 91.35%. With the encouragement of the top management and the zeal of all the public attorneys, the PAO was able to finally achieve its ADR settlement rate target this year.

❖ **Total No. of Research Work and Legal Opinions for Queries from the Public**

that were Directly Addressed or Otherwise Referred to the PAO **4,718**

❖ **Library Services**

No. of News Releases from Various Broadsheets and Tabloids Concerning the Office, and its Cases, Programs and Projects **1,130**

❖ **PAO Equipment**

For the period covering January to December, 2023, the PAO purchased and distributed the following office equipment and semi-expendable properties, to wit:

• Air-conditioning Unit	31 units
• Air Cooler	2 units
• Camera	2 units
• Camera Lens	2 units
• Chair	199 units
• Computer Monitor	2 units
• Conference Table	1 unit
• Desktop Computer	98 units
• Electric Fan	15 units
• Filing Cabinet	84 units
• Gang Chair	2 units
• Gorilla Rack	60 units
• ICT Switcher	1 unit
• Laptop Computer	3 units
• Monobloc Chair	67 units
• Printer	116 units
• Scanner	1 unit
• Table	105 units
• Uninterrupted Power Supply	40 units
• Water Dispenser	3 units

**I. Training Participants** **2,256**  
 Lawyers 1,224  
 Support Personnel 1,032

• Training Sessions and Seminars **54**



## **The Office of the Chief Public Attorney**

- ❖ The Office of the Chief Public Attorney **received/answered 44,442 communications**, in addition to **23,849 replies/answers** to queries from the public, from January to December 2023;
- ❖ The Office of the Chief Public Attorney actually served a total of **3,334,223 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 **170 persons** (as of 31 December 2023) 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 accordingly acted upon 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 2023, **two 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 2023, **158** criminal complaints and **154** 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 158 criminal complaints, 43 are already pending in court, while the rest are still pending before the DOJ either for preliminary investigation or for review. Meanwhile, 120 out of



the 154 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 said petition, the DOH amended its interim guidelines on the administration of COVID-19 vaccine on minors and removed the contested provision which allowed the State to give consent to the vaccination if the parents refuse to permit it. The case then proceeded with the presentation of the evidence.

As of December 2023, the Honorable Court already resolved the parties' respective Formal Offers of Evidence. Consequently, the parties were directed to submit their respective memoranda on the main petition and the application for injunctive relief.

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

1. ***Philippine Distinct Men and Women of Excellence Award*** given during the Philippine Distinct Men and Women of Excellence Awards held on December 28, 2023 at Manila Grand Opera Hotel, Manila;
2. ***Dangal ng Bayan Award*** conferred during Gawad Pilipino's "*Duyan Ka Ng Magiting*" Year-Ender Recognition to Outstanding Filipinos from Gawad Pilipino Awards held on December 27, 2023 at Camp Aguinaldo, Quezon City;
3. ***Inspire Award*** from Inspire Magazine during its 2<sup>nd</sup> Issue Launching and the holding of the Inspire Awards Night on December 19, 2023 at Marriott Hotel, Pasay City;
4. ***Plaque of Participation*** (In grateful acknowledgment of her distinguished and invaluable service rendered as Guest of Honor and Speaker during the 8th Year Anniversary Program of *Mata ng Masa* Task Force contributing immeasurably to the prestige and success of the occasion), from the PNP



Force Multiplier - *Mata ng Masa* Task Force, received during #PALA's show on December 15, 2023 at the PAO Central Office, Quezon City;

5. ***Philippine Eagle National President's Award (PREXY) 2023*** from The Fraternal Order of Eagles - Philippine Eagles, Inc., personally received during #PALA's show on December 15, 2023 at the PAO Central Office, Quezon City;
6. ***Public Servant Excellence Award*** conferred during the 34<sup>th</sup> Founding Anniversary of the Mike Delta Force held on December 10, 2023 at Tramway Bayview Buffet, Pasay City;
7. ***Hall of Fame Award*** given during the Charity Gala and Hall of Fame 2023 on December 8, 2023 at Okada Manila, Parañaque City;
8. ***Premier Achiever - Outstanding and Inspiring Public Servant of the Year*** given by La Visual Corporation during the Southeast Asian Premier Business and Achiever Awards 2023 held on December 8, 2023 at Winford Resort and Casino Manila, Manila;
9. ***Most Outstanding Individual Achievement in Public Service and Legal Practice (2nd Year)*** awarded during the Asian Sterling Awards 2023 on December 4, 2023 at Sofitel Philippine Plaza Manila, Pasay City;
10. ***Most Prominent Achievement in Public Service and Legal Practice*** given during the NCO Pacific Eminence Awards 2023 on December 4, 2023 at Sofitel Philippine Plaza Manila, Pasay City;
11. ***Public Servant of the Year*** conferred during the 1st Philippine Pageantry Excellence Awards 2024 by Best Magazine on December 2, 2023 at Teatrino Promenade, San Juan City;
12. ***Circle of Excellence Award*** (Received on behalf of the Public Attorney's Office) given during the Asia CEO Awards 2023 held on October 24, 2023 at Marriott Grand Ballroom, Pasay City;
13. ***Outstanding Legal Expertise and Commitment to Public Welfare Award*** given during the Asean Excellence Achievers Awards 2023 held on October 23, 2023 at Okada, Manila, Parañaque City;



14. **Excellence Award in Public Service** conferred during the 2023 Saludo Excellence Awards held at the Centennial Hall of The Manila Hotel, Manila, on October 8, 2023;
15. **Hall of Fame Award** from the Volunteers Against Crime and Corruption awarded during its 25<sup>th</sup> Founding Anniversary Celebration on September 30, 2023 at Club Filipino, San Juan City;
16. **Major Award** (In heartfelt appreciation for and in recognition of her consistent dedication to the PAO's mandate and advocacy on public service and justice which redounds to the benefit of its clients and the public) from the Volunteers Against Crime and Corruption, awarded during its 25<sup>th</sup> Founding Anniversary Celebration on September 30, 2023 at Club Filipino, San Juan City;
17. **Major Award** (Received on behalf of the Public Attorney's Office, citation same as above) from the Volunteers Against Crime and Corruption awarded during its 25<sup>th</sup> Founding Anniversary Celebration on September 30, 2023 at Club Filipino, San Juan City;
18. **Outstanding Leader and Public Servant** from the 3 Stars Productions and Inspire Magazine Philippines during the 3rd Diamond Excellence Awards held on September 26, 2023 at Marriott Hotel, Pasay City;
19. **Certificate of Recognition** (In grateful recognition of the PAO's steadfast support and commitment of ensuring a safe environment for media workers) from the Office of the President – Presidential Task Force on Media Security given during the NCR segment of the 2023 Nationwide Summit: Promoting a Free and Responsible Press Towards a Safer Media Environment held on September 19, 2023 at Bayview Park Hotel, Roxas Blvd., Manila;
20. **Certificate of Appreciation** (Awarded to the PAO, in appreciation of the invaluable partnership with the American Bar Association – Rule of Law Initiative during the implementation of the "Access to Justice and Support for the Rule of Law in the Philippines (ACCESS) Project," from the American Bar Association – Rule of Law Initiative given on September 15, 2023 at Rizal Park Hotel, Manila;
21. **Plaque of Appreciation** (In grateful appreciation of her valuable participation and support to the Philippine



Public Health Association) given during its 88<sup>th</sup> National Convention held on September 13 to 14, 2023 at Winford Manila Resort and Casino, Manila;

22. **Appreciation Trophy** from the *Maharlika*s Fraternal and Sororal Order of Tigers (Tiger of Asia) for being the Guest of Honor during their National Oath Taking Ceremonies held on September 10, 2023 at Okada Manila, Parañaque City;
23. **Outstanding Excellence Award in Public Service** from La Visual Corp. bestowed during Philippine Finest Business Awards and Outstanding Achievers 2023 held on September 8, 2023 at the Penthouse Floor, The Hexagon Events Place, Hexagon Corporate Center, Quezon City;
24. **Global Iconic Public Servant with Outstanding Dedication to Public Welfare and Social Services Award** from the Global Aces Awards (headed by Ms. Bennilyn Amigo-Molina) awarded during the 2nd Global Iconic Aces Awards 2023 held on August 28, 2023 at Okada Manila, Parañaque City;
25. **Lifetime Achievement Award** from RDH Entertainment Network and Best Magazine, conferred during the 7th Outstanding Men and Women of the Philippines 2023 Awards held on August 25, 2023 at Music Museum, San Juan City;
26. **Plaque Ng Pagpapahalaga** (*Sa kanyang hindi matatawarang pagsuporta, at taos-pusong paglalaan ng oras at kaalaman bilang Panauhing Tagapagsalita*) given during Bulacan State University's (BulSU) Juris Doctor Conferment Ceremony held on August 24, 2023 at BulSU, Malolos, Bulacan;
27. **Plaque of Support** (In recognition of your unwavering commitment, dedication, and tireless efforts in delivering justice to the marginalized and underprivileged communities) from The Fraternal Order of Eagles - Philippine Eagles, Inc. awarded on August 18, 2023 at the PAO Central Office, Quezon City;
28. **Plaque of Recognition** given during the Testimonial and Induction of 2020-2021 New Lawyers of IBP Manila I, III and IV Chapters, personally received on August 18, 2023 at the PAO Central Office, Quezon City;
29. **Plaque of Appreciation** (In recognition of her outstanding performance and leadership, dedication to public service, and love and respect for the media in its significant role



to nation-building) from the Quezon City Press Club, Inc. received on August 15, 2023 at the PAO Central Office, Quezon City;

30. **MELA 2023 Most Trusted and Empowered Public Servant of the Year** from Metro Excellence Leadership Awards (MELA) and *Gintong Pamana ng Lahi 2023*, awarded on July 22, 2023 at Crowne Plaza Hotel Manila, Quezon City;
31. **Honorary Public Servant of the Year – Excellence in Government Service Award** from the Nation Builders and MOSLIV Awards and Sustainability Standards, Inc., conferred on June 30, 2023 at the Grand Ballroom of Okada Manila, Parañaque City;
32. **Certificate of Appreciation** from the Philippine Association of Local Government Accountants, Inc. (PhALGA) given on June 28, 2023 at the Surigao Provincial Gymnasium, Surigao City;
33. **Outstanding Achiever in Public Service Award** from Asian Top Choice Awards given on June 24, 2023 at the Golden Ballroom of Okada Manila, Parañaque City;
34. **Bravo Filipino Award (“Pusong Bayani”)** from the Bravo Filipino Awards given on June 13, 2023 at the Maynila Ballroom, The Manila Hotel, Manila;
35. **Plaque of Appreciation for the Public Attorney’s Office** (In recognition of its contribution to the Office of the Vice President’s vision to reach, serve, and create lasting impact on the lives of the Filipino people) from H. E. Vice President Sara Z. Duterte, given on June 5, 2023 at Sofitel Philippine Plaza Manila, Pasay City;
36. **Remarkable Woman of Strength and Outstanding Public Servant Award** from *Maharlikang Filipino Awards 2023* held on June 2, 2023 at Okada Manila, Parañaque City;
37. **Lifetime Achievement Award in Public Service** from the Laguna Excellence Awards during the 4<sup>th</sup> Laguna Excellence Awards held on May 7, 2023 at Calamba Tent, Calamba, Laguna;
38. **Leadership Achievement in Public Service “Hall of Fame” Award** from the Elite Business and Leadership Awards conferred on April 1, 2023 at Sofitel Philippine Plaza Manila, Pasay City;



39. **Tambuli Award** from the Toastmasters International District 75 Division K held on April 1, 2023 at Analog Devices Inc. Auditorium, General Trias, Cavite;
40. **Outstanding Woman of Class with Unwavering Dedication to Public Service** given during the Crystal International Women's Awards 2023 held on March 28, 2023 at the Golden Grand Ballroom, Okada Manila, Parañaque;
41. **Outstanding Public Servant Award** from NGO TV Awards given on March 28, 2023 at *Tanghalang Pasigueño*, Pasig City;
42. **Ambassador for Human Rights** from *Gawad Pilipino Awards* conferred on March 25, 2023 at Eurotel Hotel North EDSA, Quezon City;
43. **Natatanging Pilipina sa Larangan ng Serbisyo Publiko** from *Gawad Pilipino Awards* awarded on March 25, 2023 at Eurotel Hotel North EDSA, Quezon City;
44. **100 Most Empowered Women of the Year** from *Gawad Pilipino Awards* given on March 25, 2023 at Eurotel Hotel North EDSA, Quezon City;
45. **Most Outstanding Public Servant Award** given by the People's Choice Excellence Awards Committee and the Asia Pacific Awards Council (APAC) during the 41st People's Choice Excellence Award held on March 5, 2023 at Sofitel Philippine Plaza Manila, Pasay City;
46. **Most Outstanding Public Service Office Award** (for PAO) given by the People's Choice Excellence Awards Committee and the APAC during the 41st People's Choice Excellence Award held on March 5, 2023 at Sofitel Philippine Plaza Manila, Pasay City;
47. **Plaque of Appreciation** (In recognition for her invaluable support as "Keynote Speaker" during the 15th Mindanao Geographical Conference of the PhALGA) given on February 22, 2023 at the SMX Convention Center, Davao City;
48. **Global Excellence in Social Development and Public Service Award** given during the Global Trends Business Leaders Awards Year 2 held on February 20, 2023 at Okada Manila, Parañaque;



49. **Heroes' Iconic Public Servant and Advocate for Justice Award** conferred during the Asia's Modern Hero Awards 2023 held on February 17, 2023 at the Grand Ballroom, Okada Manila, Parañaque;
50. **Most Prolific Public Defender Award** from Diamond Golden Peace Care Good Heart World Class Global Award International Phils., Inc. given during the 4th Diamond Golden Awards Night 2023 held on February 12, 2023 at the New World Hotel, Makati City; and
51. **Certificate of Appreciation** (In recognition of her participation as "Guest of Honor and Speaker" during the Chartering of Marikina City Masigasig Bagwis Eagle Club and Quezon City Matulungin Bagwis Eagles Club and Induction of New Members under NCR-L) from The Fraternal Order of Eagles - Philippine Eagles, Inc., given on January 29, 2023 at Marriott Hotel, Pasay City.

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

**Local**

1. **Speaker**, 2023 Northern Luzon Media Summit, conducted by the PAO and the Presidential Task Force on Media Security, held on December 11, 2023 at Elizabeth Hotel, Baguio City;
2. **Speaker**, 2023 Visayas Media Summit, conducted by the PAO and the Presidential Task Force on Media Security, held on November 21, 2023 at Marco Polo Hotel, Cebu City;
3. **Speaker**, 2023 Central Luzon and Southern Luzon Media Summit, conducted by the PAO and the Presidential Task Force on Media Security, held on November 7, 2023 at Tagaytay Royale Hotel, Tagaytay City;
4. **Organizer and Speaker**, 5<sup>th</sup> National Convention of the Rank-and-File Employees of the PAO, October 9 – 11, 2023, PICC, Pasay City;
5. **Guest of Honor and Speaker**, National Oath Taking Ceremonies, Maharlikans Fraternal and Sororal Order of Tigers (Tiger of Asia), September 10, 2023, Okada Manila, Parañaque City;



6. **Guest Speaker**, Juris Doctor Conferment Ceremony, August 24, 2023, Bulacan State University College of Law, Malolos, Bulacan;
7. **Keynote Speaker**, Mindanao Geographical Conference of PhALGA, June 28, 2023, Surigao Provincial Gymnasium, Surigao City;
8. **Keynote Speaker**, Toastmasters International Division K Speech Contests, April 1, 2023, Analog Devices Inc. Auditorium, General Trias, Cavite;
9. **Resource Speaker** (online "Discussion on Women's Rights for Different Scenarios"), FY23 Women at Microsoft (Wam) Brown Bag Sessions Spotlight on Women's Rights, Microsoft Philippines, March 17, 2023;
10. **Keynote Speaker**, 15th Mindanao Geographical Conference of PhALGA, February 22, 2023, SMX Convention Center, Davao City; and
11. **Guest of Honor and Speaker**, Chartering of Marikina City Masigasig Bagwis Eagle Club and Quezon City Matulungin Bagwis Eagles Club and Induction of New Members under NCR-L, The Fraternal Order of Eagles - Philippine Eagles, Inc., January 29, 2023, Marriott Hotel, Pasay City.

### **International**

12. **Speaker**, "1<sup>st</sup> Regional Conference on Access to Legal Aid" hosted and sponsored by the Government of India, the International Legal Foundation, the United Nations Development Programme, and the United Nations Children's Fund, held on November 27 to 28, 2023 in New Delhi, India;
13. **Speaker**, "2023 International Forum on Legal Aid" hosted and sponsored by the Legal Aid Foundation (LAF), Taiwan, held on November 13 to 15, 2023 in Taipei, Taiwan;
14. **Speaker**, 1<sup>st</sup> Corrections Technology Conference (CTC)" hosted by the International Corrections and Prisons Association (ICPA), held on May 23 to 25, 2023 at the Adelaide Convention, Adelaide, Australia; and
15. **Fellow**, "Global Innovations on Youth Violence, Safety, and Justice" hosted and sponsored by Salzburg Global Seminar, held on February 8 to 12, 2023, Salzburg, Austria.

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## ❖ Other Significant Accomplishments

### **On the Organization and Administration of PAO**

#### **1. 5<sup>th</sup> National Convention of Rank and File Employees of the Public Attorney's Office**

The 5<sup>th</sup> National Convention of Rank and File Employees of the Public Attorney's Office was held on October 9-11, 2023 at the Philippine International Convention Center (PICC), Pasay City. With around 1,000 rank and file employee-participants from all the offices of the PAO nationwide, the three-day event incorporated 18 lectures, ranging from the updates on government services and requirements (i.e. occupational safety, SALN, CSC Rules, etc.), gender and development, personal development, health and wellness, to PAO Code of Conduct and Revised PAO Operations Manual— all aimed to develop and enhance the capability of the participants to deliver “Prompt service with a smile” to the clients of the PAO, and to recognize those who have remained loyal to the Office and the cause of its clients.

#### **2. Creation of District Offices**

Among the plans and programs of the PAO is the delivery of free legal services throughout the country's rural and remote areas. To achieve this plan, the PAO remains in constant coordination with local government units, especially those in far-flung areas, to discuss the possibility of opening a district office that will cater to the legal needs of the local community. For the year 2023, seven additional district offices were created, namely: Pasil, Kalinga District Office; Alcala, Cagayan District Office; Lallo Cagayan District Office; Asingan, Pangasinan District Office; Santa Rosa, Nueva Ecija District Office; Kasibu, Nueva Ecija District Office; and Passi City, Iloilo District Office. With this recent addition, the PAO now has 380 offices across the country, including its Central Office and regional offices, to serve the legal needs of indigents and other qualified clients of the Office.

#### **3. Execution of Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) / Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) with Important National Agencies and International Organization Partners**

This year, the PAO also signed several MOA with various national government agencies and international organization partners to pursue matters of public interest, which are entwined with the mandate of the PAO. On 19 April 2023, the PAO and



the UNHCR, renewed its decade-long MOU that provides free legal assistance, counselling, and representation to refugees, asylum seekers, and stateless persons.

The recently concluded 2023 Barangay and *Sangguniang Kabataan* Elections called for the execution of a MOA between: 1) the PAO and the Commission on Election (COMELEC) to effectively enforce the provisions the Omnibus Election Code on vote-buying and vote-selling, particularly on filing or handling reported incidents of such nature; 2) the PAO, COMELEC, and the Bureau of Jail Management and Penology for the free and voluntary exercise of the fundamental right to vote of PDLs; and 3) the PAO, COMELEC, and the Department of Education to ensure legal assistance and representation to persons rendering election service for suits filed in relation to the performance of their election duty functions.

Finally, to address the critical issues faced by media practitioners, the PAO and the Presidential Task Force on Media Security executed a MOA to facilitate the participation of the PAO in planning and organizing the implementation of the nationwide summit aimed to protect the welfare of media personnel, as well as to contribute legal expertise and insights during the said summit.

### **On the Services Rendered by the Office**

#### **1. Cases Covered by Rule III, Section 22 of the Code of Professional Responsibility and Accountability**

Rule III, Section 22 of the Code of Professional Responsibility and Accountability (CPRA), A.M. No. 22-09-01-SC dated 11 April 2023, issued by the Supreme Court allowed the PAO to handle cases of opposing clients that are traditionally covered by the Conflict of Interest Rule. Pursuant to the Supreme Court rules, the PAO devised ways and means to comply with the directive of the Supreme Court and assist indigent opponents who are equally in dire need of free legal representation in courts and other quasi-judicial agencies. Thus, for the year 2023, the PAO was able to handle **690 cases** where the opposing parties are both represented by the Office as allowed under the CPRA; thus reducing the number of indigent court litigants who are left on their own and unassisted by counsel.

#### **2. #PALA (Persida Acosta's Legal Advice) Program**

#PALA Program is an online legal counselling program that is broadcasted live and posted on Facebook, and also uploaded



to YouTube. It allows 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 program features teleconsultation, updates on PAO plans, programs, activities and achievements, general information on laws and jurisprudence, and interviews with public personalities, among others. For the year 2023, a total of **29 episodes** spread over two seasons were aired on Facebook, all of which remains accessible to the netizens..

### **3. Release of PDLs**

With the vigilance of our public attorneys, the PAO was able to secure the release of **87,656 PDLs** for the whole year 2023. 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.

In addition thereto, the DOJ, PAO's mother department, tapped the Office for its jail decongestion efforts. This collaboration resulted to a regular culmination activity where hundreds of PDLs were released almost every month. From the nine culminating programs conducted during the year, **5,210 PDLs** were released from penal facilities administered by the Bureau of Corrections.

### **4. Continuing Assistance to PDLs in Consonance with R.A. No. 10951**

For the year 2023, public attorneys nationwide assisted a total of **7,525 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 remedies, if applicable. Of this number, **1,029 PDLs have been released** or are pending release by virtue of a granted petition, while **1,208 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.).



**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 former rebels / former violent extremists (FRs/FVEs) who desire to surrender and be reintegrated into the community. For the year 2023, the PAO handled **493 cases** involving FRs/FVEs, and provided counselling, documentation, and administration of oath services to **1,729 FR/FVE clients**. A total of **2,489 participants** also benefited from the 23 legal outreach activities involving FRs/FVEs conducted by the PAO.

**5. Justice for Slain Youth Victims (Carl Angelo Arnaiz and Reynaldo "Kulot" De Guzman)**

To recall, 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. The testimony of an eye witness, as well as the findings of the PAO Forensic Team that the victim was shot while kneeling with raised hands conclusively disproved the initial claim.

With the assistance of the PAO, the parents of Carl and Kulot filed several 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. On 13 March 2023, the Regional Trial Court - Branch 287, Navotas City found the accused guilty beyond reasonable doubt for two counts of murder (for the death of Carl and Kulot) and sentenced him to *reclusion perpetua* without eligibility for parole.

**6. Several Delivery Riders Were Declared as Employees of Lazada E-Services Philippines, Inc.**

In 2017, several delivery riders of Lazada E-Services Philippines, Inc. (Lazada) filed an illegal dismissal case against the said company after they were removed from their usual routes and were no longer given any schedules. The PAO assisted them in litigating their claim. Despite losing the case before the labor arbiter, NLRC and the Court of Appeals, the PAO, through its Special and Appealed Cases Service, was able to persuade the Supreme Court to reverse the decisions of the said tribunals.

In its decision dated 21 September 2022, which was received by the PAO on 30 January 2023, the Supreme Court declared the



complainant-delivery riders as employees of Lazada, and not merely independent contractors, as their services are integral to Lazada's business. As such, the Supreme Court ordered the reinstatement of the illegally dismissed delivery riders and payment of their monetary claims. (See *Chrisden Ditiangkin, Hendrix Molines, Harvey Juanio, Joselito Verde, and Brian Nabong vs. Lazada E-Services, et al.*, G.R. No. 246892, 21 September 2022).

