



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

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ACCOMPLISHMENT REPORT
OF THE PUBLIC ATTORNEY'S OFFICE
FOR THE YEAR 2019

Executive Summary

- ❖ **Clients Assisted and Cases Handled**
 - Total No. of Clients Assisted 13,544,272
 - Total No. of Cases Handled 900,463
 - Average No. of Clients Assisted by Each Lawyer 5,873
 - Average No. of Cases Handled by Each Lawyer 390

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

PUBLIC LEGAL ASSISTANCE PROGRAM	FY 2019 TARGETS	FY 2019 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	76.50%	82.77% (350,944/424,023)
3. Public attorney to court ratio	1:1	1:1
B. Output Indicators:		
• Percentage of hearings for which no postponement is sought by the PAO legal representative	100%	100% (645,196/645,196)
• Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR) success rate	92.75%	92.92% (150,432/161,891)
• Percentage of request for non-judicial assistance acted upon within two (2) hours	100%	100% (3,537,275/3,537,275)

- ❖ **Total No. of Winning Appealed Criminal Cases 1,124**
(For Court of Appeals and Supreme Court only)
 - Acquittals from Reclusion Temporal 300
 - Acquittals from Reclusion Perpetua 693
 - Other Favorable Dispositions 131

❖ Total No. of Winning Appealed Civil and Special Cases	614
<i>(For Court of Appeals and Supreme Court only)</i>	
❖ Acquittals and Other Favorable Dispositions	295,951
<i>(RTC & MCTC/MeTC)</i>	
No. of Cases with:	
A. Acquittals	22,471
B. Dismissal with Prejudice	43,566
C. Granted Motion to Quash	1,338
D. Granted Demurrer to Evidence	4,483
E. Provisional Dismissal	43,290
F. Conviction to Lesser Offense	153,908
G. Granted Probation	19,103
H. Won	93
I. Granted Lesser Award	88
J. Dismissal based on Compromise Agreement	179
K. Criminal Cases for Preliminary Investigation:	
K.1. Case filed in court (Complainant)	2,771
K.2. Dismissed (Respondent)	515
L. Pre-trial Releases and Other Favorable Dispositions:	
L.1. Released on Bail (Non-bailable offense)	460
L.2. Released on Recognizance	1,016
L.3. Diversion Proceedings/Intervention	725
L.4. Suspended Sentence	1,046
L.5. Maximum Imposable Penalty Served	899
❖ Limited Services	493,096
Arrest	100,859
Pre-trial	70,666
Promulgation of judgment	30,282
Others	291,289
<i>(as Counsel de Oficio, Direct or Cross Examination during trial in the absence of private counsel, Motion for Bail, etc.)</i>	
❖ Special Legal Services	23,549
<i>(Pursuant to Sec. 14-A of R.A. No. 9406 and MOAs)</i>	
❖ Rendition of Quasi-Judicial Services	196,846
Mediation and Conciliation	196,694
Investigation <i>(R.A. No. 9745 or the Anti-Torture Law)</i>	152

❖ Instant Services	10,935,577
Legal Documentation	2,354,330
Oaths Administered	3,989,124
Clients Counseled	4,592,123
❖ Outreach Activities	291,182
1. Inquest Investigation & Custodial Interrogation	
• Total No. of Clients Assisted	156,456
2. Barangay Legal Outreach Activities	
• Total No. of Beneficiaries	134,726
❖ Nationwide Monthly Jail Visitation of District Offices	767,815
No. of Detainees/Inmates who were:	
A. Interviewed and Assisted	286,390
B. Provided Legal Representation in Court	415,084
C. Acquitted:	
C.1. After trial	12,222
C.2. On appeal	1,307
D. Released on:	
D.1. Pardon/Executive Clemency/Probation	9,384
D.2. Motion to Dismiss/Motion to Quash	6,969
D.3. Inquest Assistance/Representation	1,056
D.4. Bail/Recognizance	15,773
D.5. After serving the possible maximum prison term	5,502
D.5. Released on other grounds (i.e. Motion for judicial determination of probable cause, and others)	14,128
❖ PAO-Central Office Legal & Medical Jail Visitation and Decongestion Program	
• Total No. of Program Beneficiaries	4,711
• No. of Beneficiaries of Legal Assistance	689
• No. of Beneficiaries of Medical Assistance	1,820
• No. of Beneficiaries of Dental Assistance	547
• No. of Beneficiaries of Optical Assistance	1,186
• Total No. of Inmates Released	469
(from various jails in Metro Manila and nearby provinces visited by the PAO-Central Office and followed up by the field offices)	

❖ Legal/Inquest Proceedings Assistance

On their scheduled duties, the public attorneys and staff of the PAO-Central Office have been alternately providing legal and inquest proceedings assistance even during night time, weekends, and holidays since October 2009. For this purpose, the PAO hotlines, 8929-9436, 8426-2801, 8426-2450, 8426-2987, and 8426-2683 (local 106 or 107 during office hours and local 159 after office hours) are open to the public 24/7.

In September 2010, the coverage of this program was expanded to serve the people covered 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.

• **Clients Served** **31,646**

❖ **Training Sessions and Seminars Attended** **109**

• Training Participants *Lawyers* 808
Support Personnel 1,307

❖ **Case Load**

Out of **347,937 terminated criminal cases**, there were **295,951** or about **85.06% favorable dispositions** obtained by the Public Attorneys from representing indigent clients.

• Total No. of Criminal Cases Handled	684,798
• Total No. of Cases Terminated	347,937
• Terminated Cases Favorable to Clients	295,951
• Total Percentage of Winning Criminal Cases	<u>85.06%</u>

Out of **11,725 terminated civil cases**, there were **8,080** or about **68.91% favorable dispositions** obtained by the Public Attorneys from representing indigent clients.

• Total No. of Civil Cases Handled	42,209
• Total No. of Cases Terminated	11,725
• Terminated Cases Favorable to Clients	8,080
• Total Percentage of Winning Civil Cases	<u>68.91%</u>

Out of **2,217 terminated administrative cases proper**, there were **1,723** or about **77.72% favorable dispositions** obtained by the Public Attorneys from representing indigent clients.

- Total No. of Administrative Cases Proper Handled 11,744
- Total No. of Cases Terminated 2,217
- Terminated Cases Favorable to Clients 1,723
- Total Percentage of Winning Administrative Cases 77.72%

Out of **52,539 terminated prosecutor's office cases handled**, **26,224 were terminated**.

- Total No. of Prosecutor's Office Cases 52,539
- Total No. of Cases Terminated & Pending 24,039

Out of **10,965 terminated labor cases**, there were **9,468** or about **86.35% favorable dispositions** obtained by the Public Attorneys from representing indigent clients.

- Total No. of Labor Cases Handled 29,042
- Total No. of Cases Terminated 10,965
- Terminated Cases Favorable to Clients 9,468
- Total Percentage of Winning Labor Cases 86.35%

With respect to cases involving Violation of **Republic Act No. 9262 (Anti-Violence Against Women and their Children Act)**, **14,561 cases were handled by PAO**, among which **10,500 cases were duly terminated**.

- Total No. of Cases Involving Women Victims of Violation of R.A. 9262 14,561
- Total No. of Cases Terminated 10,500

On the other hand, with respect to cases involving **Children in Conflict with the Law** pursuant to R.A. No. 9344, **21,645 cases were handled by the PAO**, among which **6,817 were duly terminated**.

- Total No. of Cases Involving Children in Conflict with the Law (CICL) 21,645
- Total No. of Cases Terminated 6,817

❖ **Comparative of Actual vs. Target**

Overall, the PAO achieved **82.77%** favorable disposition rate for the cases it handled for the calendar year 2019, which is equivalent to **350,944** favorable dispositions out of **424,023** terminated cases. This

feat surpassed the target favorable disposition rate of 76.5% (based on the GAA of 2019) by **6.27%**, translating to **26,566** cases with favorable disposition above the target. The 2019 disposition rate also exceeded last year's (2018) actual disposition rate of 81.34% by **1.43%**.

The **350,944** cases with favorable disposition for the calendar year 2019 is broken down as follows: **295,951** criminal cases = **84%**; **8,080** civil cases = **2%**; **1,723** administrative cases = **1%**; **12,054** prosecutor's office cases = **3%**; **9,468** labor cases = **3%**; **1,781** special legal services = **1%**; and **21,887** = **6%** appealed cases.

Similarly, the PAO's performance in the ADR for the calendar year 2019 surpassed both the 2019 target and last year's actual success rate in ADR. The PAO garnered a **92.92%** ADR success rate, which is equivalent to **150,432** cases successfully terminated through ADR out of the 161,891 terminated cases for ADR. This number surpassed the 92.75% target success rate (based on the GAA of 2019) by **0.17%** translating to **278** cases more cases terminated through ADR above the target. The 2019 ADR success rate also exceeded last year's (2018) actual success rate of 92.58% by **0.34%**.

- ❖ **Total No. of Clients Assisted by the PAO-National Labor Relations Commission (NLRC) Sub-Station Located in Banawe, Quezon City** **25,495**

- ❖ **Total No. of Research Work and Legal Opinions** for Queries from the Public that were Directly Addressed or otherwise referred to the PAO **2,762**

- ❖ **Library Services**
 - No. of News Releases from various Broadsheets and Tabloids concerning the Office, its cases, and various programs and projects **1,292**

❖ PAO Equipment

For the period covering January to December, 2019, the PAO purchased and distributed the following office equipment and semi-expendable properties, to wit:

• Closed-Circuit Television (CCTV) Set	159 units
• Air Conditioner	57 units
• Television Set	17 units
• Biometric Time Recorder	13 units
• Stand Fan	11 units
• Water Dispenser	9 units
• Computer Printer (Dot Matrix)	2 units
• Paper Shredder	1 unit
• Floor Polisher	1 unit
• Filing Cabinet	129 units
• Office Chair	345 units
• Office Table	165 units
• Gorilla Rack	17 units
• Sala Set	3 units
• Push Cart	3 units
• Safety Vault	1 unit

The Office of the Chief Public Attorney

- ❖ The Office of the Chief Public Attorney received/answered **35,366 communications** from January to December, 2019;
- ❖
- ❖ The Office of the Chief Public Attorney actually served a total of **39,857 clients and other persons** during this period;
- ❖ The Chief Public Attorney served as **Speaker/Resource Person** in the following events:

Local

A. Guest of Honor/Speaker, Launching of Women's Month Celebration of PSALM (Power Sector Assets & Liabilities Management), 4 March 2019, 24th flr., Vertis North Corporate Center 1, Corner Astra & Lux Drives, North Avenue, Quezon City;

B. Speaker/Resource Person (Topic: "Defending the Defenseless"), Stop Crimes Against Women Summit conducted by the Volunteers Against Crime and Corruption

(VACC), 23 April 2019, The Tent City of the Manila Hotel, Ermita, Manila;

- C. **Speaker/Resource Person** (Topic: "Public Financial Management for Free Legal Aid Services"), **2nd Quarterly Seminar and Meeting of the Philippine Association for Government Budget Administration (PAGBA), Inc.**, 1-4 May 2019, The Crown Legacy Hotel, Baguio City;
- D. **Speaker/Resource Person** (Topic: "Sexual Harassment in the Workplace"), **Laguna State Polytechnic University's Gender and Development event**, 16 August 2019, *Kamayan at Palaisdaan Resto Hotel*, Bay, Laguna;
- E. **Guest of Honor and Speaker, Consular Corps of the Philippines Monthly Meeting**, 28 August 2019, Makati Shangri-La Hotel, Makati City; and
- F. **Guest of Honor and Speaker, Regular Meeting of the Rotary Club of Bagumbayan-Manila**, 7 November 2019, Century Park Hotel, P. Ocampo St., Malate, Manila.

Abroad

- G. **Resource Person, Roundtable Discussion Regarding Systems of Legal Aid in Australia and the Philippines** hosted by the Legal Aid Commission of the Australian Capital Territory (Legal Aid ACT), 7-14 January 2019, 2 Allsop Street, Canberra City, Australia;
 - H. **Moderator/Country Representative, "IJ Core Course: Successful Prosecution of Counterterrorism Cases"**, sponsored by the International Institute for Justice and the Rule of Law (IJJ), held on 10-13 September 2019, Malta; and
 - I. **Speaker, International Corrections and Prisons Association's (ICPA) 21st Annual General Meeting and Conference**, hosted by the ICPA, 27 October – 01 November 2019, Buenos Aires, Argentina.
- ❖ The Chief Public Attorney, together with the PAO Special Panel of Lawyers, **personally handled and/or led** the following cases, **and/or rendered legal assistance** to the following individuals, *inter alia*, to wit:

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

The surviving families of 152 persons (as of 31 December 2019) who had all been inoculated with Dengvaxia vaccine, and died after mass indiscriminate inoculation without screening and blood test, sought the assistance of the PAO for forensic examinations and legal assistance. Their requests were acted accordingly by the PAO and the PAO Forensic Team, pursuant to DOJ Order No. 792 dated 12 December 2017, issued by then Secretary of Justice Vitaliano N. Aguirre II. For the year 2019, 46 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, and Obstruction of Justice before the DOJ, as well as civil cases for damages before the Regional Trial Court (RTC) of Quezon City, were filed against those responsible, both public servants and private persons, for the deaths of the inoculated victims.

The criminal complaints were filed before the DOJ, which formed special panels of prosecutors (Panel) to handle the preliminary investigation of the Dengvaxia complaints. On 11 February 2019, the Panel handling the first batch of Dengvaxia cases issued its Resolution and indicted the majority of the respondents for Reckless Imprudence Resulting in Homicide. Said resolution is presently under review by the DOJ.

As of 31 December 2019, **57** criminal complaints and **45** civil cases were filed against the persons responsible for the death of the inoculated victims composed of minor children, together with two **(2)** public servants consisting of one (1) police officer, and (1) one medical doctor.

B. Forensic, medical and legal assistance to the surviving Dengvaxia victims

As of 31 December 2019, **2,118** families of surviving vaccinees who, likewise, received Dengvaxia vaccine through mass indiscriminate inoculation also sought legal assistance from the PAO. Of this number, one (1) minor victim, suffered the adverse effect of the vaccine that led to his temporary blindness. Timely and appropriate medical intervention saved his life, but even now he still suffers from the continuing effect of the vaccine.

On 29 August 2019, said minor victim, with the assistance of his mother and the PAO, filed a complaint for Reckless Imprudence Resulting in Homicide, and Violation of the Anti-Torture Act and the Consumer Act of the Philippines before the DOJ against those responsible for his inoculation and the resulting injury he suffered. The case is being heard as of the time of writing.

C. Forensic assistance given to the family of murdered minor Christine Lee Silawan

In 11 March 2019, the country was shocked by the brutal killing of minor Christine Lee Silawan (Christine) who was found dead in a vacant lot in Lapu-Lapu City. She was naked from the waist down and with severe injury to her face and neck.

Upon the request of Lourdes Silawan, the mother of Christine, the PAO Forensic Team conducted a forensic examination on the cadaver of Christine. They found chemical burn marks and abrasions, and hematoma on the cadaver of Christine. They also noted lacerations on her hymen.

Meanwhile, two (2) separate cases of murder against two (2) individual accused were filed for Christine's death by the National Bureau of Investigation (NBI), and another one (1) by the Philippine National Police (PNP).

D. Justice for the battered Kasambahay Bonita Baran

Bonita A. Baran (Bonita) was a former *kasambahay*, who complained of maltreatment against her previous employers after the latter caused the loss of her right eyesight. Her case helped in creating awareness and drawing support to the then *Kasambahay* bill that was approved on 18 January 2013, and is now known as Republic Act No. 10361.

In 2012, Bonita filed cases for Serious Illegal Detention, seven (7) counts of Serious Physical Injuries, and two (2) counts of Attempted Homicide against her previous employers, namely: Anna Liza T. Catahan-Marzan and Reynold T. Marzan. With the assistance of PAO, her cases reached the court and were heard by various courts in Quezon City.

After a long and grueling trial, Bonita finally attained the justice she deserves. The RTC - Branch 77, Quezon City, found Bonita's former employers GUILTY of serious illegal detention in 2017. Then, on 7 March 2019, the Metropolitan Trial Court (MeTC) – Branch 40, Quezon City found her female employer GUILTY of

seven (7) counts of Serious Physical Injuries and two (2) counts of Attempted Homicide.

From the Bureau of Jail Management and Penology (BJMP) - Camp Karingal Detention Center in Quezon City, accused Anna Liza T. Catahan-Marzan was transferred to the Correctional Institution for Women (CIW) in Mandaluyong City; while Reynaldo Marzan is still out on bail pending his appeal.

E. Victims of the tragic sinking of the M/V Princess of the Stars get favorable judgments from the Supreme Court

The families of the victims and the survivors of the ill-fated sinking of the M/V Princess of the Stars, a vessel owned by Sulpicio Lines, Inc. (renamed to Philippine Span Asia Carrier Corporation [PSACC]), sought the assistance of the PAO in 2008. Cases were filed against the PSACC and its owners, which reached the Supreme Court. In these cases, the PAO vigorously advanced the cause of the victims and their families.

On 15 April 2019, the PAO received the decision of the Supreme Court ordering the ***reinstatement of the criminal case for Reckless Imprudence Resulting in Homicide*** against one of the officers of the PSACC. It concluded that the resolution of the DOJ supports *prima facie* finding that the crime charged was committed.

In a related case, on 18 September 2019, the Supreme Court ***denied*** the petition filed by the PSACC concerning the decision of the Maritime Industry Authority (MARINA) revoking its franchise to transport and carry human passengers. Thus, the cancellation of the franchise of the PSACC insofar as transporting or carrying of HUMAN passengers is concerned stands.

F. Vindication of a women's rights advocate Miradel Torres

Accused Miradel Torres (Miradel), a member of the women's rights group, *Gabriela*, has been a client of the Public Attorney's Office (PAO) since 2014. She was pregnant when she was arrested that year, and nearly suffered a miscarriage while in jail. It was also during her incarceration when she delivered her child in a hospital.

She was charged with Frustrated Murder and Murder lodged at the RTC - Branch 65, Infanta, Quezon. During the trial of these cases, PAO Chief Public Attorney Dr. Persida V. Rueda-Acosta, DSD entered her appearance on behalf of the accused, Miradel. The PAO Chief Public Attorney fought for the innocence of Miradel,

and personally cross-examined several prosecution witnesses against the latter.

Upon the order of the Office of the Court Administrator on the ground of safety and security, Miradel was detained at the Camp Bagong Diwa, Taguig City, and the trial of said cases was transferred to RTC – Branch 153, Taguig City. On 22 July 2019, the promulgation of these cases ensued, and because of the zealous legal assistance of the PAO, accused Miradel was ACQUITTED for both cases of Frustrated Murder and Murder.

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

A. Plaque of Recognition (For “unwavering courage and determination in the pursuit of justice on behalf of the countless innocent victims of Dengvaxia”), from the Volunteers Against Crime and Corruption (VACC) during its *Stop Crimes Against Women Summit* held on 23 April 2019 at The Tent City of the Manila Hotel, Ermita, Manila;

B. Rotary Wheel Celebrity Award for Public Service conferred jointly by the Rotary Club of Manila, Fort Santiago; *Aliw Awards* Foundation; FAMAS; and the Soroptimist International, Las Piñas on 26 April 2019 at the Bureau of Treasury, Ayuntamiento Building, Intramuros, Manila;

C. Plaque of Appreciation (For delivering an informative and inspiring speech, as Guest of Honor and Speaker), conferred during the *Monthly Meeting of the Consular Corps of the Philippines*, 28 August 2019, Makati Shangri-La Hotel, Makati City;

D. Plaque of Appreciation (In grateful recognition for sharing her time and expertise as Guest of Honor and Speaker), given during the *Regular Meeting of the Rotary Club of Bagumbayan-Manila*, 7 November 2019, Century Park Hotel, P. Ocampo St., Malate, Manila; and

E. 2019 Hall of Fame Award conferred by the *Gawad Amerika* Foundation during the *18th Gawad Amerika Awards* on 23

November 2019 at the Celebrity Centre, Hollywood, California, USA.

❖ **Other Significant Accomplishments**

On the Organization and Administration of PAO

A. *Creation of the PAO Forensic Laboratory Division, with plantilla personnel, lodged under the Office of the Chief Public Attorney*

On 14 January 2019, the PAO Forensic Laboratory Division (Forensic Lab) was created by authority of law, through the Letter-Authority of then Department of Budget and Management (DBM) Secretary Benjamin E. Diokno (with attached Notice of Organization, Staffing, and Compensation Action). To be manned by eight (8) medical-related duly *authorized* plantilla positions, the Forensic Lab is primarily tasked to undertake the medico-legal and forensic-related functions and activities of the PAO.

This positive development will greatly aid the PAO in pursuing its mandate in providing adequate and free legal assistance to indigents and other qualified clients pursuant to R.A. No. 9406 (PAO Law) and other special laws, such as R.A. 9745 (Anti-Torture Act) and R.A. No. 9262 (VAWC Law).

B. *4th National Convention for the Rank and File Employees of the PAO*

The PAO successfully conducted its 4th National Convention for its rank and file employees last 5-8 February 2019 at the Manila Hotel in Ermita, Manila. **843** PAO staff and other personnel attended the convention. The convention, with its theme "Empowerment and Accountability Towards Efficient & Effective PAO Free Legal Service", apprised the participants of the latest updates on relevant civil service laws and office rules and regulations. Lectures to enhance the participant's paralegal and records management skills, and to maintain their personal wellness were also given.

C. *Construction of the new PAO building breaks ground*

The much-awaited Department of Public Works and Highways (DPWH)-led construction of the new 10-story (with 2 basement levels) building of the PAO located along

Commonwealth Avenue, Quezon City finally broke ground on 26 April 2019. The momentous event was witnessed by the Chief Public Attorney, DOJ Secretary Menardo I. Guevarra, DPWH Asec. Antonio Molano, Jr., National Housing Authority (NHA) officials, and other stakeholders.

The building will serve as the new headquarters of the PAO and will house modern facilities that will enable the PAO to better perform its mandate of providing free legal assistance to the indigents and other qualified clients. If everything goes according to plan, the new PAO building will be completed within two (2) years.

D. PAO, an ISO Certified Office

The PAO successfully passed its first ISO surveillance audit with flying colors. **TUV Nord Philippines, Inc.**, an ISO accredited certification body, conducted the surveillance audit on the months of October and November 2019 at the Central Office and ISO-certified regional and district offices. Significantly, the auditors found good practices, particularly in the Cordillera Autonomous Region (CAR) Regional Office, and found no non-conformity to the established documented process.

To recall, PAO was issued a **Quality Management System (QMS) (ISO 9001:2015)** Certification by **TUV Nord Philippines, Inc.** on 27 December 2018 with a validity period of three (3) years.

E. Regional Public Attorneys as expert resource persons in international legal aid events

The National Institute of Legal Aid, China University of Political Science and Law (CUPL), invited the PAO to participate in a **research project on international legal aid on June 24, 2019 to July 17, 2019 in China.** Upon the recommendation of the Chief Public Attorney, Regional Public Attorney (RPA) Vevelyn O. Monsanto of PAO-Regional Office No. VIII participated therein as a *visiting expert*. The CUPL-sponsored event was conducted in view of its bid to use a different approach to adopt a legal system consistent with the protection of human rights and to introduce legislations to establish a more comprehensive and attainable free legal aid program.

RPA Monsanto's discussion focused on, among other important matters: PAO's legal aid system, policies and practices; salient features of the law creating the PAO; the increase in the legal aid funding in the Philippines; and the salary

and *plantilla* positions for new Public Attorneys. She noted that the organizer and her fellow participants **“were greatly impressed that the PAO has an advanced and well-established policies and practices on legal aid.”**

On 6-8 November 2019, the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) Justice Section conducted the Regional Training Workshop on *“Ensuring Quality of Legal Aid Services in Criminal Justice Processes”* in Jakarta, Indonesia. Upon the recommendation of the Chief Public Attorney, RPA Maria G-ree R. Calinawan of PAO- Regional Office No. VII participated therein as an *expert*.

Through the said training workshop, the different legal aid systems being practiced/adopted by other countries were introduced, and the different schemes and measures undertaken by each country to ensure quality legal aid were discussed. Interestingly, as observed by RPA Calinawan, the Philippines was consistently mentioned for the different schemes adopted by our country to ensure quality legal aid, such as ready to access to lawyers from the time of apprehension. Further, she emphasized that **“the Philippines was also commended for being able to pay higher salaries for Public Attorneys through the efforts of our very own Chief Public Attorney”**.

On the legal services rendered by the Office

F. Public Attorneys assisted 7,554 Persons Deprived of Liberty (PDLs) in consonance with Republic Act No. 10951

As of 31 December 2019, public attorneys nationwide already assisted a total of **7,554** PDLs by assessing their respective cases and

pursuing the necessary legal remedy, if applicable; **748** of which have been released or are pending release by virtue of a granted petition. **559** PDLs also benefited through reduction of their sentences, while **847** have pending petitions in court. **1,507** PDLs filed motions and other remedies. The rest are in the process of filing their petitions or the petition of the PAO is not applicable (e.g. application is not favorable, PDL has a private counsel, etc.).

G. Family of road rage victim Mark Vincent Garalde gets justice

The case arose from an altercation between cyclist Mark Vincent M. Garalde (Mark Vincent) and Army Reservist Vhon Martin Tanto (Vhon Martin) while they were on the road. The incident that happened in 2016 in Quiapo, Manila ended with Vhon

Martin inflicting four (4) gunshot wounds on Mark Vincent, which caused the latter's death.

Marilou M. Garalde, mother of victim Mark Vincent, then sought legal assistance from the PAO. A complaint for Murder was filed against Vhon Martin and the trial of the case ensued. On 29 July 2019, the RTC – Branch 14, Manila CONVICTED Vhon Martin of the crime charged and ordered the payment of damages to the heirs of Mark Vincent.

H. *Beaten Kasambahay Lirio Jestre gets justice*

Kasambahay Lirio P. Jestre (Lirio) sought legal assistance from the PAO concerning the physical battering she suffered at the hands of her former employer Ma. Shiela S. Gomez. Corollary thereto, a criminal complaint was filed against Lirio's employer in Mandaluyong.

On 8 August 2019, the RTC – Branch 209, Mandaluyong issued a decision CONVICTING Lirio's employer of Less Serious Physical Injuries. The court gave due consideration to the testimony of Lirio, her hospital record and the forensic examination conducted by the PAO Forensic Team vis-à-vis the uncorroborated denial of the accused.

I. *Legal assistance to 15 Bachelor of Arts in Behavioral Science graduates from UP-Manila led to the latter's almost 100% passing in the licensure examination for psychometricians of the Professional Regulation Commission (PRC)*

Fifteen (15) unemployed graduates of Bachelor of Arts in Behavioral Science from the University of the Philippines-Manila (UP-Manila) requested legal assistance from PAO-Manila District Office on 4 October 2019, in connection with their request to the Commission on Higher Education (CHED), for a CHED-Certificate of Equivalency stating that the degree they obtained from UP-Manila is equivalent to a Bachelor of Arts/ Science in Psychology degree, as a *requirement* in applying for the licensure examination for psychometricians of the Professional Regulation Commission (PRC). The competent and zealous legal assistance of PAO-Manila District Office paved the way to their taking of the said licensure examination on 27-28 October 2019, and led to the almost one hundred percent (100%) passing of the above-mentioned graduates. Fourteen (14) of them are registered psychometricians now, to wit:

1. Kamilla Persida R. Acosta, RPm
2. Julio Rodolfo U. Benedicto, RPm
3. **Cristelle Lyn J. Cabillo, RPm (Top 6)**
4. Aessa Nicole L. Chan, RPm
5. Joana Neri D. Cumpio, RPm
6. Melissa Lorraine E. Delgado, RPm
7. Averylle Pearl L. Dumo, RPm
8. Maria Nerinna C. Estrada, RPm
9. Katryn Arielle D. Gampon, RPm
10. Carla Angelica P. Ong, RPm
11. Clark Anthony V. Trovela, RPm
12. Joseia S. Tucay, RPm
13. Renalyn Claire D. Ventura, RPm
14. Jan Eunice C. Zapanta, RPm

In their moments of uncertainties, the PAO- Central Office and its Manila District Office were there to fight for their right to hurdle a significant step in acquiring their license as psychometricians. The CHED then, responding to a letter from, and related appropriate legal actions of the PAO-Manila District Office, recognized the institutional autonomy of the University of the Philippines (UP), thereby stating that the latter is not within its jurisdiction. In connection with this, a Certification, dated 11 October 2019, was issued by **UP President Danilo L. Concepcion**, which stated the following:

“This is to certify that the Bachelor of Arts in Behavioral Sciences degree of the University of the Philippines Manila is equivalent to the Bachelor Arts/Science in Psychology degree. **This is being issued to entitle students of the University of the Philippines Manila to apply for the licensure examination for psychometricians of the Professional Regulation Commission.**”
(Emphasis supplied)

The PAO-Manila District Office lawyers who personally attended to their concern were RPA Marlon E. Buan, Atty. Gabriel A. De Andres, Jr., Atty. Cayetano B. Cauan IV, and Atty. Kaye Danica H. Catapang.

J. Perpetrators of the torture of Richard “Red” Santillan gets indicted

Ms. Jeanette Santillan (Jeanette) **requested for the re-autopsy** of the lifeless body of her husband, Richard “Red” Santillan (Richard). Her husband was killed on 10 December 2018 during an alleged operation of the TDPO HPG PHPT, Rizal.

Pursuant to such request and in consonance with *Republic Act No. 9745 (Anti-Torture Act of 2009)*, the PAO Forensic Team conducted a re-autopsy on the cadaver of Richard. They found more than sixty (60) wounds, which indicated that the victim was tortured.

Two (2) counts of Murder were charged against the police officers involved in the suspected rubout. The RTC-Branch 99, Antipolo City issued a warrant for their arrest on 22 October 2019.

K. *Exoneration of 60 innocent police officers implicated in the Maguindanao Massacre*

The Maguindanao Massacre happened in 2009 during the election campaign involving two rival political families in the Maguindanao province. It is one of the most controversial election-related cases of all time considering that the crime was committed blatantly in the open, and in sheer disregard of human rights and the rule of law. The huge number of victims involved totaling 58 individuals, including women and members of the press, also adds to the repulsiveness of the crime.

Due to the magnitude and complexity of the case, hundreds were indicted for 58 counts of Murder before the RTC – Branch 221, Quezon City.

Ten years (10) after the incident, justice was finally served on 19 December 2019 when the trial of the case ended with the conviction of those involved in the commission of the crime. However, equally to be celebrated is the exoneration of innocent persons implicated in the crime. This includes the fifty-six (56)¹ ACQUITTED innocent police officers and/or civil personnel represented by the PAO, particularly by Atty. Armando M. Cura. The said acquitted persons are composed mostly of the Solano and Labayan Groups. As succinctly explained by the judge, who was a former public attorney, the said groups are composed of “those who had no prior knowledge of the murder plot were not at all identified in the *locus criminis* – are totally innocent of these crimes.”

Note that there were four (4) other accused represented by the PAO who were earlier acquitted on demurrer. Thus, overall, the PAO was able to secure the acquittal of **60** accused.

¹ Including the two (2) accused represented by the PAO who were inadvertently omitted from the decision.