

ANNUAL ACCOMPLISHMENT REPORT FOR THE YEAR 2009

I. PREFATORY STATEMENT

The history of the Public Attorney's Office (PAO) is replete with challenges which tested the PAO's competence, efficiency and integrity. The PAO has bravely faced the challenges of the times and their chain of impact to social justice, an advocacy and commitment which the public attorneys have dedicated their profession and their very lives, if need be, through the years. While this principal free legal aid office of the Philippine government has not been spared from the effects of economic and political upheavals, the PAO steadfastly stands for genuine public service with Her Excellency President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo as its model of a consummate public servant.

Looking back, the PAO was able to carry-out its National Conventions for Public Attorneys in 2003, 2006 and 2009. Each of these conventions provided complete 36-unit legal education activities that were accredited by the Mandatory Continuing Legal Education (MCLE) Committee of the Supreme Court. All of these MCLE units were provided without cost to its 1,407 public attorneys nationwide as part of its manpower capacity building and empowerment. With gratefulness, the PAO remembers that this was made possible through the stewardship and benevolence by no less than Her Excellency.

Every public attorney was greatly elated when Republic Act No. 9406 was signed into law on March 23, 2007. Republic Act No. 9406 or the PAO Law provides for the upgrading of salaries and allowances for public attorneys equivalent to their counterpart in the National Prosecution Service. The law and its Implementing Rules and Regulations have produced a significant impact to the morale, dynamism and professionalism of the public attorneys and staff of the PAO. Indeed, this is not only a concrete affirmation of the PAO's significant role in the Philippine justice system as part of the country's sustainable social development but also a manifestation of the Arroyo administration's continuing thrust in protecting the rights of the people, especially those who are in the margins of the society.

With R.A. 9406 in place, the PAO has been strengthened by the autonomy and independence provided by the said law. R.A 9406 further organized the PAO with the creation of 359 new lawyer positions and 164 new support personnel positions complementing the 1,047 present public attorneys and 802 support personnel. This is in keeping with the continuous realization of the Arroyo administration's advocacy for social justice and with the fulfillment of its agenda of government as previously introduced in Her Excellency's State of the Nation Address (SONA) in 2004.

The PAO's intensified nationwide Free Legal and Medical Jail Visitation and Decongestion Program has yielded enormous numbers whose significance goes beyond statistics for these figures are composed of the very people whose lives have been touched and have been made better by the PAO.

In 2007, a total of 86,593 clients of the PAO were either acquitted, released from confinement or otherwise obtained favorable dispositions of their criminal cases. In 2008, there were 81,966 accused and in 2009 there were 118,619 accused which regained their freedom and honor in this manner through the free legal assistance provided by the PAO.

Behind the continuous success of the plans and programs of the PAO are recognitions and support from media, governmental and non-governmental institutions, both foreign and local alike, to the mandate of the PAO and its accomplishments.

The agency is resolved to remain true to its sworn duty and commitment as champion of the poor, of the oppressed, and the underprivileged and shall endure as a staunch advocate of peace and justice in the county.

II. STRUCTURAL FRAMEWORK

A. Geographical location

The Public Attorney's Office maintains its Central Office at the DOJ Agencies Building, NIA Road corner East Avenue, Diliman, Quezon City, an edifice allotted for various agencies under the Department of Justice. The Regional and District/Sub-District Offices, on the other hand, are strategically located nationwide responding to indigent clients from 80 provinces, 137 cities and 1,497 municipalities which are in dire need of legal assistance.

At present, there are **17 regional offices** and **274 district and sub-district offices**. Most of the offices are situated in the Halls of Justice nationwide along with the courts and other offices involved in the administration of justice.

B. Public Attorneys and the Courts

As of December 2009, the PAO has **1,407 lawyers**, who actively handle criminal and civil cases before **2,182 courts** nationwide and about **29 lawyers** who devote themselves on appealed cases before the Court of Appeals, the Supreme Court and the Office of the President.

Below is a table indicating the number of existing offices and assigned lawyers in each region, and its proportionate ratio to existing courts therein.

REGION	DISTRICT OFFICES	PAO LAWYERS	COURTS	RATIO
Central Office		122	NA	NA
National Capital Region	15	249	338	1.38
Cordillera Administrative Region	10	38	65	1.71
I Ilocos Region	21	82	140	1.71
II Cagayan Valley	13	61	101	1.65
III Central Luzon	26	94	209	2.22
IV-A CALABARZON	31	105	234	2.29
IV-B MIMAROPA	10	46	62	1.35
V Bicol Region	19	61	149	2.44
VI Eastern Visayas	17	95	160	1.68
VII Central Visayas	22	76	151	1.99
VIII Western Visayas	24	83	133	1.60
IX-A ARMM	2	28	83	2.96

IX-B Zamboanga Peninsula	13	48	75	1.56
X Northern Mindanao	19	73	81	1.11
XI Davao Region	11	54	82	1.52
XII SOCCSKSARGEN	10	55	64	1.16
XIII CARAGA	11	37	55	1.49
TOTAL	274	1,407	2,182	1.55

The introduction of district offices in different regions of the country complements the agency's mission to provide litigants free access to courts, judicial and quasi-judicial agencies by rendering legal assistance. With the accessibility of the services of the PAO, justice could efficiently be delivered despite geographical fragmentation.

C. Personnel Complement

The PAO, in the delivery of its mandated mission, is complemented by several administrative units, which render support role to its technical operations. Even with the limited personnel of the office, it has, however, managed to carry out its operations with utmost efficiency and dedication.

C.1 PERSONNEL COMPLEMENT

The table below shows the number of authorized, filled, and unfilled positions in the PAO for the year 2009, to wit:

	Authorized	Filled	Unfilled
Lawyers	1,407	1,407	0
Support Personnel	966	966	0
Total	2,373	2,373	0

C.2 PERSONNEL MOVEMENT

While recruitment is high, the turn-over of PAO personnel especially its lawyers is likewise fast due primarily to their search for greener pastures either by engaging in private practice or by transferring to other government agencies such as the National Prosecution Service (NAPROSS), Ombudsman, and the judiciary.

The table below sets forth the movement of personnel in the PAO for the year 2009, to wit:

	Lawyer	Support Staff	Total
Recruited	291	162	453
Promoted	47	17	64

C.3 UPGRADING OF SALARIES OF PAO LAWYERS

Pursuant to Republic Act No. 9406 and its Implementing Rules and Regulations, the rank of incumbent public attorneys was upgraded to the rank equivalent to their respective counterparts in the National Prosecution Service. Salary differentials accruing to said qualified public attorneys were released by the Department of Budget and Management.

D. Operational Resources

D.1 FINANCIAL RESOURCES

In 2009, the office had an approved appropriation of Php 816,430,000.00. However, a total amount of Php 947,641,634.00 was released by the Department of Budget and Management which included the payment of Terminal Leaves and Retirement Gratuities of 62 retired/resigned employees amounting to Php 13,342,113.00.

D.2 LIBRARY SERVICES

The PAO library is looking forward to giving better and more efficient means of assisting its clientele, the PAO lawyers, through modern and advance information-assisted technology such as the Internet, modern fax machines, and telephone units for a fast transmission of output.

Consequently, and in order to give flesh to this aspiration, several legal books and reference materials were distributed to all Regional and District Offices amounting to the aggregate amount of Php 51,695.00. A total amount of Php 39,032.00 was allotted to *Lex Libris* Subscription for the Central Office as well as to Regional Offices to facilitate research work.

The PAO Library, through its personnel, was able to collate a total of **3,878 news releases** which include the speeches of the Chief Public Attorney delivered in various occasions.

Through its tri-media linkages the PAO has continuously been rendering legal advice to the general public through the "Say Mo Attorney?" column in the *People's Tonight* tabloid, released every Monday, Wednesday and Friday. A total of **77 articles** were published and clipped into a file for the year 2009.

The effort to serve the greatest number of people was realized when the Chief Public Attorney intensified this endeavor by the daily publication of a legal advice column, "Dear PAO" in *The Manila Times*. This column started in November 2008, and for the year 2009 a total of **362 articles** were published.

Finally, from March to December 2009, a total of **303 articles** were published in the column "*Magtanong kay Attorney*" in Bulgar newspaper.

D.3 OFFICE EQUIPMENT

In 2009, the PAO purchased and distributed the following office equipment, to wit:

* Airconditioners	-	17 units
* Computer Sets (with monitors and printers)	-	312 sets
* Computer Monitors (replacement for defective units)	-	5 units
* Computer Printers	-	319 units
* Copiers	-	4 units
* Fax Machines	-	18 units
* Filing Cabinets	-	27 units
* Office Chairs		
Executive Chairs	-	41 units
Monobloc	-	114 units
* Office Tables		
Executive Desks	-	56 units
* Others		
Paper Shredders	-	2 units
Electric Fans	-	2 units

- Re: Computers, 194 sets with printers taken from 2008 budget but delivered in 2009
- Re: Computers, 115 sets with printers for delivery. Purchased via Procurement Service
- Re: Printers, 309 units included in the total report for computer sets purchased 10 units purchased separately as replacement for defective units

Since the date of assumption of duty, it has been the battle cry of the Chief Public Attorney to put into oblivion the traditional impression with public offices where there is a dearth of office supply and only obsolete and/or worn out office equipment are in place. With the purchase of the foregoing office furnishings, such as chairs, filing cabinets, computer tables, scanners, computers, and posture chairs, PAO personnel were able to perform their duties in a more office-friendly environment. Needless to say, it somehow contributed to the continuously swelling public trust to the services of the PAO.

In addition, the computerization program of the office saw the continuous upgrading of existing computer units in order to cope up with the fast changing times and technology.

III. LANDMARK ACCOMPLISHMENTS

A. Clients assisted and cases handled

The statistical figures below show the total number of indigent clients assisted and the total number of cases (judicial and quasi-judicial) handled by the PAO and its proportionate relation to the **1,407 lawyers** for the year 2009.

Total No. of Clients Assisted	4,154,587
Total No. of Cases Handled	591,358
Average No. of Clients Assisted by Each Lawyer	2,953
Average No. of Cases Handled by Each Lawyer	420

B. Acquittals, releases and other favorable dispositions in criminal cases

Despite overwhelming case load, the Public Attorneys were able to represent a total of 118,619 indigent clients in courts for the year 2009, who were granted verdicts of acquittals or other favorable dispositions, or were released from incarceration as shown in the table below.

Nature of disposition	No. of Clients
A. Acquittal	10,906
B. Demurrer to Evidence granted	1,973
C. Case Provisionally Dismissed	32,040
D. Case Permanently Dismissed	27,170
E. Motion to Quash granted	1,081
F. Released on Bail	15,178
G. Motion for Released on Recognizance granted	8,807
H. Released in accordance with Art. 29, RPC	6,589
I. Application for Probation granted	1,619
J. Released on other Grounds	13,256
TOTAL	118,619

C. Winning Appealed Cases

Out of 1,407 lawyers in the PAO, there are about 29 who devote their attention in attending to appealed cases, particularly those pending before the Court of Appeals, the Supreme Court and the Office of the President. For criminal cases alone, a total of 112 favorable decisions were obtained for 2009. The table below shows the breakdown of figures, to wit:

Acquittals from Death Penalty	105
Acquittals from Reclusion Perpetua	53
Acquittals from Reclusion Temporal	54
Modification from Death Penalty to Reclusion Perpetua	2
Modification from Death Penalty to Reclusion Temporal	2
TOTAL	216

Aside from criminal cases, the Special and Appealed Cases Service also handles civil and special cases such as appeals from the decision of NLRC, SSS and GSIS. In those cases, a total of **328** favorable dispositions were obtained by PAO-SACS.

D. Distribution of Cases handled

1. JUDICIAL CASES

1.a Criminal Cases

As of June 2009 there are about **443,177** pending criminal cases nationwide, of which a total of **249,511** cases or about **56.30%** are handled by PAO

KEY RESULT AREAS	PERFORMANCE INDICATORS	OUTPUT	TARGET
I. REPRESENTATION OF INDIGENTS IN JUDICIAL CASES (CRIMINAL)	TOTAL NO. OF CASES HANDLED	377,978	653,457
	A. CARRY OVER	225,548	
	B. NEWLY RECEIVED	152,430	
	TOTAL NO. OF CASES TERMINATED	137,539	308,188
	DISPOSITION RATE	36.39%	
	NO. OF CASES PENDING AT THE END OF THE PERIOD	240,439	

Out of the 137,539 terminated criminal cases, there are 95,679 or about **69.56%** favorable dispositions obtained by the Public Attorneys from representing indigent clients in criminal cases alone.

1.b Civil Cases

The PAO is also mandated to represent, free of charge, indigent persons or the immediate members of their family, in all the civil cases for or against them where, after due investigation, it is determined that the interest of justice will be served thereby. The office may represent either the plaintiff or defendant in a civil case subject to merit and indigency tests.

KEY RESULT AREAS	PERFORMANCE INDICATORS	OUTPUT	TARGET
II. REPRESENTATION OF INDIGENTS IN JUDICIAL CASES (CIVIL)	TOTAL NO. OF CASES HANDLED	48,707	83,881
	A. CARRY OVER	35,773	

	B. NEWLY RECEIVED	12,934	
	TOTAL NO. OF CASES TERMINATED	13,031	29,021
	DISPOSITION RATE	26.75%	
	NO. OF CASES PENDING AT THE END OF THE PERIOD	35,676	

2. QUASI-JUDICIAL CASES

2.a Administrative Cases

Aside from cases pending in court, PAO also renders free legal assistance to parties involved in administrative proceedings or other administrative matters requiring the assistance of a counsel (ex. NAPOLCOM and PLEB). It may involve administrative charges against erring employees or officials either in public or private service subject to merit and indigency tests and other limitations as laid down under PAO MC No. 18, series of 2002 and PAO Law.

	PERFORMANCE INDICATORS	OUTPUT	TARGET
III. REPRESENTATION OF INDIGENTS IN QUASI-JUDICIAL CASES (ADMINISTRATIVE CASES PROPER)	TOTAL NO. OF CASES HANDLED	7,134	12,656
	A. CARRY OVER	5,682	
	B. NEWLY RECEIVED	1,452	
	TOTAL NO. OF CASES TERMINATED	1,415	3,854
	DISPOSITION RATE	19.83%	
	NO. OF CASES PENDING AT THE END OF THE PERIOD	5,719	

2.b Cases before the Prosecutor's Office

While public attorneys appear as defense counsels in criminal cases pending in courts, they may, however, represent either a private complainant or respondent in criminal cases pending for preliminary investigation before the Prosecutor's Office.

	PERFORMANCE INDICATORS	OUTPUT	TARGET
IV. REPRESENTATION OF INDIGENTS IN QUASI-JUDICIAL CASE (PROSECUTOR'S OFFICE)	TOTAL NO. OF CASES HANDLED	45,894	80,024
	A. CARRY OVER	26,538	
	B. NEWLY RECEIVED	19,356	
	TOTAL NO. OF CASES DISPOSED	17,214	38,891

	DISPOSITION RATE	37.51\%	
	NO. OF CASES PENDING AT THE END OF THE PERIOD	28,680	

2.c Labor cases

For a long period of time, the PAO has been representing and advocating for various concerns of the labor sector, which usually involves non-payment and/or underpayment of wages as well as illegal termination of employment. PAO renders free legal assistance to employees who are victims of discrimination and oppression in their respective workplaces.

V. REPRESENTATION OF INDIGENTS IN QUASI-JUDICIAL CASES (LABOR CASES)	PERFORMANCE INDICATORS	OUTPUT	TARGET
	TOTAL NO. OF CASES HANDLED	19,398	33,880
	A. CARRY OVER	15,127	
	B. NEWLY RECEIVED	4,271	
	TOTAL NO. OF CASES DISPOSED	3,302	10,427
	DISPOSITION RATE	17.02\%	
	NO. OF CASES PENDING AT THE END OF THE PERIOD	16,096	

3. LIMITED SERVICES

In spite of the fact that PAO is handling more than half of the total number of pending criminal cases nationwide, still, the public attorneys are frequently appointed by the courts to render limited services and appear as *counsels de oficio* to cases that are actually handled by a *counsels de parte* if only to facilitate proceedings therein and in order not to frustrate the intentions of justice.

VI. LIMITED SERVICES	PERFORMANCE INDICATORS	OUTPUT	TARGET
	ARRAIGNMENT	123,925	277,872
	PRE-TRIAL	81,130	201,930
	PROMULGATION	38,067	146,361
	OTHERS	249,565	406,732
	TOTAL	492,687	1,032,895

4. NON-JUDICIAL SERVICES

Aside from representation of clients in court, every public attorney renders other legal services like preparation of pleadings and other legal documents, legal counseling, administration of oath as well as conducts mediation and conciliation proceedings to abate protracted court litigation and help the court to avoid clogging of cases.

VII. RENDITION OF NON-JUDICIAL SERVICES	PERFORMANCE INDICATORS	OUTPUT	TARGET
-----------------------------------------	------------------------	--------	--------

	LEGAL DOCUMENTATION	714,474	1,377,254
	CLIENTS COUNSELED	912,239	1,787,857
	OATHS ADMINISTERED	530,451	622,719

Continuation.... VII. RENDITION OF NON-JUDICIAL SERVICES	MEDIATION AND CONCILIATION	OUTPUT	TARGET
	NO. OF DISPUTES HANDLED	323,149	619,737
	A. CARRY OVER	97,001	
	B. NEWLY RECEIVED	226,148	
	NO. OF DISPUTES RESOLVED	225,653	482,018
	DISPOSITION RATE	69.83%	
	NO. OF CASES PENDING AT THE END OF THE PERIOD	97,496	

5. LEGAL ASSISTANCE TO WOMEN

With the approval into law of Republic Act No. 9262, otherwise known as the Anti-VAWC Law the PAO is mandated to extend legal assistance to women and their children who are victims of violence. In response thereto, PAO was able to adopt its own Standard Office Procedures in Extending Legal Assistance to Women and Their Children Subjected to Violence, otherwise known as PAO Memorandum Circular No. 8, series of 2007, which took effect on December 7, 2007.

The table below shows the number of women and children assisted by the PAO for the year 2009.

REPRESENTATION OF WOMEN CLIENTS	PERFORMANCE INDICATORS	OUTPUT	TARGET
	TOTAL NO. OF CASES HANDLED	69,404	125,081
	A. CARRY OVER	39,398	
	B. NEWLY RECEIVED	30,006	
	TOTAL NO. OF CASES TERMINATED	26,037	64,015
	DISPOSITION RATE	37.52%	
	NO. OF CASES PENDING AT THE END OF THE PERIOD	43,367	

6. LEGAL ASSISTANCE TO CICL

On April 28, 2006, Republic Act No. 9344 (R.A. No. 9344), otherwise known as the Juvenile Justice and Welfare System Act, as well as the subsequent issuance of Executive Order No. 633, mandated the PAO to facilitate the release of minor offenders from jail, particularly those who were fifteen years old or below at the time of the alleged commission of the crime. PAO, on the other hand, adopted its Standard Office Procedures in Extending Legal Assistance to Children in Conflict with the Law.

The PAO has continuously put this task into action by devoting special attention to the cause of women and children in so far as the criminal justice system is concerned.

	PERFORMANCE INDICATORS	OUTPUT	TARGET
REPRESENTATION OF CHILDREN IN CONFLICT WITH THE LAW (CICL)	TOTAL NO. OF CASES HANDLED	14,785	27,225
	A. CARRY OVER	10,187	
	B. NEWLY RECEIVED	4,598	
	TOTAL NO. OF CASES TERMINATED	4,254	11,435
	DISPOSITION RATE	28.77%	
	NO. OF CASES PENDING AT THE END OF THE PERIOD	10,531	

In the end, in spite of the limited number of lawyers and support personnel of the agency, not to mention its meager budgetary allocation, the PAO has managed to carry out its mandate with rewarding output.

It is humbly submitted that the above data manifest and indicate the continuous trust and faith of the people in the performance of the agency.

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

5. PAO-NLRC SUB-STATION

By virtue of a Memorandum of Agreement, the PAO has been maintaining its sub-station at the National Labor Relations Commission (NLRC) located at Banawe, Quezon City.

The sub-station was established to facilitate the rendition of legal assistance to complaining workers before the NLRC and consequently to expedite the proceedings thereon. It was aimed to make justice readily and more accessible to complaining workers whose plight the PAO is vigorously concerned about.

The efficiency of the office has been proven for years and as a matter of fact, for the year 2009, a total of **7,832 clients** were accommodated and were extended legal assistance.

6. RESEARCH AND COMMUNICATION

For the year 2009, the PAO, through the Legal Research Service, had a total number of **225 research works** that were duly accomplished. It included legal queries from the public which were either directly addressed or otherwise referred to the PAO. The sudden upsurge in the number of research works was brought about by the increasing public trust coupled with consistent tri-media linkage as a means of education and information dissemination. The accessibility of the Chief Public Attorney herself for public services, has for one reason, marked the great difference.

7. INTENSIFYING INFORMATION DISSEMINATION

Aside from linkage to print media for public education and information dissemination, the PAO has also cooperated with the broadcast media (radio and television) to strengthen and sustain its legal services operations.

Towards this end, PAO lawyers continuously provide on-the-air legal counseling to DZRV (Radio Veritas), DWIZ (Hustisya Para sa Lahat), DWDD-AFP (Ugnayan ng Anghel ng Masa), GMA 7 (Imbestigador and Unang Hirit), DZMM, ABS-CBN 2 (Aksyon Ngayon, Eksklusibong Explosibong Expose (XXX), Umagang Kay Ganda), DZRH, DZRV (Radyo ng Bayan), DZBB "Oro Mismo" and almost all other radio and television stations. The same activity is also undertaken by selected PAO lawyers in the different regions.

IV. THE CHIEF PUBLIC ATTORNEY

A. The Chief Public Attorney personally handled the following cases and/or rendered legal assistance to the following individuals, to wit:

1. The cases of the *victims* of the *M/V Princess of the Stars maritime tragedy*. Seventy-one (71) civil cases have already been filed against the owners and management of the Sulpicio Lines, Inc. (SLI) in Manila and fifty-one (51) in Cebu City. Administrative and criminal cases have also been filed against the said respondents at the Maritime Industry Authority (MARINA) and the Department of Justice, pursuant to Department Order No. 439, Series of 2008;
2. *Legal assistance to Philippine National Police (PNP) personnel from the ranks of PO1 to PO3* who were involved in the *EDSA-NIA Shoot-Out*, pursuant to Department Order No. 106, Series of 2009;
3. *Provisional and temporary legal assistance*, i.e. taking of oath, to former Congressman, broadcast journalist and tv news anchor, *Mr. Ted Failon* and his driver in connection with the *Trina Etong suicide case*; and
4. *Release of the twelve (12) remaining military personnel* who were incarcerated relative to the *Aquino-Galman double Murder case*. By virtue of the executive clemency given to these twelve (12) incarcerated soldiers by H. E. President Gloria Macapagal- Arroyo, on February 6, 2009, two (2) of them were released and on March 4 of the same year, the remaining ten (10) were likewise freed.

B. The Chief Public Attorney received the following prestigious awards, to wit:

1. ***Discovery of the Year Award (Category: Poetry)*** given by the Aliw Awards Foundation Incorporated on November 17, 2009 at the Megatent, Pasig City;
2. ***Ulirang Ina Award for Law and Judiciary*** given by the National Mother's Day & Father's Day Foundation, Inc. Ulirang Ina Awards Committee on May 10, 2009 at the Century Park Hotel, Malate, Manila;
3. ***Up Close and Personal with Marissa del Mar 1st Impact Awards (Awardee for Good Governance-Executive)*** given by Millicent Productions on March 2, 2009 at the Fort Bonifacio, Taguig City.

C. The Chief Public Attorney signed/answered 35,480 communications. The breakdown is as follows:

I. Communications to / from CPA Rueda-Acosta	<i>Total No. of Communications</i>	35,480
A. Communications from Executive Division	7555	

1. Appointments	213
2. Memoranda	461
3. Memorandum Orders	274
4. Memorandum Circulars	6
5. Office Orders	141
6. Reassignment Orders	34
7. Travel Orders	6
8. Special Orders	6
9. Other Communications	
9.1. Signed by CPA	3623
9.2. Signed by Executive Lawyers	2791
B. Communications from Other Services	2789
1. Administrative Service	1527
2. Legal Research Service	240
3. Field Operations and Statistics Service	230
4. Financial Planning and Management Service	535
5. Special and Appealed Cases Service	257
C. Communications from Regional Offices	4183
1. Region I	219
2. Region II	174
3. Region III	312
4. Region IV	466
5. Region V	524
6. Region VI	365
7. Region VII	315
8. Region VIII	161
9. Region IX / ARMM	199
10. Region X	154
11. Region XI	182
12. Region XII	237
13. CAR	88
14. CARAGA	99
15. NCR	688
D. Communications from OP, OVP, Senate & HOR	598
E. Communications from Other Offices	20036
1. Department of Justice	272

2. Supreme Court	3021
3. Court of Appeals	10605
4. National Labor Relations Commission	1116
5. Other Communications	4557
6. Applicants	465
F. Legal Opinion/s Published at Manila Times	362

D. The Chief Public Attorney attended the following local trainings and seminars:

1. Speaker, Competency and Skills Development Training-Workshop/Seminar for Public Attorneys in Handling CICL and Women and Their Children Victims of Violence (Pursuant to PAO MC Nos. 7 & 8, S. 2007 in Relation to RA No. 9262), November 25-27, 2009, Palo, Leyte;

2. Panelist/Reactor, Multi-Sectoral Seminar Workshop on Agrarian Justice for the Province of Quezon, conducted by the Agrarian Justice Foundation Inc., November 10-12, 2009, Dumaguete City;

3. Convenor/Lecturer, the PAO's 3rd MCLE Accredited Convention of PAO Lawyers, September 28 to October 2, 2009, Manila Hotel;

4. Speaker, Forum Group Discussion: Obstruction of Justice, August 24, 2009, University of the Philippines, Diliman, Quezon City;

5. Signatory, Participant, National Summit on the United Nations Convention Against Corruption (UNCAC), May 27, 2009, Philippine International Convention Center (PICC), Roxas Blvd., Pasay City;

6. Panelist/Reactor, Multi-Sectoral Seminar Workshop on Agrarian Justice for the Province of Quezon, conducted by the Agrarian Justice Foundation, March 19, 2009, Lucena City;

V. RECOGNITIONS AND COMMENDATIONS

For the past three years, the PAO has been recognized and commended by the Civil Service Commission in the implementation of its Public Service Delivery Audit (PASADA) Project and has conferred the following, to wit:

1. On September 18, 2007, a Certificate of Recognition was awarded to the Filed Services and Statistics Division (**PAO-FSSD**) (now Field Operations and Statistics Service) for its **Very Good Performance** in the delivery of prompt and responsive frontline services;

2. On September 30, 2008, a Certificate of Recognition was conferred to the **PAO-Regional Office No. II**, Public Attorney's Office, for having garnered a rating of **Very Good** in exhibiting the value of customer care and meeting the expectations of the transacting public for prompt, courteous, responsive, facilitative and pleasant service;

3. On September 22, 2008, three (3) Certificates of Recognition were conferred to the **Iloilo District Offices I and II, PAO-Region VI**, for having garnered a rating of **Very Good** in exhibiting the value of customer care and meeting the expectations of the transacting public for prompt, courteous, responsive, facilitative and pleasant service, specifically in the following frontline services, to wit:

1. Outreach Services (Legal Assistance in Custodial and Inquest Investigation); and
2. Documentation/Notarial Services. The Office was also conferred another Certificate of Recognition for

having garnered an **Excellent** rating for its Inquiry/Request for Legal Assistance/ Legal Counseling services.

4. On September 8, 2009, two (2) Certificates of Recognition were conferred to the **Bacolod City District Office, PAO-Region VI**, for having garnered a rating of **Very Good** in exhibiting the value of customer care and meeting the expectations of the transacting public for prompt, courteous, responsive, facilitative and pleasant service, specifically in the category of Legal Representation in Judicial, Administrative and Labor Cases and an **Excellent** rating in the Documentation/Notarial Services category.

VI. OTHER PROGRAMS AND ACTIVITIES

A. PAO- CENTRAL OFFICE LEGAL AND MEDICAL JAIL VISITATION AND DECONGESTION PROGRAM

The Chief Public Attorney herself has spearheaded this endeavor and because of the horrendous condition of jails in the country, the PAO, upon prior approval of the former Secretary of the Department of Justice (DOJ), Hon. Raul M. Gonzalez and ardent support of the current DOJ Secretary, Hon. Agnes VST Devanadera, has continuously carried out its nationwide and intensified free Legal and Medical Jail Visitation and Decongestion Program. The table below shows the output of the project for 2009, to wit:

	VISITED JAIL	DATE	NO. OF BENEFICIARIES FOR LEGAL ASSISTANCE (ADVICE)	NO. OF BENEFICIARIES FOR MEDICAL ASSISTANCE	NO. OF BENEFICIARIES FOR DENTAL ASSISTANCE	NO. OF READING GLASSES DISTRIBUTED	TOTAL NO. OF INMATES RELEASED
1	NBP (Max Security)	Feb. 26, 2009	49	86	49	95	398
2	Metro Manila District Jail, Camp Bagong Diwa	Mar. 2, 2009	87	36	N/A	N/A	127
3	Marikina City Jail	Feb 17, 2009	65	72	N/A	N/A	508
4	Candelaria Municipal Jail	Mar 17, 2009	6	11	N/A	N/A	47
5	Lucena City Jail	Mar 18, 2009	37	116	N/A	N/A	39
6	Lucena Police Station	Mar 18, 2009	15	105	N/A	N/A	50
7	Quezon District Jail	Mar 18, 2009	116	54	N/A	N/A	60
8	Albay City Jail	Apr 28, 2009	41	67	N/A	N/A	59

9	Albay Provincial Jail	Apr 28, 2009	31	82	N/A	N/A	24
10	Correctional Institution for Women	May 8, 2009	135	130	31	148	50
11	NBP (Max Security)	May 26, 2009	66	150	19	122	1,415
12	NBP (Max Security)	June 9, 2009	23	190	21	102	
13	NBP (Med Security)	June 9, 2009	105	219	23	159	
14	Cebu City Jail (Male)	June 18, 2009	50	91	N/A	N/A	0
15	Cebu City Jail (Female)	June 18, 2009	8	66	N/A	N/A	
16	QC Female Dormitory	July 7, 2009	132	237	34	140	749
17	Quezon City Jail	July 24, 2009	127	319	30	200	1,660
18	Correctional Institution for Women	Aug 31, 2009	170	211	32	N/A	11
19	Camp Crame Custodial Center	Sept. 11, 2009	21	57	5	N/A	4
20	Albay Provincial Jail	Nov 19, 2009	51	51	N/A	N/A	3
21	Legazpi City Jail	Nov 19, 2009	34	34	N/A	N/A	18
22	Tacloban City Jail	Nov 25, 2009	130	130	N/A	N/A	55
23	Leyte Provincial Jail	Nov 25, 2009	188	188	N/A	N/A	18
24	Correctional Institution for Women	Dec 21, 2009	129	262	35	139	11
25	Mandaluyong City Jail	Dec 21, 2009	20	107	22	76	9

26	Manila City Jail (Male)	Dec 23, 2009	157	131	22	78	18
27	Manila City Jail (Female)	Dec 23, 2009	80	170	21	89	8
28	Manila Youth Reception Center	Dec 23, 2009	50	91	21	12	1
TOTAL			2,123	3,463	365	1,360	5,342

Updated As of January 11, 2010

B. OUTREACH ACTIVITIES

B. 1 INQUEST INVESTIGATION AND CUSTODIAL INTERROGATION

While public attorneys are overwhelmed with workload and voluminous cases, they still managed to accommodate and serve indigent clients who are taken into custody by authorities to undergo inquest investigation and custodial interrogation. Public attorneys are ready counsels in these kinds of proceedings and this kind of service is over and above their regular services such as counseling, documentation and court appearances. For 2009, the PAO accomplished the following:

VIII. OUTREACH ACTIVITIES	INQUEST INVESTIGATION AND CUSTODIAL INTERROGATION	OUTPUT	TARGET
	TOTAL NO. OF CLIENTS ASSISTED		117,840

B. 2 NATIONWIDE LAWYERS' JAIL VISITATION

As per PAO Memorandum Circular No. 2, series of 2008, jail visitation shall be undertaken by lawyers and staff nationwide to render legal advice, counseling and assistance and to be conducted in jails nationwide, youth detention homes, female detention centers and other commitment centers located within their respective territorial jurisdictions and/or to which their clients are committed, at least once a week. In 2009, the PAO accomplished the following:

VIII. OUTREACH ACTIVITIES	NATIONWIDE LAWYERS' JAIL VISITATION	OUTPUT	TARGET	
	VISITATION			
	A. NO. OF PRISONERS INTERVIEWED		178,168	130,187
B. NO. OF PRISONERS PROVIDED WITH ASSISTANCE		211,643	146,095	

B. 3. 24/7 LEGAL COUNSELING & INQUEST PROCEEDINGS ASSISTANCE

The Office has even intensified its assistance during inquest proceedings when it undertook to provide inquest service to indigent individuals during night time, weekends and holidays at the PAO-Central Office since October 2009. The project has provided a ready counsel for advice and assistance in police precincts apprehending alleged suspects of crime.

C. LEGAL AID INFORMATION DISSEMINATION

Lawyers and staff assigned at the district offices, as well, would engage themselves in various activities involving legal education and information dissemination in communities within their respective territorial jurisdictions. It includes appearances in conferences, local fora, radio stations and delivery of related lectures.

LEGAL AID INFORMATION DISSEMINATION	PERFORMANCE INDICATORS	OUTPUT	TARGET
A. COMMUNITY LINKAGE	NO. OF INFORMATION DISSEMINATION CONDUCTED/ATTENDED	1,883	1,500
B. TRI-MEDIA LINKAGE	NO. OF HOURS IN RADIO PROGRAM CONDUCTED/INITIATED	989	240
	NO. OF PRESS RELEASES/NEWS ITEM PUBLISHED	156	140

D. COOPERATION WITH LEGAL AID ORGANIZATIONS

In coordination with other stakeholders in the justice system, clients are sometimes referred to the office for legal assistance by some organizations or other entities, both public and private. In the same manner, applicants who are not qualified for free legal services of the PAO are endorsed to other legal aid organizations for appropriate action.

Aside from the training programs of the PAO, relevant trainings and seminars are also provided by other agencies for which this agency is usually invited to participate.

COOPERATION WITH OTHER LEGAL AID ORGANIZATIONS	PERFORMANCE INDICATORS	OUTPUT	TARGET
A. IBP/OTHER LEGAL AID ORGANIZATIONS	NO. OF MEETINGS CONDUCTED/ATTENDED	2,313	600
	NO. OF REFERRALS RECEIVED	21,893	12,000
	NO. OF REFERRALS MADE	20,839	10,400
INSTITUTION BUILDING	NO. OF TRAINING PROGRAMS CONDUCTED/ATTENDED	1,127	680
	NO. OF PERSONNEL TRAINED	4,692	1,460
	TOTAL NO. OF TRAINING HOURS	6,636	1,840

E. RATIFICATION OF THE PAO's CITIZEN's CHARTER

After due deliberation and conferences, the Public Attorney's Office sent its key officers to the Development Academy of the Philippines, Ortigas Center, Pasig City to undergo relevant training on the formulation of a citizen's charter. On June 25, 2009, the Chief Public Attorney, upon ratification of the

Regional Public Attorneys and recommending approval of Deputy Chief Public Attorneys, approved the PAO Citizen's Charter in faithful compliance with the provisions of Republic Act No. 9485, otherwise known as the Anti-Red Tape Act of 2007.

F. TRAINING PROGRAMS

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

In September 28 – October 2, 2009 at the Manila Hotel, the PAO conducted its **3rd MCLE Accredited National Convention of Public Attorneys** which provided a complete 36-unit training activity required from Filipino lawyers by the Mandatory Continuing Legal Education (MCLE) Committee of the Supreme Court.

The USAID, the US Department of State, and the American Bar Association-Rule of Law Initiative co-sponsored the said convention. These American institutions directly transmitted a part of the cost of the holding of this event to the administrators of the Manila Hotel.

The Training Committee of PAO, under the auspices of the Chief Public Attorney, was able to revise its training module and was able to produce three (3) module videos for the training activity dubbed as **“Competency and Skills Development Training-Workshop/Seminar for Public Attorneys in Handling Cases Involving CICL and Women and their Children Victims of Violence”** (Pursuant to PAO MC Nos. 7 & 8, series of 2007, in relation to RA No. 9344 and RA No. 9262). The Public Attorneys assigned in family courts from PAO-Regions II, III, IV, NCR, CO, V and VIII, were able to benefit from this training program. This endeavor was made possible thru the courtesy and sponsorship of the UNICEF and unwavering support of Atty. Alberto T. Muyot, Project Officer, Child Protection Section, UNICEF-Manila, Philippines.

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

From January to December 2009 there were about **55 seminars** attended by PAO personnel. A total of **1,461 lawyers** and **22 support staff** were registered in attendance.

Finally, a total of **3 Public Attorneys** from the District and Regional Offices attended as Resource Speakers upon invitation of various sectors.

VII. ISSUES AND CONCERNS

A. FAST TURNOVER OF PAO LAWYERS

The high turnover rate of PAO lawyers is primarily due to the following reasons:

- (1) Resignation to engage in private law practice;
- (2) Transfer to the National Prosecution Service (NAPROSS);
- (3) Transfer to the judiciary;
- (4) Transfer to other government owned and controlled corporations; and
- (5) Heavy workload;
- (6) No attractive retirement benefits.

Due to uncompetitive compensation package and allowance given to its personnel, the PAO has difficulty in maintaining the stint of PAO lawyers in its fold. However, with the recent upgrading of salary grades for lawyers in the agency pursuant to PAO (R.A. 9406), the PAO is hopeful to retain most of its lawyers in the service until retirement age, more or less.

B. HEAVY WORKLOAD

On the average, a PAO lawyer is assigned from two (2) to four (4) courts while a prosecutor is assigned only to one (1) court. The PAO has only 1,407 authorized *plantilla* positions for lawyers.

This unfair advantage in the number of prosecutors over PAO lawyers is due to the provision of P.D. No.1275 which states that “whenever there is an increase in the number of court salas, there shall be a corresponding increase in the number of assistant provincial/city fiscal positions at the ratio of two fiscals to a sala.” At this stage, while PAO is thankful for the passage of PAO Law, the agency is yet to fully realize its effect until its full implementation.

It is also worthy to mention that aside from handling criminal and civil cases, PAO lawyers are likewise mandated to handle: (1) preliminary investigation of cases before the Office of the Public Prosecutor; (2) labor cases before the National Labor Relations Commission; (3) administrative cases before administrative bodies like DARAB, PRC, COMELEC, Bureau of Customs, DECS, PLEB, Insurance Commission, etc.

C. SCARCITY OF OFFICE EQUIPMENT

Despite procurement of some office furnishings, such as chair, filing cabinets, computer tables, scanners, computers, and posture chairs, the PAO still greatly lacks computers which are necessary in the immediate preparation and submission of pleadings with the courts and other quasi-judicial bodies. This problem continues on account of the insufficiency of funds that are needed to answer the additional requirements for equipment of new public attorneys and staff.

D. LACK OF ATTRACTIVE RETIREMENT BENEFITS

Earnest efforts had been exerted to improve the retirement scheme of the PAO employees but up to now the same remains a dream. This is the reason why the PAO finds it difficult to hold on to its lawyers, who naturally want to retire in an office that offers attractive retirement benefits.

VIII. PLANS AND PROGRAMS FOR THE YEAR 2010

A. Launching of Forensic Laboratory as well as Medical and Dental Clinic at PAO-Central Office for the benefit of its employees and for furtherance of investigation conducted relative to cases handled by PAO;

B. Compliance with ISO 9000 and the Government Quality Management Systems Standards (GQMSS), pursuant to Administrative Order No. 161 dated October 5, 2006;

C. Organization and establishment of PAO Choir and PAO Band as creative channels of artistry and musicality to discover/enhance PAO talents and boost the morale of its employees;

D. Continuously carry out activities and outreach programs for the welfare of prisoners and inmates such as the PAO’s free Legal and Medical Jail Visitation and Decongestion Program;

E. Continuation of the “PAO-UNICEF Seminar on Violence Against Women and their Children Act (R.A. 9262), Comprehensive Juvenile Justice and Welfare System Act (R.A. 9344) and Other Related Laws” under the revised training modules;

F. Continuation of the “PAO’s Advanced Training/Workshop in Forensic Medicine and Science”;

G. Continuous promotion of good governance, professionalism, and anti-corruption measures;

H. Continuous improvement of communication facilities and other office equipment;

I. Vigorous efforts to implement compensation scheme and financial incentives of the PAO lawyers to further motivate them in discharging their duties pursuant to R.A. No. 9406 (PAO Law);

J. Continuous capacity building, enhancement of the skills and competence of PAO lawyers and staff through the holding of workshops and seminars;

K. Increase the number of lawyers and support staff assigned in each of the Regional and District Offices for a more effective and efficient delivery of services pursuant to Republic Act 9406 (PAO Law);

L. Continuous coordination with the tri-media for the advancement of the PAO outreach activities, more particularly, dissemination of free legal advice and counseling;

M. Vigorously pursue the rendition of prompt, effective and adequate legal services to the indigent sector;

N. Maintain programs and policies in achieving virtues of excellence, integrity, professionalism and moral values of all PAO lawyers and staff;

O. Endeavor to meet the ideal situation of one PAO lawyer being assigned to one court for a more effective and efficient representation of clients;

P. Empowerment of the PAO's capacity in promoting Gender and Development (GAD) Program of the government; and

Q. Continuous active participation of the PAO in the on-going pro-poor and social justice programs of the government.

IX. CONCLUSION

The year 2009 is worth the salutations of the men and women of the Public Attorney's Office. The countless blessings that it brought to this principal free legal aid office of the government enabled the PAO to thrive in the midst of adversities.

The Public Attorney's Office was not spared from the environmental disasters which wrought havoc in the Philippines in 2009. Many of the PAO's district offices in the Metropolitan Manila areas and neighboring regions were devastated, so much so that the office buildings and facilities had been rendered unserviceable for some time. Its employees were among those Filipinos who were left homeless and who until now are striving to pull through the toughest times yet of their lives.

Amidst this backdrop of ecological trials, the Public Attorney's Office has been resilient and impervious in its resolve to fulfill its avowed commitment to the indigent public which it has faithfully served through the years. The challenges of times may be daunting, but the PAO shall always pace forward in the path of public service.

In the year 2010, toughened all the more by past ordeals, the PAO shall incessantly work its way to the hearts of the poor, the deprived, and the less-privileged by being increasingly efficient in the delivery of its mandate to the very people who need its succor and expertise.

As the PAO looks back to the year 2009 with gratitude, it warmly welcomes the year 2010 with warm jubilation and praises to the Almighty God.

PERSIDA V. RUEDA-ACOSTA

Chief Public Attorney