



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

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## ACCOMPLISHMENT REPORT FOR THE YEAR 2007

### INTRODUCTION

The year 2007 has engraved another significant milestone in the pages of history for the Public Attorney's Office (PAO). Through the strong determination and dynamic leadership in the PAO as well as the unwavering support from the members of the 13<sup>th</sup> Congress and the Honorable Secretary of Justice Raul M. Gonzalez, Republic Act No. 9406, also known as the PAO Law, has come into being when it was signed into law by no less than Her Excellency President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo on March 23, 2007. The PAO Law has become effective on April 15, 2007, mandating PAO as an independent and autonomous office but attached to the Department of Justice for purposes of policy and program coordination.

Her Excellency President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo has shown her heart for the indigent clients of the PAO by affixing her signature on the PAO Law as an emblem of her sincere approval thereof owing to the cause of the poor.

While this agency was not spared from the economic swings and political upheavals besetting the country, it did not, however, hamper the PAO administration from attaining its goals of pursuing its mandate to extend free legal services to the indigents. Records would show that it even traversed beyond its expectations when it embarked on noteworthy projects, including the extensive programs in substantive trainings in forensic science and updates of contemporary legislations as well as its free Legal and Medical Jail Visitation and Decongestion Program nationwide. These earned recognition and respect from the academe, bureaucracy, and civil society both here, in the Philippines and the international community.

## I. THE OFFICE

The Public Attorney's Office maintains its Central Office in Diliman, Quezon City, in 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 78 provinces, 117 cities and 1,494 municipalities who are in dire need of legal assistance.

At present, there are 16 regional offices and 257 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.

## II. PAO LAWYERS AND THE COURTS

As of December 2007, the PAO has 1,048 lawyers, who actively handle criminal and civil cases before 2,255 courts nationwide and about 25 lawyers devote themselves on appealed cases before the Court of Appeals and the Supreme Court.

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

REGION	DISTRICT OFFICE	PAO LAWYERS	COURTS	RATIO
National Capital Region/Central Office	15	281	421	1.50
Cordillera Administrative Region	8	29	48	1.66

I Ilocos Region	21	67	140	2.09
II Cagayan Valley	13	47	118	2.51
III Central Luzon	22	89	207	2.33
IV Southern Tagalog	40	117	292	2.50
V Bicol Region	19	54	148	2.74
VI Eastern Visayas	17	53	160	3.02
VII Central Visayas	22	51	149	2.92
VIII Western Visayas	23	68	131	1.93
IX-A ARMM	6	14	74	5.29
IX-B Zamboanga Peninsula	9	26	62	2.38
X Northern Mindanao	13	43	108	2.51
XI Davao Region	9	42	63	1.50
XII SOCCSKSARGEN	9	37	76	2.05
XIII CARAGA	11	24	58	2.42
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>257</b>	<b>1042</b>	<b>2255</b>	<b>2.16</b>

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.

### 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 1,048 lawyers for the year 2007.

Total No. of Clients Assisted	4,382,611
Total No. of Cases Handled	599,076
Average No. of Clients Assisted by Each Lawyer	4,182
Average No. of Cases Handled by Each Lawyer	572

#### B. ACQUITTALS AND PRISONERS RELEASED FROM JAIL

Despite overwhelming case load, the public defenders were able to represent indigent accused in court and for 2007 alone, were able to facilitate the release of **86,593\*** bereaved convicts after having been acquitted or for some other reasons as shown in the table below.

Acquitted	13,265
Demurrer to Evidence granted	2,075
Provisionally Dismissed	38,354
Dismissed	2,149
Granted with Probation	8,400
Motion to Quash granted	1,504
Released on Recognizance	4,549
Released on other Grounds	16,297
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>86,593</b>

\*based on partial reports

### C. WINNING APPEALED CASES

Out of 1,048 lawyers in the PAO, there are about 25 who devote their attention in attending to appealed cases, particularly those pending before the Court of Appeals and the Supreme Court. For criminal cases alone, a total of 145 favorable decisions were obtained for 2007. The table below shows the breakdown of figures, to wit:

Acquittals from Death Penalty	10
Acquittals from Reclusion Perpetua	44
Acquittals from Reclusion Temporal	58
Modification from Death Penalty to Reclusion Perpetua	23
Modification from Death Penalty to Reclusion Temporal	10
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>145</b>

Aside from criminal cases, the Special and Appealed Cases Division also handles civil and special cases such as appeals from the decision of NLRC, SSS and GSIS. In 2007, a total of **408** favorable dispositions were obtained by PAO.

### D. JAIL VISITATION AND DECONGESTION PROGRAM

Owing to the horrendous condition of jails in the country, the PAO, upon prior approval of the Hon. Justice Secretary Raul M. Gonzalez, has launched its nationwide free Legal and Medical Jail Visitation and Decongestion Program. The table below shows the output of the project, to wit:

	VISITED JAIL	DATE	NO. OF BENEFICIARIES FOR LEGAL ASSISTANCE (ADVICE)	NO. OF BENEFICIARIES FOR MEDICAL/DENTAL ASSISTANCE	NO. OF READING GLASSES DISTRIBUTED	TOTAL NO. OF INMATES RELEASED
1	QUEZON CITY	April 12, 2007	589	358	182	193
2	CIW MANDALUYONG	May 15, 2007	340	418	291	117
3	MANILA CITY	May 22, 2007	488	646	298	393

4	MARIKINA CITY	June 20, 2007	249	361	150	118
5	CALOOCAN CITY	July 4, 2007	208	359	183	232
6	LAS PIÑAS CITY	July 11, 2007	125	254	95	38
7	FEMALE DORM, CAMP CARINGAL, QUEZON CITY	August 1, 2007	339	321	179	29
8	NBP (MAX SECURITY), MUNTINLUPA CITY	August 21, 2007	262	357	203	104
9	NEW PARAÑAQUE CITY JAIL	September 19, 2007	114	366	86	373
10	MAKATI CITY JAIL	October 17, 2007	211	363	155	107
11	PASAY CITY JAIL	November 7, 2007	129	523	n/a	353
12	TAGUIG CITY JAIL	November 15, 2007	386	327	Glasses distributed: 96 Consultation: 22	64
13	MALABON CITY JAIL	November 27, 2007	143	420	Glasses distributed: 73 Consultation: 36	190
14	CAGAYAN DE ORO	December 6, 2007	120	553	n/a	367
15	NBP (MAX SECURITY), MUNTINLUPA CITY	December 11, 2007	115	261	Glasses distributed: 155 Consultation: 17	92
16	MUNTINLUPA CITY JAIL	December 13, 2007	68	305	Glasses distributed: 93 Consultation: 27	69
17	NAVOTAS CITY JAIL	December 18, 2007	128	238 *	Glasses distributed: 75 Consultation: 51	138
18	VALENZUELA CITY JAIL	December 20, 2007	51	164	Glasses distributed: 25 Consultation: 19	124

**Total**                      **4,065**                      **6,356**                      **2,339**                      **3,101**

\* Medical only

*Based on partial reports*

## E. MANUALS FOR CICL AND VAWC CASES

Through the noble support from the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) thru Mr. Nicholas Alipui, its Country Representative and the trust reposed upon the PAO by Atty. Alberto T. Muyot, the UNICEF's Child Protection Specialist, all Regional Directors and Division Chiefs, along with the Deputy Chiefs and Chief Public Attorney, were gathered together on June 13-15, 2007 for the development of office manuals. Thereafter, the following documents came into being, to wit:

- *Standard Office Procedures in Extending Legal Assistance to Women and Their Children Subjected to Violence under Republic Act No. 9262 and other Related Laws; and*
- *Standard Office Procedures in Extending Legal Assistance to Children in Conflict with the Law under Republic Act No. 9344 and other Related Laws.*

The foregoing manuals were duly published in *Malaya*, on December 6, 2007, as contained in Memorandum Circular No. 7 and Memorandum Circular No. 8, series of 2007, respectively.

## IV. CASE LOAD

### STATISTICAL REPORT OF ACCOMPLISHMENT FOR THE YEAR 2007

KEY RESULT AREAS	PERFORMANCE INDICATORS	OUTPUT
I. REPRESENTATION OF INDIGENTS IN JUDICIAL CASES (CRIMINAL)	TOTAL NO. OF CASES HANDLED	374,362
	A. CARRY OVER	212,737
	B. NEWLY RECEIVED	161,625
	TOTAL NO. OF CASES TERMINATED	146,301
	DISPOSITION RATE	39.08%
	NO. OF CASES PENDING AT THE END OF THE PERIOD	228,061

Out of the 146,301 terminated cases, there are **108,635** or about **74%** favorable dispositions obtained by the public defenders from representing indigent clients in criminal cases alone.

KEY RESULT AREAS	PERFORMANCE INDICATORS	OUTPUT
II. REPRESENTATION OF INDIGENTS IN JUDICIAL CASES (CIVIL)	TOTAL NO. OF CASES HANDLED	51,542
	A. CARRY OVER	32,786
	B. NEWLY RECEIVED	18,756
	TOTAL NO. OF CASES TERMINATED	14,560
	DISPOSITION RATE	28.25%
	NO. OF CASES PENDING AT THE END OF THE PERIOD	36,982

		OUTPUT
III. REPRESENTATION OF INDIGENTS IN QUASI-JUDICIAL CASES (ADMINISTRATIVE CASES PROPER)	TOTAL NO. OF CASES HANDLED	6,871
	A. CARRY OVER	4,675
	B. NEWLY RECEIVED	2,196
	TOTAL NO. OF CASES TERMINATED	1,774
	DISPOSITION RATE	25.82%
	NO. OF CASES PENDING AT THE END OF THE PERIOD	5,097

		OUTPUT
IV. REPRESENTATION OF INDIGENTS IN QUASI-JUDICIAL CASE (PROSECUTOR'S OFFICE)	TOTAL NO. OF CASES HANDLED	42,630
	A. CARRY OVER	20,518
	B. NEWLY RECEIVED	22,112
	TOTAL NO. OF CASES DISPOSED	19,076
	DISPOSITION RATE	44.75%
	NO. OF CASES PENDING AT THE END OF THE PERIOD	23,554

V. REPRESENTATION OF INDIGENTS IN QUASI-JUDICIAL CASES (LABOR CASES)		OUTPUT
	TOTAL NO. OF CASES HANDLED	18,557
	A. CARRY OVER	10,236
	B. NEWLY RECEIVED	8,321
	TOTAL NO. OF CASES DISPOSED	3,732
	DISPOSITION RATE	20.11%
	NO. OF CASES PENDING AT THE END OF THE PERIOD	14,825

VI. LIMITED SERVICES		OUTPUT
	ARRAIGNMENT	181,945
	PRE-TRIAL	122,988
	PROMULGATION	76,019
	OTHERS	271,515

VII. RENDITION OF NON-JUDICIAL SERVICES		OUTPUT
	LEGAL DOCUMENTATION	860,799
	CLIENTS COUNSELED	1,010,092
	OATHS ADMINISTERED	276,299
	MEDIATION AND CONCILIATION	
	NO. OF DISPUTES HANDLED	448,672
	A. CARRY OVER	94,306
	B. NEWLY RECEIVED	354,366
	NO. OF DISPUTES RESOLVED	353,378
	DISPOSITION RATE	78.76%
	NO. OF CASES PENDING AT THE END OF THE PERIOD	95,294

VIII. OUTREACH ACTIVITIES	INQUEST INVESTIGATION AND CUSTODIAL INTERROGATION	OUTPUT
	TOTAL NO. OF CLIENTS ASSISTED	147,329
	JAIL VISITATION PROGRAM	
	A. NO. OF PRISONERS INTERVIEWED	208,572
	B. NO. OF PRISONERS PROVIDED WITH ASSISTANCE	179,305

LEGAL AID INFORMATION DISSEMINATION		OUTPUT
A. COMMUNITY LINKAGE	NO. OF INFORMATION DISSEMINATION CONDUCTED/ATTENDED	3,487
B. TRI-MEDIA LINKAGE	NO. OF HOURS IN RADIO PROGRAM CONDUCTED/INITIATED	421
	NO. OF PRESS RELEASES/NEWS ITEM PUBLISHED	254

COOPERATION WITH OTHER LEGAL AID ORGANIZATIONS		OUTPUT
A. IBP/OTHER LEGAL AID ORGANIZATIONS	NO. OF MEETINGS CONDUCTED/ATTENDED	1,692
	NO. OF REFERRALS RECEIVED	30,740
	NO. OF REFERRALS MADE	29,347
INSTITUTION BUILDING	NO. OF TRAINING PROGRAMS CONDUCTED/ATTENDED	1,027
	NO. OF PERSONNEL TRAINED	3,171
	TOTAL NO. OF TRAINING HOURS	4,626

With the advent of Republic Act No. 9262, otherwise known as the Anti-VAWC Law and 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, the PAO is specifically mandated by the law to extend legal assistance to women and their children who are victims of violence and 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.

But even prior to the enactment of the law, the PAO has been devoting special attention to the cause of women and children in so far as the criminal justice system is concerned. The PAO has embarked the challenges of carrying out series of seminars and trainings for PAO lawyers on substantive laws pertaining to women and children.

The table below shows the number of women and children assisted by the PAO for the year 2007.

REPRESENTATION OF WOMEN CLIENTS		OUTPUT
	TOTAL NO. OF CASES HANDLED	79,050
	A. CARRY OVER	38,915
	B. NEWLY RECEIVED	40,135
	TOTAL NO. OF CASES TERMINATED	39,085
	DISPOSITION RATE	49.44%
	NO. OF CASES PENDING AT THE END OF THE PERIOD	39,965

REPRESENTATION OF CHILDREN IN CONFLICT WITH THE LAW (CICL)		OUTPUT
	TOTAL NO. OF CASES HANDLED	19,125
	A. CARRY OVER	10,988
	B. NEWLY RECEIVED	8,137

	TOTAL NO. OF CASES TERMINATED	7,364
	DISPOSITION RATE	38.50%
	NO. OF CASES PENDING AT THE END OF THE PERIOD	11,761

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 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.

## V. THE CHIEF PUBLIC ATTORNEY

*A. The Chief Public Attorney signed/answered 27, 768 communications. The breakdown is as follows:*

I. Communication to / from CPA Rueda-Acosta	Total No. of Communications	27,768
A. Communication from Executive Division	5857	
1. Appointments	476	
2. Memorandum	381	
3. Memorandum Order	226	
3.1 Serbisyo Muna Caravan Memorandum Order	29	
4. Memorandum Circular	7	
5. Office Order	179	
6. Reassignment Order	65	
7. Travel Order	8	

8. Other Communications	
8.1. Signed by CPA	2645
8.2. Signed by Executive Lawyers	1823
9. Press Release	18
B. Communication from Administrative Division	1671
C. Communication from Regional Offices	4089
1. Region I	304
2. Region II	139
3. Region III	239
4. Region IV	413
5. Region V	173
6. Region VI	417
7. Region VII	434
8. Region VIII	184
9. Region IX / ARMM	211
10. Region X	217
11. Region XI	152
12. Region XII	197
13. CAR	118
14. CARAGA	146
15. NCR	745
D. Communication from OP, OVP, Senate & HOR	517
E. Communication from Other Offices	15634
1. Department of Justice	463
2. Supreme Court	2222
3. Court of Appeals	9082
4. National Labor Relations Commission	748
5. Field Services and Statistics Division	36
6. Special and Appealed Cases Division	261
7. Other Communications	2822

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

1. **International Gusi Peace Prize 2007** for working for people's amelioration, to find peaceful solutions to advocate social justice and humanitarian law in the Philippines, from the Gusi Peace Prize Foundation given on November 21, 2007 at the Meralco Theatre, Ortigas Avenue, Pasig City;

2. **Huwarang Pilipino Grand Achievement Award 2007** given by DZRB–Radyo ng Bayan and Huwarang Pilipino Foundation, Inc. on December 11, 2007 at the Occupational Safety and Health Center (OSHC), North EDSA, Diliman, Quezon City.

*C. The Chief Public Attorney attended the following conferences/programs outside the Philippines, to wit:*

1. Participant/Speaker, **International Corrections and Prisons Association’s (ICPA) 9<sup>th</sup> Annual General Meeting and Conference**, October 21–26, 2007, Imperial Queen’s Park Hotel, Bangkok, Thailand;

2. Participant/Presenter/Discussant, **Discussion on Criminal Justice and the Situation of the Public Attorney’s Office in the Philippines**, July 16–19, 2007, Asian Human Rights Commission (AHRC) Office, Hong Kong.

*D. Aside from the above–mentioned conferences and programs, the Chief Public Attorney also attended the following local trainings and seminars:*

1. Panelist/Reactor, **Multi–Sectoral Seminar–Workshop on Agrarian Justice in Region VI**, conducted by the Agrarian Justice Foundation, November 29, 2007, Centennial Resort and Convention Center, Iloilo City;

2. Lecturer/Resource Person, **Seminar–Workshop on Discernment**, conducted by the Philippine Judicial Academy, November 19, 2007, Amigo Terrace Hotel, Iloilo City;

3. Speaker, **General Membership Meeting of the Rotary Club of Manila Bay**, November 15, 2007, Astoria Plaza Hotel, Escriva Drive, Ortigas Center, Pasig City;

4. Keynote Speaker, **5<sup>th</sup> National Convention of Solemnizing Officers**, conducted by the National Statistics Office, October 9–11, 2007, Atrium, Lim Ket Kai Center, Cagayan de Oro City;

5. Participant/Scholar, **7<sup>th</sup> ISPCAN Asian Regional Conference**, hosted by the Child Protection Unit Network (CPU-Net), Sept. 23–26, 2007, Sofitel Philippine Plaza;

6. Speaker, **32<sup>nd</sup> Joint Induction and Turn-Over Ceremonies of the Rotary Club and Inner Wheel Club of Sta. Maria, Bulacan**, July 3, 2007, Barcic International Convention Center, Regina Carmeli University, City of Malolos, Bulacan;

7. Panelist/Reactor, **Multi-Sectoral Seminar-Workshop on Agrarian Justice**, conducted by the Agrarian Justice Foundation, May 25, 2007, La Rica Hotel, Tacloban City;

8. Participant, **Dialogue on the Conduct of Pre-Trial and Use of Deposition and Modes of Discovery Procedures**, January 12, 2007, Westin Philippine Plaza, CCP Complex, Pasay City

*E. The following articles, authored by the Chief Public Attorney, were published in the newspapers mentioned below, to wit:*

1. **Legal Counseling and Healing Behind Bars**, *Manila Bulletin*, November 11, 2007, p. 11; *The Manila Times*, November 15, 2007, p. 5;

2. **The Philippine Census: Hurdling the Boundaries and Barriers of Civil Registration**, *Manila Bulletin*, November 8, 2007, p. 11

## VI. ADMINISTRATIVE CONCERNS

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.

### A. HUMAN RESOURCES

#### 1. PERSONNEL COMPLEMENT

The table below shows the number of authorized, filled, and unfilled positions in the PAO for the year 2007, to wit:

	<b>Authorized</b>	<b>Filled</b>	<b>Unfilled</b>
Lawyers	1048	1042	6
Support Personnel	802	798	4
<b>Total</b>	<b>1850</b>	<b>1840</b>	<b>10</b>

#### 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 2007, to wit:

	<b>Lawyer</b>	<b>Support Staff</b>	<b>Total</b>
Recruited	197	55	252
Promoted	102	25	127

### 3. PERSONNEL ENHANCEMENT

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.

#### i. SEMINARS AND TRAININGS

For this year alone, the PAO has provided MCLE (Mandatory Continuing Legal Education)-accredited seminars and trainings and the same were conducted in different regions nationwide. These are the following, to wit:

*\* PAO-UNICEF Seminar on Violence Against Women and Their Children Act (R. A. No. 9262), Comprehensive Juvenile Justice and Welfare System Act (R. A. No. 9344) and other Related Laws Pertaining to Children*

*\* Regionwide Seminar on Crime Scene Investigation and Reconstruction for the Public Attorney; Forensic Evidence and Medico-Legal Issues*

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

A total of 1,773 lawyers and 54 support personnel were registered in attendance of about 104 seminars, trainings and conferences attended for this year.

*\* 10<sup>th</sup> Training Course on Corruption Control in Criminal Justice System*

Along with the effort of the Chief Public Attorney to enhance the skills of public defenders, the agency nominated Atty. Froilan L. Cabarios, Public Attorney III/OIC-Field Services and Statistics Division, and was eventually

chosen to represent the country in the 10<sup>th</sup> Training Course on Corruption Control in Criminal Justice System held at Osaka and Tokyo, Japan from October 22 to November 22, 2007. The training course was conducted by the United Nations Asia and Far East Institute (UNAFEI) for the Prevention of Crime and the Treatment of Offenders in Tokyo, Japan, in cooperation with Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA).

## **ii. RECOGNITION OF EFFICIENT PUBLIC SERVICE**

On September 18, 2007, the Civil Service Commission, in the implementation of its Public Service Delivery Audit (PASADA) Project, conferred a Certificate of Recognition to the Field Services and Statistics Division, Public Attorney's Office, for its **Very Good Performance** in the delivery of prompt and responsive frontline services.

The agency is deeply elated yet humbled by the recognition as it complements the Chief Public Attorney's vision to create within the agency an environment of efficiency and integrity.

## **B. FINANCIAL RESOURCES**

In 2007, the office had an approved appropriation of Php 638,727,000.00. However, a total amount of Php 690,114,124.83 was released by the Department of Budget and Management which included the payment of Terminal Leaves and Retirement Gratuities of 55 retired/resigned employees amounting to Php 10,481,021.83.

## **C. LIBRARY SERVICES**

As the year 2007 ends, 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 machine, and telephone units for a fast remittance 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 468,672.22. On the other hand, a total amount of Php 390,768.00 was allotted to *Lex Libris* Subscription for the Central Office as well as to Regional Offices to facilitate research work.

On the other hand, the PAO Library, through its personnel, was able to collate a total of 90 news releases which include, among others, the following, to wit:

1. A **regional workshop regarding Children in Conflict with the Law** and a **Forensic Lecture for the National Capital Region (NCR) PAO Lawyers** were held last June 2007 at the historic **Manila Hotel**. This three (3) day activity was sponsored by the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF);
2. The **2007 GUSI Peace Prize Award** given to the Chief Public Attorney for her advocacy in social justice and humanitarian law given by the GUSI Peace Prize Foundation headed by the former PCSO Chairman Manuel L. Morato and Ambassador Barry Gusi on November 21, 2007 at the Meralco Theatre;
3. The order of the Supreme Court to grant exemptions for all **PAO indigent clients free docket and other fees** on their cases, as provided in the recently approved Republic Act No. 9406 otherwise known as the PAO Law;
4. The release of Msgt. Pablo Martinez, one of the convicts in the Aquino-Galman double murder case on November 23, 2007. He was given by Her Excellency

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo with a presidential pardon on November 7, 2007.

Through its tri-media linkage the PAO has also started rendering legal advice since September 2007 in the "Say Mo Attorney" column in the Peoples Tonight tabloid, released every Monday, Wednesday and Friday. In a very short stint since its inception, the library has already collated 51 newspaper clippings. The output is expected to rise up as public awareness continuously widen.

#### **D. OFFICE EQUIPMENT**

In 2007, the PAO purchased and distributed the following office equipment, to wit:

- Computer Units – 65 units
- Binding Machine – 1 unit
- Computer Monitor – 2 units
- Printers – 85 units
- HP Scanners – 1 unit
- Facsimile Machines – 15 units
- Paper Shredder – 1 unit
- Filing Cabinets 2 drawers – 3 units
- Airconditioning Units – 1 unit
- Copying Machines – 90 units
- Computer Tables – 52 units
- Computer Chair – 21 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 upgrading of existing computer units in order to cope up with the fast changing times

## **VII. TECHNICAL OPERATIONS**

### **A. 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.

The efficiency of the office has been proven for years and as a matter of fact, for the year 2007, a total of 2,681 clients were accommodated and were extended legal assistance.

### **B. RESEARCH AND COMMUNICATION**

For the year 2007, the PAO, through the Legal Research Division, had a total number of 170 research works that were duly accomplished. It includes legal queries from the public which were either directly addressed or otherwise referred to the PAO. The sudden fluctuation 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 spotted the great difference.

### **C. 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 provided on-the-air legal counseling to DZRV (Radio Veritas), DWIZ (Hustisya Para sa Lahat), DWDD–AFP (Ugnayan sa Masa), GMA 7 (Imbestigador and Unang Hirit), DZMM (Private Eye), ABS–CBN 2 (Aksyon Ngayon), DZRH, DZRV (Radyo ng Bayan), DZBB and other radio and television stations. The same activity was also undertaken by selected PAO lawyers in the different regions.

### **D. ADMINISTRATIVE COMPLAINTS AGAINST PAO EMPLOYEES**

For the year 2007, a total of 122 administrative complaints were received, out of which 104 were resolved and terminated.

The PAO, through the fortitude of the Chief Public Attorney, has been trying to upkeep the integrity not only of the entire agency but of each lawyer and personnel appointed in the office.

## **VIII. PLANS AND PROGRAMS FOR THE YEAR 2008**

A. Fill-up all vacant positions in the *plantilla* (total maximum allowed items: 1,048 lawyers and 804 support staff positions) including unfunded positions.

B. Continuous coordination with the Department of Budget and Management concerning the approval of the Implementing Rules and Regulations (IRR) of the PAO Law specifically the funding requirements to upgrade the salary scales of its personnel and the increase in the allowable items for PAO lawyers equivalent to the number of courts nationwide.

C. 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.

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

E. Continuously carry out improvement of communication facilities and other office equipment.

F. Vigorous efforts to improve compensation scheme and financial incentives of the PAO lawyers to further motivate them in discharging their duties.

G. Continue the enhancement of the skills and competence of PAO lawyers and staff through the holding of workshops and seminars.

H. 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).

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

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

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

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

M. Continuous active participation of the PAO in the on-going pro-poor programs of the government.

## IX. 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.

Due to uncompetitive pay and allowance given to its personnel, the PAO has difficulty in maintaining the stint of PAO lawyers in its fold.

### 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. Indeed, unlike in the NAPROSS which has 1,968 authorized *plantilla* positions for prosecutors, the PAO has only 1,048 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.”

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 the procurement of some office furnishings, such as chair, filing cabinets, computer tables, scanners, computers, and posture chairs, the PAO still greatly lacks computers and typewriters which are necessary in the immediate preparation and submission of pleadings with the courts and other judicial bodies. This problem continues on account of the unavailability of funds.

### **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. This problem was addressed in the PAO law.

## CONCLUSION

Like a house that is built upon the rock, the PAO had stood firm through all the storms and stout-heartedly welcomes another year of challenges. Like keeping a marriage vow, lawyers and staff remained faithful and dedicated to their duties through thick and thin. Like a one big family, the PAO has once again rejoiced as its efforts and sacrifices for 2007 have yielded into a well-rewarding fruition.

However, the struggle does not stop here and the entire PAO administration is determined to strive for more for what is at stake is the welfare of the powerless, the indigenous people, the underdogs, and the bereaved victims of cruelty and injustice. In the delivery of justice to the poor, the PAO firmly stands that there shall be no room for chances; no room for mediocrity but only credibility and efficiency.

In the midst of adversaries and adversities, the PAO is both honored and humbled because people look upon this office as their bridge to the court as they continuously pursue their standing quest for justice.

In the meantime, we can only hope for the best; work on it; and have faith in the Almighty God for His immeasurable guidance and blessings.

**PERSIDA V. RUEDA-ACOSTA**

Chief Public Attorney