The Commission on Filipinos Overseas congratulates and welcomes Undersecretary Astravel Pimentel-Naik as the newly appointed CFO Executive Director.

Appointed by President Rodrigo Roa Duterte on February 6, 2018, Usec. Astra, as she prefers to be called, took her oath of office at Malacañang on February 13, 2018.

Usec. Astra values excellence in governance and integrity grounded.
on deep faith in God. She rose from the ranks of government service starting as a front desk officer. Prior to her appointment at CFO, she served as Assistant Secretary at the Presidential Legislative Liaison Office and Political Affairs Officer at the Office of Senator Aquilino “Koko” L. Pimentel III. She is also the National Chairperson of the Committee on Membership of PDP Laban. Astra is determined to help President Duterte push for reforms to ensure that Filipinos, including those living and working overseas, will enjoy the fruits of both their toil and the country’s resources.

The CFO was established in 1980 and is an attached agency of the Office of the President of the Philippines. Its mandate includes maintaining and strengthening ties with overseas Filipinos and promoting migrant welfare and interests.
Starting the year 2018 on a high note, the Commission on Filipinos Overseas (CFO) formally received the certification from the International Organization for Standardization (ISO), marking a significant milestone in 37 years of service to Filipino emigrants and overseas Filipinos. Receiving the ISO 9001:2015 certification capped CFO's two year journey towards establishing a Quality Management System (QMS), covering CFO's entire process that ensures a consistent level of quality service to its clients, partners, and stakeholders.

ISO Certification is an accreditation conducted by external certification bodies to ensure that an organization performs its inter-related processes at par with international standards. The ISO 9001:2015 certification measures the quality of an organization's processes by reviewing a number of principles, including
strong customer focus, top management leadership and decision-making, process approach, and continual improvement.

For any organization, the road to certification requires time and commitment. CFO’s journey towards establishing its ISO-certified Quality Management System (QMS) began in the last quarter of 2015, with the Development Academy of the Philippines (DAP) as its QMS consultant. Throughout the long and arduous process towards clearly defining its core processes of Migrant Welfare Services, Policy Development, Program Management, support processes for Filipino Emigrants and Migrants, and Administrative and Finance Support Services, CFO’s QMS Core Team remained steadfast and committed in the face of daunting challenges that came its way. Administrative and Finance Division Director Maria Regina Angela G. Galias said that receiving the ISO certification is proof of the Commission’s “strong commitment to good governance, the highest standards of excellence, and ensuring quality service to its clientele.”

After passing the audit conducted by international certification body TÜV Rheinland on December 20, 2017, CFO received its ISO 9001:2015 certification on January 19, 2018. CFO vows to maintain and sustain the quality standards in the entirety of its processes and procedures as it enters its 38th year of service to the Filipino diaspora.

The latest version of ISO 9001:2015 incorporates risk management to enable organizations to identify and provide a systematic approach to risk for a more efficient quality management system. The ISO 9001:2015 is, by far, the most recognized and widely implemented quality management system standard in the world.

CFO thus joins the ranks of national government agencies that can proudly claim to be ISO-certified, as mandated by Executive Order 605 of 2007, directing all government agencies to adopt the ISO as part of the implementation of a government-wide quality management program towards the goal of “enhancing public sector performance and making government organizations citizen-driven.”
Filipino nurses from different parts of the world converged in Pasay City, Philippines on 25-26 January 2018 to participate in the 2018 Global Summit of Filipino Nurses and International Nursing Conference at The Blue Leaf Filipinas. The Nursing Summit was attended by five hundred eighty-five (585) representatives from Canada, Germany, Guam, Ireland, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, Sultanate of Oman, United Arab Emirates, United States of America and the Philippines. The summit is aimed at advancing the professional skills of Filipino nurses and celebrate their growing population within the diaspora.

Under the theme, “Planetary Health: Unite for Nation Building/ Professional Mobility”, the conference sought the identification of the roles of nurses and their commitment in promoting planetary health, as well as to collectively advance and protect the holistic welfare of Filipino nurses wherever they are in the world.

The conference had an array of proficient keynote speakers and resource persons, which included the Former Secretary of the Department of Environment and Natural Resources Gina Lopez and Undersecretary Roger Tong-an of the Department of Health, who talked about safeguarding planet earth and safeguarding global health, respectively. The keynote speakers emphasized the need to care for the planet/environment. Because people won't do it, we would have no place to live and grow. Meanwhile, in his keynote
speech, Undersecretary Claro M. Arellano of the Department of Labor and Employment underscored the government’s efforts to promote the well-being and rights of health care workers by way of providing appropriate employment options and comparable wages especially for nurses in the Philippines.

Concluding the conference is the ceremonial signing of the Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) by Mr. Dino Doliente III, PNAA President, Ms. Ruth Thelma P. Tingda, PNA President, Dr. Mary Grace C. Lacanaria, ADPCN President, and CFO Administrative and Finance Division Director Maria Regina Angela G. Galias. The MoU sealed the collaborative partnerships among the government and NGO sectors to harness the potential of Filipino nurses (both domestic and global) in providing a competent and sustainable health work force that is able to contribute significantly to the attainment of universal quality health care and the development of the country.

The 2018 Global Summit of Filipino Nurses and International Nursing Conference was organized by the Philippine Nurses Association of America, Inc. (PNAA), Philippine Nurses Association, Inc. (PNA), Association of Deans of Philippine Colleges of Nursing (ADPCN), and the Commission on Filipinos Overseas (CFO).
CFO OPENS THE 2018 PRESIDENTIAL AWARDS FOR OFs

The Commission on Filipinos Overseas opened nominations for the Year 2018 Presidential Awards for Filipino Individuals and Organizations Overseas last January.

The Presidential Awards is a biennial search to honor and recognize overseas Filipinos and other individuals or organizations that contribute to Philippine development initiatives, or promote the interests of overseas Filipino communities. The awards are also given to overseas Filipinos who have exceptionally distinguished themselves in their work or profession, and have thereby brought pride to the Filipino nation. A distinct category in the awards is also reserved for foreign individuals or organizations for their exceptional contribution to the Philippines and for advancing the cause of overseas Filipino communities. Since its inception in 1991, the awards have already been bestowed upon 460 Filipino individuals and organizations overseas from 51 countries and territories.

The Presidential Awards highlight the time-honored Filipino values of PAKIKIPAGKAPWA, PAGTUTULUNGAN and PAGKAKAISA. The four (4) award categories are:
1. **Lingkod sa Kapwa Pilipino (LINKAPIL) Award** – for overseas Filipino associations or individuals with exceptional or significant contributions to Philippine reconstruction, progress and development.

2. **Kaanib ng Bayan Award** – for foreign individuals or organizations with exceptional or significant contributions to Philippine reconstruction, progress and development, and/or have significantly benefited a sector or community in the Philippines, or advanced the cause of overseas Filipino communities.

3. **Banaag Award** – for overseas Filipino individuals or organizations for their contributions in advancing the cause of and/or have significantly benefited overseas Filipino communities or sectors.

4. **Pamana ng Pilipino Award** - for overseas Filipinos who have demonstrated the talent and industry of the Filipino and brought honor and recognition to the country through excellence and distinction in the pursuit of their work or profession.

For rules on filing of nomination, downloadable nomination forms, requirements and other information about the awards, you may visit www.presidentialawards.cfo.gov.ph.

All nominations had been coursed through the Philippine Embassy or Consulate of jurisdiction in the country/ area. Afterwards, they were submitted to the Awards Secretariat not later than 31 May 2018 through:

---

**Presidential Awards Secretariat**  
**COMMISSION ON FILIPINOS OVERSEAS**

Citigold Center, 1345 Pres. Quirino Avenue corner South Superhighway, Paco, 1007 Manila, Philippines

Tel. Nos.: (632) 552-4700 locals 761 to 767  
Fax No.: (632) 561-8291

E-mail: presidentialawards@cfo.gov.ph; presidentialawards2018@gmail.com

Website: www.presidentialawards.cfo.gov.ph

Facebook: https://www.facebook.com/gawadpangulo/
CFO RECOMMITS TO GENDER PARITY ON WOMEN’S MONTH

Led by Undesecretary Astravel Pimentel-Naik, the men and women of the Commission on Filipinos Overseas (CFO) have once again shown their unwavering commitment in advancing gender equality and promoting women empowerment when they unveiled their activities for this year’s National Women’s Month Celebration during the flag-raising ceremony on 5 March 2018 at the CFO Main Office in Manila.

Usec. Pimentel-Naik highlighted the role of women as innately nurturing and understanding, making them highly qualified counsellors. She further added that the gender-based activities of CFO in observance of the celebration of the National Women’s Month clearly shows the government’s pledge to alleviate the social costs of gender disparity brought about by migration, and protect and promote the rights, welfare and interests of overseas Filipinos in every possible way.

As part of the observance of the International Women’s Day, the National Women’s Month celebration every March stems from the following legal bases; (a) Proclamation No. 224 s. 1988, declaring the first week of March each year as Women’s Week and March 8 as Women’s Rights and International Peace Day; (b) Proclamation No. 227 s. 1988 which provides for the observance of the month of March as Women’s Role in History Month; and (c) Republic Act (RA) 6949 s. 1990 declaring March 8 of every year as National Women’s Day.

This year’s CFO activities for the National Women’s Month Celebration were unveiled during the flag-raising ceremony on March 5, 2018

The theme “We Make Change Work for Women” highlights the empowerment of women as active contributors to and
claimholders of development. It is also anchored on the commitment of President Rodrigo Duterte’s development thrusts on Malasakit, Pagbabago, and Patuloy na Pag-unlad as enshrined in the 2017-2022 Philippine Development Plan, Ambisyon Natin 2040. The theme was developed in 2017 by the Philippine Commission on Women and will be used until 2022.

CFO personnel sang along to an all-women cast Lupang Hinirang video of the Philippine Commission on Women to launch the celebration of March as National Women’s Month at this flag raising ceremony on 5 March 2018.

In line with this, the CFO held several activities that were geared towards accelerating gender parity throughout March.

**Community Education Program (CEP)**

A series of information campaigns in different provinces, cities and towns in the countryside were scheduled. The (CEP) aims to increase public awareness regarding migration issues, such as illegal recruitment, documentation fraud, and trafficking among prospective migrants.

Aside from its regular country-specific Guidance and Counselling Program, CFO will also conduct a series of marriage migration seminars and capacity development trainings for local government officers, local civil registrars, and other stakeholders in different areas. Cases of gender-based violence such as domestic violence, mail order spouse, prostitution, and human trafficking among marriage migrants are expected to be discussed.

The following is the schedule of activities for the CEP:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Region</th>
<th>Location</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Feb. 19-23</td>
<td>Region 4-A</td>
<td>Laguna -Sta. Cruz, Calamba</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Cavite -Imus, Bacoor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feb. 26 – Mar. 2</td>
<td>Region 4-A &amp; B</td>
<td>Batangas -Batangas, Lipa</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Mindoro -Calapan, Puerto Galera</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>April 1 – 6</td>
<td>CAR</td>
<td>Benguet -Baguio City, La Trinidad</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Mt. Province -Sagada, Bontoc</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>April 16-20</td>
<td>Region 3</td>
<td>Zambales -Iba, Olongapo</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Pampanga -San Fernando, Angeles</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>April 23-27</td>
<td>ARMM</td>
<td>Tawi-Tawi -Bongao, Taganak Island</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>May 7-11</td>
<td>ARMM</td>
<td>Maguindanao -Shariff Aguak, Cotabato City</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>July 2-6</td>
<td>Region 8</td>
<td>Southern Leyte -Maasin City, Sogod</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Northern Leyte -Ormoc City, Baybay</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
ATIP and WeToo

The CFO also joined the Bureau of Immigration, together with partner agencies and civil society organizations, in the program entitled “The Information Caravan on Anti-Trafficking in Persons (ATIP) PLUS Project 2018” or #WeToo Campaign (Women Empowerment to address Trafficking of Women Overseas). It is an awareness campaign to help address and prevent the increasing number of victims of human trafficking in the country, especially women. It is scheduled to be launched in April 2018 in Malacanang.

Online GAD Corner

An Online GAD Corner was also rolled-out in the CFO website. This corner will serve as a portal for accessing and sharing information on mainstreaming gender and development efforts of the Commission.

IEC Materials

In support of the Serbisyo Para Kay Juana campaign that enjoins agencies to distribute information, education, and campaign (IEC) materials on March 8, the CFO is also distributing the following GAD oriented publications, available free of charge all year round:

The Faces of OF-ReD

This is a special publication by the CFO, in partnership with the Provincial Government of Ilocos Norte, Cooperative Bank of Ilocos Norte, United Nations Development Programme and the Western Union Foundation.

The photo-book documents the inspiring, sometimes heart-warming success stories of 20 beneficiaries of the Overseas Filipinos Remittances for Development (OF-ReD): Building a Future Back Home Project. The beneficiaries are mostly returning Ilocano women migrants while some are dependents of overseas Ilocano migrants.
Primer on Anti-Mail Spouse Act of 2016.

This primer features Republic Act 10906, an Act that provides stronger measures against unlawful practices, businesses, and schemes of matching and offering Filipinos to foreign nationals for purposes of marriage or common law partnerships. It became a law on 21 July 2016.

The Act repeals Republic Act 6955 or the Anti-Mail Order Bride Act. The salient features of the new law are the inclusion of Filipino men against acts of matching for purposes of marriage or common law partnerships to foreign nationals; matching through the use of the internet; confiscation and forfeiture of proceeds and instruments derived from committing the prohibited acts in favor of the government; provision on the formulation of implementing rules and regulations; and imposing stiffer penalties for violations.

Primer on Anti-Trafficking in Persons and Trafficking Posters and Stickers

This primer provides concise information about Republic Act 9208 or the Anti-Trafficking in Persons Act of 2003 as amended by Republic Act 10364. It serves as a handy reference on the salient provisions of the Act and the available programs and services for trafficked victims.

As a supplementary to the primer, CFO regularly updates its trafficking posters and stickers. These IEC materials reinforce the anti-trafficking advocacies of the CFO.

Interested parties may contact Mr. Michael A. Apattad of the Policy, Planning and Research Division of CFO at telephone number 552-4762 and email address mapattad@cfo.gov.ph for pick-up details.
CFO STEPS UP ANTI-HUMAN TRAFFICKING DRIVE

The Commission on Filipinos Overseas continued to step up its campaign against human trafficking by partnering with the Bureau of Immigration in its #WeToo Campaign or Women Empowerment to address Trafficking Of women Overseas. The campaign aims to concretize nationwide awareness in addressing the trafficking of women by providing information about women empowerment, trafficking, local opportunities and working overseas through a nationwide information caravan.
Undersecretary Astravel Pimentel-Naik underscored the importance of such a collaboration and the convergence of initiatives among government agencies and civil society organizations. “No less than President Rodrigo Roa Duterte stated the need to intensify the war against human traffickers in his first State of the Nation Address,” stated Usec. Pimentel-Naik. “The President even put it in parity with illegal drugs. The President has no tolerance for those that take advantage of overseas Filipinos,” she added.

Together with partner government agencies and NGOs, the MOU was signed on 19 March 2018 at the H2O Hotel in Manila. The launching of the #WeToo Campaign was scheduled the following month in Malacañang Palace.

PESO SENSE TEACHES MANG INASAL: KAPIT KA

On March 19, 2018, the Commission on Filipinos Overseas (CFO) conducted its first Kaalamang Pinansyal Tungo sa Kaunlaran (KAPIT KA) financial literacy training for the year to employees of Mang Inasal’s Head Office, to help them maximize their entrepreneurial potentials and enhance their money management skills.
Participants to the training were officers from Mang Inasal’s Human Resources Department, Research and Development Department and Finance Department.

The KAPIT KA Training module covered the following topics:

- Knowing your Financial Standing
- The Right Formula of Saving
- Financial Fitness Quiz
- Preparation of Personal Income and Expense Tracker (PIET)
- Prioritizing your Expenses
- Preparing your Dream Matrix
- 10 Commandments to be Financially Literate
- Oath of Financial Literacy

The participants underlined the importance of the training in their daily lives. “The topics were really relevant, as it provided tips on how to save money; workshops are experiential,” said one participant.

According to Mang Inasal’s Human Resources Division, KAPIT KA Training is the first of the series of trainings they will provide to their employees for them to be financially wise, and in return become more productive members of society. Their next scheduled event is a livelihood skills training.

The KAPIT KA module aims to improve the financial literacy of its beneficiaries by instilling the importance of financial planning as a guide towards reaching one’s financial goals. CFO’s PESO Sense – the Philippine Financial Freedom Campaign aims to improve the financial acumen of not only working professionals but also students, young adults, homemakers, entrepreneurs, seniors, and retirees, both in the Philippines and overseas, by improving productive expenditure and their capacity for saving and promoting entrepreneurship. It also provides a set of knowledge and skills that allow individuals to make informed decisions in relation to their financial resources.
QUEZON CITY CONDUCTS M&D AND SDG WORKSHOP

Members of the Quezon City Migration and Development (M&D) Council, along with representatives from the Commission on Filipinos Overseas (CFO) and International Training Centre for Local Actors (CIFAL) Philippines, gathered early morning of January 23, 2018 at the Quezon City Hall compound before embarking on a 3-hour trip to Caliraya Resort Club, Inc. in Barangay Lewin, Lumban, Laguna for a Strategic Planning Workshop and 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (SDG) Orientation.

Around 24 members of the QC M&D Council representing the following offices were on hand during the 4-day planning workshop: Public Employment and Service Office (PESO), Assessor’s Office, City Planning and Development Office (CPDO), Community Relations Office (CRO), Health Department, Information Technology and Development Office, Social Services Development Department, Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Office, Budget Office / Gender and Development, and the Department of Interior and Local Government.

The Strategic Planning Workshop and SDG orientation served as the opening salvo of the Quezon City M&D Council for 2018. The activity aimed to strengthen the structure and mandate of the Quezon City Migration and Development Council to be the institutional mechanism that will provide overall direction and coordination of the various migration and development-related initiatives of the
member agencies from the government, civil society and private sector. The 4-day activity also aimed to foster and strengthen its role and contribution in supporting and enhancing the local M&D structures and their corresponding programs and services, to present emerging concepts, policies, events, opportunities and challenges at the global, national and local levels that will impact on the migration situation of the Philippines and affect Quezon City, as well as identify priority programs and activities (PPAs) for the next two years that are responsive, resilient, innovative and coherent, and finally, find ways to efficiently and effectively implement, institutionalize and sustain the PPAs.

The Strategic Planning Workshop was held back to back with an orientation on the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development or the SDG to ensure that the sustainable development agenda is integrated into their 2-year plan. It also comes after a series of capacity-building activities in 2017 organized by CIFAL Philippines and its supporting institutions, which include the CFO and its migration and gender programs such as the Migration Crisis Management, Migration Data Analysis, and Gender and Migration.

During the 4-day workshop, the QC M&D Council looked back on their accomplishments from 2015 to serve as a leveling-off activity for all members. The workshop also allowed them to hear narrative forecasts for the future, especially from the perspective of migrants and their families who should be at the center of M&D planning and programming. Also, part of the futures envisioning is sharing the M&D provisions in the Philippine Development Plan (PDP) for 2017 – 2022.

At the end of the 4-day workshop, the participants came up with proposed plans for the Quezon City M&D Council for 2018 – 2020 and inputs to the Quezon City Comprehensive Development Plan for 2020 – 2022.
CFO JOINS MIEUX REGIONAL ROUNDTABLE

Over the past ten years, the Migration EU Expertise (MIEUX), a joint initiative of the European Union (EU) and the International Centre for Migration Policy Development (ICMPD), has been providing on-demand technical assistance to Asian countries to help address migration issues. With years of successful implementation, the MIEUX team organized a knowledge sharing roundtable last 5-6 March 2018 in Bangkok, Thailand to facilitate the exchange of views on common concerns from a triangular (EU-South East Asia-Central Asia) perspective.

The roundtable provided an opportunity for reflection and discussion on MIEUX’s main achievements and best practices in the region, as well as specific issues of recent concerns and common interest, namely labor migration and trafficking in human beings.

Focal points of the previous MIEUX Actions in Cambodia, Kyrgyzstan, Laos, Myanmar, Thailand and the Philippines, represented by Joanna Lyn Rodriguez of the Commission on Filipinos Overseas (CFO), presented their respective actions with focus on the activities conducted, opportunities and challenges, outcomes, impacts and follow-up actions made. The country presentation also highlighted the value of the best practices and features of MIEUX, in particular, its peer-to-peer approach.

Government experts from Romania and the Philippines, such as Ms. Maria Teresa delos Santos of the Philippine Overseas Employment Administration (POEA), were likewise invited to facilitate discussions and present best examples of cooperation between EU Member

Ms. Joanna Lyn Rodriguez (center) of CFO presents the MIEUX Regional Action Initiative of the Philippines in 2012-2013.
States and Asia, and among Asian Countries. In particular, their presentations focused on experiences, best practices and partnerships on addressing the issue of trafficking in persons and strengthening the anti-illegal recruitment campaign.

Moreover, the roundtable served as a validation of the existing approaches of MIEUX in terms of providing technical assistance, and provided reflections on the future of migration governance in light of the most recent developments at regional and global levels, in particular, the Sustainable Development Goals, Global Compact for Migration and ASEAN framework/instruments.

To date, fifteen (15) MIEUX Actions have been implemented in Central and South East Asia, both at national and sub-regional levels. These Actions aimed at strengthening the capacities of governments in responding to cross-border management, labor migration, trafficking in human beings, migration policy making and migration data management.

PESO SENSE IPON CHALLENGE GOES VIRAL

The PESO SENSE IPON CHALLENGE has been widely recognized by many Filipinos as one of the most effective tools in saving their hard-earned money. For the past three years, tens of thousands of followers have sent their success stories in the PESO SENSE Facebook page and PESO SENSE Savers Group. The followers usually send photographs of their savings and the story behind their saving journey.

A blog article written by Saving Pinay on the 10 Best Peso Sense Ipon Challenge Stories was published last December, documenting the best saving stories posted in the PESO SENSE Facebook page. Below is the online link of the said article: http://savingspinay.ph/peso-sense-ipon-challenge-stories/

In January, the PESO SENSE Facebook page conceptualized a saving scheme which is called the PESO SENSE Shade and Save Ipon Challenge. A saving chart on the said Ipon Challenge was developed by the PESO SENSE team, wherein an individual will shade the chart
once he/she places a certain denomination in his/her piggy bank. The PESO SENSE Shade and Save Ipon Challenge Chart has already reached 7 million people in Facebook and has already been shared 41,000 times since it was posted.

The idea of the PESO SENSE Shade and Save Ipon Challenge was contributed by a PESO SENSE Saver group member, Ms. Sarah May Pahilga, and was improved and revised by the PESO SENSE team. The PESO SENSE Shade and Save Ipon Challenge chart quickly became viral that even online product vendors used the format as cover of coin banks that they sell.

Due to the high demand of the PESO SENSE coin banks and the instant success of the PESO SENSE Shade and Save format, the Ipon Challenge has been featured in the following TV programs:

1. Kapuso Mo Jessica Soho - https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pkJoRRz3s4Y
3. ABS-CBN Bandila - https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Hou7RCfktfM
The nationwide and international success of the PESO SENSE Shade and Save Ipon Challenge can be attributed to the new and innovative ideas of the PESO SENSE team members. They developed and improvised a new saving mechanism that makes saving money more fun and engaging compared to the traditional way of just placing the money in a coin bank. The success may also be credited to the high engagement rate and followers of the PESO Sense Facebook page, which is now considered as the number one Financial Literacy page in the Philippines in terms of Likes and volume of page engagements.

It is noteworthy that many Filipinos have now been encouraged to save through the PESO SENSE Shade and Save Ipon Challenge and they are now aware of the importance of being able to save to pursue financial independence.

The PESO SENSE Shade and Save Challenge has also inspired mobile app developers to create a mobile application program using the shade and save format. One of these mobile applications is the IPON: Money Challenge, which is now available and free to download in the Google Store.

CLEARING THE AIR

While the PESO SENSE Shade and Save Ipon Challenge can be downloaded for free in the PESO SENSE Facebook page and website, some coin bank suppliers have inadvertently used the name of the PESO SENSE for their personal gain. This has caused confusion among page followers; they thought that the PESO SENSE team is the one selling the coin banks. The biggest obstacle that the team has faced is the absence of an approved trademark that will secure the intellectual property of the project and charge copyright infringements on any individual who will use PESO SENSE for his/her personal gain. Previous applications with the Intellectual Property Office to trademark PESO SENSE were unsuccessful, and therefore, anybody could use the name PESO SENSE in his/her business name and concept. For instance, a certain online supplier used the PESO SENSE shade and save format and placed them in her coin banks and resold them without seeking prior permission from PESO SENSE. The coin banks bear the name of the project and are now being sold nationwide.
Although the selling of PESO Sense coin banks is not endorsed by the team, the team still appreciates the widespread demand for the coin banks as it only shows that many Filipinos in the entire nation are now aware of the value of saving.

The Ipon Challenge has a nationwide impact on the lives of many Filipinos as the new method developed by the PESO SENSE team has given netizens new and innovative ways of saving money. An average of 15-20 success stories on savings and investments are being sent daily to the PESO SENSE Facebook page and group by followers. The success stories of peso saving journeys are documented through the hashtag #PESOSenseIponChallenge that Facebook users post.

The success of the IPON Challenge program is currently being undertaken without a single expense from the National Government since it uses Facebook as a free marketing platform. The PESO SENSE team has also not used any Facebook advertising and has relied solely on informative and engaging content from its team members. The PESO Sense Facebook page currently has 2.7 million active followers. These followers are regularly being taught innovative ways to save, invest, start a business, and other financial lessons that are given for free. The PESO SENSE Facebook page serves as a free online mentor on financial knowledge for many Filipinos toward their journey to financial freedom.
On 22 March 2018, Commission on Filipinos Overseas (CFO) Undersecretary Astravel Pimentel-Naik visited Catalunan Grande Elementary School (CGES) in Davao City to observe and check on the feeding program funded by Feed the Hungry (FTH) and implemented by Catanihan Foundation, Inc. (CFI).

The 100 pupils, together with CFI, welcomed Usec. Naik warmly into the school’s feeding center. The children who had just taken their nutritious lunch provided by the CFI, which consisted of mongo soup with malunggay and bits of pork, cheerfully welcomed the visitors. Three months ago, they were considered undernourished, hence, their enrolment in the feeding program.

CFI is a SEC-registered charitable institution that has been operating since August 1982 in Barangay Catalunan Grande, Davao City. One of the foundation’s existing projects is

100 PUPILS IN DAVAO CITY BENEFITTED FROM THE FEEDING PROGRAM OF CFO
the Feed the Children Program which caters to 100 undernourished Grade 1 pupils of the CGES. This project aims to integrate sanitation education to improve the health of the children and to elevate their health status from undernourished to nourished stage. The CFI accepts only 100 pupils or 10 pupils per classroom yearly due to limited resources.

This year, one of the donors, the Feed the Hungry, Inc. USA (FTH), approved the proposal of the CFO and allocated the amount of Three Thousand US Dollars ($3,000.00) to fund the feeding program for six (6) months for the undernourished children of CGES. The implementation started last January 2018 and will end on July 2018.

The CFO assisted the program through coordination and preparation of the Memorandum of Agreement between the donor and the beneficiary, witnessed by the representatives of the school and CFO. The CFO also conducts the monitoring and evaluation of the project and provides the FTH with regular progress reports.
To jumpstart the implementation of the BaLinkBayan project in the Local Government Units (LGUs) of Dagupan, Urdaneta and Rosales in the province of Pangasinan, the Commission on Filipinos Overseas (CFO) conducted a capacity building and data gathering workshop for said LGUs on 15 March 2018 at Lenox Hotel, Dagupan City.

The activity was attended by officers from the LGUs’ Public Employment Service Office, Planning Office, Tourism Office, Information Technology Office, Social Welfare Office and Business Permit and Licensing Office, among others.

The capacity building and workshop aimed to introduce the localized BaLinkBayan as a migration and development tool, which can be used as the LGUs’ web based platform to promote and highlight their programs, projects and activities for overseas Filipinos (OFs) and their families. The localized BaLinkBayan can drive OFs’ greater participation and engagement in their respective localities.
Moreover, the activity helped the LGUs identify the information and source they will be including in their localized BaLinkBayan portals. Through the localization data guide template, the participants outlined their inputs to the project’s three main components – Start a Business, Donate and Volunteer, and Access Online Government Services. Additional components like Tourism Activities and Social and Welfare Programs were also included.

As part of the project’s commitment to Dagupan, Urdaneta and Rosales, the BaLinkBayan team also turned over three computer sets to the said LGUs to aid them in the implementation of the BaLinkBayan project.

Upon development of the LGUs’ localized BaLinkBayan portals, the next scheduled activity is Website Management Training to capacitate the website managers and administrators on uploading, updating and maintaining their localized BaLinkBayan portals.

As part of the Commission on Filipinos Overseas’ (CFO) drive to intensify government’s fight against human trafficking and commitment to bring to the community level the realities of international migration and intermarriages, the CFO continuously implements its annual Community Education Program (CEP).

The CEP is an information campaign conducted nationwide in coordination with various government agencies, non-government organizations (NGOs), local government units (LGUs), and academic institutions. It seeks to assist prospective migrants in making informed
decisions regarding overseas employment or permanent residence abroad, as well as to generate community involvement on migration concerns. It also aims to raise public awareness on various issues concerning migration, inter-marriages and existing government policies, programs and services that address illegal recruitment, human trafficking, mail-order bride scheme, and other related migration issues and concerns.

For the first quarters of 2018, the CFO was able to conduct CEP in Laguna and Cavite on February 19 to 23, 2018 and Batangas and Mindoro on February 26 to March 2, 2018.

For the second to third quarter of the year, the CFO is scheduled to conduct the CEP in the following areas: Zambales, Pampanga, Tawi-Tawi, Maguindanao, Southern Leyte, Northern Leyte, Zamboanga Peninsula, Zamboanga Del Sur, Compostela Valley and Davao Oriental.