CFO CELEBRATES 'HER'

January - March 2020 Issue

OVERSEAS FILIPINOS ASSIST TAAL VICTIMS THROUGH CFO'S LINKAPIL PROGRAM

Save your Hard Earned Money the CFO Peso Sense Way!

CFO Prepares for NCOV Threat

CFO CELEBRATES 1343 ACTIONLINE'S ACHIEVEMENTS

12 Fil-Am Youth Learn What It Means to be a Filipino

2020 NATIONAL WOMEN’S MONTH

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About The CFO

Established on 16 June 1980 through Batas Pambansa 79, the Commission on Filipinos Overseas is an agency of the Philippine Government tasked to promote and uphold the interests of Filipino emigrants and permanent residents abroad, and preserve and strengthen ties with Filipino communities overseas.

To know more about us, visit www.cfo.gov.ph.

Commission on Filipinos Overseas
Malugod pong nakikiiisa ang Komisyon sa mga Filipino sa Ibayong Dagat sa pagdiriwang ng Pambansang Buwan ng Kababaihan.

Nais naming bigyan ng pagpupugay ang lahat ng mga kababaihang matiyagang nagtataguyod at kumakalinga sa mga kani-kaniyang pamilya, higit lalo sa milyung-milyong mga Filipina na nagtatrabaho o permanenteng naninirahan sa iba’t ibang bahagi ng mundo.

"Higit sa tagumpay sa inyong larangan, nagpapasalamat kami sa inyong pagsisikap at pagpupunyagi upang bigyang karangalan ang ating bansa saan man kayo naroroon."

Nawa ay patuloy kayong magsikap para maabot ang inyong mga mithiin hindi lamang para sa sarili, kundi lalo na sa inyong mga minamahal, at sa ating Inang Bayan.

Patuloy na magiging katuwang ninyo ang Komisyon sa mga Filipino sa Ibayong Dagat sa inyong mga adhikain at sa pagsusulong ng inyong mga karapatan.

Mabuhay kayong lahat!

HUKOM FRANCISCO P. ACOSTA (Ret.)
Kalihim at Tagapangulo

Commission on Filipinos Overseas
Despite the abrupt suspension of work halfway through the month of March due to COVID-19, the Commission on Filipinos Overseas was able to conduct several activities in celebration of Women’s Month. The activities were a reaffirmation of its commitment towards advancing gender equality and promoting women empowerment as it joined once again the nation in celebrating this year’s National Women’s Month celebrations.

The CFO undertook a series of activities that were aimed not only to recognize the women for their significant contributions around the world, but also to educate the public on gender issues in order to address the lingering gender inequality in society.

The activities form part of the Commission’s commitment in implementing gender-responsive programs for Filipino emigrants, and in providing interventions and services for Filipinos overseas, especially those who are victims of human trafficking and gender-based violence. In 2019, CFO was recognized as one of gender responsive government agencies by the Philippine Commission on Women.

The Gender and Development Focal Point System (GFPS) of CFO led the launching of the activities for the celebration of the National Women’s Month on March 2, 2020 during CFO’s regular flag ceremony.

In order to debunk some misconceptions about women and girls, CFO’s Ms. January Sanchez, discussed the prevailing stereotypes against women that often are discriminatory and can even result to harassment and harmful situations.

A surprise serenade to the women personnel by homegrown male talents concluded the event. The women employees expressed appreciation to the entertainment they were provided with by their male colleagues.
HARANA KAY JUANA - BY REQUEST!

Reviving the traditional form of courtship music or harana, CFO male musicians treated female employees and clients with beautiful and inspiring songs thru Harana kay Juana.

"The activity brought smiles to both women employees and clients as they were reminded of this custom back in the days. They conveyed that serenading them with soothing old-time favorite songs brought them excitement and kilig."

CFO women employees and clients were serenaded by CFO’s boy bands - The Bandwidth (left) and the Kulas Academy (right)
Men are fortunate to have been surrounded and nurtured by women who always support, love, and care for them.

This year’s National Women’s Month Celebration served as an opportune time for the CFO male personnel to return the favor by composing a love letter to a woman who is a source of inspiration and encouragement. The letters were posted in all CFO Social Media Accounts.

Warner to Michelle
Ikaw ang aking nagsisilbing lakas at inspirasyon
Ang iyong ngiti ang dahilan kaya ako bumabangon
Pagsasama natin ay pinatibay na ng panahon
Dahil ikaw lang ang mamahalin mula noon
hanggang ngayon

Dumating man tayo sa walang hanggang panahon
I love you, cross my heart three times a day.

Maliyalarang Araw ng Kababaihan!

Eva,
Ang ganda mo sa larawang ito. Lalo akong nabighani ng iyong singkit na mga mata at labing napakanitpis. Kabaligtaran lahat ng sa akin.

Natatandaan mo pa ba ito? Ito ang huling kuha natin bilang magkakambal.

Noong nagpasabihin ka sa akin na magpakasal na tayo, ito’y naghatid ng labis na kagalakan sa aking buhay. Kasi naman, ikaw pa ang nag-propose. Ang tanging nasabihin ko lamang sa iyo ay,
‘Hindi kita mabibigyan ng maganda buhay, magandang lahi lang ang kaya kong ibigay sa iyo.”
Tinanggap mo pa rin ako kahit iyon lamang ang meron ako.

Sadyang napakabilis ng takbo ng panahon, halos maglilimang taon na tayo ng mag-asawa.
Salamat sa lahat ng pang-unawa, pag-intindi sa mga kahinaan at pagkukulang ko, at higit sa lahat sa pagmamahal mo.

Ikaw ang nagpakita at nagpakilala sa akin ng kahalagahan, kalakasan, at kagalingan ng mga kababaihan. Kung walang ka, walang ako.

Te amaré hoy, mañana y siempre!

Jobi
I want to tell the whole world about a friend of mine. This little light of mine that makes our whole family shine. There are plenty of roses, stars, sunsets, rainbows, brothers and sisters, aunts and cousins, but only one mother in the whole of mine.

There’s no way I can pay you back, but the plan is to show you that I understand, you are appreciated. Thank you for everything. The reason why I know what love is, it’s because of you.

Awa mo na. Sagutin mo na ako. Ikaw ang aking forever.

Sige ka pag di mo ako sinagot ay ipapa raffle ko na lang sa iba ang aking mga properties.

Always and forever,

Jopet
Rod to Millette

There can never be another now, nor there will ever be another you. Years from now, I may probably be a faintly remembered narrative. But to me, you will always be the heaven sent key that opened my heart to love.

Tula Para Kay Aileen

Simula ng dumating ka sa aking buhay naramdaman ang tunay na figayang inaalay ng isang taong nagpahalaga, umunawa Ikaw ang siyang umiintindi at di nagsasawa

Sa akin ay sabi mo ako’y iyong hiling Sinambit ko sa langit ay agad kang dumating Ngunit ika’y isang tulad ko rin na pangako sa isa’t isa’y tutuparin pag-ibig natin

Natutong makunento sa isa na ang katumbas ay wala rin sa iba Wala nang hihigit, wala nang lalamang Walang aagaw sa’yo, pagkat ika’y akin lang

Tandaan mo bawat araw mas minamahal kita Di tulad sa iba, sa’y ko lang ito nadama dito sa mundong ginagalawan ako’y similang dahi sa ikaw ang dahilan

William

Allan to Wife

Meeting you was fate Becoming your husband was a choice But falling in love with you was beyond my control Thank you for being a great life partner Through its ups and downs I promise that I will love you In the moments we’re together And times we are apart Always and forever

Mahal,

Salamat mahal kong asawa sa iyong pag-aaruga, hindi lang sa akin, kundi sa ating buong pamilya. Ilaw at gabay ng tahanan tunay na ikaw nga! Mahal na mahal kita!

Noel

Hindi man ikaw ang naglulwal, ika’y dakila pa ring tunay! Salamat sa pag-gabay at pagpapalaki. Hindi matatagaran ang ginagawa mong mabuti.

Mabuhay ka mahal kong ate!

Commission on Filipinos Overseas
As part of its annual tradition in the yearly celebration of the National Women’s Month, female clients in the CFO Main Office and its satellite offices in Cebu, Davao, and Clark were treated to snacks and refreshments. Female employees were likewise provided with free lunch.

Regardless of their employment status, all women personnel of the CFO were given a day off for the month of March 2020. There was no deduction on the leave credits of permanent employees who availed of this optional time-off nor deduction in salary for contractual employees.

This special privilege was aimed at helping the women employees of CFO to spend much-needed time for themselves.
The CFO reproduced the streamer of the 2020 National Women’s Month and posted it on the facade of the CFO Manila Office. It was also shared in the CFO website and CFO social media platforms.

The CFO month-long activities were all anchored on the theme “We Make Change Work for Women” that highlights the empowerment of women as active contributors to and proponents of development.

Undersecretary Naik said that the disruption of the Women’s Month celebrations due to COVID-19 serves also as a reminder for the CFO to continuously uphold its steadfast advocacy towards attaining gender parity. She added that in these times of extraordinary challenges, everyone is in the same boat to share a concerted act of helping, uplifting, and supporting one another, regardless of gender.
The Commission on Filipinos Overseas lauds the House of Representatives for its swift passage of a bill protecting women and children from all forms of electronic abuse. Voting unanimously at 227-0-0, the legislators approved on third and final reading House Bill 5869 or an act defining electronic violence against women and children.

The CFO has widely pushed for its passage and actively engaged the legislature since the previous Congress. In the present 18th Congress, CFO’s interventions include submission of policy inputs to the proposed bills and rigorous attendance to the various committee meetings.

The CFO welcomed its role as an additional member to the Inter-Agency Council on Violence Against Women and their Children, which was created by virtue of Republic Act (RA) No. 9262, or the Anti-Violence Against Women and their Children Act of 2004.

The measure expands the coverage of RA 9262 by defining electronic violence or information and communications technology (ICT)-related violence as any act that involves the "use or exploitation of data or any form of information and communications technology which causes or is likely to cause mental, emotional, or psychological distress or suffering to the woman and her children."

Speaking in the plenary session after the bill’s passage, Gabriela Women’s Partylist Representative Arlene Brosas said HB No. 5869 addresses a “loophole” in RA No. 9262. “Violence is a stark reality that women have to struggle with every day.... Mr Speaker, this bill will give women an increased chance to fight all forms of violence and abuse,” said Rep. Brosas. The Gabriela representative added that “the passage of the measure will give women and children an 'increased chance' to combat all forms of abuse.” She also thanked the supporters of the bill and acknowledged CFO for its support and active engagement during the committee deliberations.

HB No. 5869 considers as electronic abuse the unauthorized recording, sharing, and uploading of photos, videos, audio, and other forms of electronic or artistic presentation depicting the following:

- Private parts of women and children
- Scenes portraying sexual intercourse, masturbation, kissing, caressing, hugging, and petting
- Scenes showing sexually-related verbal or non-verbal expression of the woman and her children "which may be construed as lewd, indecent, or obscene"
- Scenes depicting any "errant" behavior, including the use of illegal drugs
- Scenes "suggestive" of a wrongdoing or act that "tends to besmirch" the reputation of women and children

The bill also counts as emotional abuse the use of text messages and other forms of cyber communication to harass, intimidate, threaten, or vilify women and children.

Those who would resort to online stalking, including the hacking of personal social media accounts and using location data from electronic devices, would also be penalized under the bill.

HB No. 5869 would consider spreading fake information about women and children using electronic devices and creating fake social media accounts to "sow intrigue or inflict harm" as electronic violence punishable by law.
To effectively and efficiently deliver gender-responsive policies, programs and services for the well-being and empowerment of the community of Filipinos overseas, the Commission on Filipinos Overseas held its Annual Strategic Planning Workshop for 2020 on January 23 to 24, 2020 at the Quest Conference Center, Clark Freeport Zone, Pampanga.
CFO Secretary and Chairperson, Retired Justice Francisco “Nick” P. Acosta in his opening message emphasized that CFO’s policy direction which is to further strengthen the Commission’s engagement with overseas Filipinos, specifically the permanent residents. He also instructed the CFO team to continuously enhance partnership with our foreign diplomatic posts, Filipino communities overseas, and media representatives here and abroad.

The whole day Strategic Planning Workshop was packed with activities that assessed the CFO Accomplishments for 2019 and would set CFO direction and quality objectives for the current year and the year ahead. Division representatives presented their respective workplans and budget requirements to carry out programs and services. Active participation was encouraged from attendees to help the CFO Management assess the programs and projects based on priority and impact to the overseas Filipino community.

The CFO was privileged when House Speaker Alan Peter Cayetano graced the planning session mid-afternoon. In his brief speech, he mentioned importance of the creation of the proposed Department of Overseas Filipinos and Foreign Employment which will allow all migrant-serving agencies to have clearer focus, and for Filipino migrants to have quicker access to the services of the Philippine Government. He congratulated Justice Acosta and Undersecretary Naik for shepherding CFO in the pursuit of its objectives and plans under the current Administration.

"Kalidad na serbisyo para sa mamayan, abot sa labas ng bayan."
Headed by Usec. Astravel P. Naik, CFO employees had an ocular inspection of the CFO-Clark Satellite Office on the second day. During the inspection, Usec. Naik and the team identified how the facility can be further improved to better serve the clients better.

The CFO-Clark Satellite Office started its operation since the launching of the “One-Stop Service Center for Overseas Filipinos” in Clark Pampanga on August 15, 2016. The CFO-Clark office is open to serve the public from 8am to 5pm, Wednesdays to Fridays with no noon breaks. The office provides Pre-departure Orientation Services (PDOS) for emigrants as well as guidance and counselling services for fiancées/spouses of foreign nationals.

The Commission on Filipinos Overseas joined the entire nation in a synchronized prayer for Peace at 12 noon on 06 February 2020. Participated in by CFO clients and employees in Manila, Cebu, Davao and Clark, the prayer movement aims to unite everyone in praying for peace, unity, protection, prosperity and transformation of our nation.

On July 07, 2017 at the height of the Marawi conflict, Ms. Lourdes “Bing” Pimentel launched the “PasaLord Prayer Movement” that seeks to unite Filipinos of various creeds and denominations to pray for peace and reconciliation in the Philippines. With all the seemingly insurmountable problems besetting the nation, Ms. Pimentel believes that prayers can be the country’s best weapon. Through prayers, we are passing the load to the Lord the problems of our nation and people and let Him move on our behalf.

The name “PasaLord” means passing our burdens/load to the Lord. The movement is non-partisan and encourages Filipinos to unite and show their love to the Philippines by praying for the country daily at exactly 12 noon, wherever they are. While people are free to say their own prayer, a one-minute universal prayer that summarizes our hopes and petitions to God was composed by the movement.
Secretary Francisco P. Acosta directed the office to prepare for the threat posed by the novel coronavirus (2019 nCov) threat. Such action is necessary for the office to prepare and take all pro-active steps to stop the spread of this disease. Among the measures include the procurement and installation of hand sanitizers in strategic places inside the CFO main office; provision of liquid hand soaps in all comfort rooms; procurement of face masks for all CFO frontline personnel including guards and utility workers as well as the use of thermal scanners to screen all persons entering the building. These measures were also implemented in all offices of the Commission such as Cebu and Davao.

The Commission also posted public advisories about the coronavirus as well as precautionary measures such as maintaining proper hygiene and regular hand washing in its social media account. It also presented a basic orientation for employees during its February flag raising ceremony.

The CFO remains vigilant as it caters to several hundred clients daily and will continue to monitor and take proactive steps in light of the confirmed first case of novel coronavirus entry in the Philippines on January 30, 2019.
Two Convictions. A 1343 Actionline call report has led to two counts of conviction of a child trafficker of two minor boys from Cebu. In 2015, the 1343 Actionline received a call requesting for rescue on the minor boys who were victims of labor and sexual exploitation in Quezon City. Separate cases were filed by the victims in two court branches in Quezon City which resulted to convictions in 2017 and 2018.

Website. Email. Social Media. As an expansion of the service of the 1343 Actionline, it is complemented by the following communication channels - online through e-mail; official website at www.1343actionline.ph and its social media networks.

Mobile Application. In July 2014, the 1343 Actionline launched its mobile application for Android and IOS mobile phone users. It has features where users can conveniently report in real-time suspected human trafficking activities with the option of attaching photographs and videos as evidences. The identities of the users are treated with utmost confidentiality. Users also have access to information and news updates about human trafficking, and directory of IACAT member agencies.

Global Actionlines. Several 24/7 toll-free international hotlines for overseas Filipinos were developed as alternative reporting mechanisms for trafficking acts committed against Filipinos abroad. It consists of a series of international toll-free help lines in five (5) countries that forward calls to the Philippine-based Actionline.

In observing the anniversary, the CFO is highlighting the following milestones:

- **Two Convictions.**
- **Website. Email. Social Media.**
- **Mobile Application.**
- **Global Actionlines.**
Online Legal Counseling. Aptly called Itanong mo kay Ato!, the online service allows the public to avail of the live chat or send a message to the partner lawyers using their computers or smartphones.

IACAT’s Advocacy Core Messages. The ADVOCOM, through the CFO, has initiated a tagline and slogan contest during the commemoration of the World Day against Trafficking in 2018. Break All Chains; Makialam, Itimbre Mo!; and Human, Hindi Laruan were the winning entries and currently being used in IACAT’s anti-trafficking information materials.

Partnerships. Aside from the government partners in the IACAT, the Actionline partnered with various non-government and private agencies in the provision of services for victims being assisted through the Actionline. Organizations such as International Organization for Migration (IOM), Arellano Law Foundation, Integrated Bar of the Philippines (IBP), Kapisanan ng mga Brodkaster ng Pilipinas (KBP), Grab Philippines, are among the Actionline’s partners.

As the flagship project of IACAT-ADVOCOM, the 1343 Actionline against Human Trafficking is the only 24/7 hotline facility that is dedicated to matters related to human trafficking, from inquiries to emergency or crisis calls, from reporting of possible human trafficking crimes from the public to information about the anti-trafficking campaign. It can be reached through local telephone lines, online and toll-free global numbers in five (5) countries.

Aside from supervising the Actionline, the CFO has been consistently cited by the US State Department’s Trafficking in Person Report for almost a decade for its initiatives to curb human trafficking.

Its anti-trafficking national prevention campaign include the conduct of an annual community education programs on trafficking and safe migration in the countryside; counseling programs for groups considered at-risk, including Filipinos seeking overseas marriages or those migrating to Europe to work as au pairs; partnering with a private radio and television broadcasting association to develop a short public service announcement that aired on numerous stations; awareness campaign focusing on cybercrime and online child sexual exploitation, and disseminated related informational materials to more than 60,000 local residents, among others.

The CFO has also published several information materials that are distributed for free such as posters, booklets, comics and stickers to further raise community awareness on the perils of human trafficking. These materials can also be downloaded for free at www.cfo.gov.ph.
CFO PARTICIPATES IN JICA-SPONSORED ANTI-TRAFFICKING TRAINING IN JAPAN

by Rodrigo Garcia, Jr.

The Commission on Filipinos Overseas participated in the Seminar on Promotion of Networking among ASEAN Countries on Anti-Trafficking in Persons (TIP) organized by the Japan-based National Women’s Education Center (NWEC) from October 23 to November 8, 2019.

Funded by the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA), the seminar was attended by 12 people overseeing anti-TIP measures, both from public and private sector, of six countries in the ASEAN region: Cambodia, Laos, Myanmar, the Philippines, Thailand, and Vietnam.

The seminar focused on the prevention of trafficking in persons (TIP) and the protection of victims by letting participants learn about the various efforts in each other’s countries, including Japan, and to strengthen the networks among them.

To learn about initiatives taken by the Japanese government, participants visited the Cabinet Secretariat, where they were given a briefing on the government’s systems for implementing the 2014 Action Plan of Measures to Combat Trafficking in Persons, and outline of activities by the relevant institutions, and statistics on crime involving TIP.
Officials from the Ministry of Health, Labor and Welfare gave lectures on the protection of victims of TIP, with a focus on legal framework and systems for the protection of women in Japan at its foundation, and on programs of assistance for victims of TIP. To learn about the protection of women from violence at the local government level, participants visited the Tokyo Metropolitan Women's Consulting Center, where they were briefed on an overview of programs for temporary protection, toured protection facilities, and learned about phone consultations given by the Center.

The Japanese National Police Agency discussed its law enforcement activities in relation to TIP crimes, partnerships with relevant institutions, and the anonymous reporting hotline. Participants also visited the Tokyo Regional Immigration Bureau, where they learned about entry inspections, visa procedures, and applications for recognition of refugee status.

Caseworkers from the International Organization for Migration (IOM) gave a briefing on a TIP victim assistance program commissioned by the Japanese government. There was also group discussions in which members compared and contrasted initiatives in the respective countries.

Participants also visited the Fujimino International Cultural Exchange Center (FICEC) in Saitama, where they talked with women who do volunteer work for adults and children in the communities with overseas ties. FICEC is engaged in a broad range of assistance, including learning support for the Japanese language, multilingual consultations on matters concerning community life (also available by phone). The delegation then visited Kisarazu City in Chiba Prefecture, where they learned about the efforts of a social welfare foundation called Ichiryukai.

During the final week, participants engaged in group debates as they incorporated what they had learned in the seminar into action plans. A specialist from JICA's Office for Gender Equality and Poverty Reduction outlined the anti-TIP programs JICA is undertaking in chiefly the Mekong region.

On the last day, a Final Presentation and Discussion Seminar was held at JICA Tokyo Office, to which experts were invited. Attendees gave presentations of action plans incorporating what they had learned in the seminar's lectures, study tours, and discussions on case examples in other countries into action plans to undertake once they have returned to their home countries. This was followed by a discussion on how to eradicate trafficking in persons in the ASEAN region while continuing to maintain human networks. The Chief of Mission of IOM, members of the Lawyers for Trafficked Victims and academe, and experts from NWEC were in attendance as well.

The National Women’s Education Center (NWEC) of Japan is an independent institution established in 1977 as the only national center for women’s education in Japan. Its principal objective is to promote women’s education and contribute to a gender-equal society by conducting training programs for regional government officers, educational and group leaders, and international trainees and other personnel in women’s education, and conducting specialized research and surveys on women’s education. The Center has a long standing cooperation with the Japan International Cooperation Agency.
Starting the year 2020 on a high note, the Commission on Filipinos Overseas (CFO) successfully passed the surveillance audit of the organization’s Quality Management System (QMS) last 09 January 2020 resulting to positive findings and maintenance of its ISO 9001:2015 certification for 3rd year in a row.

The ISO certification and accreditation rules require the performance of a regular surveillance audit after certification of the CFO’s QMS. The surveillance audit conducted by TUV Rheinland (TUVR) Philippines aimed to verify the adherence of the CFO QMS to the requirements of the ISO 9001:2015 standards with emphasis given on the effectiveness of the established processes.

Notably, among the commendable findings cited by TUVR in its audit report are the recognitions received by the CFO for the year 2019 which demonstrate the organization’s good governance, commitment and efforts towards delivering quality and citizen-centric program to its clientele.

These include the GADtimpala Bronze Award for Outstanding Gender-Responsive Government Agency, the Selyo ng Kahusayan sa Filpino Serbisyo Publiko Antas II for championing the use of Filipino language in rendering services to clientele, communications and correspondences, the Program to Institutionalize Meritocracy and Excellence in Human Resource Management (PRIME-HRM) Bronze Award for having managed and implemented its human resource management systems, and an unqualified opinion from the Commission on Audit (COA) for its transparency, accountability and efficiency in the use of valuable taxpayers money.

With its quality policy statement aptly summarized by its mantra of “Kalidad na Serbisyo sa Mamayan, Abot sa Labas ng Bayan,” CFO vows to maintain and sustain the quality standards in its entire processes and procedures as its contribution in enhancing public sector performance and making government organization citizen-driven.
A week after Taal volcano spewed ash and started erupting on 12 January 2020, the Commission on Filipinos Overseas through its Lingkod sa Kapwa Pilipino (LINKAPIL) Program implemented a series of calamity relief assistance for the benefit of the victims of this unfortunate event in Batangas province on 20, 21, and 29 January 2020.

The Feed the Hungry, Inc., Philippine-American Charity Foundation, Seven Lakes San Pablo City International, Balayan Las Vegas Association, and National Federation of Filipino-American Association in Las Vegas, all overseas Filipino organizations based in the United States of America, as well as individuals funded these assistance for the Batangeños, who were severely affected by the eruption and sent to live temporarily in designated evacuation centers in Batangas and nearby areas.

The assistance from the overseas donors were able to serve and cater to eighteen (18) evacuation centers in Alfonso, Cavite, municipalities of Calaca and Balayan in Batangas. This endeavor benefitted 2,500 families or around 12,500 individuals, who were residents of Agoncillo, Lemery, Taal, Laurel, San Nicolas, Balete, Mataas na Kahoy, and Lemery in Batangas.

Each family-beneficiary in Calaca and Alfonso received bag of toiletries with face masks, blankets, bottled water, and cosmetic products, which were donated by Ever Bilena to CFO. While those beneficiaries in Balayan, Batangas received bag of food items, toiletries, and cosmetic products, as well.

In addition, CFO employees participated also to this endeavor and donated financial assistance for the purchase of relief items that addressed the needs of the victims of Taal volcano eruption.

"Lubos kaming nagpapasalamat sa patuloy nilang pagtulong sa amin kahit na nasa ibang bansa na sila.”
- Local Resident
This was just one of the insights of the 12 Filipino-American youth from the US Midwest area who were brought together to participate in the 2nd US Midwest Youth Leaders in the Diaspora (YouLeaD) program of the Commission on Filipinos Overseas (CFO), in partnership with the Philippine Consulate General in Chicago. Held on January 3 to 9, 2020, the program was designed to enable Fil-Am youth from the US Midwest area to rediscover their roots and gain better understanding of their Motherland.

The 7-day program module comprised of lectures on Philippine history and language, guided tours to scenic places, eco-tourism and social entrepreneurship activities, interaction with public officials and communities, among others.
During the opening ceremony at the CFO office, Secretary Francisco P. Acosta and Undersecretary Astravel Pimentel-Naik welcomed the participants and expressed their messages to the group. Sec. Acosta mentioned that his siblings and their families are abroad, and that somehow relates him to the participants. He also highlighted the rights and opportunities of being a Filipino, and said that the group are privileged to enjoy it. While Usec. Pimentel-Naik mentioned to the group that the YouLeaD program is fun and a different kind of immersion because they are with their peers.

National Artist for Literature F. Sionil Jose graced the first day of the immersion and shared his literary works about Filipino identity. He also imparted his insights on how the participants, as Fil-Am youth, can help in the development of the Philippines. Aside from that, the participants also had a session with Ms. Einzoely Agcaoli of the Komisyon ng Wikang Filipino (KWF), in which they learned basic conversational Filipino. As mostly of the participants don’t speak and understand Filipino, the session was indeed challenging. But on the other hand became useful when they interacted with the people and communities they met during the program.
To raise awareness on social entrepreneurship and local farming, the participants toured the Gawad Kalinga (GK) Enchanted Farm in Angat, Bulacan. They were also introduced to locally-made products made by students of the School of Entrepreneurial and Experiential Development (SEED) inside the GK community. Aside from that they spent time playing “farmazing race” which enabled them to appreciate farming in a fun way.

The next day of the immersion was spent in Gapan, Nueva Ecija where Making A Difference (MAD) Travel, a Philippine-based social enterprise, facilitated a solid waste management, zero waste lifestyle, and climate change workshops. On the same day, the group travelled to San Antonio, Nueva Ecija and planted rice for the first time.

In addition, the participants completed a day touring around Minalungao National Park, a protected area in General Tinio, Nueva Ecija. They enjoyed activities such as trekking, swimming, riding a zipline, and even having a sumptuous lunch on bamboo rafts over the green pristine river of Minalungao.

"The YouLeaD program is an incredible opportunity for Filipino youth in the diaspora. What made this program worthwhile were the people involved in making it happen. The passion driving each and every person I met who helped to make this trip possible for me was so eye-opening."
The last part of the cultural immersion were courtesy visits and meetings with public officials such as Cabanatuan City, Nueva Ecija Mayor Elizabeth Vergara. Department of Foreign Affairs (DFA) Undersecretary for Strategic Communications and Research Ernesto Abella, Office of the American Affairs Assistant Secretary Maria Lumen Isleta, and Executive Director Romulo Victor Israel. Mayor Vergara presented her leadership style and aspirations for the city. Usec. Abella talked about Filipino identity and roots and expressed his hope that the participants be future partner of the Philippines. The group were also welcomed by the US Embassy where Political, Economic, Cultural and Public Diplomacy Sections officials Mr. Bret Heidemann, Ms. Nina Lewis, Mr. Gary Applegarth, and Ms. Claire Therese Bea briefed them of the Embassy’s activities, including programs for young people both in the Philippines and the US.

During the closing ceremony held at the National Youth Commission (NYC) office in Quezon City, the participants individually spoke of their insights and experience during the 7-day YouLeaD program. Generally, all of them were thankful for being part of it.

"The experiences they had and the learnings they gained helped them bridge the gap between their identities as young Fil-Ams."

The ceremony was led by CFO Executive Director Pimentel-Naik, NYC Chairperson Ryan Enriquez, NYC Commissioners James Ceasar Ventura, Victor del Rosario and Paul Anthony Pangilinan.

The participants to the 2nd edition of US Midwest YouLeaD were accompanied by CFO YouLeaD Secretariat staff Ms. Mayumi Peralta and Mr. Jovian Bulawan, and Philippine Consul General in Chicago Gina Jamoralin.
SAVE YOUR HARD EARNED MONEY THE CFO PESO SENSE WAY!

by Patricia Marie Salvador

Saving money will never be as easy as spending it. This is undoubtedly one of the reasons why many people still struggle to save and invest. A huge chunk of Filipinos can really relate to this, until the CFO PESO SENSE came into the picture and introduced the PESO SENSE IPON CHALLENGE – an exciting and innovative way of saving money.

For the past years, thousands of CFO PESO SENSE Facebook followers have shared their success stories and narrated how the Ipon Challenge helped them realize their saving goals while also having fun. This challenge was so popular it was even featured on several TV programs, like Kapuso Mo, Jessica Soho, Bandila, and Unang Hirit.

To assist more Filipinos in their financial journey, the CFO PESO Sense developed the 2020 Peso Sense Ipon Challenge Calendar. With this, people don’t have to follow a schedule for the Ipon Challenge, and their success will all depend on how devoted they are and how soon they’re going to shade all the circles to complete the challenge. Once completed, a person can save Php 60,000!

The 2020 Ipon Challenge calendar also serves dual purpose, because it’s not only an Ipon Challenge tracker, it’s also a calendar.
The CFO Peso Sense started giving away the calendars in January for free. Now, many Ka-PESO, as how the followers are called, already embarked on the 2020 ipon challenge. Even national government agencies like the Department of Education (DepEd) and the National Anti-Poverty Commission (NAPC) took on the mission. Since January, 4,000 copies of the calendar were distributed nationwide.

"Doing the CFO Peso Sense Ipon Challenge is solving two problems with one solution. You will not only achieve your saving goal, more importantly, you develop the discipline and good habit of saving your hard-earned money."

Officers and staff of DepEd’s Public Affairs Office proudly holding the calendars

The PESO Sense calendars reached Pagbilao, Quezon
As part of the CFO’s continuous grit to mainstream migration and development at the local level, and encourage overseas Filipinos to participate and engage in nation-building, the CFO BaLinkBayan program sealed another partnership – this time with the Local Government Unit of Bayambang, Pangasinan.

The implementation of the CFO BaLinkBayan project in the municipality was put in effect upon signing of the Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) on January 13, 2020 at Balon Bayambang Events Center, Bayambang, Pangasinan. Present in the signing were CFO BaLinkBayan Project Manager and CFO Project Management Director Marita Del Rosario-Apattad, Municipal Administrator Atty. Raymundo B. Bautista Jr., who represented Mayor Cezar T. Quiambao, Vice-Mayor Raul R. Sabangan, Municipal Councilors Benjamin de Vera, Mylvin Junio, Philip Dumalanta, Joseph Vincent Ramos, Martin Terrado II, Amory M. Junio, Gerardo Flores, and Levinson Uy, League of Barangays President Rodelito S. Bautista, and Sangguniang Kabataan Federation President Gabriel Tristan Fernandez, and Department of Labor and Employment (DOLE) Central Pangasinan Field Office Head Agnes B. Aguinaldo.

The MOA signing was led by CFO BaLinkBayan Project Manager Marita Del Rosario-Apattad and Vice Mayor Raul Sabangan, and Municipal Administrator Raul Bautista.

During the MOA signing, Action Desk Officer on Migrant Concerns Gerenerio Q. Rosales shared the LGU’s plans and programs for Bayambangueño overseas Filipinos and their families. He mentioned that the LGU will make sure that all these programs are sustainable. This was then followed by PESO Manager Joel Cayabyab who presented Bayambang’s Poverty Reduction Plan. Dir. Del-Rosario-Apattad underscored BaLinkBayan’s significance to the LGU to appreciate the potential that migration could bring to Bayambang’s development. Furthermore, Ms. Aguinaldo affirmed DOLE Region 1’s support in LGU Bayambang and CFO’s endeavors regarding diaspora engagement.

Bayambang, Pangasinan is CFO’s 31st LGU partner since it began localizing the BaLinkBayan project in 2017. While migration policies are usually centered on national level, CFO BaLinkBayan LGU partners recognize their pivotal and dynamic role in migration governance, and thus continue to promulgate their own policies and implement programs and services that overseas Filipinos and their families can easily avail of.
CFO PROVIDES ORIENTATION TO US EMBASSY CONSULAR OFFICERS

by Kristine Joy Gacer

The Commission on Filipinos Overseas (CFO) provided a briefing to the consular staff of the United States Embassy on 05 February 2020 at the Charles Parson Ballroom, US Embassy, Roxas Blvd., Manila.

The orientation centered on the work of the Exchange Visitor Program (EVP) Committee of the Philippines, which oversees the participation of Filipinos to the J1 program of the US or the EVP. This activity is part of US Embassy’s strategic plan on how can the US and the Philippine governments can work together for the common good of the Filipino EVP participants.

The J1 visa, issued to all EVP participants, is considered as an important category in the Non-Immigrant Visa Unit due to the significant increase in applicants starting 2007, particularly in the categories of Summer Work/Travel, Interns, Trainees and Teachers.

As requested by the Embassy, the CFO provided information on the following: the roles and mandate of EVP Committee of the Philippines and the CFO; Overview of the Pre-departure Orientation Seminar (PDOS) provided by the CFO; Initiatives in Fighting Human Trafficking; Statistical data of participants; among others.

Resource speakers from the CFO were Director Marita Apattad of the Project Management Division and Director Ivy Miravalles of the Migrant Integration and Education Division. Both represent the CFO as the Secretariat of the EVP Committee of the Philippines and the chair of the Advocacy and Communication Committee (ADVOCOM) of the Inter-agency Council Against Trafficking (IACAT), respectively.

The De La Salle-College of St. Benilde was also invited to talk about how their School of Hotel, Restaurant Institution Management handles their J1 visa program as their internship program is regarded by the EVP Committee as best practice.

Aside from the CFO, Department of Foreign Affairs and the Commission on Higher Education, chair and member of the EVP Committee of the Philippines, were represented and have provided inputs during the open forum.

As the next step, the Fraud Prevention Unit of the US Embassy also plans to conduct a J1 visa Outreach Program within the year to different colleges and universities for information dissemination purposes.
The Commission on Filipinos Overseas (CFO) encourages interested overseas Filipinos and the public that nominations to the 2020 Presidential Awards for Filipino Individuals and Organizations Overseas (PAFIOO) are still on-going.

The PAFIOO is conferred by the President of the Philippines every two years in recognition of the immense contributions of Filipino/foreign individuals and organizations overseas in the national development efforts, promotion of the interest of the Filipino diaspora and for their exceptional achievements or excellence in the pursuit of their endeavors. Since its inception in 1991, 485 individuals and organizations overseas from 51 countries and territories have been bestowed with the awards under the following categories:

- **Lingkod sa Kapwa Pilipino (LINKAPIL) Award** – conferred on Filipino individuals or organizations for their exceptional or significant contribution to progress and development in the Philippines.

- **Banaag Award** - conferred on Filipino individuals or organizations for their contributions that have significantly benefited a sector of the diaspora, or advanced the cause and interest of overseas Filipino communities.

- **Pamana ng Pilipino Award** - conferred on overseas Filipino individuals, who, in exemplifying the talent and industry of the Filipino, have brought the country honor and recognition through excellence and distinction in the pursuit of their work or profession.

- **Kaanib ng Bayan Award** – conferred on foreign individuals (natural-born) and organizations for their exceptional or significant contribution to Philippine progress and development, or in advancing the cause or promoting the interests of overseas Filipino communities.

**CALL FOR NOMINATIONS**

The call for nominations to the 2020 PAFIOO which began last 15 August 2019 will end on **31 July 2020**. Nomination must be endorsed first by the concerned PH Embassy or Consulate General that has jurisdiction over the place of residence/work/operation of the nominee prior to its submission to the CFO which serves as the Presidential Awards Secretariat.

To download the prescribed nomination forms and know more about the nomination process and requirements for the PAFIOO, visit [www.presidentialawards.cfo.gov.ph](http://www.presidentialawards.cfo.gov.ph).
Marriage is a special contract of permanent union between a man and a woman entered into in accordance with law for the establishment of conjugal and family life. It is the foundation of the family and an inviolable social institution whose nature, consequences, and incidents are governed by law and not subject to stipulation, except that marriage settlements may fix the property relations during the marriage within the limits provided by the applicable laws.\[1\]

However, certain issues involving the validity, registration, and recognition of foreign divorce arise for marriages celebrated abroad involving Filipinos and foreigners.

Executive Order No. 209 otherwise known as the "Family Code of the Philippines" is the basic law that governs marriages entered into by Filipinos within and without the Philippines.

Under Article 26 of the Family Code, "(a)ll marriages solemnized outside the Philippines in accordance with the laws in force in the country where they were solemnized, and valid there as such, shall also be valid in this country, except those prohibited under Articles 35 (1), (4), (5) and (6), 36, 37 and 38."

Accordingly, provided that the marriage of a Filipino with a foreigner satisfies the Formal and Essential requisites under Articles 2 and 3 of the Family Code of the Philippines; (i) legal capacity of the contracting parties; (ii) consent that was freely given in the presence of the solemnizing officer; (iii) duly authorized solemnizing officer; (iv) valid marriage license; and (v) personal appearance of the contracting parties in a marriage ceremony with at least two witnesses; the same will be respected under Philippine jurisdiction.

The Department of Foreign Affairs (DFA) is the government agency that is tasked to handle the registration process of marriages between Filipinos and foreigners that were celebrated abroad and they may be directly contacted at:

- records-director@oca.dfa.gov.ph
- oca.crd@dfa.gov.ph

[1] Article 1 of Executive Order No. 209 otherwise known as the Family Code of the Philippines. The phrase “this Code” was replaced with the phrase “the applicable laws.”
At present, the documents to be presented and process to be complied with for the late registration of marriages between Filipinos and foreigners that were celebrated abroad are as follows:

Present original documents and submit five (5) photocopies of each:

- Notarized Report of Marriage Form
- Marriage Contract/Certificate with corresponding translation and/or in authenticated form if required. The Original copy of the Marriage Contract will be submitted with the DFA;
- Copies of the Birth Certificate of both parties – Authenticated by PSA for Filipino Nationals and with official English Translation for Foreign Nationals if required;
- Passports of both parties valid at the time of marriage and current/valid passport of both parties;
- Five (5) recent passport size photos of both parties;
- Notarized Affidavit of Delayed Registration [required only for applicants who are married for more than one (1) year];
- Notarized Affidavit of Two (2) Disinterested Persons [required only for applicants who are married for more than one (1) year]; and
- Negative Certification of Marriage Record from the PSA (CRS Form No. 3).

Assuming that all documents and procedures were properly complied with, the registration process is expected to be completed within a period of 2 to 3 months.

Recognizing that not all marriages are successful, the Philippines created a system that would govern the recognition of foreign divorce, which is rooted in the archaic notion that personal relations can only be governed by the national law of that person. Thus:

First, by means of a petition to allow remarriage under Art. 26 of the Family Code wherein the termination of marriage is recognized in order to avoid a situation of injustice and “discrimination in her own country,” when the erstwhile foreign spouse of a Filipino is capacitated to remarry under foreign law, and yet the Filipino is limited for failure of our laws to recognize the judgment.[2]

Second, recognition of a foreign divorce may also be obtained under Rule 39, Sec. 48, of the 1997 Rules of Court, which is the central governing law on procedure for judicial recognition of foreign judgment in the Philippines.

While recognition of foreign divorce is currently accepted under Philippine laws, it is, however, hidebound by the ordinary rules of procedure as it results to the unnecessary re-litigation of matters already heard by a court of competent jurisdiction.

Acknowledging the flaws in and the need to improve the present system, the Commission on Filipinos Overseas laid down for consideration of the Philippine Congress the possibility of utilizing the benefits of the Apostille Convention[3] wherein a document, i.e. foreign decree of divorce, issued in one of the signatory countries can be certified for legal purposes in all the other signatory states,[4] which would dispense with the need to prove the existence of the foreign law in a Petition for Recognition of foreign decree of divorce and leaving the sole issue to be inquired into is whether or not the decree in fact terminated the pre-existing marriage.

At the end of the day, a married couple is “no longer two, but one flesh; therefore, what God has joined together, let no one separate.”[5]

Indeed, God hates divorce but He would not expect a married person to remain married to a spouse that remains in an adulterous situation for the victim of such a marriage is not bound by the law and God would not call that sin.[6]

[6] https://www.whatchristianswanttoknow.com/reasons-for-divorce-what-does-the-bible-say/; removed the phrase “it is hoped that there is always room for repentance, counseling, and reconciliation – but if it doesn’t occur, and sexual sins outside of marriage persist” and replaced with the word “for”.
CFO JOINS THE 2020 GLOBAL SUMMIT OF NURSES

by Benilda Pereyra

To continue the Filipino Nurses’ commitment to Planetary health caused by climate change, and celebrate the Filipino nurses’ diaspora, hundreds of Filipino nurses from different parts of the world converged at the Henann Regency Convention Center in Boracay, Aklan on 21-22 January 2020 to participate in the 2020 Filipino Nurses Global Summit and International Nursing Conference. The Nursing Summit was attended by around 300 representatives from Afghanistan, Australia, Guam, Korea, Malaysia, United Arab Emirates, United States of America and the Philippines.

Under the theme, “The Planet is our Patient: Nurses Leading Transformative Climate Action and Developing Resilient Communities,” the conference focused on the practical applications on how to address the vulnerabilities and effects climate change has on local and global health of those mostly affected in coastal countries.

The conference was opened by a parade of nations of the delegates. It was followed by the welcome remarks of the presidents/heads of the summit conveners namely, 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 Undersecretary Astravel Pimentel – Naik, in her welcome remarks, commended the Filipino nurses for being the most sought after around the world because of their skill, dynamism, professionalism, perseverance and above all compassion. She also appreciated the PNAA for unselfishly committing their time and generously sharing their expertise to nurses in the Philippines through the Balik-Turo project.
The conference had an array of keynote speakers and resource persons. World Health Organization Department of Public Health, Environmental and Social Determinants of Health Director Dr. Maria Neira welcomed the participants via video message challenging nurses to commit to working on the survival of planet earth and to global health. The keynote message, entitled, “Climate Change as an Emergency: Implications on the Preventive and Emergency Health Approaches in the Philippines,” was delivered by Director Emmanuel Luna of the UP Resilience Institute.

Internationally renowned experts led by Lorenzo Guinto, Doctor of Public Health Fellow, Harvard University gave presentations demonstrating the realities of the devastating effects of climate change on the environment and resulting climate sensitive communicable and non-communicable diseases; resilience of health care facilities who transitioned to the green environment; role of nurses and clinicians for a healthy population.

Concluding the conference is the ceremonial signing of the Declaration Calling for Global and Transformational Actions by Ms. Madelyn D. Yu, PNAA President, Dr. Erlinda C. Palaganas, PNA President, Dr. Mary Grace C. Lacanaria, ADPCN President and CFO Secretary Francisco P. Acosta, represented by Undersecretary Astravel Pimentel – Naik. The Declaration sealed the collaborative partnerships among the government and NGO sectors to harness the potential of Filipino nurses (both domestic and global) to provide for competent and sustainable health workforce that is able to contribute significantly to the attainment of universal quality health care and the development of the country.