

Office of the President of the Philippines
COMMISSION ON FILIPINOS OVERSEAS

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I. About the Agency

Commission on Filipinos Overseas: An Overview

Established on 16 June 1980 through *Batas Pambansa 79*, the Commission on Filipinos Overseas (CFO) is an agency of the Philippine Government under the Office of the President tasked to promote and uphold the interests, rights and welfare of overseas Filipinos and strengthen their ties with the Motherland. Section 3 of BP 79 state the following functions and power of the CFO:

- a. Provide advice and assistance to the President of the Philippines and the *Batasang Pambansa* in the formulation of policies and measures affecting Filipinos overseas;
- b. Formulate, in coordination with agencies concerned, an integrated program for the promotion of the welfare of Filipinos overseas for implementation by suitable existing agencies;
- c. Coordinate and monitor the implementation of such an integrated program;
- d. Initiate and directly undertake the implementation of special projects and programs, whenever necessary, to promote the welfare of Filipinos overseas with respect to their interests and activities in the Philippines;
- e. Serve as a forum for preserving and enhancing the social, economic and cultural ties of Filipinos overseas with their motherland;
- f. Provide with liaison services to Filipinos overseas with appropriate government and private agencies in the transaction of business and similar ventures in the Philippines;
- g. Promulgate rules and regulations to carry out the objectives of this Act;
- h. Call upon any agency of the government, including government-owned or controlled corporations, to render whatever assistance is needed in the pursuance of the objectives of this Act; and
- i. Perform such other related functions as may be directed by the President or assigned by law.

VISION

The Commission on Filipinos Overseas envisions a community of well-respected and proudly competitive Filipinos overseas who contribute significantly to the productivity and well-being of the countries where they reside or work while maintaining strong political, economic and cultural ties with the Philippines.

MISSION

To be the Philippines' premier institution in promoting policies, programs, and projects with Migration and Development as a framework for the strengthening of and empowering the community of Filipinos overseas.

CFO QUALITY POLICY

We in the Commission on Filipinos Overseas (CFO), a government agency responsible for upholding the interests, rights and welfare of overseas Filipinos and strengthening their ties with the Philippines, commit to effectively and efficiently

deliver policies, programs and services for the well-being and empowerment of the community of Filipinos overseas.

In pursuit of this commitment, we shall:

Capacitate our people through continuous professional development anchored on social responsibility;

Formulate policies and facilitate quality and citizen-centric programs and services that exceed expectations of the public we serve; and

Optimize the benefits of migration with overseas Filipinos as development partners of the Philippines and their host countries while addressing the social costs.

With the commitment to uphold the principles of good governance and highest standards of excellence, we adhere to comply and continuously improve our quality management system and other legal requirements.

“Kalidad na serbisyo para sa mamamayan, abot sa labas ng bayan”.

II. Highlights of CFO’s 2017 Accomplishments

A. MIGRANT WELFARE SERVICE PROVISION

1. Pre-Departure Orientation Seminar (PDOS) for Emigrants

The CFO conducts country-specific Pre-Departure Orientation Seminar (PDOS) for 20 to 59 years old Filipino emigrants with the core objective of addressing their settlement concerns overseas.

It aims to help Filipino migrants by providing updated and appropriate information about living abroad, including their rights as a permanent resident. CFO strongly believes that a well-informed migrant is in a better position to seek opportunities and assert his/her rights. An empowered Filipino migrant also promotes a positive image about Filipino migrants in host countries and reduces his/her vulnerabilities.

Filipino emigrants are those individuals who leave the country to settle permanently abroad. They are required to register with the CFO and attend the Pre-Departure Orientation Seminar (PDOS) prior to departure.

CFO registered **79,419** emigrants in 2017. The following are the top ten destination countries of Filipino emigrants: United States of America, Canada, Japan, Australia, Italy, New Zealand, United Kingdom, Spain, Germany, and South Korea.

Mobile PDOS

CFO implemented four (4) mobile PDOS in 2017 in Davao City with 598 registered emigrants and 201 marriage migrants.

The mobile PDOS is implemented to make CFO's services more accessible to the public, especially those in areas that are historically considered as origin provinces of Filipino emigrants. The activity also help emigrants save on travel expenses averaging at about PhP15,000 per person, which they would have to spend if they register in CFO's Manila or Cebu office .

2. Peer Counseling Program

The Peer Counseling Program is required for Filipino emigrants 13 to 19 years old. The sessions aim to provide a venue for the young migrants to discuss their specific concerns about leaving their country of birth and residing in a new country (i.e., family relations, culture shock, schooling, language barrier, bullying, absence of friends, etc.).

While sessions are not country specific, country profiles and settlement concerns are also discussed during the counseling. No other government agency in the country provides this specialized pre-departure program for migrating Filipino youth.

CFO provided counseling to **12,317** peer counselees in 2017.

3. Guidance and Counseling Program (GCP)

The Guidance and Counseling Program (GCP) is mandatory for Filipinos leaving the country as a spouse or fiancé(e) or partner of a foreign national. The program does not only provide information about the country of destination, but also allows the counselees to have a one-on-one session with CFO guidance counselors. During the individual sessions, CFO counselors discuss on a more personal level the realities of intermarriage and help counselees make informed decisions.

CFO counseled **20,773 spouses and partners of foreign nationals** in 2017. The following are the top ten destinations of Filipino spouses and partners of foreign nationals: United States of America; Japan; Canada, United Kingdom, Australia, South Korea, Germany, Taiwan, Norway, and Sweden.

4. Country Familiarization Seminar (CFS) for Europe-bound Au Pairs

Filipinos au pairs bound for European countries are required to register with the CFO and attend the Country Familiarization Seminar. Au pairs are young Filipino citizens, between 18 – 30 years old; unmarried and without any children, placed under a cultural exchange arrangement with a European host family for a maximum stay of two years.

The CFS is a vital tool for the au pair participants to equip them with adequate information on settlement processes, values, cultural and social realities in the host countries, health and safety measures, airport and travel procedures and available support networks.

In 2017, CFO registered **2,004 au pair participants**. The following are the top ten destination countries of Filipino au pairs in Europe: Denmark, Norway, Netherlands, Switzerland, Germany, Belgium, Sweden, Iceland, Austria and Luxembourg.

5. Exchange Visitor Program (EVP)

The Exchange Visitor Program (EVP) refers to the international exchange program administered by the United States to implement the Mutual and Cultural Exchange Act of 1961. It is a result of an agreement between the United States of America and Philippines to allow the exchange of their nationals for training in both countries. It aims to increase mutual understanding between the people of the United States and the people of other countries by means of educational and cultural exchanges.

Filipinos leaving the country to participate in the EVP are required to register with the CFO. Part of their registration is attendance to Pre-departure Orientation Seminar (PDOS) to inform them about the conditions and responsibilities as J1-visa holders as they are not expected to stay permanently in the US.

In 2017, CFO registered **8,814** EVP participants.

6. Community Education Program (CEP)

The Community Education Program (CEP) is an annual information campaign conducted nationwide by the CFO in coordination with various government agencies, non-government organizations, faith-based groups, media, local government units and academic institutions.

It seeks to assist prospective migrants make informed decisions on working and/or settling abroad, as well as generate community involvement on migration concerns. It also aims to raise public awareness about issues on international migration, inter-marriage, and existing government policies and programs directed against illegal recruitment, human trafficking, documentation fraud, among others.

In 2017, some **6,070 individuals participated** in the information campaign held in the following areas:

1. Davao City
2. Mandaue City
3. Panabo,
4. Samal Island
5. Cebu City
6. Cordova
7. Sawang, Zamboanga
8. Calero, Palawan
9. Pasil,
10. Laguna
11. Cavite
12. Batangas,
13. Tuguegarao City, Cagayan
14. Penablanca, Cagayan
15. Iguig, Cagayan
16. Malabon
17. Manila
18. Pasay
19. San Fernando, La Union
20. Bangar, La Union
21. San Nicolas, La Union
22. Bauang, La Union
23. Vigan, Ilocos Sur
24. Cagayan de Oro
25. El Salvador, Misamis Oriental
26. Mindoro
27. Coron, Palawan
28. Legazpi, Albay
29. Dumaguete, Negros Oriental
30. Thomson Reuters in Taguig

7. Inter-Agency Council Against Trafficking – Advocacy and Communications Committee (IACAT-ADVOCOM)

In December 2010, the CFO became an ex-officio member of the IACAT and was delegated to head the Advocacy and Communications Committee (ADVOCOM).

The creation of the IACAT-ADVOCOM is in line with one of the functions of the IACAT as stipulated in Section 21 (e) of RA 9208 which is to coordinate the conduct of massive information dissemination and campaign on the existence of the law and the various issues and problems attendant to trafficking through the local government units, concerned agencies, and NGOs. The Rule VIII, Article II, Section 132 of the Revised Implementing Rules and Regulations of the RA 9208, as amended by RA 10364, also stipulated that the ADVOCOM shall be primarily responsible for the development and implementation of the IACAT's communication program, and the conduct of research and study on the patterns and schemes of trafficking in persons for policy formulation and program direction.

Among its strategies is to engage and mobilize various stakeholders and target groups such as the national and local government agencies; civil society groups; media institutions; international organizations; foreign government agencies; migrant associations; and other non-government organizations.

In 2017, the IACAT-ADVOCOM established new partnerships with the following:

1. Cebu City Women and Family Coalition (Philippines)
2. Philippine Legislators' Committee on Population and Development Foundation (Philippines)
3. GBV Protection Center (Philippines)
4. Office of the Solicitor's General (Philippines)
5. Asian-Americans Advancing Justice-Los Angeles (USA)
6. Metropolitan Family Services, Chicago (USA)
7. Integrated Bar of the Philippines (Philippines)
8. Inter-agency Council Against Trafficking-Mactan Cebu (MOA) Philippines
9. Department of Manpower Development and Placement - Philippines
10. Japan Federation of Bar Association (Japan)
11. Danuri Helpline and Woman Migrants and Multicultural Family (South Korea)

CFO also participated in Anti-Trafficking in Person activities with partner agencies in Maguindanao, Cebu City and Metro Manila such as the launching of IOM X Anti-Illegal Recruitment Campaign; National Consultation on Anti-Trafficking/CSO Summit Anti-Trafficking Conference and the celebration of the World Day Against Trafficking in Persons.

8. 1343 Actionline against Human Trafficking

To make reporting trafficking cases easier for the general public, the IACAT through the ADVOCOM launched the 1343 Actionline Against Human Trafficking on 15 March 2011. It is a 24/7 hotline facility that responds to emergency or crisis calls from victims of human trafficking and their families. The 1343 Actionline likewise provides a venue for the public to be engaged in the fight against trafficking in

persons. Its creation is also in line with the core message of the IACAT which is, *Laban kontra Human Trafficking, Laban nating Lahat*.

The 1343 Actionline can also be accessed via text messaging/short messaging services (SMS), e-mail, website (www.1343actionline.ph), social media (Facebook), mobile application and international hotlines as alternative reporting mechanisms.

On July 2014, the 1343 Actionline launched its mobile application for Android and IOS mobile phone users.

In 2017, a total of 158 cases were addressed by the CFO including those reported thru the 1343 Actionline. Cases involved human trafficking, labor contract violation, illegal recruitment, domestic violence, prostitution, harassment, location of whereabouts, cybercrime, repatriation request, labor disputes, among others.

To further improve its institutional and capability to fight trafficking in persons, CFO undertook the following activities and initiatives:

- Regular attendance and active participation at meetings of IACAT
- Close monitoring of laws, regulations, institutions and mechanisms which support and complement the government's fight against human trafficking
- Maintenance of close working relationships with international organizations and civil society organizations, including Filipino associations and organizations abroad to intensify information awareness to combat human trafficking

9. Philippine Schools Overseas

Philippine Schools Overseas (PSOs) are duly-registered educational institutions operating outside the Philippines and implementing the basic education curriculum of the Department of Education. PSOs are established to address the educational needs of children of Filipinos overseas, and eventually facilitate their reintegration into the Philippine educational system. The schools also provide a venue for teaching and propagation of the Filipino culture and heritage among Filipino youth overseas, and serve as a locus for Filipino community activity.

The Inter-Agency Committee on Philippine Schools Overseas (IACPSO) was established through Executive Order No. 252 (s. 2000) to serve as a policy-making body and forum for discussion and resolution of issues concerning the establishment, operation and management of PSOs. Composed of five (5) member-agencies, the Committee is co-chaired by the DepEd and the Department of Foreign Affairs. Other members are the Department of Labor and Employment, the Overseas Workers Welfare Administration, and the CFO, which also serves as the Committee Secretariat.

Seventy (70) representatives from 31 Philippine schools in Bahrain, China, East Timor, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Oman, and United Arab Emirates and one alternative learning center in Sabah attended the 14th Conference of Philippine Schools Overseas at The Diamond Hotel Philippines on 17 – 20 May 2016 in Manila.

In May 2017, fifty-four (54) representatives from 26 Philippine Schools in China, East Timor, Greece, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Libya, Oman, Qatar, and United

Arab Emirates attended the 15th Conference held at the N Hotel in Cagayan de Oro City, Misamis Oriental.

The annual conference is meant to promote and strengthen the implementation of the Philippine curriculum in PSOs, and to help ensure a continuing education among Filipino expatriate students and support the unification of the Overseas Filipino families.

As of December 2017, there are **41 PSOs** operating in 10 countries with an estimated **33,000 students** enrolled from pre-elementary, elementary, and high school. Additional 3,000 students from two (2) additional PSOs in UAE were also assisted after the schools were given a permit to operate by the DepEd.

B. PROGRAM MANAGEMENT

10. Lingkod sa Kapwa Pilipino (LINKAPIL) Program

In 2017, **P99,850,308.32** worth of (cash and in-kind) donations were channeled thru the LINKAPIL Program helping **91,914** beneficiaries from **31** provinces. These include Batangas, Benguet, Bohol, Bulacan, Capiz, Cavite, Cebu, Compostela Valley, Davao del Norte, E. Samar, Ilocos Sur, Iloilo, La Union, Laguna, Leyte, Misamis Oriental, Negros Occidental, Negros Oriental, Nueva Ecija, Nueva Vizcaya, Occidental Mindoro, Pangasinan, Quezon, Rizal, Sarangani, Sorsogon, S. Cotabato, S. Leyte, Siquijor, Surigao del Norte, and Zamboanga del Norte, and Metro Manila.

A. Health and Welfare - Medical Missions

An estimated PhP81,441,000.00 worth of general, surgical, ophthalmological, and medical missions by overseas Filipinos benefitted 14,554 individuals from General Santos City, Cavite, Cebu, Quezon Province, Eastern Samar, Leyte, and Quezon City. The missions were conducted by six (6) organizations from the USA, namely:

1. Phil-Am Association of Nevada;
2. Philippine Medical Association in Chicago
3. Association of Philippine Physicians in America
4. Society of Philippine Surgeons in America
5. Roman Catholic Diocese of Joliet-Partnership in Mission; and
6. World Surgical Foundation, Inc.

PhP9,250,000 worth of donated medicines, medical supplies and other health related supplies were also accounted during the conduct of said missions benefiting 56,400 patients. These contributions and transfer of skills helped improve the health condition of the beneficiaries.

B. Gift-Giving Project

The gift-giving activities and provision of financial assistance to non-government charity organizations were facilitated in San Jose, Occidental Mindoro, Kawit, Cavite, Doña Remedios Trinidad, Bulacan, Liliw and San Pablo City, Laguna, Quezon City,

and Makati City. These activities benefitted around 4,008 individuals amounting to Php901,895,49 worth of assistance.

C. Feeding Program

Five (5) feeding programs in 2017 were implemented and supported by Filipino organizations overseas amounting to PhP294,946.39, and benefitted 266 undernourished school children. These feeding programs were implemented in the following:

1. Tapulanga Foundation, Inc. in Silay City, Negros Occidental
2. Lupang Pangako Elementary School in Quezon City
3. Bankerohan Sur Elementary School in Montevista, Compostela Valley
4. Municipality of Doña Remedios Trinidad in Bulacan
5. Catalunan Grande Elementary School in Davao City.

D. Small – scale Infrastructure Projects

Nine (9) new classrooms were constructed in 2017, while six (6) existing classrooms were repaired. Thru the LINKAPIL, one (1) school library/reading center was also built, and seven (7) water supply systems were installed. These projects were implemented in the following:

1. Bungsuang Elementary School in Dumarao, Capiz
2. Bactul-1 Multigrade School in Maasin City, Southern Leyte
3. San Antonio Elementary School in Ormoc City
4. San Emilio National High School in San Emilio, Ilocos Sur
5. National Secondary School of Arts and Trade Extension in Gen. Santos City
6. Bonifacio Elementary School in Batuan, Bohol
7. Mariano Espina Memorial Central Elementary School in Surigao City
8. Buenavista Primary School/Day Care Center in Lemery, Iloilo
9. Marapal Elementary School in Lemery, Iloilo
10. Liñagan Primary School in Maasin, Iloilo
11. Medina Elementary School in Anilao, Iloilo
12. Nagba Elementary School in Maasin, Iloilo
13. Brgy. Laylayan, Alimodian, Iloilo.

The above infrastructure projects amounted to P3,096,383.35 which benefitted 3,375 individuals mostly students of the said schools in Capiz, Southern Leyte, Leyte, Ilocos Sur, South Cotabato, Bohol, Surigao del Norte, and Iloilo.

E. Education and Scholarship

Forty (40) scholars were supported under the Adopt-a-Scholar Project of the LINKAPIL Program for S.Y. 2017-2018, and seventeen (17) scholars under the Enhancement Training Sponsorship Program of the Exchange Visitor Program. The assistance amounted to a total of P1,503,183.24, which include provision of educational materials to students.

The assistance gave the beneficiary students from Nueva Ecija, Cavite, Nueva Vizcaya, Cebu, Negros Oriental, Siquijor, Pangasinan, Leyte, Laguna, Sorsogon,

Zamboanga del Norte, Davao del Norte, Misamis Oriental, Bohol, Bulacan, Sarangani, Muntinlupa City, Taguig, Malabon City, Quezon City, and Manila access to quality education.

An amount of P812,399.85 was also granted to support the needs of various schools in Bulacan, Occidental Mindoro, Cavite, Compostela Valley, Baguio City, Negros Occidental, Rizal, Surigao del Norte, Leyte, Cebu, Davao del Norte, Capiz, Pasig City, and Manila for purchase of school supplies, books, sports equipment and other educational equipment.

11. Youth Leaders in the Diaspora (YouLeaD)

The YouLeaD was first known as the Lakbay-Aral, a Filipino term which means “travel study”. YouLeaD is a two-week cultural immersion program in the Philippines, developed and implemented by CFO since 1983.

The program enables Filipino youth overseas to rediscover their Filipino roots and appreciate the richness and diversity of their heritage. The program combines lectures on Philippine history and language; and guided tours to scenic and historical landmarks. Interaction with Filipino students, public officials and members of indigenous communities and participation in local festivities are also included in the program.

In 2017, the program was marketed to various Filipino communities abroad. Notably, this was presented to second generation Filipino-European youth and Filipino community leaders during the European Network of Filipino Diaspora during their annual conference held in Essen, Germany last September 30, 2017. The program was well-received in Europe, and preparations for its implementation are underway in 2018.

12. Assistance to Filipino Children in Sabah

Reportedly there are about 30,000 children of Filipino ancestry who are at risk of being stateless in Sabah. These children are unable to enroll in Malaysian schools because of their undocumented status that led to widespread illiteracy. Many end up as child laborers or take to the streets and eventually become juvenile delinquents.

In 2014, six (6) alternative learning centers (ALCs) in Sabah operated by some concerned Filipino groups, signed a Memorandum of Understanding on Community-Based Education Program (CBEP) with the CFO, DepEd, and the Philippine Embassy in Kuala Lumpur. These ALCs teach the children basic reading, writing and arithmetic.

Together with DepEd and the Philippine Embassy in Kuala Lumpur, the CFO organized and facilitated the capacity-building workshop for teachers and volunteers in Kota Kinabalu, Sabah.

In 2017, the CFO joined the officials from the Department of Education (DepEd), and travelled to Sabah on February 12-15, 2017 to reassess the situation of the

Alternative Learning centers (ALCs) catering to the children of Filipino ancestry in Sabah.

The team visited four (4) ALCs in Sabah, namely Vision of Hope Learning Center and Learning Translation and Review Center, both in Keningau, Learning Translation and Review Center (Penampang) and Stairway to Hope Learning Center (Inanam).

The delegation met with the ALC heads and volunteer teachers to discuss the educational needs of Filipino learners in their centers and related matters. To provide training to the volunteer teachers, the DepEd scheduled a second round of capacity-building workshop for the ALC volunteers in March 2017.

The Filipino community members have so far established and manage operations of six (6) ALCs in Sabah upon the encouragement of and with the support of the Philippine Embassy in Kuala Lumpur. The ALCs are providing basic literacy to some 2,500 undocumented Filipino children.

Educational materials such as books were also obtained by CFO from various donors and shipped to ALCs.

13. Virtual Sentro Rizal

The “Virtual Sentro Rizal” (VSR) project brings the traditional mode of appreciating Filipino heritage into the digital age. It is a portable collection of essential Filipina references in DVD format which were primarily culled from the current library catalogue of the National Commission for Culture and the Arts (NCCA), with additional materials sourced from cooperating producers and publishers. The collection is stored in an external hard drive.

This initiative was undertaken in compliance with Section XII of Republic Act No. 10066 – National Cultural Heritage Law (2009) – which calls for the institutionalization of Sentro Rizal(s) to serve as venues for the promotion of Philippine arts and culture in areas with significant numbers of Overseas Filipinos. While the virtual nature of the collection allows cultural dissemination beyond borders and is purposively designed to appeal to the tech-savvy, this initial compilation is a modest attempt to introduce the Philippines via distance learning but does not preclude the establishment of corresponding physical facilities.

Phase 2 of the project saw the VSR translated into other major languages aside from the original English. These are Filipino, Ilokano, Bikol, Sebwano, Meranaw and Spanish. The printing of the manuals accompanying the materials took place in 2016, and is being distributed since then.

14. PESO Sense: The Philippine Financial Freedom Campaign

In line with the national development goal of financial inclusion, CFO also put focus on contributing to the financial literacy of overseas Filipinos and their families left behind.

In October 2013, CFO collaborated with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the Western Union Foundation in implementing the Philippine Financial Freedom Campaign or PESO Sense in order to help overseas Filipinos and the families left behind to develop or enhance personal strategies, skills and knowledge in attaining financial freedom.

This nationwide Financial Literacy Campaign began with the main objective of improving financial literacy by promoting productive expenditures, greater savings and entrepreneurship among overseas Filipinos and the beneficiaries of their remittances.

With more than 10 million overseas Filipinos in more than 200 countries worldwide, the task of inculcating the importance of financial literacy becomes challenging more than ever. PESO Sense's uniqueness is its use of new technology to reach out to all Filipinos, whether they are the sender or receiver of remittances. The PESO Sense campaign makes use of all forms of communications such as the internet, social media and mobile applications. The online PESO Sense financial literacy module is designed with 6 targeted profiles in mind: those of Students, Young Adults, Business Owners, the Employed, Home Makers and Retirees.

The following existing platforms are used in the promotion of CFO's Financial Literacy Program:

a. SOCIAL MEDIA PLATFORM

In 2017, the verified Facebook page of the PESO Sense: The Philippine Financial Freedom Campaign reached more than 2.5 million likers/followers reaching more than 11.5 million users weekly from all over the world. There are 104,195 overseas Filipinos who follow the Facebook page. Followers are coming from countries such as (a) Saudi Arabia; (b) United Arab Emirates; (c) Hong Kong; (d) Singapore; (e) United States of America; (f) Taiwan; (g) Kuwait; (h) Qatar; (i) Singapore; (j) Japan and (k) Canada. These countries have high concentration of overseas Filipinos.

It is updated on a daily basis with various posts, inspirational quotations, saving and budgeting tips, stories, provocative questions related to financial literacy and insightful articles that directly help the audiences in realizing the importance of managing their money for their future. The official page of PESO Sense can be accessed at <https://www.facebook.com/pesosenseph>.

b. PESO SENSE KNOWLEDGE MATERIALS

CFO continuously distributes knowledge materials such as bookmarks, brochures and videos that are customized based on the six selected profiles – students, young adults, professionals, homemakers, micro and small-scale entrepreneurs, seniors and retirees. They are distributed regularly at CFO offices and in various events and activities in and outside the country, reaching as far as Europe and the Middle East. These bookmarks can be downloaded from the PESO Sense website.

c. WEBSITE

The 30-minute free online training modules featured in the PESO Sense website is the heart of the campaign. Consistent with the campaign's strategy, each training module is customized per target remittance recipient. In 2017, 11,779 followers enrolled in the online training modules

The modules have specific learning materials for students, young adults, professionals, homemakers, micro and small-scale entrepreneurs, seniors and retirees. These free online modules feature, among other things, videos, games, online mentors, reflection exercises.

At the end of every module, online learners are encouraged to answer the feedback form to help improve the materials. In addition, after finishing the modules, they receive an online certificate, proof that they have completed the training.

d. PESO SENSE MOBILE APPLICATION

From handy bookmarks to regular maintenance and enhancement of the PESO SENSE website to maximizing the incredible benefits and outreach of the social media platform, the financial freedom campaign have been brought to a new and innovative level with the development of the PESO Sense app in 2015.

Users of the mobile app are based in Saudi Arabia, United Arab Emirates, Qatar, Singapore, Kuwait, South Korea, United States of America, Canada, and Hong Kong. The app is available on Android.

15. BaLinkBayan

The BaLinkBayan is the Overseas Filipinos' (OFs) one-stop online portal for diaspora engagement, offering an integrated and unique platform to re-engage with the Philippines through the D2D (Diaspora to Development) program of the Commission on Filipinos Overseas with the support and help of several government agencies such as the Department of Trade and Industry (DTI), Department of Agriculture (DA), Department of Agrarian Reform (DAR) and the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR).

Examples of the D2D programs that are part of the portal are: diaspora philanthropy, medical mission coordination, doing business in the Philippines, tourism initiatives and investment for overseas Filipinos.

The term BaLinkBayan is a play on the Filipino words *Balikbayan* (returning migrant), *balik* (return), *bayan* (country) and the English word "link," that refer to the World Wide Web. As a portal for diaspora engagement, it seeks to bring together 10.24 million Filipinos in the diaspora into an integrated and comprehensive platform that taps into their knowledge, expertise, skills, networks, material and financial resources to contribute to the development of the Philippines.

BaLinkBayan works at two levels, first, it links OFs to development oriented diaspora initiatives in the Philippines and second, it provides options for business and

investment opportunities both at the national level and at their respective hometowns. The latter would link, among others, to automated transactional processes at the LGU level.

In 2017, the BaLinkBayan Project completed the following:

A. Established formal partnerships with the following:

1. Iloilo Province
2. Pangasinan Province
3. Aklan Province
4. Cuenca Municipality
5. Iriga City
6. Los Baños Municipality
7. Guinobatan Municipality
8. Rosales Municipality
9. Camarines Norte Municipality

B. Conducted Migration and Development Training for the following:

1. Bacoor City
2. Los Baños Municipality
3. Pangasinan Province

C. Conducted Capacity Building Workshops for the following:

1. Iloilo Province
2. Pangasinan Province
3. Aklan Province
4. Cuenca Municipality
5. Iriga City
6. Los Baños Municipality
7. Guinobatan Municipality
8. Camarines Norte Municipality

D. Turned over ICT equipment of the following:

1. Iloilo Province
2. Pangasinan Province
3. Aklan Province
4. Cuenca Municipality
5. Iriga City
6. Los Baños Municipality
7. Guinobatan Municipality
8. Camarines Norte Municipality

E. Conducted ICT trainings for the following:

1. Iloilo Province
2. Pangasinan Province
3. Aklan Province
4. Antique Province
5. Cuenca Municipality
6. Iriga City
7. Legazpi City
8. Tabaco City
9. Ligao City
10. Sorsogon City
11. Sorsogon Province
12. Masbate City

F. Developed the Localized BaLinkBayan website of the following:

1. Antique Province
2. Iloilo Province
3. Pangasinan Province
4. Aklan Province
5. Cuenca Municipality
6. Iriga City, Albay
7. Los Baños Municipality
8. Guinobatan Municipality
9. Camarines Norte Municipality

G. BaLinkBayan Marketing Activities:

1. Regional Forum on Migration in Pili, Camarines Sur
2. Regional Forum on Migration in Mariveles, Bataan
3. 7th Multi Agency Service Mission in Cambodia
4. Migration and Development Training in Aklan with 20 municipalities
5. Meeting with officials from Padre Garcia Municipality
6. Meeting with officials from Dagupan City
7. Meeting with officials from Urdaneta City

H. Developed new knowledge materials (IEC)

1. Luggage
2. Notepads
3. Eco-bags

16. Month of Overseas Filipinos Celebration

Through Proclamation No. 276 (s. 1988) by then President Corazon Aquino, the country started to celebrate December as the Month of Overseas Filipinos This is in

recognition of the significant contributions of overseas Filipinos to Philippine development and the restoration of Philippine democracy.

In December 2000, the United Nations General Assembly also proclaimed December 18 of each year as International Migrants Day. On this important date, all member-states, intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations celebrate the occasion and disseminate information regarding the fundamental rights and freedom of migrants.

An Inter-Agency Committee for the Celebration of the Month of Overseas Filipinos and International Migrants Day was created through Administrative Order No. 202 issued in October 2007 by then President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo. The IAC is composed of the following members:

- Philippine Migrants Rights Watch (Chair)
- Commission on Filipinos Overseas (Co-Chair)
- Department of Foreign Affairs
- Department of Labor and Employment
- Department of Health
- Department of Tourism
- Department of the Interior and Local Government
- Department of Trade and Industry
- Presidential Communications Operations Office
- National Commission for Culture and the Arts
- Film Development Council of the Philippines
- Overseas Workers Welfare Administration
- Philippine Overseas Employment Administration
- National Reintegration Center for OFWs
- Philippine Health Insurance Corporation
- Pag-IBIG Home Development Mutual Fund
- Social Security System
- Union of Local Authorities of the Philippines
- League of Provinces of the Philippines
- League of Cities of the Philippines
- League of Municipalities of the Philippines
- Philippine Migration Research Network
- Migrant Forum in Asia

The IAC is tasked to come up with activities for the MOF celebration for each year.

The theme for the 2017 MOF is *“ENHANCING REINTEGRATION: LEAVING NO MIGRANTS AND THEIR FAMILIES BEHIND.”* This is in line with the policy pronouncement of President Rodrigo Duterte of providing assistance to overseas Filipinos and bringing government services closer to migrants, including the reintegration program. It will also highlight the various reintegration programs and services offered by the government to returning OFWs and other overseas Filipinos. These services cover psycho-social, livelihood and investment, and employment, among others.

Following activities were conducted in 2017:

- a. Migrants' Health Fair & Regional Forum on Migration in Camarines Sur
- b. Migrants' Health Fair & Regional Forum on Migration in Bataan
- c. International Forum on Migration in Hong Kong
- d. International Forum on Migration in Doha
- e. National Forum on Migration

17. Migration Advocacy and Media Awards

The Migration Advocacy and Media Awards (MAM Awards) was conceived in 2011 to recognize the significant role of the media, particularly in the fields of print, radio, TV and movie, advertising and the internet, in raising public awareness on issues related to Filipino migration, and the challenges of migration and development, and advocating the cause and promoting a positive image of Filipinos overseas.

A yearly event, MAM Awards has been made as a part of the Month of Overseas Filipinos Celebration held every December in the Philippines. In 2016, the CFO as the award giving body decided to make it a biennial event to give ample time for the media, especially from other countries to send in their entries.

Already in its 6th year, the CFO conferred the Migration Advocacy and Media Awards to 10 best media institutions, practitioners and advocates during the Awarding Ceremony on December 18, 2017 at the Philippine International Convention Center, Pasay City. The 2017 MAM awardees came from the US, Italy, Myanmar, South Korea, Singapore and the Philippines.

C. Policy Development

18. Policy Inputs

Pursuant to its mandate, CFO develops and provides policy inputs and position papers that are meant to assist the executive and legislative branches of government on matters pertaining to the political, economic, and social concerns, rights and obligations of overseas Filipinos. Below shows the list of CFO developed policies for the year 2017:

2017 Developed Policies
<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Inputs on the CSC Memorandum Circular (MC) No. 23, series of 2016 on the Policy in the Government Service of Filipino Citizens with Dual Citizens2. Inputs on the proposed National Development and Security Agenda of President Rodrigo Roa Duterte, dubbed as "20 in 2022"3. Inputs to Philippine Development Plan 2017-2022

4. Reply to the Memorandum of Cabinet Secretary regarding the President's directive to all the members of the Cabinet to study the possibility of maximizing each agency's provision of online services to the public
5. Inputs on Senate bill no. 157 – An Act Expanding the Use of Legal Assistance Fund, Amending the Purpose of Section 26 of Republic Act no. 8042, Otherwise Known as the “Migrant Workers and Overseas Filipinos Act of 1995”
6. Inputs on Senate Bill no. 192 – An Act Mandating the Philippine Overseas Administration (POEA) to Publish, Disseminate and Update a Handbook on the Rights and Responsibilities of Migrant Workers, Amending for the Purpose Republic Act no. 8042 otherwise known as “Migrant Workers and Overseas Filipinos Act of 1995”
7. Inputs on Senate Bill no. 210 – An Act Providing Financial Literacy and Entrepreneurship Programs to Workers
8. Inputs on Senate Bill no. 968 – an Act Establishing Social welfare Attache and for other Purposes
9. Inputs to House Bill no. 2664 – An Act Amending Republic Act no. 9262, Defending Electronic Violence Against Women or E-Vaw
10. Inputs on House Bill no. 3813 – An Act Penalizing all Advertising Agencies that Exploit Women and Glorify Sexual Violence in their Advertisements
11. Inputs on House Bill no. 2850 – An Act Establishing a Task force to Recommend a Uniform Strategy to Protect Women against Violent Crime
12. Inputs on House Bill 1471 – An Act to Establish the Address Confidentiality Program for Victims of Violence against Women and their Children
13. Inputs to the proposed hosting of the Philippines of the Inter-Governmental Conference on the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration
14. Inputs on the social development issues raised by the NEDA Regional Offices and Regional Social Development Committees that are relevant to the CFO operations with reference to the National-Regional Consultative Meeting on March 9-10, 2017.
15. Initial Accomplishment Report of CFO for 1 July 2016 to 15 March 2017, in line with the preparations for the President's Report to the People 2016-2017
16. Inputs on the on-going amendment to the Guidelines for Departing Au Pair for Europe (February 2016)
17. Inputs to the Ongoing Drafting of Guidelines on Referral System Involving Trafficking in Person (February 2017)

18. Inputs to the 5th and 6th Philippine Report on the Implementation of the Convention on the Rights of the Child
19. Inputs to PSA's framework on counting overseas Filipinos
20. Inputs to the proposed policies of certain Ms. Fritz Dionela Yee on assisting undocumented overseas Filipinos
21. Inputs to renaming the LBP's initiative of opening a bank for dedicated Filipino migrants – from OFW Bank to OF Bank
22. Inputs to the Presidents Report to the People 2016-2017 (SONA 2017) (2nd submission)
23. Drafted Executive Order on Creating the Migration and Development Cluster in the Cabinet Clusters System
24. Drafted Executive Order on Establishing Inter-Agency Council on Migration and Development (IACMD) for Overseas Filipinos
25. Inputs to the Presidents Report to the People 2016-2017 (SONA 2017) (3rd submission)
26. Inputs to Centenarian Act of 2016 Memorandum of Agreement among the Department of Foreign Affairs, Commission on Filipinos Overseas, Department of Social Welfare and Development and Philippine Veterans Affairs Office
27. Inputs to Centenarian Act Supplemental Guidelines on Memorandum Circular 04 Series of 2017 re Implementation of Republic Act 10868 also known as the Centenarians Act of 2016
28. Inputs to the Protocol on Blacklisting of Recruitment Agencies, Illegal Recruiters and Persons who are Involved on Trafficking in Person launched in June 2017
29. Provided inputs to the approved IACAT Resolution on Standards in Building Communities that Protect Children from Trafficking
30. Provided inputs to the approved IACAT Resolution on Guidelines on the Grant of Financial Assistance to Victims of Trafficking
31. Provided inputs to the approved IACAT Resolution on Guidelines on Data Collection and Monitoring for Management of Knowledge on Trafficking in Persons
- 32. Provided inputs to the approved IACAT Strategic Plan for 2017-2022**
33. Inputs to the Presidents Report to the People 2016-2017 (SONA 2017) (4th submission)

34. Inputs to the draft National Migration Survey 2017 Questionnaire of IACMS of PSA, specifically on the types of migrant organizations and on the social costs of migration
35. Inputs to the Provision of Care for the Filipino Elderly and the International Mobility of the Care Workforce for the Multi-stakeholder Forum on Investing in Health and Active Aging in Sustainable Growth: A Regional Approach to Long-Term Care in Vietnam
36. Inputs on the Scoping Study on International Migration Statistics in the Philippines of the Philippine Statistics Authority
37. Inputs to the current administration's initiative in reclaiming the Balangiga Bells from the US government
38. Inputs on HB No. 2592 – An Act Defining Electronic Violence Against Women And their Children providing protective measures, and prescribing penalties, amending for the purpose Republic Act No. 9262 otherwise known as the Anti-Violence Against Women And Their Children Act Of 2004, introduced by Representative Linabelle Ruth R. Villarica
39. Inputs on HB No. 5153 – An act amending Republic Act No. 9262 otherwise known as the Anti-Violence Against Women and their Children Act of 2004, defining electronic violence against women (E-VAW), providing protective measures and prescribing penalties therefore, and for other purposes, introduced by Representative Gus S. Tambunting
40. Inputs on HB No. 5584 – An Act defining domestic violence against individuals including members of the LGBT community other than women and children and providing for protective measures for victims, prescribing penalties therefore, and for other purposes, introduced by Representative Federico S. Sandoval
41. Inputs to the priority GAD Indicators of PCW for Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) Gender Equality and Women Empowerment
42. Inputs to the SONA Directive No. 2017-0007 regarding President Rodrigo Duterte's directive to all the government agencies to further streamline frontline services from womb to tomb and undertake all necessary measures to make these truly efficient, responsive and people-friendly
43. Inputs to the observations and direct request for information in relation to the Philippine application of ILO Convention 97 of the ILO Committee of Experts on the Application of Conventions and Recommendations (CEACR)
44. Input to revision of Au Pair Guidelines draft 2
45. Inputs to the Draft implementing rules and regulations of Anti-Mail Order Spouse Law.

46. Inputs to the draft template of model local ordinance on anti-trafficking
47. Status Report on President Duterte's SONA Directive No. 2017-0010 on Responding to Requests and Inquiries within 15 Days.
48. Inputs to NEDA's 2017 Socioeconomic Report (SER).
49. Inputs to the Principles and Guidelines with Practical Guidance on the Protection of Migrants in Vulnerable Situations.
50. Inputs to House Bill No. 6446 on recognition of foreign divorce authored by Representative Pia S. Cayetano.

19. Publications

Information/knowledge materials are effective tools in raising public awareness about the programs and services of the Philippine government for migrants and for their families. Thus, CFO continuously develop publications and IECS (in printed form or electronically published) that are shared free of charge in the agency's websites (main and auxiliary) and social media accounts, or sent electronically to partners, stakeholders and various Filipino organizations and communities abroad. This has strategy help further strengthen the government's efforts in raising promoting and upholding the interests, rights, and welfare of our overseas Filipinos (OFs).

In 2017, following publications were developed and published:

a. **Migration Standpoint.**

The Migration Standpoint is an e-publication of the CFO that presents observations and analyses on certain migration related policy issues. It aims to give readers better understanding of certain issues and provide useful inputs for decision-making.

b. **2015 CFO Statistics on Philippine International Migration.**

This compilation features the number of CFO-registered Filipino emigrants, spouses and partners of foreign nationals, US Exchange Visitor Program (EVP), au pairs, and data on financial and material contribution of overseas Filipinos to the Philippines coursed through the CFO's Lingkod sa Kapwa Pilipino (LINKAPIL).

c. **Filipino Ties.**

The Filipino Ties is the official newsletter of the CFO distributed worldwide. It diaspora; events and activities relating to overseas Filipinos and their families left behind; and news relevant to migration and development.

d. **CFO Freedom of Information People's Manual.**

The CFO's Freedom of Information (FOI) People's Manual provides guidelines in the filing and processing of requests for information received under Executive Order (E.O.) No. 2 on Freedom of Information. It also

includes the types of information that can be requested from the CFO, the procedures in handling approval and denial of requests, as well as process flow charts and document templates.

D. SUPPORT TO OPERATIONS

20. CFO Information Systems Strategic Plan 2015- 2018

The CFO Information Systems Strategic Plan (ISSP) for 2015-2018 provides the roadmap to guide the agency's Information and Communications Technology (ICT) efforts for the next four (4) years. The plan confirms the critical role of Information and Communication Technology as an enabler of success for the CFO to achieve its new ten point goals in line with the objectives of Philippine Development Plan for 2015 to 2018 and the Government Information Systems Plan (GISP).

In 2017, following information systems and websites were developed and enhanced:

Enhanced

- a. EVP On-line Reservation
- b. EVP On-line Registration
- c. EVP On-line Verification
- d. EVP On-line Sticker Printing
- e. OR On-line Printing

2nd Quarter

Enhanced

- a. Localized BaLinkBayan website of Legazpi City
- b. Localized BaLinkBayan website of Ligao
- c. Localized BaLinkBayan website of Masbate
- d. Localized BaLinkBayan website of Sorsogon City
- e. Localized BaLinkBayan website of Sorsogon Province
- f. Localized BaLinkBayan website of Tabaco

3rd Quarter

Enhanced

- a. EVP On-line Reservation
- b. EVP Intranet Sticker Printing
- c. EVP On-line Verification

4th Quarter

New

- a. Month of Overseas Filipino Website
- b. Online EVP Verification

Enhanced

- a. EVP Data Encoding Information System
- b. Official Receipt Online System (Collection and Deposit Report)

21. ISO 2001:2015 Certification

In 2017, the Commission on Filipinos Overseas (CFO) formally received the certification from the International Organization for Standardization (ISO), marking a significant milestone in its 37 years of service to Filipinos overseas. 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 their inter-related processes 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.

CFO's QMS covers the core processes of Migrant Welfare Services, Policy Development, Program Management and other support processes to Filipino emigrants and migrants.