

CFO INPUTS TO THE PHILIPPINES COMBINED 7TH AND 8TH Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women Report

Initiatives to Mitigate the Vulnerability
of Filipinos Married to Foreign Nationals

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COMMISSION ON FILIPINOS OVERSEAS

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Philippines is widely recognized as one of the world's point of origin for skilled labor and human resources. It however has moved beyond labor migration as Filipinos migrate for reasons other than employment. These could range from family unification to marriage to foreign nationals, from business to educational opportunities and professional advancement.

As of December 2013, data of the Commission on Filipinos Overseas (CFO) of the Office of the President show that there are 10.24 million overseas Filipinos worldwide. Of this, 48% or 4.89 million are permanent migrants that comprise the largest category of overseas Filipinos followed closely by temporary migrants (41% or 4.21 million), more popularly known as OFWs or overseas Filipino workers, and then we have the so-called irregular migrants that is 11% or roughly 1.16 million.

One aspect of migration that is usually not discussed is what we call marriage migration. Citing the Philippine experience, CFO recorded that in 2015, there were 18,586 spouses or partners of foreign nationals, 10,821 are women, which is equivalent to 58%.

The government is not closing its eyes to the social costs of migration. The CFO has designed innovative pre-departure orientation seminar (PDOS) that is geared towards marriage migrants which is called Guidance and Counseling Program. It is a country-specific discussion which provides Filipino fiancé(e) s, spouses and other partners of foreign nationals with adequate information and advice on the realities of intermarriage and migration, their rights and obligations overseas, available support networks, cultural and social realities overseas, and other information about cross-cultural unions.

CFO also undertakes yearly Community Education Program (CEP) in at least 20 provinces in the country, where the CFO staff coordinates with various government agencies, non-government organizations



(NGOs), faith-based groups, local government units (LGUs), and academic institutions for its effective implementation. As an information campaign about various issues on migration, intermarriages and existing government policies, the program seeks to assist prospective migrants in making informed decisions regarding overseas employment or permanent residence abroad. CEP likewise aims to generate community involvement on migration concerns.

It is quite involved in the anti-human trafficking campaign of the government through its 24/7 hotline – the 1343 Actionline Against Human Trafficking, managed by CFO for the Inter-Agency Council Against Human Trafficking (IACAT). The hotline facility responds to emergency or crisis calls from victims of human trafficking and their families. It likewise provides a venue for the public to be part of this fight.

The positive impact of the continuous inflow of remittances to the Philippines including its potential for development influenced the CFO to establish BaLinkBayan – a one-stop online portal for diaspora engagement. Among its overarching aims is for overseas Filipinos to link together and connect with the Motherland for initiatives such as investment, philanthropy, technology and skills transfer. The program now is being cascaded to local government

from the Chairperson

SECRETARY IMELDA M. NICOLAS
Commission on Filipinos Overseas

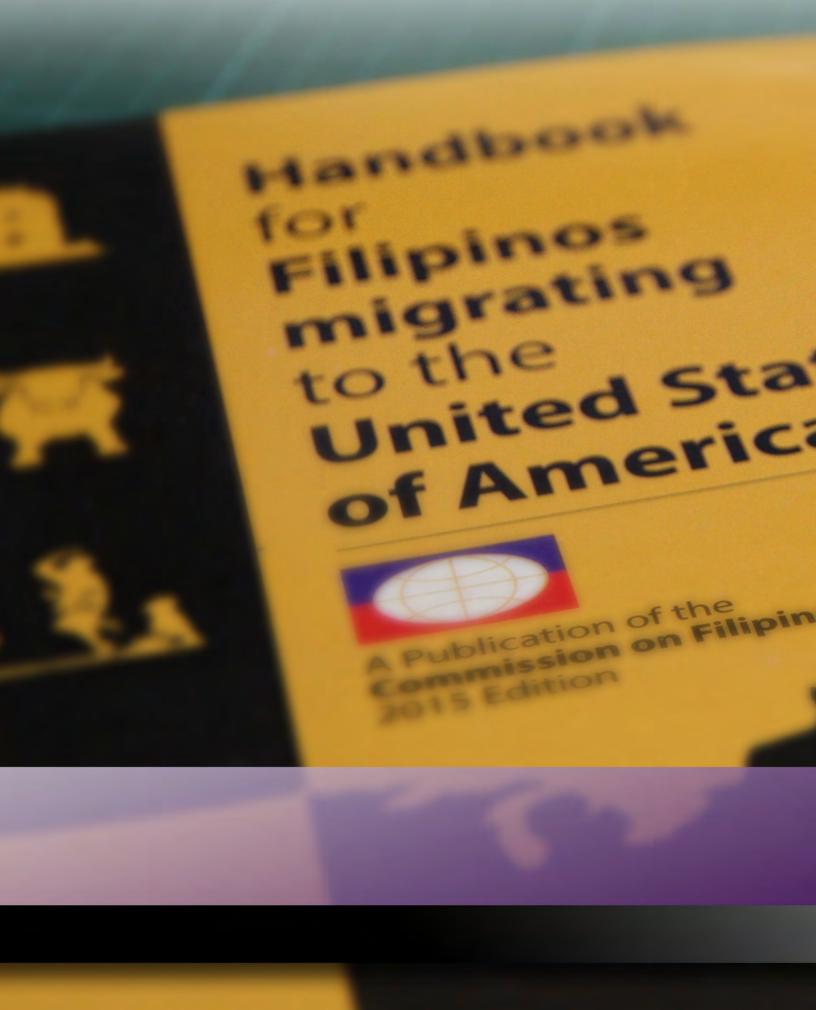
units through localized web portals, which among other things, would eventually enable on-line payment of real property taxes and on-line application of business permits.

Increasing our overseas Filipinos' ability to do their personal and family's fiscal goal setting and financial planning is the Commission's objective when it launched in 2013 the Philippine Financial Freedom Campaign or PESO Sense. Our PESO Sense has come a long way since its inception, using all kinds of medium and technology to reach its global audience. From handy bookmarks and videos to its dedicated-website, from social media to mobile application, from on-line training modules to face-to-face training, we have brought the financial freedom campaign to new and innovative levels.

All these reflect the government's commitment to mitigate the social costs of migration, maximize its

benefits and protect and promote the rights, the welfare and interests of our overseas Filipinos in every possible way. We, at CFO, also strive to address the particular vulnerabilities and situations of the predominantly female migrating spouses or partners of foreign nationals and consider their needs in every stage of the migration cycle.

At the end of the day, we want to see the Filipino people exercise their right to mobility, give them an informed choice and option whether or not to go out of the country, free from the downside risks of migration.





PRE-DEPARTURE ORIENTATION SEMINARS

1. Guidance and Counseling Program (GCP)

Given this profile of predominantly female marriage migrants, the CFO has set up a nontraditional Pre-Departure Orientation Seminar consisting of group guidance and counseling with a trained counselor as facilitator and a one-on-one counseling. This program which is country-specific aims to provide information and advice on the realities of cross-cultural marriage and family, adjustments and coping mechanisms, the marriage migrants' rights and obligations, basic immigration policies, available support network for women migrants in distress, among others.

They are required to undergo country-specific pre-departure group and individual guidance and counseling sessions, which are conducted with 15 participants per session. CFO counseled 22,837 spouses and partners of foreign nationals in 2014.

To ease the transaction of the counselees in securing a slot for their attendance to the required guidance and counseling program, CFO developed and implemented an On-Line Appointment System in 2014.

This allows for interaction, personalized goal setting and for questions relevant to cross-cultural relationships. The counselor helps the participants by summarizing and synthesizing this interaction with her own inputs to the discussion. The final session is geared towards individual counseling where the counselor spends time with the counselees with their specific concerns and utilizes possible intervention to address any problem that surfaced in the process of counseling.

CFO has been highly involved in the passage of RA 10364 "An Act Expanding the Anti-Trafficking in Person Act of 2012" in February 2013, The





new law that amended RA 9208, reinforced the implementation of the Guidance and Counseling Program of the CFO. Pursuant to Section 15, j: "Commission on Filipinos Overseas shall conduct the pre-departure counseling services for Filipinos in intermarriages." The newly enacted law also amended Section 4 of RA 9208, "Acts of trafficking in Persons - It shall be unlawful for any person, natural or juridical to commit any of the following acts...... section 4 (b): "To introduce or match for money, profit, or material, economic or other consideration, any person or, as provided for under Republic Act No. 6955, any Filipino woman to a foreign national, for marriage for the purpose of acquiring, buying, offering, selling or trading him/her to engage in prostitution, pornography, sexual exploitation, forced labor, slavery, involuntary servitude or debt bondage." and Section 4 (c): "To offer or contract marriage, real or simulated, for the purpose of acquiring, buying, offering, selling or trading them to engage in prostitution pornography, sexual exploitation, forced labor or slavery, involuntary servitude or debt bondage"

All the amendments reinforced the need to penalize the perpetrators of mail order bride schemes that lead to or are forms of human trafficking. The CFO continues in its effort to upgrade and improve its Guidance and Counseling Program in support of the Inter-agency Council Against Trafficking (IACAT) campaign against human trafficking including those done in the guise of intermarriage, all to promote the protection and uplift the status of women and children.

2. Peer Counseling

The Peer Counseling Session is required for Filipino emigrants 13 to 19 years old. The sessions aim to provide a venue for the young migrants to discuss their own concerns about leaving their country of birth. The Peer Counseling is unique because it is the youth themselves who bring up their issues: from their unfamiliarity with the foreign language of the host country to fear of rejection, from their separation from friends in the Philippines to the possibility of bullying and discrimination in their new schools, from feelings of homesickness, isolation and depression to culture shock.

While sessions are not country-specific, country profiles and settlement concerns are also discussed. No other government agency provides this specialized pre-departure program for migrating Filipino youth. CFO decided to implement a separate counseling program for the youth when the registrants between 13 to 19 year old reached 32% of the CFO clientele.

In 2014, there were 11,176 attendees in the peer counseling session.

3. Country Familiarization Seminar (CFS) for Au pairs

s background, the alleged abuses and reported cases of exploitation, discrimination, sexual violation and prostitution of au pairs led to the imposition of Philippines ban on the deployment of au pairs to Europe. The Philippine government's ban did not deter the participation of these young Filipinos to the Scandinavian countries and other areas of Europe. There were reports on the continued issuance of Au Pair visas by some European countries as well as cases of exploitation and abuse. Most of these Filipinos are undocumented, hence, there are no traces of movement of these people within the host country or within Europe. Abuses were not also recorded or reported because technically these Filipino au pairs are considered irregular migrants. Concerned agencies, including the au pairs themselves, raised several issues, i.e., the absence of insurance coverage for emergency situations; the lack of a comprehensive pre-departure orientation program to address concerns over integration into host family settings; the need for a

registration system and a monitoring mechanism to ensure the well-being and safety of the au pairs.

In 2010, the DFA agreed to lift the ban on au pairs headed for selected countries (i.e., Switzerland, Norway and Denmark) which guaranteed the protection of participants. Additional measures included a comprehensive pre-departure orientation, with recruitment and deployment supervised by the Department of Labor/Philippine Overseas Employment Administration (DOLE/POEA), as well as a provision for the repatriation for Au Pairs in case of emergency or illness. (DOLE Board Resolution No. 04, Series of 2010)

The Au Pair scheme fell under the POEA's "name hire" category. It was clear, however, that au pairs were not in the same category as regular temporary or contract-based workers. Nevertheless, the program was included in the POEA's mandate to ensure the protection of the rights and welfare of au pairs given POEA's regulatory function which



allows it to monitor and sanction recruiters who victimize young Filipinos interested in overseas employment.

The increasing number of au pairs further drew attention to the need for a comprehensive monitoring system. DOLE records show that in 2010-2011, a total of 1,613 au pairs left for Norway (139), Denmark (754) and Switzerland (720) and underwent the DOLE-Overseas Workers Welfare Administration (OWWA) pre-departure orientation program.

The CFO Country Familiarization Seminar (CFS) for Au pair participants prepares them for the immersion process in a cultural and language learning context. The seminar provides input on: settlement concerns, values, cultural and social realities in the host countries, health and safety issues, airport and travel procedures and support networks in the host countries. It also encourages the au pairs to participate in the various activities prepared by Filipino Communities and EU funded non-government organizations prepared for au pairs. To ensure that Filipino au pairs' protection are in placed CFO through the help of the DFA



In 2011, an inter-agency ad hoc technical working group (TWG) was formed to draft the guidelines for the total lifting of the ban on Au Pairs. During the task force meetings, the CFO was requested to conduct the pre-departure orientation program for au pairs, develop and maintain a database on au pairs bound for Europe and discourage the participation of nannies or household service workers in the Au Pair Program since it is recognized internationally as a cultural, educational and selfimprovement opportunity. (European Agreement on the Placement of Au Pairs - EPAP 1969) The task force likewise came up with the steps to be taken by various agencies especially the DFA, the Philippine Embassies and Consulates in Europe and the CFO.

partnered with Babaylan Denmark and its EU networks. Reported cases on violation of agreement, au pairs in distressful situations and even basic inquiries of new settled Filipino au pairs are referred to the likes of this organization.

From January to December 2014, there were 2,509 au pairs who registered and attended the CFO's Country Familiarization Seminar. Denmark, Norway, Netherlands, Switzerland and Germany were the top 5 destination counties for Filipino Au Pair participants. There were less than 11 actual cases acted upon by CFO and cases were mostly about contract violation, change of host family, illegal recruitment agencies, among others.







In addition, the CFO establishes linkages and partnerships with several Filipino communities overseas to seek their help in ensuring the integration of the newly arrived migrants in the destination countries. These partnerships are very much alive in the Filipino communities in Canada, Australia, United States, Italy, Scandinavia and some parts of Europe, Japan and South Korea with guidance from their respective Philippine embassies and consulates.

4. MOU with South Korea on Filipina marriage Migrants

n 2012, the CFO and Korea's Ministry of Gender Equality and the Family, or MOGEF, formally agreed to work together to help Filipino marriage migrants with resettlement, adjustment and assimilation issues, and to promote their empowerment through pre and post-arrival programs such as exchange of learning modules for PDOS, access to information for newly arrived marriage migrants through MOGEF's over 200 multi-cultural family support centers and a regular training for CFO counselors and PDOS officers.. The MOU also aims to solidify joint programs and efforts on conducting research and implementing policies that will help ease adjustments of marriage migrants and integration in South Korea's increasing multi-cultural society.

The CFO hopes that the Memorandum of Agreement (MOA), between CFO and MOGEF serves as a template for similar agreements with other countries where there is a pattern of marriage migration from the Philippines. Through the MOA, CFO and MOGEF collaborated in the conduct of the two-day Korean Cultural Workshop which supplements the GCP for all spouses and other partners of Koreans that aims to provide an intensive discussion on marital

adjustments, preparations and settlement, and laws on intermarriage. The partnership also resulted to the implementation of the mandatory Korean language course to all Filipino spouses of Koreans as additional pre-requisite for visa. CFO is also hoping that the Korean government would be open to CFO's suggestion of an orientation to be conducted in Korea for Korean spouses about multi-cultural marriages that may help in maintaining their harmonious marital relationship and settlement overseas.

The rise in the number of international marriages has created more multi-cultural Filipino families. Children born out of these unions are referred to as "hyphenated" Filipinos, eg., Filipino-American, Korean-Filipino, and Japanese-Filipino. More updated data are needed on the number of children from these marriages especially from the latter 2 countries as anecdotal sources have shown problems, issues and concerns arising from them especially those children left behind. Then both government and civil society organizations, both from the Philippines and the destination countries, could work together to intervene effectively and deal with the problems.



The CFO closely works with groups such as Korea's IOM-Migration Research Training Center (or MRTC), Philippine Resource Persons Group (PRPG), Kyoto University, Catholic Korea University, Metropolis International Asian Institute of Management, Kiel Institute for World Economy, among others, to encourage more researches, studies and trainings specifically in relation to marriage migration in the Philippines. Filipino NGOs such as the Development Action for Women Network and Batis Center for Women help women who used to

work in Japan by counseling, through livelihood assistance, in finding the fathers of their Japanese-Filipino children and in seeking child support. Recently, CFO forged an agreement with the Catholic Daegu University in South Korea and is about to sign an MOU with Kyoto University in Japan to supplement the Counseling program with free language and cultural lessons for marriage migrants bound for South Korea and Japan, respectively.

5. Partnership with the American Jewish Joint Distribution

American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee (JDC) is internationally recognized for its immense contributions in providing relief and long-term development assistance to impoverish and disaster stricken nations. The JDC, in partnership with the Israel Trauma Coalition (ITC), an association whose commitment lies in providing much needed psychological care and assistance to survivors of natural disasters, abuse, terrorism and war, seek to supply a population in need with services and care that might otherwise be unavailable to them. CFO, JDC AND ITC agreed to work together with the objective of empowering local professionals through enhancing their existing knowledge on how to deal with vulnerable individuals. The partnership will ensure that service is continually provided to the affected community in a sensitive and responsive manner.

Another main advocacy of the CFO as a member agency of the Inter-agency Council Against Trafficking (IACAT) is to help at all cost combat human trafficking. CFO recognized the prevalence of abuse and extortion of survivors in the wake of a disaster. Due to their desperate circumstances, individuals who have lost their families, homes, jobs and all sense of normalcy may be more vulnerable targets to human traffickers.

The JDC, ITC and CFO, along with other participating organizations, will combine their efforts to serve the mental health needs of victims and thwart human trafficking operations in disaster-stricken areas.







C O M B A T I N G TRAFFICKING



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

n December 2010, the CFO became an ex-officio member of the IACAT and was delegated to head the Advocacy and Communications Committee (ADVOCOM) because of its experience in handling the Presidential Task Force Against Human Trafficking (TFHT). CFO-TFHT implemented its antitrafficking programs from March 2007 to March 2010, covering the four areas of prevention, protection, prosecution and reintegration. With





the passage of the Republic Act 10364 in 2013, the CFO became a permanent member of the IACAT and continued to lead the ADVOCOM.

The primary role of the ADVOCOM is to work in conjunction with its members and of the IACAT,

in the initiation, implementation and evaluation of an effective communications program for the Council. The ADVOCOM will specifically oversee and monitor the implementation of the communications and information campaign and will update the IACAT with any significant development vis-à-vis the campaign.

The creation of the ADVOCOM is in line with some of the functions of the IACAT as stipulated in the 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 Article V, Section 16 (c) of the Implementing Rules and Regulations of the RA 9208 also stipulated that one

of the roles and responsibilities of the IACAT is to undertake information, education and advocacy campaigns against trafficking in persons.

Representatives from Department of Justice, Department of Social Welfare and Development, Commission on Filipinos Overseas, Council for the Welfare of Children, Department of Education, Department of the Interior and Local Government, Department of Foreign Affairs, Department of Labor and Employment, Overseas Workers Welfare Administration, Presidential Communications Operations Office, Philippine Commission on Women, Philippine National Police, Philippine Information Agency, Philippine Overseas Employment Administration, International Justice Mission, Ople Policy Center and Visayan Forum Foundation comprise the

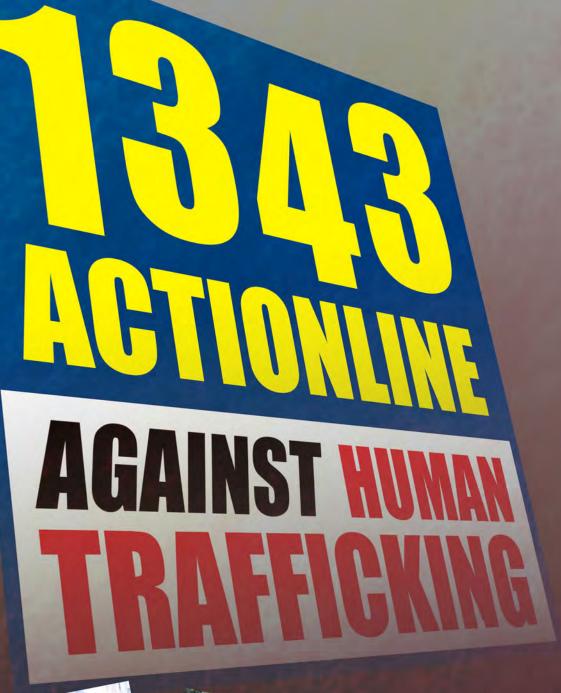
Notable accomplishments of ADVOCOM includes the convergence agreement with POEA, DOLE, OWWA and DILG in intensifying campaign against illegal recruitment, trafficking in persons and other schemes on irregular migration; signed





members of the Committee. Other relevant nongovernment partners are the Kapisanan ng mga Brodcasters ng Pilipinas (KBP), Philippines Against Child Trafficking (PACT), and Dynamic Outsourcing Solutions 1 (DOS1). MOAs with provinces and municipalities towards intensifying activities against TIP; participation in Walk for Freedom Project/ Initiative and promotion of 1343 Actionline during Celebration of Month of Overseas Filipinos

CFO-ADVOCOM also conducted the National Training the Trainors' Workshop on Trafficking to frontline and training officers in the government and non-government agencies involved in the handling and attending of human trafficking cases; and in partnership with the Philippine Commission on Women, seminar-workshops on trafficking and other related laws and gender-sensitive reporting for media professionals were held in Pampanga and Iloilo provinces.





7. 1343 Actionline against Human Trafficking

ne of the important accomplishments of CFO-ADVOCOM is the operationalization of the 1343 Actionline against Human Trafficking which started on 15 March 2011. It is a 24/7 hotline facility which responds to emergency or crisis calls from victims of human trafficking and their families. It can be reached from any point in Metro Manila and is likewise accessible from the provinces and overseas. Moreover, 1343 Actionline website was launched and also 1343 Actionline infomercials were aired in radio stations.

Another initiative of the IACAT-ADVOCOM is the creation of a technology-based legal counseling for the public who have concerns in trafficking in persons, illegal recruitment and other related acts. The CFO has partnered with the Arellano Law Foundation, through its Office of the Legal Aid, for the provision of the service.

Itanong mo kay Ato, is the web application which aims to provide free online legal counseling. It is an effort to directly provide online legal opinion and a

means to further reach out to Filipinos who cannot afford legal consultation and an avenue to further reinforce the fight against trafficking in persons. The said web application can be accessed through the official page of the 1343 Actionline against Human Trafficking, http://www.1343actionline.ph or directly accessing its link; http://onlineleg alcounseling.1343actionline.ph . Once accessed, the public has the options to avail of the live chat or send a message to the partner lawyers. All information received through chatting or e-mails will be held with utmost confidence.

Since its launching in July 2015, the web tool has received and responded to 14 inquiries involving human trafficking, illegal recruitment, and intermarriage.



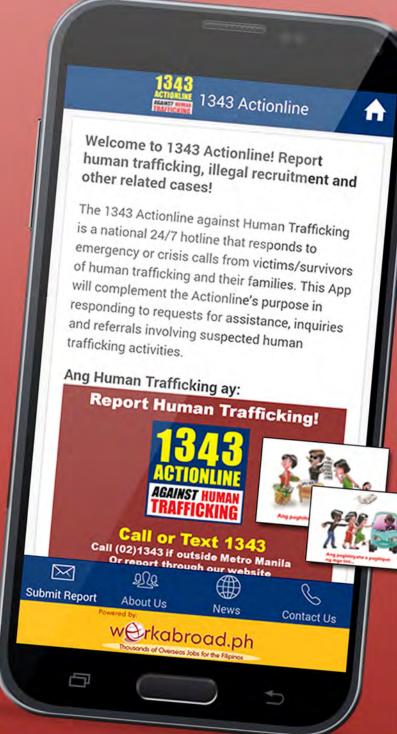
8. 1343 Actionline Mobile Application

With the hope of addressing human trafficking cases with the use of the modern technology, the CFO launched the 1343 Actionline mobile application in 2014. The mobile app was developed in line with the core message of the IACAT, Laban Kontra Human Trafficking, Laban Nating Lahat! which is an inter-active campaign to engage everyone in the fight against human trafficking.

The mobile application 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 will be treated with utmost confidentiality. They will also have access to information and news updates about human trafficking, and directory of IACAT member agencies.

Users can also access the latest information and news updates against human trafficking, and the directory of IACAT member agencies.

The 1343 Actionline mobile application can now be downloaded for free from Google Play in any Android-capable devices mobile phones and tablets and for Iphone and Ipad users.





9. Seminar-Workshop on the Issues of Filipinos in Intermarriage







Through the conduct of GCP, various violations/ irregularities on the pre-requisites of marriage are uncovered such as discrepancies in the information indicated in the marriage certificate, wedding ceremonies taking place even before the issuance of the marriage license, forged parental consent or advice, among others. It was also found out that these violations are usually facilitated by marriage brokers.

Because of the rising number of problematic cases involving Filipinos in intermarriage, the CFO is faced with the challenge of trying to identify more professionals who can give initial assistance to Filipino fiancé(e)s, spouses and other partners even before their attendance to the CFO's GCP.

One proposed solution is the conduct of a seminar for those who have for some reason or the other have an opportunity to meet with Filipinos who are spouses, fiancés or partners of foreign nationals, namely, local civil registrars, premarriage counselors from the local social welfare offices, faith-based organizations and parishes.

The primary objective of the seminar is to provide awareness to the intended participants on the

specific issues of inter-marriage and to enhance their counseling skills in addressing the needs of Filipinos in intermarriage.

Specifically, it aims to engage the participants in disseminating the information about the mandatory Guidance and Counseling Program of the CFO; review the current Philippine laws regarding marriage; orient on the salient features of RA 9208 as amended by 10364 and other laws related to intermarriage and violence against women; discuss the issues and concerns on intermarriage encountered and identified by the participants; and popularize the use of the 1343 Actionline against Human Trafficking as a means to report suspected or confirmed cases of human trafficking and mail-order bride scheme.

From August 2015 to January 2016, seminar-workshops were conducted in Davao City, Cebu City, Angeles City, Batangas and Metro Manila. The areas were selected based on the number of registrants in the CFO's GCP. The activities were attended by 164 participants who are marriage counselors from the local government units and faith-based organizations, and social workers.







10. Community Education Program (CEP)

The CEP is an annual information campaign conducted nationwide by the CFO in coordination with various government agencies, non-government organizations, local government units, media organizations, and academic institutions.

The CEP seeks to assist prospective migrants in making informed decisions regarding working or settling abroad, as well as in generating community involvement on migration concerns. It also aims to raise public awareness about issues concerning migration, inter-marriages, and existing government policies and programs directed against illegal recruitment, documentation fraud and trafficking, among others.

In 2014, CFO conducted the CEP in the provinces, cities and municipalities of Leyte, Iloilo, Cebu, Negros Oriental, Bohol, Camarines Sur, Lanao del Norte, Misamis Oriental, Bukidnon and Quezon City and managed to bring information to 22, 500 individuals who attended and participated in the program.

11. Awareness Campaign in Hong Kong

During the reporting period, the CFO conducted an awareness campaign in Hong Kong for Filipino migrants. The awareness campaign was participated by at least 120-150 migrants who are members of migrants' organizations in HK which includes Progressive Labor Union of DW in HK, Asian Migrants Credit Union, APL SENTRO, FILCOMSIN, Wimler Foundation, Help for Domestic Helpers, Catholic Center and other OF/OFW groups.

As an organization identified as a support network for migrants, Progressive Labor Union (PLU) was tapped by the ADVOCOM to be a partner/convenor in Hong Kong for this activity. To formalize the partnership, a Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) with PLU is currently being discussed. The MOA stipulates both parties responsibility in the dissemination of 1343 Actionline and free online legal counseling; referral of cases from Hong Kong and Macau; and provision of free legal assistance.



12. Awareness Campaign against Cybercrime and Online Child Exploitation

Asub-Committee on Cybercrime under the National Law Enforcement Coordinating Council (NALECC), which CFO is one of the members, was created to cover exploitation done online that can be related to trafficking.

In December 2015, a Round Table Discussion together with the government, non-government organizations, and academe were conducted in Cebu City to discuss about cyberpornography and online child exploitation in relation to human trafficking. A symposium was also conducted in one of the schools as well as posting of IEC materials covering 14 barangays in the identified hotspots for these crimes in the province of Cebu.

The RTD and symposium had an estimated number of 60 participants while the posting of IEC materials in some of the barangays covered an estimated number of 60,000 residents. With these activities, the participants and residents where cybercrime and online child exploitation is rampant, are anticipated to be informed of this crime as well as become aware that even the national government has been doing efforts to resolve and help its constituents especially its local community.





13. Information Education and Communication Materials

To complement the efforts of the IACAT-ADVOCOM in its fight against human trafficking and conduct of massive information dissemination and campaign on the existence of the law and the various issues and problems attendant to trafficking, information materials were also crafted such as posters, stickers, bookmarks and tarpaulins.

The information materials were distributed during information campaigns and to partner government agencies, non-government organizations and to academe institutions.









14. PESO-Sense

Perhaps the greatest lesson that any overseas Filipino has to learn is: --that it is not how long they have worked or lived abroad or how high their salaries are that result in a seamless and successful retirement but how they are able to do fiscal goal setting and financial planning as a family, before and during their migration phase.

This is why the government and various nongovernment organizations (NGOs) continue to undertake financial literacy campaigns (FLCs) that aim to promote a culture of savings among overseas Filipinos and their families.





Cognizant of this situation, CFO set the goal of assisting overseas Filipinos and their families left behind to achieve financial freedom and independence through financial education. In 2012, a financial literacy module called "Kaalamang Pinansyal Tungo Sa Kaunlaran" or "KAPIT KA!" was developed to guide overseas Filipinos and the families to enhance their basic understanding and skills in budgeting, savings and financial planning. The modules are now incorporated in CFO's predeparture orientation seminars (PDOS) for Filipino emigrants.

Moreover, in October 2013, the CFO in collaboration with the United Nations Development Programme and with the support of the Western Union Foundation, launched 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 nation-wide Financial Literacy Campaign started 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 has been challenging more than ever.

PESO Sense utilizes new technology to reach out to all Filipinos, whether 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.

Now, PESO Sense and has come a long way since its inception using all kinds of medium and technology to reach its global audience. From handy bookmarks and videos to its dedicated-website, from social media to mobile application, from on-line training modules to face-to-face training, we have brought the financial freedom campaign to new and innovative levels

It's official site can be accessed at www.pesosense.com







15. CFO Foreign Sponsors' Watch List

There are a number of modus operandi employed in marrying Filipinas by foreigners for reasons not related to getting married at all. Multiple sponsorship pertains to the practice of sponsoring multiple Filipinas for marriage, which means that a foreigner has been married or engaged to a Filipina more than once, some may have ended in divorce, amicable or otherwise, or death. Serial sponsorship, on the other hand, refers to the practice of marrying one or more Filipinas where a foreigner has a history of domestic violence, abuse, abandonment, undetermined death, involvement in human trafficking, and other derogatory record.

While inclusion in the Watchlist does not prevent the Filipina to travel overseas or marry her foreign fiancé, it forewarns fiancé(e)s, spouses and partners about the personality, marital history, record or past of the foreigner. The Filipina has the last say whether to accept the proposal or not. Through the database, the CFO wanted to prevent illegal acts hiding in the guise of intermarriage and perpetrated against Filipinas that result to trafficking, slavery or domestic violence.

Eleven years ago, the CFO conceptualized a software database wherein names of all foreigners marrying Filipinas or Filipinos can be checked to spot marital fraud, deception and those with undesirable records. It was 1999 then, and the practice before was to crosscheck the names manually, against a folder full of papers. The plan was to speed up the process by automating the manual system. A year later, in 2000, a customized software was developed by CFO that can verify

names in seconds. It also contains profiles of erring foreigners, case histories and other pertinent personal information involving spouses and partners. If a name gets a positive hit, the system can pull up previous information regarding that individual, including past transgressions in the country.

The software can run on minimal system requirements and is enhanced every year by CFO programmers. Right now, the serial and multiple sponsorship database is an integral part of the Guidance and Counseling Information System (GCIS) of the CFO.

Information contained in the database is real time and names are added on a daily basis or as the need arises. The system is hosted both on a separate and redundant servers and has multiple firewalls to protect it from cyber attacks.

The database keeps track of the following: (1) Filipinos married to foreigners, (2) foreign and Filipino nationals included in the CFO watchlist, (3) Filipinos who attended the guidance and counseling more than once, and (4) foreign nationals who sponsored more than once, with or without derogatory records.

To date, the database had foiled attempts by 5,991 foreigners to marry Filipinas on a multiple basis; identified 2,582 Filipino fiancées/ spouses who attended the guidance and counseling more than once; included 58 Filipino fiancées/ spouses in the CFO watch list; and keeps track of 251 foreign nationals in its watch list.

From January to June 2013, there were 10,686 spouses/partners of foreign nationals who underwent guidance and counseling session. (No breakdown given) While from January to December 2013, CFO recorded 21, 616 Filipino fiancé(e), spouses and partners of foreign nationals who attended the CFO Guidance and Counseling Program.

16. Creation of the Suspected and Identified Marriage Brokers' Database

/ith the prevalence of mail-order bride V scheme, marriage brokerage system and other violations of the Republic Act 6955 or the Anti-Mail Order Bride Act, there is a need for the creation of a separate database on the Suspected and Identified Marriage Brokers' Database. Its creation will not only provide a more in-depth counseling service to victims of these schemes but may prevent their further exploitation that may resort to human trafficking. The said database will at the same time be instrumental in determining the scope of activities and modus operandi of these marriage brokers especially with largescale cases. Its creation was also one of CFO's commitments in the Revised Implementing Rules and Regulations (IRR) of RA 9208 as amended by RA 10364.

IDENTIFIED/SUSPECTED MARRIAGE BROKER MONITIORING SYSTEM

[Main Page]				
SUSPECTED MAI	RRIAGE BROKER IN	IFORMATION		
Type of Broker:	Organization Individual			
Lastname:				
First name:				
Middle name:				
Alias:				
Complete Address:	[Street, City/Town]			
Country:				
Telephone No.:				
Cellphone No.:				
Email:				
	Submit Broker Inf	formation		
		Last_Name	age_ 3 ,7	First
EDIT	Delete			

Add New Victim Profile





P O L I C Y WORK

17. CFO's position on House Bill No. 222 Amending the Republic Act 6955, otherwise known as The Anti-Mail Oder Bride

CFO submitted its proposed amendments to the Republic Act 6955, otherwise known as "The Anti-Mail Order Bride" to the lower house of the Congress which seeks to broaden the scope of the unlawful and punishable schemes of matching Filipinos to foreign nationals.

The bill's aim is to broaden the scope of unlawful and punishable schemes of matching Filipinos to foreign nationals. CFO's salient proposals include (1) Prohibiting the matching of Filipino men and women for marriage or common-law partnership to foreign nationals by a third party engaged in the business of mail-order spouse; (2) Declaring unlawful the operation of the mail order spouse industry in the World Wide Web; (3) Confiscation and forfeiture of proceeds and instruments derived from committing the prohibited acts in favor of the government; and (4) Mandatory services to victims of the mail order spouse scheme to ensure their recovery and rehabilitation; and (5) Stiffer penalties for the violators.

18. CFO's position on House Bill no. 2387, Amending Article 21 of the Civil Code of the Philippine – Prescribing Additional Requirements for Male Citizens or Subjects of a Foreign Country Desiring to Marry a Filipino Woman.

The bill proposed additional requirements for male citizens of a foreign country desiring to marry a Filipino national. Under the measure, the prospective foreign husband shall provide a certificate of good moral character and a certificate that he has gainful trade, business, employment or other lawful source of income to be issued by his country's diplomatic or consular official, in addition to the usual certificate of legal capacity.

While the CFO supported the author of the bill in safeguarding the rights of Filipino women, CFO didn't favor the proposed additional requirements as it contradicts the fundamental equality before the law of women and men as guaranteed by the Philippine Constitution. In its counter-proposal, CFO emphasized that prescribing additional requirements should be applicable to both Filipino men and women and not to the latter only. It further added that foreign nationals should be required to disclose his/her criminal record, if any, and marital background, if he/she contracted marriage.

CFO moreover, believed that the good financial standing of a foreign national, as shown by having a gainful trade, business employment, is not a guarantee that they will have a harmoniously married life.

19. CFO's Position on the Proposed Amendments to Articles 13 and 26 of Executive Order No. 209, otherwise known as the Family Code of the Philippines

The aim of the amendment to the Family Code of the Philippines is to allow a Filipino to remarry in the country if he or she is legally divorced abroad. In its House Bill Number 5907, the House of Representatives proposed the following amendment to Article 13 of the Family Code:

"Art. 13. In case either of the contracting parties has been previously married, the applicant shall be required to furnish, instead of the birth or baptismal certificate required in the last preceding article, the death certificate of the deceased spouse or the judicial decree of the absolute divorce OBTAINED BY THE ALIEN SPOUSE DULY AUTHENTICATED BY THE PHILIPPINE CONSUL IN THE COUNTRY WHERE THE DECREE WAS OBTAINED, or the judicial decree of annulment or declaration of nullity of his or her previous marriage.

"THE FILIPINO SPOUSE NEED NOT SEEK JUDICIAL RECOGNITION OR ENFORCEMENT OF THE FOREIGN JUDICIAL DECREE OF ABSOLUTE DIVORCE AND ITS REGISTRATION BY THE CIVIL REGISTRAR SHALL BE SUFFICIENT FOR THE ISSUANCE OF A MARRIAGE LICENSE. "In case the death certificate cannot be secured, the party shall make an affidavit setting forth this circumstance and his or her actual civil status and the name and date of death of the deceased spouse."

Further to the Bill, CFO also proposed an additional provision that will give considerations for survivors of mail-order bride scheme and trafficking in the guise of intermarriage. As an additional option, CFO specifically proposed that the presentation of a final judgment of a court in the Philippines finding a Filipino a victim of mail-order bride scheme or trafficking in the guise of marriage, should be enough to dissolve the marriage from the foreign spouse.

The CFO based its proposal from one its handled cases wherein a court in the Philippines rendered a judgment finding a Filipina a victim of mail-order bride scheme but even after judgment, the marriage between her and the foreign spouse still exists. The law requires that she needs to file another case in court praying to nullify the marriage and undergo another traumatic process. Removing the judicial process in nullifying their marriage would be of great help for their complete "healing".





20. BaLinkBayan





The positive impact of the continuous inflow of remittances to the Philippines including its potential for development influenced the CFO to establish BaLinkBayan in 2013, a onestop online portal for diaspora engagement. This e-government project is accessible at www. balinkbayan.gov.ph

BaLinkBayan is the marriage of two Filipino terms, "link" referring to inter-connectivity through the Internet and "balikbayan" a term for a returning Filipino migrant.

Among its overarching aims is for overseas Filipinos to link together and connect with the Motherland for initiatives such as investment, philanthropy, technology and skills transfer. The program now is being cascaded to local government units through localized web portals, which among other things, would eventually enable on-line payment of real property taxes and on-line application of business permits. This is in line with the inclination and desire of overseas Filipino to "pay back" and retire in the places where they come from.

