

Women Beyond Borders:

The stories of women recipients of the 2018 Presidential Awards
for Filipino Individuals and Organizations Overseas (PAFIOO)



Office of the President of the Philippines
COMMISSION ON FILIPINOS OVERSEAS

A special publication of the Commission on Filipinos Overseas (CFO)
for the 2019 Women's Month Celebration



Background

The *Women Beyond Borders: The Women Recipients of the 2018 Presidential Awards for Filipino Individuals and Organizations Overseas (PAFIOO)* is a special publication of the Commission on Filipinos Overseas (CFO) for the 2019 Women's Month Celebration. It aims to highlight the outstanding accomplishments and exceptional contributions of the nine (9) women awardees of the 2018 PAFIOO.

From advancing the cause and interests of Filipinos overseas to catalyzing civic engagements with the homeland, to looking after the welfare of their fellow Filipinos and providing their needs to exemplifying in their professions, these nine (9) women awardees of the 2018 PAFIOO truly have brought pride and honor to the Philippines.

About the Presidential Awards

The Presidential Awards for Filipino Individuals and Organizations Overseas (PAFIOO) is a biennial awards system intended to give recognition to Filipinos and other individuals or organizations that contribute to Philippine development and progress, or promote the interests of overseas Filipino communities. The awards are also given to Filipinos overseas who have distinguished themselves in their professions.

The Presidential Awards consist of four categories. The Banaag Award is conferred on Filipino individuals or associations for their contributions which have significantly benefited a sector or advanced the cause of overseas Filipino communities. The Pamana ng Pilipino Award is conferred on Filipinos overseas, who, in exemplifying the talent and industry of the Filipino, have brought the country honor and recognition through excellence and distinction in the pursuit of their work or profession. The Lingkod sa Kapwa Pilipino Award is conferred on Filipino associations or individuals for their exceptional or significant contribution to reconstruction, progress and development in the Philippines. The Kaanib ng Bayan Award is conferred on foreign individuals or organizations for their exceptional or significant contribution to Philippine reconstruction, progress and development, or have significantly benefited a sector or community in the Philippines, or advanced the cause of overseas Filipino communities.

The 2018 awardees were selected from a total of 96 nominations from 28 countries through 37 Philippine Embassies and Consulates. Of the 25 awardees, 18 are individuals while 7 are organizations. The awardees came from the United States of America, Australia, Peru, Italy, Taiwan, Sudan, Hong Kong, Switzerland, Portugal, Myanmar, Singapore, and The Netherlands.

Message



Office of the President of the Philippines
COMMISSION ON FILIPINOS OVERSEAS

As we celebrate the Women's Month this March 2019 and the International Women's Day on March 8, 2019, the Commission on Filipinos Overseas (CFO) is delighted to share this special publication to pay tribute to the extraordinary and inspiring women recipients of the 2018 Presidential Awards!

These women advocate for the welfare of their fellow Filipinos abroad and in the Philippines, and distinguish themselves in their fields of expertise. Most importantly, they broke gender stereotypes, fostered their own potentials and bridged the gaps to become empowered. They have brought pride and honor to the motherland.

For all the Filipino women and girls, we hope that this publication will motivate you to pursue your dreams and passions. Do not be afraid to break barriers and unleash your potentials and talents.

We at the CFO will continuously promote and deliver gender-responsive policies, programs and services. We pledge to alleviate the social costs of gender disparity brought by migration, and protect and promote the rights, welfare and interests of overseas Filipinos in every possible way.

Mabuhay ang mga migranteng Filipina sa pagsusulong ng patuloy na pagbabago!

(sgd)

JUSTICE FRANCISCO P. ACOSTA (Ret)
Chairperson and Secretary

(sgd)

UNDERSECRETARY ASTRABEL P. NAIK
Executive Director

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Banaag Awardee

SALVACION GUIT-CIMANEZ

*Lingkod sa Kapwa Pilipino Awardee
The Netherlands / Daraga, Albay*

Nikos Kazantzakis once said, “True teachers are those who use themselves as bridges over which they invite their students to cross; then, having facilitated their crossing, joyfully collapse, encouraging them to create their own.” Such are the deeds of teachers like Salvacion G. Cimanecz who build bridges that serve as pathways to the unseen world and connect the dreams of the marginalized to reality.

Teaching has always been the one thing that drives Ms. Cimanecz to work - for herself and for the people. After completing her education degree at the National Teachers College in 1973, she spent her time enjoyably teaching at the St. Catherine Academy in Taytay, Rizal from 1983 to 1985, then at Pasig Catholic College from 1985 to 1988. In 1987, she happily found love in a Dutchman, who constantly advised her not to worry about finding a job. After they got married and migrated to the Netherlands, Ms. Cimanecz dedicated her time volunteering for organizations that operate for the good of others, namely the Kinder Opvang in Amsterdam, the World Health Organization, St. Dominicuskerk, and the St. Bonifatius Church in Leeuwarden.





After the unfortunate demise of her husband in 1995, she believed it was time to reconnect with her roots in Bicol. Coming back to visit in 1999, what caught her sight are not those that changed after 12 good years, but those she could improve. As she walked through the halls of her elementary alma mater, reminiscing about the good old days, she witnessed students cramped in small classrooms. That's when she realized that much as she had done good for others in her host country, the Netherlands, so she can, too, right in her own local community in the homeland. Many of her intended beneficiaries were children with disabilities who needed extra facilities and services to fully internalize the lessons being taught.

Ms. Cimaney always had a burning desire to serve the underprivileged community. As she came back to the Netherlands, she decided to establish a foundation for deaf and blind children. Fueled by the belief that decent learning opportunities should be for all, the Philippine Services for Deaf and Blind Children Foundation (PSDBCF) was officially registered with the Netherlands Chamber of Commerce in 2000.

The first project of the Foundation gained financial support from the Wild Geese Foundation, a Dutch non-government organization with special interest in sponsoring social initiatives beyond the Netherlands. With their assistance, a school for deaf and blind children in Daraga, Albay was inaugurated in 2005. The building continually accommodates special education (SPED) students with space wide enough for indoor games and livelihood training.



The funds and resources gathered by the PSDBCF are also used to provide financial assistance to marginalized children at the Laguna Resettlement Community School in Barrio Langgam, San Pedro, Laguna. After 13 years since the foundation extended help, the initial batch of beneficiaries are finally moving up to secondary level and are performing exceptionally well in their academic classes. The school's students may come and go, but the impact the Foundation made will surely remain in their hearts. The third beneficiary school was the Special Education School in Naga City. Any type of assistance the school needed, the foundation found a way to provide – be it repainting of structures, roof replacement, or seeking sponsorship for the school's activities.

Any kind act, no matter how small, is never insignificant. As Mark Twain puts it, "Kindness is the language which the deaf can hear and the blind can see." Children with special needs and disabilities are the absolute minority; they are the most vulnerable to abuse, violence, and the like. Not only has Ms. Cimanez played a big role in the realization of these special needs centers, but she has also helped the Philippines move steps closer to narrowing the gap toward full educational access.



ELIZABETH LAJATO MERTO-ENGLE

*Pamana ng Pilipino Awardee
USA / Dumaguete, Negros Oriental*



In an industry traditionally dominated by men, Engineer Elizabeth L. Engle has proven that it is possible for a woman to be heard and show the world what she can do. As the first registered woman engineer in the state of Alaska, Engr. Engle served in various leadership roles, managed projects with precision, and worked collaboratively and fervently with different professionals over the years.

Known as Betsy to her friends and colleagues, Engr. Engle came from a modest beginning. She hails from Dumaguete City, Negros Oriental, where she spent her early childhood years together with her five siblings were spent in a home without electricity and running water. Through her parents' hard work, coupled with her own dedication, she obtained a degree in Civil Engineering at Silliman University in 1963, and later took up Sanitary Engineering at the Mapua Institute of Technology in 1965.

A year later, she tried her luck overseas by pursuing her engineering career in Virginia and Washington D.C. Then in 1968, what was supposed to be a seven-month structural engineering job in Fairbanks, Alaska became permanent as she got married to her immediate supervisor and eventually started her own family.

From 1971 to 1999, Engr. Engle worked in various capacities in companies in Fairbanks, Alaska, including the State Department of Transportation & Public Facilities, Northern Region (AKDOT&PF).

While at AKDOT&PF, she rose from the ranks, starting as a Project Planner, then as Design Group Chief, and eventually, as Director of Design and Construction. She was responsible for numerous public work projects throughout the northern region of Alaska. She worked with state client agencies in developing project scopes and budgets, and administration of projects from concept development through design and construction.

She handled projects like upgrading of AKDOT&PF buildings in line with the American Disabilities Act; purchase of snow removal equipment for various airports in Alaska; Fairbanks International Airport maintenance and facilities improvement; and the Deadhorse Airport Combined Facility for the State of Alaska and the Federal Aviation Authority (FAA). The latter won the FAA's 1999 Facilities National Award for Excellence. She also did the renovation of the Fairbanks Youth Facility, as well as the Huslia Airport masterplan and improvements, among others.

Shortly after retiring in 1999, Engr. Engle was offered a Project Manager position at the world renowned Alyeska Pipeline Service Company (APSC) which designed, constructed, and maintains the 800-mile Trans-Alaska Pipeline System (TAPS). TAPS transports crude oil from Prudhoe Bay to the northernmost port of Valdez in Alaska. The pipeline today is recognized as a landmark engineering feat and remains essential to Alaska's economy and central to the state's industry.

From 2000 to 2008, Engr. Engle was responsible for the tank inspection projects, management of major maintenance and new construction projects, from inception through project closeout. Moreover, she managed challenging jobs and made multi-million dollar decisions. Despite these, Engr. Engle had the uncanny ability to smile through the tasks and pull the best team together to do the work.

Among all the projects on the TAPS that she handled, the most challenging and high profile one was a bypass project due to a discovered leak in the transit line of British Petroleum (BP), the major owner and contributor of the oil that flows into TAPS. Pigging activities, solids management, and corrosion inspections were performed in three months with about 300 construction workers in the field, working 24 hours in 12 hour shifts and 50 support staff in the office in minus 35°F average outside temperature.





Now retired, Engr. Engle is highly involved in various activities, both in Alaska and in the Philippines. She is the current Chairperson of the Silliman University Alumni Council of North America (SUACONA), which has 15 chapters in the US and 3 chapters in Canada. She is also the founder of the Silliman University Alumni Association of Alaska (SUAA) and was its President for 10 years. Moreover, she was a member of the Board of Directors of Ice Alaska, which hosted the largest ice sculpting competition in the world.

Her exemplary contributions and accomplishments were recognized by various institutions in Alaska and in the Philippines. She was given the 2017 Woman of Distinction Award by the Farthest North Girl Scout Council. The award recognizes women from Fairbanks, Alaska and surrounding communities in Northern Alaska, who have demonstrated qualities of outstanding leadership and excellence in their professional, family and personal endeavors. In 2016, she was bestowed with the Outstanding Sillimanian Award in the field of Project Management in Engineering by Silliman University. In the same year, she was Silliman's Balik Talent Speaker for the College of Engineering.

Engr. Engle confronted three challenges when she migrated to the United States, i.e., to hold her own as an engineer in a field that is traditionally dominated by men, to deal with usual obstacles that go with being an ethnic minority person and to work in state with subarctic conditions. None of these daunted her as she proved her worth and capabilities, thus, exemplifying the Filipino's character can succeed in a way that few others can.



MARIA THERESA ANGOB-EVIOTA

Pamana ng Pilipino Awardee

Switzerland / San Francisco, Surigao del Norte

It was in the early 1990s when Maria Theresa Eviota made one of the most difficult decisions a mother could make – to leave her four young children behind so she could work overseas. While she did work as an accounting clerk in Surigao del Norte, the income was not enough as she single-handedly took on the task of nurturing and providing for her children's needs. However, she was determined to ensure the future of her children, even if it meant being away and leaving her sons and daughter in the care of her parents and older sibling.

Left with a limited choice, she had to take that difficult journey which led her to Berne, Switzerland – home to numerous embassies and diplomatic residences where nearly 80% of its residence managers, housekeepers, drivers, and local-hire administrative staff are Filipinos.

She found work in Berne beginning in 1992 and built a career out of keeping house for diplomats where her responsibilities include housekeeping and general maintenance of the residences, the organizing of or assisting in formal receptions and social events at the residences such as the Queen's Birthday party (with up to 600 guests in attendance), and the inventory and maintenance of residence properties. Currently, she serves as the House Manager of the Embassy of Tunisia.





In her work as a Housekeeper or House / Residence manager, Ms. Eviota makes sure that the skills, traits, and qualities she has acquired since she started working back in the Philippines translates into impeccable results for the diplomats she worked for. Her former employers, Ambassadors among them, have nothing but glowing words for the quality of work she has rendered. Her outstanding work with members of the diplomatic community in Berne resulted in more employment opportunities for fellow Filipinos and added to the popularity of the Filipino brand of work.

With an entrepreneurial mindset, she and her family established the first ever all-Filipino cleaning company in Berne. Their staff is composed of Filipino men and women chosen for their high work standards. They are hardworking and reliable, honest and trustworthy. They have the combined experience of working in the embassies and diplomatic residences in Bern, as well as in private dwellings and offices. The Philippine Embassy and the Royal Norwegian Embassy in Berne are among their satisfied clients with the excellent cleaning service they provide—efficient, thorough, reliable, and trustworthy.

As a long-time resident of and an active member of the Filipino community in Switzerland, Ms. Eviota has had many forms of community involvement and engagement. She is a member of the Samahang Pilipina (SP) Berne (since 2005) and is currently the organization's President. She is also a founding member of the Tambayan Pinoy Swiss (TPS), a volunteer group making videos of Filipino success stories, achievements, and significant events in Switzerland.

Under her leadership as President of SP Berne, she helped organize three financial literacy workshops in partnership with the Manila-based Social Enterprise Development Partnerships, Inc. (SEDPI) and the Philippine Embassy in Berne from 2012 to 2014. She also helped organize a raffle fundraiser for a 25-bed mission hospital for the St. Scholastica Sisters in Pambujan, Samar in 2012. Another fund-raising activity raised 2,000 Swiss Francs for the St. Scholastica Mission Hospital in the same locality.



Ms. Eviota also found opportunities to help other needy communities outside of Switzerland and the Philippines. She assisted the founders of Cecily's Fund, a UK-based charity helping orphans and vulnerable children in Zambia. It was set up by former British Ambassador Basil Eastwood and his wife Alison to honor the memory and the work of their child Cecily, who died in a road accident in Zambia while volunteering for a Zambian charity, in the yearly benefit fundraisers in Berne.

She also shared her time, talent and expertise as Coordinator responsible for the overall planning, conceptualization and the presentation of the entire program for the Philippine Independence Day celebrations in 2012, 2013, and 2015 in cooperation with the Philippine Embassy and other organizations.

She survived more than 20 years away from her children and family because she learned how to adapt. From her simple beginnings, she acquired social skills that would make her thrive in Berne, where working for the embassies and diplomats was the norm for Filipinos. She made use of the network of friends and contacts that she had built up over the years. She also learned to build on the values that she was taught in childhood – of hard work and perseverance, of faith and trust in God, of hope and belief in oneself, and strength coming from the deep bonds among women.



CORAZON ALVAREZ-FRANCISCO

*Banaag Awardee
Australia / Balaoan, La Union*



For migrants like Dr. Corazon Alvarez-Francisco, the need to compete and stand out in an international setting may be a very daunting task to pursue. Migrating to Australia in 1987 as a Filipino doctor, her dream to practice the profession in the country remained clear in her mind. Motivated with this sense of purpose, she studied hard for the required examinations, which eventually paid off; 4th out of 298 examinees at the Australian Medical Council (AMC) examinations for Medical licensure.

She was given several accolades because of her exemplary work, even achieving the titles “First Filipino Doctor in Australia to become a Fellow of the Royal Australian College of General Practitioners (FRACGP)” in 1996 and “First Filipino Doctor in Australia to become a member of the Panel of Examiners for the Fellowship Exams for General Practitioners” in 1996. It may sound unchallenging to some, but its rigid evaluation process only allowed a handful of Filipino Doctors to fully pass the college’s qualifications. From there, Dr. Alvarez-Francisco obtained a Resident Medical Officer position at Liverpool Hospital and a General Practitioner position at Quakers Hill Medical Center.

She has been a shining example of how one could stretch the challenges of life, despite being out of one's comfort zone. Knowing very well the hardships of Filipino doctors to apply for eligibility in Australian society, she founded the Philippine Australian Medical Association (PAMA) in 1992. It was an organization that invaluablely contributed to the professional development of Filipino doctors in Australia. She organized review classes for those anxiously preparing to take the AMC exam, imbuing in its members a sense of camaraderie rather than of competition. From there, she rigorously linked them to Australian medical groups and institutions and organized seminars that would keep doctors abreast of the latest medical technology.

In the same year that PAMA was established, she also opened her own medical clinic with majority of her patients being Filipino-Australians. She became a highly respected member of the Filipino community in Australia as she contributed to the growth of 180 registered Filipino doctors now serving the Filipino-Australian community, compared to the initial 7 practicing doctors when she started. PAMA provides a platform for newly migrated Filipino doctors to make use of their full potential, which has evolved from a small study group to a humanitarian organization with over 200 members that conduct free medical, dental, and surgical missions in various remote communities in the Philippines. Aside from serving the Filipino-Australian medical industry, she has also participated in outreach programs with the Philippine Consulate General in Sydney, which has provided Filipinos in New South Wales an opportunity to obtain dual citizenship.

In addition to her strong civic sense of duty, Dr. Alvarez-Francisco has consistently been an active member of the University of the Philippines Alumni Association Australia – New South Wales Chapter (UPAAA-NSW). As President of the UPAAA-NSW from 2000 to 2002, she initiated a student exchange program in collaboration with the University of the Philippines (UP) and two prestigious universities in Australia – the University of New South Wales and the University of Sydney.





Alongside her husband, she coordinated and spearheaded fund-raising activities in connection with the UPAAA-NSW Scholarship Grant Project, whose activities (such as the Oblation Cup Golf Tournament in Sydney from 2008-2012) generated a substantial amount of funds to support eight indigent yet deserving tertiary students in UP.

Through her impeccable leadership at the *Timek Iti* (translated as “Voice of”) *La Union* Association, Inc. (TILAUNA, Inc.) from 2013-2017, many activities were undertaken to promote both Ilocano and Filipino cultures, made possible from the renewed vigor and motivation she cultivated among the organization’s officers and members. She has not only elevated the image of Filipino doctors in the country, but she has also encouraged her fellow Filipinos in Australia to stay connected with their cultural roots.



AGNES KATBETH ONG-KREIMER

*Banaag Awardee
Peru / Makati City*

"True service is working quietly, without counting the cost, without expecting fanfare, nor praises nor applause from anyone. True service chooses no time or place. Very often the urgent call comes at the least expected moment, at the most unlikely places." - Rosa Rosal

As vicarious beings, it is natural for humans to develop an appreciation for theater and film. Audiences easily sympathize with actors on stage and on screen – about dilemmas they empathically experience. In the real world, however, only a few surpass the passive role of spectator to help true-to-life characters in distress. One of them is Agnes Katbeth O. Kreimer, a professional actress based in Lima who has dedicated her life to the service of troubled Filipinos in Peru.

Known as Keibi to her colleagues and fans, Ms. Kreimer has joined various studios in Peru for acting roles in cinema, television, and theater. At present, she is most active as actress and stage manager with the Asociación Cultural Teatro de Cámara. Her theatrical repertoire includes plays pertaining to the human condition in general and the Peruvian experience in particular. Among others, she plays roles in stage adaptations of *Tradiciones Peruanas* (Peruvian traditions) written by Ricardo Palma, a well-respected author and scholar known for his satirical take on Peruvian and Latin American history and politics.





Although accustomed to receiving recognitions and applauses as an actress, Ms. Kreimer volunteers as Filipino community coordinator without seeking profit or recognition. With no compensation and at times at her own peril, she provides humanitarian assistance to Filipinos in Peru. While an Honorary Consul is yet to be appointed in Lima, she is the de facto leader of a growing community of 170 Filipinos in her host country. On an almost 24/7 basis, she responds to calls concerning emergency situations and assistance-to-nationals (ATN) cases.

Her wide-range network makes her the ideal person to be in charge of logistical matters during the Embassy's consular outreach missions in Lima. With her help, these missions conveniently give Filipinos in Peru the opportunity to acquire or renew passports, apply for dual citizenship, and register for overseas voting. Being the focal person in the Peruvian capital, she communicates with the Philippine Embassy in Santiago, Chile (which has jurisdiction over Peru) in times of calamities to report on the location and safety of community members.

She also aids Filipinos trapped in disadvantageous situations, especially women and children. These include prisoners, parolees, and trafficked persons awaiting repatriation to the Philippines. She plays a pivotal role by giving them advice and assistance regarding immigration, legal, labor, and welfare issues. Moreover, she gives translation services among Embassy representatives, Filipino prisoners, and pro-bono lawyers.

To guarantee the security of her compatriots, she coordinates with agencies in Peru other than the Embassy. She processes and monitors Filipino cases at the Peruvian National Police Foreign Division and Immigration, the Corte Superior de Justicia de Callao, and the Ministerio Publico. Undaunted by dangerous locations, she conducts visits even to high-security prisons like Ancon II and Sarita Colonia, where Filipino detainees face immigration-related and drug-trafficking charges.



Aside from legal advice and documentary assistance, she also occasionally provides prisoners with food, toiletries, clothes, and other basic necessities with the help of volunteers. In her altruistic endeavors, she involves friends like Sra. Maria Estelita Pelaez, a Peruvian public attorney and nun from the Daughters of Charity of St. Vincent de Paul. The international service organization implements projects in Peru concerning education, healthcare, human services, and more.

Ms. Kreimer's different roles in life and on stage have instilled in her values that transcend acting - empathy and sincerity. With her admirable talent, courage, and compassion, she is reminiscent of the legendary Rosa Rosal, a highly acclaimed Filipino actress and recipient of the 1999 Ramon Magsaysay Award for Public Service. Both women prove that practicing one's profession is not the only way to make lasting contributions to society.

The Philippines and Peru, with their similar colonial experience, would no doubt, benefit greatly from extensive bilateral relations. In promoting Filipino-Peruvian diplomatic and cultural exchange, perhaps there is no better candidate than Ms. Kreimer. Her knowledge of the Peruvian terrain and history, mastery of the Spanish language, vast network of friends, and participation in cultural promotion make her a model of effective migrant integration. Her relentless devotion to the Filipino community in Peru is virtually unmatched by any award imaginable.



HILDA LEUTERIO-GIGIOLI

Lingkod sa Kapwa Pilipino Awardee

USA / Manila



Spacecraft Structures Engineer and former IET Young Woman Engineer of the Year awardee Abbie Hutty equips “The whole idea of being an engineer is about solving a problem that hasn’t been solved yet, or solving it in a way that been done before.” From generation to generation, engineers have positively transformed the lives of communities through new discoveries and technological advancement. Ms. Hilda L. Giglioli embodies the ideals of the profession and is proud to live by that legacy, not only as an engineer, but also as a philanthropist.

From her undergraduate degree in computer engineering at the Catholic University of America (CUA) to her Master’s Degree in Systems Engineering at Boston University, the skills she learned along the way from the academe and the businesses she had worked for have greatly contributed to the establishment of Roccamar, Inc. in Washington, DC, It’s a defense contractor company she has been successfully leading as Chief Executive Officer since 2002.

Likewise, the US-Philippines Society (USPS), an organization that aims to bridge the gap between the United States and the Philippines, would not be the premier organization it is now without the efforts of Ms. Giglioli.

Behind this strong representation of a successful Filipina is a woman who embodies the empathizing quality of a leader. Her perseverance to invest in the dreams of the youth was one initiative that stood out, which touched the lives and uplifted the standard of education of many Filipinos in the Philippines.

Ms. Gigioli is aware of the costly route towards pursuing the Engineering profession. This became the catalyst to her pursuit of a burden-free educational and cultural experience for Filipinos. Following the launch of the first scholarship grant at the University of the Philippines in 1981, she was appointed chairperson for scholarships at the Philippine Association of Metropolitan Washington Engineers (PAMWE), which granted 117 scholarship grants in the Philippines and in the United States. Ms. Gigioli donates P250, 000.00 annually in support of the fund-raising golf tournament organized by PAMWE for Filipino scholars in the Philippines. Aside from educational opportunities, this fund-raising activity has also provided logistical support for communities in the Philippines to improve their way of living.

In honor of her late father, who was an alumnus of Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT), Ms. Gigioli established the Mariano P. Leuterio-PAMWE Scholarship for students enrolled at MIT, which has so far funded a three-year scholarship to a deserving 3rd year engineering student. She did not stop there. She also tapped her alma mater, the School of Engineering at CUA, in working tirelessly with universities in the Philippines to give its students opportunities to study abroad. CUA has since hosted 10 Filipino students with P10M worth of scholarship grants. Going above and beyond, she took care of the first 2 master's degree scholars, welcoming them into her home and treating them as if they were her own. Her role as chairperson of the Catholic University's Pope Francis Scholarship Program (PFSP) was most noteworthy as she has given an opportunity not only for Filipinos to realize their full potential as engineers, but also for the Philippines to gain highly qualified professionals who could provide a multiplier effect to aspiring engineers in the Philippines.





Aside from her educational pursuits, she has been involved in humanitarian organizations that restored schools and communities in the Philippines. As fundraising and finance committee chair of the Philippine Humanitarian Coalition (PHC), she played an integral role in raising critical funds through a benefit concert that raised over \$2 million, which in turn rehabilitated communities damaged by Typhoon Haiyan in 2013. Embodying the leadership of Tandang Sora, she and her team were also able to build a school and evacuation center in the worst hit province of Leyte to prevent the sudden and untimely discontinuation of much needed education among children there.

Ms. Gigioli's commitment to social responsibilities was once again demonstrated when PHC raised funds for earthquake victims of Nepal through an Arts Exhibit and a 5K fun run. As shown in the fundraising activity with the Philippine Nursing Association of America (PNAA), USPS, and PHC, her ability to liaise and establish good relationships with people from different disciplines allowed events such as the Afternoon Tea and Ilustrado Ball to raise around \$10,000 in total. This markedly funded the rebuilding and restoration of the sieged city of Marawi.

She also promoted advocacies that preserved the Congressional Gold Medal for Filipino World War II veterans and the Bataan Death March Memorial in New Mexico. Ms. Gigioli serves as an inspiration for the youth. She has proven how people can pursue both their profession and passion at the same time. In a country 8,000 miles away, she has evidently and substantially influenced the hearts of Filipino-Americans, at the same time changing the lives of Filipinos in need.



TERESITA GUTIERREZ-MARQUES

Pamana ng Pilipino Awardee

Portugal / Batangas City, Batangas

A passionate music lover, Teresita Angeles Villanueva Gutierrez Ribeiro Marques echoes Friedrich Nietzsche's famous saying "*Without music, life would be a mistake*".

She was born in Batangas City in 1950 and obtained her Master of Music degree, major in Piano and minor in Musicology from the College of Music of the University of the Philippines, Diliman. As a member of the University of the Philippines Madrigal Singers, she participated in numerous festivals and international competitions between 1969 and 1976. Having married a Portuguese citizen, she moved to Portugal in 1977.

Music continued to be her life's work when she became a member of the faculty of the Lisbon National Conservatory of Music, teaching choir music from 1978 until her retirement in April 2017. In 1978, Teresita founded the Coro de Câmara de Lisboa (Lisbon Chamber Choir), composed of twenty-two young musicians who perform musical works of Portuguese and foreign composers from the Renaissance up to the contemporary period either in *a cappella* style or with the accompaniment of instrumental ensembles or orchestras.

Under Ms. Marques' guidance and leadership, Coro de Câmara de Lisboa has performed all over Portugal and abroad and has maintained an artistic level that is widely applauded both by the critics and the public.



Parallel to this, they also have several recordings on discs. The tour and the recordings enabled them to project Philippine and Portuguese music and culture to the world.

Ms. Marques also founded the Ensemble Peregrinação at the Lisbon National Conservatory of Music in 2004. In 2006, the group was invited by the Fundação Oriente, to perform in the “Festival de Música Capela do Monte” in Goa. In 2007, they were invited by the French Government to perform in several cities in the north of France for the “Jeunesse Festival de la Musique.” In 2008, the Ensemble Peregrinação recorded a CD entitled *Cantos da Lusofonia* which included folksongs from Angola, Brazil, Macau, Malacca (Malaysia), Moçambique, Timor Lorosae, Cabo Verde Islands and Goa (India).

Aside from founding chorale groups, she was also awarded a scholarship by the Spanish Government to attend the *Polyphony Class of the 21st International Music Course of Santiago de Compostela*, under the direction of Angel Botia in 1979. She was sent by the Foreign Ministry of Portugal to give lectures at the *Summer Courses in Music*, held at the University of California (Sta. Barbara) in 1984. The Ministry of Education of Portugal also sent her to conduct training courses in vocal techniques for the teachers in the Azores Islands in 1996 and 1998. The European Federation of Choirs *Europa Cantat* invited her to direct the workshop *Multiple Choir Music* in 2001.

In December 2015, the Philippine Embassy in Lisbon requested Ms. Marques to create a recording project for a commemorative CD entitled “Amizade entre Filipinas e Portugal / Celebration of Philippine Portuguese Friendship” which has brought great honor to the choir. It includes seven Portuguese and seven Filipino folksongs. The pieces by Filipino composers are “Katakataka,” “Ili-Ili Tulog Anay,” “Rosas Pandan,” “Dahil Sa Iyo,” “Tuksuhan,” “Pagtulog Na, Nene,” and “Mamayog Akun.”





Beyond the realm of music, Ms. Marques also helps out Filipinos and the Philippines in ways that she can. In 1980, she offered her services to translate court hearings involving a Filipino sailor accused of a criminal offense. In the aftermath of Typhoon Haiyan in 2013, she contacted PE Lisbon, Father Jovito Osalvo of the Catholic Filipino community in Lisbon, and the officers of the Filipino-Portuguese Association, and informed them of her interest to organize a benefit concert by the Coro de Câmara de Lisboa, the proceeds of which would be donated to the typhoon victims. Two weeks before the concert, the members of the Filipino community set up stalls and sold Filipino sweets and souvenirs as part of the fundraising program for the typhoon victims. The concert took place in December 2013, at the Igreja dos Mártires, Baixa Chiado. The proceeds were then channeled to different organizations in the Philippines; part of the proceeds were offered to some of the members of the Filipino community in Lisbon, whose families in the Philippines, had lost their homes.

She also established and managed the Coro Feminino and the Children's Choir in the Escola de Música Nossa Senhora do Cabo until her retirement in April of 2017. As a professor in the said school, she had trained and given opportunities to aspiring singers and musicians through vocal and piano training.



JULIET MONTANO

*Banaag Awardee
Taiwan / Tanauan, Batanagas*



Often, health is not valued until sickness comes. And there is no worse time to get sick than when one is overseas, far from home and the loving care of a family, with a language barrier to contend with, and finances to worry about. Serving as a doctor to Filipinos in Taiwan for over 30 years, Dr. Juliet Montano understands this on a deeper and personal level.

Dr. Montano, also known by her Chinese name Mei-Hua Tsai, was born on December 20, 1959 in Tanauan City, Batangas. She earned a degree in Medicine at the University of Santo Tomas in 1983 and had her internship at the Jose Reyes Memorial Hospital. Upon completion of her rural service in Tanauan City, she took the licensure exam for doctors and passed.

Five years after, Dr. Montano migrated to Taiwan and had her residency at the Far Eastern Memorial Hospital in Taipei. Aside from successfully passing the medical licensure exam in Taiwan, she specialized in the areas of Family and Adolescent Medicine, which gave her a greater edge among other medical practitioners.

Shortly after her retirement from the Far Eastern Memorial Hospital, which caters to a majority of Taiwanese, Dr. Montano purposely set up a clinic at the Ban Ying Hospital, where she would have more latitude in accepting and dealing with patients.



Since then, thousands of Filipinos in Taiwan have benefited from her medical expertise. In her clinic where Filipino is the main language spoken, almost all of her patients are overseas Filipino workers and overseas Filipino-Chinese. She performs numerous abdominal and breast ultrasound examinations, general check-ups, blood and urine tests, Pap smears, mammograms, electrocardiograms, and x-rays to Filipinos. Such medical services, which overseas Filipinos often choose not to avail due to additional expenses and fear of discovering their medical conditions, are offered for as low as TWD 80 (PHP 135.00) at Dr. Montano's clinic. She likewise voluntarily assists other Taiwanese doctors in translating communications to fully understand their Filipino patients and address their health concerns.

With utmost care and concern for her Filipino patients, Dr. Montano attends to the patients in nursing homes and the homes of bedridden patients. Moreover, she ensures that her mobile number is available to all her patients so they can contact her anytime for any emergency or non-emergency medical concerns. She likewise finds time to visit them when they are hospitalized. She also used to visit female prison and juvenile facilities for check-ups and prescription of medicines for ten years.

Dr. Montano's sense of responsibility to the Filipinos in Taiwan goes beyond treating the sick as her approach is also proactive. For years, she has been sharing medical advice through her regular columns featured in Filipino publications such as *The Migrants* and *The Manila Post*, as well as at churches and other centers where Filipinos congregate. The catchy titles of her monthly health articles are humorous yet very relatable and informative to her Filipino readers. She also wrote numerous health educational materials in Filipino which she distributes among her patients to create awareness on health issues and promote preventive health.



Providing medical care services for the community is not limited within the corners of her clinic. Dr. Montano has gone on numerous medical missions in various communities in Taiwan, Cambodia and Gambia. These efforts have earned the respect and admiration of her colleagues, who have in turn elected her into leadership positions in several organizations and associations. She leverages her influence for the benefit of Filipinos, as when she was able to collect several boxes of clothes, toys, and relief goods for the benefit of Typhoon Yolanda victims.

To date, Dr. Montano is affiliated with many health societies in Taiwan. She is a member of the Taiwan Association of Family Medicine, Taiwan Society for Adolescent and Health, Taipei Medical Association, Taiwan Society of Ultrasound and Taiwan Academy of Hospice Palliative Medicine. She has authored several publications, published in Taiwan and USA, attended national and international conferences and received awards. She has also provided lectures on CPR and health related topics, emphasizing disease control and prevention, caregiving, sex education, and tobacco cessation in various overseas Filipino communities, different religious sectors, town halls, elderly communities, schools, and hospitals around Taiwan.



MARIA CRISTINA FERNANDO SULAIK

*Banaag Awardee
Sudan / Makati City*

Over the years in Sudan, overseas Filipino workers (OFW) with various backgrounds and professions come and go. Problems of maltreatments, incarcerations, hospitalization and cases of deaths of OFWs are also reported in the country. In the absence of a Philippine Embassy in Sudan, OFWs have to rely initially on each other for help before assistance from the Embassy of the Philippines in Cairo, Egypt can be obtained.

In scenarios like these, Ms. Maria Cristina F. Sulaik has been instrumental in assisting her fellow Filipinos who face difficulties in the country. In coordination with the Honorary Consulate and the Embassy of the Philippines in Cairo, she serves as the main contact of OFWs and other Filipinos in the host country to get assistance on certain consular-related concerns, such as labor issues and passport requirements.

Ms. Sulaik migrated to Sudan in 2004. Albeit a graduate of Banking and Finance, she struggled in finding the right work for her. For more than a decade, she opted to accept jobs that she was overqualified for so she could earn decently.

Her years of perseverance and determination bore fruit when she was hired in one of the leading hotels in Sudan, the Al Salam Rotana Hotel. She started off as a Sales Secretary, and then promoted to Marketing and Communication Executive.





Currently, she's the Marketing and Communications Manager of the hotel. She is primarily responsible for the positioning of the hotel in the global market, managing its social media and other online channels, securing sponsors for its events and promotions, and maintaining strong relationships with media partners, among others.

Ms. Sulaik is admired and well respected by her colleagues. She was also instrumental in a number of awards and recognitions received by the Al Salam Rotana Hotel. On top of that, she is responsible for the conduct of charity events, donations, and health and environmental initiatives of the hotel.

Just as she takes her corporate responsibilities to heart, so she does, too, her passion for helping fellow Filipinos in need. Through her initiative and support, the Philippine Embassy in Cairo, Egypt was able to repatriate OFWs, assist those in various detention centers, and repatriate the remains of Filipinos who died in Sudan. In particular, she assisted a 70-year old Filipino who was showing signs of Alzheimer's disease, had been in Sudan for the longest time, and lost communication with his family and relatives. Ms. Sulaik informed the Embassy about his condition, provided him food, medications, and temporary shelter. In 2017, after 32 years, the Filipino was finally repatriated to the Philippines.

She likewise assists her fellow Filipinos who are suffering from unjust situations. From providing temporary shelters, to assisting with their personal needs and processing their necessary documentation, Ms. Sulaik is truly a valued partner of the Honorary Consulate and the Embassy of the Philippines in Cairo in the protection and promotion of the welfare of Filipinos in Sudan.

As a key member of the Association of Filipinos in Sudan (AFS), Ms. Sulaik also organizes meetings and events, and participates in charity works organized by the Filipino community in Sudan. She even uses her personal funds and resources to help her fellow Filipinos in dire need of financial support.



On top of Ms. Sulaik's duties and responsibilities, she is active in promoting the Filipino culture. She initiated the annual Philippine week at the Al Salam Rotana Hotel. Already on its third year, the event features Filipino cuisine and culture and is attended by Filipinos, other expatriate communities, dignitaries, government officials, and the media.

Every Ramadan, Ms. Sulaik prepares *Iftar* boxes for Muslim brothers and sisters, including the Filipino Muslim student community. She has also been supporting Khartoum American School's traditional International Potluck dinner, an annual fund raising event for different charities in Khartoum. She was also the first to initiate a project in Sudan that led the students to conduct charity drives to help differently-abled children. She's a regular church member of the Philippine Catholic Community in Khartoum, and also a major solicitor for fund raising activities of the church.

For all her contributions and assistance, she has earned the respect and trust of her *kababayan* and the Philippine Embassy in Cairo. Ms. Sulaik's benevolence and admirable dedication in assisting fellow Filipinos in Sudan truly made a lasting impact in their lives.





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