

6 SUCCESS STORY

Supreme Court of the Philippines Spearheads the Launch of eCourt in Quezon City Courts

On June 14, 2013, Supreme Court Chief Justice Ma. Lourdes P.A. Sereno led the launch of eCourt in Quezon City Courts. The event marks the start of the Supreme Court's goal of automating all trial courts throughout the country. The event was graced by Supreme Court Associate Justices Teresita J. Leonardo-De Castro and Mario Victor F. Leonen, Court Administrator Jose Midas P. Marquez, and Executive Judges of the Quezon City Regional Trial Courts and Metropolitan Trial Courts, and Quezon City court personnel.



Supreme Court of the Philippines Chief Justice Ma. Lourdes Sereno presents the eCourt functionalities and the benefits that can be derived using the system in a recent Launch of the eCourt in Quezon City

In her remarks, Chief Justice Sereno cited key features of the eCourt that would speed court processes, eliminate possible sources of corruption, and provide greater transparency. She explained that the eCourt would remove doubt that “money is leaking in the court system,” as cases would now be raffled off electronically and the fees determined by the system. She added, “Quezon City courts are waiting to be transparent and above-board. In other words, you are willing to put the seal of transparency and good governance on the courts.” Associate Justice Leonardo-De Castro, in her own remarks focusing on the history of court innovation and automation in the Philippines, noted that the creation of a case management system for the judiciary was “long overdue”.

Quezon City is one of the largest metropolitan areas in the Philippines with one of the largest number of court cases filed each year. The Quezon City Hall of Justice is comprised of 58 courts, making the station the second largest in the country. In 2012 alone, Quezon City registered more than 32,000 pending court cases, and formed 32% of the total caseload of the National Capital Region of the country. Quezon City Court Stations therefore was recognized as formidable grounds for testing this hallmark automation project.

eCourt was first formulated in 2011 with assistance from the American Bar Association Rule of Law Initiative (ABA ROLI) and funding from USAID to automate key court processes that render increased access to case information within the courts and among court users, improved transparency on case status, and cut-down excessive delays found in the more clerical processes of the court. With the eCourt the court will be able to track completed and succeeding case actions and define when delays or non-compliance to court time standards are not met. ABA ROLI since then has built on the initial platform of eCourt in Quezon City to include such features automated raffling that reduces human intervention in the assignment of cases to court branches, document tracking as pleadings enter and court notices and orders are issued, among others. Motions and hearings are monitored through the eCourt and can now be accessed on a kiosk in the court lobby. Judges upload their decision onto the eCourt, enhancing the transparency of those decisions. A

dashboard provides real time information on the performance of individual courts to court administrators and supervising judges to allow them to improve the quality of court services. Future enhancements include allowing electronic notification of lawyers and internet access to hearing time.