

## **About the Author**

Judge Vilches, a graduate of the Ateneo de Manila University and the Ateneo Law School, after passing the Philippine Bar in 1983, immediately worked as Attorney II in the Offices of Justices Hermogenes Concepcion, Jr. and Jose Y. Feria and was later promoted to the post of Attorney III in the Office of Justice Teodoro Padilla, Supreme Court of the Philippines, Manila, until July 1989.

In August 1989, Judge Vilches, at the age of 32 years old, was appointed as Municipal Trial Court Judge of Barugo, Leyte. For her good performance in the bench, the Supreme Court subsequently designated her as Acting Presiding Judge of the Metropolitan Trial Court of Manila, Makati, and Caloocan. In 1999, she was appointed as Presiding Judge, Branch 48, Regional Trial Court of Manila, Philippines.

For demonstrating the expected skills and competence of her position, Judge Vilches earned numerous grants for major studies, among which are: "Evidence" conducted by the National Judicial Institute Of Canada (NJI), at Kelowna, British Columbia, Canada, on 23-27 August 2004 sponsored by NJI and the Supreme Court of the Philippines; "Children's Rights" at Oxford University, England, supported by the British Council; "Violence Against Women: Tackling Trafficking" at Hertfordshire, United Kingdom, sponsored by the British Council and the Supreme Court of the Philippines; "Evidence" and "Role of the Judge" at the University of Nevada in Reno, USA, sponsored by UNICEF and the City Government of Manila, Philippines; DNA and Forensic Matters at the Home Office, United Kingdom, arranged by the British Embassy, Manila; Philippines; "The Legal and Technical Aspects of DNA" extended by the Applied Biosystem in Foster City, California, USA; "Political, Economic and Social Rights" conducted by the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) and the Philippine Judicial Academy, Supreme Court, in Tagaytay City, Philippines; "Crimes Against Children" conducted by the US Federal Bureau of Investigation and the Department of Justice; and "Juvenile Justice", conducted by the National Council of Juvenile and Family Court Judges (NCJFCJ) in Houston, Texas, USA, granted by the Consuelo (Alger) Foundation.

Judge Vilches combines judicial functions with academic work and activism, hence her involvement in the following capacities: Professorial Lecturer and Member of the Faculty and Research Group of the Philippine Judicial Academy (PhilJA), Supreme Court, where she does lectures and training for judges, does research work, and helps recommend innovations in legal procedure and system; Professor of the Ateneo Law School and recipient of the Chief Justice Ramon Avancena Professorial Chair in Civil Law for the years 2003-2006 to provide quality education to future lawyers and magistrates; Chairperson, Task-Force On Justice For Children, Council For the Welfare of Children (CWC), Office of the President of the Philippines, the biggest organization of government and non-government institutions, where in her free time, she coordinates inter-agency efforts for the betterment of Filipino children and families; Lecturer for the University of the Philippines Law Center-Institute of Judicial Administration (UP-IJA) and UNDP to train Nepal judges and justices on women and children's concerns, the Integrated Bar of the Philippines (IBP), the Public Attorneys Office (PAO) of the Department of Justice, and the City Of Manila Legal Office for the mandatory continuing legal education program for lawyers thereby updating their knowledge of new laws, rules, and societal issues that affect the legal system. Judge Vilches also helps train other court duty-holders for UNICEF-Manila in partnership with the judiciary and various relevant government agencies.

At the same time, Judge Vilches and her staff provide study tours, mostly in coordination with the Philippine Judicial Academy (PhilJA) of the Supreme Court, on the Philippine judicial system and good court practices such as: 1) diversion of minor offenders from the formal court system to alternative child-appropriate programs; 2) the appointment of a CASA/GAL or a trained community volunteer who advocates for the best interests of the child in court; 3) the operation of the mobile court under the "justice on wheels" program wherein the Court of Judge Vilches disposed most (33 out of the total 93) cases heard by the judges of Manila involving victimless offenses 4) the conduct of bi-monthly "Kids Day Court" an educational visit of the courtroom by an average of 20 serious sexually abused child victims to familiarize them with the court officers, workers and environment; and 5) as to the use of the live-link television (LLTV) in the testimony of children and women who are victims of violence to encourage attendance in court hearings and to eliminate trauma brought about by a complicated courtroom environment, to the public and to visiting counterparts from the United States, United Kingdom, Canada, Sweden, Bhutan, Cambodia, Mongolia and Guatemala, Judge Vilches likewise assists the supervision of the Manila Youth Reception Center (MYRC), a detention home for children while waiting the trial of their cases at the Regional Trial

Court of Manila. Judge Vilches is often asked to do radio, television and print interviews to further the impact of all these court services.

In May 2002, Judge Vilches was chosen as a Member of the Philippine Delegation to the UN General Assembly Special Session for Children in New York, USA; was a Delegate-Rapporteur to the 1st Australasian Judicial Forum in Manila in January 2003, and was a Delegate-Rapporteur, Asia-Europe Experts Meeting in Manila in March 2003. With a vision of transforming the work of a trial court judge beyond the role of an adversarial trier of fact, in August-September 2004, Judge Vilches participated as a member of the Canadian-Philippine judicial team designated by the Supreme Court of the Philippines and the National Judicial Institute of Canada in the activity to develop a course on family court mediation, a form of alternative dispute resolution (ADR) that can be performed by the judge himself or herself to provide in the end healing to the parties in intra-familial controversies. On 12-23 June 2005, Judge Vilches, on authority of the Supreme Court, participated in the study tour on the justice and social welfare systems of Sweden and visited the Rauoal Wallenberg Institute of Human Rights at Lund University, Sweden.

As a recognized international speaker, Judge Vilches delivered on plenary session the topic "Trafficking in Women and Children" and chaired Session 24 on "Child Trafficking" at the 4th World Congress on Family Law and Children's Rights at Cape Town, South Africa, on 20-23 March 2005 [www.lawrights.asn.au](http://www.lawrights.asn.au). In August 2004, Judge Vilches presented the paper on "Trafficking In Women and Children" at the 31st International Convention Of Social Welfare Agencies (ICSWA) in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia <http://www.ncwsdm-icsw31.org/>. For her work to advance children's and women's rights, she will be featured by the British Council, United Kingdom, in the "Women of the World: Making a Difference" project. At present, Judge Vilches, as representative of the Philippine Judicial Academy (PhilJA), is a significant member of the technical working group (TWG) in Congress to draft the consolidated comprehensive juvenile justice bill to uplift the conditions of children in conflict with the law.

Judge Vilches has written the articles "Trafficking In Women and Children"; "Are You Ready To Be A CASA/GAL Volunteer?"; "DNA And The Courts"; "Making Juvenile Justice Work", and "Mediation: Reaching Its Potential in Family Law Cases" which have been widely published locally and internationally. In 2004, she authored a reader-friendly book entitled "B.P. 22: FAQs" published by Rex Bookstore to help the general public know more about the commonly committed violation of the law that penalizes the issuance of bounced checks. And in 1999, Judge Vilches started a program in the Philippines called "CASA/GAL" composed of trained community volunteers who advocate and promote the best interests of children and families in court and thus ensuring their access to justice. Among the earliest volunteers for children in the court of Judge Vilches are Ms. Maribel Ongpin and Mrs. Virginia Davide. In 2004, CASA/GAL, a component program of the Ateneo Human Rights Center, was voted by UNICEF as one of the ten innovative initiatives for East Asia and the Pacific.

In February 2004, Judge Vilches was nominated by the Judicial and Bar Council (JBC) for the post of Associate Justice, Court of Appeals, was a finalist in the Gender Justice Awards of August 2004 and will be a co-author of the upcoming Gender Justice Book. She is a nominee to the Outstanding Regional Trial Court Judge for 2005 of the Search Committee, Society for Judicial Excellence and of the Office of the Court Administrator, Supreme Court of the Philippines. Judge Vilches is a member of the National Council of Juvenile and Family Court Judges (NCJFCJ), Reno Nevada, USA; The International Association of Youth and Family Judges and Magistrates (IAYFJM) based in Switzerland; International Association of Women Judges (IAWJ), USA; Philippine Judges Association (PJA); Philippine Women Judges Association (PWJA); Philippine Bar Association (PBA); and the Integrated Bar of the Philippines (IBP).

The prestigious **Society for Judicial Excellence** has chosen Branch 48, RTC of Manila *Judge NIMFA C. VILCHES* as the winner of the 2006 *Chief Justice Jose Abad Santos award for Outstanding Regional Trial Court Judge in Metro Manila*. The awarding was held on September 19, 2006 2:00 PM at the Session Hall Supreme Court Padre Faura, Manila

Of the same day, Judge Vilches was appointed by the Supreme Court of the Philippines as the ***new Assistant Court Administrator (ACA)***