

# Atty. Ruiz: Up Close and Professional

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**ROWENA CANDICE M. RUIZ**  
42 years old  
Executive Director  
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Department of Budget and Management

*“All women are created equal but only the finest become lawyers.”*

A woman, a barrister and a public servant, Atty. Ruiz reflects a life of balance and a brand of public service worthy of attention. Obtaining a Bachelor of Arts Major in Political Science degree from the De La Salle University, she pursued a Bachelor of Laws degree at the San Beda College and entered the Bar at the age of 27. She finished Master of Laws at the University of London as a Chevening Scholar. She joined the roster of the CES Eligibles in 2011 and was appointed to CESO Rank III in 2012. To this day, she continues to display the highest

values and competencies of leadership excellence, and the marks of a woman of integrity. A daughter of Malabon, she is her hometown's pride in the field of law and public finance and expenditure management.

## Her Journey in Public Service

Starting as a lawyer at the Department of Budget and Management (DBM) handling legal opinions, litigation and special projects, Atty. Ruiz had the privilege to be designated as Officer-in-Charge (OIC) of the Legal Service two years into the job. This gave her the needed exposure and training to prepare for management work as she was appointed Director III in 2010 and two years later, promoted to Director IV. She was Director III when Former President Benigno Aquino, Jr. issued an executive order requiring those holding Career Executive Service (CES) positions to secure CES ranking which lead to her CES leadership journey. During the SALDIWA leadership program, she was truly exposed to the daily travails of the marginalized, giving her a deeper and personal understanding of public service that later on shaped her life as a public servant.

Eager to learn more, she has long asked then Budget Secretary Florencio “Butch” Abad for permission to take further studies. However, given the many controversies, such as the PDAF and DAP, that the Department had been entangled with, she was asked to wait it out. When the dust settled, she took the chance and applied for a Chevening Scholarship without any government endorsement.

When she returned from her studies, she again had the privilege to serve as OIC of the Department's Legal and Liaison Group. In 2018, she was tapped to head the Technical Support Office (TSO) of the Government Procurement Policy Board (GPPB).

## Challenges and Victories at Work

She admits that she considers mentoring as her most challenging task as a public servant. The diversity of the professionals, mostly lawyers, that she constantly works with makes handy off-the-shelf formula or strategy unsuitable. Instead, she needed to carefully assess each personality to come up with a viable mentoring approach. The multitude and myriad of work their unit has to face makes it more challenging for her to find the time and energy to integrate mentoring in their daily grind.

Aside from mentoring her subordinates, she also had difficulty in finding her mentor. In her stint at the DBM, she often reports directly to the Secretary. Given such situation, she is grateful to have had the chance to the work with high caliber CESOs, such as Undersecretary Evelyn Gurrero and Undersecretary Laura Pascua, who somehow became her “forced” mentor and helped her adapt to her work. *“They have greatly influenced and shaped the very precepts of government budgeting. Somehow, I would say that their influence made me a better lawyer for the Department,”* says Atty. Ruiz.

A woman of humility and profoundness, she feels that her greatest achievement so far is the respect and recognition she receives from her colleagues in the DBM. *“It feels like a long and warm hug from the people that I equally respect and look up to. It makes me strive harder and be better in anything that I do.”*

## A Grateful Servant of the People

She is most grateful for the work they do in government, truly believing that it is a privilege to be in government because of the exclusivity of the whole experience, which cannot be equaled by the private sector. She explains that government work enables its servants to shape and influence governance and public policy and empowers them to make a difference and actually change lives.

*“I have always said that one need not be a superhero or do something extraordinary to effect the change we need in society. It starts with us, in the everyday work we do, in the way we value our role in governance by carefully and judiciously crafting public policy that directly impacts the lives of every Filipino.”*

For Atty. Ruiz, hard work and humility are the most important values/principles that a leader must possess and share with his/her subordinates/peers and the general public. She endeavors to live by the principle of integrity because it permeates into other values and principles, such as respect. It is also the core principle passed on to her by her father and the same principle she hopes to pass on to her children.

*“There is also no substitute to hard work and perseverance. Anything as important as good public service requires resoluteness and passion. Success is made more sweeter when realized with these two elements: hard work and perseverance.”*

She also values humility because she believes that the government leaders exist to serve the people. She explained that humility keeps government leaders grounded and makes them serve beyond their position, while the illusion of influence and power can be tempting.

## Steering the GPPB - TSO

Under her leadership, the GPPB – TSO commits to make procurement responsive to the needs of the government. Imbued with the paradigm of procurement management, the GPPB is looking at the entire procurement process from planning to contract administration. In line with this, the GPPB aims to introduce tools and approaches that will allow procurement practitioners to become proactive players in the procurement process.

The GPPB – TSO opened the year with a fresh offering with the conduct of its First Procurement Forum on 24 January 2019. *“Central to our reforms is making our procurement rules pragmatic.*



*To this end, we shall continually leverage advances in technology in streamlining our rules and making our processes more efficient – all these towards a strong and responsive procurement.”*



***What does public service mean to you and why do you choose it as a career?***

My life in public service came to be as a result of a challenge posed by a friend to do something rather than rant after I had a rather testy experience with a government office (not DBM). I may have been egged into entering government service, but it was my choice to stay.

When I was young, I see public service as a calling, a choice for me to do something and make things better, not being contented with business as usual or *'pwede na'*. It is a yearning, a desire to uplift and make a difference, no matter how insignificant it may be for some. It is the art and science of making the mundane and sometimes even the arcane inner workings of government practical and effectual because every aspect of government work matters.

***How do you think the younger generation best contribute to their agency and to the bureaucracy in general?***

The technological advancements that permeate the younger generations' work environment make them more innovative and inspired to do their work. Also, these advancements are useful tools in giving feedback making mentoring process more effective. The younger generation provides a more integrative and adaptive approach in making the bureaucracy more responsive, and to certain extent, alive, as it continuously changes.

***What do you think are the three (3) most important skills/competencies a leader must have?***

- a) **Inspiring** – Leaders do not make the change, they inspire the hearts and mind of the people to make the change. As leaders, we should strive to allow others to grow and be the person they desire by setting a good example and living by the tenets and principles we impart.
- b) **Innovative** – As leaders, we have to continually find ways to make things better; not business as usual. Leaders thrive during adversities because they see them as opportunities; never as constraints. The everyday challenges become an exploration of possibilities when we have leaders that innovate.
- c) **Decisive; Courageous** – People tend to be risk averse; choosing to play it safe than take chances. But effective governance requires leaders to actively make decisions for the bureaucracy to evolve continuously. With decisiveness comes the courage to maneuver around politics in the workplace. As leaders, we cannot be ingenuous to politics. Leaders will be tested. We need to stand by our principles and fight for what is right, which may not at all be a popular stance at all. We need to be courageous enough to put our careers on the line, if need be.