

THE LEADER AT THE TOP OF THE MOUNTAIN

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“This is my second home, but you have to face reality; I cannot stay. I am no rock. I will turn 74 soon. I will eventually retire. At 74, I should have fully retired. It’s just my love for Shontoug that keeps me in touch. God has been good to me and my family. A lot of miracles happened in my life because of God. My work has been my mission [and] my way of giving back.”

-Marietta Paragas

Marietta Paragas looked at the time on her watch. It told her that another weekly Monday visit had ended. It was 5 p.m. - a time that most people in the Philippines understood meant that one should head home and spend quality time with the family. Interestingly, the word ‘home’ was also something that Marietta attributed to her workplace, the Shontoug Foundation, Inc. Her gaze fell at the map of the Cordillera region, tacked to the wall of her office, which she had successfully unified as its first President back in 1998 under the Cordillera foundation network (see Exhibit 1). The Cordillera network provided organized rural development assistance to the Indigenous people of the region, such as the Ibaloi (see Exhibit 2).

The region was known as the CAR (Cordillera Administrative Region). It was found in the northern part of the Philippine Archipelago (see Exhibit 3; Nations Online Project n.d.) and was comprised of 6 provinces: Abra, Apayao, Benguet, Ifugao, Kalinga, and Mountain Province. The capital of the region was Baguio city, also known as the “*Summer Capital*” of The Philippines. From the perspective of the Indigenous Ibaloi Community, however, it was best known

as *Shontoug*, meaning “on top of the mountain.” Since this name was adapted and registered by the foundation since 1989, Shontoug Foundation, Inc. became synonymous with pioneer sustainable development initiatives in the region, marked by local and international recognition.

Exhibit 1. The Cordillera Region/ Network with Marked Community Projects

Source: Shontoug Foundation Inc.

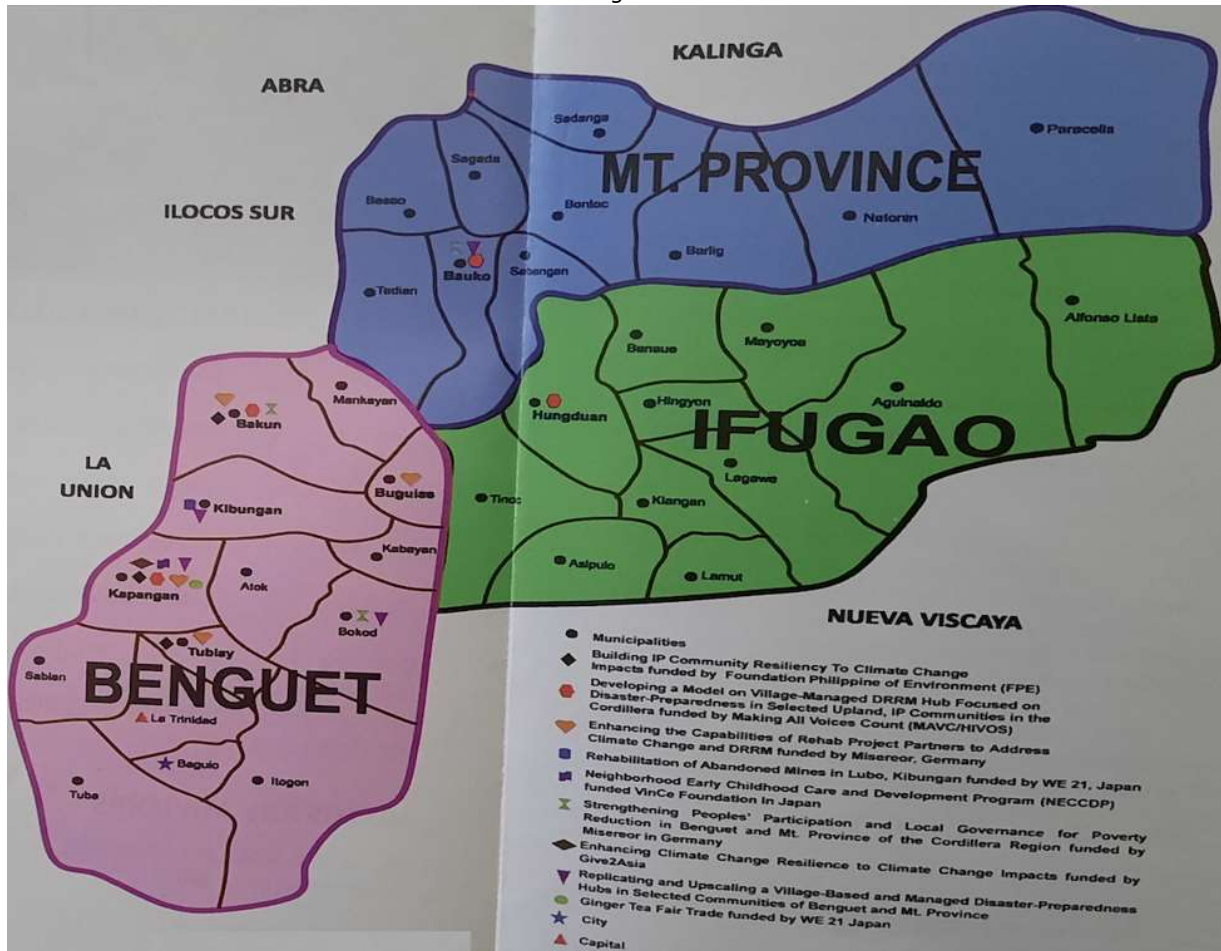


Exhibit 2. Ibaloi Indigenous People

Source: Shontoug Foundation, Inc.



Exhibit 3. Map of the Philippines

Source: Nations Online Project



Note: The Philippines, a country in Southeast Asia composed of 7,640 islands is in the Western Pacific Ocean, composed of three geographical divisions from north to south, Luzon (the largest with its Capital – Manila), Visayas and Mindanao. The Philippines has a diverse ethnicities and culture and there are indigenous people who live in various parts of the land (Nations Online Project n.d.).

Shontoug Foundation, Inc. at a Glance

Shontoug Foundation, Inc. started as an outreach institution of the Good Shepherd Sisters and was first called the Good Shepherd Social Center (GSSC) in 1968 (Religious of the Good Shepherd n.d.). In 1972, it became an independent foundation and was renamed as the Shontoug Foundation, Inc - a welcome change that allowed for implementation of holistic, gender-responsive and culturally sensitive projects that integrated sustainable development models for the marginalized sector of Benguet and Ifugao regions (Paragas, Shontoug Interview Part 1 2020).

Shontoug's mission was centered on the *"liberation from poverty, inequity and marginalization through creative education participatory management of life-giving programs and services"* (Shontoug Foundation Inc. 2002 p.6). The foundation envisioned culturally rooted indigenous communities capable of sustaining life-giving programs and services working towards the fullness of life (Shontoug Foundation, Inc. 2014).

Shontoug's intentions were put into action in the indigenous communities through its core programs, as seen on Exhibit 4 (Shontoug Foundation Inc. 2014). These programs were:

- Integrated Rural Development Program (IRDP)
- Neighborhood Early Childhood Care and Development (NECCD)
- Community-Managed Health and Nutrition
- Sustainable, Environment-Friendly Livelihood
- Participatory Local Governance
- Community/ Institution Building and Research

The core strategies adopted were Indigenized Program and Appropriate Technologies, Capability Building and Empowerment, and Research Studies (Shontoug Foundation Inc. 2014).

Exhibit 4. Core Programs, Impact and Beneficiaries

Source: Shontoug Foundation Inc.

Projects	Direct Number of Beneficiaries	Impacts	Projects	Direct Number of Beneficiaries	Impacts
1. Neighborhood Early Childhood Care and Development Program (NECCDP) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Shontog, Datakan • Tuel, Baayan • Togog, Boayan • Lubo, Kibungan • Busoc, Atok • Sayet, Caliking, Atok • Salidet, Caliking, Atok • Catngel, Caliking, Atok • Saddle, Caliking, Atok 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 154 children benefitted 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ECCD curriculum has been indigenized • 4 indigenized story-books and flipcharts were published and copyrighted • 41 children underwent medical check-up • NECCD facilitator enhanced KAS in the adoption of indigenized curriculum and utilization local materials 	4. Anti-Mining Advocacy <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lubo 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 240 HHs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enhanced awareness on Mining Issues and laws like IPRA and Mining Act • More vigilant on issues on affecting the community • Unity of community against mining, e.g. petitions, rally • Presence of Community Rehab Project or devastated mining site
2. Sustainable Agriculture (SA) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Shontog, Datakan • Sayet, Caliking • Ubod, Apunan • Abiang, Taba-ao • Taloy Norte 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 55 farmers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Intensified IEC on the benefits of SA • Started support services on SA marketing • Of the 55 trained farmers, 17 committed to practice SA • 5 SA demofarm were developed in 5 villages 	5. REHAB Project <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dagao • Pongayan 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 47 HHs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Open avenues for alternative livelihood • Earned income to augment their minimal income for crop production • Promotion of organic farming technologies • Relationship within the family enhanced • Relationship among community members improved especially cooperation and volunteerism
3. Community Health Care for Indigenous People (CHCIP) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ubod/Apunan, Taba-ao, Kapangan • Bileng and Ampongog, Sagubo • Namon-ao • Copias • Gadang 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 51 HHs • 53 HHs • 49 HHs • 21 HHs • 36 HHs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Presence of 9 trained village health workers who are rendering health services especially on Alternative Health Care modalities in the respective communities twice a month • Installed Health Savings of UBAPAS, DAYUKONG and LAMPADA for the members to avail for any health concern/problem 	6. Localized Anti-Poverty Project (LAPP) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Datakan • Labueg • Sagubo • Gadang 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 4 barangays 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 4 barangays have organized their BPRATs through an Administrative Order (AO) issued by the Barangay Council • Updated Community-based Monitoring System (CBMS) • Prioritized problems based on the analyzed CBMS that were translated into a Problem Tree that aimed to trace the root causes of the problem and formulated doable objective • Finalization of 2014 Annual Investment Plan • The MPRAT is supported by an inter-agency group called Economic Development Team (EDT) • Various livelihood projects supported by DTI, DOST, TESDA, DOLE-CAR, DAR-Benguet, BSU, BENECCO increased household income.

The foundation had been consistent with funds raised for the different projects for the communities. Based on its 5-year fundraising performance (see Exhibit 5) and financial statements (see Exhibit 6), it was only during the pandemic that Shontoug had been unable to maintain community projects in the year 2020. By 2021, Shontoug was in recovery as shown by increased community engagements and sources of funds. Nonetheless, Shontoug’s long-term objective included an increase in the number of donors in order to strengthen its sustainability.

Exhibit 5. Fund Raising Performance

Source: Artista, Fundraising Performance 2017-2021

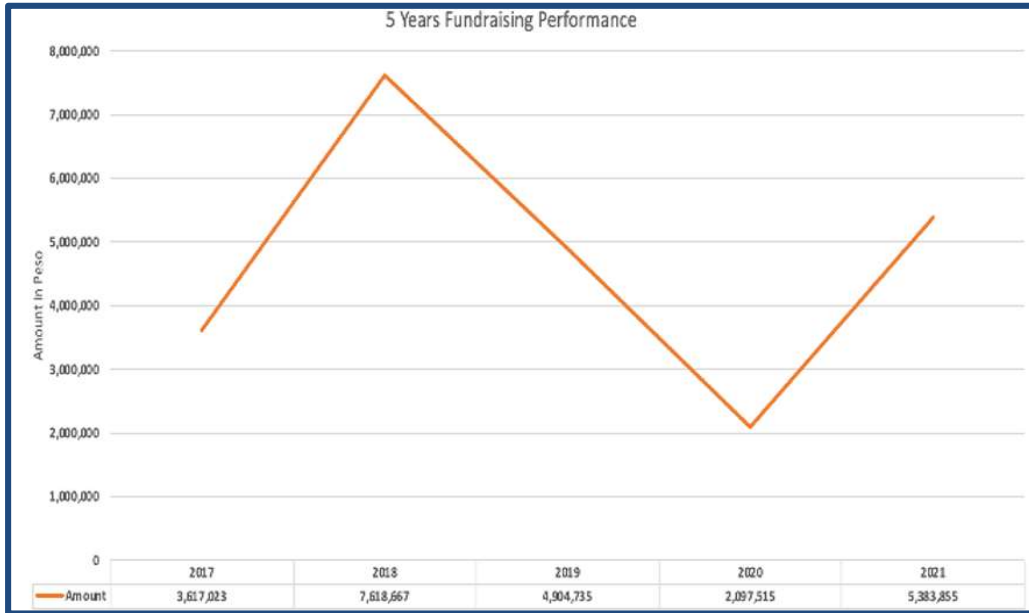


Exhibit 6. Financial Statements*Source: Shontoug Foundation Inc.*

Shontoug Foundation, Inc.
15 Gibraltar Road, Baguio City

Statements of CASH FLOWS

For the Years Ended December 31, 2021 and 2020

(in Philippine Peso)

	2021	2020
CASH FLOWS FROM OPERATING ACTIVITIES		
Net Surplus (Deficit) before Tax	P (39,375)	P (1,711,560)
Adjustments to reconcile net surplus to net cash provided by operating activities		
Prior period adjustments	(2,154,908)	(10,500)
Decrease in Deferred Tax Asset	54,517	-
Decrease (Increase) in Long-term Investment	(34,693)	-
Provision for Retirement Benefit Obligation	100,188	99,963
Operating Cash Flows Before Working Capital Changes	(2,074,271)	(1,622,097)
<i>Changes in Operating Resources and Liabilities:</i>		
<i>Decrease (Increase) in Current Assets:</i>		
Loans and Other Receivables	(116,952)	117,878
Other Assets	474,213	(2,943,912)
<i>Increase (Decrease) in Current Liabilities:</i>		
Trade and other Payables	(25,713)	176,321
Net Cash Used in Operating Activities	(1,742,723)	(4,271,810)
CASH FLOWS FROM INVESTING ACTIVITIES		
<i>Net cash provided by (Used in) Investing Activities</i>	-	-
CASH FLOWS FROM FINANCING ACTIVITIES		
Net Additions to Funds	2,114,436	232,480
Net cash Provided by Financing Activities	2,114,436	232,480
NET INCREASE IN CASH AND CASH EQUIVALENTS	371,713	(3,979,330)
CASH AND CASH EQUIVALENTS, BEGINNING	554,765	4,534,096
CASH AND CASH EQUIVALENTS, ENDING	P 926,478	P 554,766

Exhibit 6. Financial Statements, cont.

Shontoug Foundation, Inc.
15 Gibraltar Road, Baguio City

Statements of FINANCIAL POSITION

As of December 31, 2021 and 2020

(in Philippine Peso)

		2021		2020
ASSETS				
Current Assets				
Cash and Cash Equivalents	P	926,477	P	554,765
Loans and Other Receivables		378,920		261,968
Other Current Assests		1,397,420		1,871,633
<i>Total Current Assets</i>		2,702,817		2,688,366
Non-Current Assets				
Property and Equipment, net		-		-
Long-Term Investments		1,106,972		1,072,279
<i>Deferred Tax Asset</i>		0		54,517
<i>Total Non-Current Assets</i>		1,106,972		1,126,796
TOTAL ASSETS	P	3,809,789	P	3,815,162
LIABILITIES AND FUND BALANCES				
Current Liabilities				
Trade and Other payables	P	175,998	P	201,711
<i>Total Current Liabilities</i>		175,998		201,711
Non-Current Liabilities				
Retirement Benefit Obligation	P	2,255,096	P	2,154,908
<i>Total Non-Current Liabilities</i>		2,255,096		2,154,908
TOTAL LIABILITIES		2,431,094		2,356,619
FUND BALANCE				
Unrestricted Fund		(1,924,321)		(1,859,281)
Restricted Fund	P	3,303,017	P	3,317,823
TOTAL FUND BALANCES		1,378,696		1,458,542
TOTAL LIABILITIES AND FUND BALANCES	P	3,809,790	P	3,815,161

Exhibit 6. Financial Statements, cont.

Shontoug Foundation, Inc.
15 Gibraltar Road, Baguio City

Statements of CHANGES IN FUND BALANCES
For the Years Ended December 31, 2021 and 2020
(in Philippine Peso)

	Unrestricted Funds	Restricted Funds	Total Fund Balances
Balance, January 1, 2020	P 674,397	P 4,328,672	P 5,003,069
Net Surplus (Deficit)	(697,203)	(1,014,358)	(1,711,561)
Contribution to Funds	228,970	3,510	232,480
Appropriations to Restricted Fund	-	-	-
Prior Period Adjustments	(2,065,445)	-	(2,065,445)
Balance, December 31, 2020	(1,859,281)	3,317,824	1,458,543
Net Surplus (Deficit)	(24,568)	(14,807)	(39,375)
Contribution to Funds	2,114,436	-	2,114,436
Appropriations to Restricted Fund	-	-	-
Prior Period Adjustments	(2,154,908)	-	(2,154,908)
Balance December 31, 2021	P (1,924,321)	P 3,303,017	P 1,378,696

Shontoug Foundation, Inc.
15 Gibraltar Road, Baguio City

Statements of Activities
For the Years Ended December 31, 2021 and 2020
(in Philippine Peso)

	Total 2021	Total 2020
RECEIPTS		
Grants	P 5,061,563	P 1,387,119
Donations	285,921	663,627
Interest income	36,371	46,768
<i>Total Receipts</i>	5,383,855	2,097,514
Less: Program Expenses	3,828,780	2,283,109
<i>Gross Income</i>	1,555,075	(185,595)
Less: General and Administrative Expenses	1,594,450	1,525,966
NET SURPLUS (DEFICIT) BEFORE TAX	(39,375)	(1,711,561)
LESS: PROVISION FOR INCOME TAX	0	0
NET SURPLUS (DEFICIT) AFTER TAX	P (39,375)	P (1,711,561)

CEO by Chance, Leader by Choice:

Marietta's Community Development Journey in Action

In 1976, Ms. Paragas was a promising and upcoming College Dean. At the time, Marietta could hardly believe the words coming out of her mouth directed to the school's president: *"Allow me to perform my tasks as a mother and wife. I'm really sorry."*

She bit her lip to hold back mixed emotions, but she knew this was the best way to live up to her recently realized conviction that family first would matter more than career. This decision did not come easy. She bravely faced the fact that she had to let go of her position as the Acting Dean of the College of Commerce and Secretariat at Baguio Colleges - now called as the University of the Cordilleras (UC) (see Exhibit 7). Had she stayed on in the academe as administrator, she would have taken part in the growth of the school which has Information Technology, Criminology and Teacher Education under the Center for Excellence Status awarded by the Government (University of the Cordilleras n.d.). From a population of 156 graduates in the liberal arts in 1946, UC had grown to a population of 18,000 students, along with ISO 9001 quality certification and a large population of international students represented by 37 nationalities. (University of the Cordilleras n.d.)

Nonetheless, her teaching, coaching and administrative skills were put to good use as life offered her an opportunity to help people in a more direct way. In 1992, the Sisters of the Good Shepherd Social Center, where her husband worked for as an auditor, convinced her to be a *reliever* for a sick staff member working for the center. Her supposed 45-day stint while on maternity leave turned into a 30-year commitment.

The last thirty years was not a walk in the park. Ms. Paragas learned, led, grew and motivated herself and her staff alongside the growth of the foundation. She knew from that start that she would need more than passion to bring people from the NGO to work together.

“Coming from a very different field, I don’t want to be questioned with regards to the initiatives I created, like my heading the Cordillera Network. I earned my Masters in Community Development at Benguet State University so I could be more credible.”

She also showed strength of purpose where it matters because as she stated:

“I needed to show that I am not a pushover and politics does not have a place in Shontoug. Early on, I knew transparency and sincerity in this job, my mission would have to be in its core.” (Paragas, Shontoug Interview Part 1 2020).

For every project, the importance of designing culturally appropriate development models, and a social enterprise responsive to the community became the trademark of the foundation.

Her conviction partly came from her being formerly in academe and as a person born in the province of Ilocos (Northern Luzon) – where people were known to be straightforward. Being straightforward served as an asset when Ms. Paragas spoke with people from different walks of life - including politicians and entrepreneurs. In troubleshooting and crises, she operated with openness and listened to those around her. Her staff saw her as a strong leader when it came to work, but also as an endearing mother to all staff members.

As CEO, her typical workday would include submitting proposals to funders, awarding funds to rural communities, and ensuring that community leaders were trained to be accountable on cash flow and profits from agriculture or other means of livelihood. The foundation was big on transparency and accountability.

“We developed a manual of operations which encompasses the administrator roles aside from documenting best practices so in the face of missteps the foundation can ‘run’ even without me being directly involved” (Paragas et al., Shontoug Interview Part 3 2022 p.2).

Aside from this, Ms. Paragas had to mentor her staff on how to train community leaders and allay their fears when times were uncertain. Once in the aftermath of a devastating typhoon, Marietta and her team had to empower the community by encouraging them to be “creative” in how they would recover. She asked questions to the community that made members of the

community realize their resilience in starting over given that crops were initially destroyed. *“What can you use in your immediate surrounding that could help you?” “What livestock or produce can you sell?”* This led to a formation of cooperatives selling organic eggs, poultry, root crops, etc. (Paragas *et al.*, Shontoug Interview Part 3 2022)

“You need to look for leaders who are vocal, self-confident, accountable and displays a strong sense of responsibility. Once a community leader is identified, it needs to be clear to them that once trained by me under the foundation, the task to train others would be part of the agreement.” (Paragas *et al.*, Shontoug Interview Part 3 2022).

It was a very rewarding experience to see once shy and timid person bloom into a more confident and vocal member of the community. Marietta highlighted that the transition was *not that hard* because by nature the people had honesty as their core value. They wanted to work for the money they earned, and they took pride in their reputation as well:

“Exposing them to learning opportunities so they can help themselves is a big factor. They also enjoy the attention when board members visit them as they take pride in their achievements. This serves as something aspirational for the other communities” (Paragas *et al.*, Shontoug Interview Part 3 2022).

All in all, Marietta’s strong economic background, commitment to instill pride in all, and dedication created community leaders and gave the Shontoug foundation a reputation not only locally but internationally. Aside from speaking engagements both locally and internationally, she was awarded fellowship program on *“Leadership in a Changed World”* by the Ford Motor Company. Columbia University in New York and ALA Fellowship recognized her for *“Developing an Institutional Mentoring Framework: Benchmarking of Workplace Learning and Development Practices.”* She was also recognized in Australia by AIM, Brisbane, Australia (Paragas, Shontoug Interview Part 1 2020). She shared the limelight with her staff by bringing them to these engagements and at times letting them attend on her behalf, knowing that the exposure could empower them as they took on bigger leadership roles.

Over the years, Ms. Paragas’ quest for other avenues of funding was still on the top of her list.

“I am not satisfied with what we are doing now. I want innovations. I want to focus on financial sustainability apart from marketing the products of the

community and NGO partners. Fund-sourcing is not always easy. That's why you need to work hard, if God does not like what you do, there would be no more funds... However, if God sees promise in what you do, He will provide (Paragas, Shontoug Interview Part 1 2020).

At 74 years old, Ms. Marietta Paragas still visited as a consultant every Mondays carrying on her mission work in her second home. She gave herself tall orders to plan a smooth transition and pass the baton to a successor. Overcoming the COVID pandemic, the Foundation was standing - but her wish was for her staff of 5 to have a bankable future and secure retirement as well. Her staff showed great resistance just at the thought of her leaving. They thought that they couldn't survive without her. This left Ms. Paragas with no choice but to subtly train her finance/administration officer, Ms. Ligaya Victoria. When Ms. Paragas' husband died, it was Ms. Victoria who took over the entire operation. When a board member inquired about funds, it was Ms. Victoria who answered their questions. Ms. Paragas thought, *"Get ready, I am going to train you to be the next CEO."*

Exhibit 7. University of Cordilleras (formerly Baguio Colleges Foundation)

Source: Artista, University of Cordilleras Campus Digital Image



Call to Step up: Ligaya Victoria's Personal Crossroad

"I expect to pass through this world but once. Any good thing therefore that I can do or any kindness I can show to any fellow human being let me do it now. Let me not neglect it, for I shall never pass this way again."

--Ligaya Victoria, citing Stephen Grellet

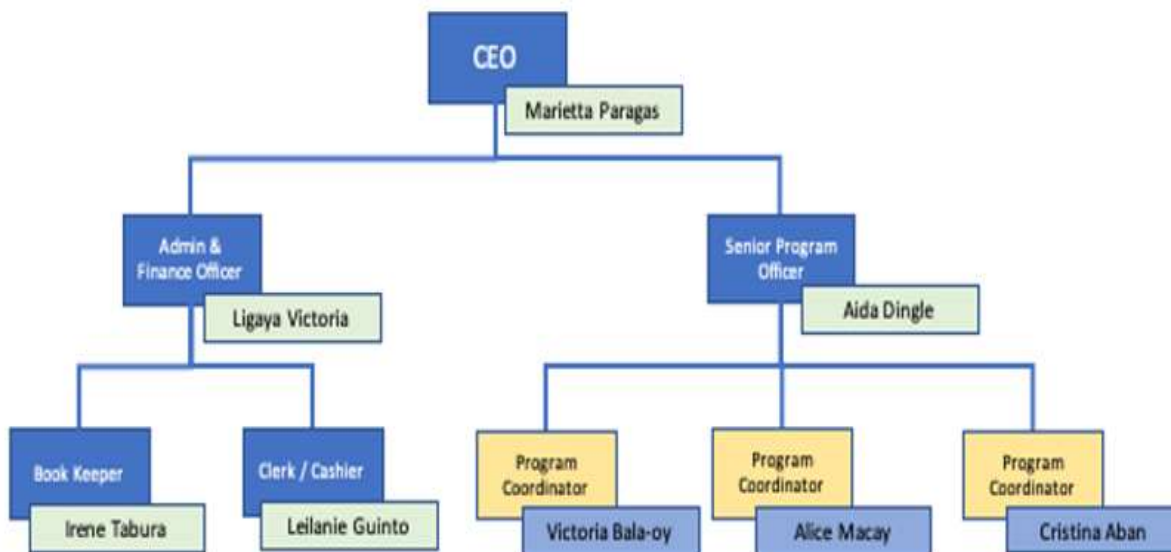
At age 54, Ligaya Victoria believed that it was destiny that led her to the Shontoug Foundation. She had hope for any job after graduation from the University of Cordillera just to help her parents and siblings. It turned out that her first job would be the *work of her heart*. Could it be fortuitous that she was in line to be the next CEO? Had the past 30 years prepared her for this turnover? Ligaya Victoria was described by others as capable, helpful, filial and dependable (Paragas *et al.*, Shontoug Interview Part 3 2022). Ligaya seemed contented to be the silent encouragement to all around her as she supported the activities of the foundation.

"I do not see myself as a leader. I have grown to love my work and it is very rewarding to see the community members grow with our initiatives. Although I do not work directly in the with the Good Shepherd Sisters, I feel I grow spiritually through my work" (Paragas et al., Shontoug Interview Part 3 2022).

As of January 2020, the foundation had a lean but dedicated staff of five: three administration officers and two direct staff - all proudly from Indigenous origin. The foundation could identify with its target communities - a feat not easily achieved by an outsider.

Exhibit 8. Organization Chart

Source: Shontoug Foundation, Inc.



The two direct staff in administration were Irene, the bookkeeper, and Leilanie, the clerk. The other three were coordinators: Victoria, Alice, and Cristina under the senior program officer Aida. The rest of the people came from the different NGOs who implemented and monitored progress in the community.

Ligaya Victoria's scope of work grew from documentation and budget control to community training and hands-on immersion. As her responsibilities grew, so too did her concern not only for the communities but also for the administrators themselves, specifically in terms of sustaining operations and their financial security. She understood that proper utilization of funds needed to always be in check. As a result, she saw to it that funds were maximized for projects.

"We need to prioritize that the salaries of the project administrators are always funded, however at times, the permanent staff may need to look for alternative sources of funds" (Paragas et al., Shontoug Interview Part 3 2022).

Each successful funding partner project was assured of funds for 3-5 years. *What would happen after that?*

The COVID outbreak in 2022 tested the team’s creativity and resiliency. Shontoug conducted virtual training and used mobile phones rather than going to sites. After two years, the Foundation was being tested - yet again -to think of creative ways as the *new normal* posed challenges in reaching customers. Ligaya’s fervently hoped that the right people would come to help them. Would she find the strength to step up and formally accept the position as CEO?



Lesil Artista is a faculty member in Human Resource Development Management under the College of Business and Financial Science of the University of Makati. She also taught at the School of Management and Information Technology at De La Salle-College of Saint Benilde. Before joining academia, she was part of Honda Cars Philippines Inc. for 18 years and headed different functions in the business operations from Quality, Engineering, Corporate Planning, and Organizational Development. A Business/HR Consultant since 2011, she provides consultancy in terms of corporate planning, human resource, talent development and process engineering.



Anne Camit teaches corporate communication, corporate social responsibility, and human behavior in organizations at De La Salle – College of Saint Benilde under the Human Resource Management Program. Her research interests and pursuits include sustainability, positive psychology in organizations, and employee well-being, among others. She applies her background in educational psychology and organizational communication when opportunities present themselves in areas of training, curriculum development and writing.

