



# BRIDGES

VOLUME 9

CORPORATE SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY INITIATIVES OF THE LOPEZ GROUP

**DOING WELL, DOING GOOD,  
DOING RIGHT, DOING IT NOW**



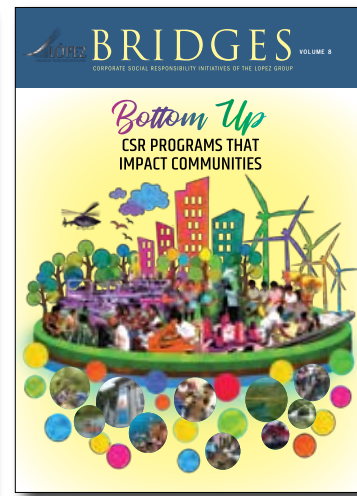
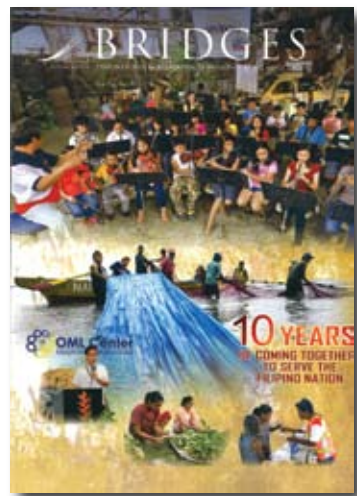
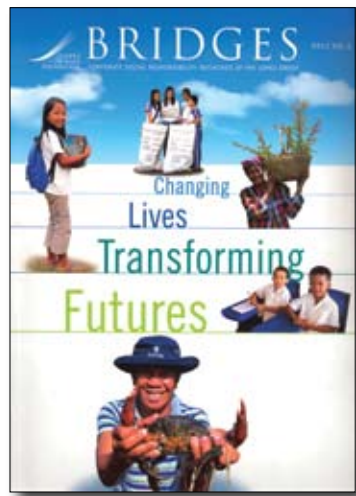
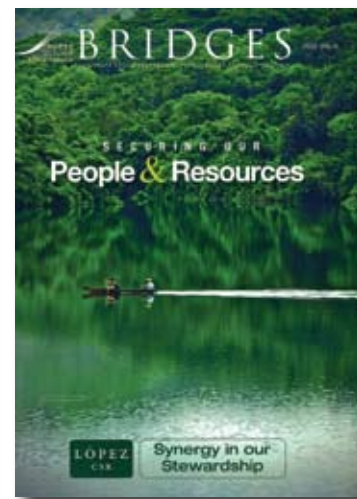


**BRIDGES MAGAZINE** is published by the Lopez Group Foundation, Inc. (LGFI), which coordinates the corporate social responsibility (CSR) programs and activities of the Lopez Group of Companies.

LGFI's main objective is to promote synergy among the Group's social and environmental responsibility initiatives by providing an overall view to internal and external stakeholders, thereby facilitating partnerships and sharing of knowledge and resources so as to

maximize the programs' positive impact on beneficiaries.

Through the print and online editions of Bridges, LGFI hopes to inform Group employees, partner companies and communities, policy-makers, non-government organizations, volunteer groups, and other stakeholders about ongoing CSR programs of the Lopez Group, and inspire a spirit of nationalism and civic consciousness that will help improve lives and secure a brighter future for Filipino families.



◀ THE COVER

CSR has evolved not only toward mainstreaming or being integrated with business objectives but also toward being a tool for enabling a company and, ultimately, society to deal with disruptive events and become renewed or regenerated.

# 'WE WILL CONTINUE TO SERVE'

As this issue of Bridges was about to go to press, the Covid-19 pandemic struck and a lockdown was implemented in Metro Manila, later in the whole of Luzon and other parts of the country.

True to its DNA of helping others in time of natural or man-made disasters, the Lopez Group of Companies immediately implemented a work-from-home regimen for its employees. Employees and management took it upon themselves to extend help to communities, the effort being spearheaded by the CSR groups of each Lopez company. LGFI is helping coordinate the Group initiatives.







Employees reached out to neighbors in the form of providing food packs and other basic needs, especially to those who lost their jobs. FPH-First Gen donated P100 million to the Department of Transportation and Communication to set up a quarantine facility and provided the most modern ambulance as well. A donation of P50million was also given to the Philippine General Hospital.

ABS-CBN Foundation or AFI mobilized its volunteers to provide assistance to as many communities as its resources could reach.

These are very tough times for everyone. But we take heart from the Lopez Group's long history of rising from the darkest crises and emerging even stronger.

As we can read from the book *Undaunted*: "The Lopez clan is ... notable for its ability to recover from severe upheavals. It has survived wars, assassination, exile, systematic looting of its assets, and political vendettas. Yet from each disaster, the Group manages to recover like a phoenix..."

LGFI Chairman Oscar Lopez explains this uncanny ability when he said: "The reason the Lopez Group has been so resilient through two centuries of its history is...we do have the kind of corporate values that go beyond the mere earning of profits... the Lopez Group will live on because it believes in certain basic values and principles that guide its existence beyond mere bottomline results."

In his Foreword to the same book, he said, "I believe that as long as the Lopez family remains true to its past and its forefathers, it can face the future with confidence... Our values are the secrets not just of our business longevity but also of our continuing ability to create a positive impact on the lives of the Filipino people. We are here to serve. That is our only reason for being, from my father's time until today, and beyond."

**"I believe that as long as the Lopez family remains true to its past and its forefathers, it can face the future with confidence... Our values are the secrets not just of our business longevity but also of our continuing ability to create a positive impact on the lives of the Filipino people."**







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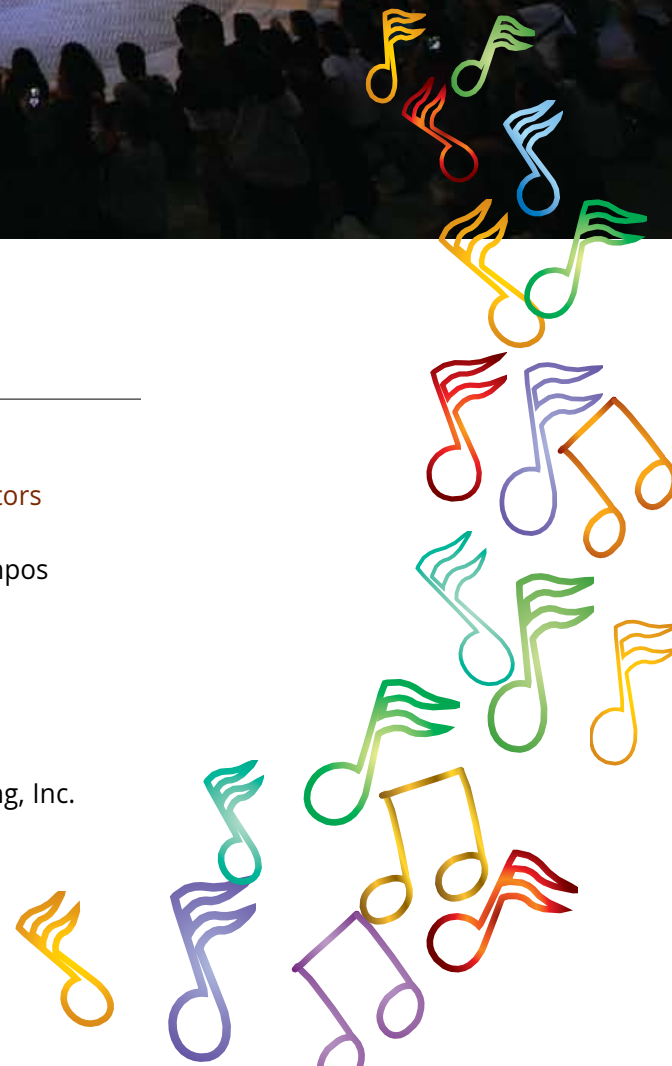
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# DOING WELL WHILE DOING GOOD

BY OSCAR M. LOPEZ

Up to a year ago, nearly 20 million Filipinos were extremely poor and had to live on less than Php130 (\$1.25) per day. This amount is for basic food and non-food necessities. The situation has improved somewhat, says the National Economic and Development Authority, but with the population still growing fast, the number of poor families continue to increase.

However, statistical figures are cold and do not allow us to feel the poverty of families. With one of every five Filipinos being poor, perhaps it helps if we imagine a typical Filipino family: father, mother and their three children.

One evening, the parents call their children to supper. Two children come to the dining table, but one child was nowhere in sight. For some reason or the other, he or she could not share the family's blessings. This absent child did not have the education, good health, resources and opportunities of the others.

How do the parents and the two children at home feel for their missing member of their family? Do they feel sad and think they need to help the brother or sister? Or, as may be happening in many families, do they simply shrug their shoulders and go on with their dinner.

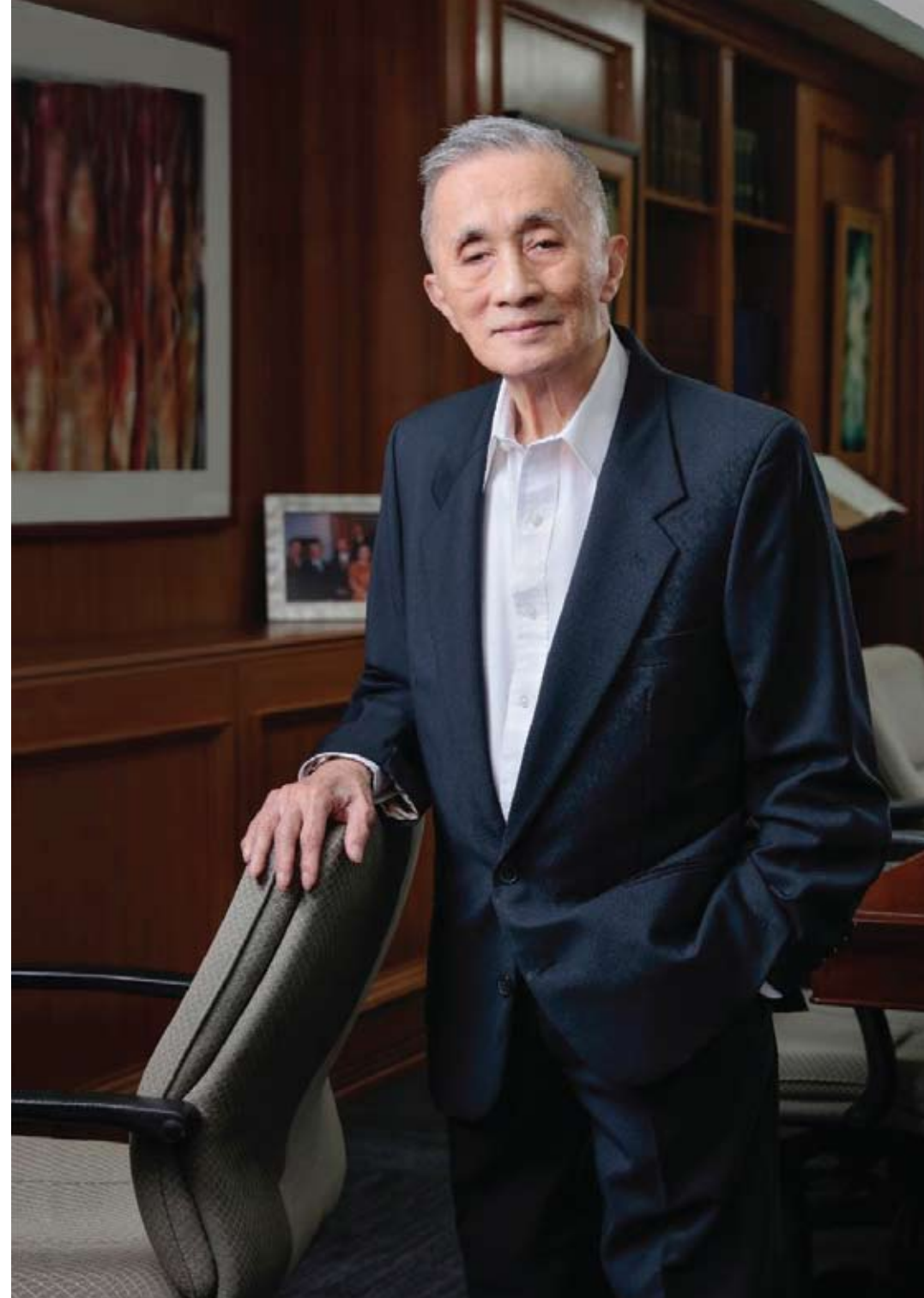
The absentee son or daughter represents the one of five Filipinos who remains poor and whom we do not help enough to allow him to join us at the dining table. I have heard other business and civil society leaders frame the Philippine poverty scene this way or perhaps in more compelling ways. It is always a

sobering thought where our lack of empathy shows how we ignore that "to those whom much is given, much is required."

While government is assumed to lead in multi-sectoral efforts to bring down poverty incidence, the essential role of the private sector in this effort is well recognized. But companies can fully participate in reducing poverty only if they embrace their social responsibility. Lopez Group has been a steadfast champion of Corporate Social Responsibility since the late 1800s when CSR had not yet gotten that name and was instead referred to as charitable or philanthropic acts.

But CSR and other significant efforts to address social inequities can only come from companies with principles and values that transcend profitability objectives.

In the transformative study of more than 1,400 companies that Jim Collins and Jerry Porras did with their team of meticulous academic researchers over many years, which produced the books "Built to Last" and "Good to Great," they referred to values as virtues and related this to the companies' sense of purpose.



Companies built to last are those that fight the good fight, that is to say, they compete in the marketplace from a platform of values. They do well while doing good.

Many companies may have been operating for years, and due to the values of their previous owners and employees, some continue to be profitable, even dominant in their industries. But when you examine them closely, they are no longer the same companies that their founders established. They retain their corporate names, their product brands, their distribution networks, and most things they call their corporate identity, but these are only on the surface.

Inside the company, you will see clearly that things are no longer the same. For one thing, everyone works solely for the revenues and not for their customers, and the unspoken mantra for corporate decision-making is, "We are here for the short term, so take the money and run." According to Jim Collins, these companies will not last no matter their present performance, and will never be great.

Whenever I talk about corporate values with senior executives of other companies, whether global or local, the Lopez value that surprises them the most is nationalism. They ask me, sometimes politely and in a roundabout way, why would a company like us consider that love for country is important in the marketplace. Doesn't this value diffuse our focus and resources, depriving management of more aggressive and wily options, and making us less profitable, less competitive?

Let me put this corporate value in terms of the attributes of national economies. I believe that the one single trait or mindset that makes countries like Japan, China, Vietnam, Singapore, Switzerland, Britain and Germany strong and globally competitive is their citizens' love for their country. It may be true that corruption, company rivalries, and even policy failures happen in these economies but, on the whole, what makes them hard to beat, what makes them resilient and built to last, is love of country and pride in themselves.

Likewise in the business arena, it is my observation that the leaders of great companies are committed to programs that serve not solely their financial bottomline but also help their countrymen, their customers everywhere, have better lives in healthier, safer and more joyful places.

The Lopez family and employees of the Lopez companies have among their peers so many men and women who dedicate their talents, energies, even personal resources to serving society in various ways. They always show selflessness and leadership in preserving the environment and Filipino culture, making good education available to more young people, pulling up the disadvantaged, generating clean power to light up barangays and run industries, providing audiences with information and entertainment, and building quality homes and productive work venues.

Our activities reflect love of country and other values such as integrity, social justice, and employee wellness that others may find irrelevant or even hindering in the pursuit of profits and market dominance. But we are steadfast in the belief that these values make us a company that will outlive others, and will remain true to its character: a company that is committed to doing well while doing good.



# DOING RIGHT, DOING IT NOW

BY MANUEL M. LOPEZ

When companies hold their Annual Stockholders' Meeting, sometime in the first or second quarter of the current year, they normally report their business performance in the year just past. They also make projections of their revenues and profits in the near term and their prospects for the long term. The more optimistic, the better.

Actually, it is very hard to predict the future, especially in these times of market volatility, political turbulence and rapid technological advances. The truth is, if there is a man who can accurately predict what will happen tomorrow, he will be the richest man in the world.

One thing that would help ensure a company's viability and growth in the coming years is for the company to adhere not only to legal and regulatory mandates but, and perhaps more importantly, moral and ethical principles that are increasingly shared by most countries at a time of globalized trade and geopolitics.

Many of these principles are reflected in the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals or SDGs. I am not about to discuss the SDGs – as that would require the expertise of others – but I will say that the Lopez companies have been active contributors to our country's commitment to help achieve the SDGs.

In 2016, the Philippines ranked 95th out of 149 countries in progressing toward the SDGs. We had good marks in four SDG areas,

namely Quality Education, Gender Equality, Affordable and Clean Energy, and Climate Action.

One SDG commitment the Philippines made was to lift over 20 million Filipinos out of poverty by the year 2030. That's only 10 years from now. The government, with private sector support, brought down poverty incidence from over 35% in 2010 to 19% in the early part of 2019. The target is to bring down the poverty incidence to around 14% by 2022. We have been making some progress but remain woefully behind comparable ASEAN economies. The poverty rate in Indonesia is about 10%; in Thailand it is 8%; Vietnam, 6%; and Malaysia, less than 2%, according to ASEAN economic surveys.

As a tool for poverty reduction, CSR has evolved toward the mainstream of business operations. It may have had its limitations, but CSR over the years has given birth to two powerful ideas that put the more progressive companies at the crossroads of profitability and social impact. These are the principles of Sustainability and Inclusion.



Sustainability, where First Gen and EDC are recognized as pioneers and innovators, means the capacity of the ecosystem and humankind to co-exist in balance or equilibrium. Sustainable development was defined by the UN Brundtland Commission as “development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.” Our two companies have excellent publications discussing Sustainability, which may have prompted government agencies and other companies to issue annual sustainability reports to show how they are complying with sustainable development principles.

Inclusion or, in our case, Inclusive Business is a way of doing business where companies engage and enable low-income communities to participate at scale in the companies' value chains either as employees, suppliers, processors, distributors, retailers or consumers. It is seen as an effective way for the private sector to help reduce poverty and democratize opportunities and at the same time gain business edge in terms of ensuring raw materials supply, distribution channels, or business continuity even in tough times.

When many large companies are fixated on the delusional objective of market dominance at any cost, Sustainability and Inclusion may become convenient buzzwords of branding and reputation building. There are simply too many ways for duplicity to cover up for actual behavior on the ground. Standards and metrics are important tools in promoting fair and ethical practices, but sadly can be circumvented or, in malevolent hands, the rules can be rigged. This is where the Lopez Group value of integrity keeps us grounded and centered.

The SDGs and the twin philosophies of Sustainability and Inclusion have a common element: they are holistic or integrative in the sense that they complete a loop that puts together companies, communities, and the policy environment into a circle of productivity and balanced growth. No one is left behind.

Finally, I want to say we must be conscious that the windows of opportunity open briefly and then close. One gets a clear shot, and that's all. One must know when he or she is in the right place and the right time, and make a decisive move.

The poor cannot be made to wait much longer. If we are to succeed as a company and make positive impact on the lives of people, we must do right by them and do it now.



# A CSR THEME THAT LEADS TO REGENERATIVE ACTIONS

BY MERCEDES L. VARGAS



On this ninth edition of Bridges, we have chosen a theme which at the outset looks rather simple and straightforward. But when you reflect on it, you might realize that it summarizes the evolution of Corporate Social Responsibility. Hopefully, it may bring good cheer and motivate Lopez Group employees and partners toward actions that will re-invigorate, or better yet, regenerate business, communities and our environment.

Let us consider CSR's evolution in broad strokes. In their early years, companies would normally focus on only one thing, which is on **doing well**, in terms of earning revenues, increasing profits, beating competition, and steady growth. Business owners then thought that if they did well in business and in so doing created jobs, paid taxes diligently, and brought affordable goods and services to customers, why, that should be more than enough contributions to society.

Some businesses are able to grow by improving or adding to their products, making their operations more efficient and productive, and expanding to new markets. Along the way, the companies learn that

they are increasingly expected to be **doing good** not only to their stockholders and employees, business partners and customers, and other stakeholders or people who could help or harm the companies' growth.

As they develop further, companies begin to see that doing well and doing good will not ensure their longevity or resilience. They have to be **doing right** in every aspect of their business. They have to observe or comply with the laws or the policy and regulatory environment. Their management has to keep in step with the latest technologies and empower the employees to be more productive, innovative, and motivated by their rightful share in the fruits of their work.

In a much more globalized, competitive and unpredictable world, the more transformative companies, the business leaders who are most likely to outdo their peers, are those who know the importance of **doing it now** and the agility to execute change or bring to market new products ahead of competitors. Complexity, constant acceleration, and unprecedented choices of a very young and assertive

generation give companies a narrow timeframe and fleeting opportunities to act.

As it is with business, so it is with CSR. In fact, the dividing line between profit-making and social impact has all but disappeared. CSR itself has evolved, giving rise to such concepts as strategic philanthropy, social enterprises, sustainability, inclusive business, and others not even in the horizon.

Yet, one unchanging rule of business and CSR is that for all one's best intentions and anticipation, things can and do happen that will test one's resiliency and longevity. In living organisms, this ability or mechanism of dealing with any eventuality is called **regeneration**. It is a process of renewal, restoration and re-growth that makes cells, organisms, and entire ecosystems, including those of humans, resilient to sudden fluctuations or major events that bring disturbance or damage.

Human regenerative abilities extend not only to individuals but to families and entire societies.

Invention, innovation, scientific analysis and creative adaptation are part of these abilities. Unfortunately, such abilities are hindered by many factors – such as superstition, rigid tradition, unjust political and economic structures, religion-based extremism, and unmitigated greed – which prevent more agile, timely and adequate responses to major disruptive events. The world's confused and laggardly responses to unprecedented challenges posed by climate change, toxic pollution, infectious diseases, racism and other forms of prejudice, and nuclear armaments have, ironically, given us certain clues on how we may properly address such crises. Gradually, we are seeing the following realities:

- a) The world is so much more interconnected now that problems cut across borders;
- b) Resources, experiences, round-the-clock work, and free exchange of data will bring down the time and cost for responses;
- c) Such global synergies will produce multiple solutions targeted at specific components or locations of the crisis;
- d) Mankind has the innate ability to deal with any threat, no matter how novel and at whatever scale; and
- e) We have a choice.

We certainly have a choice of whether to simply give up or take actions that will allow communities, economies and the planet itself to regenerate. But we have to make that choice now.

It is our hope that the Lopez Group's commitment to CSR is contributing to give Philippine society greater powers of regeneration.



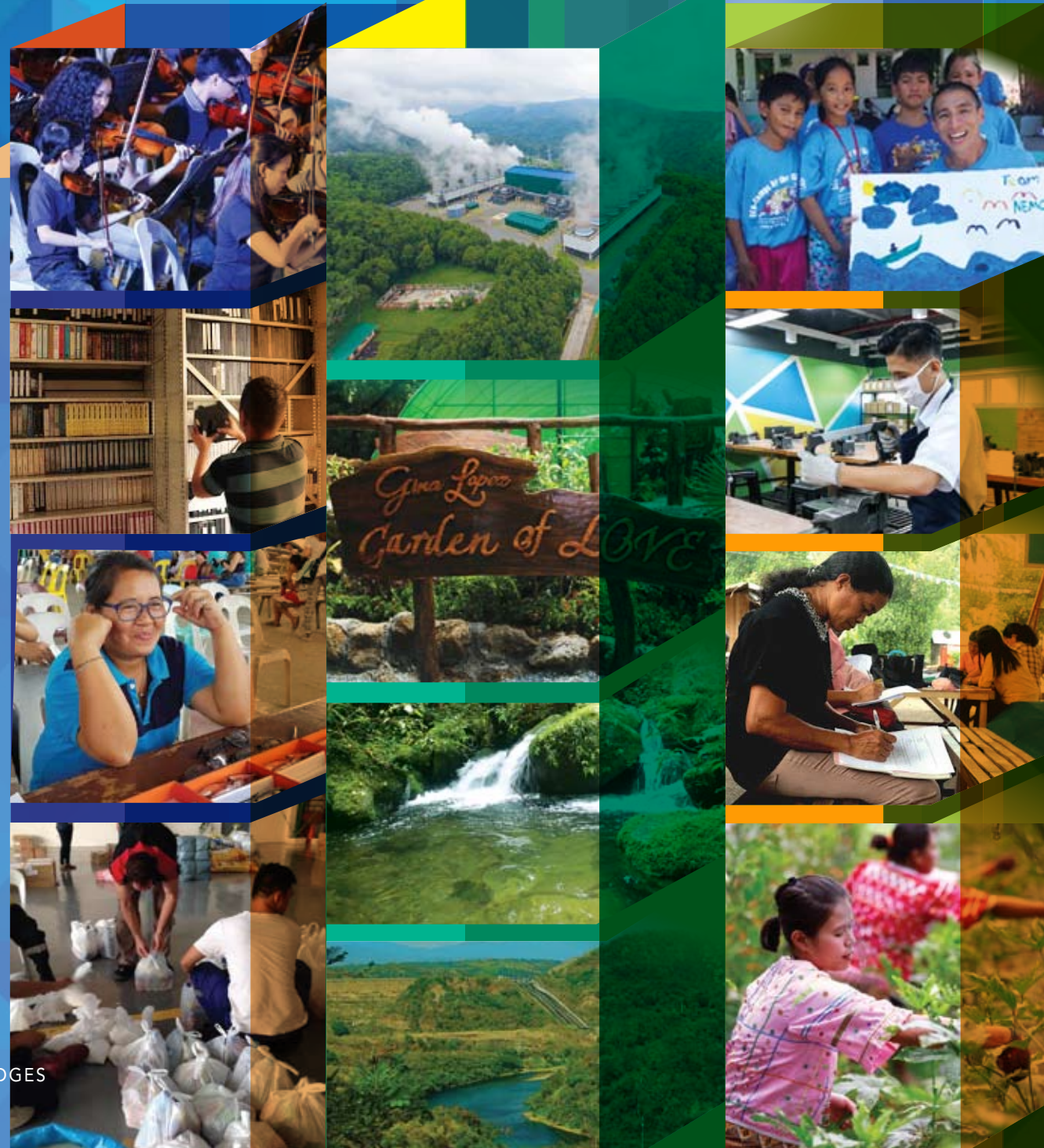
Cedie Vargas with España y Filipinas by Juan Luna collection (left) of National Gallery of Singapore and (right) collection of Lopez Museum



# LOPEZ GROUP CSR INVESTMENTS

PHILIPPINES

-  EDUCATION
-  ENVIRONMENT
-  LIVELIHOOD
-  HUMANITARIAN ASSISTANCE
-  HEALTH & WELLNESS
-  PHILANTHROPY





# TAKING CARE OF FUTURE GENERATIONS

## THE LOPEZ GROUP CSR INVESTMENT REPORT

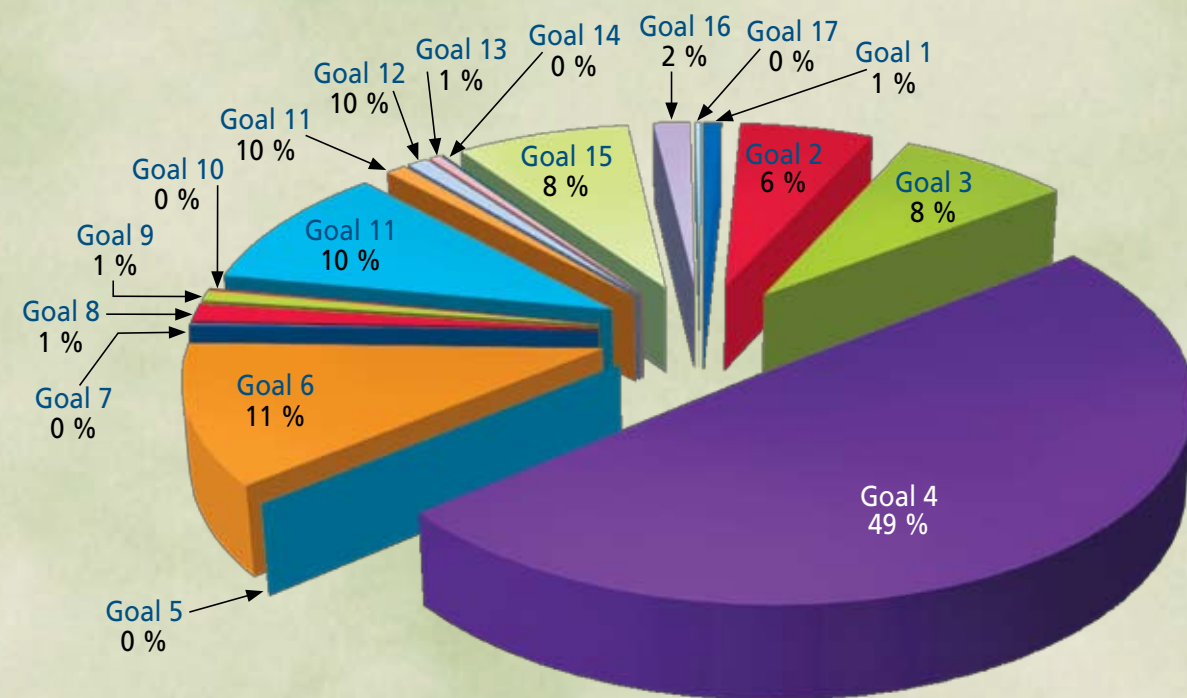
BY FAITH I. BACON

*“Education is the most powerful weapon which you can use to change the world.” Nelson Mandela*

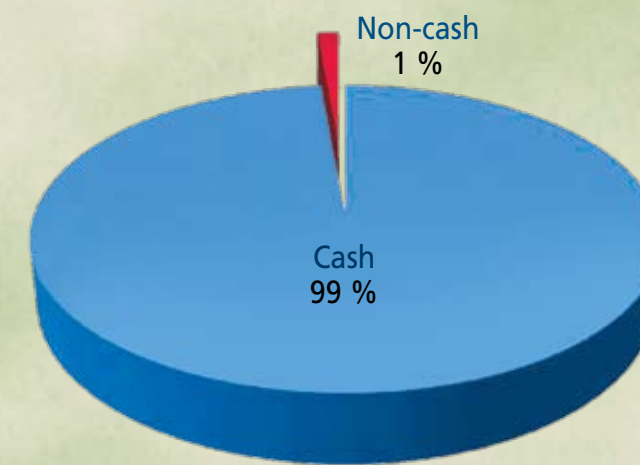
Forty-nine percent of the total CSR investments of the Lopez Group supports the United Nations’ Social Development Goal 4, which is to “ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities,” in 2018, the year being presented here for review as it has completed regulatory audit. One of the Group’s biggest educational programs is ABS-CBN Foundation’s Operation Sagip which provides for school buildings, scholarships and other programs through “Programa Genio.” In a class by itself is Knowledge Channel

Foundation Inc. which for nearly two decades has used TV and internet-based technologies to raise educational standards in hundreds of schools, some in remote areas. Other initiatives under this goal are EDC’s assistance to formal education and the Kananga-EDC Institute of Technology (KEITECH) which aims to be “a post-secondary technical vocational training center that will graduate highly-skilled workers, sought after by employers for their self-discipline and positive work attitudes.” Twelve of the 16 Lopez Group companies and foundations

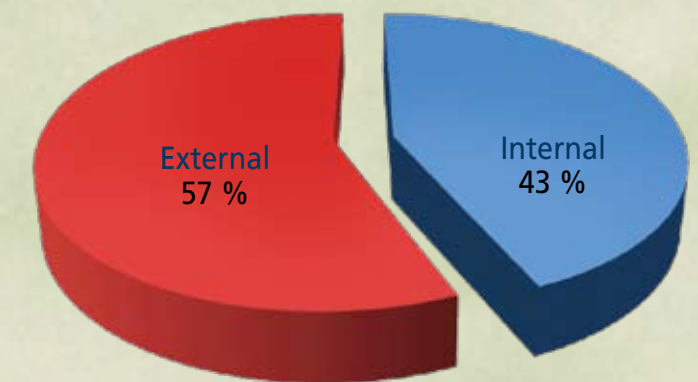
### THE LOPEZ GROUP SDG CSR INVESTMENT



### TYPE OF INVESTMENT



### SOURCE OF INVESTMENT



that participated in this report show through their investments that the Group puts primary importance to developing human capital for future generations.

SDG Goal 6 takes 11% of the investments. This covers the goals that “ensure availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all”. The biggest contribution of the group is the management of the La Mesa Watershed which services Metro Manila’s population of 28 million.

In making “cities and human settlements inclusive, safe resilient and sustainable” (SDG 11: Sustainable Cities and Communities), Operation Sagip contributes immensely in ensuring that there is significant reduction of fatalities during disaster and that its adverse effects on the well-being of affected families is reduced drastically specially for the most vulnerable sectors. Another major contribution to SDG 11 is in the area of strengthening and safeguarding the county’s cultural and natural heritage. Together with the Lopez Memorial Library and Museum, the Orchestra of the Filipino Youth by Ang Mission Inc. contributes to the “per capita spent on the preservation, protection and conservation of all cultural and natural heritage” as part of private funding and expenditure (SDG Goal 11.4.1).

Two more SDGs high on the list of the CSR investment of the Lopez Group are Goals 15: Life on Land and Goal, and 3: Health and Wellness. For Goal 15, the major source comes from EDC’s BINHI: Tree for Food and for Life Program. Tree for Life aims to “rehabilitate forests to avoid fragmentation of habitats through assisted natural regeneration or

rainforestation farming” while Tree for Food aims to “rehabilitate degraded forests by engaging upland communities as partners through agro-forestry and other sustainable forest practices.”

For Goal 3, bulk of this investment comes from ABS-CBN’s “Doc Ricky Pedia,” (Pedia ng Barangay), an ALKFI co-produced show which aims to educate mothers on proper nutrition and child care for their growing families. It highlights the importance of good health during the child’s first 1,000 days.

As in previous years, majority of the Groups investment is in the form of cash, although non-cash contribution has always been given value and included in the report. It is also worthy to note that ABS-CBN airtime and putting value into volunteers’ initiatives are ongoing processes within the Group.

In the interest of public disclosure, the Lopez Group has consistently included in the report the funds generated from external sources which are not part of the Lopez Group. These are funding donors and individuals who contribute to specific projects and activities of the various Lopez foundations. For the 2018 report, the external funds were managed by ALKFI, the bulk of which is for the La Mesa Watershed and humanitarian assistance, as well as Ang Misyon Inc. and Knowledge Channel Foundation Inc.

The total number of direct beneficiaries and partners in various communities who were reached by or had interacted with the Group’s 2018 CSR programs reached 36,624,653, or a third of the country’s population.



After 19 years, a million trees in 1,552 hectares were reforested, with 92% survival rate.

From 25 species, 125 bird species can now be found. From nine species of rare trees, now there are 125.

# LA MESA WATERSHED

## SECURING LIFE FOR GENERATIONS TO COME

“It’s a perfect model, this is the model that I used in DENR. La Mesa Watershed is an economical, ecological, and educational zone.” This was how the late ABS-CBN Foundation Chairman, Gina Lopez, described the La Mesa Watershed after it was transformed from a “totally disturbed” forest to an area that has sprung to life after years of rehabilitation and reforestation.

Situated in Quezon City, Caloocan City, and the town of Rodriguez in Montalban, Rizal, the La Mesa Watershed & Nature Reserve is the last forest in the Metropolis. The 2,659 hectare area is proven to be vital in the country as it is one of the primary sources of drinking water for a growing population of more than 12 million residents of Metro Manila and other Metropolitan Water and Sewerage System (MWSS) service areas.

### THE CHALLENGE

However, people didn’t seem to understand the watershed’s crucial role in sustaining life in the city. Over 2,500 illegal settler families were living within the watershed. Slash-and-burn/Kaingin system, timber pouching, land conversion, massive cutting of trees

and illegal logging degraded the condition of the watershed. There were only 25 species of birds and only nine species of exotic trees left. As experts said, the reservoir was totally disturbed. The forest was 75% denuded, brought about by illegal activities in the area.

Just a year after its establishment, Bantay Kalikasan (BK), the environmental program of ABS-CBN Foundation, became the project manager of the La Mesa Watershed in 1999 and launched the “Save the La Mesa Watershed Project”. The project’s objectives were crafted to regenerate the ecosystems of 2,659 hectares of the La Mesa Watershed, to preserve, and protect its reservoir and to institute watershed management structures, including the generation of donations and funds, for sustainable watershed management and protection.

“Napakarami pong informal settlers (IS) na nakatira dito. Almost 1,400-1,500 ang IS dito na kung saan karamihan sa kanila ay may kanya-kanyang kaingin. Ang prosesong ito ay napakadestructive dahil halos lahat ng puno pinuputol nila, para lang magkaroon sila ng areang taniman,” Dave Azurin, Project Manager of Save the La Mesa Watershed Project, recalls.





One of the project's components was the watershed's reforestation. This component initially called for the reforestation of at least 1,250 hectares through nursery establishment, plantation development, and plantation maintenance.

However good the intention to rehabilitate the forest, it was negatively received by those who have established their lives around the area and have relied on the land for their livelihood. This put the foresters' lives in danger. "Noong araw na nagpupunta ako dito, talagang natatakot ako. Sabi namin, yung isang paa na namin nasa hukay," shares Jose "Mang Jo" Pascual, La Mesa Watershed Management Project Supervisor. "Pinagbabantaan kami para lang hindi kami matuloy magreforest dito. Alam nilang matatanggal sila dito pag kami'y nag-umpisa." Despite the situation, they still went on with their plans.

"Ang ating mga foresters, napaka-dedicated nila. Na talagang meron silang sistema ng pagtatanim. Pati ng pagpili ng mga punong itatanim ay talagang ine-ensure natin na ito yung mga endemic at nabagay dito sa ecosystem at biodiversity na mahahanap natin dito. So marami dito yung mga endemic species katulad ng Kupang at mga Narra," says Jen Santos, Program Director of Bantay Kalikasan.

## TAKING A STEP FURTHER

Designed to be self-sustaining, the project rehabilitated a 33-hectare area where Bantay Kalikasan, along with their partners, launched the La Mesa Eco Park. The park serves as the "live classroom" to educate tourists about biodiversity and allow individuals to be part of the cause through donations they provide.

"Sa pagbisita nila dito, nakikita nila na meron palang paraiso yung katulad ng La Mesa Eco Park na malapit lang sa kanilang tinitirahan. They experience being in nature. Sabi nga namin, bago nating kayang sabihin na mahal natin ang isang bagay, kelangan muna nating daanan ang proseso ng pagkilala, pagpapahalaga, at saka natin siya mamahalin," says Santos. "So providing a landscape or an opportunity para sa kanila na makilala nila yung kalikasan. Yung mga puno, yung mga ibon ay isang paraan patungo sa pagmamahal sa kalikasan. Ang La Mesa Eco Park din ay nagbibigay donasyon para sa ating adbokasiya



sa patuloy na pagpoprotekta sa water shed. So sa bawat pagpunta ng bisita dito sa La Mesa Eco Park, nag-eejoy na siya, natututo siya, at nakikisama siya sa ating adbokasiya patungo sa ating pagprotekta ng La Mesa Watershed."

The Save the La Mesa Watershed Project is a shining example of successful Public and Private Partnerships (PPP). Bantay Kalikasan has done its successful watershed operation in collaboration with Metropolitan Water and Sewerage System (MWSS) along with its two concessionaires, Manila Water and Maynilad, Local Government of Quezon City, and the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR).

The Public-Private Partnerships have created a huge contribution to the success of the La Mesa Watershed's rehabilitation. They have increased the level of private sector's participation in saving the La Mesa Watershed by sharing conscious efforts to the environment. Partnerships also allow for augmentation in skills and capacities in order to address its growing needs efficiently.

A 25-year integrated watershed management plan was launched in 2016 to ensure the continuing reforestation of the watershed. It is an impact study management plan intended to further calibrate the conservation and protection of the watershed for the next two decades.

## ENJOYING THE FRUITS OF EVERYONE'S LABOR

After 19 years, the Save the La Mesa Project has addressed the totally disturbed watershed. Close to a million forest trees in the watershed or 1, 552-hectares were reforested with 92-93% survival rate according to validations done by DENR and MWSS. The passing rate of the DENR is 85%. It has become a verdant space inside the city through public and private sectors' aid. The once denuded watershed is now revitalized.

From 25 species, 125 bird species can now be found at the La Mesa Watershed. And from nine species, there are now 105 exotic trees. In 2018 alone, 180 hectares were enhanced with a total of 72,000 forest trees and 7,000 bamboos.

"Just recently," Santos shares, "meron tayong mga ekspertong nakapagpatunay, nakapagturo sa atin na ang Apugan Cave ay matatagpuan sa area ng watershed. At ang kagandahan nito, ang pagkakaroon natin ng cave - buhay, may mga dumadaloy na tubig, merong mga stalactites at stalagmites na nandoon. Maraming mga specie ang nakatira doon. Ito ay isang pagpapatunay na talagang ang biodiversity ay na-enrich dahil sa trabaho at misyong ginagawa natin dito sa La Mesa Watershed."

Azurin recalls, "Noon ang plano sana natin sa opisina is mag-establish lang ng demonstration farm na 20 hectares. Dahil sa dami ng mga supporters, donors doon sa proyekto natin, ito ay lumaki nang lumaki, hanggang sa ngayon ay patuloy tayong nagrehabilitate dito sa La Mesa Watershed. I'm very proud na naging part ako doon sa success ng La Mesa Watershed. Yung rehabilitation ng Watershed ay hindi lang para sa atin ngayon, ito ay para sa mga anak natin at sa mga apo na natin."

From this generation and for generations to come, Bantay Kalikasan believes that every Filipino is an Earth Warrior.





# EDC PARTNERS

## GIVE ASSISTANCE TO MINDANAO QUAKE VICTIMS



(from left) Norreen Gerona-Bautista, head of EDC's CSR teams in Mount Apo and Negros, and Engr. Romy Kee, head of EDC's Mount Apo Geothermal Facility, led the company's Christmas gift giving to over 3,000 earthquake victims in Kidapawan, North Cotabato.



Over 3,000 residents of Barangay Ilomavis in Kidapawan City, North Cotabato are now resuming productive lives after the strong earthquakes that hit their province and other parts of Mindanao last October and early December, thanks to the relief packs that EDC and its partners, Manobo Apao Descendants Ancestral Domain of Mount Apo (MADADMA), and the barangay local government unit (BLGU) of Ilomavis, Kidapawan City have given to them on December 21, 2019 at the Barangay Ilomavis gym.

EDC employee-volunteers, youth volunteers and members of MADADMA, and BLGU officials distributed packs composed of spaghetti noodles and sauce, coffee, milk, sugar, cheese, canned fruit cocktail, all purpose cream, pancit, meat, and rice in their first ever Christmas gift-giving ceremony in Kidapawan City.

"This activity that we did to somehow bring joy to these earthquake stricken families also fortifies our strong partnership with our partner community here in Brgy Ilomavis," said Norreen Gerona-Bautista, CSR Head for Mt Apo and Negros geothermal facilities.

Datu Damaso Bayawan of MADADMA; Datu Jimmy Mantawil, Captain of Brgy Ilomavis; National Commission on Indigenous Peoples Acting Provincial Officer Joey Bogay, and Tribal Chieftain Datu Romeo Atang were also present to show their appreciation and full support for EDC.

"The residents of Brgy. Ilomavis and I are thankful to EDC for all the assistance that it has been providing to us who were all affected by the strong earthquakes. Thanks to EDC", expressed Mantawil.

Cotabato was first struck with a magnitude 6.3 earthquake on October 16, followed by a magnitude 6.6 and a magnitude 6.1 on October 29, a magnitude of 6.5 just two days after on October 31, and a magnitude 6 on December 15.

EDC operates the 108.48-MW Mount Apo Geothermal Project that supplies clean and reliable power to Mindanao. It is a global pioneer in the geothermal energy industry and the country's largest vertically-integrated geothermal developer, delivering 1,457.8MW of clean and renewable energy to the Philippines.





# PRIORITY GIVEN TO QUAKE SANITATION & WATER NEEDS



Almost a month since the first of a series of high-intensity earthquakes struck the province of Cotabato on October 16, proper sanitation and drinking water facilities remain a top priority among displaced residents in evacuation centers across the Mindanao region, according to local government officials.

In Barangay Ilomavis in Kidapawan City, Barangay Captain Datu Jimmy Mantawil identified around 1,400 evacuees from Purok 7, 6A, and 6B in need of toilets and access to potable water. With assistance from the Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) team of Energy Development Corporation (EDC) and employee-volunteers from its Mount Apo Geothermal Project (MAGP) and Southern Negros Geothermal Project (SNGP) and from the local community led by Datu Henry “Saukulon” A. Ambas, six makeshift comfort rooms were constructed at the evacuation site at Ilomavis basecamp where the evacuees were transferred to ensure their safety.

EDC’s Emergency Preparedness and Disaster Response Unit (EPDRU) from its Manila head



office was also deployed to provide the necessary assistance to employees as well as to aid in continuous clearing operations of the local government of Kidapawan City.

More than 4,000 residents of Barangay Ilomavis and Balabag have received relief goods of rice, canned food, noodles, bottled water, medicines, and tents from EDC. “We are thankful to EDC for initiating this project to help our evacuees,” said Datu Mantawil.

Employees of EDC from its various sites as well as employees of other Lopez Group of Companies, namely First Philippine Holdings, FirstGen Corporation, FPIP, Rockwell, Lopez Inc, Lopez Holdings, LGFI, and private individuals pooled together their cash donations for the affected residents of Barangay Ilomavis.

“The Kapamilya spirit was certainly evident as employees wasted no time in doing what they could to help our communities in Kidapawan,” said Atty. Allan V. Barcena, Head of EDC’s CSR-Public Relations Group.

EDC is also working closely with the local government of North Cotabato, Kidapawan City, its Barangay Emergency Response Teams (BERTs) as well as local chapters of relevant government agencies and other civic organizations to continuously monitor the situation in the area and to provide necessary assistance.

Cotabato was first struck with a magnitude 6.3 earthquake on October 16, followed by a magnitude 6.6 and a magnitude 6.1 on October 29, and the latest with a magnitude of 6.5 just two days after on October 31. The epicenter was recorded in the vicinity of the municipality of Tulanun, affecting several nearby provinces and felt in many areas across Mindanao.

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144 student-trainees recently graduated from EDC's KEITECH Educational Foundation, Inc., the company's world-class technical vocational school located in Kananga, Leyte.

# 10th batch FUTURE NATION-BUILDERS GRADUATE FROM KEITECH SCHOOL

One hundred forty four trainees are set to fulfill their dreams after recently graduating from the KEITECH Educational Foundation, Inc. (KEITECH) Leyte Campus.

Coming from different walks of life, some trainees have worked in various fields as househelpers, construction laborers, farm laborers, sales staff (tindera/tindero) before enrolling in KEITECH. Some of them were grade 10 finishers and senior high school graduates.

Their own challenges in life became their motivation to work extra hard in their day-to-day training. They all adopted a "never give up" attitude.

KEITECH is a technical-vocational school established in 2009 by geothermal leader Energy Development Corporation (EDC) in partnership with the Technical Education and Skills Development Authority (TESDA).

Its mission is to help the poorest of the poor by addressing high poverty incidence and unemployment

rate in the municipality of Kananga and Ormoc City in Leyte and enabling qualified youth to acquire the top skills that are locally and globally in-demand. KEITECH has played a role that shaped not only the future of unemployed youth but also the true meaning of public-private partnership.

## PERSEVERANCE LEADS YOU TO SUCCESS

This year's Oscar M. Lopez Awardee Reynante C. Ylanan proved that if you persevere you will reach the success you've worked hard for.

The 22-year old is a son of a housewife and farm laborer and a native of Masarayao, Kananga, Leyte. He is the fifth of six children whose desire to help his family pushed him to persevere and get a scholarship slot.

Ylanan proved that he was worthy of the scholarship. He showed leadership skills and performed very well in his skills training. He took up Industrial Fitters, making him qualified for Scaffolding NC II, Plumbing

NC II, Shielded Metal Arc Welding NC II (SMAW), and Pipe Fitting NC II.

## CLARITY OF PURPOSE, PERSEVERANCE, BRAVENESS

Commencement speaker, Ms. Ma. Elizabeth Nasol, Senior Vice President of the Human Resource Management Group of the Energy Development Corporation shared three things that her father passed on to her when she graduated from college, among them that one must have clarity of purpose and perseverance.

"Kung wala kang passion to do what you're doing, you will never hit your dream. You need to have the desire to succeed, kasi kung wala kang desire to succeed, it will not be easy," said Nasol.

She also expressed her gratitude to KEITECH for continuing its advocacy in helping locals improve their lives and their families, and contributing skilled laborers in the workforce.

## CONSISTENT QUALITY OF TRAINING

Each student receives a full scholarship and are given accommodations and meals for the duration of their training. Moreover, KEITECH's 10-month training program is tailor-fit to the most in-demand jobs in construction, metals and engineering, and tourism and health and social services.

While it followed the prescribed curriculum of TESDA, KEITECH went one notch higher by incorporating life skills and values formation program so the trainees will acquire not just the technical skills but also the professionalism and right attitude towards work. This consists of a discipline-oriented training environment, with values development focusing on respect, honesty, teamwork, leadership, cleanliness, and others.



Now on its 10th year, KEITECH has proven its capability to produce world class laborers by maintaining a 100% passing rate in all TESDA certification exams.

About 90% of the graduates have been absorbed for employment by companies where they did their on the job training (OJT). Other industry partners have shown interest in hiring KEITECH graduates, especially those in the construction industry due to the high demand for skilled construction laborers.

Out of the 145 graduates, 12 were scholars sponsored by Philippine Associated Smelting and Refining Corporation (PASAR). The company was so satisfied with the training that their scholars got from KEITECH that they have committed to sponsor 30 more trainees this next school year.

Sixty-four trainees will be given a certification on Construction Handcraftsman, 25 on Industrial Fitters, 30 on Metals & Engineering, and 26 on Hotel & Restaurant Services Tourism. This batch will have 31 females and 114 male graduates.







## TWO DECADES OF CHAMPIONING QUALITY EDUCATION

BY MICHAEL RAMOS  
AND NINA DE SAGUN

The 90s marked the rise of educational television programming or e-TV in the Philippines pioneered by the late Gina Lopez. Kids woke up watching shows like Sineskwela, ATBP, Math Tinik, and EpolApol on ABS-CBN. Eventually, Knowledge Channel Foundation (KCFI) took on the role of heralding and expanding this initiative into a channel dedicated to airing TV programs based on the curriculum of the Department of Education. It was the birth of Knowledge Channel, first and the biggest classroom on-air.

Two decades later, Knowledge Channel still stands as a proof that quality education can be achieved with the help of technology. And with an education crisis looming over our country today, KCFI is needed more than ever in helping catalyze the change we need for the sake of the Filipino children and the country's future.

### USING THE POWER OF TELEVISION FOR EDUCATION

Founded by Rina Lopez Bautista and Carlo Lopez Katigbak, with the support of Lopez Group Chairman Emeritus Oscar M. Lopez and Eugenio Lopez III,

KCFI championed the cause of improving the quality of basic education in the country by producing educational content and installing satellite dishes in public schools. The goal was to create transformative learning experiences inside the classroom with the aid of technology.

"There was a lot of problems and a lot of issues facing the education sector but we started off with just so much excitement, so much promise. That promise and that excitement we started with just led to a deepening of our passion to continue and face the different challenges in the years that followed," said Lopez Bautista.



Over the past 20 years, Bautista and her team of dedicated employees and volunteers, crossed rivers, trekked mountains, and traversed islands, just to reach the remotest schools in the Philippines. From Itbayat, Batanes to Sitangkay, Tawi-Tawi, KCFI brought Knowledge Channel to more than 7,000 public schools, alternative learning centers, and learning spaces.

Evolving with the times, KCFI sought to diversify its options when it came to content delivery. From initially providing educational programming via cable and satellite, it made its content available on various online and offline platforms. Today, Knowledge Channel can be viewed on digital television through ABS-CBN TV Plus and SKY Direct. It has more than 700 videos uploaded on its YouTube channel, a fast-growing online platform for educational learning. On-demand viewing is now possible as well thanks

to Knowledge TV, a smart TV installed with a Knowledge Channel app, where kids and teachers can watch any Knowledge Channel video even without an internet connection.

### FOCUSING ON FOUNDATIONAL SKILLS IN LEARNING

KCFI also continues to push its limits by producing relevant and creative educational content that help address the challenges teachers and students are currently facing. Back in 2016, the channel pioneered a program for primary Mathematics titled "MathDali" top-billed by Robi Domingo, a series that focuses on overcoming the fear of the subject to pave the way for better Math learning. A pilot study was done in Bulacan which unearthed some serious concerns running within the basic education system.







is a colorful weave of animated shorts of popular storybooks, live acting, and catchy rhythms blended with reading strategies hosted and demonstrated by teacher Michelle Agas. Each episode follows the curriculum and teaching guides of the Department of

Education, a move made by KCFI to make classroom instruction more seamless and natural for the teachers.

### CELEBRATING 20 YEARS OF EDUCATIONAL SHOWS

In celebration of its double decade anniversary, the channel has launched new seasons and new episodes of its highly anticipated shows such as “AgriCOOLture”, hosted by Enchong Dee, is back after two successful runs. Produced in partnership with Landbank, it promotes the value and significance of agriculture in our country’s economy, and to the lives of every Filipino. Teen stars Maymay Entrata and Khalil Ramos currently stars in the fourth season of the environment-focused “Puno ng Buhay” developed with the Forest Foundation Philippines. The nine episode learning series is designed for Grades 4 and 5 that talks in detail about Philippine forests. The channel’s travel and magazine show “Wow” returns with two new episodes shot in Bukidnon and Isabela. Together with Edric Calma, viewers can take a glimpse of local geography, life, and culture which can be used in Araling Panlipunan Grade 3.

MathDali studies have shown that one of the major causes for low math scores stem from low reading comprehension of pupils. Foundational skills in reading and numeracy were truly lacking thus urging KCFI to steer its direction towards early learning.

As a result, Basa Bilang is born, a multi-year project created by KCFI to help teachers and students in Grade 1 establish the foundational skills needed for higher learning. The goal of BasaBilangis to produce more than a thousand animation videos in English, Filipino, and Math for Grades 1 to 3 and for teachers to effectively use these in their lessons. The integrative approach of the project included teacher trainings, mentoring sessions, and regular monitoring from KCFI of which 18 elementary schools in Santa Rosa City, Laguna are involved in its pilot run.

One of the direct products of BasaBilangis “Wikaharian”, an animated educational show targeted for Grade 1 learners. Done in collaboration with various interns under the KCVIP or Knowledge Channel Volunteer and Internship Program. The show

Apart from these shows which air under the curriculum block, it has also introduced its short-form content starting with it’s first mobile quiz show “Knowledge on the Go” with Marlo Mortel, the hands-on experiment-based Science Says with renowned Filipina scientist Dr. Reina Reyes, values-inclined animation “Kwentoons”, “Art Smart”, Talasalita, and Knowledge Factory.

### THE CALL FOR MORE EDUCATION CHAMPIONS

With all the accomplishments KCFI has done in the past two decades, many consider Bautista to be a true champion for education. Yet, it will take more education champions to help KCFI steer all its projects into fruition and ultimately, with the leadership of the Department of Education and other organizations, improve the low reading and comprehension, and numeracy skills of Filipino students.

The looming education crisis in the Philippines proves to be bigger than initially thought as it involves a confluence of other factors including health, nutrition, and social protection among others. But Bautista believes that partnerships and collaboration play a central role in all of this. “Education is the key to progress,” asserted Bautista. “Today, so much can still be

done to help more people through education. Each of us can contribute, knowing and honing our talents and passion, and using them to help improve the lives of our fellow Filipinos. Let us do it together!”

For donations and / or partnerships, you may email [liberty.reyes@knowledgechannel.org](mailto:liberty.reyes@knowledgechannel.org)





# ENHANCING LEARNING STRATEGIES

BY MONICA TAN



It was the third quarter of 2018 when Lopez Group Foundation Inc. (LGFI) received an email from Mr. Albert Hisoler, Principal of Dumalogdog Elementary School, located in a remote barangay of Sindangan, Zamboanga del Norte, asking for educational assistance. Since it was already in the last months of the year, LGFI's funds for small grants were all allocated for. But that did not put off the hardworking and conscientious principal, who still communicated with LGFI. According to his communication, Dumalogdog Elementary School is in need of new classrooms, a library, learning facilities/materials, supplemental feeding for 40+ children, a stage/mini covered court, school supplies, among

others. The school has around 300 learners, 65% of which belong to an indigenous tribe and 50% of the children belong to families who are considered among the poorest of the poor, qualifying for cash assistance under the Department of Social Welfare and Development's 4Ps program.

Barangay Dumalogdog is only 9 kilometers from the town center but its accessibility is not easy. The village, until the 1940s, was still a forest. The Subanen tribe is present in the area. It remains primarily an agricultural area, but with few landowners, and with other small business activities such as transportation and construction.



The overall Grades I-VI Mean Percentage Scores result of Dumalogdog Elementary School is pegged at 73.78% for School Year 2017-2018 which is below the planning standards of the Department of Education (DepEd). This is why LGFI selected Dumalogdog Elementary School for a "Gift of Knowledge" package from the Knowledge Channel. The package consists of a 40" colored television, a portable library-device loaded with 1,000 learning videos and other materials based on the approved DepEd curriculum, speakers, and a half day training session with the teachers on how to use the videos to enhance their teaching skills. The decision was relayed to the Principal in May 2019, just before the new school year started.

Last July 19, 2019, Ms. Doris Nuval, Head of School and Community Engagement – Knowledge Channel Foundation Inc., went all the way to Mindanao to personally deliver the Gift of Knowledge package to Principal Hisoler and the rest of Dumalogdog Elementary School. In the same afternoon, Ms. Nuval also oriented the teachers on the Gift of Knowledge and how to maximize use of the videos to better engage the students.

Per Principal Hisoler, the Gift of Knowledge package is well received by both teachers and learners. The 9 teachers, for instance, no longer have to make their own instructional materials. This saves them a lot of time, which they can use for enrichment or remedial tasks. The videos also provide more opportunities for interaction between the teachers and learners. As the students are more visual, they pay more attention and better retain the lessons. Comparing and contrasting their experiences are also done. They also learn to communicate better during class discussions. It is noteworthy that the MPS of the students improved during the first and second quarters of 2019 compared to the average MPS for SY 2017-2018.

For Dumalogdog Elementary School, the Gift of Knowledge not only simplified learning processes but also helped the learners retain more accurate knowledge.

"...my heartfelt gratitude to LGFI for this opportunity of learning afforded to our learners and teachers. Learning the DepEd competencies had been made easier as Gift of Knowledge Package simplified it providing accurate learning experiences to our learners and new teaching approach has been utilized by our teachers. This Gift of Knowledge is proven to be cost effective and has yielded good results in our MPS for the past 2 quarters."

Albert D. Hisoler, Principal II





## ZERO WASTE STORE WITH ECO HOTELS

First Balfour, in partnership with Eco Hotels Philippines, officially launched its zero-waste store in its corporate office in Parañaque City earlier today. A much bigger First Balfour Zero Hero initiative, the zero-waste store aims to push against single-use plastics through the use of refillable containers.

Launched in 2016, First Balfour Zero Hero is an environmental awareness campaign aimed at challenging employees to give back to the environment by reducing their carbon footprint. While its banner project, the #StuffItChallenge, proved to be a huge success, this next step is aimed at reducing the use of plastics instead of repurposing plastic wastes into ecobricks.

The zero-waste store was opened to encourage employees and their families and friends to avoid the use of sachets and single-use plastics which just normally end up in oceans and landfills as plastic wastes. A much better alternative would be having refillable containers, such as those sold at the store, for organic bathroom essentials such as shampoos, conditioners, bath gels, and lotions. Each costs PhP 99 for every 250ml bottle.



*"We're so proud that we're finally here. We are Eco Warriors at Eco Hotel and you are Zero Heroes [in First Balfour]. So as Eco Warriors and Zero Heroes, we just vaulted in and now we have this very exciting super power to fight for sustainability and fight against climate change,"* shares Eco Hotel PR Manager Aym Bagatsing shares.

Known for their environment-friendly hotels across the country, Eco Hotel Philippines, launched the country's very first zero waste store at Spaces, Makati. First Balfour is Eco Hotel's very first zero-waste store partner.



## SUSTAINABLE HABITS: GOING BEYOND GREEN TECHNOLOGIES

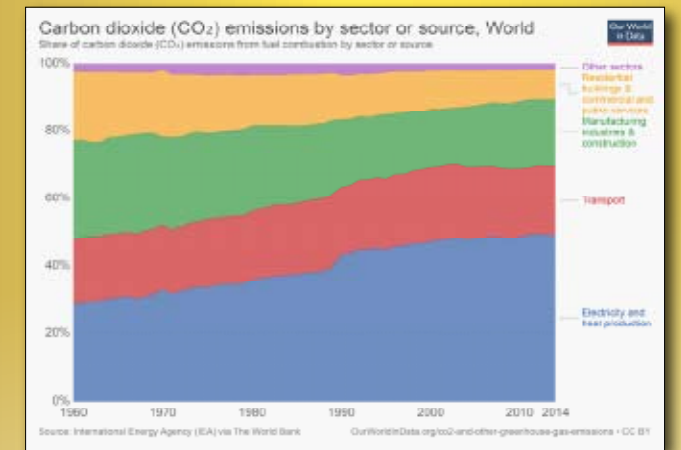
The Philippines' demand for energy has been constantly increasing. Power demand is seen to even surge as more economic activities are anticipated largely due to the Build, Build, Build program and steady economic growth.

We all know that this increasing appetite for power comes with a hefty price. In 2017, almost 50% of generated electricity was produced by coal-fired power plants while only 25% came from renewable energy sources such as solar.

Electricity generation accounted for 50% of the global greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions in 2014 which means that power plants are the largest source of GHG worldwide. So should we stop building power plants then? Unfortunately, the demand for power will always be there but many organizations these days invest in technologies not only to reduce GHG emissions but also to reduce utility costs.

Earlier back in 2015, First Balfour invested in LED lights that use less energy than conventional bulbs. A 50% average savings on lighting cost annually has been accounted for since its installation.

In November 2016, First Balfour also ventured in a bold move to invest in a solar power system installed in the Sucat Head Office. An initiative that yields 23% average savings on electricity consumption annually. Moreover, the approval of net metering that will



enable the export of surplus solar energy to the public utility power grid will further boost First Balfour's contribution to sustainability.

Additionally, the latest initiative to reduce energy consumption was installed last year. The new window films may seem invisible but its 57% solar energy blocking capacity was put to the test. With this new move, indoor heat and consequently aircon usage are expected to drop further.

First Balfour's electricity consumption has been steadily decreasing largely due to these technologies. However, it is important to note that a number of everyday initiatives and habits have been instrumental in curbing electricity consumption.

You may have noticed the daily habits among employees such as lights off during lunchtime and the scheduled aircon shut off which have been ongoing for years now. These may be considered simple actions but habits and attitude are essential in our efforts to curb global warming.

It is not yet too late. Individually, you can still do your part to reduce our impact on the environment especially that summer is just around the corner. Remember, this quest requires collective action and sustainability is not a one-time effort.

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## FIRST BALFOUR GIVES HELP TO QUAKE-HIT EMPLOYEES

First Balfour has come to the aid of the families of its employees assigned in the Energy Development Corporation Mount Apo Geothermal Business Unit (EDC MAGBU) maintenance project reeling from the destruction caused by three strong earthquakes in October, the last one on Thursday, October 31.

The maintenance project, located in Brgy. Ilomavis, Kidapawan City, North Cotabato, is approximately 40 kilometers away from Tulunan, Cotabato, the epicenter of the 6.5 magnitude quake which hit the island at 9:15 am on Thursday. Among the barangays

in Kidapawan City, the effect of the earthquake had been most felt in Brgy. Ilomavis, being right at the foot of Mount Apo. A total of 48 employees, including project team members, direct and indirect workers, and T1 Rentals operators were affected by the earthquake.

Like the thousands of families displaced by the quake, 27 of our employees also had to stay in evacuation centers provided by the local government. First Balfour extended its help by mobilizing a call for donations last November 5 which the Employee Relations team, Anchel Cruz and Hanna Aguilar, personally handed over the following day. Structural engineers from Technical Services Department, Ian Laguerta and Justin Medina, also visited their houses to assess the extent of the damage and inspect whether they are still habitable.

Thirty (30) camping tents were distributed to the employees staying in the evacuation center. Before receiving their tents, they were merely using blue sheets and used tarpaulins as temporary shelter. While food and water supply are enough from various

relief operations from the government and other volunteer groups, the victims are still in need of medicines for cough, colds, fever, and even diarrhea as access to sanitary facilities such as comfort rooms and wash areas are very limited.

Meanwhile, support was also extended to the family of Diosdado "Dado" Mayagma, a T1 Rentals boom truck operator (TGSi) who passed away of heart attack at the MAGBU site last November 4. Dado was among the team who worked on the immediate

clearing of seven (7) separate landslides along the 12-kilometer access road to the MAGBU site.

A number of heavy equipment such as backhoes and boom trucks as well as skilled labor such as welders and pipefitters from the LGBU project were deployed to the site to help out on the clearing operations and repair of the damaged pipelines. The project team worked on the completion of the repair and rerouting of pipelines to bring the MAGBU plant back in operation.





# REFRAMING HOW PEOPLE SEE CLIMATE

**G**reta Thunberg summed up 2019 in five words: “Our house is on fire.” The past year’s headlines demonstrated that climate change is already here and we are now feeling the wide range of impacts—from forest fires and drought to flooding and landslides.



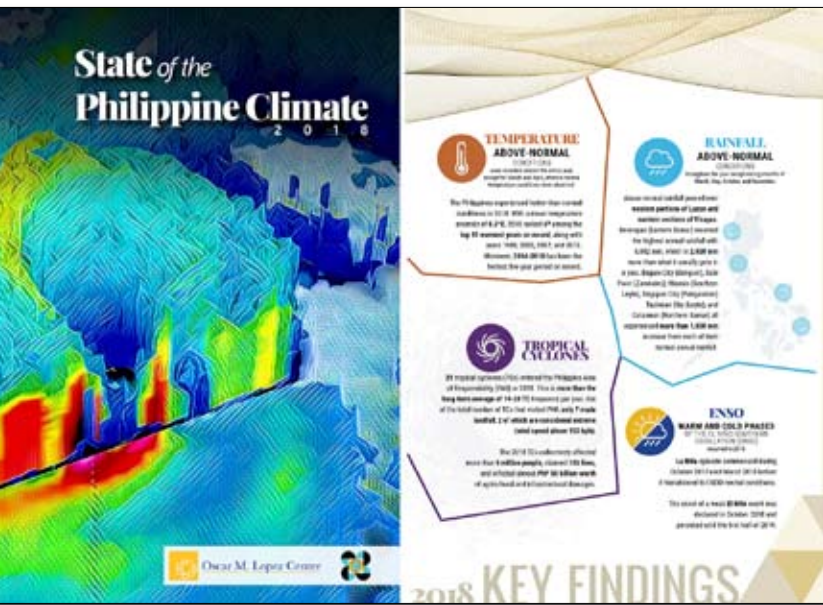
Climate scientists are in agreement that the next 12 months are critical for the survival of life on earth. While the Paris Agreement sets out plans for countries to cut carbon emissions by 45% by 2030, that plan can only come to fruition if countries significantly harden their carbon reduction targets by the end of 2020.

Regardless of diplomatic and political developments, the Philippines remains to be one of the most vulnerable countries to climate change. And according to the upcoming State of the 2018 Philippine Climate (in press), the Philippine climate continues to get warmer and warmer, rainfall patterns are changing, and extreme weather events are affecting more and more Filipinos.

To develop the resilience of the vulnerable, the Oscar M. Lopez Center further deepens its mission by harnessing science that is co-produced and actionable. The Center believes that resilience-building can be developed through more targeted awareness-raising initiatives, and co-produced actionable knowledge projects. For 2020, the Center is looking to ramp up efforts to ensure the usability of climate information, believing that effective communication of climate information to relevant stakeholders and decision-makers is one key step towards building a more climate-resilient society.

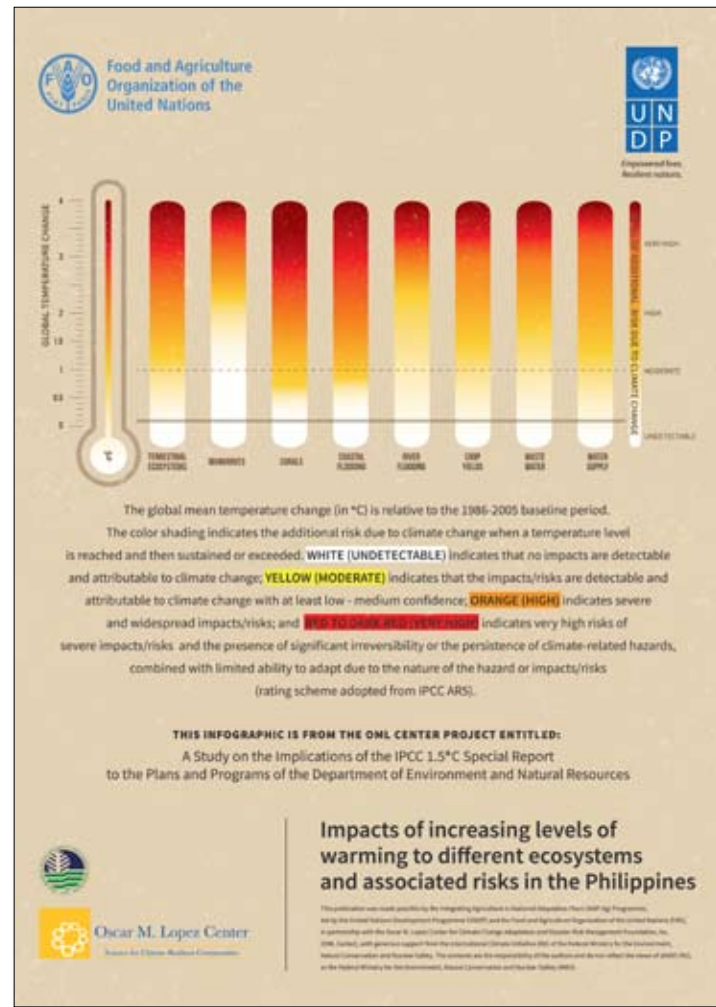


## THE SCIENCE CONVO



Part of the changes that the Center is making towards usability includes moving our branded research and publications into more dynamic directions in terms of content and packaging. The State of the Philippine Climate series and the Climate, Disaster and Development Journal, for example, are undergoing reviews to become more aligned with their target users and to reduce the gap between science and action.

With the Philippine Climate Change Assessment Report Working Groups 1 to 3 concluded, the Center is working on completing a series of briefs synthesizing the first set of reports, which can help guide decisions in climate change adaptation and mitigation. Preparation for the 2nd Philippine Climate Change Assessment reports is underway.



Last year, the Center also had the opportunity to conduct the "Study on the Implications of Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change's Special Report on Global Warming of 1.5°C to the DENR's Plans and Programs" in partnership with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR). The four-month initiative, funded by the International Climate Initiative (IKI) of the German Federal Ministry for the Environment, Nature Conservation and Nuclear Safety and managed by the UNDP, involved analyzing how the DENR's ten priority programs can be improved to become more climate-responsive.

Upon the project's conclusion in October, the Center's project team presented their key findings on how DENR's ten priority programs can be improved to become more climate-responsive. In addition, the team made recommendations on using the ridge-to-reef approach when looking at climate impacts and risks as a framework to craft policies and design programs for climate change adaptation and mitigation; strengthening inter-agency and cross-sectoral coordination and information sharing; and the necessity of localizing studies on the impacts of climate change given various global warming scenarios and capturing baseline data for climate change-related information to better understand how the country's ecosystems will be affected in the future.

The Center has also begun implementing a more innovative and expanded Grant program, which looks into collaborative projects aside from the traditional research grants. This will allow the Center to work on co-produced projects that harness and combine the strengths of varied disciplines and sectors, such as journalism, science, arts and culture, in elevating public discourse on climate change, its impacts and possible solutions.

## THE GROUP CONVOS

In the past year, several of the Center's major projects have begun to focus on communicating climate change and its impacts, and involving multi-sectoral groups to engage in climate responsiveness and resilience.





## EXCELLENCE IN MUSIC FOR A BETTER PHILIPPINES

**M**ore than 1,000 youthful music scholars have benefited from Ang Misyon's tireless effort to reach out to various barangays and schools so as to find budding musicians who would grow in knowledge and skills, and later pass on their training and inspiration to others. It is a unique social development approach where the love of music becomes the bridge to help the next generation attain a more productive and fulfilling life for themselves and their communities.

Ang Misyon offers music programs that aim to develop musical skills as early as 6 years old. At a young age, children are introduced to the world of music and its possibilities, preparing them to eventually progress to professional levels. The values of commitment, discipline and community are ingrained in their orchestral training.

## SCHOLARS' PROGRESS

The OFY scholars are changing the perspective about music not being a sustainable career choice, a common misconception and challenge for many. There are scholars in college who have decided to take Music as their major, which is a sign that they are determined to pursue their passion.

As part of their mentoring, allowances are given for the hours they clock in to teach and perform, which sets the tone that they can be properly compensated for their time and effort as well as their talent.

A number of them have stepped up to teach the younger groups, Ang Misyon Children's Orchestra and the Beginners Program. As some OFY members share in their social media posts, this is their way of paying it forward.



# ANG MISYON

## REACHES WIDER AUDIENCE







There is not one formula to measure the success of a social project as such may take years of work and study, but with a movement that marked its seven years in 2019, there are a few proofs of concept that show there is much potential to move forward. Ang Misyon's is gradually gathering scholar stories, such as those who have been with the program for a few years, siblings or come from a lineage of musician parents and grandparents and those who reach out to seek for further growth and exposure to the field.

### NURTURING YOUNG TALENT

With the steady progress and a remarkable improvement in their musicality, and the guidance of Joshua Dos Santos, Music Director and Chief Conductor of Orchestras, the younger groups namely the Beginners and Children's Orchestra, will be honed to become another generation of disciplined and dedicated young musicians.



Photo caption



Many of them started in Ang Misyon as young musicians eager to learn and hone their skills. opportunities to perform with professional groups such as ABS-CBN Philharmonic Orchestra and Philippine Philharmonic Orchestra have opened for the OFY members. There are graduates of Music Conservatories and senior members of the group that have had the chance to also be engaged as professional musicians, performing at key events and venues, with the confidence and humility that they are the result of their hard work, perseverance and the commitment to their training with Ang Misyon's programs.

### PLATFORM FOR OPPORTUNITIES

Performances in local and international venues have also become milestones for the OFY such as their 2018 Qatar Tour. They played at Qatar National Library and were the first Filipino youth orchestra to perform in Katara Opera House. They represented the Philippines for arts and culture under the Department of Foreign Affairs, Cultural Diplomacy Project.

While they have broken ground on an international scale, Ang Misyon remains to work on the local avenues, specifically in areas where a number of scholars come from. Many come from Rizal, some from provincial areas as far as Zambales and Mindoro.





# FULFILLING POSSIBILITIES THROUGH CAREERS

BY MARY GRACE TITO

**G**aya ng marami sa inyo, may kwento din ang Sablay ko. Sa maniwala kayo't sa hindi, ang cum laudeng ito ay bulakbol talaga nung grade 1 pa lang.

I was five years old and I really didn't want to go to school. I didn't want to listen to my teachers. My favorite subject was recess. In fact, I would always escape from class and go home to watch Mr. Bean. My parents didn't know how to convince me to go to school.

## UNTIL THAT FATEFUL DAY IN JULY 2005.

I can still vividly remember when a white van came to our elementary school. A pretty and bubbly lady wearing white polo and her team got off the van and distributed school supplies and snacks to me and my school mates.

I was so excited to receive those gifts and I realized back then *na hala ang sarap naman palang mag-aral! July pa lang, may regalo na!* I told myself that I want to be an employee of EDC in the future. I want to be like that lady *na maganda at namimigay ng school bags!*

EDC is geothermal leader Energy Development Corporation, the company that really changed my life. I didn't know much about it before but since then, I never wanted to miss school for fear of missing the school supplies and bags that EDC will give to my classmates the next time its team comes back.

Months passed by and guess what? I started enjoying school already. In fact, I enjoyed it so much that I became the first honor in our class. *Ewan ko ba kung anong hiwaga ang meron sa EDC bags na yun!*

I can still remember how happy my parents were on our recognition day. For the first time, I saw how proud they were of me. I promised myself from that time on that I will keep on studying hard to make them happy.

Years passed by and I realized through various circumstances how important a good education was for me to earn money to provide for my family.

I grew up in an extended family. We were poor but I thought at first that it was okay because there was always so much love and caring in our family. Unfortunately, love was not enough to cure my sick relatives who I grew up with. My grandfather, my uncle, and my *nanay-nanayan* perished one by one due to lingering illnesses just a few months before my high school graduation. *Konti na lang sana, maririnig na nila ang valedictory address ko. Kung may pera lang sana kami, baka umabot pa sila.*



Since then, I promised myself once again that I will strive to give my family a good life because they deserve nothing less. For this, EDC's CAREERS program became my guiding light.

CAREERS used to be EDC's College Admission Review and Readiness program that aimed to help us, graduating honor students from the company's host schools, review and prepare for the University of the Philippines College Entrance Exam (UPCAT) but it has already expanded into a full length education program that also helped those from our batch who wanted to study in local colleges and universities.

This year, Laila Isabel Galera, another CAREERS scholar who's also from my home province in Negros Oriental, graduated magna cum laude with a degree in Bachelor of Science in Elementary Education from Silliman University while Jamaica Escosa from Negros Occidental graduated cum laude with a degree in Bachelor of Science major in Geology from UP Dilliman.

Thirteen others EDC scholars graduated from various UP campuses this year while 19 graduated from various top colleges and universities from the company's geothermal sites in Negros Island, Bicol, and North Cotabato. EDC already had a total of 210 CAREERS scholars since 2011, which 77 have already graduated like me.

CAREERS was not just a scholarship program that gave us stipend for our living expenses. EDC's education team from its Corporate Social Responsibility group guided us every step of the way—through values formation, career mentoring, even up to job placement and preparation after

graduation aside from regular monitoring and *kwentuhan* sessions to help us psychologically and emotionally cope throughout our challenging college life.

Since day 1 of our UPCAT review until I graduated, EDC's education team didn't give up on me. Hindi nila 'ko talaga sinukuan. They changed my life more than they think. EDC doesn't only generate clean, reliable geothermal energy that powers infinite possibilities. The possibilities of dreams that we have and can still fulfill are likewise endless through its CAREERS program.

To the one up above, Lord, *daghan kaayong salamat!*

This *Sablay* is not just a symbol of honor and excellence but a promise to serve and inspire others to do the same. I will keep on reminding my fellow scholars to continuously lift themselves by lifting others up through the EDC CAREERS core values of nationalism, social justice, excellence, and integrity.

*Mary Grace Tito is an EDC CAREERS scholar who graduated cum laude with a degree in Bachelor of Arts major in Mass Communications from the University of the Philippines Cebu this year.*

*EDC is a global pioneer in geothermal energy and the country's largest renewable energy company, delivering 1,457.8MW of clean and renewable energy to the Philippines. It has been supplying clean, reliable geothermal energy to the country for over 40 years.*





**FIRST SCHOOL  
AND LOPEZ GROUP  
FOUNDATION INC.**

# **MATCHING INDUSTRY NEEDS WITH THE RIGHT GRADUATES**

**BY MONICA TAN, LGFI WITH  
KARMELA SARMIENTO OF FIRST SCHOOL**

In 2018, First Philippine Industrial Science and Technology School (FIRST School) and Lopez Group Foundation Inc. (LGFI) entered into a memorandum of agreement to support learners finish senior high school (SHS). SHS was only introduced in the country's basic educational system in 2013, with its first batch of graduates in 2018. SHS has four tracks: academic, technical-vocational and livelihood (TVL), sports, and arts & design.



**W**hy choose TVL track? First, “manufacturing comprises more than half of the Philippines’s industrial sector and accounts for almost a quarter of the country’s Gross Domestic Product (GDP). From an annual growth rate of 5.4% in 2012, the manufacturing sector grew by 10.5% in 2013 and 8.1% in 2014. Manufacturing industries have higher employment, income and output multipliers relative to the agriculture and services sectors. Manufacturing also promotes stronger inter-industry and inter-sectoral linkages, firm productivity, technological development and innovation 1.

Second, there is a marked mismatch between industry demands and the skills of the graduates. Data from the Philippine Statistics Authority say that of the 5.3% unemployment rate in October 2018, 24.0 percent of these were college graduates, 16.0 percent were college undergraduates, and 27.5 percent have completed junior high school 2. Some families also cannot afford to send their children to a four year college course due to the immediate need to regularly contribute to the family’s earnings.

So in 2017, FIRST School was incorporated to address the need for the right skills and immediate employment in the manufacturing sector. The following year, the school opened its doors to its very first batch of students, a total of 120. This pioneer batch has a 99% retention rate. The initial three courses are: Electrical Installation and Maintenance (EIM), Electronics Products Assembly and Servicing (EPAS), and Mechatronics Servicing (MS). LGFI then supported 33 scholars on the very first school year by paying for the top up fees of Php15,000 (after applying the Department of Education’s voucher of Php17,500) for the tuition and other fees. For the 2nd batch of students, LGFI supported 35. The assistance is needs-based (taking into consideration the student’s household income and size as well as income stability; scholars also have to remain in good standing until the end of the school year). Donors to the scholarship fund comprise of Lopez Group employees and companies. In Grade 11, students not only have academic subjects such as English Communication and Algebra but also practical workshops that give them foundational skills in hands-on work such as lighting connections circuit for EIM.

In June 2019, the pioneer batch of students entered into a 10-month work immersion program. The





scholars such as Anisah, Darryl and RJ, have opted to take TVL for SHS and enroll at FIRST School due to the well equipped laboratories, practical education, student allowance received in Grade 12 (equivalent to 75% of minimum wage) and teachers of the school as well as the work opportunities that can be found inside the First Philippine Industrial Park (FPIP), where most are detailed for Grade 12 work immersion.

(See boxes for their individual stories)

The work immersion program not only provides the Grade 12 students with practical know-how of

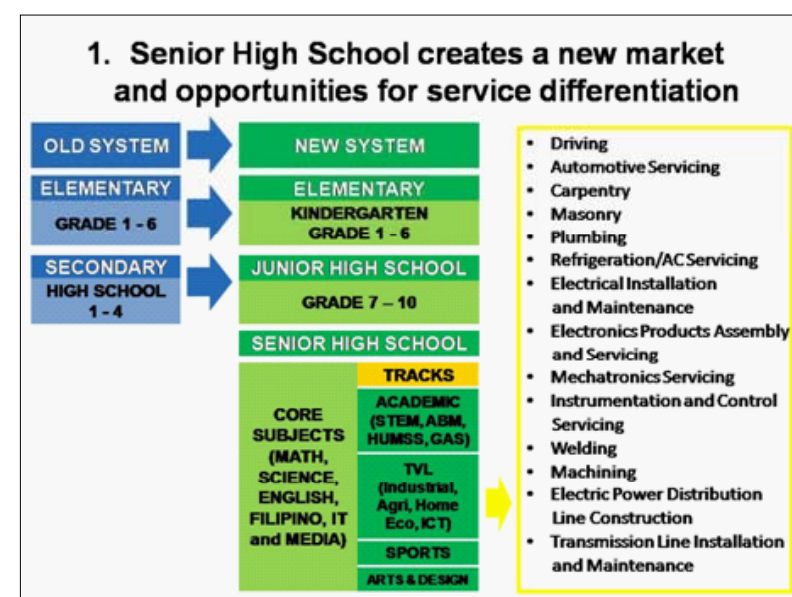
technical/vocational requirements and skills. 10 months compared to 200-500 hours ensure that FIRST School students are job-ready. FIRST School also wants to see the difference not only in the skills but also in the values and attitudes of the students. That they are resilient, able to work well with others and dedicated to their work. Each Grade 12 student has a dedicated mentor assigned to them, who not only supervises their work immersion outputs and who manages their relationships with the manufacturing company (locator) they are assigned to but who also acts as their life coach as they transition from students to professionals. Once a month,

Grade 12 students have a full day supplemental training address the gaps between what they are learning during their work immersion and the competencies required by DepEd and Technical Education Skills Development Authority (TESDA).

Anisah, Darryl and RJ are unanimous in saying that enrolling at FIRST School is one of the best decisions that they made. While the transition was not so easy, one only needs perseverance, be responsible, and have a positive, can do mindset. They appreciate the invaluable experience and practical skills gained during work immersion as well as the material benefits (i.e. at least 75% of minimum wage in form of allowance, subsidized lunch, and free shuttle service).

In April 2020, the first batch of students will graduate and are expected to be employed or offered full-time and permanent jobs by the locators. Prior to graduation, the students will take the National Certificate of Competency II (NC II) assessment of TESDA. The NC II is issued when a candidate has met the competency standards defined by TESDA in a specific specialization to ensure productivity, quality and global competitiveness. Passing the test will make them certified to take on jobs related to their chosen course.

FIRST School and LGFI are pleased to collaborate in this endeavor. For inquiries on FIRST School's course offerings and other related matters, kindly get in touch with Ms. Chiqui Marco or email [info@firstschool.edu.ph](mailto:info@firstschool.edu.ph).







**ANISAH**

Anisah, 19, is a self supporting, Muslim scholar who lives with her grandmother and two younger siblings in Tanauan, Batangas. Her parents, who are vendors, live in Manila and Pangasinan. She has five siblings. Having taken on responsibility not only for herself but for her two siblings, Anisah grabbed the

opportunity to be a scholar at FIRST School, after visiting schools in Tanauan for an introductory session, so she can have a secure and steady job at the earliest possible time. Entering Grade 11, she had no idea on the workshops and hands on application required of the students but quickly rose to the occasion. Now her work immersion enables her to have a steady income every two weeks. She also mans a store owned by an aunt on weekends to augment her allowance from the work immersion. Anisah credits FIRST School with honing and upgrading her skills, such as in computers since FIRST School provides individual notebooks for its students to use throughout Grade 11. She enjoys the school organizations and extra-curricular activities for she has limited time to relax. For Anisah, the 10 month work immersion experience is invaluable in getting along with other people and having respect for all. It is also teaching her how real life is and how one contributes to a wider goal (not only after having money for one's needs). Anisah does not plan to get a college degree. For her having enough skills and a can do and positive attitude in the manufacturing sector are enough to pursue her bigger goals in life.



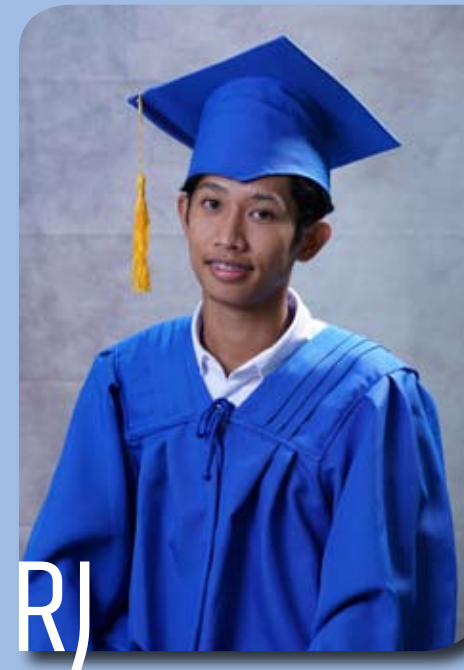
**DARRYL**

Darryl, 17, is the eldest among six siblings, the youngest is currently two years old. His mother is a vendor and a laundry woman while his father is a construction worker. Having an unstable income is hard for the family, since they never know how much

the following day's earnings will be. Initially wanting to take the academic track (specifically Science, Technology and Mathematics) for SHS, Darryl and his mother learned of the opportunity to study at FIRST School via the Community Relations program of First Gen Corporation, an affiliate of FIRST School, which owns four power plants in Batangas City, where they live. Darryl saw an announcement at their barangay (village) hall for scholarships. A field trip to FIRST School proved to be decisive for Darryl and his mother as they found the school to their liking and very practical for their needs, with Darryl particularly enticed by the workshop areas and the computer laboratory. Aside from the scholarship from LGFI for the top up fees, Darryl is also one of the beneficiaries under First Gen Scholarship Program, which provides transportation allowance, among other benefits. Darryl travels every school day to and from Sto. Tomas, a distance of 49 kms. that usually takes an hour to travel one way. At first, Darryl found it hard to commute – on a bad day, he was home by 10:00 p.m. after getting up between 5:00-6:00

a.m. - but tried to adjust to it as soon as possible. He knew his sacrifices would pay off. Schoolwork was not easy either, due to tight deadlines of projects. His grades were not stellar in Grade 11. However, Darryl's optimism and perseverance paid off. In Grade 12, his grades not only steadily improved but his performance at work immersion has also proven to be more than satisfactory. He considers himself very lucky because his work immersion allowance is slightly higher than the 75% of mandated wage by the Department of Labor and Employment (DOLE). Instead of fretting about not having money for education and other basic needs, Darryl now proudly contributes to his family's upkeep. He gives his mother most of his work immersion allowance but he sets aside a portion of his allowance (Php500-700) every two weeks to buy something that he needs, such as clothes and shoes. He was also

able to buy a nice birthday cake for his youngest sibling's second birthday, something that he could not have done before. It was a joy that he never experienced before. Darryl is also appreciative of the subsidized lunch and the shuttle service within FPIP at his work immersion. Darryl hopes to be hired by an FPIP locator after Grade 12 so he can be a bona fide worker. He plans to work first before enrolling in college for an electrical engineering course (something very related to his SHS course and work immersion tasks). His two youngest siblings are still not of school age so it will take at least a decade for him to be in college. But he knows his SHS years at FIRST School will pave the way for him to attain bigger goals like helping his siblings finish school, enrolling and finishing college, and having a (proper) house for his family and his own business.



**RJ**

RJ, 25, is from a farming family in Masbate. He has been working at a Caltex gasoline station in Sto. Tomas, Batangas since 2012. He reached first year college but had to drop out after due to his family's very limited financial means in 2010. He first worked in Manila. The gasoline station that he works for is located across FPIP Gate 2 and he was able to read FIRST School's poster near the gate. RJ had already set aside his plans of continuing his college studies since he is earning his keep for years now. But the opportunity of studying

a technical vocational course at FIRST School enticed him. Aside from having upgraded skills that will lead to a more secure and higher paying job, RJ said he is also interested in the sciences, which is another big reason why he pursued to have a SHS-TVL degree. Working and studying at the same time taught him time management. RJ appreciates the nice facilities and the helpful faculty and staff of FIRST School. In Grade 11, he worked at the Caltex station from 5:30 PM to 9:00 PM and on weekends. In Grade 12, he wakes up at 3:30 a.m. to have an early start since work immersion starts at 6:00 a.m. After that, he still reports to work at Caltex by 3:30 p.m. and works until 9:00 p.m. and on weekends. RJ does not mind the long hours. He is particularly happy that he is able to connect his tasks at his work station with his love of science as well as the skills he had in electrical repair prior. A younger sister, who is taking up BS in Education, also needs his financial support. He currently assigned as a loader so he learned to value teamwork – if his colleagues do not produce enough, then he will have little to load. When the regular loaders are enough, he helps produce more PCBs. In addition, he learned that productivity matters, with nations competing for the same manufacturing jobs set up by multinational companies. On the job experiences and insights like these are invaluable to RJ. He believes that having a secure job with added benefits will be attained after graduating from SHS at FIRST School.





Scholars and their parents were given an orientation. Afterwards, they signed the scholarship contracts, and the scholars were officially enrolled at LPU-Batangas.

# Year 2

## BRIDGING THE EDUCATION GAP

First Gen provides scholarships to qualified yet economically challenged Senior High School students residing in its host communities in Batangas City, in partnership with the respective barangay local government units, educational institutions, and the Lopez Group Foundation Inc. Aligned with First Gen's mission to be the preferred partner in nation-building and community development, and the Lopez value of social justice, the program aims to promote economic productivity in the host community by building the capacities and competencies of its residents. Thereby increasing the opportunity for productive employment and decent work.

Now on its 2nd year, the First Gen Scholarships Program has awarded scholarships to eleven (11) Grade 11 students pursuing strands in Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM),

Accountancy, Business and Management (ABM), and Mechatronics Servicing in Lyceum of the Philippines University-Batangas and First Industrial Science and Technology (FIRST) School.

First Gen is also continuing the scholarships of twenty-one (21) Grade 12 students studying in AMA Computer College and FIRST School. Our 3 scholars in FIRST School are already undergoing work immersion in El Sol Electronics Device and Canon Business Machines Philippines inside First Philippine Industrial Park (FPIP), where they're given an opportunity to experience actual workplace environment and processes for 10 months, while receiving a daily allowance equivalent to the 75% of the applicable minimum wage. With satisfactory work performance, there is a huge possibility that the company will absorb them for employment after graduation.

This year, First Gen's first batch of Senior High School scholars will graduate.

Jhasmin Magpulhin intended to work after completing Grade 10 because the honorarium her mother receives as a Barangay Justice coupled with the irregular income from freelance massage and reflexology services are still not enough to support her education. Her father, on the other hand, is unable to work due to the effects of stroke.

Even though First Industrial Science and Technology (FIRST) School is over 50 kms (3 rides) away from their residence, Jhasmin grabbed the scholarship opportunity to pursue a Technical-Vocational track for better employment possibilities after. She made it a habit to finish her assignments requiring the use of computer during lunch breaks, and the others on her way to the school in the morning.

Jhasmin shares, "Minsan po 'pag ako'y pauwi na, maghihintay ako ng ilang oras bago makasakay ng

bus. Dumadating din po sa point na nakatayo po kami hanggang Lipa. Pagod na sa school, pagod pa sa pagtayo. Naranasan ko din po 'pag papasok ako ng school, kapag tinanghali, tatayo po ako mula Batangas City terminal hanggang Sto. Tomas. Naranasan po namin talaga ang pagod, nangangalay na paa at minsan masakit na ang ulo dahil sa sobrang siksikan." The travel was even worse when it rains.

On the 2nd semester of Grade 11, Jhasmin received the fruit of her labor with a final average grade of 88. She proudly exclaims, "Kahit mahirap ang biyahe sa araw-araw na pagpasok, worth it naman po kase may magandang oportunidad naman pong kapalit. Natutunan ko noong Grade 11 na maging matatag sa mga hamon ng buhay sapagkat makatutulong ito sa aking pag-unlad."

This Grade 12, she started last June 24 her work immersion, specializing on Electronic Products Assembly and Servicing, in Canon Business Machines at FPIP. Though still a trainee, she is being given an



(clockwise from top-left) 1) Jhasmin's section won 1st runner-up in the Cheerdance Competition and was declared the overall winner during the school's very first Intramurals. 2) She participated in a dance performance to celebrate the Korean Month as a form of gratitude to the Korean investors of the school. 3) She was a volleyball varsity player and their team had been sent to compete with other schools. 4) She participated in the school's earthquake drill. 5) She learned how to make a C-clamp during their laboratory workshops.



opportunity to be involved in employee undertakings such as meetings, morning exercises, sports fest, company outing and year-end party, and she also enjoys free lunch. She will receive her first work immersion allowance by August, and her allowance for June and July will be saved by Canon for distribution at the end of the program next year.

Angelica Lordalen Manalo is the 3rd among 4 siblings. Her mother provides for their family's needs from her employment as a welder. Her father used to have a good income as an OFW which supported their education in a private school, but 5 years ago, he suffered from stroke that paralyzed half of his body. This started their family's financial predicament that compelled Angelica and her siblings to transfer to a public school. Though struggling with disability, her father remains determined to help by selling barbecue at the gate of their residence.

The scholarship gave Angelica an opportunity not only to pursue Senior High School but also to study again in a private educational institution. Aligned with her dream to be a Chemical Engineer, she excels in the Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) strand evidenced by her final average grade of 93 on the 2nd semester. She was also able to exercise her leadership skills as the elected Business Manager of the STEM Club.

Angelica also benefitted from the Financial Literacy workshop conducted by First Gen. "Ang pinakamahalagang natutunan ko po ay yung tamang pagba-budget ng pera na kahit malaki ang gastusin kelangan pa din na may maitabi na ipon. Sa pamamagitan po nun, mas naunawaan ko na malaking tulong po pala yung may pera tayong naiipon kahit ano man pong halaga. Nung umpisa po nagsimula ako mag-ipon ng mga coins hanggang sa nakasanayan ko na pong maghulog. Di ko po namalayan na malaking halaga na po pala yung naiipon ko at masarap po sa pakiramdam dahil simula po nung naging scholar ako at tumatanggap ng allowance monthly, e di na po ako nahingi ng pera kay mama kung may babayadan man, kase na-apply ko po yung mga realizations ko at learnings simula nung naging scholar ako."

Last summer, she decided to use her vacation to be more productive by taking on work at a burger kiosk, which lasted 1.5 months until the first week of her classes. For this reason, she was able to help with



Angelica revealing her savings from her salary after the Ipon Challenge.

their household expenses from her accumulated income of PHP 10,500.

*"Isang walang hanggang pasasalamat po sa bumubuo ng First Gen. Ilang buwan nalang po at ga-graduate na ako. Salamat po sa suporta at higit sa lahat sa opportunity po para maging isa sa mga masu-swerteng scholars niyo. Di ko man po masabi ng harapan pero lubos po akong nagpapasalamat dahil isa po kayo sa naging way at inspiration ko para mas pagbutihin ang pag-aaral at makatulong sa pamilya. Proud po ako na scholar ninyo dahil marami po akong natutunan at nabago sa aking sarili. Sana po marami pang tulad ko ang matulungan ninyo at mahubog ang kanilang mga sarili para mas pag-igihin ang pag-aaral, makatulong sa magulang at higit sa lahat ay ang maabot ang pangarap sa buhay."*

Erhica Lapez, an ICT-Programming student in AMA Computer College, served as the Grade 11 Technical-Vocational-Livelihood (TVL) Representative in the Student Council. Even though her responsibilities in the Student Council was demanding in time and effort, she was able to balance it with her studies and managed to get a final average grade of 88 on the 2nd semester.

After 5 to 10 years, Erhica sees herself as a successful IT Officer or Computer Engineer, giving back to her parents for supporting her education, and for their hardships.

Erhica also aspires to become a model and an artist. Last summer break, she was asked to represent in the Ginoo and Binibining Bolbok 2019, where she received



The student council donated a recyclable waste container to the Batangas City Government (left), and retained one in AMA wherein the collected recyclables are sold to generate funds for the student council (right).



Angelica taking an oath during their installation as officers of the STEM Club.



Angelica contemplating on her life dreams during the Financial Literacy workshop.

the People's Choice Award even though she had little time to prepare. After the pageant, she received offers from handlers.

*"Malaki po ang naitulong ng scholarship na aking natanggap sapagkat sa pamamagitan po nito, ang problemang pang-pinansyal ng aming pamilya ay nababawasan, at ang pagkakaroon ko ng scholarship na ito ay isa sa naging dahilan kung bakit mas nagpursigi ako sa aking pag-aaral. Ang pinakamahalagang natutunan ko po ay tayong mga tao ay nararapat na maging masikap at madiskarte sa buhay dahil sa pamamagitan ng mga katangian na ito, maaari natin silang maging sandata para malagpasan ang lahat ng pagsubok na ating kakaharapin at para narin tayo ay magtagumpay sa buhay."*

*Para po sa First Gen, nais ko pong sabihin na ako po ay taos-pusong nagpapasalamat na ako ay isa sa mga nabiyayaan ng ganitong klaseng scholarship, malaki po ang naitulong ninyo sa akin at sa aking pamilya. Nawa po'y mas dumami pa ang inyong matulungan. Muli po, maraming salamat po!"*



Erhica exuding confidence while waiting for their production number at the Ginoo and Binibining Bolbok 2019.





# MOVING A PRICELESS COLLECTION

BY YNA MUSICO

## LOPEZ MUSEUM & LIBRARY



It was done. In 2017, the Lopez Museum and Library set up its final exhibitions within the halls of the Benpres Building. Phrases of future endeavors and goodbyes wove their way into the opening remarks. Surely this time. On the white board written in black erasable ink the final exhibition checklist, beside it the timeline for packing the Lopez Museum and Library collection. At the time, in the middle of cocktails and cakes iced to praise authors long-gone, the idea of a museum transfer did not feel so daunting. And perhaps, while the artworks hung on the walls, and speeches buzzed inside television boxes, the idea of moving felt too far away.

Months trickled down to days, the lifespan of our scripts came to an end. Soon enough lightboxes were



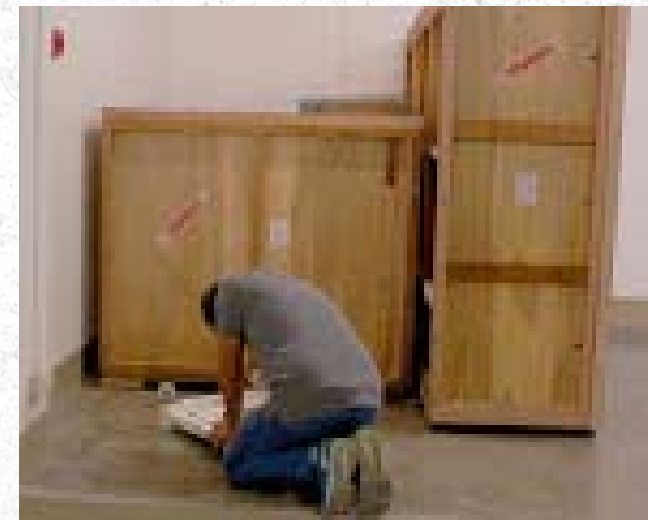


switched off, and stickers that used to form paragraphs were scraped from the walls. There was no Next Exhibition to plan and every inch of museum space felt it. Galleries were converted into sanitized packing areas, vitrines replaced by large white tables, Gantt charts took the place of paintings hung on walls. Sketches of lifters and palette jacks were tacked on the museum café while exhibition invitations were lifted from the cork board. The otherwise changing hues of the walls remained the same without the need to complement paintings hung on them. There and then, the operation began.

Had it been only desk chairs and file cabinets to be transported, many a moving company would have taken on the endeavor. But what one should understand is that in the Lopez Museum and Library collection are things that were not easily encased in bubble wrap. Many pieces have seen it through wars, through several colonizers and continents. Other objects have survived bombings, lootings and some of the darkest days of Philippine history. For example, how does one pack away a tapestry literally as large as a tangible nightmare, with beads and stones threaded intricately across the surface, or cushion a crate to house ceramics fired in the 1600s. Only hands familiar with their frames and their scratches could be trusted. And so, from taking inventory, to tagging each object with RFID markers, and crating each hand measured box into trucks, all processes were taken on by the Lopez Museum and Library in-house team.

The same hands that built exhibitions, rooms, and fixtures, now took them down, and measured them into boxes. For many in the Lopez Museum and Library team, this would be the first time that they translate what has come to be known as best museum practices into the logistics of a relocation. Somehow it all felt like an exhibition egress but in crescendo, en masse. Every work that carries history within its walls, the Lopez Museum and Library team had to tuck away in chorus.

When read and written, 600 hundred years of arts and letters seem contained; an x amount to be placed in a fixed number of boxes and crates. And if one chooses to have specifics, a mobilized team of 25 Lopez Museum and Library employees packed 2,500 hundred boxes. Carefully, in a span of a year packed 61,800 objects, and in five months transferred them safely to their new facility. The numbers seemed to loom larger as the Benpres building began to shrink in parallel to the date of demolition. Jack hammers rammed on the floors above the museum, saws gnashed through thick plastic palettes and served as the background noise of seven am morning coffees.





The Lopez Museum and Library was the last occupant of the Benpres Building. During the final months when water and electricity were unstable, the last of the carefully stacked palettes and racks were wheeled through the stained and peeling floors and into the receiving mouths of trucks by hands and arms still aching from the day before. Slowly, new vaults were filled (the older ones dismantled), archives fit into envelopes found their way into freshly constructed shelves of the new facility.

What was left in the end instead of walls were wooden skeletons; galleries now only called rooms; places that now looked exponentially larger. The absence of objects amplified the presence of space. Looking back, some ghosts of the institution remained in the form of purple walls of the hallway and the bright blue of the ceiling. In the library was a single word still stuck high above the wall. It read, "Dahrrling," a fond saying of a beloved journalist. Final coffees were had in the cushion-less benches of the museum café covered in dust mirroring the surface of the hands and pants of the employees who sat there. The team rested cross-legged and shared pandesal while the plywood walls were peeled off about them. A goodbye in the shape of a half-demolished room. Everything now in past tense.

In the process of closing another chapter in the ever-growing story of the institution, the LML team kept in mind that the home that the Lopez Museum and Library made in the Benpres Building became home for many others. Whether an established member of the academe, a budding researcher, or a lover of art and histories, there were discoveries to be made and narratives to be told. And in the task of safely transporting more than 600 years of arts and letters, the LML team was entrusted not only with the immediate artifacts, but also with the future narratives they have yet to tell.

In the Benpres Building, LML left behind the shapes of rooms whose corners, or lack of them, have been memorized by the strides of those who frequent it; walls and panels that have molded to take shapes of other worlds. Left behind are tangible memories that are cherished, that will be built on in its future space.

Though the institution bids farewell to its former home, it looks forward to its future initiatives of furthering historical continuity and prevailing relevance in the language it is fluent in, in the language of arts and letters.







Student on AutoRefractometer machine

# ASIAN EYE INSTITUTE, SKY GIVE LUZON STUDENTS A GIFT OF CLEAR VISION

BY AIZEL MAQUIMOT

Asian Eye Institute and SKY have joined forces to provide students with free eye checkups and prescription glasses through the Kislap Mata: Malinaw na Mata, Malinaw na Kinabukasan project. Students are also taught the importance of having healthy vision and having good eye care habits, so they can perform well in school, sports and in socializing among their peers.

Zacquia Chua and Cassandra Baral of Lagundi Elementary School were among those who've had difficulty reading and catching up in class due to poor vision. But through the Kislap Mata project, they updated their prescription and received new pairs of eyeglasses. Baral said, "Mas makakapag-aral na po akong mabuti kasi makakakita na po ako ng mas maigi. Salamat po sa SKY at Asian Eye."

The beneficiaries of the project were from San Isidro Elementary School in San Jose del Monte, Bulacan, and Sto. Tomas North Central School and Lagundi Elementary School in Morong, Rizal. A total of 575 students attended the lectures, 338 underwent eye checkups, and 108 received prescription glasses.



Eye care workshop conducted for Kislap Mata program at Lagundin ES

There were also 23 students that were referred to EyeSite by Asian Eye Institute for further checkups and/or diagnostic tests. A part of the Asian Eye network of clinics, EyeSite is an eye center and optical shop found in four locations – St. Frances Cabrini Medical Center in Sto. Tomas, Batangas, SM City Batangas in Batangas City, SM City Dasmariñas in Cavite, and SM City Fairview in Quezon City.

Claire Rino, principal of Lagundi Elementary School, shared that the project would be very helpful for their students. "We feel privileged of the Kislap



Asian Eye and Skycable team with Sto. Tomas North Central School students and faculty members

Kisap Mata gave 338 students eye checkups, 108 got prescription glasses, and 575 were taught how to care for their eyesight

Mata project of SKY. Eyesight is very important for students. Without healthy eyes, they won't be able to understand and read their lessons. Thank you very much to SKY and Asian Eye. Of all the schools in the Philippines, Morong got picked."

According to Asian Eye Chief Operating Officer Alwin Sta. Rosa, this project is part of the institute's goal to reach out to more Filipinos, especially children. "We're happy that SKY partnered with us in the Kislap Mata project. Because most children don't know what normal vision is and what isn't, a lot of them don't complain if they have blurry or double vision. But through this project, we're able to help children have clear, healthy vision and at the same time, support the government's initiative in diagnosing and addressing early childhood problems."

Just recently, the National Vision Screening Program (NVSP) was signed into law. It requires kindergarten students to undergo vision screening to catch any eye problems early, develop a referral system for treatment, create a database that has the results of the screening per child and visual diagnoses by eye care practitioners, and conduct continuing research on the state of visual impairment.

More than just giving glasses, it's also important for children to learn good eye care habits early. Sta. Rosa added, "It gave us an opportunity to teach children what it means to have healthy eyes. Kids are



Eager and excited Lagundi ES students for Kislap Mata program

constantly exposed to technology, so it's good practice for them to rest their eyes every 20 minutes of studying of playing on gadgets. It's also an effective way to prevent eye fatigue that can lead to headaches. Another factor to consider is good hand hygiene to avoid eye irritation or infections like sore eyes."

SKY Head of Marketing Gidgette Faustino shared SKYcable's eagerness to help students, "We at SKY are grateful for the opportunity to help in any way we can, we envisioned 'Kislap Mata' project to help select students learn in their full capacity and more comfortably with clearer eyesight. We look forward to more learning advocacies that will help spearhead education in the country."



**VISION  
SPRING  
& AEI  
PARTNER UP  
TO WORKERS**



VisionSpring and Asian Eye Institute partnered up to provide vision screening and reading and prescription eyeglasses to handicraft workers in Parañaque, Laguna, and Pampanga. VisionSpring is an international social enterprise that has distributed over 5.4 million pairs of vision correcting eyeglasses around the world.

Asian Eye first partnered with VisionSpring in 2018. As part of its sustainability program, it aimed to bring quality eye care to places and communities where it is not easily accessible. The Asian Eye medical team also screened workers in Pampanga, Pangasinan, Bohol and Cebu factories. These are all partner companies of VisionSpring.

This year, over 600 employees of Asia Ceramics Corporation, Terra Cotta Art Works, Inc., Anastacio's Ceramics, and Basket and Weaves Handicrafts underwent eye checkups. 502 or 78% of them were recommended prescription and reading glasses, and of



**78% rate of uncorrected refractive errors is too high**

the 502, 76% were first-time wearers. Meanwhile, those who had signs of other eye conditions like cataracts and pterygium were advised to see an ophthalmologist for further tests and treatment.

“Most of the employees had never had their eyes checked before,” shares Asian Eye’s Sustainability Program Coordinator Melicca Jamilla, “Some did not even want to try it, thinking that they did not need it or that eyeglasses are only for older people. Through this event, we were able to catch their eye problems and provide them with eyeglasses to help them be more efficient at work.”

“At 78%, the rates of uncorrected refractive errors were surprisingly high,” says Ramona Bajema, ClearVision Workplace Business Development Officer. “We typically see rates of presbyopia at 20 to 30 percent of a population depending on age, and 10 to 20 percent for nearsightedness in countries like India and Bangladesh.”

Refractive error refers to the blurring of vision that happens when the eyeball is unusually long or

short, or the cornea (the clear, surface of the eye) is not evenly or smoothly shaped. This causes a combination of nearsightedness, farsightedness, astigmatism and presbyopia or the loss of near vision. In 2017, the Department of Health (DOH) estimated that 332,150 people are bilaterally blind, 25% of which are caused by refractive errors.

Asian Eye Chief Operating Officer Mr. Alwin Sta. Rosa says, “These are actually very high numbers. What most people don’t realize is that these can actually be corrected by wearing eyeglasses or reading glasses.”

“Our partnership with VisionSpring is driven by our mission to help Filipino workers enjoy happy and productive lives. As we celebrate the Sight-Saving Month this August, it is important to realize that having clear, healthy vision is crucial to our daily lives because it allows us to work and care for our families.”

Bajema adds, “The high rates further validated our decision to organize vision camps in the Philippines. Besides, all the factories expressed satisfaction







with Asian Eye's service. They were not only happy that eye care services were provided, but that the screening process was well-coordinated and seamlessly executed."

Apart from eye checkups and quality eyeglasses, Asian Eye's medical team took the opportunity to teach the handicraft workers about different eye problems and proper eye care. "Many Filipinos don't know they are suffering from an eye condition until they feel pain or lose their vision. By educating them, we were able to instill in them that having clear, healthy vision can ensure they can continue to make a living by creating intricate housewares, pottery, and baskets to provide the needs of their family members," says Sta. Rosa.

Asian Eye has been involved in different initiatives to eliminate preventable blindness in the country. In 2015, it launched EyeScan, a pre-screening service that can detect signs of eye conditions, including cataract, glaucoma, retinal problems and cornea and external disease like pterygium or pugita. It regularly conducts CSR projects with its partner foundation and private companies, providing free eye checkups, eyeglasses and even surgeries to members of indigent communities.

### ABOUT ASIAN EYE INSTITUTE

Asian Eye Institute has been providing quality eye care to over 60,000 foreign and local patients every year. With seven clinics and growing, Asian Eye Institute is the largest ambulatory eye institute in the Philippines – Rockwell Center and Legaspi Towers 200 in Makati City; Trinoma in Quezon City; SM Mall of Asia in Pasay City; Commercenter Alabang in Muntinlupa City; and Santolan Town Plaza in San Juan City. Its EyeSite clinics are located inside St. Frances Cabrini Medical Center (SFCMC) in Sto. Tomas, Batangas; SM City Batangas in Batangas City; SM City Dasmariñas in Cavite; and SM Fairview in Quezon City.

### ABOUT VISIONSPRING

Founded in 2001 by U.S. optometrist Dr. Jordan Kassalow, VisionSpring is a pioneering, global social enterprise creating access to affordable eyewear, everywhere. We expand the optical market, using innovative distribution strategies to sell radically affordable, durable, attractive eyeglasses to consumers earning less than \$4 per day.



The First Gen Corporation recently kicked off the new cycle of its community-based environmental program, Create for the Climate, with schools and barangays around the company's operations nationwide.

In line with the company's advocacy for a low-carbon future, the program aims to help the members of its host communities become more mindful of their social and environmental impacts, while also helping them improve their livelihood. The program has reached more than 5,000 households in Batangas City and Pantabangan, Nueva Ecija since it started in 2017.

This year's run sees an increase of participants, with the extended reach to Jabonga, Agusan del Norte and Manolo Fortich, Bukidnon.

Create for the Climate enjoins kids and adults of the communities alike in the fight against climate change





through various activities, which are rolled out in four phases: (1) Engage, (2) Educate, (3) Express, and (4) Econovate.

Under the Engage phase, schools and communities are tapped to become program partners through a series of planning and consultation sessions done with the school heads, parent-teacher associations, and barangay representatives at the beginning of the school year.

The program sees that all stakeholders take part in all stages of planning, implementation, and evaluation of the program. Suggestions and recommendations for improvement are also solicited to ensure that the stakeholders have a sense of ownership in the program.

In the Educate phase, participating schools and host communities undergo workshops on climate change and its relevance in their lives, including adapting to climate change, securing natural resources, conserving ecosystems, minimizing ecological impacts of development, and promoting the use of renewable sources of energy. First Gen has recently concluded the Educate phase for the program's 2019 cycle, where almost 3,000 students, teachers, and

community leaders joined these workshops on climate change and environmental stewardship.

The program's third phase, Express, lets students and members of the community join organized inter-school and inter-barangay competitions to show their contributions to climate action. Younger students participate in jingle- and poster-making contests, while older students and adult members of the community participate and compete in the development of Climate Action Projects, which are executable projects related to climate change adaptation in their communities.

In Econovate, the program's last phase, teams that developed Climate Action Projects receive technical support, coaching, and mentoring from a partner Climate Leader. The winning teams will be given the opportunity to implement them, and the success of these projects will be monitored and evaluated by the CSR team for their impacts on climate change adaptation and mitigation.

The winning teams will be announced by the end of the current run, scheduled on March 2020. Winning student teams win educational trips, while winning adult teams will receive materials and supplies for their community schools and funding for their Climate Action Project.





# EDUCATION FOR MARINE CONSERVATION FIRST OF ITS KIND

For more than a decade now, First Gen has long been supporting the protection and conservation of the Verde Island Passage (VIP)— the center of the center of marine biodiversity in the world\*, through the Center of Center (COC) Program. COC is First Gen’s Corporate Social Responsibility Program that aims to conserve and protect the VIP through strengthening local capacities in espousing sustainable development.

With its aim to educate stakeholders on the preservation and conservation of the VIP, First Gen partnered with the Science, Education, and Advocacy

or SEA Institute-Philippines last year, triggering a series of marine conservation workshops with different environmental advocates and volunteer groups thru Science-based lectures and experiential learning methods.

In 2018, First Gen first conducted a mini-camp for 54 students of Malabrigo Elementary School in Lobo, Batangas, followed by an eco-camp for 31 students for the same school in 2019. The camps integrated scientific research on the VIP and fun and interactive educational materials in order to inspire the youth of Lobo, Batangas to understand and appreciate



The two-day Marine Eco-Camp for students of Malabrigo Elementary School, facilitated by First Gen volunteer employees, scientists from Batangas State University, and the SEA-Institute



Marine IEC volunteer facilitators and employee participants from First Gen Head Office



the beauty and importance of marine Science and conservation, and instill them with love and regard for their marine environment.

The first batch of First Gen's marine conservation facilitators composed of 10 employee volunteers from the head office and Batangas site office also completed a Facilitators Workshop on Marine Conservation last March 2019. These employees went on to conduct two (2) consecutive information and education campaigns (IECs) for First Gen employees in the head office and in Batangas site office last April and May 2019, in celebration of "Earth Day" and "Month of the Ocean", respectively, as well as the students' eco-camps.

In the recent visit to Malabrigo Elementary School several months after the activity, a Grade 6 student participant of the marine eco-camp shared her insights as to why the ecocamp became important for her and for the community of Lobo. In a short interview, April Camo revealed that the taking care of the marine environment is crucial for their community because many fisherfolks depend on the sea for their livelihood.

Through the Center of Center Program, we continue to contribute to the 2030 targets of the Sustainable Development Goal 14: Life Below Water, by bringing in sustained collaboration and efforts among different stakeholders on marine conservation and protection.

*\*Carpenter and Springer in their 2005 study identified the VIP as an area having the highest concentration of marine shorefish biodiversity per unit area on the planet. Their study analyzed 2983 combined ranges and revealed the central Philippines as the area of highest diversity and endemism. It has about 1736 species overlapping over a 10-kilometer area. In addition, the study showed that the greatest concentration of 120 restricted-range endemics is in the Philippines which has 38, Indonesia/Malaysia 19, Australia 18, New Guinea/Bismark/Louisade 18, Coral Sea/New Caledonia/Vanuatu 17, and seven other localities had either one or two endemics. (Source: <http://seainstitute.org/>)*



Marine IEC volunteer facilitators and employee participants from First Gen Batangas Site Office





# NATURE'S MATCH

God must have been smiling when PNOC-EDC started exploring Mt. Apo in 1984 for a Geothermal Resource. It was a time of turbulence and if the now common phrase of VUCA (Volatility, Uncertainty, Complexity and Ambiguity) had existed then, it would have been an understatement.

It wasn't until after the EDSA revolution that PNOC-EDC returned to Mt. Apo in 1987 to drill 2 exploratory wells and confirmed the existence of a Geothermal Resource. This milestone for PNOC-EDC also triggered the events that led to the beginnings of the Mt. Apo Foundation, Inc. (MAFI) and its relationship with Energy Development Corporation (EDC).

On hearing of the plans of PNOC-EDC to put up a Geothermal Power Plant, local residents were concerned on the effect of pollution to their health and livelihood. Environmentalists were alarmed that a power plant would be constructed in the Mt. Apo Natural Park, home of unique and indigenous flora and fauna. Indigenous people saw this as an intrusion to the home of Apo Sandawa. The Catholic Church, local and international Non-Government Organizations took up the cause of these sectors and escalated the issue to national and international levels.

It took nearly 4 years and in the end the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) granted PNOC-EDC an Environmental Compliance Certificate (ECC). The ECC contained a provision that for every kWh of electricity generated, 1 centavo would go to an Environmental and Tribal Welfare Trust

Fund (ETWTF). MAFI was established to manage the ETWTF and this marked the start of the relationship between MAFI and EDC.

PNOC-EDC pursued its vision of Life, Energy, and Progress by supplying renewable electricity to the power-hungry island of Mindanao and aided in stopping the regular 12-hour brownouts. As part of its business, it embarked on a massive reforestation



MAFI's first batch of senior high students moved up to college

program at Mt. Apo that has resulted in over 2000 has. of indigenous forest cover and provided a sustainable source of water for the Mt. Apo Geothermal Resource.

MAFI joined in with over 5 has. of forest cover. Both worked on addressing the medical needs of the communities and indigenous people through their respective medical programs such as medical outreaches, and DOH aligned medical programs.

Since their existence, both EDC and MAFI have implemented various livelihood programs and constructed various infrastructures such as water sealed toilet facilities, hanging bridges, communal showers and toilet facilities, day care centers and rehabilitation of school buildings. Tribal heritage programs have been implemented to revive and continue the cultural heritage of the resident Obo-Manobo tribe. But the biggest impact that EDC and MAFI jointly have and continue to deliver to the communities is its education program.

College scholarships have been given to over 300 upland dwellers in an area wherein completing a college education is a rarity. Most of the graduates are teachers who have in turn returned to their respective communities and teach the next generation of scholars.

New opportunities have sprouted since MAFI and EDC started their partnership. The education

system changed with the implementation of the K-12 Program. State Universities improved their quality of education with the influx of good teachers attracted by the higher pay. Free tuition in these state universities also made it more attractive for MAFI and EDC Scholars.

MAFI has taken advantage of these positive changes by piloting a Senior High School Scholarship program and shifting its college scholars from the Private Colleges to the State Universities. It expanded further its education program by providing social services to its scholars, their families and their communities with the hiring of social workers.

New problems emerged with the increasing population of the upland dwellers that has put more strain on the ecosystem of Mt. Apo. More people are now living in the uplands that have led to more land being converted for farming. More climbers climb Mt. Apo and more people flock the tourist sites like Lake Agco, Paniki falls due to reduced travel time brought about by the construction of cemented roads.

Opportunities to sustainably uplift the Indigenous People, revive and nurture their cultural heritage are now more viable with the enactment of the Indigenous Peoples Rights Act (IPRA), which has awarded Certificate of Ancestral Domain Titles (CADT) to tribal groups like the Manobo Apao who are one of the CADT holders within the Mt. Apo Natural Park.



Our Indigenous People brothers for the first time in their history can now claim the land that has been theirs since before colonization in 1521.

To meet these new challenges, the Board of Trustees realized that MAFI has to change. A pivot was needed to ensure the continued upliftment of upland dwellers and protection of Mt. Apo through sustainable programs. The Board also realized that MAFI has the potential to grow because its membership to the Philippine Council of NGO Certification (PCNC) makes it attractive for external donors. In order to pivot and grow, it had to transform itself.

Fortunately, EDC was undergoing its own transformation through the Apollo Program with the end result in growing by improving efficiencies, establishing a culture of collaboration, performance, accountability built on sound relationships among employees and with stakeholders. MAFI adapted a similar objective.

Methods and lessons learned from the EDC Apollo Program are being applied to MAFI through EDC



Armando Pacudan

representatives to MAFI, Allan Barcena (Chairman) and Pim Daza (President). The hiring of a new executive director in 2019 with over 30 years experience in managing a NGO, Armando Pacudan, completed the management team that would accelerate MAFI's transformation.

On its 25th year last 2018, MAFI and EDC started its pivot to grow and ensure a sustainable future. MAFI began with revising its mission and vision. MAFI established its core values that will serve as the foundation for the pivot and the turbulent times that accompany the transformation. Advocacy, Accountability, Excellence, Inclusiveness, Passion, Relevance, Respect, Stewardship and Transparency have long been practiced by MAFI but with this declaration, action is matched by words.

To guide MAFI in its journey, MAFI hired a consultant, Virgie Ongkiko, to assess the efficiency and effectiveness of MAFI's programs for the past 25

**OUR COLLECTIVE VISION**

Empowered upland dwellers and IP communities, capable of self-direction, and working together in unity and harmony towards achieving the sustained conservation of biodiversity and ecosystem of Mount Apo, and preserving their traditionally-based aspirations, values, and way of life.

**OUR CORPORATE MISSION**

To serve as a catalyst in the total development of cultural communities and Mount Apo through the provision of culturally-acceptable, ecologically-sound and sustainable technologies and process.

To be recognized as a leader and capable organization in promoting culturally diverse and sustainable programs in Mount Apo.

**OUR CORE VALUES**

Advocacy	Inclusiveness	Respect
Accountability	Passion	Stewardship
Excellence	Relevance	Transparency

years. The results of her assessment helped craft the strategic plan for MAFI as well as a stakeholder map. This plan is the foundation for MAFI's transformation journey.



In 2019, MAFI needed a brand to market itself. With "Works of Hearts," a Filipino Social Impact Design studio, MAFI created its brand and changed its logo.



Under the strategic plan, a Resource Mobilization Strategy was identified. MAFI and EDC realized that there are other organizations that share the vision and mission of MAFI and EDC for Mt. Apo and the upland dwellers. The partnership between EDC and MAFI can grow into a community of organizations and with this community comes synergy that will serve and uplift more upland dwellers, provide more protection of Mt. Apo and enhance its ecosystems. In this resource mobilization strategy, MAFI will partner with other organizations outside of EDC to form a community with a "Shared Vision" of "Empowering Communities, Sustainable Futures."

To launch MAFI's brand, MAFI produced a Coffee Table Book, entitled "25 Years: Celebrating Gains and Building Sustainable Futures." It is a collection of 25 stories from MAFI's stakeholders from MAFI Scholars, Tribal Leaders, partners, board and staff. Each tells their personal story on how MAFI has changed their lives, their family's lives, the lives of the community and of Mt. Apo.

No sooner had MAFI launched its brand on Oct. 24 when a series of earthquakes struck the city of Kidapawan, towns of Makilala, Tulunan and towns in the neighboring province of Davao del Sur on Oct. 29 and 31. While EDC focused on relief efforts to the residents living around the Mt. Apo Geothermal Reservation in Brgy. Illomavis and Balabag in the City of Kidapawan. MAFI provided relief efforts to other stakeholders of both EDC and MAFI from the towns of Magpet and Makilala. It went even farther by providing relief efforts in the towns of Tulunan, Cotabato, Magsaysay and Padada in Davao del Sur. It was able to do so through partnership and networking with other foundations, development agencies, NGOs and wide circle of friends here and abroad, including retired PNOC-EDC employees.





# LGFI CREATES OPPORTUNITIES IN HANDLING

# WASTE

Around eight million metric tons of plastic ends up in our oceans each year, 80% of which comes from land-based sources such as beach litter, sewage and waste entering through rivers. about 60% of that originates in five countries in asia, with the Philippines ranked as the third top polluter. If nothing is done about this, our plastic waste will likely more than double by 2025.

With our increasing population, industrial production and consumption, our municipal waste, specifically, plastics will exponentially increase as well. Upon research with limited data, it would be safe to conclude that our waste management systems are poorly organized and logistically mismanaged.

There are three existing landfills that are currently servicing Metro Manila's waste (Navotas, San Mateo and Rodriguez, Rizal). Dumping into these landfills affects our air quality as it produces toxic methane gas, which is byproduct of decomposing waste. It also affects our water quality as this toxic gas and chemicals seep into the ground reaching our water sources which will affect our health and well being for generations to come. What happens in a few years when these landfills reach their maximum? We may be drowning in our waste.

As a staunch advocate of the environment, LGFI took initiatives to be part of the solution and create



opportunities to reduce waste that would otherwise end up in our landfills.

As its first initiative, LGFI partnered with Envirocycle. A DENR (Department of Natural Resources) accredited organization that ethically recycles and seeks ways to segregate scrap and waste into their appropriate streams, undertaking safe and effective mechanical processing or manual dismantling of end-of-life electrical and electronic equipment. Maximising



their value through recovering or regenerating these even after the end of their service life.

With the Rockwell Makati Community as a pilot project we undertook an all-out Information and Communication campaign (IEC) within the community of its nine residential towers. As the month of April is also considered Earth month, we enjoined the residents to do their share in helping our environment by donating all their old and non-working appliances

as well as recyclable items (paper, plastic, glass bottles, etc.). A total Of 3.4 tons were collected from the residential community alone. Following the success of this pilot project, LGFI engaged the community of the Rockwell Grove in Pasig City and collected 1.9 tons from its six residential towers. That is a total of 5.3 tons of garbage that will not end up in our landfills. Its a small amount but we know it can create a ripple effect and a long term change in mindsets.

We did not stop in this initiative. LGFI searched for other opportunities to help in the reduction of plastic waste.

We stumbled upon a start up social enterprise founded by a young French couple who came to the Philippines with the goal of solving the marine plastic pollution crisis. They setup the

Plastic Flamingo. Its mission, to collect and recycle plastic waste and turn them into sustainable products such as furniture and modular planks for building temporary emergency shelters.

Their dynamism and enthusiasm to help our country made it even more attractive for us to collaborate and partner with them. LGFI became a collection point and as of this writing has so far collected a total of 300kgs for its initial collection.



# SEEDS OF HOPE

BY DULCE FESTIN-BAYBAY



Many of us have been worried of the pollution that is being felt around us. Yet one of the most dangerous pollutants can be avoided by motor vehicle owners. I am referring to used lead batteries that are classified as toxic waste and their disposal is even strictly regulated by law.

Unfortunately, vehicle owners may not be aware of just how to dispose such type of waste which, if the lead is accidentally ingested, can cause serious nervous and circulatory damage. If sulfuric acid is spilled into the ground, it may even seep into underground aquifers, contaminating our deep well water supply.

It may look completely safe while our car batteries are intact with its protective housing, yet it can be broken if not properly disposed of, spilling its dangerous elements within. But there is hope.

In October-November 2000, BantayKalikasan of ABS CBN Foundation started the project known as BantayBaterya. It aims to collect used junk lead-acid batteries for recycling into fresh raw materials for the production of new batteries and consequently helps in the removal of pollutants which can harm our lives and the environment.

To make the BantayBaterya project effective and successful, BantayKalikasan, the Environment Management Bureau of DENR and the Philippine Recyclers Inc., signed a Memorandum of Agreement to actively campaign for the recycling of used lead-acid batteries.

Next the project implementors requested companies for donations of used lead acid batteries earmarked for disposal. Once a donation is confirmed, BantayKalikasan, in tandem with Oriental & Motolite Marketing Corporation (OMMC),

assures the proper pick-up, transport and disposal of donated batteries. A 100% tax deductibility for value of donated batteries (as allowable expenses) via BIR issued Certificate of Donation is given to the donor company. Evergreen Environment Resources then reprocesses the batteries which will be used as raw materials in manufacturing new batteries. OMMC determines the monetary value and subsequently remits the amount to ABS CBN Foundation. Funds raised through the project are used to support the foundation's environmental undertakings.

Oriental and Motolite Marketing Corporation is known for their complete product cycle for its Extended Producer's Responsibility through a nationwide Used Lead-Acid Batteries Collection Program being a DENR accredited transporter of ULAB. Another party involved with this project is the Envirocare Management Precision Inc. It is a first TUV ISO4001 Certified in the Philippines among the waste transporters having successfully passed the international certification for Environment Management System and gearing for ISO18001 & R2 Certificate.





# PROJECT AREAS

14 Areas

28 Municipalities

90 People's Organizations

7,297 Members of Organized Primary Stakeholders

- **Heavy Interventions**
- **Enhancement Areas**
- **Initial Interventions**
- **Exit**



Aside from the tax benefits to the donor, the company also enjoys other benefits and is relieved of the hassles of disposing their used lead-acid batteries with free transport/hauling of said batteries, assurance of proper pick-up and disposal of donated hazardous waste by well-trained personnel and the issuance of Certificate of Treatment duly received and stamped by the DENR-EMB. And since this is a donation, the activity will form part of the company's CSR activity which can benefit communities BantayKalikasan is assisting nationwide.

I remember the time I accompanied the pick-up of almost a hundred used batteries from a major newspaper company and it was a sight to see so many discarded batteries to be recycled when before it would just be dumped elsewhere to poison the air we breathe.

As an individual, Ogie Agaton, from the logistics department of Eugenio Lopez Foundation Inc., has been donating his car batteries ever since he heard of this project of BantayKalikasan. "Every time I replace my battery, I return to the dealer for a discount on the total price of the new battery. Doing this is my own small way of contributing to the safety of our environment because I know the dealer will properly dispose the used battery."

Other sources of lead-acid batteries aside from automotive vehicles are motorcycles, rechargeable lamps, aircrafts, gensets, forklifts, marine vessels and others. Lead-acid batteries are a major component in industries (telecommunications, semiconductor production and transportation. We notice that benefits to industries are undermined when disposed of indiscriminately, posing a serious threat to ourselves and of course the environment.

Since the project began, five million kilograms of used lead batteries have been collected and recycled.



For general information, the following are effects of hazardous wastes: asthma, vomiting, kidney damage, skin irritation, cancer, decreased IQ, nervousness, headaches and liver damage.

From BantayBaterya, to BantayLangis Project (started 2007) BantayKalikasan's hazardous waste collection projects is now into Waste Electrical & Electronic Equipment (WEEE), which is virtually anything with a plug or a battery that may have reached the end of its 'user life' or may be old, defective or obsolete. Those items that use electricity usually connected via a plug or battery are included in this waste category.

We may be exposed to a lot of toxic waste today, but we now know what to do about it. There is the seed of hope for a clean environment through BantayBaterya and other projects of BantayKalikasan, now into its second decade of impactful assistance to save the environment.





# AT A GLANCE

## THE BEGINNING

- February 14, 1997
- Gina Lopez was disturbed by the news of a child being beaten to death by her own mother.
- Bantay Bata 163 (BB163) was launched as a hotline to report the abuse and neglect of children.

## WHAT WE DO

- A holistic approach to child care, ensuring a better life for our beneficiaries through education, health, protection, and the improvement of family life.

## FOUR (4) PILLARS OF BANTAY BATA 163

- BantayProteksyon: Hotline 1-6-3, Children's Village, Legal Counseling
- BantayEdukasyon: Educational assistance program
- BantayKalusugan: Medical assistance program through pledges to medical service providers

- BantayPamilya: Community-based outreach programs and capacity-building trainings

## HOTLINE 163

- For children across the country, these three numbers have symbolized the powerful message of HOPE in the last 21 years of Bantay Bata 163's existence.
- Bantay Bata 163 was established on February 14, 1997 as a hotline for reporting abuse.
- 24/7 Operations
- Toll-free for landline—163—and for Globe users—#163

## CHILDREN'S VILLAGE

- It began as mall crisis center to temporarily house children rescued by BB163
- Through the generosity and passion of our parent organization ABS-CBN, private donors, and volunteers, it blossomed into the Children's Village (CV).
- A halfway home designed to house up to 120

children and provide them with the necessary love, care and intervention on their way to healing.

- House parents provide day to day parental supervision to children in a structured, therapeutic family-like environment.

## SERVICES OFFERED BY THE CHILDREN'S VILLAGE

- Educational needs
- Legal needs
- Health and wellness needs through psychological services, rehabilitation, therapy, routine and emergency medical services
- Placement of children for foster care and adoption
- Education: in-house kindergarten play school and preparatory school, library
- Health and Wellness: Therapy Hall, Clinic, Examination Rooms, Meditation Room, Psychological Services

## TOTAL CLIENTS SERVED FROM JANUARY TO SEPTEMBER 2019

- From January to September: 23, 269
- Surpassing our commitment through the ABS-CBN Integrated Public Service's Child Welfare Key Results Area of servicing at least 20,000 children per year

- Additionally, 4,790 parents and 207 service providers

## REINTEGRATED CHILDREN

- 13 children reunited with their families
- Tri-Media Exposure for The Foundlings
- Foundlings: Children found on the streets
- Part of the requirements of the tri-media exposure that the children are supposed to accomplish before they can be declared available for adoption.
- Regular Segment: LingkodKapamilya on DZMM every Sunday

## COINBANK (SHARE-A-LATA LOVE)

- Institutional partnerships

## WHY INSTITUTIONAL PARTNERSHIPS?

- Easier to bring down the cans and to harvest them at a minimum of 350 pesos per can.
- Promotion of Hotline 163
- Partnership with our first responders and our partners for child welfare and protection.

## CANCAN

- Mascot used during the Share-A-Lata Love Campaigns







### BANTAY BATA 163 ON THEIR ROLE IN SOCIETY

- With technology and digital advancement, abuse has taken on a new form—cyber abuse
- BB163's role has become more critical because of its duty to protect and keep our children safe because of the growing rampancy of issues such as Cyber abuse.

### ON THE FUTURE

#### THE NEW FACE OF CHILD ABUSE

Bantay Bata now seeks to address a new form of child abuse: cyber-abuse. Children are goaded into inflicting harm on themselves or others.

This is where educating the public comes in as a

critical and preventive aspect of raising awareness. One way to prevent online – and offline – child abuse is by changing one's perspective and promoting values formation through Bantay Bata 163's family seminars and community outreach activities at the grassroots level. It is also important to make children aware of their rights, and to teach them when abuse happens and when their rights are violated.

### STRENGTHENED PARTNERSHIPS

It takes a village to raise a child. Reaching out to the grassroots requires the cooperation and involvement of other sectors. It is imperative for Bantay Bata to improve and strengthen its partnerships with private individuals and corporations, civil society organizations, NGOs, allied government agencies, local governments, barangays, and other

stakeholders. This will then ensure greater program sustainability and act as a multiplier that will amplify the effectivity of Bantay Bata's efforts. With more hands and hearts at work, the more can be achieved in the service of the Filipino child.

Another strong partner of Bantay Bata is the Overseas Workers Welfare Administration (OWWA). Several programs are being implemented for the children left behind by OFW parents, particularly in terms of child protection. The goal is to capacitate OWWA social workers on how to handle child-related concerns and on how to give family seminars, which they may then cascade to parents and guardians.

### THE LONG HAUL

Bantay Bata 163 emulates the past 22 years to shape the future. Bantay Bata intends to keep up with the latest trends to address the pressing concerns at hand. Challenges are being faced head-on.

Jing Castaneda, Bantay Bata 163 Program Director: "A lot has changed except one: Bantay Bata, with the support of different sectors of society, will continue to give children what they deserve: love, embrace, and better chances at life. The main goal is to restore hope and ignite the children's passion to strive, no matter how hard, and to achieve what they are aiming for. Teaching a child to dream and guiding them to achieve such is one of the many goals that BB163 is working on. The second is to make Bantay

Bata everyone's organization." Although the Bantay Bata organization started as Gina Lopez' vision, Jing dreams that all sectors, and even other media networks, would also embrace Bantay Bata. "That our advocacy will be everyone else's too—one family, one child at a time."

Ernie Lopez, Bantay Bata 163 Executive Director would like to focus on the role of Fathers in strengthening families.





# THE EVOLUTION OF GINA LOPEZ

BY JENIE CHAN



**G**ina accomplished a lot in her lifetime. Her impact, significant and long lasting.

Many came to learn about her life and work better when she passed on. The media was extra generous. They told stories of her as a missionary and as a leader of the foundation she managed for over two decades. Many began to see her beyond the fearless and aggressive nemesis of the mining industry.

People have seen her transition from one project to the next. But what is striking is whatever project she has done, it had a common driver – love for country. Be it an advocacy for education, children, environment or area development, what led her to all of these was her desire to make a difference in the country, through service. A remarkable alignment to what her father, Don Eugenio, set up to do with the company he led – to be in the service of the Filipino.

## AN ADVOCATE FOR EDUCATION

Gina actually started her public service career in the Philippines as an advocate for education. She became a producer of television shows designed specifically for the public elementary school system.

Programs like Sineskwela, Mathinik, Bayani and Hirayamanawari taught an entire generation of Filipino kids their science, math history and values alongside their teachers in thousands of schools. Gina raised the money herself to afford the classrooms the TV set and the video equipment necessary.

Her brother Gabby Lopez recalls, “The first thing Gina wanted to do when she came home was to put a television in every school. And we were quite shocked.

“How could you do that Gina? But she has set her mind to it and she started down that path”. Many came to know about what she has done for over fifteen years. But few knew why she did it. Of all things she could have done then, why Educational Television (ETV)?

Gina was an Ananda Marga yoga missionary for 20 years. She worked in extremely poor communities where children had very little or no opportunities at all for education.

She lived in the slums with them. She was convinced that the main reason why people lived in poverty was the lack of education.

To make a difference, Gina was relentless in her efforts to build schools. An incredible fund raiser, by the time she left Ananda Marga, she was able to put 50 schools in Africa.

Upon her return to the Philippines, she saw the same problem. Poverty. But the difference was, unlike Africa, schools were plenty. It was not necessary to build them to give children opportunities to learn. The problem was the low level of comprehension and retention of lessons. This became evident to her when she learned about the dismal performance of Filipino children in a science and math aptitude test given to students from Asia.

Of countries which participated in the test, the Philippines ranked 32nd out of 33. This is what fired her passion to make a difference in the country. Her goal was to make Filipino students globally competitive. And it begins by giving them access to technology that would help them understand their lessons better. A strategy that would level the playing field for all students, regardless if you lived in a far-flung barrio or were studying in the city.







Bantay Bata 163 Children's Village in Bulacan

And so, with her ETV, Gina started to do the rounds of public schools. From VHS tapes to DVD. From the CRT model to the flat screen TV. Teachers now have access to audio-visual references and were trained how to measure its effectiveness and impact on their students.

In 15 years, Gina produced 16 shows and put in place over 10,000 video libraries from Batanes to Basilan. Studies confirmed the effectiveness of ETV in increasing comprehension and retention by 30% among students

## A PROTECTOR OF CHILDREN

Gina was on a roll with her flagship project for education when she came upon a realization. Empowering children through education was not the only solution to poverty, it was protecting them. How could children even do well in school, be globally competitive, when they are abused?

Gina's consciousness on the prevalence and gravity of child abuse in the country was opened by the death of an eight-year old girl who was physically abused by her mother.

According to the reports, the neighbors were aware of the physical abuse as they would hear the cries of the child in the wee hours, but were scared to intervene. Gina was convinced that if there had been an organization with a hotline easily accessible even to a child or where reports can be kept confidential, the tragedy could have been prevented. Thus, the birth of Bantay Bata 163.

Gina evolved from education advocate to protector of children.

She opened a hotline, rescued children and built a home where they can seek refuge. This eventually became a village where children undergo therapy and healing until they are ready to be reunited with the families.

Gina wanted a holistic approach to healing. She created a family-like set up in the Village where house parents must regularly assure the children that they are valued, loved and protected.

Having ran orphanages during her Ananda Marga days, Gina knew the value of nurturing in rebuilding the confidence of children, especially when they are abandoned or orphaned. In Bantay Bata's case, the children were abused, it required a higher level of patience and understanding. During her regular visits to the village, she would hug, carry and talk to the children. She would assure them that in Bantay Bata's care, they were safe.

Gina continued to evolve.

## A DEFENDER OF THE ENVIRONMENT

It was in early 1998 when DZMM Angelo Palmones pitched to Gina the idea of creating an environment hotline which was inspired by the success of Bantay Bata's 163 emergency helpline launched a year prior. Reports gathered through the hotline can be discussed on the radio program Bago Yan Ah! He suggested that the name of the segment be Bantay Kalikasan (BK).

The radio segment was instrumental for the passing of the Clean Air Act. It was able to gather 1 million signatures in support of the bill.

Gina was thrilled with the idea of using media as a watchdog for the environment and as a platform to bring attention to pressing environmental issues. It was not enough to educate and protect children, the environment where they live must be protected. This ensures a better quality of live for them. Gina said "Even if you have money, technology and infrastructure, without clean air and clean water, you won't have quality of life".

So instead of just a radio segment, Gina made Bantay Kalikasan the flagship program for the environment of the ABS-CBN Foundation.

Her first major project for BK for the environment was the reforestation of the La Mesa Water Reserve. At that time, La Mesa was classified as a disturbed forest. Meaning it was denuded and had cases of illegal settlers within the protected area. This posed a big threat to the water reservoir which supplies the drinking water supply of 12 million residents of Metro Manila.

Through the Save the La Mesa Watershed campaign, Gina was able to rally thousands of volunteers and donors. As a result, over one million trees were planted within the La Mesa Watershed. These serves as home to 125 bird species, a newly discovered cave, a variety of butterflies, insects and other species.

To sustain the maintenance of the forest, she had the La Mesa Eco Park rehabilitated. Tickets to the attractions and the entrance fees were meant to keep the protection, enrichment and protection of the watershed going.

Today, The La Mesa Eco Park has become a favorite recreational destination of families and students. It is also known as the PreNup Photography Capital of the Philippines for its popularity as a pre-nup pictorial location. Its Eco Academy has classes on nursery development and management conducted by expert foresters

Gina took on more projects for the environment. But one that equally stands out in terms of impact and significance is the rehabilitation of the Pasig River. The river was declared biologically dead due to extreme pollution.

The illustrative comparison of the Pasig River with a human nervous system became one of the

trademarks of Gina. She uses the illustration to explain to show the parallelism of the Pasig River being the main water artery of the nerve center of the country. Gina said "The state of the river has great adverse impact not only on the surrounding area but on our nation as a whole."

She further adds, "I have become increasingly aware that it was more than just cleaning the water of a river. It was connected to our history, to our identity. Cleaning the river is really more about reconnecting to the essence of what we are. We are essentially river people, taga-ilog and for a river people to live in filth goes against our very soul".

Gina's work for the Pasig River resulted to the rehabilitation of 17 esteros including the century-old Paco Market. It also resulted in the relocation of over 3,000 families in Calauan, Laguna in a community called BayaniJuan sa Southville 7 (BNJ).

The ABS-CBN Foundation managed BNJ for almost a decade. By the time the management of the community was transferred to the local government of Calauan, it had two schools, a wet and dry market, livelihood centers, medical clinic, sports field and a church donated by various corporations, NGOs and the Lopez clan.

## AN ADVOCATE FOR AREA DEVELOPMENT

As Gina was becoming more cognizant of the environment's impact to health, economy and quality of life another life-changing experience happened to Gina.





On board a chopper above the skies of Palawan, she saw an open pit mine.

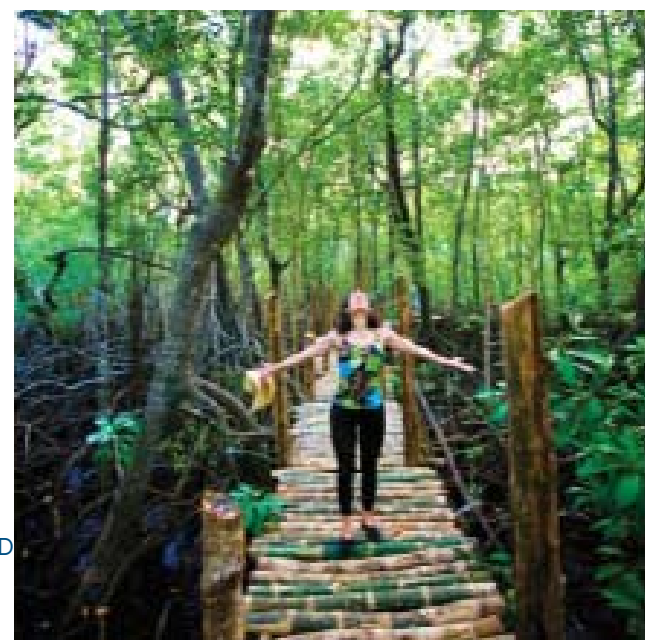
She was both horrified and saddened upon learning that the huge holes on the ground caused the suffering of farmers and fishermen whose livelihood were affected by mining operations.

There were also issues of corruption. Permits were being granted without regard for the imminent damage to the environment and risk to lives. This was at a time when there were 100 new applications for open-pit mining in Palawan.

As a solution, Gina offered an alternative to communities who supported mining. Her concept was called Area Development.

The concept is simple – one leverages on the available resources of an area and uses them to achieve development. Initiatives need to be sustainable, holistic and promotes inclusive growth. The concept of area development was perfect for Palawan. The province has more protected area than any other province in the country. It has two World Heritage sites and 17 Key Diversity Areas, areas with global impact.

It was a natural magnet for tourists. She started to work on several community-based eco-tourism projects with Gerry Ortega, a local radio anchor who was known for his anti-corruption campaigns. Gina engaged him as a Project Manager for Bantay Kalikasan. Among their projects were the Bacungan river cruise, snorkeling in Honda Bay and Pambato Reef, dolphin watching in Puerto Princesa Bay, firefly watching in Iwahig River and Ugong Rock Climb and Zipline Adventure. The projects started to attract many local and foreign tourists and to win awards.



And then, the unthinkable happened.

On broad daylight, Gerry was assassinated by a gunman in front of a thrift store in Barangay San Pedro. Gina was devastated.

The death of Gerry was pivotal to bringing Gina to the next phase of her evolution as a champion of the environment.

Now, the fight became more personal. The risks, real. There was urgency and intensity, that was never seen of her before.

### CHAMPIONING SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

Gina became more focused on communities that were threatened by mining. She had projects in Brooke's Point in Palawan and Lobo Batangas, areas that badly needed support for projects that will take the community away from patronizing mining activities or kaingin. And she was successful in doing so.

Her community-based projects in Bulusan and Gubat, Sorsogon as well as those in Sarangani, Samar and Leyte are doing very well. Communities experience a tremendous improvement on their local economy, with positive spillover effects to neighboring communities.

But aside from the material gains, it was the strengthening of values and heightened consciousness for the protection of the environment which made Gina happiest. She has proven that can people can work together without any agenda. Her idea of creating models on the ground, is now a reality.

### MISSION COMPLETE

For many of us who feel deeply the loss of Gina, we find consolation in the thought that Gina must have completed her evolution. She accomplished all that she had set out to do. And so, it was time to move on...

We continue to carry the torch and honor her legacy. She left many projects that stand as testaments for her genuine love for country. And we could always look at them to remind us how fortunate we were for having the opportunity to have worked with an incredible woman.



One of the ways to measure a person's legacy is to observe the kind of action they inspire after they exit this world.

Do their successors lose steam and falter, or do they carry the torch, however heavy it may be, and keep the fire burning? A single look at what followed after Gina Lopez's passing provides the answers.

Her death was never the end of anything; it was simply a new beginning, one meant for those that she had trusted to continue her work and inspired to do as she did to claim. Days after her final farewell, those who believed in her remain as strong as ever, never stopping once to re-think if her work was well worth it.

Turning to the words of ABS-CBN Foundation managing director Susan Afan, she sums up the Gina Lopez legacy perfectly: "You've done your part. Enjoy your dad and our God's embrace. Now we need to turn on the 'sparks of Ginas' in all of us to continue what you've started and make our Philippines bolder and brighter."

And if that doesn't summarize the effects that Gina had on people—the true measure of legacy—this will convince you further.

In a look back at her time in serving the Filipino people alongside Gina, Susan recalls the best of the best memories, lifelong lessons, and shared dreams she had with the icon, hoping that others will, like her, adopt Gina's passions and live a life of purpose just as she did.



**"Gina was overwhelming. Her energy was literally bouncing off the walls. She hated rules. She was bored with numbers and never read contracts. And yes, she (when allowed) was a micro-manager that would never take 'no' for an answer; bottom line, she was one heck of a boss."**

She also sent emails at ungodly hours, expected immediate responses, called whenever and wherever, and demanded the same energy from her staff. Under different circumstances, it would all be an employee's worst nightmare, but as Susan and many others—hundreds of others—who have the pleasure (no, the blessing) of working with Gina, they would eventually come to understand that it was what made her her. It was why she was able to accomplish so much, why her dreams almost automatically materialized, why she was the living embodiment of practical application over theory, why her projects were as far-reaching and high-impact as they were. It was, among many other qualities, what made her amazing.

She never stopped moving, but it was because she had the desire to do everything she could in her power for the Filipino people. The need to solve issues never stops after all, so why should she? That's Gina Lopez for you.

**Gina mastered the art of pakikisama.**

**"Despite her stature, she always made everyone in the foundation feel valued and heard."**

There was no doubt that Gina was a force to reckon with. In front of government officials, she was staunch in her principles and uncompromising in her advocacies. Addressing an intimidating audience of members of the private sector, she was likewise unbending, never, ever showing signs of breaking under pressure. Speaking to the individuals and communities that benefited from her programs, she exhibited a firmness in her promise to be of help to them, now and forever.



She was different things to different people, but to her staff, she was first and foremost a figure of humility and adaptability, an icon of genuine caring and zero pretension. She was the definition of the adage of walking one's talk and two of the most unforgettable ways she practiced this was through treating employees as equals and making sure that all opinions were given their fair share in the spotlight. She listened, and when she did, it was always with undivided attention. To her, everyone had something to say, and it was always worth listening to—regardless of who was talking.

In other words, Gina earned respect by knowing that respect must first be given.

**Gina believed that there was no foundation stronger than love.**

**"I was talking corporate language to her, using my 30 years of US management experience. And here she was talking about love! I don't know what happened next—it's now a blur, but that day for whatever reason, she convinced me—to just love."**

Love—it was probably the strongest, and only emotion, that Gina ever let herself be influenced by.

Sure, there were times she had felt frustration, disappointment, and even anger, but at the end of the day, for Gina, love truly conquered all. It was the core of who she was as a person and an environmentalist and humanitarian and without it, none of her work would have been achievable. Gina showed us all that love—unconditional and selfless love—and faith were the most crucial elements in working towards a goal; more so in her line of work that dealt with bettering the lives of the vulnerable, maltreated, and downtrodden.

Well-researched action plans, airtight presentations, and the most detailed SWOT analyses mean nothing if they're motivated by other things besides love.

And in Gina's words, as Susan recalls, she would say, "As long as you think it's hard, it will be hard. We can't think small. We have to think big. Let the others take on the smaller tasks. We need to take on the most difficult. We are ABS after all! Don't think too much, my love... Let it come from your heart and God will listen."

**Gina loved the Philippines and believed that being a Filipino was a gift.**

**"Gina has always said, 'The Philippines is so rich in natural resources and we have the best people. We should not be poor.' And now, I believe her."**

Colonial mentality didn't exist in Gina's consciousness.

To her, her Filipino-ness was something to be proud of, something to display with pride and embrace with open arms. Not once has she felt her race was inferior, her national identity something to conceal. Gina believed so much in this country and the people who call it home that she poured her heart and soul, her very life, into work that proved that the Philippines and Filipinos could be great. She believed in her country's strength: its agricultural bounties, extensive biodiversity, ecotourism, and the very warmth of the Filipino. There were never any weak points to her, just untapped potential.

These things to her and more were treasures worth protecting with one's very life and that was exactly what she did, using herself as an example.

Her nationalism was comparable to none and it inspired leagues and leagues of her countrymen from Luzon to Mindanao to follow her footsteps in whatever capacity they could. Like Susan, thousands of Filipinos had been moved by Gina and have learned to see the value of protecting what is uniquely Filipino.

**Gina only knew "now," and didn't believe in "later."**

**"We all say we've been touched by her, that she has inspired us. How great and wonderful can that be! But as we all know, warm moments don't last. How do we keep this inspired feeling going? Let's give the life of Gina Lopez justice, as she has given us and our country so much!"**

If Gina had a dream, a plan, or any vision of the future, you could be sure that in a matter of hours, the wheels to get them to materialize would be





turning within days—a week, tops. That's because she always believed that there was no time to waste and that if it was a plan to do good in the world, dillydallying was never an option. (Why wait to make positive change, after all?)

She inspired time and time again with her relentlessness to help (and her restlessness in doing so), but now that she's crossed over to the next life and her signature energy is no longer here to push—and sometimes shove—people in the right direction, what is there to do?

We continue, of course. We keep moving. We, like Gina, remain to be people of action. We do so because we continue to believe what Gina believed in and that we do the things we do for a greater good.

It is, perhaps, the only way to keep Gina's legacy alive.

**Gina is strong-willed, and she always kept going, and going, and going.**

***"Gina was flawed just like all of us. But that's why she is a modern-day hero, that in spite of her being human, she continued to live her life***

***in the principles she believed in: compassion, inclusiveness, integrity, and love. That amidst negativity, and naysayers, she soldiered on creating institutions like Bantay Bata 163 and Bantay Kalikasan, helping millions of people."***

In the days that followed Gina's death, thousands of people have called her one in a million. And she was indeed, but not because she was the only Filipino to ever believe that her country and fellowmen were worth fighting for, or that she was the first to implement beautiful programs to help millions nationwide.

Rather, they called Gina one of a kind and irreplaceable because she remained to be all these things despite her opponents, of which there were many and very powerful indeed, and the countless hurdles that came her way, most seemingly insurmountable to the ordinary dreamer.

But Gina was extraordinary in every way; so extraordinary, in fact, that she believed that nothing could stop her, or more importantly, that nothing was worth stopping her work for. There was a solution to everything.



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