USAID FROM THE AMERICAN PEOPLE

OPPORTUNITY 2.0

EDC Education Development Center

Second Chance Opportunities for Out-of-School Youth

HIGHER EDUCATION LEARNING SUMMIT

EVENT REPORT

Higher Education Institutions: Partners in Out-of-School Youth Development

May 30-31, 2023
Novotel, Cubao, Quezon City
Metro Manila

HIGHER EDUCATION LEARNING SUMMIT

Introduction

USAID Opportunity 2.0 (O2) is a collaborative program designed to support existing programs and mechanisms so that Filipino out-of-school youth (OSY) can pursue higher-level education, get new jobs, or start their own businesses. Part of strengthening systems around the youth is leveraging the mandates of higher education institutions in OSY development in the Philippines. The **Education Development Center** is O2's lead implementer.

O2 gathered 200 higher education leaders from 15 of its partner cities for the **Higher Education Learning Summit** themed, "Higher Education Institutions: Partners in Out-of-School Youth Development," at the Novotel in Quezon City.

Higher education institutions (HEIs) are public or private universities, colleges, community colleges, academically-affiliated research institutes, and training institutes that offer higher or tertiary education, including academic, vocational, or professional education (USAID Education Policy, 2018). In O2, HEIs are valued partners in Youth Development Alliance mechanisms in partner cities, facilitating positive youth development for OSYs through second-chance opportunities.

During the opening ceremonies, Ryan Washburn, Mission Director of USAID Philippines, Pacific Islands, and Mongolia on behalf of US Ambassador to the Philippines MaryKay Carlson officially announced the US government's two new grants that will further boost the capacity of HEIs to collaborate with other actors in the Philippines and the United States on OSY advancement.

SUMMIT OBJECTIVES

1. **Highlight the unique and pivotal role of HEIs** to advance systems and opportunities for Filipino OSYs as exhibited by partner HEIs of O2;
2. **Raise the awareness of stakeholders,** both from academe and from other sectors, on the unique role of HEIs in strengthening the enabling environment OSY-related policy and program development;
3. **Create spaces for interaction and collaboration among HEIs** and other sectors to spark new innovations that address persistent and evolving challenges in OSY development, and surface recommendations based on tested interventions; and,
4. **Enjoin HEIs to continue and sustain knowledge-sharing and collaborations** through the Higher Education Community of Practice in OSY Development and Lifelong Learning in the Philippines.

Quezon City is honored to be home to so many leading educational institutions and centers of academic excellence in our beloved country.

Thank you for choosing our city to be witness to the power of youth champions coming together to create real and lasting impact on the lives of marginalized Filipino youth.

We are excited to learn new research, innovations, and practices that will improve our city's services to the many out-of-school youth who are eager to achieve their dreams of a better tomorrow.

Vice Mayor Gian Sotto
Quezon City Government

I also commend all higher education institutions partners of USAID Opportunity 2.0 program that have dedicated their resources, time, and expertise to produce OSY-focused research, conduct training programs, and design responsive innovations for this project..

It is through the concerted efforts of our stakeholders—educators, researchers, policy makers, and all other stakeholders—that we can create a truly inclusive society where every young person has equal opportunity for growth and success.

Chairperson Dr. J. Prospero De Vera III
Commission on Higher Education

The US government, through USAID, has been working with the Philippine government industry and academia to help youth achieve their dreams and more broadly to drive inclusive growth...

Opportunity 2.0 created a network that strengthens global institutions and programs for out-of-school youth and that's what we're here to do today to expand that network with higher education institutions.

Ryan Washburn
USAID Mission Director to the Philippines, Pacific Islands, and Mongolia

Dr. Lynn Padilla
Director III, Department of Education

Maria A. Roque
Director, TESDA

DepEd remains committed in its mandate of delivering quality and relevant basic education to learners both in the formal and Alternative Learning System.

The nation's collective aspiration of a future that is *matatag* (strong), *maginhawa* (prosperous) and *panatag* (peaceful) is attainable when education institutions ensure that programs are inclusive and equitable. Through research, extension, and innovation, the education system in the country will grow stronger.

TESDA is committed to advancing the welfare of OSYs and providing them with as many chances as possible to help them achieve their full potential whether it is through employment, entrepreneurship, or life long learning.

We extend our gratitude to the initiative of USAID Opportunity 2.0 and congratulate their accomplishments with public and private education institutions, industry partners, and other government agencies.

Role of HEIs in OSY Development in the Philippines

Collaborating with other HEIs, local governments, national government agencies, and private sectors to enhance OSY programs

Leaders of colleges and universities in cities of Quezon, Angeles, Zamboanga, and Cagayan de Oro sat down for a panel discussion moderated by Miriam College's Dr. Trixie Sison and shared their HEIs' existing practices on partnership with local actors to create and expand opportunities for OSY.

Our work does not stop once the students graduate. We want to make sure that they get employed and stay employed and that they become leaders in society

Dr. Francisco Villanueva
City Colleges of Angeles President

Social inequity cannot be resolved by a single person or a single institution. We tell our barangay leaders all OSY issues in the community. Co-own it with the community members, with the OSY, and together, co-create a solution.

Dr. Theresita Atienza
QCU President

I encourage all institutions to adapt HERO. Our implementers are Education students. Students and OSY share experiences at a peer level which is useful in encouraging them to pursue further education.

Dr. Jaime Jalon
ZSCMST President

OSYs are easily discouraged so that is why we need to engage them in their own context

Dr. Maria Teresa Fajardo
USTP Director

Quezon City University President Dr. Theresita Atienza previously received a directive from City Mayor Joy Belmonte to "bring education to the core of the city government." With this goal, QCU launched the USAID-funded Executive Course for Barangay Leaders on System Delivery Support for the Out of School Youth (QCU BLeSDS for the OSY) to capacitate barangay officials in crafting projects with the youth, for the youth. It also engaged youth leaders and community organizers including Alternative Learning System (ALS) graduates, and TESDA course completers. QCU also partnered with the city's Education Affairs Unit to disseminate information on available programs that community leaders can cascade to OSY in their communities. Since then, communities in QC have conceptualized seven new youth projects, four of which were already implemented. OSY were engaged in urban farming, enabled to sell their produce to local restaurants. Some also gained skills in computer literacy and website development and were transitioned to employment.

Dr. Francisco Villanueva, President of the **City Colleges of Angeles** highlighted the college's existing government, industry, and academe partnerships built on its on-the-job training and placement programs. Among this collaborative work's many accomplishments to date is placing OSY in gainful employment through the STEP-UP program, a specialized high-speed sewing training for employment for the underprivileged in partnership with the largest garments manufacturing in Clark. The CCA is also in the process of organizing the Advocacy and Research Institute and finalizing the Angeles Center for Community Education and Skills for Success to help with its research agenda and policy formation for OSY and poverty alleviation.

Higher-Level Education or Training Readiness Orientation or HERO has become a part of **Zamboanga State College of Marine Sciences and Technology's** National Service Training Program (NSTP) as shared by President Dr. Jaime Jalon. It is now also a part of the college's extension services strengthening collaborations and partnerships with local stakeholders. To date, ZSCMST has trained 365 student HEROes (HERO implementers) who are expected to reach 4,000 ALS students through the program. ZSCMST is now looking into embedding HERO in its NSTP and sustaining the HERO program together with the Department of Education Region 9, with its 12 districts comprising almost 300 schools.

University of Science and Technology of Southern Philippines Director for Extension and Community Relations Dr. Maria Teresa Fajardo underscored the importance of capitalizing on digital technology and leveraging the university's available resources and expertise in order to provide the best training for OSY. To help with this, USAID funded the USTP-led eMonitor Mo app which is used by local stakeholders to get to know the OSY's situation.

Existing Programs and Best Practices

On Academic Research

- To understand OSY needs and situations, **Pamantasan ng Lungsod ng Pasig** (PLP) conducted a "Barangay Needs Assessment Basis for an Improved Out-of-School Youth Alternative Learning Program." Respondents included 463 OSYs, 452 parents, and 433 Barangay Local Government Unit officials. Through the program, PLP found that OSYs and the other respondents have limited knowledge of available opportunities.

Supporting OSYs to pursue further education

- **Zamboanga State College of Marine Sciences and Technology** integrated O2's HERO guide in its extension programs for OSY and included it in its NSTP curriculum where college students are trained to volunteer in facilitating alternative education graduates in their community to higher-level studies and training.
- **Angeles University Foundation** shared its ALS Learner Wellness Program which provided holistic assistance to OSY which boosted their morale, confidence, and well-being, with the support of the Angeles YDA.
- **Ferndale College** in Zamboanga had a Bridging Program for ALS students where they employed a creative curriculum considering the OSYs' unique situations and multiple intelligence. Ferndale also worked with the local government, barangays, NGOs, and CSOs. Youth trained on leadership, empowerment, and financial integrity.

On OSY Employment and Entrepreneurship

- **Technological Institute of the Philippines**, through a USAID grant, started project "Kabataan NEGOSYANTE: Navigating, Engaging, and Gearing OSY as New Technology Entrepreneurs." The project equipped OSY with technical skills in digital transformation, business operation, and 21st Century Skills. It also included career counseling and guidance and promoted entrepreneurial mindset and research activities to learn about youth challenges and solutions related to OSY employment. Training schedules were adjusted to avoid the livelihood activities of youth. Remedial classes were also offered to those who missed a few. This reduced the attrition rate by 20 percent.

- Also through a USAID grant, **Banilad Center for Professional Development** (**BCPD**) in Cebu implemented the Youth Workforce Readiness Training Program which prepared young women for employment and entrepreneurship. The Center also adopted the Dualized Training Program (DTP) which allowed learners to train both in school and in various industries. BCPD has over 90 industry partners and has institutionalized Industry Network Liaising which allows for communication with the industries and reports the learners' progress from training to employment. The Center's innovations also include institutionalizing the Foundation for Professional Training, Inc. Child Protection Policy, and extension of skills training programs to OSY, solo parents, indigenous peoples (Badjao community), and persons with disability.

- The primary goal of the **School of Knowledge for Industrial Labor, Leadership, and Service** (**SKILLS**) in Cebu is to create sustainable employment among OSY. Like BCPD, SKILLS is also a USAID grantee, teaches skills to marginalized youth, and employs the DTP. It addresses shortages in the industry by forging partnerships with other industry leaders and the academe.

- **Miriam College** (**MC**) promoted entrepreneurship education connecting OSYs to micro, small, and medium enterprises (MSMEs). It also operates a night school for TESDA skills training. By working with the QC government, MC has access to the OSY database and identified learners for its Back to Business (B2B) program. Through B2B, youth are provided with seed capital for their small businesses, and introduced to further education opportunities.

- **Notre Dame University** (**NDU**) offers support to youth entrepreneurs through standardized modules and Be Your Own Boss. Through its Small Business Institute, youth can have access to capital through a credit line ranging from Php 500 to Php 5000, without interest. NDU collaborates with the YDA in referring youth to appropriate pathways.

Capacitating DepEd ALS Teachers

SEAMEO-INNOTECH and its partner HEIs (**Miriam College, West Visayas State University, University of Southeastern Philippines**) co-developed courses and interventions to enhance ALS teacher competencies. The project made use of INNOTECH's Flexible Learning Platform or IFLEX to expand reach to ALS teachers.

Ensuring data-driven youth-focused policies and programs

- **Quezon City University**, through its six-month executive course for barangay leaders, helped local communities craft OSY-centered projects. This is in response to having OSYs make up 10 percent (60,000) of the QC youth population. With USAID support, QCU also conducted youth profiling, identified relevant stakeholders, provided skills training, and engaged OSY in civic engagement activities. The program fostered a strong partnership with OSYs and barangays to learn about their exact needs.

- For data collection on OSY, **STI General Santos City's** POSYGEN online database management system was able to reach and gather data on 23,716 youth and shared these with at least six youth-catering agencies. The Sangguniang Kabataan Federation (youth council) was instrumental in the data-gathering success.

- Similarly, **University of Science and Technology of Southern Philippines** in Cagayan de Oro City optimized the eMonitor Mo mobile application to enable teachers map and monitor ALS learners.

- **Ateneo de Zamboanga's** "Out-of-School Youth. Self Toward Actualization for a Responsive Transformation (OSY.START)" project focused on Indigenous People (IP) youth. ADZU met with ethnic group leaders in 98 barangays to locate OSYs. ADZU expanded its external linkages to facilitate more programs and work immersion.

Building the Higher Education Community of Practice (COP) for OSY Development and Lifelong Learning

USAID Higher Education Senior Advisor Dr. Samantha Alvis presented noteworthy practices on higher ed collaborations following the USAID Higher Education Program Framework. The framework is noted to provide guidance for the higher education system in providing quality and relevant education and training, advancing knowledge and research, and strengthening networks and communities.

> While the Higher Education Program framework is seeking to bring cohesiveness to our work in higher education, we're also simultaneously working to inform and improve the effectiveness of our strategic planning and programming.

Dr. Samantha Alvis
USAID Higher Education Senior Advisor

Meanwhile, USAID Higher Education Learning Network (HELN) Leader Dr. Jennifer Lebron and George Mason University's Dr. April Mattix Foster provided a global perspective on building higher ed Communities of Practice (COPs) for OSY development and lifelong learning. Lebron shared three (3) interrelated elements that create a COP: domain, practices, and relationship.

- Domain is what sets the boundaries for the community, how we decide the topics that we choose to pursue, and the questions we choose to answer.
- Practices are the tools that we have, the resources we create, the processes that we use to work together, and the stories that we tell.
- Relationship is what results in sharing domains and practices and allows us to transform our work as a community.

Dr. April Mattix Foster
George Mason University
Virginia, USA

Dr. Jennifer Lebron
USAID Higher Education
Learning Network

> Communities of practice are ways in which you can learn and improve on what you're doing and expand what you're doing.

It was argued that HEIs must form a COP to effectively leverage existing networks and foster new partnerships to enhance youth's access to opportunities. Throughout the sessions, emphasis was given to fostering a COP to effectively identify various expertise from within the community, supports organizational systems and learning, foster dialogue and research, and allow for lobbying new ideas or policies, among others. Participants were grouped to further discuss programs, partnerships, and challenges in OSY development in their communities, where they had a chance to learn best practices and effective strategies from one another.

Breakout sessions focused on HEIs' roles in OSY and academic research, supporting OSY to pursue further education, employment, and entrepreneurship, and ensuring data-driven youth-focused policies and programs.

Call to Action: What Can Be Done?

Understanding youth's circumstances

- There is evident **need for research to further understand the circumstances of OSY** and teachers and trainers. However, barangay government units and key stakeholders have low reception of research and its relevance to their work. One of the questions posed was, "How can we encourage our policymakers and academe to advocate for research and increase support in translating the findings to actions?" A proposed strategy is to **align with the targets of the local government and join planning sessions**. Collaboration with external stakeholders and continuous involvement of OSY are also essential.
- Research studies determining the challenges and solutions related to OSY employment must be included in the **HEI research agenda to contribute to evidence-based data for policymakers**' reference when lobbying for policies and programs.
- A defeatist attitude stemming from poverty and the lack of support seems to be the norm for most OSY. As such, this may result in attrition or lack of interest. To address these, **HEIs implemented mental health programs, adjusted class schedules, and allotted resources for OSY's expenses** to attend sessions.

## Developing OSY-friendly policies and curricula

- There is still a need to **improve program delivery and curricula**. This includes capacitating HEIs in understanding OSYs' circumstances and requirements to develop appropriate, contextualized curricula and allowing for flexibility in curriculum implementation.
- HEI curricula are regulated by the Commission on Higher Education (CHED). While there are credit transfers, and integrated lessons to help OSY pass diploma courses, **CHED currently does not have policies that solely cater to OSYs** and does not assure that OSYs will be able to cope with its rigorous standards. Its scholarship program is also noted to be merits-based, which makes it practically inaccessible to OSYs. This calls for further improvement in the system as well as curriculum designs.
- To increase OSY employability, **Dual Training Program (DTP) should be institutionalized** among training providers and 21st Century Skills should be integrated into higher ed curriculums.

Expanding partnerships with government, HEIs, private sector

- OSYs prioritize income and survival over training and education. Moreover, there is still a **bias towards college grads among industries**. It is challenging to find companies who would trust OSYs and provide them opportunities for work and self-employment. Even so, it was recommended that HEIs should upskill OSYs for the changes in industry requirements, and to increase their employability.
- **More scholarships** should be allocated for the poor, and there should be a **stronger partnership between the academe and industries**. However, it was noted that public funding (e.g. TESDA scholarships) often causes delays in program and training implementation. As such, HEIs are encouraged to partner with private sectors to not only address this problem but also **create shared value** for the benefit of the OSY, businesses, and communities.
- In CDO, there is an initiative to **explore partnerships with PhilHealth, SSS, and Philippine Statistics Authority to help OSY in processing documents** needed for employment.
- HEIs are also encouraged to **build a relationship with the Public Employment Service Office** to create more employment opportunities.

Enhancing youth mapping and recruitment strategies
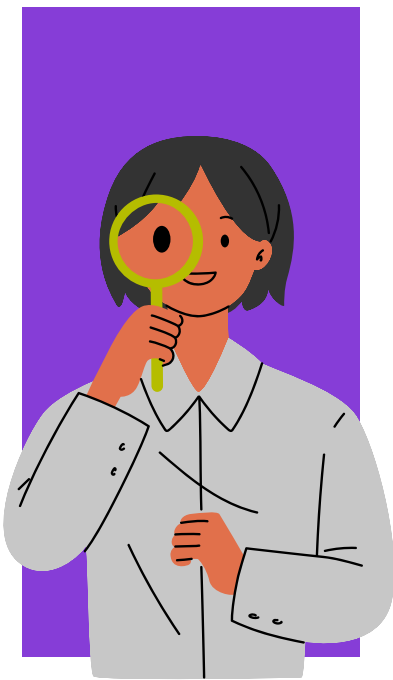
- OSYs are digital natives. Because of this, **social media has been proven to be an effective tool for youth recruitment**.
- Families also hold a huge role in OSY development and should not be overlooked. **Home visitations and communication with the youth's families are encouraged** when recruiting youth for development programs.
- A persisting challenge in data-gathering in the Philippines especially in Mindanao, as experienced by STI GenSan in using POSYGEN is the **lack of internet access in far-flung areas** which affects the speed of cascading policy changes and other information, as well as gathering data. In some cases (e.g. ADZU's OSY.START project), lack of data means delayed program implementation. Politically influenced notions on surveys affect OSY's responsiveness. Lack of facilities for program longevity, data encoding, and management also contributed to the challenges. In response, USTP's eMonitor Mo has begun developing an **offline data synchronization mechanism**.
- **Stakeholders' resistance to adopting new technology** makes it difficult to promote data systems. There is also the matter of having varying definitions of "OSY" among different agencies which makes it challenging to reconcile data. Other concerns include duplications as well as missing data which makes it challenging to maintain an inclusive database. To protect the youth's data, stakeholders hold access depending on their level of authority within their agencies.

Future Directions

Mir Tillah
USAID Philippines Senior Education Advisor

> We have this perception that OSYs are somewhat less articulate, less intelligent, or less capable than their colleagues or peers but that is far from the truth. The OSY are just as capable as those in school. It's just that the circumstances have prevented them from continuing their journey.

EDCOM 2 Executive Director Karol Mark Yee stated that the future of Philippine higher education is in making higher education more accessible whilst not sacrificing the quality of education that HEIs provide. HEIs are thus expected to develop avenues for access to education and lifelong learning, reskilling, and upskilling. Policy development to further enable the marginalized to access education is imperative. This requires conducting careful reflection, research, and application so that HEIs may finally break down barriers and challenges that hinder OSY's success.

Per the USAID Higher Education Program framework, HEIs have three (3) functions: research, education and workforce development, and community engagement. Knowledge and resource-sharing and creating co-ownership between HEIs and government and private sectors are some of the most important community practices mentioned. HEIs can make use of the community's diverse, multisectoral backgrounds to develop systems that are inclusive so that policies are institutionalized and OSYs actually reach and complete higher education.

The concerns raised during the sessions require a community of practice to harmonize efforts and address them all completely. This is an enormous task indeed, but all summit participants signified their willingness to engage and collaborate. By the end of the summit, participants committed to setting up enabling mechanisms for OSY including conducting research and extension activities and industry forums to support policy formation, youth mentoring and coaching, capacity building for teachers, and employing data-driven programs to achieve sustainable development, among others.

ANNEXES

All materials are accessible online. Scan the QR code below or click each annex listed to access.

Annex A: Event Briefer and Program

Annex B: Plenary Presentations

Annex C: Day 1 Breakout Presentations

Annex D: Day 2 Breakout Presentations

Annex E: Event Photos

Annex F: Video Messages

Annex G: Event Evaluation Summary

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