

# Cebu city youth finds pathway after pandemic

USAID introduce work-based learning in Philippine tech-voc to support marginalized Filipino youth

In early 2020, Melbert Sesante, Jr. was a 20-year-old who was just beginning his sophomore year in a Cebu City college. With an outgoing personality, he was pursuing a career in hospitality. But when COVID-19 hit the Philippines, he chose to drop out. He didn't think online classes were for him. Besides, his family couldn't afford to buy distance learning equipment.

Out of school and not working, he instead took a short tech-voc course on computer servicing through the Technical Education and Skills Development Authority (TESDA) Online Program. "I learned about it through a friend from church. I very much wanted to expand my knowledge in that area so I immediately grabbed the opportunity," he said.

USAID supported TESDA expand its online program so that it was more accessible to out-of-school youth who lost access to training and education services due to pandemic restrictions. Through this collaboration, trainees were loaned tablets and print modules. Community-based facilitators were also engaged to guide young learners throughout the process.

In addition, through USAID, more work and business readiness content was introduced into the Philippine tech-voc curriculum. This included the adoption of the Work-Based Learning approach from the Education Development Center. So, in addition to technical skills, hands-on learning and work immersion in actual workplaces were facilitated for TESDA learners. TESDA-trained youth now also gained soft skills which are always highly sought-after by businesses looking to expand and grow.

Melbert did his work immersion at Anjo World Theme Park in Cebu City. "My favorite lessons were hands-on. We went to actual workplaces and talked to managers," he recalled.





## Success Story: Cebu city youth finds pathway after pandemic

"Akala ko lang madali pero hindi. (I thought it was going to be easy, but it wasn't.) I encountered so many types of people as a game attendant. There were short-tempered people, some were rude, while some were slow. I really developed patience." Because of his balanced training, he was prepared. "I was able to enhance my computer skills as well as my communication skills. I made friends and family of everyone here at Anjo," Melbert said.

After a month, Melbert was officially hired by Anjo as a full-time game attendant. He's in charge of the park's opening and closing procedures, game equipment operations, area maintenance, and prize inventory.



USAID's collaboration with TESDA restored much needed access to learning opportunities for the marginalized youth in the Philippines. Additionally, the enhancements to the TESDA Online Program and the Philippine tech-voc curriculum have led to real, lasting, and positive impact to the lives of out-of-school Filipino youth. Having gained both technical and soft skills from USAID and TESDA support, more young people have better chances at achieving their education, employment, and entrepreneurship goals.

"I do want to go back to college, but that's in the future, and I will work and save up for it," with the right support, Melbert—whose gregarious spirit remains unwavering—is able to continue to pursuing his dreams.



**If it wasn't for USAID Opportunity 2.0, I'd still be a tambay (an idler), stuck at home just laying around. But because of this support, I found a regular, permanent job. Thank you, USAID, for steering me to a good path.**

— Melbert, 22, Cebu City  
Former out-of-school youth



Opportunity 2.0 is a five-year (2020-2025) program that aims to improve the learning and earning outcomes of out-of-school Filipino youth by working with key stakeholders in government, industry and academia to strengthen education, training, and employment systems at national and local levels. As of September 2022, over 1,200 out-of-school youth has completed tech-voc courses with USAID support.