

SUCCESS STORIES

USAID-DTI entrepreneurship training inspires self-starter to build computer servicing business

Moving through grief

Tom Luell Francisco, 24, was a college freshman in Cagayan de Oro City when he lost his father to lung cancer. His family struggled with finances shortly after, and his mother's pension was not enough to pay for household needs as well as his college fees. He decided to drop out and went on to work as a bartender to help his mom with the expenses.

As a self-starter, Tom is always on the lookout for new trainings. He signed up for the training program offered by USAID Opportunity 2.0 through the Crossroads Training Institute (CTI). Later on, he would join the USAID-funded Design Thinking for Entrepreneurship training, as well as the Youth Entrepreneurship Program (YEP) with the Department of Trade and Industry (DTI).

At night he worked as a bartender, and during the day, he spent his time upskilling and learning business foundations.



I've always wanted to learn new skills so I can get access to more opportunities. I did not expect the program (Opportunity 2.0) to be this comprehensive. I thought I only signed up for a tech-voc course. Now, I even have my own small business.

— Tom Luell, 24
Former out-of-school youth



Building an entrepreneurial mindset

USAID partnered with DTI to strengthen entrepreneurship programs for OSY. DTI integrated USAID Opportunity 2.0's Be Your Own Boss curriculum which boosted the program's trainings on business planning, development, and management.

To further expand youth's growth, the program also incorporated coaching and mentorship in collaboration with CDO's private sector partners. These sessions allowed OSY to earn the nitty-gritty of building a business.

"Our mentors, as well as DTI, helped us (youth) out a lot. Without their guidance, we wouldn't know how to get our paperwork done, or where to go for assistance, especially for youth like us who were just starting their small businesses for the first time. I think this is also a great help for fresh grads, or anyone looking for side hustles. Securing permits from the local government can be confusing and taxing, but I'm glad we were guided through the process."



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Starting COMPUTECH

Applying his skills in design thinking and entrepreneurship, Tom recently began his computer servicing business named "COMPUTECH." His services include desktop computer and laptop checking, cleaning, and assembling. He also builds computer sets and offers software program installations.

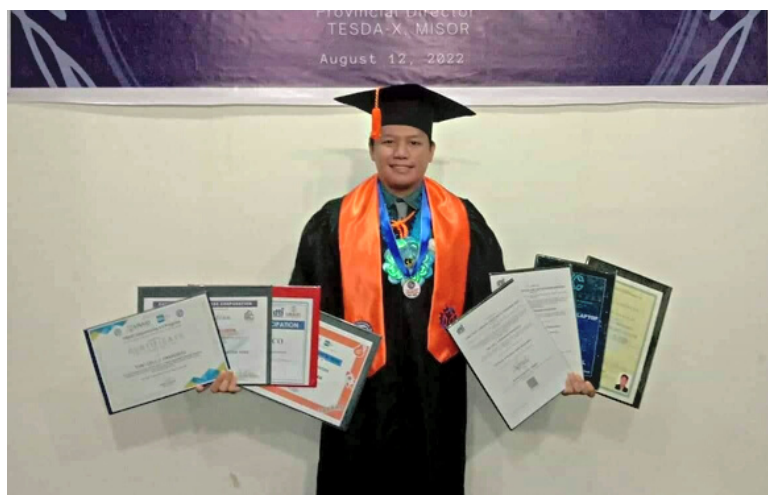
"It's a good thing to have your own business. You are your own boss, you manage your own time, and you work directly with your clients. It's up to you to put in the amount of effort you want, to grow your business at your own pace. If you're an employee, your work hours are fixed, but so is your income. " Tom created a Facebook page for COMPUTECH, where he shares his work as well as his clients' feedback.

"I always ask for feedback from my clients and then share them online. It's always important to me to receive feedback so I can improve my services and let my clients know about the effort that goes into each project."



I am proud of myself because no matter the challenges that come my way, I am focused on my goals. I plan it all out and I work hard to achieve them.

— Tom Luell, 24
Former out-of-school youth



Becoming His Own Boss

Even while moving through grief, Tom did not lose sight of his goals. He recalls how he struggled to look for clients in CDO when he had just launched his business, as there were other, bigger businesses offering the same services. Nevertheless, he persevered and is now slowly growing his clientele.

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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.