



USAID has been strengthening support systems for young entrepreneurs in the Philippines

Former out-of-school youth takes part in Angeles City street food scene

At dusk, Rizal Street in Angeles City comes to life as a bustling food lane offering the best local street food cuisine. Just an hour outside Metro Manila, here, young entrepreneurs with a passion for food set up their carts every day. Among them is Clark Catacutan, 21. He parks his motor bike, with a cart attached giving him just enough space for ingredients to prepare his very own version of nachos. ‘Nachos de Motor’ was only a dream. But today, Clark’s vision of being part of a community of food entrepreneurs has come true.

“I was already an out-of-school youth when I first tried selling food but that had to end.

I used to think that I could not manage a business. All I thought about was working for other people.”

Clark was unsuccessful in his first business endeavor. He was not gaining enough income to sustain operations.

An estimated four million Filipino youth are out-of-school, many come from lower income households forced to help support their families. The same was true for Clark. He had to start working at a very young age, helping out at his uncle’s small businesses as well as his mom’s small snack bar, all to augment their family’s income.



I have ‘Be Your Own Boss’ to thank for making me realize my strengths and giving me the confidence and tools to pursue this business track.

— Clark, former out-of-school youth, recalls a USAID-supported training he attended in 2021.

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Aspiring entrepreneurs can get their businesses on track. I highly encourage students who want to fund their schooling or people who just want to earn money to try and start a business.

— Clark, 21, enjoys the results of a strong alliance of youth champions in Angeles City, established through USAID support.



"I didn't have enough knowledge on business planning so couldn't make sure that my business growth was sustainable," he looks back at a USAID-supported training he attended in 2021. "I have 'Be Your Own Boss' to thank for making me realize my strengths and giving me the confidence and tools to pursue this business track."

USAID has been supporting the Philippine government enhance its training programs for out-of-school youth. Over the past two years, Be Your Own Boss content has been added and institutionalized into services for out-of-school youth, including programs by the Technical Education and Skills Development Authority. Clark gained essential skills on business start-ups when he was taking a vocational course two years prior, something that was not yet available before then. The additional training content USAID introduced gives Filipino learners a significantly higher chance of post-training success.

Through his training, Clark topped a business pitching contest and received a business starter kit from the Department of Trade and Industry, a strong member of the city's Youth Development Alliance. Aside from enhancing training curricula, USAID has also been supporting local actors to come together as a group of youth champions. Through this alliance, youth-serving agencies and organizations are able to put high priority for the marginalized out-of-school youth population and funnel resources together in collaborative youth development initiatives.

"Aspiring entrepreneurs can get their businesses on track. I highly encourage students who want to fund their schooling or people who just want to earn money to try and start a business." Clark's 'Nachos de Motor' business serves at least 300 people a week, most of them now repeat customers. Clark is currently working on launching a second pop-up branch. "I like Mexican food, but they can be expensive and not easily available. But with 'Nachos de Motor,' I made it so it's affordable and filling. I also make my own cheese sauce!"

Be Your Own Boss helps learners lead business start-ups with empathy and using community mapping tools. Participants are able to find more clarity about the solutions and products they can bring into their community to ensure clientele and growth.

"USAID really helped me get to know myself. I already had a bit of knowledge of running a business before training. But, I realized my strengths, received mentorship, and learned how to make a sustainable business plan. Thanks to you, I will reach further success in my business. That's for sure."

Opportunity 2.0 is a five-year (2020-2025) program that aims to improve the learning and earning outcomes of out-of-school youth by working with key stakeholders in government, industry, and academia to strengthen education, training, and employment systems in the Philippines.