



OSY to Business Owner: Building Communities One Cup of Coffee At A Time

Cagayan de Oro City is a bustling city in Misamis Oriental, south of the Philippines. It hosted a Food and Travel Festival in 2018 as the economic hub and gateway to the Northern Mindanao region. While the city grows, so too its out-of-school youth (OSY) population. "I stopped school because there was no one to support me," said John Cayman Dungog, 22, a former OSY from Cagayan de Oro.

"Because of the pandemic, everything stopped," John recalls. "There were fights in the family also. I didn't know what to do, so I was looking for a way to support myself. I was selling bananas as a source of income."

He also tried applying to more than 10 jobs but was not accepted to any of them. This was around the time when he saw an opportunity on social media to join USAID's Opportunity 2.0 program, an initiative that aimed to uplift OSYs like John in the country. The program focused on improving systems around youth so that they have better opportunities in employment, education, and entrepreneurship.

The program tapped and capacitated local schools and training institutions to roll out work and business readiness trainings to marginalized youth. In Cagayan de Oro City, through a local technical-vocational training center that specialized in food and beverage courses, Be Your Own Boss (BYOB) modules were added into the training curricula. BYOB, adopted from the Education Development Center, is a module that is proven to equip learners with essential entrepreneurship skills like business planning, financing, and growing clients, among others.

John was described by his peers during the training as quiet, keeping to himself. However, he would approach his trainers at Jamaican F&B Training Center after each session and ask about coffee bean quality, roast types, and methods of creating drinks. During one of their performance evaluations, he had his first taste of brewed coffee from his trainers.



I wanted the people of my community to experience the things that were taught to me.

— John Cayman Dungog, 22
Former OSY in Cagayan de Oro City



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“Our instructor had us taste espresso as part of our training program to determine the acidity and sweetness of the coffee. I didn’t like the taste at first... But he had us taste a Spanish latte for the first time. I was surprised that it tasted good, that it comes from the same espresso we had earlier!” The experience, he said, changed him.

John fell in love with coffee as a product and thought about establishing it as a business. He saved up his allowance from the BYOB training and used it to purchase coffee beans and equipment. He practiced at home and sold coffee from there. After he saved around PHP 3,000 (USD 54), he opened his first popup store in the town plaza.



Part of the reason why he established his business in the town of Jasaan is his love for his local community. He wanted to be able to share his story and his opportunities with those around him, which is why included them in his business model, applying BYOB skills. He hires his staff locally and utilizes the *habal-habal* (motor bike) drivers in his delivery services, letting them keep the delivery fee for themselves.



His popup, ingeniously propped on a motor bike, became very popular on social media. Local bloggers shared about it so much he had difficulty accommodating so many customers. He would have people traveling all the way from different parts of the province to try his coffee.

With each cup of coffee he sold, and he put his money back in to the business, just like what he learned from BYOB. The bloggers and the idea of making his family proud encouraged him. “From my popup, all the income I had, I put into the business, even if it was only five pesos (0.08 cents). If I can buy three cases of milk, I would be happy,” John said.



After just a few months, his hard work paid off—The Brew Box Café launched in January 2023. He designed his own logo and interiors, and even did the carpentry for the tables and chairs. He also expanded his menu with non-coffee based drinks, pastries, and snack food such as Korean-style sandwiches and lasagna.

To date, USAID through its local partners has reached more than 3,000 out-of-school youth and engaged with over 120 employers across the public and private sectors in Cagayan de Oro City alone. Through its Opportunity 2.0 program, USAID has successfully introduced BYOB in the technical vocational curriculum in the Philippines. In partnership with the Technical Education and Skills Development Authority as well as local private training institutions, learners across the country can now be more business-ready through BYOB.



My end goal is to help others, like with my staff and the local riders and their families. I want to be able to offer them jobs and opportunities. I want to build a community as well.

— John plans to build more branches across Cagayan De Oro City in the next five years.

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.