

USAID opens new possibilities for young breadwinner in Cebu



Yna (left), young freelance make-up artist in Cebu, takes a selfie with a client.

Yna Marie Cabañog, 20, started working since the age of ten. She took up jobs washing dishes and grilling barbecues. “My family is poor, and we almost always don’t have enough for the expenses, so I had to work at an early age to help support my siblings’ schooling,” recalls Yna as the eldest among seven children, with a stay-at-home mom, and a father who did construction work.

Having been an out-of-school youth, Yna was discriminated against. “I lost confidence in myself. I settled for less because I believed I was not worthy of more,” she said. But Yna was not one to give up in the face of adversity. She found a second chance through alternative education and through USAID.



I joined USAID's Opportunity 2.0 to learn about available opportunities and discover what else I'm capable of.

—Yna, 20, former out-of-school youth from Cebu City



Yna (right most) and her training batchmates posing with training materials

Through USAID’s Opportunity 2.0 program, out-of-school youth like Yna are able to gain life and work skills as well as a support system through peer groups. Training programs were adopted from the Education Development Center to help ease youth into better opportunities in employment, entrepreneurship, and higher education. Launched in 2020, the program was meant to boost local education and workforce development systems to cater to the conditions of marginalized youth.

After training in Opportunity 2.0, learning about development pathway and now more work-ready, Yna is studying in Lahug Night School while working as a house help and a make-up artist on the side. “It gets tiring, but I have to do this for my family.”

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Yna started dabbling with make-up as a hobby in 2018. "I feel like I can freely express myself when I do make-up. It boosts my confidence, and I also like boosting my clients' confidence by giving quality service. It really makes me happy." She followed make-up artists and schools on social media, learning techniques and styles from their content. She also dreams of attending one of their master classes one day. "I enjoy doing it. I made it my hobby and eventually my side hustle. As a working student, it allows me to work around my schedule."

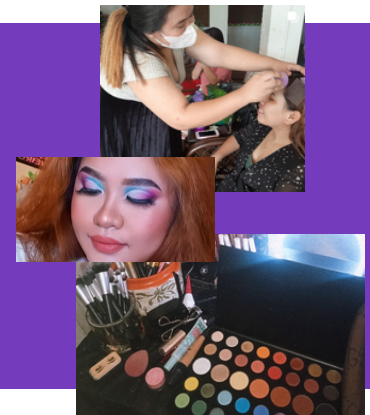
In addition to functional skills gained through the Philippine alternative education system, USAID Opportunity 2.0 added content that equips learners with soft skills—something highly sought after in the world of work and business.

Using Life Skills modules, Yna learned interpersonal communication, how to practice leadership, operate in a team, begin work habits, as well as health and safety practices in the workplace, among others. This Work-Based Learning approach also allowed her to link with professionals in fields she is interested in, establishing that valuable mentorship and guidance in a chosen career path. Yna used these skills and insights to boost her make-up business.



O2 helped me get to know myself better. I now fully understand the skills I do best. We were able to interview professionals and managers, which I'm really thankful for because it really boosted my confidence.

— Yna, 20, on her work and business readiness training



Following tips from accomplished make-up artists in Cebu City, Yna has started marketing her services on social media. Through this, she began receiving clients for events like graduations, school celebrations, and weddings.

In addition to upskilling, Opportunity 2.0 also incorporates opportunities for youth to interact with others from their community. Meaningful youth engagement empowers young people by fulfilling their full potential, and solidifies their success along their chosen development pathway. During training, Yna developed into a peer coach. She was able to share her experiences with fellow youth who were also struggling.

"I am super proud that I became a peer coach!" Yna realized that she has the indispensable ability to connect and effectively communicate with other people. In the end, through Opportunity 2.0, Yna gained her confidence back and was able to build on her leadership skills. Currently, she is the Class President at her night school and is the top student at her year level. Upon graduating senior high, Yna plans to apply for a scholarship and pursue a Social Work degree.

"I never saw myself as a leader. *Grabe talaga*, the program motivated me and made me believe that I can do so much better."



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.