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Private Sector Partnership and Out-of-School Youth Development

The MYDev Experience



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FOREWORD

We in the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) value our longstanding relationship with the Philippines in working toward a more stable, prosperous and well-governed nation. To contribute to this goal, USAID helps accelerate and sustain broad-based and inclusive growth; enhance peace and stability in conflict-affected areas in Mindanao; and improve environmental resilience in the Philippines. Through its work with youth, USAID Philippines' Mindanao Youth for Development (MYDev) program has made important contributions to enhancing peace and stability in Mindanao.

Since it started in 2013, MYDev has expanded opportunities for thousands of out-of-school youth from some of Mindanao's most conflict-affected areas by increasing young people's access to education; improving their life skills, employability, and civic engagement; and strengthening local governance. These youth, 19,000 of whom MYDev will reach, will gain the skills necessary to pursue peace, stability and growth in their homes and communities, and help drive development throughout Mindanao.

The private sector plays a pivotal role in helping vulnerable young people get on a path toward productive adulthood. Local businesses supply jobs, facilitating greater youth involvement in their communities. Partnering with local businesses also gives the youth who graduate from MYDev programs the competitive advantage of being equipped with timely relevant skills. Finally, the private sector is a key pillar in the community of practice we call the Out-of-School Youth Development Alliance. This local entity informs MYDev programming and provides critical training and post-training support to youth in civic engagement, entrepreneurship, and job placements.

This study showcases the possibilities that exist when we harness the power of the private sector -- together with other key stakeholders -- to achieve the country's development goals.

I want to extend my sincere appreciation to everyone who has devoted time, energy and resources to help MYDev support their communities' youth. I would like to thank the Education Development Center and its service providers for ensuring that the program is implemented with the highest standards. I would like to recognize our Philippine Government counterparts for providing invaluable support to the program: the Departments of Education, Interior and Local Government, Labor and Employment, Social Welfare and Development, Trade and Industry, and the Technical Education and Skills Development Authority. Finally, we are particularly grateful for the commitment of our local government partners -- the barangay, municipal, and city officials -- who have advanced and sustained the program's good work.

We in USAID appreciate the collaboration and outstanding work of the many talented and committed organizations and people, including the program participants, who are pushing the boundaries under challenging circumstances to improve the lives of youth and their communities in Mindanao, so that -- as one graduate noted -- "We are no longer out-of-school youth, but outstanding youth."



Susan K. Brems, Ph.D.
Mission Director
USAID Philippine

PREFACE

Emerging economies within fragile environments hinge upon youth having the right kinds of technical and work readiness skills to secure meaningful, well-paid work and in turn contribute to family livelihoods. Throughout the world, EDC's youth programs have helped young people succeed in jobs, entrepreneurship, and on-going career learning through programs that connect young people with skills training and employers.

EDC is proud of its successful efforts over the past decade to deliver quality educational, economic, social, and civic opportunities for these poor and vulnerable youth across the project's eight selected regions, enabling many of them to become entrepreneurs or gain employment. Since its founding in 1958, EDC has been a vital force in bridging research, policy, and practice to strengthen education, health, and workforce development opportunities in the communities we reach.

Through the USAID Philippines Mindanao Youth for Development (MYDev) project, EDC has provided more than 12,000 out-of-school youth (OSY) in conflict-affected Western Mindanao with foundational life skills, technical skills, and basic education. As a result, more than 32% of participating youth have gained new or better employment. To sustain this success, EDC has established eight Out-of-school Youth Development Alliances (OSYDA) to strengthen ties between youth, the private sector, and government resources. These Development Alliances continue to mobilize resources to provide advanced educational opportunities and employment pathways for youth.

This report describes the challenges and successes of the MYDev project to provide out-of-school youth with the right kinds of market driven technical and work readiness skills and to successfully link them with employment. It also examines the challenge of engaging local business leaders to support job creation within MYDev's target conflict-affected communities in a way that benefits both their business model and meets their labor needs.

The shared perspective regarding lessons learned by both out-of-school youth and private sector partners is critical to inspiring long-term engagement between the private sector and programs supporting out-of-school youth in Mindanao. We recognize the importance of increasing understanding of private sector priorities and the needs and perceptions of the youth in Mindanao.

I would like to thank USAID for sponsoring the MYDev project. I would also like to recognize the many local government and civil society partners that support MYDev. In particular, I would like to thank SEAMEO INNOTECH, which shared its wealth of knowledge and expertise during this study; national and local government officials who provided their time and support; the community-based organizations that led MYDev skills training programs; and the numerous committed private sector representatives who dedicated their time to the advancement of youth livelihood opportunities in their communities.

All my best,



David Offensend

Education Development Center, Inc. President and CEO

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This documentation of the private sector partnership and out-of-school youth (OSY) development would not have been possible without the extensive support from the MYDev field offices in Zamboanga City and Cotabato City who took the arduous task of coordinating all the schedules for the focus group discussions and key informant interviews.

Special thanks to the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) for supporting this endeavor. Appreciation also goes out to Southeast Asian Ministers of Education Organization Regional Center for Educational Innovation and Technology (SEAMEO INNOTECH) who accepted the task of conducting this study and to the Education Development Center, Inc. (EDC) MYDev senior management for providing technical guidance throughout this initiative.

Finally, the MYDev Program extends its sincerest gratitude to all the private sector partners and employers, Out-of-School Youth Development Alliance (OSYDA) members, local government unit representatives, as well as the MYDev graduates and their parents, who made time to accommodate the research team and were generous in sharing their experiences. These stories not only inspire youth and encourage partners from both the private and public sectors, but also serve as basis for the improvement of the MYDev Program in order to sustain the gains the project has so far achieved in the field of youth development.

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LIST OF ACRONYMS

CEO	Chief Executive Officer
CBPA	Comprehensive Bangsamoro Peace Agreement
DepEd	Department of Education
DOLE	Department of Labor and Employment
DPWH	Department of Public Works and Highways
DTI	Department of Trade and Industry
EDC	Education Development Center
EST	Emerging Skills Training
HR	Human Resources
IDPs	Internally Displaced Persons
LGU	Local Government Unit
MILF	Moro Islamic Liberation Front
MNLF	Moro National Liberation Front
MYDev Program	Mindanao Youth for Development Program
NC	National Certification
NDU	Notre Dame University of Cotabato
NGO	Non-government organization
OJT	On-the-job training
OSY	Out-of-school youth
OSYDA	Out-of-School Youth Development Alliance
PESO	Public Employment Service Office
TESDA	Technical Education and Skills Development Authority
USAID	United States Agency for International Development



MYDev learners (Photo courtesy of EDC, 2016)



Out-of-school youth attending a MYDev skills training program (Photo courtesy of SEAMEO INNOTECH, 2016)

THE CHALLENGE OF YOUTH DEVELOPMENT

Globally, effective and sustainable development for vulnerable youth groups (e.g., out-of-school youth, at-risk youth) is an elusive feat for many skills training programs designed to empower youth and improve their quality of life. Too often, the end of a short-term skills training program means receiving a certificate or getting a hand shake and photo opportunity, but leaves little tangible opportunity for real life work experience, let alone employment. This is not through lack of effort or ability on the part of the youth learner, but simply because opportunities for employment in many communities may be limited. Or there is a mismatch between the skills the youth have gained from their training program and the ones actually required by employers. Or there is a preference for traditional graduates of formal schools, colleges and universities. Or worse, there is a perception among employers and other community leaders that those coming from such vulnerable youth groups are uneducated, unskilled, disinterested, and lack the necessary work ethic. Even if these youth have completed skills training or alternative learning programs, such programs are frequently viewed as second rate, low quality and lacking credibility, substance and relevance.

Map of MYDev Project Sites

- ① Jolo, Sulu
- ② Indanan, Sulu
- ③ Isabela City
- ④ Lamitan City
- ⑤ Zamboanga City
- ⑥ Cotabato City
- ⑦ Parang, Maguindanao
- ⑧ Marawi City

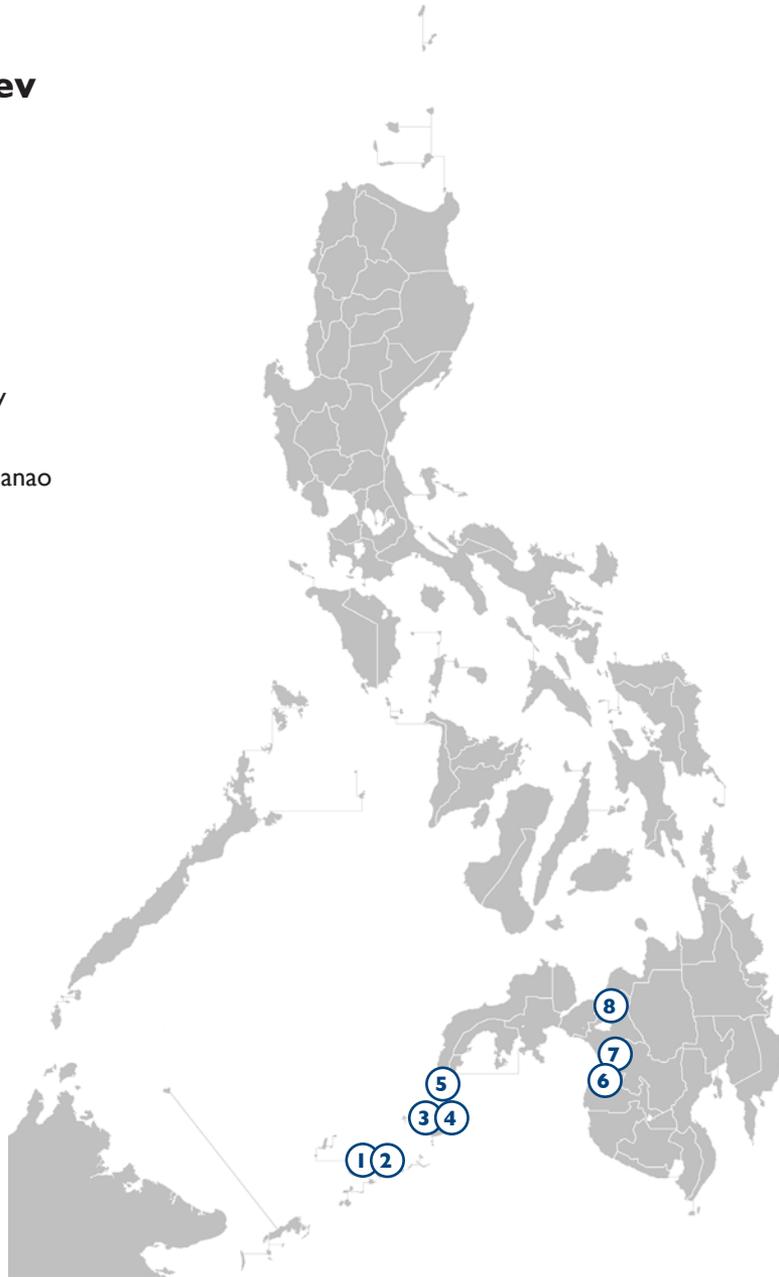


Photo credit: Mike Gonzales, used under Creative Commons attribution Public Domain

At-risk youth in the conflict-affected areas of Mindanao in Southern Philippines have historically faced similar challenges. The Philippine Statistics Authority estimates that approximately 20% of youth aged 15-24 in Mindanao are out-of-school youth.¹ Millions of dollars of international development assistance for skills training and alternative learning programs have been poured into the region but their actual impact on lives of youth beneficiaries has been difficult to document. Youth unemployment and underemployment rates remain high with young people aged 15-24 years representing over 50% of the total unemployed.²

In 2013, the USAID, in partnership with the Philippine government, launched a new five-year initiative known as the Mindanao Youth for Development Program (MYDev), which sought to seriously tackle the issue of youth development through a new approach. The initiative aimed to build collaborative synergy among the government, non-government and private sectors anchored on the socio-economic development of vulnerable youth groups. The project covers eight sites—the cities of Zamboanga, Lamitan, Isabela, Marawi and Cotabato; and the municipalities of Jolo and Indanan in Sulu, and Parang in Maguindanao (see Map of MYDev Project Sites). USAID Philippines Mission Director, Dr. Susan K. Brems, describes the strategic approach to MYDev as follows: “*The USAID MYDev program addresses key constraints to peace and stability in selected conflict-*

1 Philippine Statistics Authority, 2013 Functional Literacy, Education and Mass Media Survey (FLEMMS)

2 Philippine Statistics Authority, 2016 April Labor Force Survey



Dr. Susan K. Brems, USAID Philippines Mission Director (Photo courtesy of EDC MYDev, 2016)



Mr. David Offensend, EDC President
(Photo courtesy of EDC MYDev, 2016)

affected areas in Mindanao by enhancing the life skills and employability of vulnerable youth. This involves engaging youth in workforce and community development activities by developing their basic education competencies, livelihood capacities, and life and leadership skills for civic engagement.”

To design, implement, monitor and evaluate the MYDev program, USAID engaged the services of the Education Development Center (EDC). The EDC President, Mr. David Offensend, explains, “Through the MYDev program, EDC continues to place a strong emphasis on developing critical work readiness skills and employment-related life skills, alongside technical competencies needed for employment. EDC is able to deliver these skills through flexible, learner-centered, labor-market driven training courses. In addition, MYDev incorporates a strong post-training support program to connect graduates to employment opportunities, scholarships and continuing education and training.”

ENGAGING THE PRIVATE SECTOR AS PARTNERS IN YOUTH DEVELOPMENT

Engaging the private sector as partners in youth development has been critical to the success of the MYDev program. Beneficiaries or completers of MYDev-sponsored training programs gain opportunities for on-the-job work experience and actual employment. In Cotabato City and Zamboanga City, MYDev has been able to secure the support of over 20 private sector employers for on-the-job training, apprenticeships and employment placement for its program completers. These include commercial enterprises, department stores, retail stores, supermarkets, hotels and restaurants, construction suppliers, fish processing factories and canneries, and health and personal service providers. The following table (MYDev Private Sector Partners and Employers in Cotabato City and Zamboanga City) illustrates the type of private sector partners supporting youth development in these two cities. Private sector partnerships have been facilitated by local Chambers of Commerce and local government units which view youth as both the fuel and beneficiary of economic progress/development. MYDev graduates are recognized as a source of skilled labor power that will help drive inclusive economic growth in local communities. There is also a strong sense of corporate social responsibility anchored on a desire to help the youth secure gainful employment. To date almost 300 MYDev completers have been offered employment and close to 400 have benefited from apprenticeship programs provided by private sector partners and employers in Zamboanga City and Cotabato City.

MYDev Out-of-School Youth Private Sector Partners and Employers in Cotabato City and Zamboanga City

Company Name	Type of Business	Location	Number of MYDev Completers Supported	
			Employment	Apprenticeship or OJT
Cotabato City Muslim Chamber of Commerce	Chamber of Commerce	Cotabato City	1	
Buildright Hardware	Hardware	Cotabato City	23	39
Mall of Alnor	Retail Sales	Cotabato City	22	
McDonald's	Food and Beverage	Cotabato City	1	
Jollibee Foods Corporation	Food and Beverage	Cotabato City	4	
SouthSeas Complex	Retail Sales	Cotabato City	3	
PureGold Department Store	Retail Sales	Cotabato City	12	
Centro Department Store	Retail Sales	Cotabato City	5	47
Superama Supermart	Retail Sales	Cotabato City	32	
EM Manor Hotel and Restaurant	Hotel and Restaurant	Cotabato City	1	17
A and B Plastic Center and General Merchandise	Plastics and Retail Sales	Cotabato City	50	110
Pagana Kutrawato Restaurant	Food and Beverage/ Restaurant	Cotabato City	1	
Permex Producer and Exporter Corporation	Fish Processing	Zamboanga City	69	101
Chowtime Cuisine	Food and Beverage/ Restaurant	Zamboanga City	5	12
Mega Fishing Corporation	Fish processing	Zamboanga City		28
B-Zess Coffee Shop	Food and Beverage	Zamboanga City	2	
Mi Casa Hotel and Spa	Hotel and Hospitality Service	Zamboanga City	15	
Lei Siopao and Empanadas	Food and Beverage	Zamboanga City	4	
Secret Recipe Restaurant	Food and Beverage	Zamboanga City	2	2
ZAMTEES Garments Advertising	Garments	Zamboanga City	8	25
Oro Wonder Drug	Retail Sales	Zamboanga City	3	
Mang Inasal	Food and Beverage	Zamboanga City	4	
Red Logo	Retail Sales	Zamboanga City	2	
Dennis Café	Food and Beverage	Zamboanga City	1	
KCC Mall de Zamboanga	Retail Sales	Zamboanga City	4	
Jollibee Foods Corporation	Food and Beverage	Zamboanga City	2	
TOTAL			276	381

Source: EDC MYDev Cotabato City and Zamboanga City Offices, August 2016



Some members of Out-of-School Development Alliances of Zamboanga City (left) and Cotabato City (right).
(Photo courtesy of EDC and SEAMEO INNOTECH, 2016)

DRIVERS OF SUCCESSFUL PRIVATE SECTOR ENGAGEMENT

Out-of-School Youth Development Alliance (OSYDA) – The Springboard for Collaboration and Partnership

To ensure that vulnerable youth are at the center of MYDev programming, there was a need to establish a mechanism for inter-agency, public-private, civil society collaboration that is focused on youth development and treats youth as partners, not just mere beneficiaries. Through such a youth-centered inter-agency mechanism, MYDev program interventions were envisioned to help strengthen the social contract between vulnerable youth and their respective communities.

EDC field staff worked with local governments to establish a network of Out-of-School Youth Development Alliances (OSYDAs) in the cities and municipalities covered by MYDev. The membership and structure of the alliances vary from site to site depending on local context. Usually, however, the alliance is chaired by a local government executive (i.e., the City or Municipal Mayor) with representatives from the Department of Education (DepEd), the Technical Education

and Skills Development Authority (TESDA), Department of Labor and Employment (DOLE), Department of Trade and Industry (DTI); private sector representatives; training providers; and vulnerable youth representatives. The mandate of the alliance is to prioritize, plan and oversee skills training and alternative learning programs for youth that are aligned with local labor market requirements, and to facilitate referral and information exchange so that MYDev program completers have opportunities for post-training activities such as job fairs, on-the-job training, work experience, scholarships for continuing education and training and ultimately employment. Each alliance member continues to pursue its own mandate and set of responsibilities, but the OSYDA ensures that the respective mandates of alliance members are integrated with a common focus on youth development. The private sector is represented in the alliance by local chamber of commerce representatives, who help ensure that youth program identification, prioritization, design and implementation are anchored on local private sector human resource requirements, thereby increasing employability of MYDev program completers.

In Zamboanga City, the mayor's executive assistant, Mr. Christian Olasiman, sits as the chair of the Out-of-School Youth Development Alliance. Mr. Olasiman believes that the role of the alliance is critical in supporting this private sector engagement process. He says, *"The Out-of-School Youth Development Alliance provides an excellent mechanism for referral, advocacy and information exchange regarding possible post-training options for youth including employment, as well as ensuring youth training programs are aligned with the labor market requirements of private industry. This is why the city government passed an Executive Order providing a legal basis for the OSYDA as a sustainable institution beyond the life of the MYDev program."*

Collaborative Planning and Program Design with Private Sector Partners

Engaging private sector partners at every phase of the program implementation process—from design, implementation, to post-program support—is central to the success of MYDev. This starts with the conduct of a collaborative community-based labor market analysis to ensure MYDev training programs are relevant and responsive to private sector requirements. Chambers of

Commerce and their private sector members are invited to actively participate in community-based labor market analysis workshops. As chair of the Out-of-School Youth Development Alliance, local government units are tapped to assist chambers of commerce in mobilizing private sector organizations to join the labor market analysis discussions. The output of these collaborative workshops is a list of prioritized competency areas which guides MYDev program development. It also includes recommendations regarding content focus and program design parameters. During these discussions, private sector organizations are also encouraged to commit to taking on MYDev program completers for on-the-job experience and eventually employment. This collaborative planning process helps ensure MYDev training programs are responsive, relevant and lead to actual post-training employment opportunities for youth.

Ms. Bai Sandra Siang, President of the Cotabato City Muslim Chamber of Commerce, commends MYDev for facilitating such a collaborative labor market analysis process. She says that too often in the past, technical and vocational skills training organizations and foreign-funded projects offered training courses that were not relevant to local employers leading to a mismatch between skills supply and labor demand. *“The advantage of the MYDev emerging skills training courses, such as those on cashiering, utility work and warehouse management, is that these skills are directly aligned with employers’ labor requirements, and EDC is able*



Ms. Bai Sandra Siang, Cotabato City Muslim Chamber of Commerce President (Photo courtesy of SEAMEO INNOTECH, 2016)



Dr. Danda Juanday, Metro Cotabato Chamber of Commerce President (Photo courtesy of SEAMEO INNOTECH, 2016)

to quickly and flexibly respond and give immediate feedback to requests from the Chamber for skilled youth,” she explains.

The Metro Cotabato Chamber of Commerce President, Dr. Danda Juanday, shares that the chamber had been working closely with the city government of Cotabato in encouraging chamber members to join job fairs and provide referrals for employment opportunities for MYDev program completers. *“Now, there is a real window of opportunity for the private sector and vulnerable youth to collaborate,” he says. “The Chamber is in the right place to identify the assets of the community – and this includes the prospective youth labor force – as an input to private sector development. Youth who are willing to work to improve their lives and have the necessary skills will be given the chance to avail of the many emerging opportunities,”* Dr. Juanday concludes.

The Motivation for Private Sector Partnership

Private sector organizations are motivated to support MYDev programs for three major reasons:

- 1) **Need for Skilled Labor Power** – The improving peace and order situation in Southern Mindanao has resulted in socio-political stability and opportunities for economic growth. Economic growth rates in Zamboanga City and Cotabato City in 2014 stood at 6.5%.³

³ Philippine Statistics Authority, July 2014, Gross Regional Domestic Product (GRDP)

The signing of the Comprehensive Bangsamoro Peace Agreement (CBPA) between the Philippine Government and the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) in 2015 has provided a boost to economic development facilitating private sector investment in hotels, shopping malls, and other commercial establishments. This economic development has stimulated demand by private enterprises for skilled and semi-skilled labor in occupational areas such as cashiering, front office operations, commercial bagging; utility work, food and beverage, and stock management. Responding to the results of the labor market analysis, MYDev training programs were designed specifically to address these occupational skill areas directly and immediately helping private employers meet their human resource requirements.

- 2) **Corporate Social Responsibility** – Beyond their own commercial interests, MYDev private sector partners also have articulated a growing sense of social responsibility for youth development in their communities. The Cotabato City Muslim Chamber of Commerce, for example, is actively advocating for its members to reach out to vulnerable Muslim youth and give them a chance for gainful employment as an effort to reduce risks of social disorder caused by drug use, social alienation and recruitment in illicit activities and groups.

The store manager of Centro Department Store, Mr. Alsharif Saiden, shares, *“We are happy that employment opportunities for at-risk youth have a positive impact on addressing social problems faced by the city such as drug addiction, idleness, gangs, and peace and order concerns.”* He explains that by supporting at-risk youth through on-the-job training and employment, Centro was helping them transform their lives which benefits the whole community. Mr. Saiden notes, *“This is part of our social responsibility and my personal concern that*



Mr. Alsharif Saiden, Store Manager, Centro Department Store
(Photo courtesy of SEAMEO INNOTECH, 2016)

youth do not lose hope. We treat all our employees equally and nurture mutual respect so that they become better persons. Other stores may be nervous of hiring out-of-school youth due to lack of trust or not willing to take the risk. At Centro, we are confident that out-of-school youth are good people who make excellent employees.”

- 3) **Quality and Credibility of MYDev Training Programs** – Private sector companies consistently attribute their willingness to engage with the MYDev Program to the quality and relevance of the training courses it provides and the competence of its program completers. The President of the Cotabato City Muslim Chamber of Commerce claims, “MYDev strives to align its courses with the industry needs of the business sector.” In addition, Ms. Siang says she appreciated MYDev for emphasizing values development of its youth learners through its life skills component since these soft-skills are essential for employers. The MYDev end of program certificate is hence respected by employers as evidence of job readiness of the

graduates. Ms. Olaya Malaguik, manager of a leading Filipino apparel company in Cotabato that recently hired 21-year old MYDev graduate Alvin Lu, shares further, “When I saw Alvin’s MYDev course completion certificate with the USAID logo on it, I was confident that he had the skills and attributes we needed.”

Local Government as a Catalyst for Private Sector Partnership for MYDev

The success of the MYDev Program in facilitating private sector support for vulnerable youth owes much to the catalytic role played by local governments, with the support of line agencies of the national government. In their capacity as chair of the multi-sectoral Out-of-School Youth Development



Mr. Christian Olasiman, LGU Representative, and Chair, Zamboanga OSYDA (Photo courtesy of SEAMEO INNOTECH, 2016)

Alliances pioneered by MYDev, local government representatives have been instrumental in mobilizing private sector support for out-of-school youth. This includes soliciting private business participation in job fairs and advocating for on-the-job training and employment opportunities for MYDev program completers. The local government chair of the Zamboanga OSYDA, Mr. Christian Olasiman, says that the local government is in a strategic position to advocate and mobilize the interest of the private sector to support vulnerable youth engagement. Accordingly, the Zamboanga City Social Welfare and Development Office has actively partnered with MYDev and relevant national line agencies (i.e., TESDA, DOLE, DTI and DepEd) to organize and promote job fairs to bring prospective employers and MYDev program completers together. Mr. Olasiman shares, *“The city government of Zamboanga is looking at a range of strategies to mobilize private sector interest and support for at-risk youth. This includes encouraging private companies to identify specific target numbers of youth they might be able to engage for on-the-job training and/or employment, and exploring possible tax discounts/incentives for employers who provide on-the-job training or employment opportunities for out-of-school youth.”*

Out-of-School Youth as Champions of their Own Employability and Transformation

Having the private sector as an active program partner is not enough to transform the lives of out-of-school youth. It requires the youth themselves being committed to their own learning and self-development, and actively participating in training programs designed to develop employable skills needed by prospective employers. In MYDev, such youth participation is facilitated by engaging out-of-school youth as partners and champions of their own development rather than mere program beneficiaries. Through the OSYDA mechanism, out-of-school youth representatives have an opportunity to provide inputs to the planning and program design decision-making process. Every



Some out-of-school youth who participated in MYDev training programs. (Photo courtesy of EDC, 2016)

MYDev training program also has a built-in life skills development component designed to equip learners with essential work-related skills such as group leadership, managing interpersonal skills, team work, communication skills, customer relations, and work ethics. Development of these soft skills not only increases the youth's employability but more importantly builds their self-esteem, self-determination and self-confidence, a belief in the value of education, and sense of hope and personal empowerment. These attributes prepare them for the challenging process of seeking employment as well as facilitate their engagement as members of civil society with confidence to engage in social-political processes. The achievements of the program help shatter traditional community stereotypes of out-of-school youth as victims of social alienation and sources of threats to peace and social order. In contrast, they are now viewed as valuable contributors and assets to the community.



Mr. Jonald Macrohon, Owner, Chowtime Cuisine (Photo courtesy of SEAMEO INNOTECH, 2016)

In Zamboanga City, the local government's work with MYDev has helped them appreciate the importance of inclusive governance that extends to vulnerable youth. OSYDA Chair Mr. Olasiman explains, *"Out-of-school-youth are part of society and they need to have a place at the decision-making table in order to increase their sense of trust and give them hope to dream."* Private employers have also recognized the social benefits of youth empowerment facilitated by MYDev. Mr. Jonald Macrohon, owner and manager of Chowtime Cuisine, a thriving restaurant in Zamboanga City, employs out-of-school youth and considers them the backbone of his restaurant's workforce. He is driven by a sense of social justice and commitment to help out-of-school youth develop their self-confidence, on-the-job skills and sense of value as a member of the community. He remarks, *"Helping these young people to grow is a social responsibility. We should not forget where we came from and ultimately the entire society benefits, since when these young people feel that they are part of a community through gainful employment, there is less frustration, less social vice, less crime, and less violence."*



Some of the Youth Development Coordinators in Zamboanga City and Cotabato City. (Photo courtesy of SEAMEO INNOTECH and EDC MYDev, 2016)

Youth Development Coordinators – the bumble bees of youth development

Helping to orchestrate the interplay of MYDev stakeholders in youth development at the grassroots level is a small team of dedicated and hard working Youth Development Coordinators employed by EDC. Youth Development Coordinators provide technical support to the OSYDA mechanism and more importantly facilitate connections and communication between alliance members, training service providers, local government units, chambers of commerce, private employers and the youth themselves. Like bumblebees pollinating flowers, Youth Development Coordinators help at-risk youth transform and achieve their full bloom. As the MYDev Program progresses, these Youth Development Coordinators work with the various stakeholders to build local capacities and transfer the responsibilities they are currently performing to personnel, officials and offices of mainstream structures and agencies in order to promote sustainability beyond the life of the MYDev Program.



Out-of-school youth in a development agenda workshop for MYDev on October 2014. (Photo courtesy of SEAMEO INNOTECH, 2016)

REMAINING CHALLENGES AND FUTURE DIRECTIONS

The MYDev Program has achieved great success in supporting high impact youth programming with transformative potential for the economic development of vulnerable youth and their families as well as the business communities who employ them. It has also been successful in terms of supporting the processes of social engagement, youth empowerment and inclusive economic growth. Working with local governments, the program has helped create enabling political, legal and policy environments that encourage private sector partnership as well as facilitate collaboration within existing socio-political structures, hence laying the foundation for programmatic sustainability. As MYDev enters the second half of its program life, the challenge is to build on these foundations to further institutionalize emerging sustainability mechanisms and continue its institutional capacity building efforts to facilitate community-based technology transfer and scale-up. Efforts should include documentation and sharing of transformational practices and ensuring the continuous quality improvement of programming founded on local ownership. Through these, the program will continue to succeed in helping youth achieve their full potential within a framework of peacebuilding and inclusive social and economic development.

CASE STORIES





Mr. Gerald Alantaol, MYDev Graduate (Photo courtesy of EDC MYDev, 2016)

EMPLOYABILITY SKILLS, VALUES, AND ATTITUDES — A KEY TO OUT- OF-SCHOOL YOUTH SUCCESS

Gerald Alantaol, a 22-year-old college drop-out from Zamboanga City, is full of smiles after being offered a job as a waiter at the Secret Recipe Restaurant at Pahali Suites, a brand new hotel in Zamboanga. Gerald recently completed a 3-month MYDev-funded food and beverage skills training course and is one of the 15 completers who successfully passed the TESDA National Certification Level II (NC II) assessment for food and beverage. This experience was transformational for both

Gerald and his entire family. Gerald's 60 year-old father, Al, an ice cream vendor and widower, pushes a rented ice cream cart for six kilometers each day from one barangay/village to another to earn PhP 200 a day to support Gerald and his two younger siblings. While Al only completed elementary school, he recognized the value of education and encouraged Gerald to continue his studies and enroll in the food and beverage course organized by ZABIDA, a local NGO, with funding support from MYDev. Now that Gerald is employed, the daily family income has doubled and Gerald is happy that he is no longer a burden to his father or the community and is able to contribute to the family's well-being.

Ms. Florie May Perez, owner/manager of the Secret Recipe Restaurant at Pahali Suites, says that she hired Gerald because of his excellent work attitude, flexibility and multiple skills and competencies gained from the MyDev course and accompanying life skills program. Gerald had been referred to her as a potential new recruit by EDC as part of its post-training support program. She says that she was willing to hire a former out-of school youth as part of her humanitarian commitment. She would like to offer opportunities to youth who want to make an honest living to support their family. She does not regret her decision. *"I love the way Gerald works," she says. "He is flexible, really enjoys work, and always smiles."*

For Gerald and his father, this employment opportunity is a dream come true. *"Don't lose hope because there are still employers who are willing to give out-of-school youth a chance as long as you have employable skills and a good work attitude,"* says Gerald as advice to other out-of-school youth.



Dr. Rody Garcia, Owner, Mi Casa Hotel and Spa (Photo courtesy of SEAMEO INNOTECH, 2016)

DEVELOPING MULTIPLE RELATED SKILLS IS THE KEY TO BOTH BUSINESS AND CAREER SUCCESS

Dr. Rody Garcia, owner and Chief Executive Officer of the Mi Casa Hotel and Spa in Zamboanga City, has recently employed nine graduates from the MYDev-funded, TESDA-certified food and beverage skills training course and is in no doubt of their capabilities, employability and competitiveness. Considering that his youth employees are from less fortunate backgrounds, Dr. Garcia believes it

to be his *“moral obligation and social responsibility to give them a chance to prove themselves.”* He says, *“From my experience, the MYDev graduates are highly competent and are imbued with positive work attitudes and values.”* Comparing his staff who were former out-of-school youth to university graduates, he says, *“The MYDev graduates are able to perform at the same level of work output and capacity, and more importantly, are eager to continue to learn new skills and competencies.”* He continues, *“As an employer, I am looking for staff who have the potential to build on their entry-level skills and take on multi-tasking in the workplace.”* Dr. Garcia has offered his new employees opportunities to develop skills in complementary work areas such as massage therapy, front office, and beauty care. For Dr. Garcia, having a combination of related skills is essential for business to be successful as a commercial enterprise. *“Having multi-skilled multi-tasking staff allows us to offer a broader range of customer services which gives us an edge over our competitors,”* he says. Employees also benefit enormously from such multi-skilling opportunities, enhancing their employability, career options, and earning capacity. He recommends that programs that provide skills training to youth, like MYDev, should explore providing a combination of skill sets in related work areas rather than just single one-off skills training.

Fatima and Al-Rashid Ismael, along with their younger sister, were all MYDev graduates employed by Dr. Garcia after completing a MYDev-funded food and beverage course provided by the Universal College of Southeast Asia and the Pacific. Since joining the Mi Casa Hotel and Spa, they have participated in a range of on-the-job training opportunities and developed competencies and gained experience in multiple facets of the business including front office operations, food and beverage services, massage therapy, and related beauty care services. Al-Rashid narrates, *“Since we are able to work in multiple areas, we can now earn an average of PhP 500 a day each*



Al-Rashid Ismael, MYDev Graduate
(Photo courtesy of SEAMEO INNOTECH, 2016)

which has had a huge impact on the income level and quality of life of our family. Our mother, who is a single parent, is so happy and proud of us.” Al-Rashid and his sisters now dream of setting up their own family massage and beauty care clinic once they have gained more on-the-job experience and developed additional skills in business management and English language proficiency. Al-Rashid advises other out-of-school youth, “Do not stop developing yourself through training. Rather, keep up the thirst for new skills, avoid being idle and express yourself through your work.”



Mr. Jonald Macrohon, Owner, Chowtime Cuisine (Photo courtesy of SEAMEO INNOTECH, 2016)

REACHING OUT TO OUT-OF-SCHOOL YOUTH — A SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY AND AN ENGINE FOR COMMERCIAL SUCCESS

Mr. Jonald Macrohon is the owner and manager of Chowtime Cuisine, a thriving restaurant in Zamboanga City that has established a reputation for special dishes that promote traditional Zamboangeño cuisine. Mr. Macrohon shares that he started out with a small *carinderia* (street eatery) but, through hard work and development of his culinary skills, he was able to establish the Chowtime Cuisine restaurant. From just five employees, the company has grown to employ

over 40 staff who work in three shifts. He owes his restaurant's success to out-of-school youth who have served as the backbone of the restaurant's workforce. This includes five graduates from MYDev's short-term emerging skills training courses (i.e., food preparation, handling and catering services).

Mr. Macrohon shares that he is committed to helping at-risk youth get a step up in life by providing them with opportunities for employment and on-the-job training. This, he says, is part of his social responsibility. He notes, *"When these young people get employed, they develop their self-confidence and on-the-job skills, and begin to better appreciate the value of money, hard work, and sense of self-value as a member of the community. At Chowtime, we try to make them feel part of the company family, assisting them to break down old bad habits and develop their personality and employability skills. Of course, there are challenges, including dealing with vices such as drug addiction and alcoholism but by providing a sense of belonging and support, a regular income and free meals, many of these challenges can be overcome since they know that we care for them and that we want them to grow."* Mr. Macrohon adds, *"Through these efforts, I hope that their dreams will develop, and through time, as well as their plans and skills to realize these dreams."* Already, four former staff have received support to establish their own carinderia. While he is driven by a sense of social justice, Mr. Macrohon also believes that hiring and taking care of youth employees are good for business. *"Our out-of-school youth employees have a great desire to learn. They work hard and are committed to being successful employees. Given this positive attitude, we are willing to be flexible when it comes to their work hours so they can continue studying while working."* Reflecting on his own humble roots Mr. Macrohon says, *"Helping these young people to grow is a social responsibility. We should not forget where we came from and ultimately the entire society benefits since when they feel that they are part of a community through gainful employment, there is less frustration, less social vice, less crime, and less violence."*



Ms. Mabel Grace Bacolod, PERMEX HR Supervisor (Photo courtesy of SEAMEO INNOTECH, 2016)

PRIVATE SECTOR TRAINING FOR INTERNALLY DISPLACED YOUTH MAKES A DIFFERENCE

The Zamboanga City siege in September 2013, involving weeks of armed clashes between the military forces of the Philippines and a rogue faction of the Moro National Liberation Front, resulted in the displacement of more than 100,000 people, the deaths of several civilians, and a serious negative impact on the economic confidence and activity in the city. One of the affected *barangays* (villages) in the western coastal region of Zamboanga City was Barangay Tulungatung,

which was tapped by the national government to host about 2,000 internally displaced persons (IDPs) in a temporary resettlement area. Three years later, the 427 displaced families are still in the “temporary” resettlement site with construction of the permanent relocation housing not yet completed by the Department of Public Works and Highways (DPWH). Recognizing the importance of education and improved employability as a catalyst for community development, Barangay Chairperson Ester Del Rosario, with the backing of the Department of Trade and Industry (DTI), approached MYDev for assistance of internally displaced out-of-school youth in her barangay. EDC sought out Permex Producer and Exporter Corporation (PERMEX), a local producer and exporter of canned tuna and sardines, which had recently announced various vacancies as a possible partner for on-the-job skills training leading to the employment of these youth. EDC agreed to provide life skills training for the youth while PERMEX offered to take care of a short-term on-the-job skills training course on fish processing and provide employment opportunities for successful completers as part of their corporate social responsibility program. One hundred and one (101) internally displaced youth joined a 20-day in-plant training on fish processing. EDC helped these youth meet the pre-course registration requirements of PERMEX such as securing barangay clearance, drug testing, police clearance, identification papers, etc., and coordinated the turnover of these documents to the Human Resources Department of PERMEX. EDC also gave the youth trainees work boots while PERMEX provided free transportation to and from the plant each day. During their training, the 101 youth trainees were divided into four batches and deployed to different sections in the plant. The Provincial DTI Office and EDC co-signed the training certificate of completion. According to Ms. Mabel Grace Bacolod, PERMEX HR Supervisor, the usual on-the-job training courses for new employees last for five months, hence, it was particularly challenging to try and compress the training into just 20 days and still achieve quality learning outcomes. Of the 101 completers, 60 met the minimum competency standards of PERMEX and were hired as workers. Fifty-six of those hired were internally displaced persons.

Absorbing such a large number of at-risk youth proved to be quite a challenge to PERMEX, particularly as many of the internally displaced persons were facing personal challenges due to post-conflict trauma and displacement. This required great patience on the part of the PERMEX Human Resource team led by Ms. Bacolod and the PERMEX section supervisors. The life skills training provided by EDC was also recognized as being very beneficial in helping equip the youth with work readiness and civic engagement skills. Ms. Bacolod says, “*These young workers can be competitive*

if given the opportunity along with the right attitude and work ethic." For the 60 youth trainees offered employment at PERMEX, the opportunity for a regular income and on-going work skills development realized the dream of Barangay Chairperson Rosario for improved employability and enhanced quality of life not only of youth but also of their families. One MYDev graduate, Crismar Diabordo, shares that with the work opportunity at PERMEX, "I got smiles from my parents' faces' seeing the groceries I brought home from my salary which were of great help for my family." Another out-of-school youth, Hilna Dulla, reports that her salary has allowed her to buy milk for her child and has given all of the out-of-school youth in her community "hope of a better day." Reflecting on the program, Ms. Bacolod commits to continue exploring future training and employment opportunities for at-risk youth at PERMEX. She concludes, "It would be shameful as Filipinos if we are not able to help those members of our community in need of assistance given that partners from other countries, such as the USAID MYDev Program, are trying to help."



Mr. Crismar Diabordo (left) and Ms. Hilna Dulla (right), MYDev Graduates (Photo courtesy of EDC MYDev, 2016)



Ms. Fatima Elijah Basar, Chief Executive Officer, Buildright Hardware (Photo courtesy of SEAMEO INNOTECH, 2016)

MUSLIM BUSINESS OWNERS EMBRACE AND MENTOR MYDev GRADUATES

Ms. Fatima Elijah Basar, the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of Buildright Hardware in Cotabato City, is fueled by a passion to make a difference in the lives of Muslim Bangsamoro youth in the city. Historically, she says, there have been limited opportunities for Bangsamoro youth because of discrimination. This has made some vulnerable Muslim youth give up and resign themselves to idleness, and social evils such as drugs. She believes that it is the social responsibility of Muslim business owners, such as herself, to provide on-the-job training and employment opportunities

to Muslim youth and nurture a sense of direction, hope, and professionalism. Buildright Hardware employs about 10 employees, four of whom are Muslim graduates from MYDev training courses. The hardware also provides on-the-job training to additional four Muslim youth and provides screening of prospective youth employees for other business members of the Cotabato City Muslim Chamber of Commerce.

Ms. Basar shares that managing new recruits from vulnerable youth groups is not always easy. While the graduates from MYDev skills training courses are equipped with the necessary foundational skills, these skills need to be adapted/refined to the unique contextual requirements of her company. A lot of patience and guidance is needed in the early months since these young people tend to initially lack self-confidence and self-direction, and have difficulty following instructions. Out-of-school youth also sometimes have a hard time adjusting to the structured schedule of the workplace and carrying the responsibility of managing their time. The Buildright HR team had to adjust its recruitment, assessment and probationary practices and customize the giving of work instructions to align with the socio-psychology of these youth. Ms. Basar notes that one of the challenges in hiring Muslim out-of-school youth is the initial negative attitude towards manual work. Some Muslim youth find it challenging to separate work tasks from their sense of personal status, feeling ashamed if fellow Muslims see them doing manual labor tasks such as sweeping the floor, cleaning, or serving others. As CEO, Ms. Basar said she needed to invest time and patience in mentoring her new recruits to build their

self-esteem and encourage them to continue developing skills which are transferable to multiple work settings. This means giving them space to make mistakes and helping them see the latter as opportunities to learn and grow. Buildright Hardware has put in place a systematic screening and on-the-job training program to assess the suitability of their prospective recruits prior to making a formal job offer. This gives the youth an opportunity to develop new employable skills even if they

choose not to pursue employment at Buildright Hardware and also gives the company an opportunity to determine which candidates best fit their skill, attitude and work requirements. Ms. Basar says that the secret to success in working with out-of-school youth is to patiently nurture their development and confidence. She mentions, *“You do not always notice the incremental changes that are happening to these youth each day, but after several months you can appreciate the difference and changes you have made in their lives – in their self-esteem, self-confidence and adaptability as employees. And when you finally see these changes in action in the workplace, it is very rewarding.”* She concludes, *“Despite the challenges involved in mentoring at-risk youth, it is very fulfilling to be part of such a positive change experience in their lives.”*



Ms. Marissa Mansol, MYDev Graduate (Photo courtesy of SEAMEO INNOTECH, 2016)

One former out-of-school youth who benefitted from the mentoring and coaching provided at Buildright Hardware is 18-year-old Marissa Mansol. Marissa, a first year college drop-out, joined a MYDev Emerging Skills Training (EST) course on cashiering provided by Coland Systems Technology

College Inc. Upon completion of the course she attended a job fair, and as a MYDev graduate, was given priority attention by Buildright Hardware since many of the pre-employment documentation requirements had been facilitated by EDC. She successfully completed a five-day on-the-job training at Buildright Hardware and was offered a two-month probationary contract in the Administrative Section. Marissa shares with pride that she learned many new skills on the job under the guidance of Ms. Basar and her immediate supervisor. Ms. Basar says that she readily embraced Marissa as a promising new employee worth mentoring and coaching after seeing how readily she assumed and completed assigned tasks. *“Marissa showed initiative, and was able to proactively complete her work assignments with limited instruction,”* she explains. For her efforts, Marissa was rewarded with new responsibilities, first in stock management and later as a cashier. In each new assignment, Marissa draws inspiration from the on-the-job learning opportunities facilitated by supportive coaching and mentoring from her supervisors and the CEO. She admits, *“Sometimes the new work responsibilities were challenging to adjust to, but if you are interested enough in your job it is easy to learn.”* Her advice to other MYDev learners is *“not to be choosy, and instead be patient, follow rules and instructions, be industrious and keep working hard, and always be willing to learn new things.”* Marissa tearfully shares that she loves her job *“because her employers and colleagues are like a family that always help each other.”* Even now, she is being asked to help train new recruits including college graduates. Marissa says she now realizes the importance of work and is able to face new challenges such as wisely managing her time and salary.

Ms. Basar says she observes Marissa’s constant smile at work and is intrigued by it. Marissa explains that she smiles at work because she is happy with her job and it is a great way to relieve stress. *“Sometimes, when we are busy in the hardware store there are staff running around in panic mode. At these times I just smile and take each required step one at a time,”* concludes Marissa.



Ms. Bai Sandra Siang, President, Cotabato City Muslim Chamber of Commerce (Photo courtesy of SEAMEO INNOTECH, 2016)

COTABATO CITY CHAMBERS OF COMMERCE – PARTNERS IN ADVOCACY FOR YOUTH EMPLOYMENT

To obtain private sector support for youth employment, the MYDev Program has encouraged active engagement of local chambers of commerce in the multi-sectoral Out-of-School Development Alliance (OSYDA). In Cotabato City, two chambers of commerce have been active partners of MYDev – i) the Cotabato City Muslim Chamber of Commerce, and ii) the Metro

Cotabato Chamber of Commerce. Bai Sandra Siang, President of the Cotabato City Muslim Chamber of Commerce, applauds the Out-of-School Youth Development Alliance as a unique mechanism for promoting private sector involvement in youth program planning to ensure training programs are relevant and responsive to labor market demands of local private employers and industries. The Cotabato City Muslim Chamber of Commerce has over 88 members, 90 percent of which are Muslim-owned private business establishments covering hardware, hotels, transportation services, and suppliers of motor vehicle parts, among other industry sectors. Ms. Siang commends MYDev for facilitating a collaborative process of labor market analysis where the Chamber and individual private sector members can help identify priority MYDev training programs that meet their needs. She points out, *“Too often in the past, technical and vocational skills training organizations and foreign-funded projects offered training courses that were not relevant to local employers leading to a mismatch between skills supply and labor demand.”* She says that the *“advantage of the MYDev emerging skills training courses, such as those on cashiering, utility work and warehouse management, is that these skills are directly aligned with employers’ labor requirements, and EDC is able to quickly and flexibly respond and give immediate feedback to requests from the Chamber for skilled youth.”*

Ms. Siang shares further that the Muslim chamber members are showing increased interest and willingness to recruit out-of-school youth as employees. With the improving peace and order situation in Cotabato, she said more Muslim businessmen and women are investing in local commercial enterprises in the city with an increasing demand for skilled and semi-skilled labor power. At the same time, there is a growing sense of corporate social responsibility among chamber members to reach out to vulnerable Muslim youth and give them a chance to secure gainful employment to reduce risks of social disorder caused by drug use, social alienation and recruitment in illicit activities and groups. The Chamber is actively advocating for members to employ at-risk youth and specifically MYDev program completers. Ms. Siang explains that she is using the HR team of her own private hardware company (Buildright Hardware) to help screen MYDev program completers for referral to chamber members as future on-the-job trainees and employees. She says the Chamber itself had hired graduates from MYDev skills programs and is very happy with their level of skills, work attitude and work performance. As part of their advocacy role, the Chamber orients its members on the special needs and contexts of

these vulnerable youth. She shares that Muslim youth from conflict-affected areas often lack self-confidence and feel stigmatized by the wider community. Successful placement of these young people as employees requires some patience and additional support from employers in the initial stages, but once the youth are given a chance, they are able to prove themselves as flexible, dedicated and hardworking employees. She also explains that the Chamber works closely with the local government of Cotabato City and had actively supported the plans of the city government to prepare an ordinance requesting private employers to strive to increase their employment of at-risk youth to as much as 20% of their workforce. Ultimately, the ordinance was not approved by the Executive Council due to fears that having such a fixed quota may be *“too restrictive and not business friendly.”*



Dr. Danda Juanday, President, Metro Cotabato Chamber of Commerce
(Photo courtesy of SEAMEO INNOTECH, 2016)

Dr. Danda Juanday, President of the Metro Cotabato Chamber of Commerce also emphasizes the importance of the Chamber as an advocate for young unemployed and out-of-school youth. Dr. Juanday says that the explosion of commercial activity in Cotabato in recent years provides new employment opportunities for young people and highlights the importance of the collaborative market analysis conducted by MYDev in ensuring that training programs for youth align with labor needs. Dr. Juanday cites the improving peace and order situation in Cotabato as a catalyst for the economic development in the city. *“The peace agreement between the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) and the Philippine government (also known as the Comprehensive Agreement on the Bangsamoro) has led to increased trust in banks and the commercial sector, and a surfacing of the former Bangsamoro underground economy,”* he notes. He

explains that there are now plans to further kick start the economy through *halal* economics with a new halal slaughterhouse to be established, and halal tourism as a potential growth area, which will provide on-the-job training and employment opportunities for MYDev graduates. He underscores that the role of the Chamber is to identify gaps in the skill and labor requirements of chamber members and provide this information to the Out-of-School Youth Development Alliance as input to future MYDev training program planning and decision-making. The Chamber has been working closely with the city government in this regard, encouraging chamber members to join job fairs and provide referrals for employment opportunities for youth. *“Now, there is a real window of opportunity for the private sector and vulnerable youth to collaborate,”* Dr. Juanday says. *“The Chamber is in the right place to identify the assets of the community – and this includes the prospective youth labor force – as an input to private sector development. Out-of-school youth who are willing to work to improve their lives and have the necessary skills will be given the chance to avail of the many emerging opportunities,”* he concludes.



Mr. Alsharif Saiden, Store Manager, Centro Department Store (Photo courtesy of SEAMEO INNOTECH, 2016)

DEPARTMENT STORE ACTIVELY SEEKS OUT-OF-SCHOOL YOUTH AS PREFERRED EMPLOYEES

Centro is one of the newer department stores in Cotabato City with a somewhat unique approach to recruitment that has been a boon to MYDev graduates. According to the Store Manager, Mr. Alsharif Saiden, Centro prefers to hire out-of-school youth, with 86 of the store's selling staff (70%) being former out-of-school youth. *"There are a lot of out-of-school youth in Cotabato City who find it difficult to find work due to lack of experience and formal credentials. For Centro, we are not merely looking for diplomas and academic backgrounds but whether the prospective employees have the necessary skills, attitudes, sense of self-determination, and passion for the job,"* he explains. Mr. Saiden says

he was impressed with the skills and qualities of the MYDev graduates. *“We learned about the MYDev program through participation in a job fair organized by the city government. The City Government Market Administrator and focal person of the city mayor to the OSYDA, Mr. Benjie Hoksuan, met with us and encouraged us to hire MYDev training program graduates. We now have 14 graduates from different MYDev training courses and are keen to hire more,”* Mr. Saiden explains further. He adds that the MYDev skills courses such as cashiering, utility work, and commercial baggers and packers are developing the precise skills and competencies that Centro, and other shopping malls, need as employers with growing labor market demands. He notes, too, that the MYDev life skills program helps develop important attributes in youth such as interpersonal skills, self-confidence, and teamwork. He points out that some applicants who are college degree holders tend to be overconfident, and when hired, often do not take the job seriously. In contrast, out-of-school youth are very determined to succeed on the job and appreciate the opportunity and trust given to them.

Mr. Saiden notes that there are indeed challenges faced by their out-of-school youth recruits. *“Many have low self-esteem and self-confidence and come from impoverished backgrounds. We encourage them to continue to learn on the job and never lose hope – stressing that as long as they work hard and perform well they will succeed and be rewarded,”* he says. He explains that upon hiring, new recruits undertake a 15-day on-the-job training provided by store supervisors after which they are deployed to different sections of store operations including cashiering, bagging, counter checking and stock management. He shares that he sees big changes in his out-of-school youth staff. They have increased self-confidence, improved interpersonal skills and relationships with others, and are more independent. *“They have shared with me that they feel good because God now has a plan for them,”* adds Mr. Saiden.

Mr. Saiden recounts that Centro is very pleased with its purposive out-of-school youth recruitment strategy. The company benefits by getting hard working employees who have a positive work attitude and the willingness to learn. He proudly shares, *“We are the number one performing Centro branch all over the Philippines (out of 14 stores). We are also happy that such employment opportunities for out-of-school youth have a positive impact on addressing social problems faced by the city such as drug addiction, idleness,*

gangs, and peace and order concerns." He explains that by supporting at-risk youth through on-the-job training and employment, Centro is helping them transform their lives which benefits the whole community. He says, "This is part of our social responsibility and my personal concern that youth do not lose hope. We treat all our employees equally and nurture mutual respect so that they become better persons. Other stores may be nervous of hiring out-of-school youth due to lack of trust or not willing to take the risk. At Centro, we are confident that out-of-school youth are good people who make excellent employees."



Mr. Alnajir Lutian, MYDev Graduate
(Photo courtesy of SEAMEO INNOTECH, 2016)

One of Centro's successful out-of-school youth recruits is 24-year-old Alnajir Lutian, or Al, who joined Centro some months ago after successfully completing a MYDev Emerging Skills Training course on utility work. Al's parents are farmers from Jolo, Sulu, struggling to make a viable monthly family income from just three hectares of farmland. Al lives with his grandfather in Cotabato City and, as a result of his employment at Centro, he is able to send home money every fortnight to supplement his family's income. As a result, the family is now able to afford to send his two younger siblings to school. Al is appreciative of the MYDev Program for giving him the opportunity to learn employable skills. He shares that from the life skills program he enhanced his communication skills, interpersonal skills and learned how to dress and carry himself with confidence. He says that the MYDev Program helped open the doors for him at Centro since once Centro saw his MYDev certificate they

were ready to give him a chance. He started at Centro three months ago as a Sales Clerk but has already been promoted to Item Head responsible for monitoring stocks and shelf items. "My life lesson from MYDev is to believe in yourself," shares Al. His advice to other out-of-school youth is "to enroll in MYDev training programs and study hard." Two of his relatives (uncles) have taken his advice, enrolled in MYDev's utility work training courses and also landed jobs at other malls in Cotabato City. Al is thankful to Centro for giving an out-of-school youth like him a chance to improve himself through employment, the opportunity to learn new skills on the job, and earning a salary he can share with his family.



Mr. Alvin Lu, MYDev Graduate (Photo courtesy of SEAMEO INNOTECH, 2016)

INDIVIDUAL DETERMINATION PLUS THE POWER OF A MYDev SKILLS DIPLOMA BRINGS EMPLOYMENT SUCCESS

Tears well up in the eyes of Analissa Lu as she shares how proud she is of her 21-year-old son Alvin, who recently secured employment at a leading Filipino apparel company after completing a three-month MYDev housekeeping skills training course conducted by Notre Dame University

of Cotabato (NDU) and securing a TESDA National Certification Level II (NCII). She recounts the economic difficulties suffered by her family a few years ago because of the failure of the family's scrap metal business. Alvin's self-confidence diminished as a result of the family's financial problems although he remained determined to help the family by getting a job. This, however, proved to be difficult. He worked as a gas service assistant for a while but had to leave due to health problems. He was eager to continue his college education but the family could not afford it. Alvin shares, *"The MYDev housekeeping course was a wonderful opportunity to develop needed skills to find employment."* According to him, apart from skills in housekeeping, the course helped him develop his self-confidence, and acquire skills in working with others and dealing with customers. It also instilled in him the values of honesty and integrity. His mother shares, *"Before joining the MYDev course, Alvin was a little shy and had difficulty finding employment. Now I see how he has matured as a man and enhanced his interpersonal skills building strong relationships with his MYDev classmates, peers and work colleagues."*

Immediately after completing his MYDev skills course, Alvin started approaching prospective employers giving them a copy of his resume, which he had developed as an output of the MYDev life skills program. A leading apparel company in a newly opened mall was looking for sales staff with potential leadership skills. Ms. Olaya Malaguiook, the store manager, interviewed Alvin and was impressed that he had completed a USAID-funded skills training course under MYDev. She says, *"When I was younger I benefited from a USAID-funded internship and that experience greatly assisted my career development. When I saw Alvin's MYDev course completion certificate with the USAID logo on it, I was confident that he had the skills and attributes we needed."* She empathizes with Alvin's difficult financial circumstances and feels that it is part of her social responsibility to *"give him a chance."* Ms. Malaguiook says that she is very happy with Alvin's performance since he joined the company. *"He has developed his self-confidence, has very good interpersonal skills and gets on well with the customers and his co-workers,"* she notes. In fact, Ms. Malaguiook proudly shares that Alvin is the top seller for the past month based on the point of sale records and is set to be made team leader.

Alvin mentions he wants to make the most of his opportunity and inspire other youth to achieve success. *"During my MYDev course, I was elected as out-of-school youth representative to the OSYDA which inspired me to help others since I always wanted to be a student leader,"* he says. He adds, *"One of my friends has already applied for the next MYDev-sponsored housekeeping course."* He proudly shares, *"I am now more financially independent and if the family faces financial problems at home I can now contribute."* He concludes, *"Life is too short to stay frustrated and negative."* His mother Analissa says, *"I thank God for giving me Alvin. There was a fear that because of our financial difficulties Alvin may not be able to achieve his dreams. But this did not serve as a weakness but rather a source for his self-determination to succeed. He is now a source of strength for the entire family."*



Alvin with his mom, Ms. Analissa Lu
(Photo courtesy of SEAMEO INNOTECH, 2016)



Mr. Christian Olasiman, Zamboanga City Government Representative, and Chair, Zamboanga OSYDA (Photo courtesy of SEAMEO INNOTECH, 2016)

LOCAL GOVERNMENT AS A CATALYST FOR PRIVATE SECTOR PARTNERSHIP FOR MYDev

The success of the MYDev Program in facilitating private sector support for out-of-school youth owes much to the catalytic role played by local government units, with the assistance of line agencies of the national government. In their capacity as chair of the multi-sectoral Out-of-School-Youth Development Alliances (OSYDAs) pioneered by MYDev, local government representatives have been instrumental in mobilizing private sector support for youth. Their activities include soliciting private business participation in job fairs, and promoting on-the-job training and employment opportunities for MYDev program completers. The alliances in Zamboanga City and Cotabato City are shining examples of effective local government technical leadership in private sector engagement.

In Zamboanga City, the mayor's executive assistant, Mr. Christian Olasiman, sits as the chair of the Out-of-School Youth Development Alliance. Mr. Olasiman is a very active OSYDA chairman and passionate in his advocacy for inclusive governance that extends to out-of-school-youth. He remarks, *"Out-of-school-youth are part of society and they need to have a place at the decision-making table in order to increase their sense of trust and give them hope to dream."* Zamboanga has experienced rapid economic growth since the downturn spurred by the 2013 siege. In 2014/2015, Mr. Olasiman reports that there were over 2,000 newly registered businesses in the city. *"This provides a wide range of possible employment opportunities for OSY,"* Mr. Olasiman says. He points out that the local government is in a strategic position to advocate and mobilize the interest of the private sector to support youth engagement. Accordingly, the LGU Office of Social Welfare has actively partnered with MYDev and relevant national line agencies (i.e., TESDA, DOLE, DTI and DepEd) to organize and promote job fairs to bring prospective employers and MYDev program completers together. Mr. Olasiman notes that the city government is looking at a range of strategies to mobilize private sector interest and support for vulnerable youth including encouraging private companies to specify the number of at-risk youth they might be able to absorb as on-the-job trainees or employees, and exploring possible tax discounts/incentives for employers who provide on-the-job training or employment opportunities for such youth. Mr. Olasiman believes that the role of the Out-of-School Youth Development Alliance is critical in supporting this private sector engagement process. He says, *"The OSYDA provides an excellent mechanism for referral, advocacy and information exchange regarding possible post-training options for these youth including employment. The market analysis work facilitated by the alliance and EDC provided valuable insights as to the alignment of MYDev training programs with the labor market requirements of private industry. This is why the city government of Zamboanga passed an Executive Order providing a legal basis for the OSYDA as a sustainable institution beyond the life of the MYDev program."*



Mr. Benjie Hoksuan, Cotabato City Market Administrator and OSYDA Chair (Photo courtesy of SEAMEO INNOTECH, 2016)

In Cotabato City, it is the City Market Administrator, Mr. Benjie Hoksuan, who represents the local government as chair of the OSYDA. As market administrator, Mr. Hoksuan is tasked with promoting local government–private sector partnerships aligned with the city’s strategic development priorities. He highlights the crucial role of market analysis in guiding the alliance in efforts to align MYDev-supported skills training with the labor market needs of private industry. Moreover, he explains how the city government of Cotabato has taken a lead advocacy role in connecting at-risk youth to prospective private sector employers by organizing job fairs in partnership with the Department of Labor and Employment. The city government has also strengthened the Public Employment

Service Office (PESO) tasking it to serve as a bridge between job seekers and potential employers through a system of targeted referrals, with youth employment as a priority focus. Mr. Hoksuan explains that the city government is planning to create a database of at-risk youth for tracking and referral purposes. It is partnering with Notre Dame University of Cotabato in the development of this database. The local government is thus striving to act as the connector between private sector, line agencies and the youth with the alliance carrying out an important role to facilitate this.

Mr. Hoksuan says that recently the city mayor himself convened a meeting with private sector business establishments urging them to prioritize the hiring of at-risk youth as part of their corporate social responsibility. Such high level advocacy resonated with many private sector establishments such as Puregold, Centro Department Store, Superama Hypermart, among others,

prompting them to open their doors to MYDev skills program graduates for on-the-job training and offers of employment. The city government was eager to institutionalize this private sector commitment by drafting an ordinance that would require private sector establishments to strive to increase the proportion of their at-risk youth employment to 20% of the total workforce. Ultimately, the ordinance was not approved by the Executive Council due to fears that having such a fixed quota may be *“too restrictive and not business friendly.”* Mr. Hoksuan notes that even without a signed ordinance, the business sector did embrace its underlying spirit responding favorably to the call for youth engagement and support. As a follow-up to the city mayor’s meeting with private industry, Mr. Hoksuan says that he conducts individual visits to private companies promoting the engagement of MYDev graduates as on-the-job trainees and employees.

Mr. Hoksuan also highlights the important role played by the chambers of commerce in promoting private sector support for youth. He is very pleased that the Cotabato City Muslim Chamber of Commerce and the Metro Cotabato Chamber of Commerce have been very active in their support joining OSYDA meetings, participating in the market analysis and advocating for vulnerable youth employment among their members. He posits that the Cotabato City government needs to intensify its efforts to actively engage the other two chambers of commerce that are present in the city. Mr. Hoksuan also relates that the local government itself is trying to model good practices in youth engagement by offering on-the-job training opportunities for MYDev Program completers within its own offices and projects. He concludes that the lesson learned from the Cotabato MYDev experience is that inter-agency and private sector collaboration is critical to the success of any program—particularly programs targeting vulnerable youth. He remarks, *“No single agency/office/program can work effectively without close coordination with other government agencies, Chambers of Commerce, individual private sector establishments and other stakeholders, with the city government having a critical role to facilitate the synergy of such collaborative efforts.”*

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