

# Improving Education and Employment Outcomes for Out-of-School Youth: Systems Change in the Philippines

An Evaluation of the USAID Opportunity 2.0 Activity





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# Executive Summary

This study presents the findings of an internal systems change evaluation of the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) Opportunity 2.0 activity in the Philippines, implemented by the Education Development Center (EDC). Known as “O2,” the activity aimed to improve second-chance opportunities for 180,000 Filipino out-of-school youth (OSY) in 15 cities throughout the country, thereby improving their future education, employment, and livelihood outcomes.

Designed to promote sustained and scalable shifts at the system level, O2 engaged several national and local government agencies, the private sector, OSY and the organizations representing them, education and training service providers, youth-serving organizations, and families and community groups. O2’s holistic design was intended to empower OSY to socially and economically engage in their communities.



► **Conducted toward the end of the five-year activity, this evaluation sought to answer this primary question: Over the life of the program, what have been the most salient system-level changes observed by stakeholders in the Philippines education-to-employment system for out-of-school youth?**

O2 was co-designed with a systems lens from the outset. The design process involved USAID, the Department of Education (DepEd), the Technical Education and Skills Development Authority (TESDA), and EDC. Its implementation approach was to work through system actors to test and scale locally owned solutions for the educational and employment success of Filipino OSY.

O2 did this by (a) strengthening the capacity of ALS teachers and administrators in the DepEd Alternative Learning System (ALS) to deliver quality ALS learning sessions, (b) supporting the newly created DepEd Bureau of Alternative Education (BAE) to implement its mandate over ALS programs nationwide, (c) working closely with TESDA to increase employment and entrepreneurship opportunities for OSY, and (d) convening diverse system actors at the local level to create a more favorable enabling environment for OSY.

O2 was not an entirely new concept. Rather, it was built upon previous activities funded by USAID, including the EDC-implemented Mindanao Youth Development (MYDev) and the Education Quality and Access for Learning and Livelihood Skills Project Phase 2 (EQuALLS2), as well as EDC-implemented education programs funded by the JPMorgan Chase Foundation and the Bank of America Charitable Foundation. It was set up particularly to support the Government of Philippines' Alternative Learning System (ALS) 2.0 Reform agenda and the rollout of its five-year plan known as the *ALS 2.0 Strategic Roadmap*. In fact, the name "Opportunity 2.0" intentionally reflected its mission to support the implementation of key elements of the *ALS 2.0 Strategic Roadmap*.

Conducted toward the end of the five-year activity, this evaluation sought to answer this primary question: *Over the life of the program, what have been the most salient system-level changes observed by stakeholders in the Philippines education-to-employment system for out-of-school youth?* The evaluation also explored O2's contributions to those changes, as well as any

preexisting or exogenous factors that may have contributed to these outcomes.

The evaluation team conducted the rapid summative evaluation using a mixed-methods approach, which captured data from across all 15 project sites through a desk review of secondary data and the collection of primary data via an online survey, focus group discussions, and key informant interviews. Study participants represented a range of stakeholders across several sites, as well as a select number of national-level stakeholders.

In summary, the evaluation revealed that O2 prompted the following system-level changes:

**1. Improved service delivery, sustainably and at scale:**

The Government of the Philippines (GoP) and private service providers have demonstrably improved the quality and availability of services for 2 million OSY—and these services have been sustained and scaled well beyond the 15 sites. As a result of O2:

- To date, life skills programs have reached nearly 1 million learners in the ALS. These programs continue to be sustained across all ALS junior high school-level programs nationwide, which are now providing life skills training for OSY as part of the regular ALS programs. Moreover, these schools are expanding work-readiness skills programs in entrepreneurship and work-based learning.
- An estimated 1 million OSY have received 21st century skills training through TESDA programs. Millions of more youth will continue to receive this training in the future since TESDA has institutionalized 21st Century Skills Modules for National Certificate (NC) Levels I-IV, thereby making transferrable skills accessible to all students taking technical courses at those levels.
- O2 enhanced TESDA's massive open online program and tailored it to the needs of young

out-of-school learners, reaching 1,473 OSY since the height of the COVID-19 pandemic. TESDA now intends to make changes to its Multi-Regional TESDA Online Program following the success of Youth Access to TESDA Online Program (YATOP).

- A testimony to the meaningful changes in the Philippine OSY system was not just the uptake of the curriculum itself by system stakeholders, but the efforts by other actors to adopt complementary services and practices. For example, the Department of Trade and Industry (DTI), which is responsible for entrepreneurship training services, now implements a standard national entrepreneurship curriculum, and it has been tailored to be inclusive of OSY. Meanwhile, 64 higher education institutions (HEIs) and other service providers offer career guidance programs for ALS learners.

**2. Greater system connectedness for OSY education and employment transitions:** Diverse stakeholders at the local level are more closely connected and are more effectively coordinating to increase OSY's interest in and access to programs and services.

- Over one third (39%) of study respondents said that the most significant change has been that diverse leaders across 15 sites are working together and strengthening partnerships in support of OSY.
- The key to this coordination has been O2's introduction of a local public-private partnership model called the Youth Development Alliance (YDA). Typically nested within the nationally mandated Local Youth Development Office (LYDO) and led by a representative from the mayor's office or local government unit (LGU), YDAs consist of representatives from local government, national government line agencies, education and training providers, the private sector, and youth leaders. Today, 15 YDAs (one in each city) are aligning programs and policies to the needs of youth and the local economy. Most receive funding or budget allocation from their LGUs, and 14 are demonstrating full organizational functionality.
- An important outcome of these local coordination bodies has been the increased synchronization of services for OSY as they



navigate the education and employment continuum. Each YDA has formalized these transition pathways into an internal referral system that lays out the steps and procedures for a young person to navigate education and employment services. In Cagayan de Oro, the University of Science and Technology of Southern Philippines institutionalized this referral system into a mobile application known as eMonitor Mo.

- Another result of this coordination has been that diverse stakeholders are directing more resources toward the interests and priorities of OSY. Over the life of the program, a total of over 300 million PHP (5.1 million USD) in scholarships, cash, in-kind contributions, and other non-USAID resources was mobilized to benefit OSY.
- YDAs are also now regularly collecting local labor market data in partnership with TESDA, which helps align skills development programs to the current demands of their local economy. Both TESDA and the Department of Labor and Employment (DOLE) use this information to form labor market plans, provide post-training support, and prioritize scholarship allocations.
- Overall, according to many stakeholders, the significance of the YDAs is that they have enabled the national vision of ALS 2.0 to be executed at the city level by the LGUs.

**3. More effective government leadership:** The GoP is better equipped to implement its national reform effort focusing on improved education and employment outcomes for OSY.

- Since its inception in late 2021, BAE has become a fully functioning national institution serving OSY and adults. Key informants agree that BAE now has the organizational capability to fully implement its mandate under Republic Act 11510.
- Moreover, formal systems are in place for the external auditing of the ALS Program by the Second Congressional Commission on Education (EDCOM 2)—and that system now includes the voice of youth.
- Similar incremental pro-OSY reforms are happening within TESDA, which has included an explicit strategy for OSY within its National Technical Education and Skills Development Plan.
- Due to the YDAs, LGUs in 15 major cities are better equipped to implement the national ALS 2.0 reforms at the local level.

**4. Sustained mechanisms for youth engagement:** O2 has expanded and sustained formal mechanisms for OSY engagement in programs, policies, and decision-making in their communities.

- O2 facilitated the creation of 15 youth networks to serve OSY specifically, thus reaching an underserved youth segment that normally would not have joined the more general youth-serving organizations. To sustain these

youth networks, each has obtained official registration and accreditation status as a youth-led organization through agencies such as the National Youth Commission's (NYC's) Youth Organization Registration Program (YORP) and the Securities and Exchange Commission. As a testament to the efficacy of these networks, the Youth Network Alliance in Cagayan de Oro, Kagay-anon Youth Network Alliance (KaYa NA), was selected as a top 20 national finalist for the 2024 *Ten Accomplished Youth Organization (TAYO) Award*.

- Today, at any given time, all 15 cities are represented by six elected OSY representatives serving on their YDA. As a result of these local youth engagement mechanisms, young leaders have engaged in high-level policy platforms. In fact, 10 ALS graduates engaging in O2 activities ran for positions on the barangay-level Sangguniang Kabataan (SK), the local youth council structure, and at least three of them won a position on their local-level SK. Two female youth leaders presented at an ASEAN Regional Dialogue in Jakarta, Indonesia, and shared their journey as a former OSY. Additionally, three youth leaders from the National Capital Region were invited to take part in a town hall meeting with the UN Assistant Secretary General for Youth Affairs.



**5. Positive mindset shifts among youth:** Young people participating in O2 reported greater levels of self-confidence and more positive mindsets. Youth attributed this shift to their increased skills and socioeconomic engagement and to the visibly improved responsiveness by government to their concerns.

- Across the board, study respondents—youth and adults alike—consistently referred to or used the word “confidence” to describe OSY. They described youth’s confidence in expressing themselves, voicing their opinions, exercising leadership, and taking advantage of education and employment opportunities. Many young people stated that they had thought they’d “be OSY forever,” but the opportunities provided through O2 shifted their expectations for their future.
- O2 staff and the youth themselves attribute these improved self-perceptions to the program’s holistic positive youth development (PYD) approach. The program enabled OSY to see themselves as “more than an OSY.” Its approach consisted of four main components:
  1. Skills development opportunities that provided youth with important life skills, such as critical thinking and goal setting, and empowered them for the future with skills in entrepreneurship, career-readiness, and work-based learning
  2. Transition pathways that provided youth the continuum of support they needed to successfully navigate their education-to-employment journey
  3. Tangible opportunities for youth engagement, namely through youth networks and O2 community service grants
  4. Improved enabling environment led by the YDAs that shifted public attitudes and awareness around OSY

**6. Pro-OSY lens among other system actors:** Policymakers, service providers, and employers have developed greater awareness of OSY, greater sensitivity to addressing their priorities, and more positive opinions around the potential of OSY.

- Employers reported notable shifts in how they view and interact with OSY. Compared

to before their partnership with the program, companies reported that their engagement with OSY through O2 made them more open to (and sometimes preferring) the hiring of ALS graduates.

- Many government agencies now interact with youth not simply as beneficiaries of services, but as co-partners in setting the youth development agenda. According to one key informant, O2’s support to BAE to move from a supply-focused approach (i.e., “strengthening the alternative learning system”) to a client-focused approach (“addressing the needs of OSY”) was an important shift for the bureau.
- A powerful testimony to the mindset shifts among policymakers is the proposed Magna Carta for OSY. In 2023, the House of Representatives approved House Bill No. 9347, and currently Senate Bill No. 2633 is pending approval, to legally protect the rights of all OSY in the Philippines and to provide government assistance and social services for OSY and children.
- HEIs now see themselves as an active part of the OSY ecosystem, too. HEIs report that they have elevated their community extension mandate by conducting OSY-relevant research; guiding OSY in pursuing further education and training; facilitating capacity-strengthening activities for OSY-serving stakeholders; offering support and resources to OSY in their communities; and informing local and national policies to improve OSY access to education, training, entrepreneurship, or employment. They also formed a community of practice with the purpose of integrating OSY into the higher education community.

Among these six shifts, the most salient form of change within the Philippines OSY system, as observed by O2 stakeholders, was the increased collaboration between and connectedness among system actors at the local level. The second most-reported change was the improved quality of services for OSY. These two outcomes—greater system connectedness and improved quality of services—along with other outcomes realized by O2, led to fundamental shifts in the mindsets and “mental

models<sup>a</sup> about OSY and their contributions to their local communities and the economy. The research indicated that stakeholders valued the contributions of youth more than before, and they made greater efforts to engage youth in decision-making, policies, and programs.

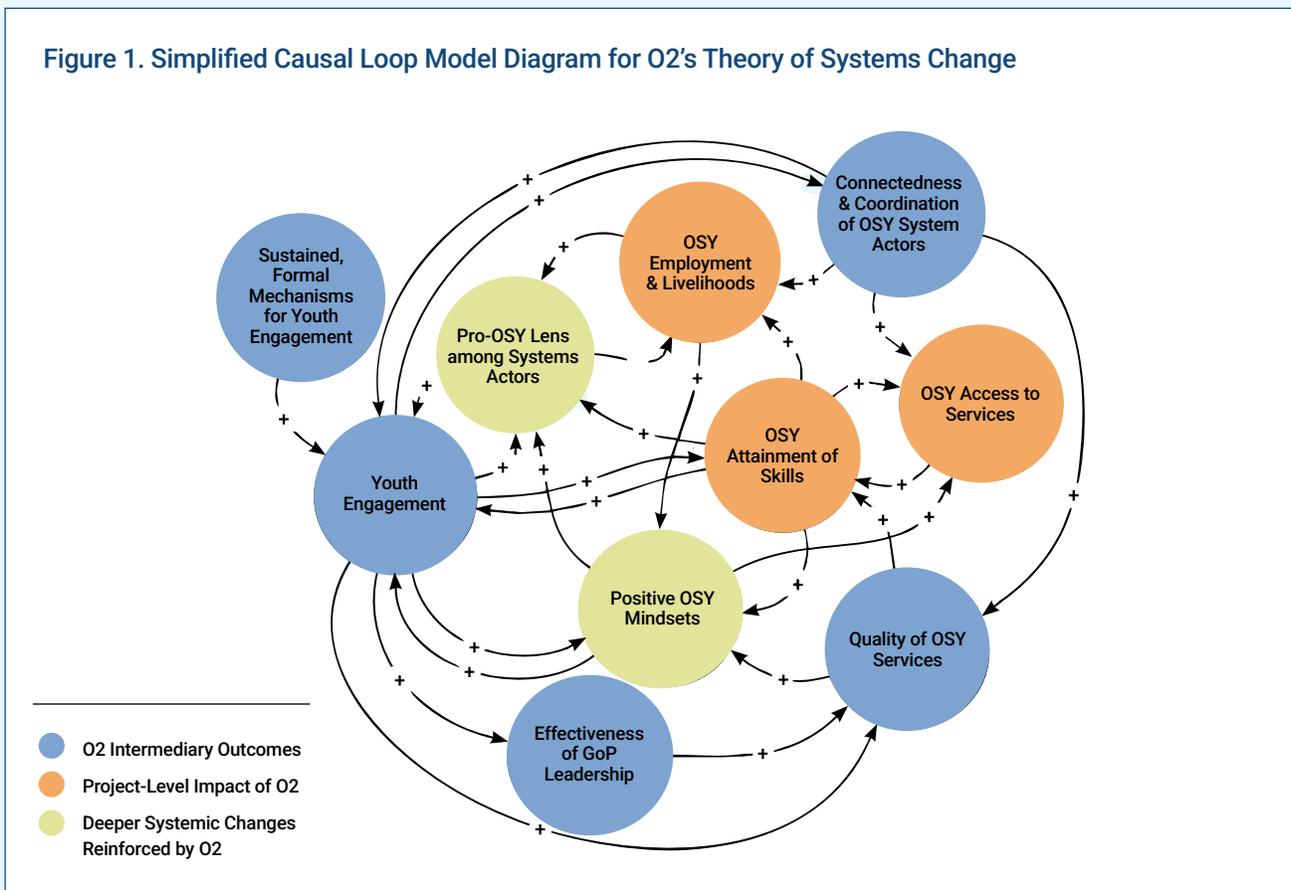
As system-change research suggests, these deeply held beliefs are often the hardest to affect, and yet they are transformative in that they “are foundational drivers of activity in any system.”<sup>1</sup> While this evaluation was not able to measure or analyze these mindset shifts in a highly rigorous fashion, its emerging findings nevertheless point to the power of a holistic approach. By addressing multiple levers of change across the system, the positive OSY outcomes arising from those efforts reinforced one

another in a virtuous circle, leading to transformative shifts that will further perpetuate positive changes across the system.

**Figure 1** illustrates these interdependent relationships as a simplified theory of systems change for the O2 activity. This conceptual diagram illustrates how the deliberate outcomes of O2 (depicted as blue circles) contributed to project-level impact (orange circles). Together these forces reinforced transformative shifts in the dynamics of the system (green). As the arrows suggest, collectively these positive changes worked together to bolster one another.

While O2’s design was rooted in systems thinking, much of the traction the program generated can be attributed to the way in which it was implemented.

**Figure 1. Simplified Causal Loop Model Diagram for O2’s Theory of Systems Change**



<sup>a</sup>The term “mental models” is commonly used in systems thinking and refers to the “deeply held beliefs and assumptions and taken-for-granted ways of operating that influence how we think, what we do, and how we talk.” These implicit habits of thought are one of the six key conditions that hold a social or environmental problem in place (Kania et. al., 2018). According to systems thinking experts, shifting mental models is a “prerequisite” to achieving systems change. (Lebus & Jeanneret, 2023)

In particular, the O2 team cultivated an adaptative management approach rooted in local ownership and capacity strengthening. The approach followed five specific tactics. First, it maintained that O2 was a facilitator of change in the system—not a direct implementer. Second, it focused on tapping champions in the system, recognizing that meaningful change arises from key actors who have a commitment to, vested interest in, and influence for change. Third, it placed youth at the center of

the program and provided them with the spaces and resources to drive change. Fourth, it made sure to provide practical tools and resources for system actors to cement the implementation, sustainability, and scaling of the change. Finally, it dedicated space and time for continuous reflection, iteration, and adaptation. This study explores this implementation approach and offers a set of recommendations for future programming for OSY in the Philippines.

## Program Results

By the conclusion of the O2 activity, these changes had underpinned the sustainability of interventions and led to the following program results:

- ▶ Approximately **2 million** OSY have accessed life skills development opportunities and/or 21st century skills training through ALS and TESDA programs.
- ▶ **98,443** OSY completed DepEd ALS or TESDA skills development programs, and a total of 110,336 youth were reached by the program.
- ▶ **81.9%** of OSY who completed DepEd ALS or TESDA programs supported by O2 demonstrated improved soft skills as a result of participating in the program.
- ▶ **68.8%** of program completers transitioned to further education, gained new employment, or reported improved employment.
- ▶ Among the completers who were employed following the program, nearly **two thirds (62.3%)** were employed or self-employed in quality green and blue jobs.
- ▶ O2 data suggests that ALS completion does in fact **positively influence** the life circumstances for OSY, reducing by more than half the rate of youth not in education, employment, or training (NEET). According to pre- and post-surveys of ALS participants, the average percent of NEET youth decreased from 10.3% to 5.2%.
- ▶ Diverse stakeholders in 15 municipalities mobilized **5.1 million USD** in non-donor resources (i.e., from national and local government, the private sector, and youth and community groups) to support OSY priorities, programs, and activities. This mobilization of resources typifies the extensive systemwide support for OSY.

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# Background

## Second-Chance Education in the Philippines

Since the 1990s, the Government of the Philippines (GoP) has invested in second-chance education and technical skills training as a means to provide pathways for learners who left school early.

In 1999, the Department of Education (DepEd) launched an alternative learning system (ALS) throughout the country with the aim of providing out-of-school youth (OSY) and adult learners with access to **(1)** free basic education to develop basic and functional literacy skills and **(2)** equivalent pathways to complete basic education. Over time, DepEd successfully increased the number of ALS learners reached annually by the program, and in 2017, it served approximately 641,584 ALS learners. However, the system also suffered from under-resourcing (less than 1% of the public basic education spending) and underperformance, with only 30% of ALS enrollees passing the ALS Accreditation and Equivalency Assessment and Certification (A&E).<sup>2</sup> In 2015, the prospective population of ALS learners<sup>b</sup> ranged from 14% of the total youth population in the National Capital Region to as much as 34% of the total youth population in the Bangsamoro



<sup>b</sup>ALS learners comprise youth ages 15–29 years who have not completed basic education.

►...with the purpose to “align the formal education system, markets, and youth ‘sub-systems’ at the regional level,” bringing these actors together “under a common vision, coordinating and aligning interests, and sharing information in a way that improves outcomes for vulnerable OSY.”

Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (BARMM). However, the ALS system was only able to reach less than 10% of 15–29-year-olds who had not completed basic education.<sup>3</sup>

## Recent Reform Efforts

Starting in 2016, DepEd initiated a series of reforms to improve the ALS program, culminating in the development of the ALS 2.0 Reform agenda and the rollout of its five-year plan called the *ALS 2.0 Strategic Roadmap (Roadmap)*.<sup>4</sup> ALS 2.0 represented a systematic upgrading of the ALS, including the curriculum; learning materials; learning delivery system; learner assessment and certification system; and management support systems (e.g., capacity building, monitoring and evaluation, governance, advocacy, social marketing, and financial management). The *Roadmap* provided guidance for the implementation of the ALS 2.0 reforms through 2024, setting quantitative targets and related activities along three major strategic goals: **(1)** expand access to basic education, **(2)** improve quality and relevance, and **(3)** modernize education management and governance.<sup>5</sup>

## From Policy to Implementation

ALS 2.0 provided the policy foundation to improve outcomes for OSY, and the *ALS 2.0 Strategic Roadmap* highlighted the main areas of focus for the implementation of those policies. However, according to DepEd officials, when the *Roadmap* was developed, DepEd did not have sufficient institutional capacity to implement its reforms. Indeed, two years after the ALS 2.0 reform efforts, not much progress had been made in OSY outcomes. In 2018, one in five (19.9%) Filipino youth ages 15–24 were not in education, employment, nor training;<sup>6</sup> 18% of junior high school learners did not proceed to senior high school; and roughly 8% of sixth-grade pupils did not graduate and enter seventh grade.<sup>7</sup> Moreover,

improving outcomes for OSY required efforts outside of the ALS itself. A 2022 baseline ecosystem study highlighted the need for multi-stakeholder coordination. Although many actors were involved in supporting Filipino youth—government agencies, training and education providers, private companies, nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), community groups, families, and youth themselves—they operated in silos and were not necessarily working together for the benefit of OSY. This disconnect made it difficult for OSY to access the education and employment opportunities available to them.<sup>8</sup>

## Designing a Locally Led Response: Opportunity 2.0

Responding to the priorities set in ALS 2.0, the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) partnered with the GoP in 2019 to co-design and implement the Opportunity 2.0 Activity. The name “Opportunity 2.0” intentionally reflected its mission to support the implementation of key elements of the *ALS 2.0 Strategic Roadmap*. During a series of consultative workshops that year, USAID, DepEd, the Technical Education and Skills Development Authority (TESDA), and Education Development Center (EDC) shaped the program with the purpose to “align the formal education system, markets, and youth ‘sub-systems’ at the regional level,” bringing these actors together “under a common vision, coordinating and aligning interests, and sharing information in a way that improves outcomes for vulnerable OSY.”<sup>9</sup> The activity initially focused on the first two objectives of the *Roadmap*: improve access to basic education and improve the quality and relevance of second-chance learning opportunities. Later, in December 2021 when DepEd established the Bureau of Alternative Education (BAE),<sup>10</sup> O2 expanded its focus to provide support to DepEd to fulfill the third objective of the *Roadmap*: modernize education management and governance.



## Building on Prior USAID Experiences

O2's strategies leveraged lessons from two previous USAID-funded programs implemented by EDC. First, the Education Quality and Access for Learning and Livelihood Skills (EQuALLS2) program (60 million USD, 2006–2012) was a basic education program that expanded ALS programs for 43,960 OSY. Through this program, DepEd and other stakeholders witnessed the impact resulting from the inclusion of vulnerable youth in early grade learning. The program also demonstrated to stakeholders the effectiveness of life skills/soft skills in improving youth's employability.

The second activity was the Mindanao Youth for Development (MYDev) program (15 million USD, 2013–2019), which provided learning opportunities for vulnerable OSY. This program operated in several cities in Mindanao, including cities in the BARMM where many young people were exposed to high levels of violence and had limited educational and economic opportunity. The MYDev program introduced an integrated employability skills package that served over 22,000 youth. Through this package, MYDev introduced the concept of positive youth development (PYD) into second-chance education—a concept that was relatively new to the Philippines at the time. Youth went through 100 hours of life skills training, three weeks to nine months of basic education or technical and vocational training, as well as post-training support.<sup>11</sup> The MYDev program also enhanced youth's agency

and their contribution to their communities through work-immersion opportunities, volunteerism, and the formation of youth networks.<sup>12</sup> Furthermore, MYDev strengthened the enabling environment for youth: it worked with municipal leaders to create Youth Development Alliances (YDAs), which were local public-private partnership structures with a commitment to improving outcomes for OSY. The YDA proved to be a powerful, sustainable, and locally led mechanism. For the first time, different government agencies, the private sector, NGOs, and young people had a formal channel for coordinating and working together to tangibly improve outcomes for OSY in their communities.<sup>13</sup>

Results from an Outcome Harvesting study<sup>14</sup> and a series of quasi-experimental studies indicated that the MYDev program model not only “improved life, work readiness, and leadership skills relative to the comparison group,” but also consistently “improved (youth's) perceptions of their government and community.”<sup>15</sup> According to the then-assistant secretary of DepEd, DepEd officials observed that ALS participation rates and passing scores on the ALS Accreditation and Equivalency Assessment and Certification (A&E) were higher in the MYDev areas of BARMM—one of the Philippines' most socioeconomically and politically challenged areas—compared to other parts of the country. Based on these observable learning outcomes, DepEd expressed interest in scaling this model nationwide to help fulfill its ALS 2.0 capacity building strategy.

## The O2 Activity

Starting in 2019, USAID launched the design of the five-year USAID Opportunity 2.0 (O2) activity. The 35.2 million USD program aimed to support and strengthen existing systems and stakeholders in the Philippines to provide second-chance opportunities to Filipino OSY across 15 cities (**Figure 2**).

Led by EDC, the activity was co-created and co-implemented alongside DepEd and TESDA, as well as implementing partners SEAMEO INNOTECH, Accenture, Catholic Relief Services (CRS), Philippine Business for Education (PBE) and Voluntary Service Overseas (VSO).

O2 had the following three objectives:

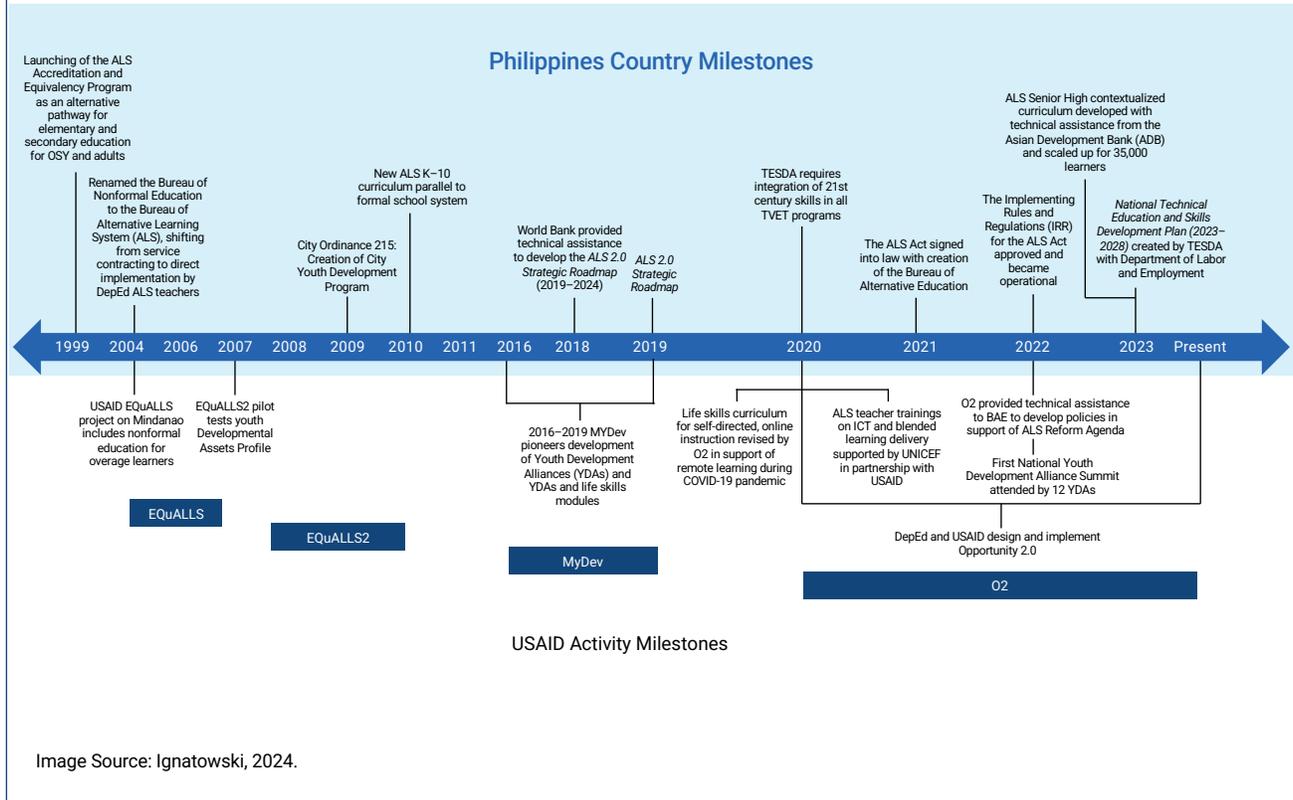
- Strengthen the capacity of national and local systems to deliver second-chance education programs for OSY:** O2 supported DepEd in delivering quality ALS programs, namely through the development and rollout of improved life skills instructional materials, work-based learning and entrepreneurship teaching and learning resources, and interactive audio instructional materials. DepEd master trainers attended national training-of-trainer workshops to support cascade training for all ALS teachers. O2 provided online courses that prepared instructors to apply innovative instructional pedagogies, such as portfolio assessment, differentiated instruction, and project-based learning. It designed the first-ever Teacher Induction Program for new ALS teachers. At the national level, O2 supported the newly created BAE to implement its mandate over ALS programs nationwide. The program supported priority DepEd ALS policy formulation, while also developing critical operations manuals, such as the *ALS Monitoring and Evaluation Handbook*, the *Manual of Operations for Teachers*, and the *ALS Handbook for DepEd Officials and Partners*, all of which improved ALS program management and quality assurance.
- Strengthen the capacity of national and local systems to deliver workforce-readiness and technical and vocational training for OSY:** This component strengthened TESDA and the technical and vocational education and training

Figure 2. Map of O2's 15 Site Locations



(TVET) sector at the national and local levels, from delivery of workforce-readiness and skills training programs to establishing a referral and job placement mechanism for OSY. O2 co-created an innovative curriculum on 21st century skills for TESDA and advised on the policy to deploy the materials nationwide, including by conducting training-of-trainers workshops. The project also developed a COVID-19 pandemic response program, the Youth Access to TESDA Online

**Figure 3. Timeline of USAID Milestones, Mapped Against Philippines Policy Milestones for OSY**



Program (YATOP). Finally, it engaged over 2,300 private sector partners as well as local officials to open more opportunities for youth for work immersion and employment.

- **Improve the enabling environment for PYD at both national and local levels:** O2 worked at the municipal level strengthening the capacity of local actors to work together to develop and implement policies and programs in support of OSY. To do so, O2 facilitated the expansion of YDAs in each of the 15 sites.

From the outset, O2 was co-designed with a systems lens, working through local system actors and their priorities to test and scale locally owned solutions for the educational and employment success of Filipino OSY. The timeline in **Figure 3** shows how previous USAID activities aligned with several policy reforms.

### Diverse Actors Working Together

Recognizing the complexity of the OSY system, the O2 team pursued meaningful and lasting change through the engagement and ownership of diverse actors who contributed to OSY outcomes. These actors included several government agencies at the national and local levels; the private sector from diverse sectors; education and training providers; NGOs and community-based organizations at the national and local levels; community groups; families; and OSY of different age bandings, education levels, and socioeconomic circumstances. **Table 1** shows the various stakeholders in the Philippines’ OSY system. Throughout the program, these stakeholders drove the agenda, with the O2 team acting as a facilitator to bring them together; co-created innovations; and supported one another in achieving their mutual goals related to the improvement of OSY outcomes.

Table 1. Actors in the OSY System in the Philippines

System Actor	Actor's Role Within the OSY System	O2's Engagement with System Actor
<b>Department of Education (DepEd), Bureau of Alternative Education (BAE)</b>	DepEd is the executive department of the Philippine government responsible for managing and governing the country's basic education system. BAE is mandated to oversee the management and supervision of DepEd's ALS programs nationwide. BAE was newly created as an organizational unit inside DepEd by virtue of Republic Act 11510 of 2020. Key functions of BAE include DepEd by virtue of Republic Act 11510 of 2020. Key functions of BAE include the following: development and management of ALS curriculum and learning materials; policy and national standards formulation; ALS assessment and certification; capacity building of ALS implementers; ALS advocacy and social mobilization; ALS financial management; ALS quality assurance; ALS research and development; ALS governance.	O2 provided technical assistance to DepEd in the creation and organizational strengthening of the BAE include development and strengthening of the following organizational systems: strategic management; operational processes; organizational competency management; risk management; quality assurance; data management; partnership management; records management. In addition, O2 provided BAE with access to technical advisory services for policy formulation, institutional capacity building, social marketing and advocacy, development of an ALS M&E system, and the implementation of the national ALS research agenda.
<b>ALS programs/ Teachers in ALS junior high school-level</b>	ALS teachers are the direct link to the young learners who left school early, and part of their job is to provide basic education, skills development, and career guidance through partnerships with a network of employers and youth-serving organizations.	990 ALS teachers were trained on the implementation of ALS 2.0 instruction-related reforms, following an O2-led training-of-trainers with 136 ALS supervisors from across 17 regions. Through multiplier trainings, a total of 3,231 ALS teachers are expected to be trained by mid-2025. The training of teachers includes: ALS curriculum contextualization, experiential-learning, differentiated instruction, portfolio assessment and instructional leadership, ALS junior high school-level programs, institutionalized work readiness curriculum (i.e., <i>ALS Life Skills, Be Your Own Boss, and Work-Based Learning</i> )  Teacher support of junior high school ALS learners transitioning to senior high school and other post-ALS JHS junior high school program exits (i.e., employment, self-employment, vocational skills training).
<b>TESDA: National and regional authorities, TESDA Technology Institutes (TTIs)</b>	TESDA provides plans, policies and directions on technical/vocational curriculum and trainer development, program accreditation, assessment and skills certification, quality assurance and training service delivery and scholarships through TTIs.  TTIs are the approximately 125 public training centers (including regional and provincial training centers and school-based centers) that undertake direct training activities for TESDA. Historically, TESDA's reach to ALS graduates and OSY has been low.	O2 provided technical assistance in TESDA's development of the <i>National Technical Education and Skills Development Plan</i> (NTESDP 2023–2028). The program co-developed 36 Work-Readiness Modules on 21st Century Skills for NC Levels I to IV; trained 209 master trainers (each master trainer expected to train two new trainers per year) on 21st Century Skills; and upskilled 1,473 work-ready youth through the YATOP
<b>Technical and vocational institutions (TVIs) and TVI associations</b>	The Philippines has 4,536 TVET providers, of which the vast majority are privately owned TVIs and whose programs are registered with and accredited by TESDA. TVIs also include public and private HEIs, such as state and local universities and colleges. Historically, TVI's reach to ALS graduates and OSY has been low.	In coordination with TESDA, O2 worked with private TVIs and TVI associations at the regional and provincial levels in the rollout of 21st century skills programs. It conducted a training-of-trainers for the delivery of the new curriculum. O2 staff and the YDAs also advocated for OSY to receive more scholarship slots from the TESDA regional offices to attend programs. Finally, O2 provided grants to 34 TVIs across 15 sites to deliver O2-designed Work Readiness development programs.

System Actor	Actor's Role Within the OSY System	O2's Engagement with System Actor
<p><b>Higher education institutions (HEIs), and the Commission on Higher Education (CHED)</b></p>	<p>The Philippines has over 2,400 HEIs, with most being private institutions. The country has 546 state universities and colleges, and their satellite campuses and 137 local universities and colleges nationwide<sup>16</sup> offer two-year and four-year degree programs. Historically, HEI's reach to ALS graduates has been low.</p> <p>CHED is the government agency that regulates HEIs and programs, covering both public and private institutions as well as degree-granting programs in all postsecondary educational institutions in the country.</p>	<p>O2 partnered with 476 HEIs to implement a career-guidance program, conduct research on issues helping or hindering OSY, and establish a higher education community of practice with 15 initial members to promote HEIs' continued support for outreach to and the development of OSY. O2 engaged CHED through the YDAs and a newly formed higher education community of practice.</p>
<p><b>Department of Trade and Industry (DTI)</b></p>	<p>DTI serves as the leading public service provider for entrepreneurship training and business development services. Self-employment is a major source of livelihoods for youth (34% of the population is self-employed or doing unpaid family work<sup>17</sup>) and a way to pay for further education.</p>	<p>O2 collaborated with DTI to standardize the curriculum for its Youth Entrepreneurship Program (YEP!), using a contextualized version of the EDC/O2 <i>Be Your Own Boss</i> (BYOB) curriculum. The new program, YEP! BYOB is now used by the agency nationwide. DTI representatives also serve as members of the YDAs in 15 sites.</p>
<p><b>Department of Labor and Industry (DOLE), including the Public Employment Service Office (PESO)</b></p>	<p>DOLE formulates policies and implements programs and services for labor and employment, including safeguarding the welfare and rights of Filipino workers.</p> <p>PESO is the primary public agency responsible for job information and intermediation, including its PhilJobNet Web portal. Prior to 2020, PESO had not explicitly served OSY in its employment transition services.</p>	<p>Representatives of DOLE and PESO participate in the YDAs to promote job linkages for O2 youth. Through the YDAs, PESO organized local job fairs for OSY.</p>
<p><b>Department of the Interior and Local Government (DILG), local government units (LGUs), and the Local Youth Development Office (LYDO)</b></p>	<p>DILG is the agency that oversees LGUs. The local government, led by the local chief executive, oversees the operation of the city. The LGU, under the Office of the City Mayor, executes plans and implements rules and regulations for the city. The LYDO oversees and coordinates youth programs in the city and also provides secretariat duties and technical assistance to the local Youth Development Council and the Sangguniang Kabataan Federation.</p>	<p>O2 engaged LYDOs in all 15 project sites, as the LYDO is the main office responsible for youth programs and policies in the city. LYDO, under the Office of the City Mayor, also has direct access to the local chief executive, who generally serves as the chairperson of the YDA. 14 out of 15 YDAs have engaged the LYDO as the YDA's secretariat. Engaging the LYDO in YDA operations as well as overseeing the mentoring and guidance of youth networks also ensures the sustainability of YDAs and youth networks.</p>
<p><b>Youth-led organizations (national and local): Youth networks, Pag-asa Youth Association of the Philippines (PYAP), and National Youth Commission (NYC)</b></p>	<p>Youth networks represent and are led by OSY who are enrolled in ALS and TESDA, as well as youth who are not in formal school or who do not have a college degree. OSY gather for a two-day youth leadership circle to elect youth leaders to represent OSY in the YDA. The youth networks design and implement programs, and they promote the inclusion of OSY in other youth-serving organizations and social and civic engagement activities.</p> <p>PYAP is primarily intended to be a youth group for OSY that is organized in barangays. Under the City Social Welfare Development Office (CSWDO), PYAP is confederated at the city level. It is responsible for organizing OSY at the barangay level so OSY are aware of and participate in city programs intended for them.</p> <p>The NYC is the country's highest office that plans, advocates, and oversees youth-related programs and policies. The NYC empowers the LYDO and the SK Federation Councils in fulfilling their mandates as local youth-serving organizations.</p>	<p>O2 mobilized OSY to establish a youth network in each of the 15 project sites. O2 supported and guided the O2 youth networks and built their capacity to organize and run their group properly and sustainably.</p> <p>PYAP representatives serve as members in several YDAs, and in some cities, they sustain youth networks by integrating them into the city-level confederated PYAP. Through this integration, youth networks receive guidance and mentoring from the City Social Welfare and Development Office and PYAP, and they can access funds from city government to implement programs.</p> <p>O2 engaged with the NYC in drafting the Magna Carta for Out-of-School Youth. O2 provided technical guidance as part of the technical working group. It also supported 100 youth leaders from O2 youth networks to facilitate focus group discussions among 300+ OSY.</p>

System Actor	Actor's Role Within the OSY System	O2's Engagement with System Actor
<b>Youth-serving organizations: Sangguniang Kabataan (SK), SK Federation Council, 4-H, YMCA</b>	<p>Different youth-led and youth-serving organizations are present at both the barangay and city levels. The SK (Youth Council) comprise elected officials at the barangay level and is confederated at the city level (SK Federation Council). The SK designs and implements youth programs, and drafts, issues, and enacts youth-related policies. Other youth-serving organizations, such as 4-H and YMCA, implement programs and advocate for youth-responsive policies in the city.</p>	<p>O2 engaged all 15 SK Federation Council presidents in the YDA, who serve as the de factor co-chairperson of the YDA as the highest elected youth official in the city. More than 1,000 SK officials have been trained in the Positive Youth Development Framework by O2 to sensitize them about the needs and context of OSY in the city, as well as to orient them on the YDA as a support mechanism for OSY programs and policies. O2 also engaged 4-H and YMCA as YDA members in select cities.</p>
<b>Youth-led savings and internal lending communities (SILC)</b>	<p>SILC are an important steppingstone for OSY to access financial services—particularly for young women and persons living with disabilities, which are groups that tend to be self-employed. Global evidence points to financial literacy and access to capital as a key success factor in youth self-employment.<sup>18</sup></p>	<p>O2 partner Catholic Relief Services (C<sup>19</sup>RS) piloted youth-led SILC in five sites as a demonstration model for TESDA to institutionalize into its TTIs. The model reached 520 OSY in 33 organized groups. Later, four SILC groups were incorporated into the diploma programs within two TTIs (two at each institution), and an additional two youth networks created SILC groups. In total, 38 SILC generated 899,216 PHP (16,349 USD), of which 50% was on-lent to members for financing economic activities, education, and family concerns.</p>
<b>Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas (BSP)</b>	<p>BSP, the central bank of the Philippines, has a mandate to promote financial inclusion, while several financial service providers are interested in extending their products and services to OSY.</p>	<p>BSP supported BAE in sections of the development of the Functional Education and Literacy Program (FELP), focusing on financial literacy and other related competencies. With O2 support, BSP has agreed to provide a joint micro-certification with DepEd for FELP FinEd course completers. The documented course design process initiated by the FELP FinEd course now serves as the blueprint for the development of all new FELP short courses.</p>
<b>Financial service providers: GCash, Tala, GoTyme, and InvestEd</b>	<p>Financial service providers increase youth's access to finance by tailoring their products and services to the financial needs of OSY. Financial technology (fintech), in particular, removes several barriers to formal financing and enables easier access through digital platforms. Increasingly youth's use of mobile money platforms has shown to increase youth's bankability by helping them to establish a credit history, thus reducing the need for collateral, which is one of the greatest barriers to youth financial inclusion.</p>	<p>O2 convened fintech companies, including GCash, Home Credit, Tala, GoTyme, and InvestEd, together with OSY to identify ways to extend financial services to OSY, who are traditionally considered risky borrowers.</p>
<b>People Management Association of the Philippines (PMAP), Philippines Chamber of Commerce (PCCI), and employers</b>	<p>PMAP serves as the preeminent human resources organization of the country, with 1,800 member companies and executives in 24 local chapters across the Philippines.</p> <p>PCCI is a nonprofit, nongovernment business organization composed of small, medium, and large enterprises and local chambers and industry associations all working together to foster a healthier Philippine economy and improve the viability of business in the community.</p>	<p>O2 facilitated linkages that enabled PMAP, PCCI, and the private sector to provide employment linkages and work-immersion opportunities to OSY.</p>

## The COVID-19 Pandemic

Shortly after USAID awarded the O2 project to EDC in February 2020, the global COVID-19 pandemic hit the Philippines. The project quickly pivoted its design and delivery systems to respond to a new paradigm of remote and blended learning. The project commissioned Accenture to conduct research on how the pandemic was affecting OSY, utilizing innovative social listening capabilities that digitally analyzed Web content from social media and Philippine news sites.<sup>19</sup> The report found that the percentage of OSY increased significantly during the pandemic, from 16.9% in January 2020 to 25.2% just three months later in April 2020.<sup>20</sup> Informed by this research, O2 supported its key government partners,

DepEd and TESDA, to ensure the delivery of education and training for OSY. In turn, the project developed 31 self-directed learning modules and materials for distance learning, provided professional development in distance learning for 3,134 teachers and trainers, and distributed laptops and tablets, making it possible for 15,829 OSY to remotely access DepEd's ALS Life Skills Modules, TESDA's Work-Readiness Modules on 21st Century Skills, and TESDA's Online Program during the height of the pandemic.<sup>21</sup> These efforts were critical to preserving a continuity of ALS and TESDA service delivery during a tenuous period. Today, ALS and TESDA learners continue to use these same self-directed online learning materials as their primary learning resource for life skills and 21st century skills development.

## Program Accomplishments

Over the five-year project period, O2 achieved the following:

- ▶ Approximately **2 million** OSY have accessed life skills development opportunities and/or 21st century skills training through ALS and TESDA programs.
- ▶ **98,443** OSY completed DepEd ALS or TESDA skills development programs, and a total of 110,336 youth were reached by the program.
- ▶ **81.9%** of OSY who completed DepEd ALS or TESDA programs supported by O2 demonstrated improved soft skills as a result of participating in the program.
- ▶ **68.8%** of program completers transitioned to further education, gained new employment, or reported improved employment.
- ▶ Among the completers who were employed following the program, nearly **two thirds (62.3%)** were employed or self-employed in quality green and blue jobs.
- ▶ O2 data suggests that ALS completion does in fact **positively influence** the life circumstances for OSY, reducing by more than half the rate of youth NEET. According to pre- and post-surveys of ALS participants, the average percent of NEET youth decreased from 10.3% to 5.2%.
- ▶ Diverse stakeholders in 15 municipalities mobilized **5.1 million USD** in non-donor resources (i.e., from national and local governments, the private sector, and youth and community groups) to support OSY priorities, programs, and activities. This mobilization of resources typifies the extensive systemwide support for OSY.

## A Remaining Question

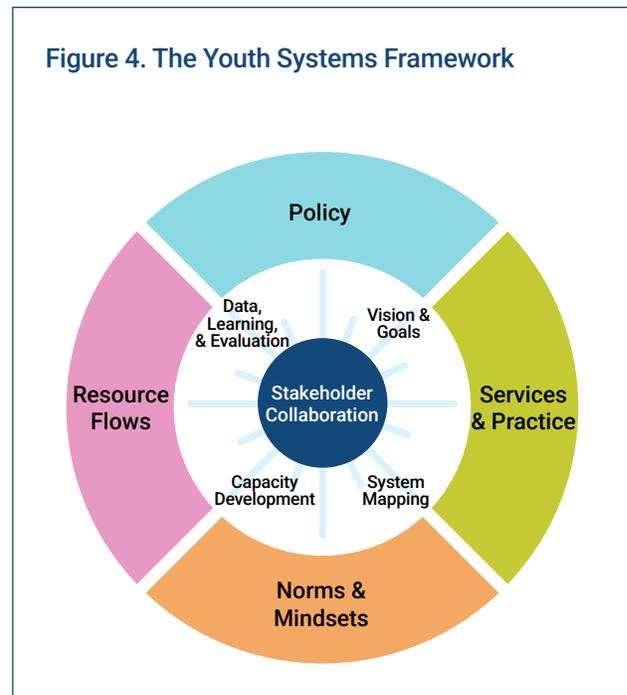
Beyond these quantifiable accomplishments, O2 partners and staff had witnessed and/or directly experienced deeper, more sustained changes across the OSY system. These transformational shifts extended beyond individual participants and were experienced by many diverse actors at both national and local levels. USAID and O2 partners wanted to understand these important system-level changes and determine the extent to which they were contributing to improvements in the OSY system writ large.

## Understanding Systems Change

“Systems change” is commonly defined as “shifting the conditions that are holding the problem in place.”<sup>22</sup> Working at a systems level addresses the deeper root causes of a social, economic, or environmental problem. Programs that seek to affect systems change bring together diverse stakeholders who have a vested interest in the intended outcome. Thus, when improving education and employment outcomes for OSY, changes must not only be seen in formal education, but they must also involve informal and nonformal education, employers and the business community, families, community groups, and young people themselves.

Within the context of international youth development, research points to a few salient forces that influence a system’s ability to achieve positive outcomes for youth.<sup>23</sup> The Youth Systems Framework (**Figure 4**), developed by the Youth Systems Collaborative<sup>(SM)</sup>, illustrates these forces. Starting at the outer ring of the framework, the visible manifestations of youth systems change occur along four major domains: services and practices, policies, resource flows, and norms and mindsets. When meaningful shifts occur in youth systems, for example, one will see widespread and sustained changes in these four domains. The inner rings of the framework explain

Figure 4. The Youth Systems Framework



the enablers of systems change, that is, the actions that stakeholders take to improve youth outcomes: stakeholder collaboration; visioning and goal setting; systems mapping; capacity development; and an improved flow of data, learning, and evaluation.<sup>24</sup> These enablers can be important signals for whether system actors are on course for achieving better outcomes for youth.

## Evaluation Rationale

This evaluation explores how these dynamics in the Philippine OSY system changed over the course of the O2 activity. It attempts to capture shifts in the underlying conditions that influence OSY outcomes in the Philippines. In doing so, it also sheds light on the sustainability of O2 interventions and the potential for scaling program impact beyond the 15 cities targeted by the activity.

- **When improving education and employment outcomes for OSY, changes must not only be seen in formal education, but they must also involve informal and nonformal education, employers and the business community, families, community groups, and young people themselves.**

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# Evaluation Design

## Purpose of the Evaluation

This study evaluated the degree to which the O2 activity facilitated positive and sustained system-level shifts for improved outcomes for OSY.

The objectives of this study were as follows:

1. Identify the **most salient system-level changes** (nationally and sub-nationally) that have been observed by stakeholders in the education-to-employment system for OSY
2. Analyze the **contributing factors** that led to these system-level changes, including O2's contributions to those changes and the key strategies within O2 that enabled the change to occur, as well as any preexisting or exogenous factors that may have contributed to these outcomes
3. Understand how those systemic changes contributed to positive **impact** for OSY
4. **Recommend strategies** and priorities for supporting positive outcomes for Filipino OSY



Table 2. Study Participant Sampling, by Geographic Region and by Participant Type

City (O2 Hub)	DepEd	TESDA	LGU	DTI	DOLE	PESO	Other GoP	Private Sector	Youth/ Youth-Led Org.	Other Service Provider	USAID, O2 Team
Cagayan de Oro (Davao)	3	1	0	1	0	1	1	2	5	0	4
Iligan (Davao)	1	0	1	2	2	1	0	0	8	0	0
Pasig City	5	0	5	1	0	1	1	2	0	5	0
Quezon City	1	0	4	0	0	1	0	1	2	1	0
Valenzuela City	0	1	2	0	0	0	0	0	2	3	0
Tagbilaran (Cebu)	1	1	4	1	0	1	0	1	4	2	1
Davao City (Davao)	2	4	0	0	1	1	0	1	11	6	0
National-Level Actors	4	6	0	1	2	0	1	0	0	0	22
Subtotal	17	13	16	6	5	6	3	7	32	17	27
TOTAL	149										

## Methodology

The evaluation team conducted a rapid summative evaluation using a mixed-methods approach, which captured data from across all 15 project sites, namely, through a desk review of secondary data and the collection of primary data through an online survey, key informant interviews, focus group discussions, and participatory workshops using complexity-aware methods. Because of O2's work with diverse stakeholders across the OSY system, study participants represented a range of stakeholders across several sites, as well as a select number of national-level actors. **Table 2** summarizes the participants by geographic region and by participant type.

## Data Collection

Secondary data sources included O2 project reports, studies commissioned by the project, communications materials, event briefs, as well as reports from outside the project. (Refer to the "References" section at the end of this report.)

The evaluation team analyzed primary data from two sources: **(1)** data collected in October 2023 for a USAID-commissioned case study on system-level changes across the O2 activity<sup>25</sup> and **(2)** supplementary data collected directly by the O2 team in late 2024 for the purposes of this evaluation. In both cases, the researchers focused their line of inquiry on the most salient change at the system level that participants had experienced or witnessed across the OSY system.

## Analysis

The evaluation team analyzed the data according to a taxonomy of codes that reflected the Youth Systems Framework (**Figure 4**). This framework was presented to and validated by the O2 team during the development of the research plan. Data was further analyzed according to a series of hypotheses for system-level changes based on the O2 team's observations over the life of the project. To the extent possible, when study participants noted certain changes, enumerators probed for and

triangulated the reasons explaining those changes. During the analysis process, the evaluation team examined patterns in data that may have explained the project inputs and outputs that contributed to those changes, as well as any exogenous contributing factors. The evaluators then utilized causal loop analysis methods to understand the relationships between the observed variables.

## Validation

The evaluation team validated the initial analysis with the O2 team through a series of online discussions and participatory workshops. Because of the timing of the project closeout (see the “Study Limitations” section next), system stakeholders were not accessible for the validation process.

## Study Limitations

This rapid study was conducted toward the end of the O2 activity, under a short timeline, and with limited access to stakeholders for data collection. In late August 2024, the O2 team was notified by

USAID that its request for a no-cost extension would not be granted and that the project would be closing in early 2025. Immediately the O2 team enlisted the support of an EDC evaluation team to conduct this study. Given that the O2 team and its partners were preoccupied with final project interventions and project closure-related tasks, the evaluation team was asked to reduce burdens on staff and partners by aligning evaluation data collection with project closeout events. This restricted access to stakeholders for data collection, in turn, limited the depth of the evaluation and the sample size. Furthermore, the time pressures associated with project closeout meant that the evaluation team was unable to officially translate and test instruments, formally train enumerators (protocols were shared with enumerators), or institute data quality controls. Finally, as this evaluation was internal, much of the data were collected internally by O2 and EDC staff. Not surprisingly, the researchers observed possible biases in the data, with most participants giving favorable responses regarding the O2 project and few noting criticisms or gaps.



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# Detailed Findings

The following subsections describe the six major findings associated with the O2 systems evaluation. By and large, the most salient form of change in the Philippines OSY system, as observed by O2 stakeholders, was the increased collaboration between and connectedness among system actors at the local level.

This connectedness enabled more cohesive pathways for OSY to access the varieties of services along their education and employment journey. This finding was reported mostly by local and national representatives of the GoP, by the private sector, and by service providers. Many noted that youth were also more integrated into the OSY ecosystem as valued, influential contributors and decision-makers. This observation was noted by various stakeholders, including youth themselves.

The second most reported system change was the improved quality of services for OSY. Respondents described a variety of new training opportunities for youth, delivered by diverse private and public service providers, and then

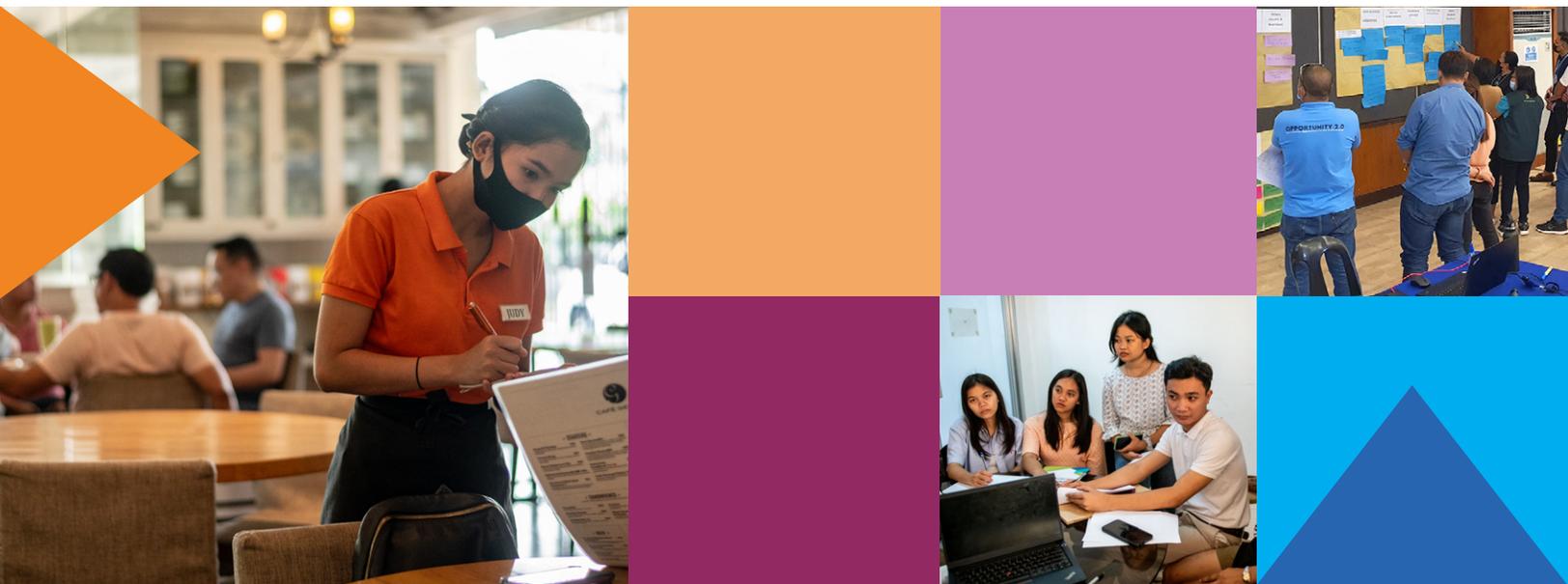
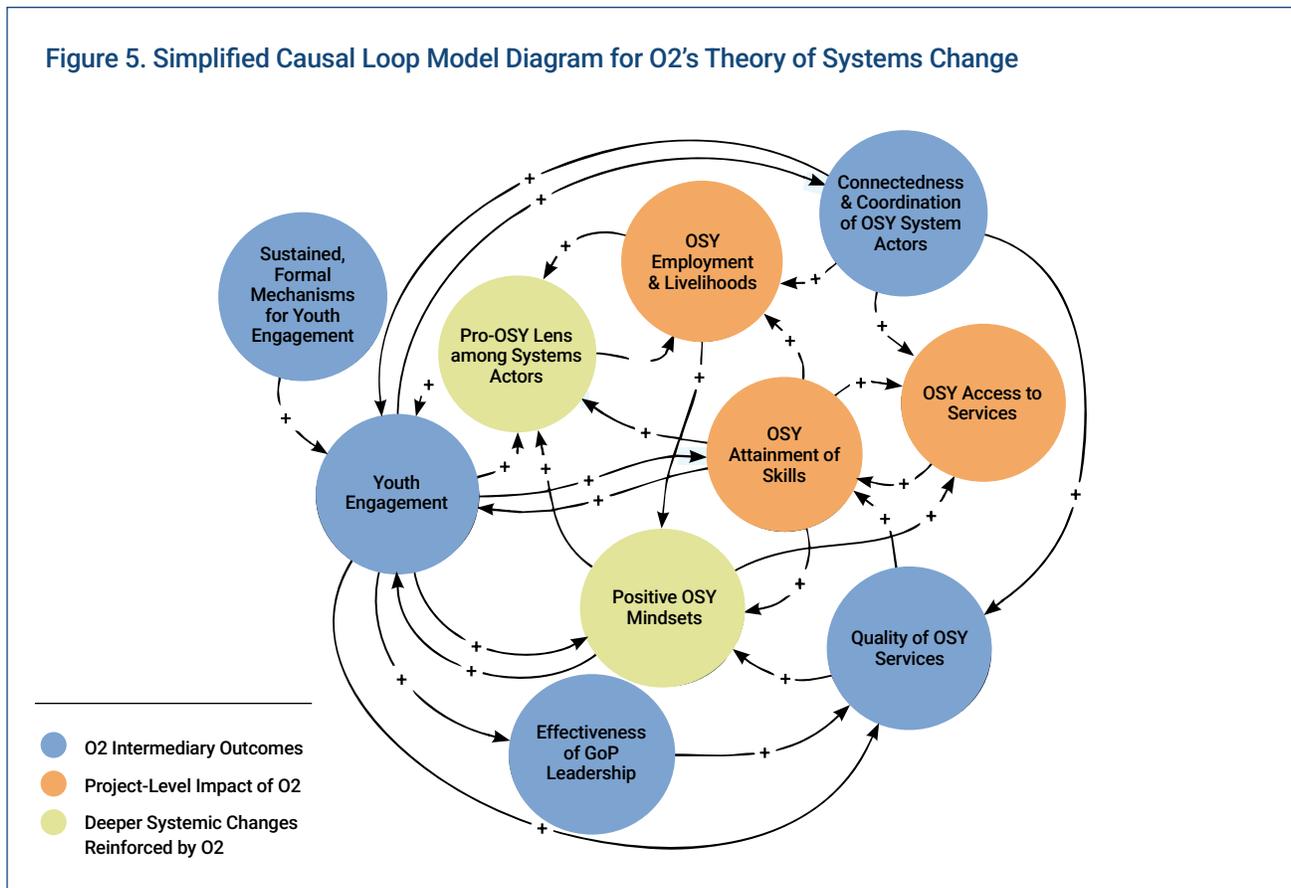


Figure 5. Simplified Causal Loop Model Diagram for O2's Theory of Systems Change



institutionalized and scaled across the country. Many respondents attributed the improved service delivery to the connections made between different system actors, as their coordination helped to align the services with the needs of both OSY and the private sector. Many respondents talked about how these services were also more accessible to youth, due to the system connectedness that created more cohesive pathways for OSY to navigate.

These two outcomes—greater system connectedness and improved quality of services—along with other outcomes realized by O2, led to fundamental changes in the mental models<sup>c</sup> that shape the OSY system. Many young people reported improved self-confidence and positive mindset shifts, while a broader set of system actors reported that they had more positive perceptions of and attitudes toward

OSY. While this evaluation was not able to measure or analyze these changes in a highly rigorous fashion, its findings nevertheless suggest that O2's holistic systems approach helped to create outcomes that positively reinforced one another.

**Figure 5** illustrates these relationships as a simplified theory of systems change for the O2 activity. This conceptual diagram illustrates how the deliberate outcomes of O2 (depicted as blue circles) contributed to project-level impact (orange circles). Together these forces reinforced transformative shifts in the dynamics of the system (green). As the arrows suggest, collectively these positive changes mutually reinforced one another in a virtuous circle. The following subsections describe their relationships and the ensuing results in greater detail.

<sup>c</sup> The term "mental models" is commonly used in systems thinking and refers to the "deeply held beliefs and assumptions and taken-for-granted ways of operating that influence how we think, what we do, and how we talk." These implicit habits of thought are one of the six key conditions that hold a social or environmental problem in place. (Kania et. al. 2018) According to systems thinking experts, shifting mental models is a "prerequisite" to achieving systems change. (Lebus & Jeanneret 2023)

## 1. Improved Service Delivery

**The Government of the Philippines and private service providers have demonstrably improved the quality and availability of services for OSY—and they have scaled and sustained these services beyond the 15 sites.**

Stakeholders noted that a significant system-level change made by O2 was its contribution to improved service delivery for OSY. Key informants consistently emphasized that the life skills and work-readiness programs introduced by O2 were important for and valued by OSY. Delivered primarily through DepEd and TESDA, these programs equipped OSY with foundational skills such as communication, collaboration, and leadership and provided them with a strong foundation for further education and vocational training. In one O2 study conducted by Accenture, OSY and their families agreed that the ALS and TESDA programs gave OSY employable skills and increased knowledge and certifications.<sup>26</sup> In an online evaluation survey, one private sector representative reported that the biggest change they witnessed was the improvements in skills development programs: “There has been a growing emphasis on equipping youth with practical, job-ready skills. Many programs now prioritize vocational training and apprenticeships to bridge the gap between education and employment.” Some youth reported to O2 staff that they chose to enroll in ALS programs rather than formal junior or senior high school programs because of the marketable life skills that were integrated into the ALS curriculum. These youth felt that ALS enabled an easier transition into further education or employment. DepEd representatives echoed these sentiments, emphasizing the power of curriculum reform in driving systems change.

**All ALS junior high school-level programs nationwide now provide life skills training for OSY as part of the regular ALS programs, and they are expanding offerings of work-readiness skills through the *Work-Based Learning* and *Be Your Own Boss* curricula.** The *Life Skills* learning resources originated under MYDev and MYDev’s success provided the opportunity to institutionalize their use as a core component of all

ALS Accreditation & Equivalency (A&E) programs. During the COVID-19 pandemic, O2 converted the course to remote, self-guided learning and developed companion guides for both the face-to-face and self-guided materials. Since then, over 1 million ALS learners have accessed life skills development opportunities through face-to-face, self-directed, and blended learning programs. Speaking to the value of these materials, an ALS division-level supervisor indicated that the *Life Skills* Modules have had a big impact on ALS learners, especially around communication skills. Now, she noted, the ALS learners practice expressing themselves clearly, taking initiative, and preparing for interviews. She also felt the introduction of the *Work-Based Learning* curriculum helped ALS learners find jobs by partnering with future employers.

“

**I didn’t have enough knowledge on business planning so couldn’t make sure that my business growth was sustainable. 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.**

—O2 Youth Participant in Angeles City

Building on the mandatory ALS Life Skills modules, O2 developed and contextualized two additional curricula to further enhance work-readiness skills: *Work-Based Learning* (WBL) and *Be Your Own Boss* (BYOB), the latter an entrepreneurship training. This impact is expected to be sustained and delivered through O2’s development of facilitator guides, the training of master trainers for all ALS regional and division supervisors across the country’s 17 administrative regions, and monitoring site visits. The master trainers continue to provide cascade training for all ALS teachers. ALS teachers now have a range of online courses in innovative instructional pedagogies, including portfolio assessment, differentiated instruction, and project-based learning.

All activities were co-created and implemented in close collaboration with DepEd BAE. Following these achievements, and with O2 support, BAE conceptualized, developed, and rolled out a curriculum for a pilot course on financial education under the new Functional Education and Literacy Program (FELP), as required by the provisions of RA 11510. O2 helped BAE document the FELP course development process as a reference manual for developing future FELP courses. Currently, five new FELP courses are under development by BAE and DepEd ALS field offices as evidence of the

materials or modules for trainers so that they could integrate critical basic competencies into their course offerings. Today, TESDA offers innovative curriculum co-developed with O2 on 21st century skills for TESDA's National Certification Levels I–IV. It is noteworthy that following the O2-led development of the NC I and II level modules, TESDA co-developed the modules for NC levels III and IV with only advisory support from O2. Under TESDA mandate, all TESDA technology institutes (TTIs) and private technical and vocational institutions (TVIs) include 21st century skills in all TVET program offerings.



sustainability and scale-up of O2's FELP instructional design model.

**TESDA has institutionalized 21st Century Skills Modules for National Certificate (NC) levels I–IV.** In interviews with government officials, some interviewees mentioned that TESDA had articulated a vision for incorporating 21st century skills into programs and the new *National Technical Education and Skills Development Plan (NTESDP)*, but action had been slow to materialize.<sup>27</sup> Key informants noted that the successful results from the MYDev *Life Skills* program prompted TESDA to seek similar approaches through O2. TESDA partnered with O2 to find ways to develop 21st century skills learning

**TESDA enhanced its massive open online program and tailored it to the needs of young out-of-school learners.** Prior to the O2 program, TESDA offered a Web-based platform offering free online technical education and skills development courses for Filipino workers. In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, O2 revamped this program to provide an opportunity to restore youth's access to skills-building programs and national certification, creating the Youth Access to TESDA Online Program (YATOP). This new program offered 21<sup>st</sup> century skills training, technical skills trainings, and work-based learning (WBL) and entrepreneurship (BYOB) modules through the TESDA platform. Guided by an

O2 facilitator, the program included practical skills training at a TVI, coupled with post-training activities such as hands-on skills practice, work immersion, and/or TESDA assessment and certification support. This enhanced version was tailored to the learning needs of OSY, as it offered a blended learning approach with revamped curriculum and an emphasis on transition to employment. Indeed, YATOP proved to be a popular module for OSY who needed the flexibility of an online program. Among 1,473 OSY participating in YATOP during the life of the program, 96% completed the course; among those who took the TESDA assessment, 88% successfully received certification. Although initially launched in response to the pandemic, O2 continued YATOP until 2024. As of 2025, select TESDA TTIs are preparing to offer the similar youth-friendly Multi-Regional TESDA Online Program (MRTOP) based on the YATOP design.

**A testimony to the changes in the Philippine OSY system was not just the uptake of the curriculum itself by system stakeholders, but the continual “crowding in”<sup>d</sup> of other actors to adopt complementary services and practices.** For example, while O2 initially focused service delivery improvements on the ALS and TESDA systems, soon other stakeholders, such as the Department of Trade and Industry (DTI), Public Employment Service Office (PESO), and HEIs, were eager to incorporate similar adjustments to the way they themselves serve OSY. These agencies strategically integrated new life skills and work-readiness content/modules of their own to complement other existing services.

**In turn, the DTI, the government agency responsible for entrepreneurship training services, now has a standard national entrepreneurship curriculum—and it has been tailored to be inclusive of OSY.** Previously, there was no unified national curriculum in place to guide entrepreneurship training nor was it serving OSY. Recognizing this gap, DTI worked with O2 to adapt the BYOB curriculum and incorporate it

as part of its *Youth Entrepreneurship Program (YEP!)*. DTI undertook several pilots for YEP! BYOB, and after several iterations, it rolled out the program nationally. Today, DTI fully owns and implements YEP! BYOB, which is now standard across all regions and incorporates elements specific to DTI’s needs, including green skills, life skills, and design thinking. Moreover, as a testimony to DTI’s new commitment to OSY, DTI officials report that the entire department sets regional quotas for the number of OSY served by DTI’s entrepreneurship training.

**Moreover, 64 HEIs and other local service providers now offer career guidance programs for ALS learners.** For some time, state and national colleges and universities had been increasing their role in community extension services; in fact, state colleges had a mandated community extension function. HEI key informants indicated that O2 helped them to see the importance of OSY-related issues in fulfilling this mandate. Today, university instructors and students in 37 HEIs, as well as an additional 27 local service providers, are delivering specially tailored services for ALS learners through a career guidance program called Higher-level Education or Training Readiness Orientation (HERO). This program orients ALS learners and graduates to a more comprehensive understanding of education and training opportunities available to them after ALS. It informs marginalized youth of the admission processes, application requirements, and financial support opportunities available for them to pursue higher-level studies in their community. This program was co-created and is now owned by the HEIs themselves. In many institutions, students provide the training and orientation to OSY as part of their mandatory voluntary community service course requirement. In some cities, HEIs now provide a venue for ALS night classes, which a key informant interview with O2 staff said has helped change the perspective of OSY, allowing them to feel like they’re “inside the gates of a university.”

<sup>d</sup>The term “crowding in” is commonly used in the field of market systems development to refer to a phenomenon where system actors who are not directly involved in a program witness the favorable conditions, improved incentives, or demonstrated benefits that the program has created. In turn, they either copy the behaviors of those who are directly involved in the program, or they adopt new practices or change their behavior based on those favorable conditions. (BEAM Exchange, n.d.). In social science, this phenomenon is often referred to as an “attractor” program model, where a new innovation or behavior is introduced into a system, and the visible benefits of this innovation attracts or encourages other actors to replicate, adapt, and/or scale similar or complementary practices. (Seelos & Mair, 2018)

## 2. Greater System Connectedness for OSY Transitions

**Diverse stakeholders at the local level are more closely connected and are more effectively coordinating to increase out-of-school youth's interest in and access to programs and services.**

Prior to O2, only a few programs were intentionally serving OSY, and the youth found it difficult to access a continuum of services that were tailored to their needs. According to one baseline study, the system was characterized by fragmented service delivery, and the various organizations—government agencies, NGOs, private sector entities—operated in silos.<sup>28</sup> Another baseline study found that “many youth do not know about the services available to them in barangay halls and, even if they do, they may not find the time to access them.”<sup>29</sup> Policymakers and service providers lacked a coordinated effort or shared vision for effectively helping OSY transition back to education, gain skills, or find employment. In many cases, local institutions reported that they had overlooked the needs of OSY entirely, serving a general “youth” population but not necessarily tailored to the needs of learners who were out of the system. Similarly, there was no post-program support for youth who had finished an ALS program, and no strategy for linking other system actors together across the OSY learning-and-earning continuum.

**Today, diverse leaders across 15 sites are working together and strengthening partnerships in support of OSY.** In a 2024 online survey of O2 participants about the most significant change in the OSY system, over a third (39%) of the respondents noted the improved collaboration and connection among diverse system actors. Many described the stronger connections between the private sector, educational institutions, and government agencies. Many also noted that OSY are more integrated into local decision-making, policies, and programs.



**There is a notable increase in partnerships between educational institutions, businesses, and government agencies. These collaborations aim to create more cohesive and effective pathways from education to employment. These changes reflect a broader effort to make the transition from education to employment smoother and more effective for out-of-school youth.**

—Private sector businessperson and YDA member, Cagayan de Oro

**The key to this coordination has been O2's introduction of a local public-private partnership model called a “Youth Development Alliance” or “YDA.”** Each YDA brings together representatives from local government (e.g., the local mayor's office); national government line agencies (e.g., DTI, Department of Labor and Employment [DOLE], PESO); service providers; HEIs; the private sector; and youth leaders. Typically nested within the nationally mandated Local Youth Development Office<sup>e</sup> (LYDO) and led by a representative from the mayor's office or the Local Government Unit (LGU), YDA members gather regularly to align programs and policies to the needs of youth and the local economy. While initially facilitated and supported by O2 staff, YDAs are now locally owned, and members set their own priorities and address local needs. This decentralized approach generated trust in and local ownership of the model. Today, YDAs are fully sustained mechanisms for coordination. According to organizational capacity assessments conducted by O2, 14 of the 15 YDAs are demonstrating full organizational functionality, and all report they are following the actions developed in their sustainability plans.<sup>f</sup> Most YDAs receive funding or budget allocation from the LGUs. Importantly, a total

<sup>e</sup>Among the 15 YDAs across the country, 14 are nested within the local Youth Development Office, a government entity mandated by the 2015 Sangguniang Kabataan Reform Act (Act No 10742) to support and promote the development of Filipino youth.

<sup>f</sup>Organization Capacity Assessments (OCAs) are self-administered across six categories on a 0–4 scale: (1) Governance, (2) Strategic Direction, (3) OSY Development Planning and Service Delivery, (4) Resource Generation, (5) Advocacy and Networking, and (6) Sustainability. YDAs conduct an OCA annually and use it for organizational development purposes, as well as to inform its sustainability plan and actions for the next year. The organization is considered *functioning* with a score between 2.0 and 2.9 and *effectively functioning* with a score between 3.0 and 4.0.



The YDAs are where the action happens for OSY programs. DepEd failed to come up with a system like the YDA to help with the transition to work and provision of work-based training. YDAs have been instrumental. The YDAs are the link to the private sector and communities for DepEd.

—Former Asst. Secretary of ALS, DepEd

of nine YDAs have been enacted into law through the signing of local ordinances. During an evaluation focus group discussion in Cagayan de Oro, one government official said, “[The YDA] has become a valuable platform for the convergence of various agencies, allowing us to coordinate our programs and initiatives, rather than working in isolation and duplicating efforts. More importantly, it has provided an avenue for youth representatives to actively participate and have their voices heard, further strengthening the alliance’s approach to youth development.”

**An important outcome of these local coordination bodies has been the increased synchronization of services, and hence improved transition pathways, for OSY as they navigate the education and employment continuum.** YDAs act as a catalyst and connecting body for youth services. They ensure that OSY are aware of and have access to the critical post-program supports, be it further education and training, connections to employers, or other job intermediation services. One tangible effect is that ALS staff and TVET trainers now receive training to work with DTI, DOLE, and the private sector to transition ALS completers into other programs or into the workforce. In a focus group discussion, an ALS representative in Iligan said, “[Before,] I noticed that [ALS] learners do not have exit pathways...they would still remain OSYs because there were no opportunities...Because of O2, there are now resources and opportunities [for youth] to engage with other partners such as PESO and DOLE [after completing an ALS course].”

**Importantly, each YDA has established, implemented, and sustained a formalized internal referral system that lays out the steps and procedures for OSY’s transition through education and employment services.** This system facilitates youth’s access to the various programs offered by the YDA member organizations and further streamlines the efforts of the YDA members to maximize shared resources for

OSY. The internal referral system outlines the steps taken by both the youth and the YDA along their shared journey, showing ease of youth’s transition along the education-to-employment continuum. In Cagayan de Oro, the University of Science and Technology of Southern Philippines institutionalized this referral system into a mobile application, known as “eMonitor Mo” (see **Box 1**).

**Another result of this coordination has been that diverse stakeholders are directing more resources toward the interests and priorities of OSY. The GoP and private sector are mobilizing resources toward OSY programs.** Over the life of the O2 activity, a total of over 300 million PHP (5.1 million USD) in scholarships, cash, in-kind contributions, and other non-USAID resources were mobilized to benefit OSY. YDAs advocated for LGUs, HEIs, and TESDA regional offices to allocate scholarships for OSY. Youth

### **Box 1. eMonitor Mo” App in Cagayan de Oro**

In Cagayan de Oro, the University of Science and Technology of Southern Philippines noticed that data and coordination challenges were a major barrier to youth’s ability to access education and employment opportunities. The university had an idea to address this problem and received a grant from O2 to develop the *eMonitor Mo* mobile app.

The app offers youth profiling, mapping, and monitoring, as well as a referral system. It shares opportunities for youth, including TESDA scholarship slots and job postings from YDA members. Youth can create their own profiles and can apply to opportunities directly in the app itself.

now have increased access to TESDA scholarships, which were unallocated prior to YDA involvement. In the final year of the project, TESDA offered 331 scholarships for O2 youth for skills training in priority sectors (as identified in local labor market assessments), with a 94% completion rate. This allocation of scholarships is significant considering that financial constraints are the primary reason for male and female school dropouts.<sup>30</sup> Another notable example is from Quezon City, where the Youth Development Office re-allocated 80 million PHP worth of scholarships for senior high school, college, and technical and vocational skills training to underprivileged youth, including OSY. Similarly, the YDA in Cagayan De Oro lobbied the city mayor's office for more scholarship slots for the OSY of the city.

**YDAs are also now regularly collecting local labor market data, which helps them align skills development programs to the demands of their local economy.** Prior to O2, local governments had no systematic way of collecting labor market data, leaving the local TESDA offices on their own to determine appropriate skills development programs for the local economy. Today, YDAs regularly lead comprehensive local labor market assessments, in partnership with TESDA, to determine key priority sectors in each city. These assessments map the appropriate skills development programs that align with skills needs, and they identify additional resources needed to meet local labor market demand. TESDA then works with DOLE to develop a labor market plan. This process also informs TESDA on how to prioritize its scholarship allocations and provide post-training support.

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**When the YDA was formed the organizations could maximize resources and coordinate trainings to reduce overlapping service provision, can connect and collaborate and understand each other's responsibilities, can determine which agency is the best fit for different needs/programs.**

—YDA Member from Tagbilaran

### 3. More Effective Government Leadership

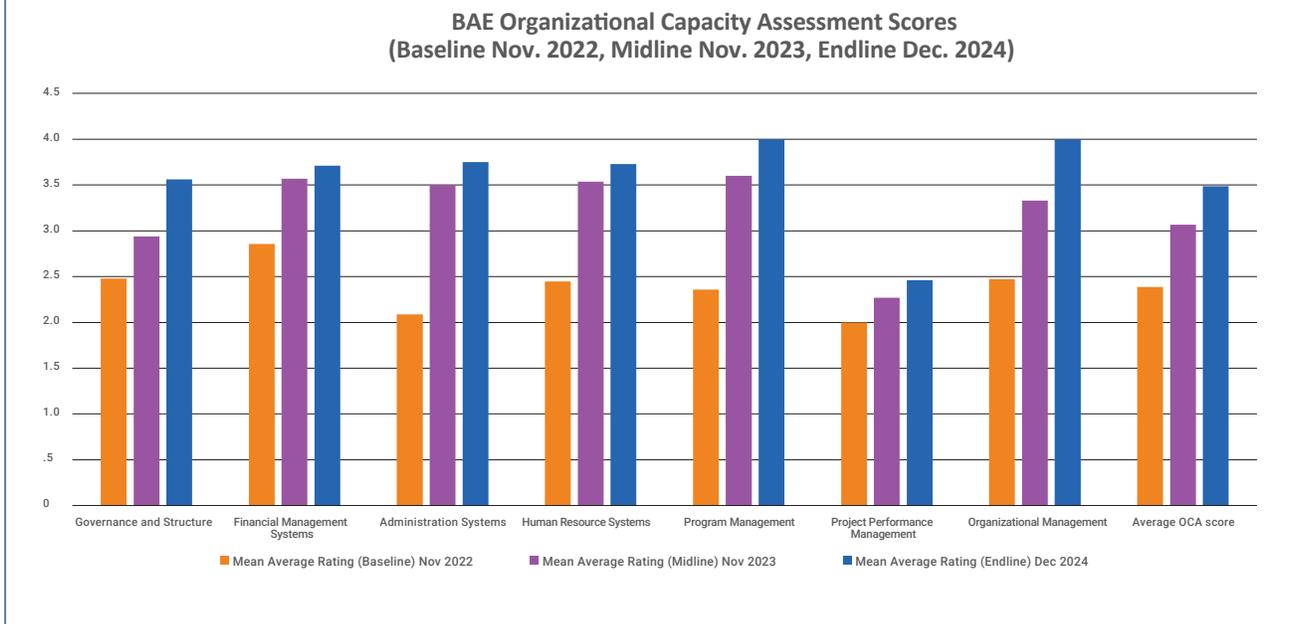
#### **The Government of the Philippines is better equipped to implement its national reform effort to improve education and employment outcomes for OSY.**

The Alternative Learning System Act in December 2020 (Republic Act No. 11510) included the mandate for the creation of the BAE “as the focal office for implementing the Department’s ALS Program,”<sup>31</sup> and one year later, the bureau was officially created.<sup>32</sup> While DepEd leaders and representatives held strong political will to get BAE up and running, many recognized that they did not have the operational capacity to do it alone.

O2 stepped in to provide advisory and technical assistance for BAE’s operationalization. Together BAE and O2 completed competency mapping for BAE positions and support for hiring employees to fit needs, developed key performance indicators for ALS, defined operational processes, and enhanced risk management and quality assurance systems. They also established implementation rules and regulations for the ALS 2.0 act and supported policy formulation and coordination. O2 also improved organizational efficiency through professional development workshops for BAE managers and senior technical staff, as well as finalizing critical operations manuals, such as the *ALS Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) Handbook* and the *ALS Manual of Operations for Teachers*, to improve program management and quality assurance.

**Since its inception in late 2021, BAE has become a fully functioning national institution serving out-of-school youth and adults.** As illustrated earlier in **Table 2**, over a two-year period, the bureau made measurable improvements in organizational capacity across several areas, especially in program management, administration systems, operational management, and human resource systems. BAE self-administered an organization capacity assessment to measure and improve its functionality. In a self-administered capacity survey, BAE’s organizational capacity scores on a 1–4 scale increased from 2.39 to 3.39 over a three-year period. As such, BAE is now classified as an organization

Figure 6. BAE's Organizational Capacity Self-Assessment Scores, from Baseline to Endline



with “strong organizational capacity.” Much of this work can be attributed to the leadership of BAE, particularly the assistant secretary for ALS at the time, as well as the support of donors, including the USAID/O2 activity. Other development partners that have supported BAE’s ALS include the Asian Development Bank, the World Bank, SEAMEO INNOTECH, the Australian Government Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, UNESCO-Jakarta, UNICEF, and the Korea International Cooperation Agency (KOICA).<sup>33</sup>

**Key informants agree that BAE now has the organizational capability to fully implement its mandate under Republic Act 11510.** In a key informant interview, a high-level BAE representative reflected that in 2021 there were only nine team members to get BAE up and running. This person said, “[O2’s] organization development process was very helpful to lay out the roles and responsibilities of leadership and what capacities they should be developing for directors and staff.” One key informant in DepEd noted how BAE now had the capacity to develop appropriate policies for OSY, and much of this was due to how O2 modeled youth engagement and research during the policy formation process.

Moreover, BAE has shown its ability to continuously improve upon its services and back-end support functions. In recent months, BAE has developed five new ALS policies to expand ALS programming, teacher welfare, and partner recognition. BAE also took the lead to develop and implement a Functional Education and Literacy Program (FELP) short course on financial education in partnership with Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas (the central bank of the Philippines); this effort demonstrated BAE’s ability to establish new partnerships and continually adapt and innovate solutions in response to the needs of OSY. These organizational shifts are supporting changes in BAE outcomes: The ALS 2.0 report highlighted that from 2016 to 2022, the number of out-of-school children, youth, and adults enrolling ALS courses was 95.35% higher than the 10 years prior (2005–2015).<sup>34</sup>

**Formal systems are in place for the external auditing of the ALS Program—and that system includes the voice of youth.** Since July 2022, the Second Congressional Commission on Education (EDCOM II) has been tasked with evaluating the performance of the Philippine education sector.<sup>35</sup> O2 provided technical and administrative support to EDCOM II, including the modeling of how to incorporate

OSY- and ALS-related research into their national review of the Philippine education system. O2 also submitted its own comprehensive position paper incorporating recommendations for legislative and executive action to further strengthen ALS program implementation and governance. O2 leveraged its on-the-ground connections with youth to create dedicated spaces for OSY to present their points and recommendations directly to policymakers. According to interviews, this youth engagement approach was an important change from the more traditional advocacy approach. Overall, O2's support was influential in integrating data and recommendations on the ALS—along with the input of OSY—into EDCOM II's review process. Today, EDCOM II's national review of the education system includes a review of the ALS program and serves as an external mechanism for holding BAE accountable to its mandate. In a recent hearing, for example, the executive director of EDCOM II highlighted the relatively low completion rates of ALS learners and emphasized the importance of financing ALS programs as well as providing more support for ALS teachers.<sup>36</sup> Representatives from EDCOM II report that the commission is highly interested in the OSY-focused research supported by O2. They say the EDCOM II plans to continue to include OSY issues within the growing body of youth research in the Philippines.

**Similar incremental pro-OSY reforms are happening within TESDA.** TESDA is a relatively large agency, with an annual budget of roughly 15.2 billion PHP (260 million USD),<sup>37</sup> it has 10 functional and 16 regional offices, 17,000 technical/vocational training

programs that are delivered through 4,630 public and private institutions, and an agency goal of training 1.8 million Filipinos in 2023 alone.<sup>38</sup> In the face of a large bureaucracy, the agency has nevertheless been successful at making incremental policy changes that are more inclusive of OSY. For example, while historically TESDA has not set targets for reaching OSY, its most recent NTESDP (2023–2028) included an explicit strategy to strengthen its capacity to deliver workforce development to vulnerable OSY and other marginalized people.<sup>39</sup> Due to O2 technical assistance, the NTESDP was informed by a dedicated analysis of OSY in the Philippines,<sup>40</sup> and it also included targets related to 21st century skills, including green skills.<sup>41</sup> TESDA has extended its targets for TVET scholarships<sup>42</sup> to OSY at the local level. Among the 5.1 million USD in resources mobilized for OSY in the O2 project sites, a large proportion of those resources included TESDA scholarships. TESDA officials acknowledge that these changes have been a result of O2's advocacy and technical assistance work with the TESDA regional offices and the YDAs at the local level.

**The YDA model has enabled the national vision of ALS 2.0 to be translated at the city level, by LGUs.**

The YDAs represent a critical link in two reform processes: “one that is a ‘vertical reform’ (cascading government service delivery system) to another that is a ‘horizontal reform’ (multi-stakeholder partnerships and collaboration).”<sup>43</sup> By enabling implementation at the local, horizontal level, O2's work has reinforced the policy and curricular reforms happening at the national, vertical levels.



#### 4. Sustained Mechanisms for Youth Engagement

**The system has expanded and sustained formal mechanisms for OSY engagement in programs, policies, and decision-making in their communities.**

**An especially powerful demonstration of youth engagement was the rise of the youth network, a first-of-its-kind local organization explicitly created to serve OSY interests in each of the 15 sites.** Although other local and national organizations serve Filipino youth more broadly, O2 facilitated the creation of youth networks to serve OSY specifically, thus reaching an underserved youth segment that normally would not have joined the more general youth-serving organizations. O2 youth networks provided a space for OSY and offered them volunteering and civic engagement opportunities. Initially established and facilitated by O2 staff, youth leaders have been trained to maintain and sustain the youth networks and to now lead the development, planning, and implementation of programs that serve the needs of OSY.

Through the process of organizing and implementing activities, network members attained hands-on project and organizational management skills. Members also disseminated information on youth opportunities and promoted the YDAs. To sustain these networks, each network has applied for and received official registration and accreditation status as a youth-led organization through agencies such as the National Youth Commission's (NYC's) Youth Organization Registration Program (YORP) and the Securities and Exchange Commission. As a testament to the power of these networks, Kagay-anon Youth Network Alliance (KaYa NA), the Youth Network Alliance in Cagayan de Oro, was selected as a top 20 national finalist for

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[Now] OSY representatives [have] confidence to express their views and opinions. Initially, their voices were hardly heard. At this point in time, they speak out even without being prompted to do so. This signifies confidence in themselves and their ideas. It may also mean that the other stakeholders are more ready to listen and work with them.

—Representative from the LGU in Quezon City

the 2024 *Ten Accomplished Youth Organization* (TAYO) Award. KaYa NA gained this recognition among a total of 752 participating youth organizations, and it was the only OSY-focused organization among the 20 finalists.

**Today, at any given time all 15 cities are represented by six elected OSY representatives serving on their YDA.** The elected youth leaders who have been through O2 programs become full members of the YDAs to inform local policies and decision-making. They contribute to the development of programs and services that address the needs and interests of OSY. One YDA member said, “I think the most interesting change that happened in Valenzuela is the inclusion of the youth leaders within the YDA. This encouraged some offices and private sector [partners] like PCCI, DTI, and PESO, to create more employment and business opportunities for OSY... I think the O2 programs and team, and the youth leaders, have been the big catalyst to make these things more possible.”

**Youth leadership circles are the mechanism for ensuring sustained youth participation in the YDAs.** An introductory activity to leadership training,

Youth study participants noted that being part of the youth networks helped them increase their awareness of employment opportunities, including jobs in the blue and green economies. Among the out-of-school O2 completers who reported being employed, 68.4% were employed in the blue and green economies.

KaYa NA's Youth Advocates Program also received the Hello Pagkain Award (Hello, Food), a special award given to projects promoting sustainable food production.

youth participate in a youth leadership circle, which orients youth on meaningful youth engagement and leadership development. The Youth Leadership Circle is a venue for youth to nominate and select peers to serve as their representatives on the YDA. Once leaders are elected, each network provides a venue for the young leaders to meet each other and further develop their leadership skills. Initially facilitated by O2 staff, youth leaders who are now officers of the youth networks have been trained on how to organize and host youth leadership circles. Over the life of the program, a total of 1,820 youth led and participated in youth leadership circles and monthly meetings while receiving O2 quarterly skill-building sessions.

**As a result of these local youth engagement mechanisms, young leaders have engaged in high-level policy platforms.** Ten ALS graduates engaging in O2 activities ran for positions on the barangay-level SK, the local youth council structure. At least three of these youth won a position on their local-level SK. Two female youth leaders presented at an ASEAN Regional Dialogue in Jakarta, Indonesia, and shared their journey as a former OSY. They were then interviewed by the director of BAE on a national morning show. Additionally, three youth leaders from the National Capital Region were invited to take part in a town hall meeting with the UN Assistant Secretary General for Youth Affairs. The town hall was organized to hear youth voices and experiences and to seek youth ideas and suggestions on improving youth programs and support services. It also allowed space for networking and collaboration among the different youth organizations present.



**O2 intentionally create[d] spaces for OSY to present their points and recommendations directly to policy makers. This is quite unique, in comparison to how other agencies submit recommendations through formal and traditional means.**

—O2 Staff Member

**A significant story of change was how O2 helped shape our journey, we found ourselves choosing between school and work. Through the Alternative Learning System (ALS) and vocational training programs initiated by O2, we not only completed our education but also gained valuable skills in urban gardening. This empowered us to become a youth agriculture advocate, training others and generating a livelihood for our family and to our fellow youth.**

—Testimony of Young O2 Participant from Cagayan de Oro

## 5. Positive Mindset Shifts among Youth

**Youth reported greater levels of self-confidence and more positive mindsets. This shift was associated with their increased skills and socioeconomic engagement as well as attributed to the visibly improved responsiveness by government to their concerns.**

In past years, OSY in the Philippines have faced social stigmas and systemic marginalization from education and employment opportunities. Historically, many OSY have experienced “stress and pressures due to their situation... and, in many cases, are stigmatized by society,”<sup>44</sup> and feel that they are discriminated against when seeking employment.<sup>45</sup> A baseline report conducted by O2 found that many OSY had looked to their families and their internal optimism to maintain the confidence to pursue their education and employment goals; however, many had reported low self-esteem, financial struggles, and the need for more skills.<sup>46</sup> Some OSY faced added social stigma, including young women who faced systemwide discrimination associated with early pregnancy,<sup>47</sup> as well as “discriminatory recruitment practices that are exclusive of youth with disabilities.”<sup>48</sup> Indeed, a 2003 World Bank study of out-of-school children and youth found that while respondents expressed a desire for services, including “better information about programs for youth [...] and employment/training opportunities at the local level,”<sup>49</sup> existing public programs reached a very small proportion of [out-of-school children and youth].<sup>50</sup>

Today, OSY indicate that participating in O2-supported programs allowed them to see themselves differently and increased their self-efficacy. Across the board, study respondents—youth and adults alike—consistently referred to or used the word “confidence” to describe OSY. They described youth’s confidence in expressing themselves, voicing their opinions, exercising leadership, and taking advantage of education and employment opportunities. Many young people stated that they had thought they’d “be OSY forever,” but the opportunities provided through O2 shifted their expectations for their future. One youth in Davao City shared that she dropped out of school once she became pregnant at age 17. During her pregnancy, she experienced depression as community members made negative comments about her status as an OSY and a young mother. However, she enrolled in ALS and completed her high school education. Through ALS, she took the BYOB training and completed a work immersion at a local restaurant. Following this month-long program, she was hired as a full-time employee. Through her training, she increased her self-confidence and through her employment, she was able to provide for her family and gained a sense of achievement. She has shared her story at youth events in her community and tells other young mothers to “believe in yourself. Do not listen to the naysayers and show them you can do it.”<sup>51</sup>

Figure 7. Four Intervention Components of O2’s Positive Youth Development Approach



“

Now, I am more active with youth engagement activities. I felt that I have a sense of purpose and inspired other OSYs.

—Young Person from Cagayan de Oro

These changes among youth were also observed by many O2 partners. For instance, in one focus group discussion with YDA members, a representative from a higher education institution said, “Along the way, I was able to see the behavioral change from the OSYs. The way they talk, they dress, the way they approach things. They have become different because of the program.”

According to O2 staff and the youth themselves, the improved self-perceptions among O2 participants were attributed to the program’s holistic positive youth development (PYD) approach. This approach supported the mindset shift of OSY to see themselves as “more than an OSY” and consisted of four main components (Figure 7). First, skills development opportunities through the work-readiness package (see “Improved Service Delivery,” above) provided youth with important life skills, such as critical thinking and goal setting. These skills also empowered them for the future with skills in entrepreneurship, career-readiness, and work-based learning. Among the 87,657 completers of O2-supported ALS and TESDA programs, 81.9% measurably improved their soft skills. One YDA member said that “the O2 platform served as an inspiration for the youth while boosting their confidence and strengthening their skills.”

Second, as discussed above (2. Greater System Connectedness), O2 facilitated several program adaptations, partnerships, and linkages that bridged youth’s transition into further education and/or employment. These transition pathways contributed to youth’s self-efficacy by providing them with a continuum of support needed to successfully navigate their education-to-employment journey. One young person from Iligan city described his journey from being a stay-in helper to attending senior high school-level ALS to accessing TESDA technical training after leaving senior high school. During the TESDA course, he also received a certificate in the BYOB course. This person stated, “After I finished



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Through the O2 system, OSYs have seen the importance of believing in their dreams... We have seen the change mostly with the attitude of our students and [their] plans for their future.

—Representative from a Youth Serving Organization in Quezon City

the course, a private sector employer hired me to work in [their company as a permanent employee]... I think I got hired because of BYOB. If O2 was not implemented I would also have been a stay-in helper. I would not have availed [myself] of other opportunities.”

Third, O2 provided the space and resources for youth to exercise their agency and to form connections with and contribute to their communities, namely through participation and leadership in youth networks (discussed previously) and O2 co-financing of youth volunteering activities (YVAs). These youth engagement activities were based on the MYDev experience and were designed to strengthen the social contract between local government, employers, civil society, and the youth themselves. Together the YVAs and youth networks allowed young people to practice the soft skills they had just acquired through ALS and TESDA skills training. Overall, roughly 69,000 OSY engaged in volunteering and civic engagement opportunities, with at least 1,820 youth leading these activities. Moreover, over the life of the activity, O2 awarded grants to 69 youth-serving organizations (primarily NGOs or community-based organizations) worth up to PHP 127 million PHP (2.2 million USD) for initiatives that

were co-led and co-designed by OSY. When referring to these opportunities, a youth leader from Cagayan de Oro said in a focus group, “Change was brought about because [of] a clearer role for youth leaders and a change in perspective in the OSYs.”

For the fourth part of the PDY approach, O2 facilitated improvements to the local enabling environment. This made a difference in youth’s interactions with policymakers, implementers, and service providers. In particular, the YDAs played a role in shifting public attitudes and awareness around OSY. The YDAs also made services more available and accessible to OSY. To enable this shift, 2,026 YDA members participated in training on PYD and other sensitization activities that highlighted the potential of OSY in their communities. Local youth development offices and local SK officials received similar PYD training. Noting the impact of these investments, one young person from Tagbilaran shared that youth in their community had improved their perceptions of themselves, and they felt that local government agencies, too, were now valuing OSY and giving them respect. The respondent observed that, in comparison, neighboring municipalities without YDAs had not experienced these same changes.



Recognizing the employability and work potential of OSY is [one of the] ways we can further contribute to society.

—HR Manager in a leading manufacturing company

One of the meaningful changes/outcomes I can share is [that] my engagements [with youth] have widened my understanding of the inequities [for OSY]. As enablers of an inclusive environment and equitable opportunities, we recognize the potential in every OSY. Our goal is to provide them with the support, skills, and platforms they need to thrive. By shifting our mindset and embracing a holistic approach, we can empower these individuals to realize their own strengths, contribute meaningfully to their communities, and break free from the limitations imposed by societal stereotypes.

—LGU Representative, Cagayan de Oro

## 6. Pro-OSY Lens among System Actors

**Policymakers, service providers, and employers have developed greater awareness of OSY, greater sensitivity to addressing their priorities, and more positive opinions around the potential of OSY.**

**O2's PYD approach precipitated mindset shifts beyond youth and across the ecosystem, particularly among the private sector, where employers reported notable shifts in how they view and interact with OSY.** Companies reported to O2 that compared to the time before their engagement with the program, they were now open to and sometimes preferred hiring ALS graduates. A representative from the Philippines Chamber of Commerce and Industry, along with other private sector members of the YDAs, explained that they now consider OSY as high-potential candidates because of the soft skills and 21st century skills youth have attained through the ALS or TESDA programs. Some employers mentioned that they've adjusted their practices to be more inclusive of OSY. One respondent in Tagbilaran said, "Previously, companies wanted to see transcripts for employment, but now they understand that [transcripts] don't always reflect youth's skills. O2 triggered this change."

Some stakeholders noted that employers' confidence in youth was buttressed by the larger youth support system created by the YDA. Many employers noted

that the YDAs served as a useful pipeline for employers to access ALS graduates. Some noted that financial institutions also started to develop new products and conduct outreach to serve OSY as a distinct market segment. Overall, study respondents noted the private sector's increased commitment to OSY issues, participation in YDAs, and creation of work-based learning programs for OSY. Over the life of the project, 2,327 employers in 15 municipalities participated in O2 by providing work-immersion opportunities, on-the-job training, mentoring, or coaching.

**Many government agencies have shifted their lens toward OSY, and now interact with youth not simply as beneficiaries of services, but as co-partners in setting the youth development agenda.** According to one key informant, O2's support to help BAE move from a supply-focused approach (i.e., "strengthening the alternative learning system") to a client-focused approach ("addressing the needs of out-of-school youth") was an important shift for the bureau. Noting this client-focused shift, one YDA member remarked that she was encouraging YDAs to not only focus on programming but to also focus on actual outcomes for OSY: "We have a monthly meeting, [and] all members report what they are doing. Like for example, we had a meeting two days ago. I told them, 'Instead of reporting what we've done, can you include in your report, what are the outcomes of what you're doing?' If you train OSY on ICT, where are they now? Are they employed? Are they having their business?"

O2 staff also observed that the engagement of youth during EDCOM II's review of the education sector was a powerful shift in opening up policymakers' minds to the voices of youth. One DOLE representative in Iloilo echoed this sentiment, saying they now refer to OSY as "invaluable youth."

**A powerful testimony to the mindset shifts among policymakers is the proposed Magna Carta for OSY.** In 2023, the House of Representatives approved House Bill No. 9347 to legally protect the rights of all OSY in the Philippines and to provide government assistance and social services for OSY and children.<sup>52</sup> Currently, this policy is being moved through Senate Bill No. 2633 and is pending approval. During the development of the proposed bill, the NYC's technical working group (TWG) for drafting the bill included feedback from approximately 400 OSY. O2 staff provided technical expertise and shared first-hand OSY experience for the draft document, after the TWG realized the Magna Carta did not reflect the needs of OSY. Over 300 OSY participated in focus groups conducted

by 89 youth leaders to provide direct input into the Magna Carta document and shape the policy.

**Higher education institutions now see themselves as an active part of the OSY ecosystem, too.** Prior to O2, most HEIs were not actively involved with issues related to OSY in their communities. O2 engaged 476 HEIs nationwide to sensitize them to OSY issues. As a result, several HEIs report that they have elevated their community extension mandate by conducting OSY-relevant research, guiding OSY in pursuing further education and training, facilitating capacity-strengthening activities for OSY-serving stakeholders, offering support and resources to OSY in their communities, and informing local and national policies to improve OSY access to education, training, entrepreneurship, or employment. An O2 staff member said, "HEIs played the role of a catalyst, helping to identify data-driven initiatives and services, and mobilize many important actors, to address the issues facing OSY." In 2023, HEIs formed a community of practice with the purpose of integrating OSY into the higher education community.

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The role of HEIs is we can do a lot of research ... so that programs that we do and design are really data-driven. Our programs will be more responsive to the needs and interest of our youth, and it's going to match what the industry needs as well.

—President of a Major University in the Philippines



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# Lessons Learned

O2's direct alignment with the Government of the Philippines mandate for ALS 2.0 was a core reason for its widespread buy-in by actors across the system.

Especially in a country such as the Philippines where respect for centralized authority tends to be relatively higher than in other countries,<sup>53</sup> partnership with and endorsement by DepEd and TESDA were critical to O2's accomplishments. Furthermore, O2 contributed to USAID's local capacity-strengthening policy objectives by relying on Philippine system actors to set their priorities, while O2 served as a catalyst and facilitator of interventions that were directly implemented by stakeholders themselves (see **Table 3**).

**O2's sustainability and impact at scale was attributed to USAID's long-standing commitment to the upskilling of OSY.** The O2 activity was not conceptualized from scratch; it was built upon the prior investments and lessons of the USAID-funded and EDC-implemented MYDev and EQuALLS2 programs, dating as far back as 2006. Most key informants agreed that USAID's long-term investment in OSY





allowed new innovations to be tested, adapted, rolled out, and scaled over time. The longer time horizon also enabled a trusting relationship between USAID, EDC, and GoP representatives. As one key informant noted: “Where O2 is now is a culmination of two decades of work, of strategies, working with youth alliances, partnership with DepEd.” Indeed, other international youth workforce development programs have found that scaling and sustaining impact most often doesn’t happen in a single USAID project cycle.<sup>54</sup> In the education sector writ large, “research shows that longer-term planning and multi-year capacity investment [compared to short-term investments] has a greater impact on sustained performance improvements ...”<sup>55</sup>

**O2’s holistic approach addressed the interdependency of several factors influencing the education and employment outcomes of OSY.**

The research showed that it was important to work concurrently at the national level (improving government services through a cascade approach, i.e., “vertical reform”) and sub-national levels (building multi-stakeholder partnerships and collaboration,

or “horizontal reform”). “O2 has been instrumental in helping to link these two reform processes by leveraging new Philippines policy and legal frameworks that enable incentives, resources, and sustainability for large-scale systems change, as well as providing targeted capacity development efforts by O2 international partners.”<sup>56</sup> Moreover, addressing multiple dimensions of the OSY experience—ALS basic education, TESDA technical training, transition services, work-based learning, and youth leadership in and engagement with their communities—allowed each component to build upon the others in a mutually reinforcing loop.

**While O2’s design was rooted in systems thinking, much of the traction that the program was able to generate was attributed to the way in which it was implemented.** Drawing its implementation strategy from earlier experiences of the MYDev program,<sup>57</sup> the O2 team cultivated an adaptive management approach that was rooted in local capacity strengthening, following five tactics described in **Table 3**.

Table 3. Five Core Tactics of the Opportunity 2.0 Adaptive Approach

Principle	Putting the Principle to Practice
<p><b>1. Facilitation: O2 is part of the OSY system as a facilitator of change—not as a direct implementer.</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ensure that all interventions are anchored in and implemented by a local actor</li> <li>• Cultivate interpersonal relationships between O2 and its system partners</li> <li>• Continuously listen to feedback from different system actors</li> <li>• Develop solutions that are co-created by relevant system actors</li> <li>• Establish a project staffing strategy that prioritizes interpersonal, communication, and critical-thinking skills over technical expertise</li> </ul>
<p><b>2. Tapping champions: Systems change arises from key actors who have a commitment to, vested interest in, and influence for change.</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Utilize participatory mapping processes and consultations to identify the agents of change—those who have a personal commitment and passion for OSY are necessary to the success of the interventions</li> <li>• Develop targeted communications and engagement strategies to spark interest from potential new champions</li> <li>• Invest in coaching, training, and modeling among champions</li> </ul>
<p><b>3. Youth at the center: Young people are critical champions to drive the change, and they need the spaces and resources to do so.</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Engage youth in intentional, youth-friendly outreach and communication strategies</li> <li>• Develop a system for identifying and addressing the needs and priorities of OSY for post-training support</li> <li>• Ensure youth are equipped with the skills to engage with other stakeholders to voice their concerns and implement solutions</li> <li>• Provide grants for OSY to exercise leadership roles in tangible ways</li> </ul>
<p><b>4. Use of practical tools and resources: When system actors co-create and have access to practical tools, it helps cement the implementation, sustainability, and scaling of the change.</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Identify existing tools and resources</li> <li>• If not already existing, co-create practical tools that enable stakeholders to implement, institutionalize, and scale the change</li> <li>• Examples of practical O2 tools include local labor market assessments, organizational capacity assessments (OCAs), report cards for YDAs to track their progress, OCA for youth-led networks/organizations, OCA for BAE, YDA handbook to institutionalize the YDA approach for replication by other cities</li> </ul>
<p><b>5. Continuous reflection, iteration, and adaptation: Positive change happens when we are flexible and responsive to changing conditions—and this happens when we listen to and learn from one another.</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Hold monthly technical team meetings, quarterly regional hub meetings, and bi-annual meetings as a full team</li> <li>• Debrief after every event, at the group level and at a technical team level, to focus on their priorities</li> <li>• Investment in M&amp;E systems and research to deepen stakeholders' understanding of the issues</li> <li>• Use alternative feedback loops, that is, generate input from all stakeholders about what is working, what's not working, and new ideas for moving forward</li> <li>• Perform a regular review of project data (e.g., OCA results, M&amp;E data)</li> <li>• Conduct annual performance review and planning meetings: What are we hearing from the partners? How is the research being integrated into daily work and annual workplans?</li> </ul>

# Recommendations

The major lesson from O2 is that improving OSY outcomes at scale requires a combined effort at the national and local levels. Strengthening national-level systems laid an important foundation in policy formulation, standards setting, new program development, and governance, while site-level interventions solidified the actions, attitudes, and services that directly impacted the lives of OSY.

Following are recommended actions to improve education and employment outcomes for Filipino OSY. Because the recommendations may involve or be led by different actors in the Philippine OSY system, each one includes (listed in brackets) a suggested “owner” or champion of the action as well as other supporting stakeholders who should be involved in the action. Moving forward, development partners may play a role in facilitating and supporting these actions, such as convening stakeholders to verify priorities and co-design and co-finance solutions. Importantly, any design and implementation process must involve youth as partners and co-developers.



## The recommendations are as follows:

- ▶ **1. Continue to strengthen the systems of DepEd BAE to be able to design other programs, laws, and mechanisms required by RA 11510:** With BAE now an established bureau, it is well positioned to advance OSY's education and employment outcomes. BAE is currently crafting its *ALS Strategic Roadmap for 2025-2030*, which will serve as a guidepost and concrete plan for future BAE programs and activities. Priority actions may include the following: enhancing the capacity of BAE to engage national line agencies in support of ALS and post-program transition process; supporting BAE to institutionalize ALS Senior High School from its pilot 500 schools to all senior high schools nationwide; and strengthening national BAE ALS governance, including management of information systems, as well as ALS governance at regional and district levels. [*Champion: DepEd BAE. Supporting stakeholders: Development partners*]
- ▶ **2. Further enhance and scale the capacity of LGUs to support OSY at the local level:** In the devolved governance context of the Philippines, LGUs are a core lynchpin that connect the ALS 2.0 reform efforts to local implementation on the ground. LGUs cooperate with various line agencies (DepEd, TESDA, DTI, and others) to operationalize OSY policies and programs. O2 has already laid the groundwork for a series of systems and processes that guided 15 LGUs in supporting OSY. Working closely with the Department of the Interior and Local Government (DILG), these methods could be embedded and scaled to additional LGUs. For example, development partners could support DILG to develop and roll out a more structured training program for barangay captains and local leaders to promote PYD programming in their communities. [*Champion: DILG. Supporting stakeholders: Barangay captains, community leaders, youth networks, and development partners*]
- ▶ **3. Replicate and institutionalize the YDA model in cities across the entire country:** In the 15 O2 sites, the YDA mechanism has helped the LYDOs better serve OSY, connect with the private sector, and coordinate the work of different service providers. According to interviews with USAID, several mayors outside of the O2 activity have contacted the agency for guidance on setting up a YDA in their own city. While O2 has institutionalized the YDA process and protocols in a written manual, many stakeholders agree that scaling the YDA model should be led by a national government agency, ideally by the DILG, which is best positioned to work through its network of LGUs to adapt and scale YDAs nationwide. [*Champions: DILG and NYC. Supporting stakeholders: LGUs and LYDOs; potential YDA members (youth networks, the private sector, NGOs, youth-led and youth-serving organizations, and other service providers); and development partners*]
- ▶ **4. Build out a network of holistic transition services and localized referral systems for OSY in each city:** When it comes to the kinds of services demanded by OSY, they need information and access to further education and training, new or better employment, or work-based learning opportunities. Some expressed a desire for more career guidance, mentoring, or peer coaching opportunities. Some seek additional wrap-around supports, such as mental health services, reproductive health services, gender-based violence support, or childcare. By and large, financial constraints remain the greatest challenge cited by OSY, and many cite a need to finance their education and associated costs, access money to cover their pre-employment costs, or obtain seed capital for starting a business. In fact, an O2 study found that financial barriers were a major contributor to low enrollment and completion rates in ALS and TVET. Many learners indicated a need to cover the opportunity costs associated with ALS and TVET (e.g., lost income while attending the programs), while also covering additionally incurred expenses such as travel, meals, study supplies, and childcare.<sup>58</sup>

Not all of these needs can be solved by DepEd ALS and TESDA alone; it requires an integrated whole-of-system approach to service delivery, involving a range of service providers, the private

sector, barangay captains, youth-led and youth-serving organizations, and other community-based organizations and community groups. Not only should the programs themselves be created or strengthened, but the linkages between them are equally important. The internal referral systems piloted by O2 showed that harnessing these diverse resources, linking them together, and explicitly communicating these transition pathways made a notable difference in the lives of OSY. While the existing 15 YDAs have expressed interest in further building out and formalizing their internal referral systems (led and managed by the LGU), any future YDAs that form would also benefit from referral systems of their own. *[Champions: DILG and city-level LGUs. Supporting stakeholders: YDA members (youth networks, the private sector, NGOs, youth-led and youth-serving organizations and other service providers) and development partners]*

- ▶ **5. Expand the type of services offered to OSY, particularly those that are inclusive of girls, young women, and youth with disabilities:** Within the ALS and TESDA programs themselves, OSY would benefit from more holistic training approaches beyond basic education and work readiness. Potential enhancements within ALS would address other socioeconomic barriers, such as developing and contextualizing mental health training modules; establishing family outreach programs to attract and retain ALS participants; creating mentoring programs for young women; or instituting programs that reduce the social and physical barriers for youth with disabilities. Within TESDA, O2's experience indicates that TESDA would benefit from strengthening its quality assurance mechanisms for the delivery of 21st century skills, enhancing in-company training opportunities in TVIs, and strengthening the delivery of green skills in the TESDA Green Technology Center. *[Champions: DepEd, TESDA. Supporting actors: Development partners, the private sector, and other service providers for OSY].*
- ▶ **6. Strengthen and scale local mechanisms for youth engagement:** Youth networks have been activated in 15 cities, signifying the first and only organizational structure representing and led by OSY. Future programs serving OSY should tap into these networks, while providing structured support for their capacity development and inter-network collaboration. An innovation fund by which youth groups develop and implement their project ideas would enable them to exercise the skills gained from ALS and TESDA programs. As seen by the experiences of O2, such opportunities would also elevate youth's voice and status in their communities.
- ▶ **7. Improve GoP management information systems for OSY:** Many stakeholders pointed to significant data gaps or the misalignment of data that prevented policymakers from making data-driven decisions around OSY. At the most fundamental level, reliable data on ALS enrollment, completion rates, and test scores are not publicly available—a phenomenon directly experienced by the O2 project itself and by this evaluation team. At the national level, development partners are encouraged to invest in data management within and between DepEd and TESDA, including the following: (a) developing a standard definition for “out-of-school youth”; (b) incorporating OSY-disaggregated data into DepEd; and (c) strengthening the interoperability between the DepEd and TESDA databases so as to identify, capture, and track youth's movement from intake to transition.

At the local level, LGUs also would benefit from collecting and managing data around OSY as there remains ambiguity about the number and location of OSY at the city level. Local data management efforts could build on the experiences of LGUs in Cagayan DeOro, General Santos, and Cotabato that have already developed unified management information systems of their own. Other resources could be leveraged, such as working with universities to identify, conduct outreach to, and track OSY, possibly at the barangay level through a mandated annual survey administered by the barangay-level SK captains. Alternatively, digital tools and software apps could be used to capture and manage data regarding OSY. *[Champions for national MIS: DepEd and TESDA. Champions for local MIS: DILG and LGU]*

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<sup>52</sup>Senate of the Philippines, 19th Congress. (2024, April 4). *An act providing for the Magna Carta of the out-of-school youth*. [https://legacy.senate.gov.ph/lis/bill\\_res.aspx?congress=19&q=SBN-2633](https://legacy.senate.gov.ph/lis/bill_res.aspx?congress=19&q=SBN-2633)

<sup>53</sup>According to the most recent data from the World Values Survey across 66 countries, the Philippines ranks higher among the countries exhibiting relatively greater levels of respect for authority, while showing a higher tolerance for strong political leadership and a moderate deference to experts. See: Haerpfer, C., Inglehart, R., Moreno, A., Welzel, C., Kizilova, K., Diez-Medrano J., Lagos, M., Norris, P., Ponarin, E., & Puranen, B. (eds.). (2022). *World values survey: Round seven – Country-pooled datafile version 6.0*. (pp. 247, 695, 697). JD Systems Institute & WVSA Secretariat. doi:10.14281/18241.24

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<sup>55</sup>U.S. Agency for International Development. (2024). *Strengthening the capacity of local education systems. Guidance for advancing USAID's local capacity strengthening policy in education programs* (pp. 7, 10–11).

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## USAID OPPORTUNITY 2.0 PROGRAM

Second-Chance Opportunities for Out-of-School Youth

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One of the most meaningful changes I observed in the OSY system through the USAID Opportunity 2.0 activity was the creation of inclusive pathways that connected out-of-school youth to sustainable education and employment opportunities. Before O2, many out-of-school youth were disconnected from formal education and had limited access to skills training that could lead to meaningful livelihoods.

—Testimony from an O2 Youth Participant

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