

# IMPACT STORIES



Nonoy dela Cruz is a graduate of the technical-vocational course in Security Services NC I under JP YEM

## TECHNICAL VOCATIONAL TRAINING IN MASBATE: Keeping the dream alive for Masbate's disadvantaged youth

Perhaps the greatest frustration of being a youth growing up in disadvantaged circumstances is aspiring for a career and being shot down even before one has been given the opportunity to take off.

“Ever since I was a child, I have always wanted to join the Army,” says 21-year old Nonoy dela Cruz who hails from the village of Jamorawan in the town of Milagros in Masbate.

“I wanted to become a teacher but my family cannot afford it,” muses Onong Ramos, who is also 21 and whose roots are in Cabayugan, an outlying village in Cawayan town in Masbate.

Both youth have unfulfilled aspirations that many other disadvantaged youth in all parts of Masbate can readily identify with.

At the brink of adulthood, they are ready to take off and claim their place in the world only to have their wings clipped off by the accident of being born poor.

### Poverty hinders access to education

In a country where the magnitude of the poor population is pegged at 23 million people (NSCB, 2009), many youthful ambitions have been shelved, including those of Nonoy and Onong, in favor of more basic issues of survival including food and basic necessities.

Nonoy was a good student in school and he was assistant to the commandant in his high school citizen's army training. Onong also got good grades and it is a shame that both youngsters would not be able to attain their childhood dream due to poverty.

### A second way

But it is not only work for the public sector as teachers and peacekeepers that can make careers. Jobs in middle level technical-vocational skills are as gratifying as work in other fields.

The Philippine government has continuously advocated that jobseekers must prepare themselves adequately for the job market. High cost of schooling means many youth in impoverished settings are not given the intense preparation needed for them to land competitive jobs.

The best that the government can do is to offer disadvantaged youth the opportunity to upgrade their qualification through trainings in labour market-responsive skills needed at the local level so that they need not leave their place of origin for jobs elsewhere.

### Eighth poorest province

Composed of three major islands—Masbate, Ticao and Burias—and several smaller islets, the province of Masbate lies at the center of the Philippine archipelago and is due south of Manila 17 hours by roll on-roll off bus or an hour by airplane.

Majority of people in these island communities continue to rely on subsistence fishing and farming with Nonoy and Onong's folks being no exception to the rule.

This spartan existence sometimes pushes parents to think first of meeting basic necessities before other concerns such as ensuring that their children graduate from school and learn a trade that will provide decent work.

Amongst the 81-odd provinces in the Philippines, Masbate placed eighth in the National Statistical Coordination Board list of provinces with the highest incidence of poverty. In 2009, the province was reported to have a 36.6 per cent poverty rate.



“When performing their duties as housekeepers, our youth can provide value-added services to their employers” Ms. Marcaida says.

Further, “a housemaid who has undergone training with us can offer her employer services in making *tocino* (cured meat) or doing her manicure and pedicure. These added services make her more valuable to her employer and raises her self-esteem” she adds.

## Reversing the trend

The Spanish-funded *MDG Joint Programme on Alternatives to Migration: Decent Jobs for Filipino Youth* was launched in July 2009 with the objective of widening young people’s choice in choosing what and where to launch their careers.

Where they are forced by local circumstances to migrate for work, the Joint Programme hopes to provide viable alternatives so that the same youth are given the choice to stay put in the province.

One of these alternatives is through local labour market-responsive trainings in technical and vocational skills.



Graduation day for technical vocational trainees in Masbate

## In-demand technical vocational skills

A recent study commissioned by the ILO to assess labour market-responsive skills in Masbate concludes that many technical vocational skills are among those that are most in demand.

These include food and beverage services, heavy equipment operation, building wiring installation, automotive servicing, welding, information and computer technology, electronics, security services, tour guiding services, driving, and food processing.



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## Training grants for disadvantaged youth

Through the Joint Programme, the ILO partnered with the government’s TESDA and Provincial Local Government in providing training grants to disadvantaged youth in Masbate.

The grantees were given the opportunity to enroll in local technical vocational institutions (TVIs) that include Osmena Colleges, Ovilla Technical Colleges, and Academy of Computer Experts in Masbate City, Abinuman Colleges in Cawayan, Cataingan Polytechnic Institute in Cataingan, and San Pascual Polytechnic Institute in Burias island.

Training courses in labour market-responsive skills in the province include automotive technology, electricity, information and computer technology, food and beverage services, and security services.

TESDA, through the TVIs, spearheaded the training of a total of 500 disadvantaged youth. The first batch received their training certificates last February 2012.

Nonoy and Onong are two of the more than 250 graduates who attended the graduation ceremony last May 4, 2012 for the second batch of trainees.

Held at the covered court of the Masbate Provincial Capital compound, the event was the culmination of the training offered to disadvantaged youth between January and May 2012.

## Challenges

The situation is different for Christopher Escorel, a 23-year old youth from San Jacinto in neighboring Ticao island.

Christopher had to give up school when he was in the second year of high school due to a lack of budget.



After a short spell, he went back to school but had to drop out again by the time he was in the third year of high school.

He never did receive his high school diploma. The situation was remedied, however, by a government programme that gives school drop-outs a second chance to get their degrees. In his twenties, Christopher availed of the Department of Education's Alternative Learning System (ALS).

A flexible schedule in which teachers guided him in completing school work enabled him to pass equivalency requirements and be eligible to progress to the next tier of the education system—middle level technical vocational school.

Christopher was also one of the graduates of the second batch of technical vocational trainings held last May 2012.

### Keeping the dream alive

These days, Nonoy, Onong and Christopher together with other disadvantaged youth trained under the Joint Programme are earning money from local jobs after completing their training.

Both Nonoy and Onong work as reliever-security guards for a local drugstore chain and a pawnshop chain in Masbate City, respectively. Many of their batch mates have already made the exodus to Manila to work as security guards in factories and retail establishments.

Christopher, meanwhile, is working as a helper-electrician in Masbate City together with fellow trainees Lino Rubisa, Jojo Badilla and Norlito Nuevo.

Although receiving daily minimum amounts equivalent to just around 4 to 5 US dollars for the days that they are working, Christopher and his pals are considered fortunate. At this point in time, they at least have something to hold on to that will sustain their dream.



### Placing one's hope in the future

Masbate's youth population (those in the 15 to 24 age range) was projected at more than 127,000 in 2011.

Around 53 per cent of this number will be going through the school system and are not counted as part of the labour force. Only 42 per cent of this number will be considered as employed and around 6 to 7 per cent will be unemployed, based on year-on-year trend from previous years.

We have to rely on projections at this point since no recent statistical data exists on the exact numbers. The government's database is disaggregated only up to the regional level, leaving out provincial breakdowns.

Admittedly, the Joint Programme's achievement of 500 disadvantaged youth in Masbate trained in technical vocational skills is but a drop in the bucket.

This is no mean feat however considering that in a world of limited resources, programme implementers can only do so much under time and financial constraints.

It suffices that these interventions are able to touch lives and change directions for the better. It has given hope to sustain the aspirations of Masbate's disadvantaged youth.

"We are grateful to the authorities for giving us the opportunity to add to our skills and knowledge. This is something that will be useful to our lives," says Christopher. ☒ Wilbert San Pedro

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