

# TESDA TRAINING CENTRE

Offering Alternative Livelihoods

**“ARTISANAL MINING WAS THE ONLY AVAILABLE SOURCE OF INCOME FOR MOST OF US. AS ONE OF EIGHT SIBLINGS, I HAD TO HELP MY FAMILY FINANCIALLY. ARTISANAL MINING IS NOT FOREVER; IT IS NOT A GOOD LIVELIHOOD.”**



Alex Pusing, aged 22, was among the first graduates of the Shielded Metal Arc Welding course at the “MGP Eight Barangay TESDA Training Centre.” He was an artisanal miner since childhood. Within several weeks of enrolling, Alex was a certified welder. A local company recruited graduates directly from the Centre and Alex is now working in his new trade.

The Centre subscribes to the national competency-based education program through the Technical Education and Skills Development Authority (TESDA). The Centre was developed as part of B2Gold’s Social Development Management Program (SDMP)<sup>18</sup> investments. The training facility is the first of its kind in the town of Aroroy and among the best in the region.

TESDA-based training offers students the opportunity to gain certified competencies designed for easy integration of its trainees into the workplace. The curriculum is modelled on a simulated work environment with condensed training periods to gain the required skills. Within two to three months students can complete basic qualifications, receive certification, and progress to higher certification through continued study.

The idea to develop a vocational training facility, based on the TESDA program, was identified in the early phases of the Masbate Gold Project. Leaders from the neighbouring communities and B2Gold recognized the mismatch of

available skills within the communities to the employment opportunities either at the mine or in other industrial sectors. Given the high level of poverty, the annual SDMP investments targeted projects for health, education and infrastructure before addressing the need for establishing the vocational centre.

Melecio Recto, a former small-scale miner, is one of the community leaders who supported the training centre project. “With the annual inflow of SDMP funding from [the Masbate Mine], an opportunity was presented to allocate a portion to a co-funded project that could finally realize our dream of establishing this centre.”

With the active commitment of barangay officials and with guidance from B2Gold, the TESDA Centre was inaugurated in June 2018. Since opening, 30 students graduated from the welding course. An intake of students in a wide variety of vocational courses (e.g. masonry, plumbing, carpentry, driving, and food and beverage service) is planned for 2019.

The centre is currently managed by a board of directors headed by Melecio: “I saw the need to break away from artisanal mining [and dependency on farming]. This centre will provide life-long alternative opportunities for our people to realize an income. Because of their training, our graduates can start small businesses, secure jobs, or start associations that will help kick-start the socio-economic development of our communities.”

<sup>18</sup> SDMP is an obligatory investment requirement by mining companies in the Philippines to contribute to social development management programs within host communities.