

Youth
Can!



YouthCan!

Facts and
Figures 2023

Partnering for opportunities
that work



SOS CHILDREN'S
VILLAGES

Contents

Foreword	4
Executive summary	8
A tailored approach to support local needs	14
A gamechanger in young people's lives	20
The power of partnerships	28

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This report has been produced in collaboration with young members of the YouthCan! Youth Advisory Board, who helped us gain insights into the data and shape key messages.

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Foreword

Alin Pădurean, 20 years old

YouthCan! participant from Romania and Youth Advisory Board member (2023-2024)

I joined this programme in 2022, out of curiosity and desire to develop new skills.

My first experience was with the YouthCan! camp, a multiple-day activity where we learned new employability skills through non-formal education (efficient management of finances, how to open a company, assertive communication, or how to build a good CV). As part of it, we visited the AkzoNobel factory in Bucharest for the first time, where we learned about the paint industry and net and gross wages.

After this, I wanted to get a lot more involved, so I became a YouthCan! Youth Advisory Board member together with my colleague, Alexandra. In this group of 10 young people from 5 countries, we work with YouthCan! Coordinators on global and local level to help them understand young people's needs and propose activities to support them. Later in 2023, I got to share my participant experience at the YouthCan! Global Conference in Bonn, Germany, and meet the other Youth Advisory Board members. It was my first time engaging with people in a different language, so I was very shy, but I learned so much!

After visiting a Youth Hub in Germany, I initiated the creation of such spaces in my country, where young people can spend their free time and learn many things during thematic workshops. I feel proud that I managed to bring an innovative idea from my participation at the global conference to SOS Children's Villages Romania.



"I learned how to step out of my comfort zone and into the learning zone."

Later that year, I joined again the YouthCan! camp in Romania – this time as a facilitator – and asked for the theme to be mental health in the workplace, which is a challenge in the labour market. Adapting to the theme, AkzoNobel hosted a workshop about our rights as employees and we did art therapy. It was a beautiful experience, and I learned a lot – like how to step out of my comfort zone and into the learning zone.

I would recommend this programme to all young people, because it allows us to explore this concept of finding an ideal job and setting SMART goals, as well as discover our abilities, and develop new skills. YouthCan! helps us a lot in this regard.

Giovana Catarina de Almeida Borba, YouthCan! Volunteer

Internal Communication and Social Responsibility Analyst for Latin America, TK Elevator Brazil

My journey with YouthCan! began at the end of 2018, when I started working at TK Elevator and got involved in the Social Responsibility area. In December of that year, I participated in the project kick-off in Uruguay, which marked the start of a deeply rewarding experience. Over the years, I have seen the significant impact of volunteer work on the lives of everyone involved, and this keeps me motivated to continue.

In my role, I have been responsible for organizing the company's voluntary work in Brazil. This includes a range of activities such as training volunteers, developing communication materials, supporting the creation of training content. Additionally, I provide support for projects in Colombia and Uruguay.

One of the most fulfilling aspects of my volunteer work is making a tangible difference in the lives of young people. I remember vividly what it feels like to prepare for adult life and strive to offer guidance on the importance of education, self-awareness, and perseverance. The young people, often living in vulnerable circumstances, are incredibly intelligent, dedicated, and eager to become independent and help others. Their potential simply needs the right opportunities and guidance to flourish.

During activities, we hear about the stories and dreams of young people. These conversations are inspiring, highlighting strength, courage, and overcoming challenges.



"We learn to listen and support young people's plans, dream together, and present opportunities for them to achieve those dreams."

Reflecting on my time with YouthCan!, I feel immense pride in being part of a company that cares about its social impact and collaborates with organizations like SOS Children's Villages. I often encourage colleagues to join the volunteering programme, highlighting the opportunity to meet new people, learn about different realities, and support young people at such a crucial moment in their lives.

I strongly recommend this initiative to other companies, as it fosters the development of employees in areas such as communication, project management, and engagement. Besides, children and young people are the future. It is our societal responsibility to ensure they grow and develop in a safe, healthy, and fair environment.



About YouthCan!

Entering the world of work and becoming self-reliant is particularly tough for young people from vulnerable families or those leaving alternative care (at age 18 or earlier). They often face mental health challenges, skill shortages, and limited social networks, increasing their risk of social exclusion, homelessness, precarious jobs, and poverty. That's where the global YouthCan! programme steps in!

In a joint effort between SOS Children's Villages and partners from the private and public sector, young people globally are connected with professional role models who share their time, skills and own career stories. Those role models can be corporate volunteers or expert trainers, and provide employability and entrepreneurship training, mentorship, or accompaniment during first work experiences.

They connect through individual and group sessions, either in-person or online, supported by the YouthLinks Community - our safe digital platform that breaks down geographical barriers and enables global collaborative learning.

Executive summary

Worldwide, 289 million young people are neither in education, employment or training, with young women twice as likely as young men to be in this situation. That accounts for 23.5% of young people aged 15-24.¹ These figures highlight the urgent global challenge of youth unemployment and underemployment. In response, the SOS Children's Villages YouthCan! programme continues to provide essential support and opportunities for young people, particularly those without adequate parental care, to transition successfully into the world of work and achieve self-reliance.

Key results in 2023

60% of YouthCan! participants came from vulnerable communities, an increase from 42% in 2022. This growth aligns with the YouthCan! programme strategy to extend impact beyond individual participants to their families and local communities. Besides an increase in reach, the perception of the programme has also improved. Young people from vulnerable communities expressed a higher satisfaction with the programme, as they often have limited access to opportunities such as those offered through YouthCan!. Furthermore, young people in SOS Children's Villages' alternative care programmes welcome this growth and see the benefits for themselves. Engaging with community participants in YouthCan! widens their perspective, strengthens community connections, and ultimately facilitates a smoother transition once they leave care.

Our 2023 data shows that the longer young people participate in YouthCan!, the more empowered and prepared they are to transition into self-reliance. Participants engaged in YouthCan! for over a year have significantly higher motivation and confidence and report more positively on the programme's role in helping them find employment. Those involved for three years show better outcomes in possessing the necessary professional and life skills to succeed, as well as having a clear plan for their future. Furthermore, participants aged 22 and older are more likely to secure employment, underscoring the importance of multi-year engagement.

Steadily, the digitalization of the programme is advancing. In 2023, 38 out of 50 YouthCan! countries unlocked access to digital mentorship and training through the YouthLinks Community. Impressively, the number of registered users on our central digital platform almost tripled, rising from 1,264 in 2022 to 3,618 in 2023.

While YouthCan! proves that positive change is possible, youth unemployment remains a global challenge that requires collective effort. In 2024, we are initiating a stakeholder-inclusive process to evaluate and refine our current strategy. This evaluation aims to enhance YouthCan!'s impact by leveraging our biggest strengths: an evidence-based approach with youth participation at the center, and a unique partnership model, involving local and global companies, institutional partners and NGOs. Only by working together we can ensure that young people are well-prepared for the rapidly changing world of work and the local realities they face.

17,800

direct programme participants - young people without parental care or at risk of losing it

53,400

indirect beneficiaries, including young people's families or peers in alternative care settings²

¹ International Labour Organization, ILOSTAT, 13 March 2023

² Calculated according to the United Nations' Department of Economic and Social Affairs method, considering the global average of 4 members per household



in 2023

It works for **young people**

...and **volunteers**

17,800

reached, develop

confidence, skills and networks

1,758

engaged, share

time, knowledge and encouragement

86%

feel positive

and have a plan for the future

27%

(self)-employed

in the same year

94%

develop skills

they use in daily tasks

90% feel

more satisfied

with their job

Safe programme digitalization

50

countries

engaged in YouthCan!

38



unlocking access

to YouthLinks Community

4,675

young people

engaged in digital activities

In 2023, we made considerable progress on the YouthCan! priority areas for 2021-2024, which were defined in consultation with our stakeholders.

Increase YouthCan! participants

25% growth, driven by an increase in communities

Safe programme digitalization

2 X more users on YouthLinks Community

Strengthen programme quality

3.5 X more countries offer entrepreneurship support

Multi-sector partnerships

50% more local partners, 282 partners worldwide

Global reach:

a worldwide network with a local response

17,800 young people and
1,758 volunteers shaped YouthCan!
in **50** countries

Europe and
Middle East

7%
YouthCan!
participants

Azerbaijan
Belarus
Bulgaria
Jordan
Lebanon
North Macedonia
Palestine
Romania
Serbia

Asia

22%
YouthCan!
participants

Bangladesh
India
Indonesia
Philippines
Sri Lanka
Thailand
Vietnam

Western and
Central Africa

7%
YouthCan!
participants

Benin
Burkina Faso
Cabo Verde
Cote d'Ivoire
Morocco
Senegal
Sierra Leone
★ The Gambia
★ Togo

Latin America and
the Caribbean

22%
YouthCan!
participants

Argentina
Bolivia
Brazil
Colombia
Costa Rica
Dominican Republic
Ecuador
Honduras
Peru
Uruguay
El Salvador
Guatemala
Mexico

Eastern and
Southern Africa

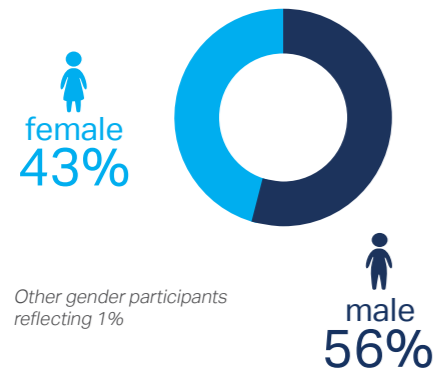
42%
YouthCan!
participants

Ghana
Kenya
Madagascar
Namibia
Nigeria
Rwanda
South Africa
Tanzania
Uganda
★ Ethiopia
★ Lesotho

Note: Countries in dark blue joined the YouthCan! programme in 2023.

At the heart: young people...

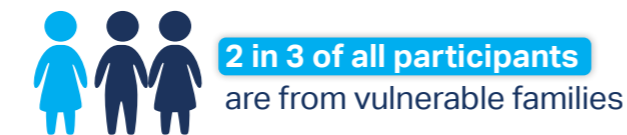
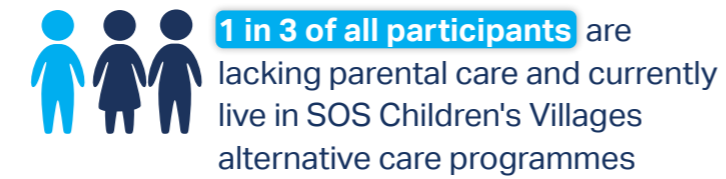
Gender



Average age range*



Family situation



Education*



6% completed primary education



51% completed secondary education



11% completed post-secondary technical training



32% completed university education

“ Young people's opinions are so important to develop YouthCan!. We can come up with some bright ideas and no one knows what youth need most, except us. ” - YouthCan! participant, Morocco

* Data from youth survey conducted in 2023, in which 4329 young people from 46 countries provided their feedback

... and volunteers

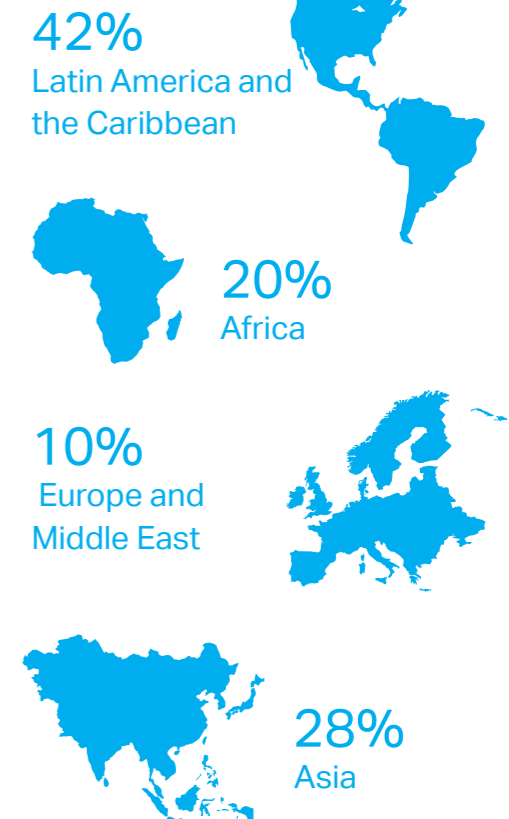
Gender*



Employer



Origin



Duration of engagement*



39% are engaged for **more than 2 years**

“ Young people on the edge of leaving care should be our primary focus, since they are about to get exposed to the world. I was lucky enough to support someone by finding a job in the field that he was very much interested in. ” - YouthCan! volunteer, DHL Group Sri Lanka

* Data from volunteer survey conducted in 2023, in which 503 volunteers from 42 countries provided their feedback



A tailored approach to support local needs

Through YouthCan! we offer a diverse range of interventions that address the various individual needs of young people.

The programme adapts to local needs and combines key elements which support the journey toward self-reliance: mentorship to boost self-confidence and build professional networks, training in life and technical skills, and practical work experiences. Using digital tools such as YouthLinks Community enhances the programme outcomes - young people can build connections beyond borders, extend their networks and practice self-learning.

To tailor YouthCan! to local needs, we design activities together with young people and partners and seek their engagement in each of the countries where YouthCan! is active. By doing so, we ensure that the programme stays relevant to emerging trends and local labour market demands. Besides, this fosters innovation and creative solutions to meet young people's needs.

In Romania, the YouthCan! Camp integrated mentorship and training, focusing on the links between mental health, employability, and entrepreneurship, in an effort sustained by AkzoNobel and TK Elevator. Meanwhile, in Benin, where local jobs were scarce, the programme equipped young people with digital and technical skills to pursue freelance or remote work opportunities, through a partnership with Learnio and DHL Group.

Digital innovation: enhancing reach, quality and safeguarding

YouthLinks Community is our digital platform that provides young people access to online learning, networking and participation opportunities. In YouthCan!, the platform is key to deliver activities like mentoring or training, ensure a safe volunteer-to-young person communication channel and provide a self-learning hub for personal and professional development.

At YouthLinks Community, we engage directly with young people to tailor our offerings to their needs. In 2023, we conducted a global safeguarding review of our digital platform, leading to the implementation of targeted interventions strengthening the aspect of safe digitalization. Furthermore, through interactive posts and surveys, we gather information about young people's learning desires and respond to them with activities that are of interest and entertaining.

As one example, young people can actively participate in awareness raising campaigns through the digital platform. A notable experience was the campaign on Employability and Entrepreneurship, co-designed with members of the YouthCan! Youth Advisory Board. Young people had to solve diverse challenges and the winners were matched with mentors from among YouthCan!'s corporate partners. Thanks to the campaign, 71% of the young people felt that their knowledge of the topic has increased.

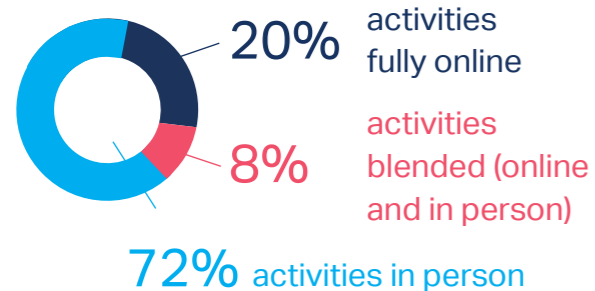
Looking ahead, we aim to increase the reach of the digital platform and offer more skills and job readiness opportunities through the YouthLinks Community. It is vital that more volunteers and partners join us on our digital platform, allowing young people to connect with them virtually and beyond geographical limitations.

Online activities



26% young people participated in activities delivered online

... and delivery



Platform engagement



59% engagement boost during 2 virtual campaigns on YouthLinks Community

... and usage



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Road to (self)-employment

In 2023, YouthCan! continued its commitment to supporting young people on their employability and entrepreneurship journeys through different interventions.

With a comprehensive approach built on three main pillars—mentor, train, and practice—YouthCan! aims to respond directly to the young people's needs. In 2023, they expressed a clear demand for more mentorship, hands-on work experience, and enhanced networking opportunities. Building up on these needs, the YouthCan! Youth Advisory Board emphasized the importance of individualizing such activities, where volunteers could provide essential guidance and professional connections, helping to bridge the gap between theoretical knowledge and real-world practice. Recognizing the profound impact of personal guidance, the programme increased its individualized mentorship activities to 12%, a move based on proven effectiveness of mentoring in leading young people to employment.

YouthCan! activities by pillar

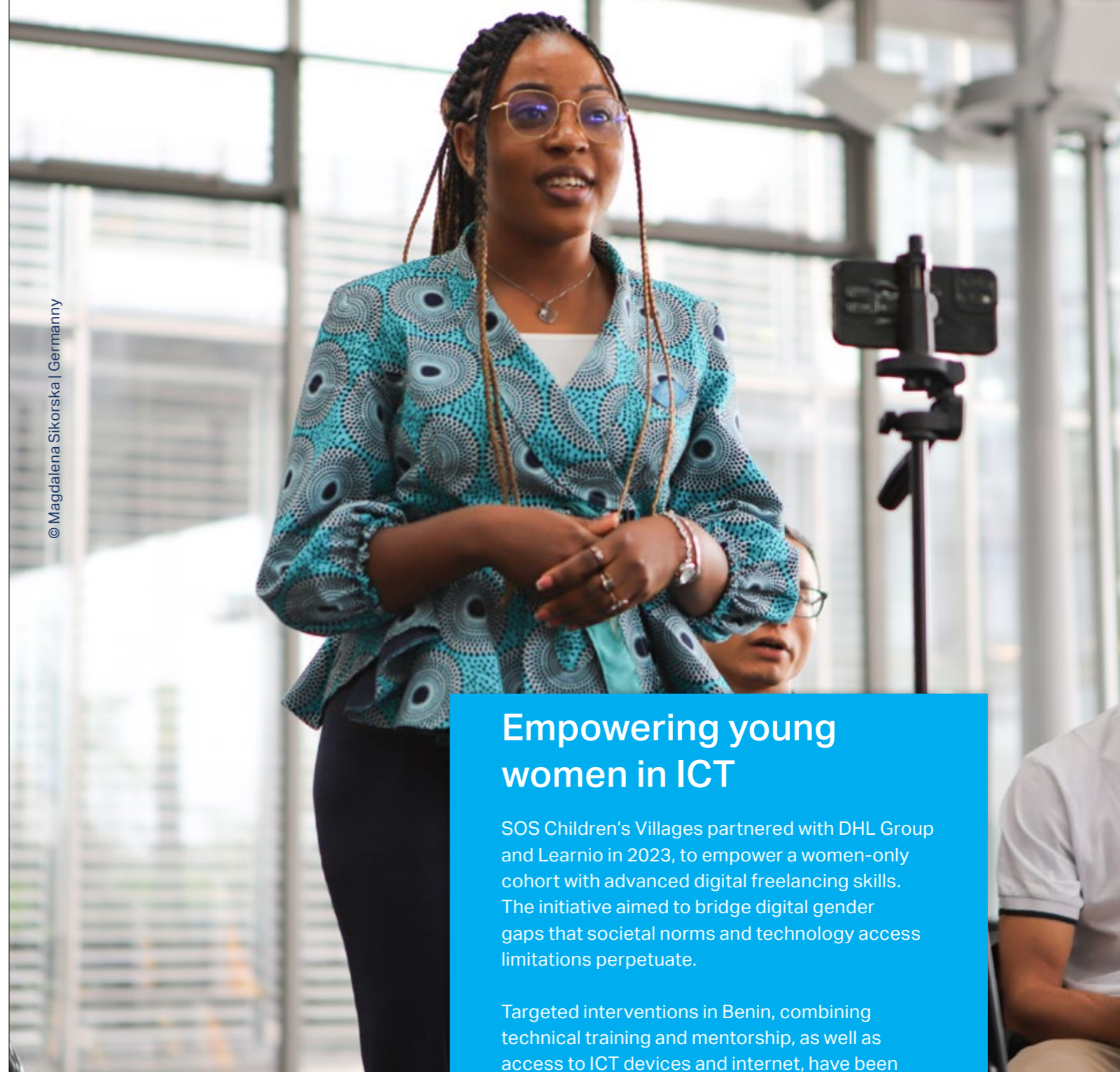


Parallely, YouthCan! has deepened focus on entrepreneurship, building up on past successful experiences. Intensive entrepreneurship training activities, which saw a participation of 2,711 young people, have not only inspired them to become job creators, but also equipped them with essential entrepreneurship skills. Nevertheless, young women in YouthCan!, have less opportunities to start a business or to get a job, despite having equal access to activities and showing high confidence in their abilities to succeed. In 2023, 44% of newly employed and 39% of entrepreneurs were young women.

Deepened focus on entrepreneurship



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Empowering young women in ICT

SOS Children's Villages partnered with DHL Group and Learnio in 2023, to empower a women-only cohort with advanced digital freelancing skills. The initiative aimed to bridge digital gender gaps that societal norms and technology access limitations perpetuate.

Targeted interventions in Benin, combining technical training and mentorship, as well as access to ICT devices and internet, have been particularly effective. We have seen very high graduation rates of over 90%, compared to industry average of 15%. Additionally, 28% of the young women trained managed to already transition into part-time or full-time employment by the time they concluded the programme.

We must recognize that gender imbalances are influenced by broader societal conditions. However, we can actively work together to empower young women and extend our impact beyond YouthCan!, advocating for systemic changes.

A game-changer in young people's life

In 2023, YouthCan! demonstrated its success in fostering self-reliance among young participants, with 1,533 securing employment and 1,323 starting their own businesses³. The programme particularly excelled with older participants, those aged 22 and older being more likely to achieve employment or self-employment⁴.

Additionally, 60% of participants were from vulnerable communities, an increase aligned with the YouthCan! programme strategy to extend impact beyond individual participants to their families and local communities. As such, indirectly, the programme touched the lives of 53,400 beneficiaries⁵, including young people's families or peers in alternative care settings.

Furthermore, young people in SOS Children's Villages' alternative care programmes welcome this growth and see the benefits for themselves. Engaging with community participants in YouthCan! widens their perspective, strengthens community connections, and ultimately facilitates a smoother transition once they leave care.

³ Results achieved within the same year, out of 17,800 young people participating in YouthCan!
⁴ Data from youth survey conducted in 2023, in which 4329 young people from 46 countries provided their feedback
⁵ Calculated according to the United Nations' Department of Economic and Social Affairs method, considering the global average of 4 members per household

Becoming self-reliant

Personal story

A virtual training session, a visit to the company, an interview with area managers and finally, a three-month internship at Siegwerk – this is how Maribel remembers her introduction to the labor market in 2023. Her proactive nature and ability to thrive in a positive work environment were key factors leading to her securing a permanent position in reception and administrative support in Siegwerk's Guatemala office.

From school to work

Earlier into this story, if one could imagine teenager Maribel, one would see a young leader engaging with peers in alternative care programmes, accompanied by the SOS Children's Villages Guatemala. Youth participation significantly shaped her character and sharpened her leadership and communication skills.

At 21 years old, Maribel transitioned into semi-independent living - a service designed to support young adults when moving from alternative care towards independence and community integration. Here, she received comprehensive support, including economic assistance, access to digital devices, and the opportunity to enroll in university. She earned a degree in psychology and language therapy, motivated by her desire to support vulnerable children.

Her academic journey was complemented by joining the YouthCan! programme in 2021, where she engaged in mentorship and training with the DHL Group. Her mentor's guidance was invaluable, especially because it boosted her confidence and provided practical tips for job interviews. This experience culminated in an internship with Siegwerk Guatemala, and played a crucial role in her personal and professional development.

Community integration

Moving to Guatemala City for her job was a big step for Maribel. This not only meant gaining financial stability, but also moving in with her sister and strengthening deeper family bonds. Now, fully immersed in her role at Siegwerk, she cherishes every aspect of her job and appreciates the support from her colleagues. If one could imagine the future for Maribel, one would see a mentor and role-model, leveraging her psycho-social expertise to support children and young people in vulnerable communities.



“ It is important that others continue to receive this support. We grow up in a bubble, and when we go out into the real world it is a little difficult. ”

- Maribel, YouthCan! Participant, Guatemala



YouthCan! in Guatemala

A multi-dimensional approach

SOS Children's Villages Guatemala had been implementing YouthCan! since 2020 with support from 10 global and local partners, including the local counterparts of DHL Group and Siegwerk.

When working with young people, 'it is very important to let them know they are the protagonists. Give them the confidence they need, and the emotional support to overcome trauma', says Omar Duque, YouthCan! Coordinator. Besides building confidence and resilience, he adds that a successful intervention develops skills but culminates with practice.

Last year, 25% of activities were practical, including job shadowing and internships with DHL Group and Siegwerk, while considering equal participation for young men and women (48% and 52% respectively).

YouthCan! works

Results for young people

In 2023, YouthCan! demonstrated its success in fostering motivation, self-confidence, and self-reliance among young participants. Notably, 38% of those over 22 years old achieved employment or self-employment within the same year of participating in YouthCan!⁶.

In fact, 89% would recommend the experience to their friends and 87% would take part in YouthCan! again. This aligns with the programme's approach of guiding young people from market exposure to practicing skills, over years of engagement.



Inspiration and self-confidence

86%

positive about the future and have a plan for their next steps in life

80%

motivated and confident in their ability to find a job

73%*

motivated and confident to start a business



Employability and entrepreneurship

83%

feel they have gained skills to succeed in life

79%

are able to interact professionally in a work environment

66%*

developed the skills to start a business



Self-reliance (in less than 12 months)

69%

agree that YouthCan! helped directly or indirectly to find work

27%

(of all ages) started a job or a business since joining YouthCan!

38%

(aged 22 years old) started a job or a business since joining YouthCan!

“ I learned about etiquette at the workplace, communication, and writing professional e-mails. I have a good collaboration with my co-workers and leaders thanks to my mentor. ”

- YouthCan! Participant, Rwanda, reflecting on the online mentoring experience on YouthLinks Community

© Donatien | Madagascar



⁶ Data from youth survey conducted in 2023, in which 4329 young people from 46 countries provided their feedback
* Young people who participated in entrepreneurship activities

YouthCan! works

Results for volunteers

Year after year, YouthCan! not only transforms the lives of young people, but also profoundly impacts the volunteers involved in the programme. Engagement in the programme fosters personal development, enhances company culture, and contributes positively at a societal level. With 94% of volunteers eager to participate again, the enduring appeal of YouthCan! highlights its significant, multifaceted benefits.



Strengthened skills

86%

improved relevant skills (eg. presenting; teamwork; leadership and communication)

94%

use the skills gained in their daily work

84%

increased interaction and collaboration at work



Job satisfaction and commitment

91%

improved job satisfaction and feel prouder to work for their company

89%

feel more committed to their companies

95%

would recommend YouthCan! to other colleagues



Social responsibility

93%

report an increased level of awareness towards the challenges faced by young people

94%

would encourage companies to collaborate with young people from vulnerable backgrounds

94%

feel they have made a positive contribution to individuals and communities

“ Participating in YouthCan! has been such a wonderful experience. Using my knowledge, learnings, and job-seeking experience, to make someone else’s journey easier or better, just added to it. Patience and empathy, something I lacked, have been a huge learning here. I’m proud of my team and grateful for being able to contribute to the empowerment of young minds. ”
 - Shrija Banerjee, YouthCan! Volunteer, Siemens AG



© TK Elevator | Thailand



The power of partnerships

Confronting the pervasive challenge of youth unemployment requires collective action and collaboration across sectors. YouthCan! embodies this approach by actively involving a diverse network of partners, including companies, institutions, and NGOs, in shaping our programme.

In 2023, YouthCan! successfully collaborated with 282 partners and 1,758 volunteers, leveraging their unique expertise and focus. We have seen a significant increase in the number of partnerships, largely driven by an increase of 50% in local corporate partners. This growth of local partnerships not only enhances our programme's relevance to local labour markets but also boosts our financial sustainability and ensures local ownership.

Through these strategic partnerships, YouthCan! not only supports our partners in achieving their sustainability goals but also significantly contributes to the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals.

By uniting various stakeholders, sharing responsibilities, and working together towards meaningful results, we jointly empower young people to become their strongest selves.

1,758
volunteers

282
partnerships

Stronger together

“Transforming lives is at the heart of AkzoNobel's Let's Colour initiative. We've partnered with SOS Children's Villages to tackle youth unemployment through education and renovation. Our painter academies, soft skills trainings, entrepreneurship programmes, mentoring, and traineeships empower young people with new skills and support their journey to self-reliance. What began as a pilot in four countries in 2016 has now grown into a solid partnership covering 25 countries.

I believe that it is becoming increasingly important for companies and brands to focus more on social responsibility and how they can give back to society. Being a YouthCan! partner offers a great opportunity to help young people and their communities, build employee pride, strengthen your company's reputation, and attract customers.

So, I would like to encourage other companies to join the YouthCan! journey, enabling young people to find decent, stable employment and make a positive change in their lives.”

- Stephanie Kraneveld, Global Marketing Manager CSR at AkzoNobel

Globally, five partners take an active role in shaping and supporting YouthCan!

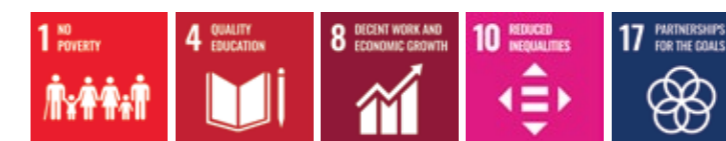


Furthermore, YouthCan! has been supported by:



© SOS Children's Villages and AkzoNobel | Indonesia

YouthCan! contributes to the Sustainable Development Goals:



Learn more about international corporate partnerships
www.sos-childrensvillages.org/our-international-corporate-partners





**SOS CHILDREN'S
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