

YouthCan!

Partnering for opportunities that work

YouthCan! is a global initiative that supports young people who have lost parental care or are at risk of losing it, on their journey to decent work and independent life. Through YouthCan! we aim to empower these young people, supporting them to strengthen their employability skills and thereby increase their chances of finding employment. By providing individualised training, job shadowing opportunities, internships and mentoring, we offer participants the opportunity to develop the skills and knowledge they need to enter and succeed in the labour market. As a result, the young programme participants have a smoother and more successful transition from school to decent work and an independent life. In this joint effort between SOS Children's Villages and reputable partners from the private sector, we develop programmes and activities where partners engage their employees to share their time, skills, expertise and own career stories, both online and offline, in an impactful manner. The employees plan workshops, facilitate exposure to professional environments and act as mentors for the young people. Employees and young people can connect face to face or through our digital platform, enabling worldwide collaborative learning and breaking down societal and geographical barriers.

Who are we helping?

Worldwide, 267 million young people are neither in education, employment or training. That accounts for 22% of young people aged 14-25. In this context, **young people without adequate parental care are particularly disadvantaged throughout the process of searching for employment, as they lack the support networks that families often provide to guide those first steps from school into the working world.** For these young people, transitioning to independence without support networks or resources increases their risks of poverty and marginalization. Finding a job becomes even more essential, as they lack the safety net provided to those children growing up with family support and economic security.]

YouthCan! follows the successful GoTeach global partnership model of SOS Children's Villages - Deutsche Post DHL Group and aims to:

- Create direct opportunities for young people, empowering them through training, mentorship and work experience, to better transition into stable employment;
- Build an action-centred practitioners network of existing and new corporate partners, to visibly increase the measurable impact of corporate partnerships on youth unemployment and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs);
- Create evidence-based research that can be shared to improve youth employability practices on national and global level;
- Inspire and invite other global and local actors to replicate the model.

Description of the programme

Young people without adequate parental care need mentoring, work experience, employability skills training, as well as confidence and self-esteem to be able to compete effectively on the labor market. The aim of the YouthCan! initiative is to meet those needs with a unique and individualized approach. **With its network of corporate partners from different areas of the private sector, YouthCan! is able to support young people's diverse pathways to employment: with tailor-made skills training programmes, job shadowing opportunities, internships and one-on-one mentoring relationships** with corporate staff members. Corporate knowledge and infrastructure provide an ideal environment for the young people to gain relevant skills and access to networks. YouthCan! also offers a worldwide scalable digital platform (YouthLinks), where young people can connect online with their mentors and trainers. This innovative approach allows a cross-border collaborative learning, while also reaching remote communities where face-to-face mentorship opportunities are not available.

YouthCan! is active in 29 countries: Argentina, Armenia, Belarus, Benin, Bolivia, Brazil, Cape Verde, Colombia, Costa Rica, Honduras, India, Indonesia, Jordan, Lebanon, Madagascar, Morocco, Nigeria, Palestine, Peru, Russia, Rwanda, Serbia, South Africa, Sri Lanka, Thailand, Uganda, Ukraine Uruguay, Vietnam.

Three programme pillars

Mentoring: With the support of SOS youth care experts, programme participants discuss and design their individual pathways to employability, considering their individual situation, interests and skills. In regular follow-up sessions, they refine their plans and can explore ways to sustain high motivation and handle challenging situations. In addition, employees of the private sector partners mentor the young people throughout and beyond their internships.

Training: Different professional and life skills trainings, supported by skilled volunteers, help strengthen employability skills and boost young people's confidence as they enter the professional world.

Practice: Private sector partners take on a key role in offering opportunities for young people to gain first work experience, through internships and job shadowing, accompanied by corporate mentors.

Everyone benefits

With YouthCan!, multinational, national and local businesses are making a measurable impact not only in the lives of young people coming from disadvantaged backgrounds, but also in the lives of their own employees. YouthCan! presents an opportunity for the volunteers to contribute

to society and at the same time enhance their professional and personal development. Conclusions from project evaluation show that the programme helps corporate volunteers develop higher sensitivity and better understanding toward marginalized young people. In addition, they also develop new skills and knowledge which they are able to use in their own work, resulting in higher employee engagement overall. Through YouthCan!, our corporate partners are able to reinforce their Corporate Social Responsibility and become direct actors, contributing to the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals.

Partners: AkzoNobel, Allianz SE, Deutsche Post DHL Group, Johnson&Johnson Corporate Citizenship Trust, Siegwark Druckfarben AG&Co., Thyssenkrupp Elevator AG, as well as over 220 local and national private sector partners in the participating countries *data from March 2020.

Strong local rooting

Supported by the global YouthCan! team, SOS Children's Villages local member associations select, prepare and accompany the young programme participants according to their individual needs, train and prepare the volunteers, build and maintain the relationship to the participating companies, ensure that global quality and safeguarding standards are met, and monitor and evaluate the programme. The YouthCan! Programme is connected to SOS Children's Villages' long-lasting experience in providing and supporting quality child and youth care in the participating countries. To ensure the programmes are tailored to the local context of each country, all YouthCan! programmes are locally developed and managed by the national SOS Children's Villages team. Young people participate in the programme design and inform the regular programme reviews. Local branches of the global partners, as well as local private sector partners, are key stakeholders in the programme planning, to ensure alignment with the local labour market and an employer-led approach.

Digital Platform

In the frame of this project, SOS Children's Villages also offers YouthLinks, a digital platform through which young people and mentors can connect, share materials, create networks and support each other. Based on Facebook Workplace, this tool helps us reach young people from remote communities, while breaking geographical and time barriers. The corporate partners will be able to digitally connect with the young people, supporting them online via chat, videoconferencing, online calls, and sharing materials to better prepare them for the job market.

How can you contribute to YouthCan!

- Giving your employees the opportunity to take an active part in the initiative through volunteering opportunities and time.
- Facilitating mentors and guides for the young people in our programmes, providing expertise and core competence;
- Becoming part of formulating the global initiative YouthCan! and its way forward.
- Providing resources to the programme in the form of:
- Volunteers'/ employees' time, sharing of opportunities for apprenticeships, workplace exposure to youth;
- Financial resources for the management of the platform, enabling it to grow and reach more young people in more countries;
- Connecting and giving access to networks of individuals and other organizations to increase the visibility of YouthCan!;
- Giving SOS programmes an insight into the labour market in the country, so we can ensure that our initiatives stay relevant, be it on blue or white collar level;
- Contribute with different experience on CSR practices;
- Provide career opportunities for youth involved in the programmes, matching the needs of the youth and capabilities of the corporates in the countries.

In a nutshell, our corporate partners lend us their employees for a variety of activities to support the young people in our programmes, while evidently and measurably contributing to the SDGs. The activities are jointly developed by our local counterparts to ensure accuracy and relevance for the current labour market trends. Tools for joint planning and recommendations for successful activities will be shared.