



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 (self)employment. By providing **individualised training, job shadowing opportunities, internships and mentoring**, we offer them the opportunity to develop the skills and knowledge they need to enter and succeed in the labour market. As a result, the young people 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. The volunteers 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 a digital platform – YouthLinks Community, enabling worldwide collaborative learning and breaking down societal and geographical barriers.

Who are we helping?

Worldwide, 273 million young people are neither in education, employment or training. That accounts for 22,4% of young people aged 14-25 (International Labour Organization, 2020)¹. 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.

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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 volunteers. Corporate knowledge and infrastructure provide an ideal environment for young people to gain relevant skills and access to networks. YouthCan! also offers a digital platform, the YouthLinks Community, where young people can connect online with their mentors and trainers. This innovative approach allows a

YouthCan! is active in 42 countries:

Argentina, Armenia, Belarus, Benin, Bolivia, Brazil, Bulgaria, Cape Verde, Colombia, Costa Rica, Cote d'Ivoire, Ecuador, El Salvador, Ghana, Guatemala, Honduras, India, Indonesia, Jordan, Lebanon, Madagascar, Mexico, Morocco, Namibia, Nigeria, North Macedonia, Palestine, Peru, Philippines, Poland, Romania, Russia, Rwanda, Senegal, Serbia, Sierra Leone, South Africa, Sri Lanka, Thailand, Uganda, Ukraine, Uruguay, Vietnam.

¹ [Global Employment Trends for Youth 2020. Technology and the future jobs \(2020\)](#), International Labour Organization



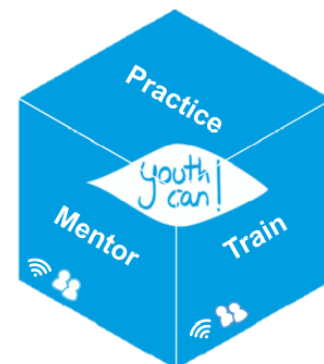
cross-border collaborative learning, while also reaching remote communities where face-to-face opportunities are not available.

Three programme pillars

Mentoring: Mentorship in YouthCan! enables young people to build relationships with the skilled, qualified and motivated employees of partners, who share their knowledge, provide guidance and act as role models to the young people.

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 on the lives of young people coming from disadvantaged backgrounds, but also on the lives of their own employees. YouthCan! presents an opportunity for 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!, 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, Deutsche Post DHL Group, Johnson&Johnson, Siegwark Druckfarben AG&Co., TK Elevator, as well as **over 230 national partners** in the participating countries.

Strong local rooting

Supported by the global YouthCan! team, SOS Children's Villages local member associations select, prepare and accompany young people according to their individual needs, train and prepare 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 **national partners**, are key stakeholders in the programme planning, to ensure alignment with the local labour market and an employer-led approach.

Youth participation

The best interest of children and young people is at the heart of SOS Children's Villages' work. From an early age, regular individual development sessions engage young people in planning their own future, including the education and training they need. This provides a holistic overview of what young people in



SOS programmes need in order to become their strongest selves, which is then used to inform YouthCan! programme planning. During implementation on local level, **youth needs assessments** and **feedback surveys** are used to regularly inform the project direction and help shape the trainings.

With the aim of strengthening youth participation, the **YouthCan! Youth Advisory Board** was launched in 2021. 10 young people from 5 countries represent the voices of all young people in YouthCan! And contribute to improving programme quality through regular consultations and feedback.

Safe Digitization through YouthLinks

The world is turning more and more digital – and so are the demands for young people to succeed professionally. Based on this need expressed by young people, **YouthLinks, the digital pillar of YouthCan!**, was established: through a safe digital platform, young people and volunteers can connect in dedicated spaces, share and access materials through a central content library, create networks and leverage on peer-to-peer support. YouthLinks has played a particularly important role during the **COVID-19 pandemic**. Mentorship and training opportunities were offered online instead of in-person. This not only allowed young people to have continued access to training, mentoring, personal and professional networks, but even enabled YouthCan! to expand. YouthLinks will play a crucial role for further scaling YouthCan!, reaching even more young people throughout the future.

Summary of results

— Since implementation in 2017:



rolled out in **42 countries**



supported by a **network of over 230 partners**

(NGOs, corporations, government authorities etc.)



five global partners



Almost **1,500 corporate volunteers** engaged in YouthCan! during 2020 only (data collection March 2021).



68 % of participants benefited from digital learning and online mentoring through **Youth Links**.

In 2020 YouthCan! Reached **6,500 young people** (data collection March 2021)



**Read more in our [YouthCan! 2020 Facts&Figures Report](#)*

Potential for scalability

YouthCan! started as an initiative with one global partner in 2011– the [GoTeach](#) programme of SOS Children's Villages and Deutsche Post DHL Group. Due to the great success of the initiative, the programme was expanded and re-launched as YouthCan! in 2017. Since then, five global corporate partners have joined and over 230 national partners are part of the initiative. To date (March 2021), YouthCan! is active in 42 countries, with new countries planned to join in 2022.

As **SOS Children's Villages is present in 135 countries and territories** around the world, there is potential for a scale-up of the initiative to take place. The **YouthLinks digital platform** allows scalability to locations where mentors are not physically available, meaning that young people in remote areas can also be reached. Further, the programme can be scaled up through other social development organisations, to provide corporates with a social partner who works with young people, ensure their preparedness and ongoing individual planning, and other support.