



youth
can!

YouthCan!

Facts and
Figures 2024

Partnering for opportunities
that work



SOS CHILDREN'S
VILLAGES

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Foreword

Paloma de Souza, 23 years old

**YouthCan! participant from
Brazil and YouthCan! Youth
Council member (2023-2024)**

I was introduced to SOS Children's Villages when I was looking for a psychologist for free. That was in my last year of school, when I was very insecure about my college choices and the costs.

By joining YouthCan!, I became more confident to build my future. I used to go twice a week to the 'Opportunity House' youth center in São Paulo, where I joined activities about self-confidence, the job market or photography. But the biggest highlight was to have a mentor, who taught me everything to start my own business as an English teacher - how to structure the contract, the prices, about pedagogy in general. This engagement had a huge impact on my life to this day. Becoming an entrepreneur when I was 17 years old, showed me a first view of how independence works and how to manage my own money.

When it comes to youth participation, it's mandatory that young people contribute to YouthCan! - nothing about us, without us! Youth have valuable points of view and creativity to work on solutions. Organizations and companies working together on YouthCan! will not be able to say what young people need if they don't ask them. These youth consultations lead to more assertive actions, a better spent budget and great feedback from youth. Everyone wins.

I'm very proud to have been part of the YouthCan! Youth Council in the past 2 years. Together with youth coordinators, we worked hard to achieve our main focus: having a National Youth Council in Brazil.



"Becoming an entrepreneur when I was 17 years old, showed me a first view of how independence works and how to manage my own money."

In my term, mental health was one of the key topics that youth said was necessary to talk about, so I initiated the YouthCan! Camp: 'Disconnect to reconnect'. It did not only have a great impact on youth, but it also created change in SOS Children's Villages Brazil. I feel proud when I see that now, mental health is becoming a focus area.

Young people face challenges such as low self-esteem, indecision, social and/or family pressure, which lead to mental health struggles. Also, if they don't get guidance on how to manage their salary, it can result in serious financial issues, leading to frustration and the feeling of incapacity - which brings us back to mental health struggles. In the next years, I wish YouthCan! continues to focus more on mental health, entrepreneurship and financial education. These topics and youth independence are strongly connected.

Tussanee Leevongwat, YouthCan! Volunteer

**Head of HR Southeast Asia and
Entity Manager, Siegwert Thailand**

I participated in the YouthCan! programme in 2024 through Siegwert's "Ignite Your Success Occupation Camp" a multi-day activity that gave me the chance to give back to my community in a meaningful way.

I've always believed in the importance of sharing knowledge and experience, and this programme allowed me to support young people as they began shaping their futures. Seeing their energy and curiosity during the YouthCan! Camp in Cha-am reminded me how powerful hands-on learning can be. It made me proud to be part of something that helps young people grow and inspired me to keep supporting them.

From delivering the opening speech to joining small group breakout sessions, I had many opportunities to connect with young people supported by SOS Children's Villages. I shared parts of my professional journey, especially how I navigated challenges when my career path didn't align with what I had studied. During the group activities, I offered guidance and practical advice, and I was happy to support participants as they explored their goals and future opportunities.

Some young people said this programme gave them a clearer goal and more confidence. That made me feel so proud. It reminded me of the importance of being a good role model, not just for them, but for everyone around me. They also taught me to listen better and be more thoughtful. This experience helped me grow as a person, improving my communication and teamwork skills.



"I have always believed in the importance of sharing knowledge and experience, and YouthCan! allowed me to do that."

I saw how much potential these young people have. With the right support, they can truly build their futures. That's what keeps me committed. I'm excited to be part of the YouthCan! programme again in 2025, to see how the young people are doing and to hear what advice they might have for their peers.

I would absolutely recommend this programme to colleagues and other corporate partners. It helps the youth, and it helps us, too, by building teamwork, leadership and a spirit of giving that benefits both the business and our communities. When we open our hearts and help others, it can change lives.



About YouthCan!

Entering the world of work and becoming self-reliant is particularly tough for young people growing up without parental care or at risk of losing it, whose families live in vulnerable circumstances due to economic poverty, weakened social safety nets or other adversities. Many of these young people face mental health challenges and limited opportunities to develop their skills and social networks, which puts them at higher risk of precarious work or unemployment. This, in turn, can cause them to fall into poverty, homelessness and social exclusion. That's what the global YouthCan! programme is here to address.

In a joint effort between SOS Children's Villages and partners from the private, public and civic sector, young people globally connect with professionals who share their time, skills and own career stories.

These professionals can be corporate volunteers or expert trainers, who provide employment and entrepreneurship training, mentoring or support during first work experiences. They connect in 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.

Through an evolving model, YouthCan! continues to work towards creating innovative and inclusive pathways for young people to transition into decent jobs or start their own business.

Expanding horizons

Worldwide, 256 million young people aged 15-24 are not in education, employment or training, with young women twice as likely to be affected. In low-income countries, only 20% of young adult workers aged 25-29 are in a regular paid job.¹ These figures highlight the urgent challenge of youth unemployment and underemployment, which continue to disproportionately affect young people without parental care or at risk of losing it. Rapid global shifts - including digital transformation, the rise of green jobs and youth entrepreneurship - are essential to addressing the challenge. However, barriers like digital divides, gender inequality, mental health challenges, disabilities and limited access to economic opportunities continue to hinder young people's access to decent jobs.

The need for holistic, inclusive solutions has never been greater. YouthCan! stands as a powerful response, offering comprehensive support to young people in vulnerable circumstances, and helping them unlock opportunities for self-reliance.

YouthCan! in 2024

It works for **young people** ...and **volunteers**

23,020
reached, develop
confidence, skills
and networks

87%
feel positive
and have a plan
for the future

22% are
(self-)employed
in the same year

1,941
engaged, share
time, knowledge
and encouragement

87%
improve skills
such as leadership,
teamwork

89% feel
more satisfied
with their job

Entrepreneurship, a rapidly growing pathway within YouthCan!, has now expanded to 39 out of 48 countries, empowering young people to start their own businesses. This growth is central to our mission of fostering lasting socio-economic change to local communities. As the programme expands, young people consistently report feeling more motivated, confident and equipped with the skills to succeed.

YouthCan! strengthened its digital presence, with YouthLinks Community growing to nearly 5,000 members. The digital platform continues to offer a safe space for training, mentoring, and global networking opportunities, further empowering youth worldwide.

These efforts created ripple effects beyond individual participants, **indirectly benefiting an estimated 69,000²**, including young people's peers, caregivers, and broader communities.

By 2024...



We concluded our strategic period 2021-2024, with progress on all core priorities

More YouthCan! participants

56% increase, especially among youth from vulnerable families

Safe programme digitalization

4,821 active users on YouthLinks Community

Stronger programme quality

81% of countries offering entrepreneurship support

Multi-sector partnerships

38% more partners, most of which are local companies

By 2030...

We will be guided by the following priority areas

Scale proven solutions

backed by evidence, locally owned, with youth at the center

Support youth every step of the way

from dreams to economic independence

Champion inclusion

enable all youth to succeed, regardless of gender or background

Empower youth for the future of work

with entrepreneurship, digital, AI and green skills

Build a YouthCan! movement

empower partners to join and replicate, multiplying collaborative impact

By 2030, YouthCan! aims to transform into a global movement, providing scalable, locally owned solutions that empower young people to shape their futures. We are committed to ensuring that youth entrepreneurship remains a cornerstone of our programme, alongside a stronger focus on equipping young people with skills for the future of work, including green, digital, and AI skills. Through deeper collaboration with the YouthCan! Youth Council, we will provide more spaces for young people to actively shape the solutions they need in their countries.

With YouthCan!, we are committed to ensuring that every young person - regardless of their gender, background, or life situation - is empowered to become their strongest self and thrive in a rapidly changing world.

¹ International Labour Organization, International Labour Organization, Global Employment Trends for Youth, 2024

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

Global reach:

A worldwide network with a local response

23,020 young people and
1,941 volunteers shaped YouthCan!
in **48** countries

Europe and
Middle East

5%

YouthCan!
participants

Azerbaijan
Belarus
Bulgaria
Jordan
Lebanon
Palestine
Romania
Serbia

Asia

16%

YouthCan!
participants

Bangladesh
India
Indonesia
Philippines
Sri Lanka
Thailand
Vietnam

Western and
Central Africa

11%

YouthCan!
participants

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

Latin America and
the Caribbean

21%

YouthCan!
participants

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

Eastern and
Southern Africa

47%

YouthCan!
participants

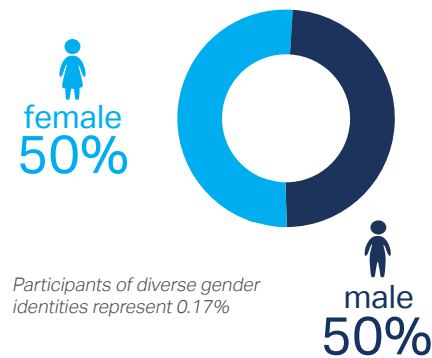
Ghana
Kenya
Madagascar
Namibia
Nigeria
Rwanda
South Africa
Tanzania
Uganda
★ Ethiopia
★ Lesotho

Note: Countries in dark blue implemented their first YouthCan! activities in 2024

♥ At the heart:

Young people...

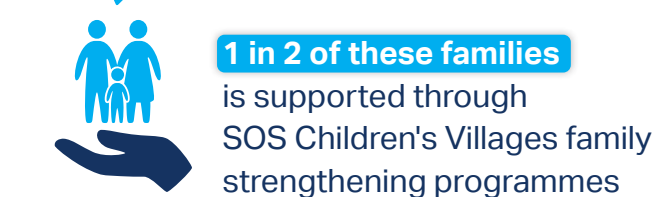
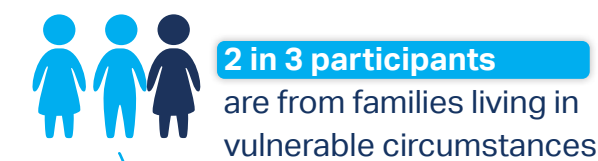
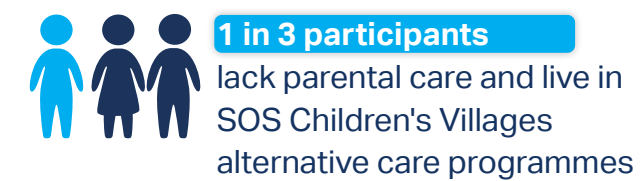
Gender



Main age range*



Family situation



Education*



8%
completed
primary
education



52%
completed
secondary
education



10%
completed
post-secondary
technical training



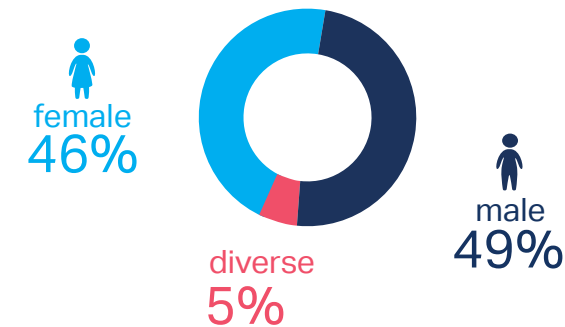
30%
completed
university
education

“Mentorship opportunities set YouthCan! apart. Youth participation is also a strength, giving young people a voice in shaping their future.”

- Adi Soumena, YouthCan! participant and YouthCan! Youth Council member, Indonesia

... and volunteers

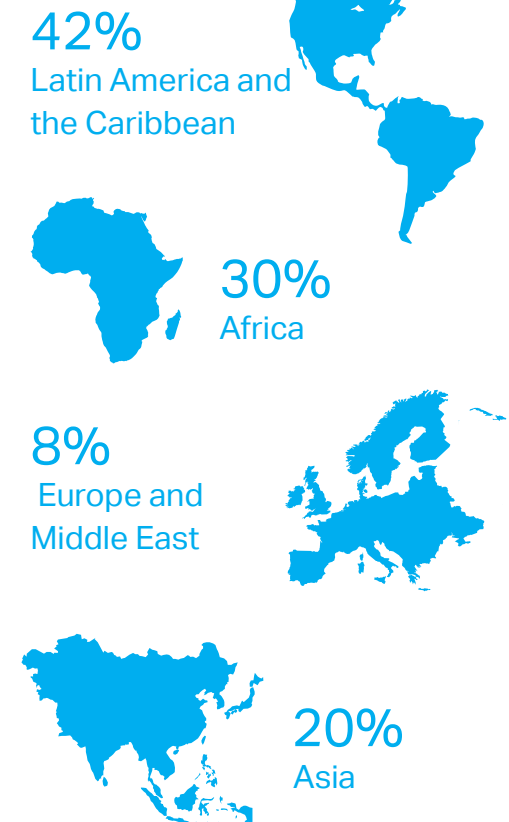
Gender*



Employer



Origin



Duration of engagement*



“I mentored two young Mexican entrepreneurs who make crocheted dolls. Meeting such bright and driven young women, with a clear vision for their business's future and its impact on their families, has been inspiring. I feel very fortunate to have taken part in this programme and to have contributed to the development of these talented women entrepreneurs.”

- Ingrid Del Solar, YouthCan! volunteer, Scotiabank Canada

* Data from youth survey conducted in 2024, in which 4029 young people from 58 countries provided their feedback, including those in which we have activities only with DHL Group

* Data from volunteer survey conducted in 2024, in which 1,226 volunteers from 59 countries provided their feedback, including those in which we have activities only with DHL Group

A tailored approach to support local needs

Whether they aspire to find a job or start their own business, YouthCan! meets young people where they are.

Together with young people, partners and corporate volunteers, country teams adapt the programme to local realities and individual needs, by running Mentor-Train-Practice activities in person, online or in a hybrid environment. YouthLinks Community has become an established digital platform in YouthCan!, enabling young people worldwide to access learning opportunities, tap into networks and voice their needs.

In 2024, a growing network of corporate partners - including new international partners like Bata and Scotiabank - tailored the YouthCan! model to their companies and mobilized their employees to provide individualized guidance. In Bangladesh and Kenya, Bata volunteers guided young jobseekers and entrepreneurs through mentoring, skills training and internships. In Peru, they invited young people into their offices for job shadowing. Meanwhile, in Jamaica and Mexico, Scotiabank volunteers led employment, financial literacy workshops and mentored young entrepreneurs.

Tailoring to local realities also means preparing for the future of work. In 2024, eight countries delivered green-skills activities – from Burkina Faso's green energy training in agriculture, to Jordan's innovation lab, where young people turned discarded wood into up-cycled furniture.



YouthLinks Community

Empowering young people through digital inclusion

YouthLinks Community is a safe digital platform that supports young people through accessible online learning and mentoring opportunities. Initially launched as a digital tool for YouthCan!, it has evolved into a central digital platform for various youth programmes within SOS Children's Villages, promoting youth participation and empowering young people with green and digital skills, certifications and scholarship opportunities. The platform allows young people to express themselves, share accomplishments, discuss challenges, and inspire each other to learn and reach their goals.

Since its launch in 2021, YouthLinks Community has constantly grown to reach 4,821 members by the end of 2024, including young people and volunteers from 100 countries - 42 YouthCan! countries and 58 additional ones. The platform offers an increasing range of self-paced learning materials in various languages, empowering youth to enhance their employment and entrepreneurship skills.

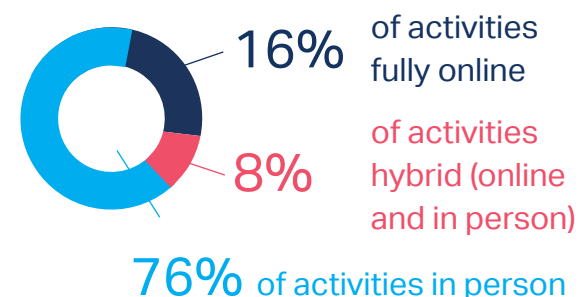
As part of its ongoing engagement plan, YouthLinks Community runs regular youth-centered and youth co-led digital campaigns - averaging two per year. The campaigns connect young people globally, empowering them to become agents of change on key issues such as safeguarding, online safety, youth participation and climate action. In 2024, such a campaign supported by our global partner AkzoNobel focused on child and youth safeguarding awareness among platform users. As part of this effort, an interactive information webpage, sos-staysafe.com, was co-created with young people to provide helpful youth-friendly resources.

Online activities

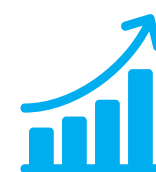


27% of young people in YouthCan! participated in online activities

... and delivery



Platform growth



4,821 members by 2024, with a **33%** increase since 2023

Affiliated users*

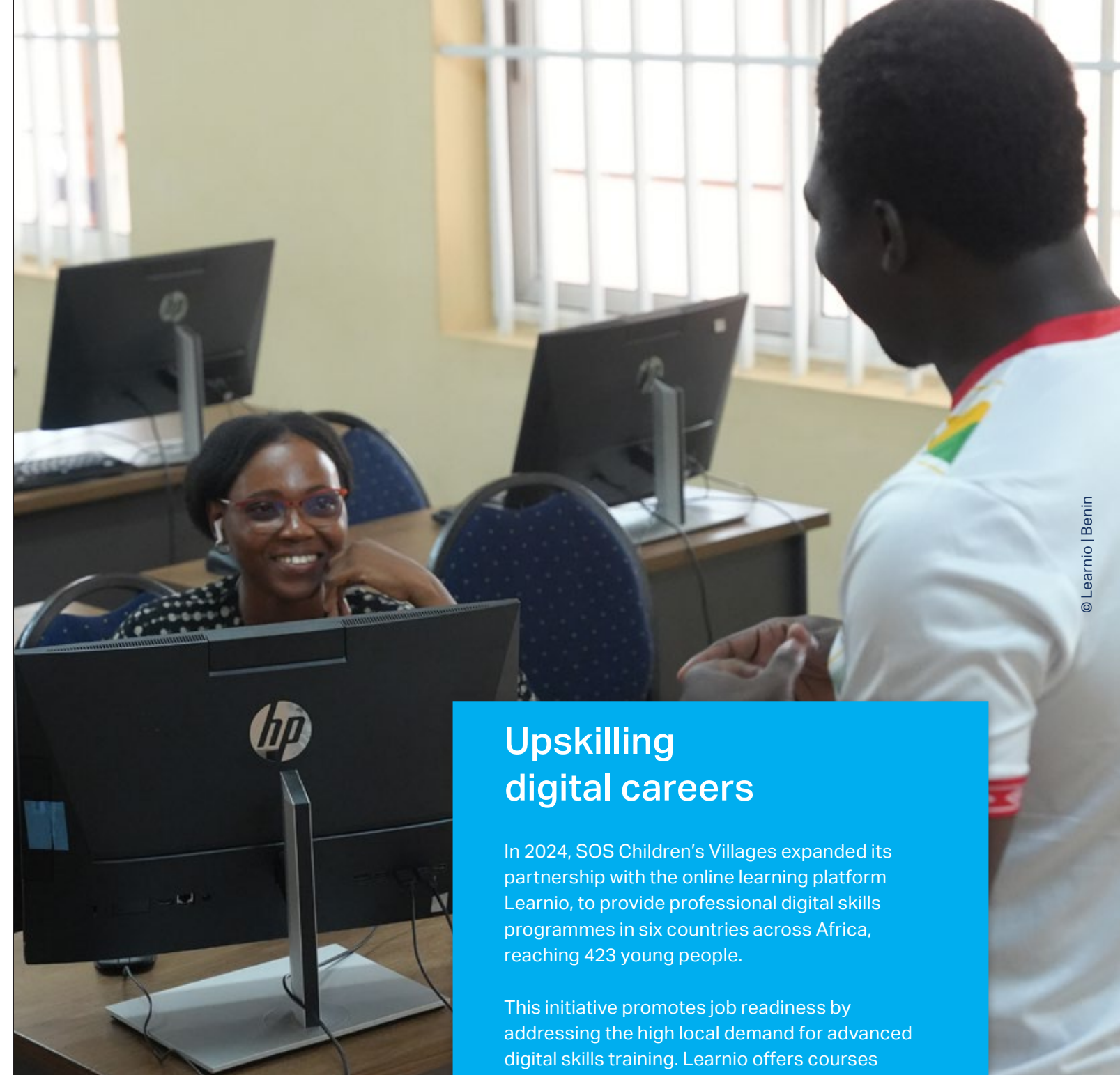
3,716 young people

448 volunteers



engaged in **488** online and hybrid mentorships since 2021

* Whereas 657 users are SOS Children's Villages staff



© Learnio | Benin

Upskilling digital careers

In 2024, SOS Children's Villages expanded its partnership with the online learning platform Learnio, to provide professional digital skills programmes in six countries across Africa, reaching 423 young people.

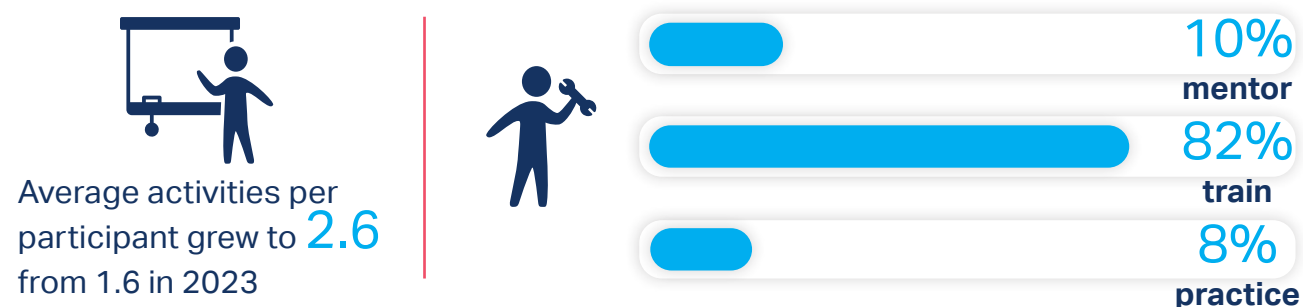
This initiative promotes job readiness by addressing the high local demand for advanced digital skills training. Learnio offers courses in graphic design, digital marketing, and web development, combined with mentorship and coaching on freelancing.

In Ethiopia, Learnio's scalable and adaptable learning approach enabled 101 young women and men to begin the training, despite challenges with internet access and a shortage of local mentors. After completing the programme, some participants continued with accessing internships and digital tools to launch their careers, while some graduates return as peer mentors, building local capacity and sustaining impact.

Road to (self)-employment

In 2024 we welcomed 29% more participants, alongside an increase in the average number of activities per young person, enabling them to build the self-confidence, self-awareness, skills and professional networks they need most to succeed. The effort to increase activities per participant paid off: young people reported higher satisfaction with the programme, especially with the opportunities to expand their professional networks and the direct or indirect support they received in finding work.

While this progress is promising, access to practical opportunities such as internships remains a top youth request within YouthCan!. A pilot apprenticeship programme launched by our global corporate partner DHL Group showed how such activities can help young people take the final step into paid work with "My first job" (see case study on next page). Expanding these opportunities will remain a key focus of YouthCan!'s strategic roadmap until 2030.



Entrepreneurship has grown rapidly

Whether it is first-time entrepreneurs in Azerbaijan, an all-women cohort in the Dominican Republic, or digital designers in Benin, YouthCan! supports young people every step of the way - from shaping their ideas to growing their business. Within two years of introducing entrepreneurship as a major programme pathway, the number of young people participating in such training has increased by over 50% and entrepreneurship support is now being offered in most YouthCan! countries.

This momentum was powered by a vibrant partner ecosystem, where 65% of activities were delivered by local partners, and 35% by local offices of our global corporate partners. Alongside the rapid growth, young people consistently reported feeling more motivated, confident and equipped with the skills needed to run their own business.

81% of YouthCan! countries offer entrepreneurship support, compared to 48% in 2023

73% of young people feel motivated, confident and skilled to start a business, compared to 68% in 2023

51% young women and **49%** young men who were trained, opened a business within a year



My first job - DHL Group

Initiated as a pilot programme by DHL Group in 2021, "My First Job" successfully ran in 12 countries in Latin America and the Caribbean. Designed to complement soft and technical skills training, the programme offered young people a structured apprenticeship experience across various company departments. Participants received nine months of mentoring, on-the-job training (including English and job-specific certifications), and a one-year fixed-term contract.

"It prepares young people to enter the workforce with the skills, confidence, and mindset needed to succeed" says Banalata Sen, Global Head – GoTeach at DHL Group.

At the end, 100% of participants reported professional development benefits, and 90% earned very good performance reviews from their supervisors³. The programme is a powerful apprenticeship example, with 78% of participants securing permanent employment within DHL Group or externally. Following the pilot's success, the programme scaled regionally and became part of DHL Group's Human Resources strategy.

³ Data based on 19 young participants who have completed the programme, out of initially selected 28

A game changer in young people's life

At the heart of YouthCan! are supportive relationships. This year, 83% of participants saw the volunteers who were their mentors, trainers or internship supervisors as positive role models.

Such connections help young people build confidence to pursue their goals. 22% of YouthCan! participants (and 35% of those over 22 years old) secured paid work or launched a business within the same year of joining YouthCan! ⁴. Importantly, these results were consistent across genders and among young people growing up with or without parental care, showing that YouthCan! works across diverse realities and reaches those who need it most.

Of the YouthCan! participants, young people who lack parental care and live in SOS Children's Villages alternative care programmes, were more likely to access early work experience - with 61% of interns or part-time workers aged 15–18. This builds exposure and experience early on, for their transition to independence. Yet, they still report less confidence, job readiness and weaker professional networks than their peers from families living in vulnerable circumstances, which highlights the need for continued tailored support.

For young people from such families, entrepreneurship was a real opportunity in 2024. In fact, they made up 78% of those who started a business, creating a lasting impact not only for themselves but also for their families and communities. ⁵

⁴ Data from youth survey conducted in 2024, in which 4029 young people from 58 countries provided their feedback, including those in which we have activities only with DHL Group

⁵ The figure of 78% is directly correlated with those who initially engaged in entrepreneurship activities



Sisonke

A journey from skill to opportunity

In 2024, 18 young people supported by SOS Children's Villages programmes in Cape Town joined a painting skills course through the YouthCan! partnership with AkzoNobel.

For Thabo and Sipho⁶, both participants in a family strengthening programme, the training marked a turning point on their path to independence. They showed a clear interest in the painting trade, guided by volunteers from AkzoNobel, and stood out for their commitment and initiative.

After completing the training, a local ward councillor in Khayelitsha offered them their first paid job - painting the municipal offices. It was an opportunity that opened the door to something bigger.

YouthCan! provided more than training.

It opened a path to economic independence, responsibility, and becoming an employer in the community.

Motivated by the experience, Thabo and Sipho launched their own small business, naming it Sisonke, meaning "We are Together" in Zulu. What began with painting, quickly expanded to include services like yard cleaning, bin washing, and car washing. Next, they established a strong social media presence to promote their business, showcase their work, and connect with potential customers in their digital community.

As their business grew, they were able to not only support themselves but also hire three employees, providing economic opportunity for other families in their neighbourhood. They also received financial literacy training, which helped them manage money more responsibly and plan for growth. With support from SOS Children's Villages, they have now formalized their services, opening the door to more opportunities. Like many small businesses, Sisonke still faces challenges. They don't have a permanent place to store their tools and currently rely on space in a nearby community hall.

Thabo and Sipho's story is still unfolding, but they hope to inspire other young people who, like them, are ready to take the next step. The combination of skill-building and partners from diverse sectors coming together to give young people an opportunity is key to turn potential into action and ideas into income.

⁶ Names of participants were changed for data privacy reasons

YouthCan! works

Results for young people

In 2024, YouthCan! reported stronger outcomes for young people across the board, especially in entrepreneurship preparedness, professional network development and direct or indirect support in securing paid work. For example, 89% of the young people surveyed would recommend the experience to their friends and 86% would take part in YouthCan! again⁷. This aligns with the programme's approach of guiding young people from market exposure to practicing skills over several years of engagement.



Inspiration and self-confidence

87%

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

82%

motivated and confident in their ability to find a job

74%*

motivated and confident to start a business



Employability and entrepreneurship

84%

feel they have gained skills to succeed in life

80%

are able to interact professionally in a work environment

74%*

developed the skills to start a business



Self-reliance (in less than 12 months)

82%

agree that YouthCan! helped directly or indirectly to find work

22%

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

35%

over 22 years old started a job or a business since joining YouthCan!

“ YouthCan! has touched the lives of young people from challenging backgrounds, including young parents and (school) dropouts. The programme has given them hope, confidence, and a sense of belonging through connections with others facing similar struggles. ”

- Vanessa Mukamanzi, YouthCan! participant and YouthCan! Youth Council member, Rwanda

⁷ Data from youth survey conducted in 2024, in which 4029 young people from 58 countries provided their feedback, including those in which we have activities only with DHL Group

* Young people who participated in entrepreneurship activities



YouthCan! works

Results for volunteers

In 2024, 1,941 employees of our corporate partners volunteered through YouthCan!. While the programme's core mission is to empower young people, it also has a lasting impact on the volunteers. Our data show that participation fosters personal growth, enriches company culture and drives wider social impact. The sustained enthusiasm of our volunteers is a testament to YouthCan!'s enduring value on multiple levels. Of the volunteers surveyed, 94% would recommend the programme to colleagues⁸.



Strengthened skills

87%

improved skills such as presenting, teamwork, leadership and communication

72%

use the skills gained in their daily work

83%

increased interaction and collaboration at work



Job satisfaction and commitment

89%

improved job satisfaction and feel prouder to work for their company

87%

feel more committed to their company

94%

would recommend YouthCan! to other colleagues



Social responsibility

91%

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

90%

would encourage companies to collaborate with young people experiencing vulnerability

90%

feel they have made a positive contribution to individuals and communities

“ As a volunteer, the experience was personally rewarding. I developed stronger mentorship skills, broadened my perspective on youth empowerment, and witnessed firsthand the lasting impact collective efforts can make. The collaboration between SOS Children's Villages and Bata Children's Programme truly demonstrated the power of investing in young potential. ” - Dennis Muya, YouthCan! Volunteer, Bata Kenya

⁸ Data from volunteer survey, conducted in 2024, in which 1226 volunteers from 59 countries provided their feedback, including those in which we have activities only with DHL Group



The power of partnerships

Addressing the issue of youth unemployment requires shared responsibility and coordinated action across sectors. YouthCan! embodies this approach, by actively involving multiple stakeholders in shaping the programme - companies, institutions, and NGOs.

In 2024, we continued to grow, joining forces with 399 organizations - a 29% increase from the previous year - with the vast majority from the private sector⁹. This growth reflects a shared commitment to tackling youth unemployment and creating inclusive opportunities for young people. Local engagement continued to be a cornerstone of our approach, with 80% of our partnerships being local and the remaining 20% representing local offices of global partners. This local presence not only strengthens youth employability where it's most needed but also contributes to resilient local economies.

Our impact is powered not only by partnerships but by people. Last year, 1,941 volunteers generously shared their time and expertise, offering mentorship and practical training that helped young people build the skills and confidence to shape their future.

Combined, these efforts indirectly benefited and estimated 69,000 individuals, extending the programme's reach to the participants' peers, caregivers and communities.¹⁰ Together, we are building a global movement - connecting sectors, communities and young people, to build a more inclusive and resilient world.

1,941
volunteers

399
partnerships

⁹ Partners with whom we organized joint activities. All partners that supported us financially or in another way are not included in this number

¹⁰ Calculated according to the United Nations' Department of Economic and Social Affairs method, considering the global average of four members per household

Stronger together

“ Our partnership with SOS Children’s Villages allows us to implement our ESG strategy in a targeted and meaningful way, supporting vulnerable communities while living up to our social responsibility. We are particularly proud that we not only provide financial support but also invest in educational programmes and infrastructure that open up new perspectives for young people. The positive development of these initiatives, along with feedback from young people and colleagues, inspires us to deepen our commitment.

We firmly believe that by working together, we can create sustainable added value, and we would absolutely recommend other companies to join YouthCan!. In addition to the measurable social impact, it also enhances employee satisfaction and strengthens our brand image. It is truly a win-win situation.

Looking ahead, we aim to expand the programme to more countries, give more young people access to education and safe environments, and further align our ESG goals with the mission of SOS Children’s Villages. ”

- Christina Gralla, Team Lead HR GBSC, TK Elevator

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



Furthermore, YouthCan! has been supported by:



YouthCan! contributes to the Sustainable Development Goals:



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



SOS CHILDREN'S
VILLAGES