



SOS CHILDREN'S
VILLAGES



YouthCan!

Facts and Figures 2025

Partnering for
opportunities that
work

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Foreword

Edrian Farinas, 23 years old

YouthCan! participant from Philippines and YouthCan! Youth Council member

YouthCan! was introduced to me way back in 2017, when I was 14 years old. I wasn't that active and engaged then, but in the following years, YouthCan! became a bridge for me - not just for learning but also for growing as a person. With how many activities I joined over the years, I honestly cannot pinpoint them individually. But one thing I'm confident about is that they were always hand-in-hand with my development journey growing up.

My most recent engagement was with DHL Group in the Philippines, a truly memorable 3-day activity. We got to explore their warehouse in Manila, consulted with their operational directors firsthand, and gained unbiased insights from questions we had about their success stories. It taught me the skill to set aside what I have learned and to welcome new knowledge, opinions, and tricks, then merge them afterwards - to create an ideal output for a particular scenario.

It warms my heart to reminisce about moments where I was the one being taught, to becoming one who guides the children and youth. I am proud of the impact we had in establishing our first-ever National Youth Federation in SOS Children's Villages Philippines, making sure that each village location has its representative at the national level, and even plans to combat challenging issues for young people.

I am currently employed and have explored multiple industries, making me reflect that my professional flexibility was guaranteed by the experiences I had over the past years. Like me, many young people in different



"YouthCan! became a bridge for me - not just for learning but also for growing as a person"

parts of the world grow up without access to opportunities that would help them build the future they aspire to. Their potential is slipping through these cracks. SOS Children's Villages steps in at that crucial moment, not just with guidance, but also with the belief in what young people can become. And because of supporters like you, who cared for young people's dreams, 2025 looked different for tens of thousands of us.

Looking forward to the future brings both hopefulness and worry, with young people around the world feeling this tension more than ever. From limited access to quality education and mental health support, to unemployment, climate anxiety, and being excluded from the very decisions that shape their lives, the challenges we face today demand urgent attention and collective action. Yet, in the middle of all of this, we have seen what becomes possible when young people are truly seen, heard, and invested in.

To the mentors who taught us, educators who believed in us, friends who supported us, you have our warmest THANK YOU!

Abigael Mwashigadi, YouthCan! Volunteer

Purchasing Manager, Bata Group, Kenya

Over the past three years, I have had the privilege of being part of the YouthCan! journey through the partnership between Bata and SOS Children's Villages. What began as an opportunity to contribute through volunteering has become one of the most meaningful experiences of my professional and personal life.

At the heart of YouthCan! is a shared commitment to ensuring that young people have the support, guidance, and opportunities they need to build confident and fulfilling futures. Through mentorship sessions, career guidance, and workplace exposure opportunities, I have witnessed the meaningful impact that encouragement, trust, and human connection can have in the lives of young people navigating challenging circumstances.

One of the most inspiring aspects of this experience has been seeing young people grow in confidence and begin to recognize their own strengths and potential. Often, a single conversation, a supportive mentor, or access to a new opportunity can help open doors and inspire new possibilities. Witnessing these moments has reinforced my belief in the importance of mentorship, inclusion, and collective action.

At the same time, the young people themselves have deeply influenced my own perspective. Their resilience, determination, curiosity, and courage continue to inspire me. They have reminded me of the importance of empathy, active listening, and the lasting value of showing up for others with intention and respect.



"YouthCan! demonstrates what is possible when organizations, employees, and communities come together around a shared purpose"

YouthCan! demonstrates what is possible when organizations, employees, and communities come together around a shared purpose. Through the partnership between Bata and SOS Children's Villages, young people are gaining access to skills, experiences, and support systems that help strengthen their transition towards independent adulthood and decent work opportunities.

As you read the stories in this publication, I hope you are inspired by the impact created through every mentorship session, every shared experience, and every opportunity made possible through collaboration. Together, we are helping young people strengthen their confidence, discover their potential, and move towards futures where they feel seen, supported, and empowered to thrive.

About YouthCan!

YouthCan!, SOS Children's Villages' global programme for economic empowerment, works to improve young people's readiness for decent work and the conditions that help them access it.

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, who live in communities facing vulnerability. Limited opportunities to build skills, strengthen support networks and access mental health support can increase their risk of unsafe or precarious work, unemployment, poverty, and social exclusion. That is what the global YouthCan! programme is here to address.

YouthCan! is built through partnerships with the private, public, and civic sectors. Together, we support young people along flexible employment and entrepreneurship pathways, connecting them to mentoring, training, practical experiences, and entrepreneurship opportunities. Partners co-design and deliver activities by mobilizing their employees, who share their time, skills and career experience in person or online. Many of these engagements are supported by YouthLinks Community, SOS Children's Villages' digital platform for learning and connection.

Through locally adapted, inclusive pathways, YouthCan! helps young people build confidence, skills and support networks, realize their potential and move closer to decent work, whether through employment or entrepreneurship.

Expanding horizons

Across the world, young people are entering adulthood in a labour market shaped by uncertainty, inequality and rapid change. For more than a decade, global youth unemployment and underemployment have remained stubbornly persistent, while many young people are still not in employment, education or training. Even when they find work, it is not always safe, stable, or fairly paid¹.

Digital transformation, the green transition and the rise of entrepreneurship are creating new opportunities, but access to them is often unequal. For many young people, especially those without parental care or at risk of losing it, the path to decent work is rarely a straight line. Barriers such as limited networks, unequal access to skills development, mental health challenges, unpaid care responsibilities, discrimination and precarious work continue to make the journey towards decent work more difficult.

Building on this reality, YouthCan! supports young people to move closer to self-reliance and decent work. Entering the world of work is not only about finding a job; it is about having the confidence, skills, support networks and connections to make informed choices and build a self-reliant future. As SOS Children's Villages' global programme for youth economic empowerment, YouthCan! brings together young people, volunteers and partners from the private, public and civic sectors. Through mentoring, skills development, practical work-based experiences and entrepreneurship support, the programme helps create inclusive pathways that respond to local realities while keeping each young person's strengths, needs and aspirations at the centre.

In 2025, YouthCan! continued to grow and evolve. Reaching 30,053 young people in 48 countries, together with 1,590 volunteers and 374 partners, YouthCan! expanded its support by 31%, particularly among young people living in families and communities facing vulnerability. This reflects a stronger shift towards community-based scale, with 76% of participants now coming from family strengthening programmes or wider community contexts. Beyond direct participants, YouthCan! indirectly benefited an estimated 120,000 people, including peers, caregivers and broader communities.

The results show encouraging progress. Most young people reported feeling more positive about their future, gaining skills for life and work, and moving closer to employment or entrepreneurship. YouthCan! also continued to strengthen its digital offers, with the YouthLinks Community reaching 5,409 registered users. Looking ahead, YouthCan! will continue to strengthen locally owned pathways, deepen employer engagement and equip young people with the skills, networks and confidence they need to move closer to decent work and become their strongest selves in a changing world.

30,053

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

120,212

indirect reach - young
people's peers, families,
communities²

1. International Labour Organization, Global Employment Trends for Youth 2024: Decent Work, Brighter Futures. Executive Summary, 2024

2. Calculated according to the United Nations' Department of Economic and Social Affairs method, considering the global average of 5 members per household



in 2025



It works for

young people

...and

volunteers

30,053

reached, develop

confidence, skills
and networks

1,590

engaged, share

time, knowledge
and encouragement



85%

have the skills

to succeed in life

89%

improve skills

such as leadership,
teamwork

58% are

(self-)employed

in the same year

92% feel

more satisfied

with their job

Safe programme digitalization

27%

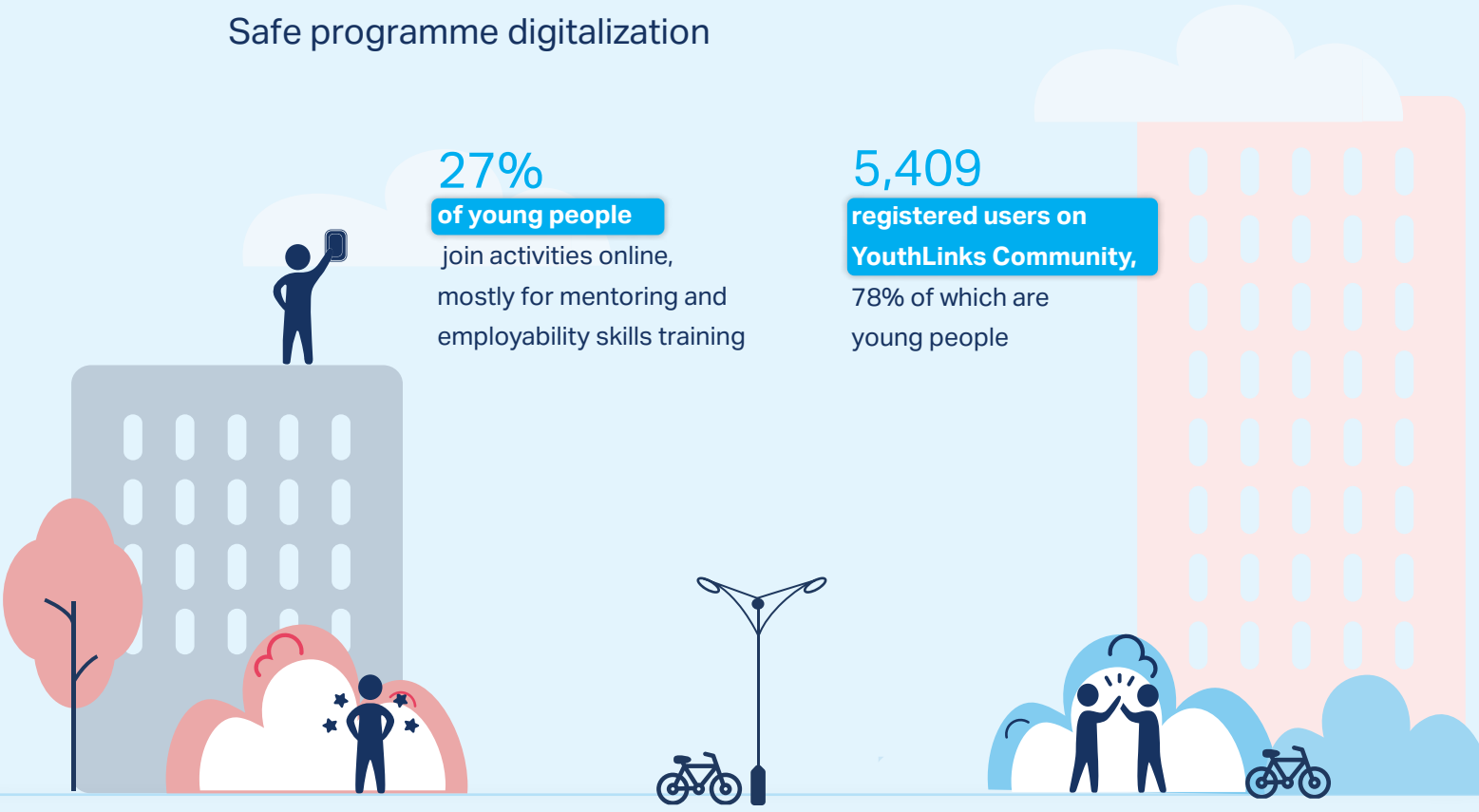
of young people

join activities online,
mostly for mentoring and
employability skills training

5,409

**registered users on
YouthLinks Community,**

78% of which are
young people



Global reach:

A worldwide network with a local response

30,053 young people
1,590 volunteers
374 partners shaped YouthCan!
in **48** countries

Europe and
Middle East

632

YouthCan!
participants

Azerbaijan
Belarus
Bulgaria
Jordan
Lebanon
Palestine
Romania
Serbia

Asia

3,151

YouthCan!
participants

Bangladesh
India
Indonesia
Philippines
Sri Lanka
Thailand
Vietnam

Latin America and
the Caribbean

2,787

YouthCan!
participants

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

Western and
Central Africa

7,514

YouthCan!
participants

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

Eastern and
Southern Africa

15,969

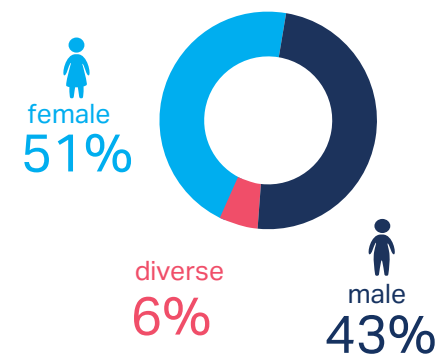
YouthCan!
participants

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

♥ At the heart:

Young people...

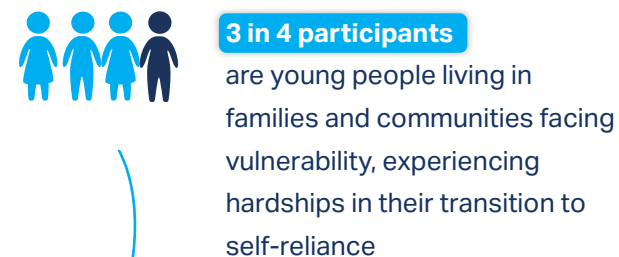
Gender



Main age range*



Family situation



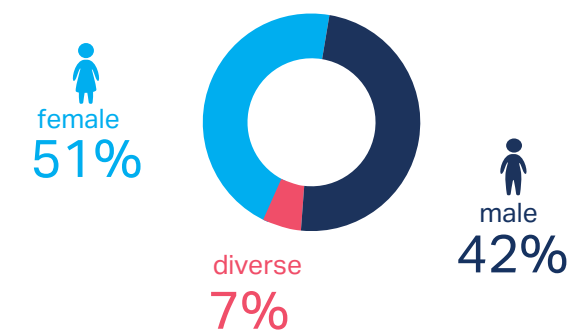
Education*



* Data from youth survey conducted in 2025, in which 3178 young people from 48 countries provided their feedback, including those in which we have activities only with DHL Group

... and volunteers

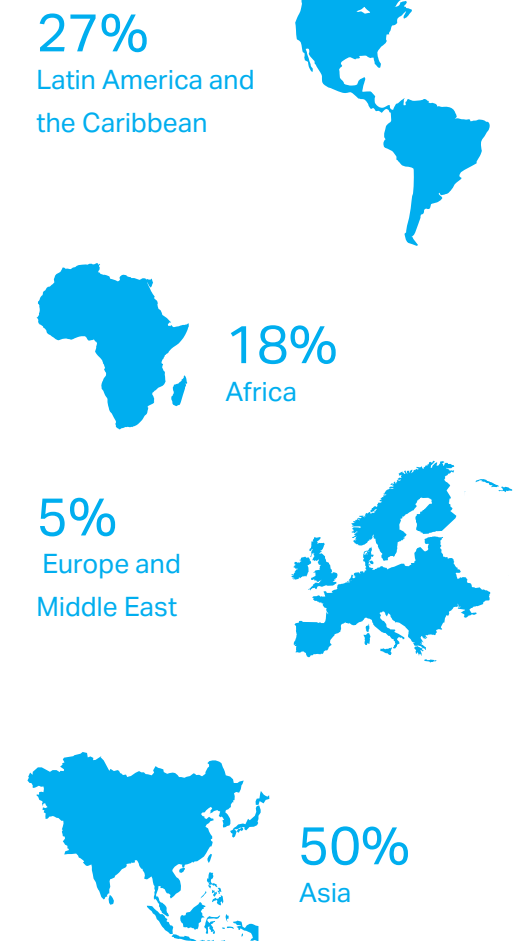
Gender*



Employer



Origin



Duration of engagement*



* Data from volunteer survey, conducted in 2025, in which 733 volunteers from 53 countries provided their feedback, including those in which we have activities only with DHL Group



A tailored approach, individual needs

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

Together with young people, volunteers and partners, SOS Children's Villages country teams design pathways that respond to local realities, while keeping each young person's needs, hopes and strengths at the centre. The key lies in connecting forms of support that are often separate: career exposure, mentoring, skills training and opportunities to practice in real work settings.

Through staged journeys, young people move from exposure to the world of work, to choosing their own path, then transitioning towards employment or entrepreneurship – while building confidence, emotional resilience and networks along the way.

Employers play a vital role in making this happen. They bring young people closer to the changing world of work, share practical knowledge and open doors to experiences that can shape their future. By contributing as co-designers, mentors, trainers and hosts, partners from various sectors help make YouthCan! relevant to local labour markets and rooted in community needs.

In 2025, this multi-dimensional approach came to life in even more diverse ways. The range of skills considered in activities locally reflects stronger youth participation as a compass, in guiding the support they need most.

Digital innovation for inclusive pathways

Connecting young people to digital learning, skills and opportunities

Digital innovation is integral to YouthCan!. As the world of work changes, digital confidence and access to technology are increasingly important for young people preparing for employment or entrepreneurship. Digital tools also help YouthCan! meet young people where they are, combining in-person, online and hybrid activities to expand access to learning.

At the center of this approach is YouthLinks Community, our safe digital platform for accessible online learning and career development opportunities. It offers self-paced learning materials, mentoring, certifications, youth participation opportunities, scholarship information and youth-centered campaigns. It is also a safe space where young people can express themselves, share achievements and ventures, discuss challenges and motivate one another to keep learning.

In 2025, country teams embedded digital upskilling into employability pathways. In Colombia, young people accessed coding and web programming scholarships, office software workshops and e-commerce learning. In India, virtual sessions focused on LinkedIn use, digital branding, professional skills and interview preparation. Indonesia showed how virtual delivery can unlock scale, with online CV writing, interview and public speaking sessions reaching hundreds of young people.

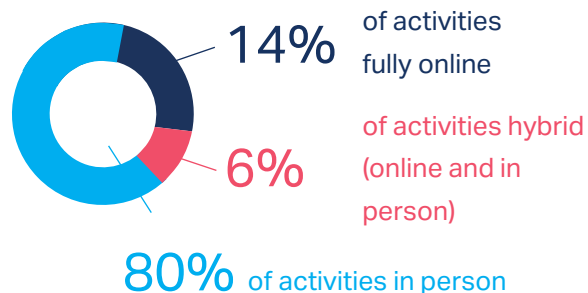
Together, these examples show how digital innovation widens access, strengthens future-of-work skills and supports pathways to decent work, entrepreneurship and self-reliance.

Online activities



27% of young people participated in online activities

... and delivery



Platform membership



5,409 members by 2025

Affiliated users*

4,125 registered young people
536 registered volunteers
748 registered SOS Children's Villages workers

Digital mentoring to strengthen financial independence

In Mexico, the YouthRISE project – a partnership between SOS Children's Villages Canada and Scotiabank, implemented by SOS Children's Villages Mexico – leveraged digital mentoring to expand young people's access to learning. Once trained on safe behaviours, Scotiabank volunteers from Canada and Mexico were matched with young people according to support needs. Delivered virtually, the mentoring reached young people across borders and in distant parts of Mexico, within two tailored pathways. Those preparing for independent living completed eight financial education sessions, including personal budgeting, goal setting and saving. Young entrepreneurs joined twelve sessions on key business and entrepreneurial skills.

After mentoring, young people reported improved financial skills, more responsible financial decisions and stronger saving habits, while young entrepreneurs applied their new skills to grow their businesses.

Road to (self)-employment

In 2025, YouthCan! reached **31% more young people**, particularly among those growing up in families and communities facing vulnerability. More participants came closer to the world of work: meeting professionals, exploring possible pathways, and beginning to shape their own.

At the same time, fewer countries offered entrepreneurship support. This tells a more nuanced story. While entrepreneurship was available in fewer places, its quality remained steady. Young people reported higher motivation, confidence, and readiness to start a business, and the success rate among those who took part remained in line with the previous year. This is an important signal for YouthCan! to keep building on, together with volunteers, and diverse partners.

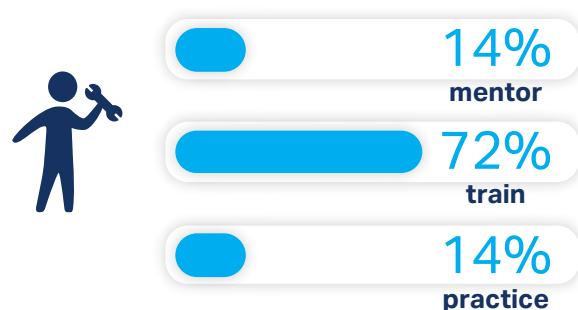
Stronger pathways, closer to employers

In response to what young people have been advocating for, YouthCan! placed stronger emphasis on mentoring and practice-based activities, which are especially important for transitioning to (self)-employment. Across countries, this reflects a wider shift towards staged pathway support. Senegal shows what this can look like when local ecosystems come together. With DHL Group and more than 60 local partners, young people moved from career exposure to certified courses, job fairs and internships, by becoming connected to opportunities through employer contact.

Skills for a changing world of work

Another encouraging direction is the diversity of skills addressed across countries, from digital readiness to emotional resilience. For instance, in Bangladesh, young people explored digital freelancing and AI alongside psychosocial wellbeing. In Brazil, they worked on personal finance, mental health, sustainability and rights at work.

As YouthCan! continues to evolve, the way forward is clear: stronger staged pathways and doors that remain open as young people move from (self)-employment into decent work.



Building readiness through training and mentoring

In India, TK Elevator supported a three-day employability skills workshop designed to help young people prepare for the transition into work. The activity combined training, mentoring and peer learning, with trainers guiding participants through interactive sessions such as group discussions, role plays and reflection exercises. Young people practiced communication, self-presentation, teamwork and decision-making, while also identifying their strengths and areas for growth.

For many, the workshop came at an important moment, as they were preparing for interviews, campus placements or first jobs. "I felt more confident in expressing myself," one participant shared. By connecting skills development with real-life practice and supportive guidance, the workshop helped young people build confidence and take clearer steps towards employment.



A game changer in young people's life

At the heart of YouthCan! are supportive relationships that help young people build confidence, strengthen skills and take steps towards self-reliance. In 2025, YouthCan! continued to grow, reaching more young people directly and extending its impact to their families and communities.

Programme satisfaction remained high, with young people continuing to value the support they receive from volunteers and other professionals during activities. These connections help make career pathways more tangible, especially for young people who have limited access to professional networks, role models or first work experiences.

The results also show how YouthCan! supports young people as they move closer to the world of work. Motivation and life skills were highest among participants aged 25 and above, reporting 94%. At the same time, the transition into decent work or entrepreneurship requires more than motivation and skills. Strengthening links to mentors, employers and industry professionals remains a priority, alongside gender-responsive interventions and tailored, longer term support for young people growing up in alternative care, who gradually prepare to exit the care system at age 18.

The silent pivot

Be brave enough to change your mind

Growing up in Nairobi, Sheila always had academic drive, but like many young people, she was searching for a clear pathway into the professional world. This is her personal story, written through her lens.

The identity trap

I was staring at my exam results, and the numbers staring back at me didn't care about the 10-year plan I'd built. For as long as I can remember, I had this "perfect" vision of my future self. I'd set the bar so high that I'd turned my life into a performance. And in one second, it felt like the stage had collapsed. People always tell us that being young means having "limitless potential," but they rarely talk about grief. That's what it was: the actual heartbreak of a plan failing. I was at a crossroads I wasn't ready for, asking the one question no 20-something wants to face: "Who am I supposed to be now?"

Growing up, I didn't just want to be a doctor; I was obsessed with being a neurosurgeon. I loved the brain - the way every nerve and thought is part of this massive, invisible system. But I finally started growing up when I stopped forcing myself to fit into a suit that didn't fit.

From neurons to global logistics

Fast forward to today: I'm in logistics, which is basically just a different kind of "global nervous system." Interning at DHL Group, I see the same complexity I used to look for in neuroscience. Instead of neurotransmitters, we have air waybills. Instead of nerve fibers, we have flight paths and shipping lanes connecting the world. I didn't lose my spark for how things connect; I just found a new language for it.

My life looks a bit different now. I'm currently on the 6:00 PM to 6:00 AM shift. While the world is asleep, I'm part of the team that keeps global trade moving. It's in those quiet, centered hours when we're reorganizing our plans, sticking to a timetable, and doing the work when nobody is watching. It's not always glamorous, but it's real.

“Caring for your future means being brave enough to change your mind. You aren't alone in the "I don't know" phase. We're all out here figuring it out, one quiet, disciplined step at a time. It's worth it. And so are you.”

Enabling job opportunities together with DHL Group

The Sub-Saharan Africa Gen Z initiative by DHL Group gives young people aged 18–23 a structured first step into work through the logistics sector. Responding to Africa's demographic shift - 60% of the population is under 25, with workers aged 60+ projected to double by 2030 - the initiative is equally relevant for communities and employers. Young people without tertiary education gain first-work experience, build confidence and strengthen professional networks; DHL Group strengthens an inclusive talent pipeline for the future.

Launched in 2025 across 20 countries, the one-year experience combines work-based learning in Customer Service and Operations with theoretical training, department-based mentoring from DHL Group teams, monthly reviews and potential pathways into full-time roles. For Sheila, this became a pathway into the fast-moving world of logistics.

YouthCan! works

Results for young people

In 2025, YouthCan! showed consistent value for young people as they moved along their journey: from feeling motivated, to building skills, to securing paid work within the same year.

Most participants felt positive about their future and better equipped to move forward. Among those who reported finding work, percentage which highly increased since the previous year, 81% said YouthCan! helped directly or indirectly. This shows how confidence building, opportunities to practice skills and stronger employer contact can support pathways to (self-)employment.



Inspiration and self-confidence

86%

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

83%

are motivated and confident in their ability to find a job

78%*

are motivated and confident to start a business



Employability and entrepreneurship

85%

feel they have gained skills to succeed in life

81%

are able to interact professionally in a work environment

77%*

developed the skills to start a business



Self-reliance (in less than 12 months)

81%

agree that YouthCan! helped directly or indirectly to find work

58%

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

42%

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

*young people who participated in entrepreneurship activities



YouthCan! works

Results for volunteers

In 2025, 1,590 volunteers brought their time and experience into YouthCan!, helping young people come closer to the world of work while gaining something meaningful in return. The experience strengthened volunteers' skills, collaboration and pride in their companies, while deepening awareness of the barriers young people face. With 95% recommending YouthCan! to colleagues and 94% ready to take part again, their commitment remains part of a shared pathway towards decent work.



*data from volunteer survey, conducted in 2025, in which 733 volunteers from 53 countries provided their feedback

The power of partnerships

Addressing today's youth employment crisis requires commitment, shared responsibility, and sustained action across sectors. In many low- and middle-income countries, young people continue to face barriers to skills development, decent work, and social inclusion. These challenges cannot be solved by young people alone, or by one sector in isolation.

YouthCan! shows what becomes possible when diverse stakeholders unite behind a shared purpose. Across the programme, partners are not only funders. They are co-designers, contributors, and opportunity enablers, bringing expertise, time, resources and networks to help young people navigate the changing world of work. Local corporate partners play an important role in keeping activities connected to labour market realities, while strengthening local ownership and sustainability.

Collaboration with NGOs, educational institutions, governments and community organizations helps build a wider support ecosystem around young people. A 20% increase in institutional partners from 2024 to 2025 shows that YouthCan!'s multi-stakeholder partnership model is becoming stronger. This matters because decent work depends not only on individual readiness, but also on the systems, services, and opportunities that shape young people's access to work.

This collective effort contributes to the Sustainable Development Goals, especially No Poverty, Quality Education, Decent Work and Economic Growth, Reduced Inequalities and Partnerships for the Goals. Looking ahead, YouthCan! aims to help build stronger alliances for youth employability and entrepreneurship, aligning skills with labour market needs, expanding mentorship and decent work opportunities, and empowering young people to shape the future of work.

Stronger together

“Siegwerk has a long tradition of Corporate Social Responsibility, with a focus on the welfare of children and young people.

Since 2010, we have partnered with SOS Children's Villages to support global initiatives, and in 2018 we became a YouthCan! partner. It all began with a shared commitment to empowering young people and supporting sustainable development. We joined YouthCan! to help create meaningful opportunities for youth, with a strong belief that collaboration with SOS Children's Villages would amplify the impact of both our initiatives.

What makes us particularly proud is that our contribution isn't just about financial support; it also gives our employees, or Siegwerkers, the opportunity to get actively involved. Through joint activities, mentoring, skill-building training, and work-based learning, they share their expertise and help young people transition into adulthood and the workplace.

The programme offers a unique opportunity to make a lasting difference to young people's lives while strengthening corporate social responsibility efforts and fostering employee engagement. Looking ahead, we hope YouthCan! will continue to grow, with other partners joining the initiative and reaching more young people with the support they need to reach their full potential. ”

Nikole Peters,
Manager Corporate Communications & CSR,
Siegwerk

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



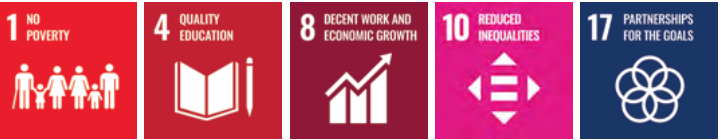
Furthermore, YouthCan! has been supported by*:



* whereas Learnio is a programme implementation partner



YouthCan! contributes to the Sustainable Development Goals:



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



SOS CHILDREN'S
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