

Madagascar



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Executive summary

On the occasion of the programme's 10th year, SOS Children's Villages decided to validate YouthCan! success by commissioning an independent evaluation of its outcomes in four countries, considered valid case studies: Madagascar, Nigeria, Costa Rica and Brazil. The evaluation study took place between September and December 2020, with the data collection process involving four member associations, current and former participants, corporate volunteers and other informed stakeholders. This country report presents the main evaluation findings for SOS Children's Villages in Madagascar only, and it is part of a larger Global Evaluation Report.

SOS CHILDREN'S VILLAGES IN MADAGASCAR

In 1989, SOS Children's Villages opened its first structure in Madagascar, 20km from the capital, Antananarivo. The structure hosted 120 children in 16 houses. Today, SOS Children's Villages operates throughout the country, with four Villages offering a wide range of services dedicated to children and their families in the fields of health, education and employment.

YOUTHCAN! IN MADAGASCAR

Madagascar is the birthplace of YouthCan! It all started there, 10 years ago, as a partnership between SOS Children's Villages and Deutsche Post DHL Group (DHL), to support young people during the delicate phase of transition from formal education to the labour market. The project, which at the time was named GoTeach, proved so relevant that the model has since been exported to many other countries and has become an integral element of SOS Children's Villages' employability approach worldwide. In 2018, it developed into YouthCan!, which is an international platform that fosters collaboration between SOS Children's Villages and the private sector to promote youth employability. Today, YouthCan! Madagascar counts on the support of two global corporate partners, **DHL** and **Allianz**, that became part of the educational community surrounding young SOS beneficiaries. Thanks to their commitment, the programme can currently offer its participants a wide choice of learning activities and training opportunities.

In the Malagasy Association, **YouthCan! is an integral part of the larger *Service d'Insertion Sociale et d'Orientation Professionnelle (SISOP) service***, which takes a holistic approach in its aim to support young people on their path towards independence.

• Management structure and alliances

YouthCan! shares its staff with the SISOP service, which includes a national coordinator, three regional coordinators and 24 educators. SOS Children's Villages is also part of a local network of organisations committed to promoting youth employability, with whom it has opened an employment office dedicated to vulnerable young people. DHL and Allianz, its two main financing corporate partners, together invest approximately €20,000 annually in YouthCan!, in addition to the working hours that their employees dedicate to it as volunteers. A portion of this budget is dedicated to infrastructure improvements or the purchase of devices and materials, thus also contributing significantly to other SISOP activities.

• Characteristics of participants

In Madagascar, YouthCan! participants are usually young people, aged 15 to 25, who still benefit from the Alternative Care services of SOS Children's Villages.

SUMMARY OF THE MAIN EVALUATION FINDINGS

• Main outcomes achieved by current and former participants

Thanks to their participation in the Alternative Care service of SOS Children's Villages, **YouthCan! participants reached an education level much higher than the average Malagasy youth**, which gives them an important advantage in the labour market. In addition, participants confirmed the **effectiveness of YouthCan! in improving their employability skills, particularly professional skills and soft skills**, which proved to be relevant for job searches, as well as in the workplace. However, many pointed out that ICT skills are not sufficiently addressed by the programme.

According to SISOP staff and corporate volunteers, **the most significant impact of YouthCan!** (and specifically of one-to-one mentoring) **is on the self-esteem of the participants**. Indeed, the majority of respondents demonstrated good self-confidence and felt positive about their futures, their skills and their ability to find a job adequate to their interests and competences in the near future. However, women proved (on average) to be less confident than men in this respect.

YouthCan's contribution to expanding the network of relationships of young beneficiaries is minimal. While most participants maintain contact with other young people who participated in YouthCan!, their interactions are sporadic. However, the majority of current and former beneficiaries seem to have the necessary social and emotional support to make informed choices for their studies and careers, although the mentor whom they met through YouthCan! remained a reference figure for only a few of them.

Finally, **the employment situation of those who have already ceased their education is quite satisfactory**. Most are in full-time employment on long-term contracts, and the few who are still unemployed have been searching for employment for less than a year. Moreover, none of the participants who exited before 2018 are unemployed, and none are self-employed. **Notably, the survey does not identify significant differences between men and women**.

• FOCUS: The online platform YouthLinks

The integration in the programme of the digital platform, YouthLinks, is still at a very early stage. Consequently, only a minority of participants have used it at least once (mostly as a virtual platform for individual or group meetings with mentors). The use of YouthLinks is even less common among women and among participants living in rural areas. The main obstacle to its use is the lack of an appropriate device and/or stable internet connection.

• FOCUS: The effects of Covid-19 on the programme

The COVID-19 pandemic had a heavy impact on the implementation of YouthCan! in 2020, as most of the programme's activities were suspended due to restrictions on movement and meetings. The career choices (or employment status) of current participants were affected to varying degrees. As the majority of participants involved in the evaluation were still enrolled in formal education, many faced only some unexpected hurdles due to confinement: classes were delayed, internship opportunities were cancelled or postponed, and, overall, they felt that job opportunities had dwindled. However, **some participants were hit harder than others, as their economic stability (or that of their families) was compromised** by the reduction in wages or the lack of work opportunities. Some of their parents lost their jobs and are now struggling to provide for their families. Consequently, many participants admitted that **the pandemic has had a negative effect on their confidence in the future**.

• Main outcomes achieved by corporate volunteers

Although only a limited number of corporate volunteers agreed to participate in the evaluation, it is still possible to appreciate the positive effects of YouthCan! on them. First of all, volunteers reported that **participation in the programme increased their awareness** of the additional difficulties faced by young people without parental care and by disadvantaged youth in general. For this reason, **they demanded to be better prepared to interact with participants and to receive more feedback from YouthCan! educational staff**. In addition, it clearly emerged that **participation in**

the programme is a source of pride and great personal satisfaction for volunteers. In fact, once they started to mentor young people, employees became more confident in their own professional competence and value. Even more importantly, they learned to share their knowledge and skills without fear of jeopardising their competitiveness in the workplace. At the same time, the experience made them develop their listening skills, empathy skills and communication skills. It also had a positive impact on their work environment, because **YouthCan! created time and space for colleagues to get to know each other in a more personal way**.

CONCLUSIONS

The YouthCan! programme in Madagascar proved to be highly effective in supporting vulnerable youth during the transition from care to independence, which makes it **a best practice to be replicated**. However, it should be considered that the very positive results achieved by participants are an outcome not only of the YouthCan! programme but also of the holistic support provided by SOS Children's Villages to the beneficiaries of its Alternative Care and SISOP services, which begins with a high-quality education.

Since YouthCan! Madagascar has always been a point of reference for the programme internationally, **the Member Association (MA)** (with the support of its corporate partners) **should equip itself with the tools necessary to ensure the continuous improvement of activities and the experimentation of innovative approaches to foster youth employability**.

LIST OF RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Improve coordination and feedback between YouthCan! staff and mentors

Improve the dialogue, coordination and feedback between YouthCan! educational staff and the corporate volunteers engaged as mentors, in order to ensure the coherence of their approaches and goals, and to better support mentors in their complex role.

2. Develop a comprehensive monitoring and evaluation system to assess the progress of current and former participants of YouthCan!

Introduce a result-based management approach by developing a monitoring and evaluation strategy to track young people's participation and progress both before and after they have left YouthCan!.

3. Improve the targeting of YouthCan! activities, based on participants' characteristics and specific needs

Ensure that all activities are relevant to the age, competencies and interests of the participants, and that activities meet the demands of the labour market.

4. Energise the YouthCan! platform by fostering exchange among corporate volunteers and corporate partners

Energise the platform in order to improve collaboration among corporate partners (global and local), to stimulate the development of new ideas and shared projects, and to identify best practices.