



A Sub-Saharan Africa youth employability initiative

of SOS Children’s Villages Netherlands

**A Brief Introduction**

# Sub-Saharan Africa’s Unemployed and Working Poor Youth

The African continent is on the rise but its relatively rapid economic growth over the past 20 years has not yet translated into employment opportunities for youth. As the youngest continent, the large majority of its 226 million working age youth (15-24) do to benefit from the economic growth and experience great difficulty in transitioning into decent employment.

With a large majority of youth having to contribute to household incomes, they cannot afford to be idle which leads to employment in the informal sector (accounting up to 80% in some countries). 70% of the youth in Sub-Saharan Africa are thus under-employed and considered to be part of the “working poor.”

# Successfully Supporting the Employability and Entrepreneurship Ambitions of Youth

The Next Economy Programme, led by SOS Children’s Villages The Netherlands, is an established and mature youth employment and entrepreneurship programme that shows that it creates jobs and opportunities for young people in challenging and fragile contexts. It enables partners in Nigeria, Mali, and Somalia in 6 locations (3 in Nigeria, 1 in Mali, 1 in Somalia, and 1 in Somaliland) to creating opportunities for youth. By working with young people, business incubation hubs, employability organisations, the private sector and government, it matches youth ambitions and career goals with needs and opportunities in the labour market. It allows youth to transition from school to decent work.

To date (2016-2019), this integrated programme focussed on supply of talented youth, matchmaking and demand and has led to 1.251 direct decent jobs created and 1660 indirect jobs for young people through accelerating business growth. A total of 5.139 young people received training. With € 7.25M in new funding from the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs for 2020-2023, we aim to create and sustain another 2.128 direct decent jobs and train 5.150 young people in life skills, employability, and entrepreneurship.

# Creating the Right Partnership

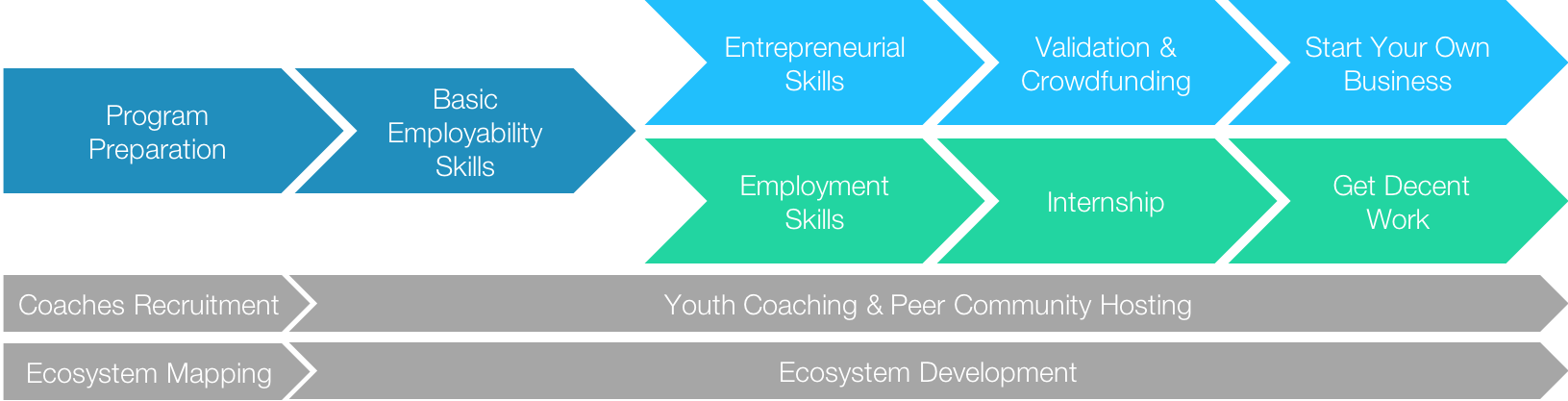
Building on experience, relationships and methodology from previous youth employment programs and engaging key sectors and stakeholders, The Next Economy combines skills development with broader efforts to establish a conducive economic environment for youth to become (self)employed. Bringing all stakeholders together in one program will lead to a more holistic understanding and more effective and locally-driven solutions addressing youth employability.

We believe that the innovative partnership of an experienced children/youth organization in SOS Children’s Villages, a business partnership expert in Crosswise Works, a skills organization in Aflatoun International, and an entrepreneurial support network (Impact Hub, GoodUp and local Hubs) brings a unique combination of training skills and ground presence within the local labour markets. Complimenting this, we have engaged private sector partners with SOS International’s Youthcan programme with large employers like DHL, AkzoNobel, Allianz, Johnson & Johnson and with local employers to match young people with jobs or entrepreneurial opportunities.

# The Next Economy Approach

The Next Economy provides an array of support to allow career transition in form of securing decent employment or starting a business. To do so, the Next Economy brings together:

* + Youth support, soft skill training and coaching network of SOS Children’s Villages.
  + Expertise of Crosswise Works in entrepreneurial support and community building.
  + Crowdfunding support from GoodUp, a social business that promotes access to capital and links to mentorship and support from large employers.

Each participant is supported by the program for a 6-month period and joins a community of peers and coaches that provides continued support after the program is completed.

The Next Economy takes a comprehensive approach towards addressing youth economic empowerment in Sub-Saharan Africa. Connecting the bottom-up individual participant support with institutional influence and resources, this partnership also aims to build the entrepreneurship ecosystem to advocate for structural improvements of local markets and policies in favour of youth employment.

After 4 years of implementation (2016-2019), the next iteration of The Next Economy project (2020-2023) seeks to build and improve its approach in three key ways. It will be work on:

* Linkages: Increasing the job placement rate and entrepreneurial success through labour market scans and connecting to local growth sectors for services, skills, and business partnerships.
* Equity: Increased emphasis on socially excluded youth and improving gender specific outcomes.
* Sustainability: Supporting alternative ways of delivering the programme through educational institutions and the model being used by other local and national initiatives in each country. Business hubs are supported in developing financially sustainable programmes, and disseminated regionally through online and in person capacity development.

The Next Economy programme model is proven to be scalable. With other resources, it has been replicated in Kenya and Ghana as well as its employability components in Ukraine, Romania and Belarus. With SOS Children’s Villages long term presence in 47 African countries, the program is ready to help youth fulfil their talents and achieve ‘decent’ work in Sub-Sahara Africa.