

# Brazil



© Luis Henrique Madaleno

## Executive summary

On the occasion of the programme's 10<sup>th</sup> 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 (MA), current and former participants, corporate volunteers, and other informed stakeholders. This Country Report presents the main evaluation findings for SOS Children Villages Brazil only, and it is part of a larger Global Evaluation Report.

### SOS CHILDREN'S VILLAGES IN BRAZIL

SOS Children's Villages Brazil was founded in 1967 in Porto Alegre. Its primary activity was to provide alternative care and protection to children and adolescents without parental care or who are at risk of losing it. Over the years, it has expanded its services and areas of action. Now, it is active in 12 states of Brazil, carrying out 187 projects in 27 cities. Its core mission is complemented by additional programmes focused on supporting families to prevent breakdown and on mentoring adolescents in their path towards independence and professional and personal growth.

### YOUTHCAN! IN BRAZIL

In 2011, GoTeach, the pioneer programme of YouthCan!, began in Brazil. It was implemented in Rio Bonito, one of the most vulnerable neighbourhoods of São Paulo, with the support of Deutsche Post Group DHL (DHL). In 2017, GoTeach evolved into YouthCan!. Its key features and goals remained unchanged, while its impact, stakeholders' network and number of beneficiaries significantly increased. The core mission of YouthCan! in Brazil is to improve youth employability by focusing not only on technical skills but also by positively impacting overall youth development to ensure that vulnerable youth can compete equally with other candidates in job recruitment processes.

#### • Management structure and alliances:

The implementation of programme activities is facilitated by YouthCan!'s **management team**, which is composed of programme coordinators and a pool of highly qualified educators. **Activities are developed** by YouthCan! educators **in collaboration with corporate volunteers** and with the support of other **third-sector organisations**. The YouthCan! stakeholders' network is thus composed of international corporate partners that finance the project annually and provide different kinds of theoretical and practical trainings, as well as by other local third-sector organisations that collaborate in the realisation of specific courses and programme tasks.

#### • Characteristics of participants

**YouthCan! participants** are usually young people, aged 15–22, from vulnerable backgrounds, living in different cities in the state of São Paulo, Brazil. For the majority of participants (62.5%), YouthCan! is their first contact with the services offered by SOS Children's Villages Brazil. Participants are allowed to participate in only one programme edition per corporate partner, which, on average, lasts approximately one year.

## SUMMARY OF THE MAIN EVALUATION FINDINGS

### • Main outcomes achieved by current and former participants

YouthCan! Brazil is focused on improving **soft skills and youth empowerment** by providing tools to increase self-confidence and **to overcome feelings of inadequacy and inferiority** that the majority of participants express. According to YouthCan! educators, SOS Alternative Care services educators and corporate volunteers, participants achieve the greatest improvements in these dimensions, which creates positive spill over in other dimensions. **Young people have overcome their introversion and acquired courage and determination** to actively improve their current conditions. In addition to increasing young people's well-being, YouthCan! attained positive results in enhancing participants' skills and competencies. In particular, both current and former beneficiaries have declared significant improvements **in professional and soft skills**. However, the programme in Brazil should increase the internship/job shadowing opportunities offered to participants, which can be an effective tool to facilitate their entry into the labour market. Indeed, the evaluation did not find a significant impact of YouthCan! on young people's employment level and financial self-sufficiency, as many of the interviewed former participants are still at least partially dependent from their family of origin. However, it has to be considered that the young age of the former participants partly influenced this result, as many of them were still in education at the time of the survey<sup>1</sup>. Finally, it is important to note that YouthCan! had a positive influence on participants' networks by giving **youth positive educational models** and reference points, both among peers and adults.

### • FOCUS: The online platform YouthLinks

The digital platform, YouthLinks, could play a crucial role in promoting networking and exchange among current beneficiaries and with mentors. However, **in Brazil, YouthLinks is not used as an educational tool but rather as a social networking tool**. As result, almost all participants (80%) were not aware of its existence.

### • FOCUS: The effects of COVID-19 on the programme

**The restrictions imposed by the pandemic had vastly different effects on former and current participants.** Former participants were strongly affected by the pandemic because of a reduction in employment opportunities available to them as well as lower financial stability. Indeed, many of them had to suspend their internships or were dismissed from their jobs due to the negative economic impact of COVID-19. Conversely, being younger and still in education, current participants did not strongly feel the effects of the pandemic on their current well-being or on their future career development.

### • Main outcomes achieved by corporate volunteers

Corporate volunteers are the cornerstone of YouthCan! activities' development. They are often responsible for the implementation of different practical and theoretical activities. According to all volunteers interviewed, participation in the programme was a **source of significant gratification as well as personal and professional satisfaction**. YouthCan! was also perceived as an opportunity to **better comprehend the inequalities and social barriers** that characterise Brazilian society.

The corporate volunteers pointed out that, for YouthCan! to be really effective, **their companies should increase their commitment** to it by giving participants more opportunities to be hired in the long term. In reality, the number of participants hired by the companies in which they interned is extremely low, and this certainly reduced the potential effectiveness of YouthCan!.

## CONCLUSIONS

YouthCan! Brazil is a well-structured programme, capable of implementing a holistic approach to improve the well-being and opportunities of vulnerable young people. It addresses youth unemployment by adopting an innovative approach that ensures the achievement of its objectives.

<sup>1</sup> In fact, as in the other three countries under analysis, the Brazilian MA was not able to provide the evaluator with contacts of former beneficiaries who had left YouthCan! more than four years earlier.

## LIST OF RECOMMENDATIONS

### 1. Integrate the offerings of YouthCan! to improve its effectiveness in introducing participants to the job market.

Reconceptualise the approach of the programme in order to ensure that its offerings are relevant to participants' needs and effectively increase their chances of obtaining employment.

### 2. Design and implement a structured monitoring system to follow up on participants during their participation in the programme both before and after they exit it.

The programme should develop a systematised database to collect participants' data, as well as indicators to conduct annual evaluations of the relevance of the services offered. This would ensure a better response both to participants' needs and the demands of the labour market.

### 3. Increase and diversify the funding sources of YouthCan! to increase financial sustainability.

Increase and diversify sources of funding by involving new corporate partners (in particular, local partners), by applying for international funding opportunities and taking advantage of public funding.

### 4. Improve the integration of YouthCan! with other services offered by SOS Children's Villages.

To ensure higher integration and coherence among SOS Children's' Villages services, the MA should improve communication and information sharing between YouthCan! and other SOS Children's Villages services and increase Alternative Care participants' involvement in YouthCan!.

### 5. Improve the content and accessibility of online activities.

To ensure the effectiveness of the programme, both in person and online, the MA should improve the online platform, particularly in terms of content quality and accessibility.