



Youth Power

Supporting young changemakers and their initiatives to spark positive impact



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SOS Children's Villages is the world's largest organisation focused on ensuring that children and young people without parental care or at risk of losing it grow up with the care, relationships, and support they need to become their strongest selves.

To implement Youth Power, SOS Children's Villages partnered with **ChangemakerXchange**, a global non-profit with over 12 years of experience supporting young changemakers and their initiatives, and **América Solidaria**, an international NGO with 20 years of experience working for the rights of children and adolescents in the Americas.

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Youth Power in West and Central Africa is a joint initiative of SOS Children's Villages and KfW Stiftung



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The most important thing I learned during Youth Power is that you must be the change you want to see, and the change you want to see tomorrow must start now, and it must start with you.

Ellen Kaliva,
a young person from Liberia



About Youth Power

Supporting young changemakers and their initiatives to spark positive impact

"Youth Power is the answer to the many problems of today's vulnerable young generation. This inclusive platform and programme promise to end poverty, reduce inequality, and combat climate change. Above all, this is where we can boost youth participation and advocacy."

Le Huynh Duc,
a young person from Vietnam

Young people worldwide have become powerful catalysts for solving our most pressing problems. Youth from the SOS Children's Villages are not different. Le Huynh Duc and 1509 other Youth Power participants from the SOS Children's Villages programmes are creating solutions through youth-led initiatives that contribute to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) across Africa, the Americas, Asia, and Europe. However, young people face severe personal and financial challenges when leading their initiatives with a high risk of burnout. For those who lack family and community support, these challenges compound their existing struggles of exclusion and discrimination.

This is where Youth Power comes in. Youth Power is a changemaker programme for young people aged 15-24 at risk of losing - or without - parental care. In parallel, their youth workers are taken on a learning journey on youth participation, helping them to empower youth as genuine agents of change. The driving philosophy is that the youth is the most suited to find solutions to their present and future challenges and (should) have the power to bring about positive change in their lives and communities. Youth Power gives young changemakers the confidence, skills, networks, and funding to spark real change.

Over the last four years, Youth Power has enabled 1.510 changemakers to provide services to over 32,378 people in over 110 communities - and - revealed a powerful truth: when we create spaces championing young people's unfiltered voices and lived experiences, they gain the confidence to navigate the barriers they face. When we invest in young people's ability to use their voices and lived experiences to become changemakers, we foster a new generation of leaders committed to achieving the SDGs for a more hopeful future.

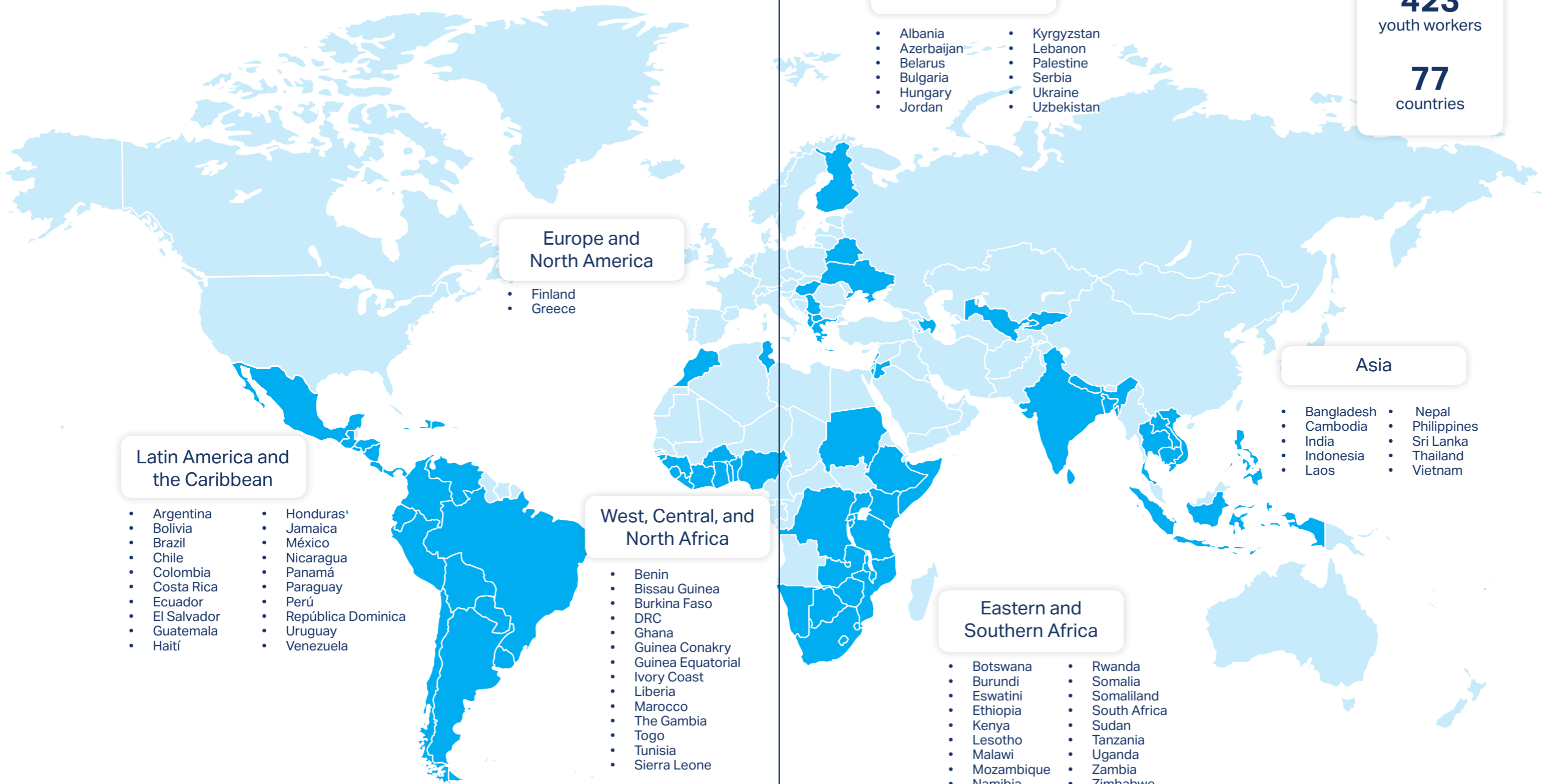
A global network of changemakers

IMPACT

1510
young people

423
youth workers

77
countries



Latin America and the Caribbean

- Argentina
- Bolivia
- Brazil
- Chile
- Colombia
- Costa Rica
- Ecuador
- El Salvador
- Guatemala
- Haití
- Honduras
- Jamaica
- México
- Nicaragua
- Panamá
- Paraguay
- Perú
- República Dominicana
- Uruguay
- Venezuela

Europe and North America

- Finland
- Greece

West, Central, and North Africa

- Benin
- Bissau Guinea
- Burkina Faso
- DRC
- Ghana
- Guinea Conakry
- Guinea Equatorial
- Ivory Coast
- Liberia
- Marocco
- The Gambia
- Togo
- Tunisia
- Sierra Leone

Central Europe and Middle East

- Albania
- Azerbaijan
- Belarus
- Bulgaria
- Hungary
- Jordan
- Kyrgyzstan
- Lebanon
- Palestine
- Serbia
- Ukraine
- Uzbekistan

Eastern and Southern Africa

- Botswana
- Burundi
- Eswatini
- Ethiopia
- Kenya
- Lesotho
- Malawi
- Mozambique
- Namibia
- Nigeria
- Rwanda
- Somalia
- Somaliland
- South Africa
- Sudan
- Tanzania
- Uganda
- Zambia
- Zimbabwe

Asia

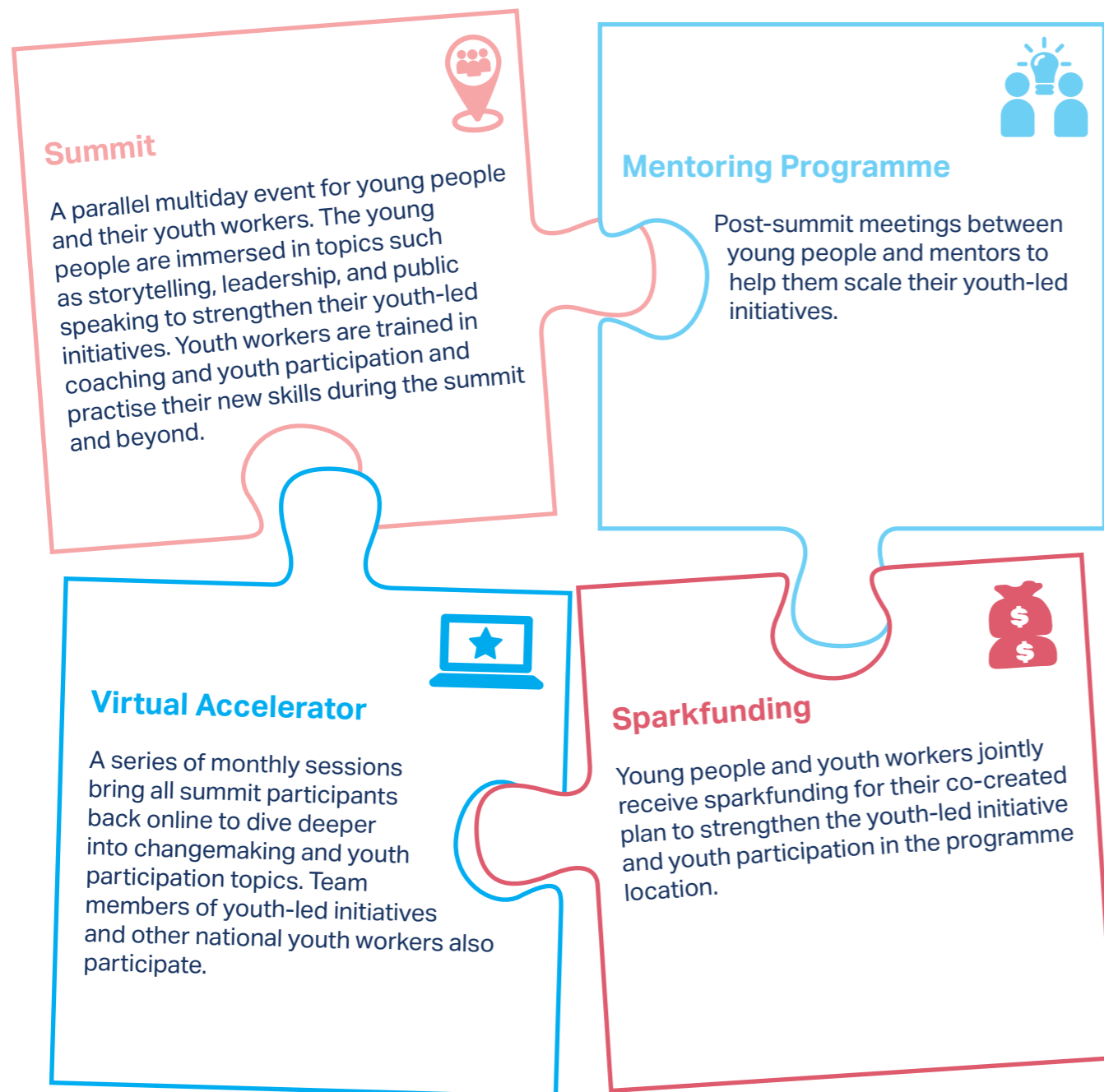
- Bangladesh
- Cambodia
- India
- Indonesia
- Laos
- Nepal
- Philippines
- Sri Lanka
- Thailand
- Vietnam

Note: the countries shown in dark blue are where Youth Power activities have taken place.

The approach

What makes Youth Power unique is the parallel approach to empowering young people with a changemaker *mindset* while supporting their youth workers to become changemaker *enablers*. Youth Power, therefore, contributes to putting Commitment 8 of the SOS Care Promise into practice: promoting education, participation, and steps to independent life.

Youth Power is a one-year learning journey consisting of four activities adaptable to each local and regional context:



"Youth Power allowed me to develop new competencies and skills personally and professionally. I discovered new talents and met new people, which awakened my interest in continuing to transform the future of my country."

Carmen Pacheco,
a young person from Honduras

"Youth Power spreads one important message: you can achieve whatever you imagine if you have the right support and someone to listen to you."

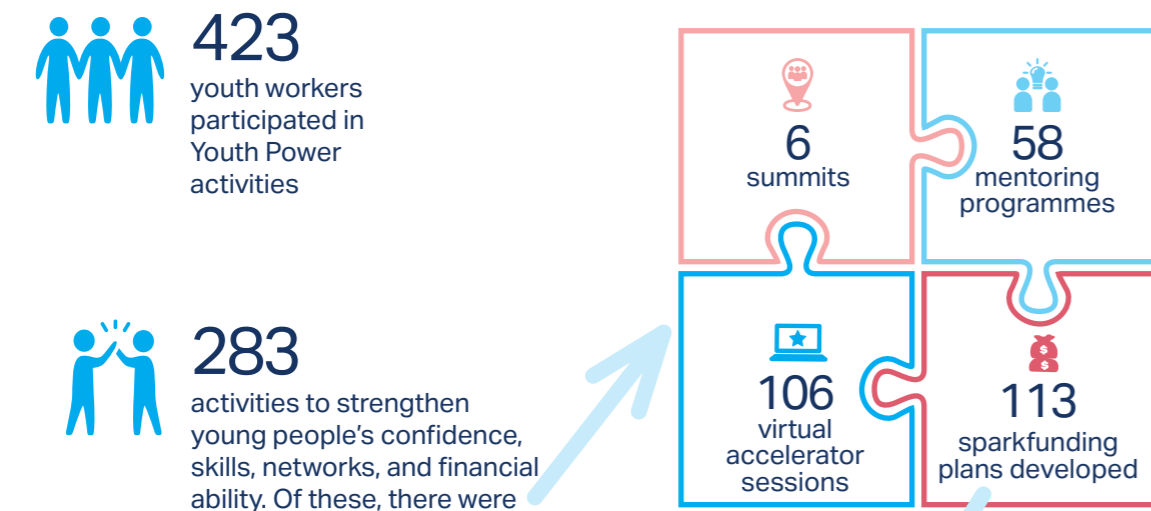
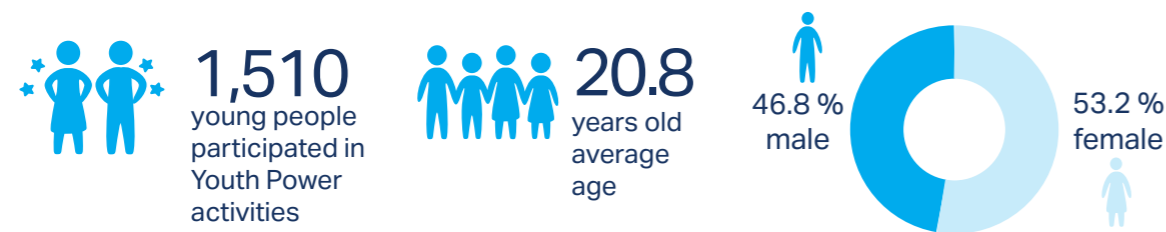
Emilija Golubovic,
a young person from Serbia

"Youth Power has dramatically improved my work with young people, allowing me to increase my confidence and responsibility. It has also allowed me to grow my self-confidence and appreciate my work more."

Francisco Camala Junior,
a youth worker from Guinea-Bissau

The reach

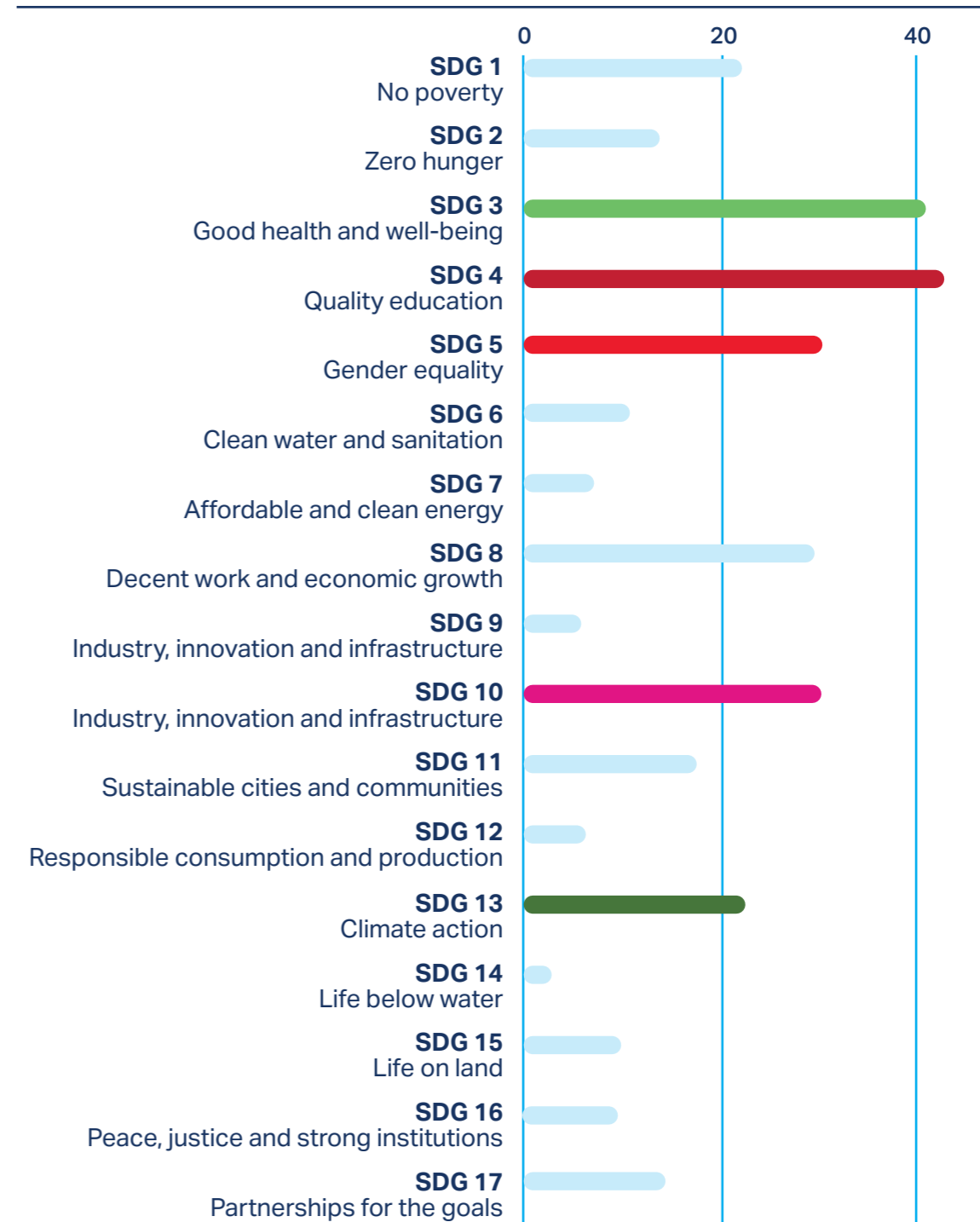
Youth Power is a programme for young changemakers to embrace a changemaker *mindset* and spark real change through youth-led initiatives.



The focus of sparkfunding plans are:



113 youth-led initiatives contributing to the SDGs.



87%

of the young people strengthened their confidence.



"Youth Power boosted my self-confidence. Before, I was a bit shy but felt safe expressing myself. You asked us deep questions and played games that allowed me to get to know myself better and gave me a sense of purpose. It reminded me that I am doing something great and important."

Heba Abuaisheh,
a young person from Jordan

81%

of the young people gained new skills to scale up their initiatives.



"Youth Power gave a new direction to our SOS waste management initiative. We were unaware that we contributed to the SDGs. We thought we did something relevant only to our area. We now seek to connect with other waste management organisations to learn and replicate best practices."

Gopika K R,
a young person from India

90%

of youth workers gained adequate skills to enable and foster meaningful youth participation.



"Youth Power has significantly influenced my role and responsibilities as a youth worker, placing young people at the forefront. This focus has deepened our relationships, boosted engagement, and fostered mutual respect and collaboration, enabling us to work better together."

Sawai Juntanoi,
a youth worker from Thailand



Stories of change

Meet inspiring young changemakers to learn about their youth-led initiatives and the impact of Youth Power



'Read to Lead' and 'One-Hour Talk'

Empowering children and young people through literacy and dialogue

Hanin Abu Znaid, Claudia Sharha, Ahmad Dandis, and Ameer Makhalfa

Our youth-led initiatives

Phones have replaced our culture of reading. We noticed more attention should be paid to book reading and non-formal education in Bethlehem. We created a library project called 'Read to Lead' inside the SOS Children's Villages office, where we invite children to read, offer storytelling training, and learn how to think creatively and organise a library.

We also noticed that young people experience high unemployment while employers set too many conditions in their hiring criteria. As young students and members of the Youth Council, we wanted to change this. That's why we created a 'One-Hour Talk' format between young people and decision-makers such as the internal management of SOS Children's Villages, the Ministry of Labor, The Head of the Chamber of Commerce, and university leaders. To prepare for the dialogues, an external expert empowered us with dialogue, presentation, and persuasion skills. After each 'One-Hour Talk' meeting, we followed up with the decision-makers to ensure that the dialogue resulted in concrete actions, for example, increased provisions for young people and stronger attention to our voices and input.

Our Youth Power experience

We are 15 young people who want to create change in our community. Youth Power was the first step that taught us how to think, talk, and negotiate as leaders and changemakers in our community. It enhanced our confidence in speaking to others and building new relationships with people outside SOS Children's Villages. After implementing our initiative, we started believing in ourselves—and each other—that we can truly make a change in our community. We can raise any issue we want with our voices.

Youth Power has inspired us to learn and do more for our community. We are proud to say that our two initiatives will continue beyond Youth Power, and despite the emergency, we are still very active. One of the councils that hosted a 'One-Hour Talk' loved our initiative so much that they want to continue supporting us. Youth Power and our youth-led initiatives have helped us face all the challenges in our country and support each other. We are facing many challenges, from moving safely between cities to dealing with the political issues in Palestine. We discuss the psychological impact of what is happening here with the children and help them do something beautiful. We believe what we learn should be passed on to others. That is our role, and we will continue to empower our children and youth to have a better future. Our future.



Thanks to the sparkfunding...

Young changemakers could strengthen their initiatives and enable SOS Children's Villages in Palestine to organise capacity-building sessions to increase youth participation and promote effective collaboration between young people and adults via:



Training sessions on dialogue, influence, persuasion, and presentation skills for young people.



Training sessions on youth development and participation for youth workers.

Education and Employment





Clean Communities, Healthy People

Promoting environmental responsibility

Emmanuel Koryan

Our youth-led initiative

Solid waste is an inevitable part of life. Still, inappropriate waste management has become an intergenerational public health concern and danger in urban Buchanan City in Grand Bassa County. Without remorse, people dispose of solid waste in public places, including markets, streets, parks, children's playgrounds, and school campuses. Many do not recognise their actions' dangers to public health and that it's everyone's responsibility to create a clean environment—instead, a cycle of blame games between the citizens and government ensues.

'Clean Communities, Healthy People' is a community sanitation project that hopes to create a clean environment for at least 5,000 people, including about 2,000 students and 3,000 community dwellers. The objective is to create equal access to safe, inclusive, and accessible green public spaces at five secondary schools and two at-risk communities in Buchanan City.

Our Youth Power experience

Before Youth Power, I already had a growth mindset, but I didn't have anyone to motivate me to start the changemaking process. Youth Power exposed me to a changemaker mindset, young inspiring people, finances, and mentorship, which were key aspects that helped me to carry out my initiative. I became motivated. I have attended many training and seminars, but those were mere talks without implementation. Through Youth Power, I got to practise what I learned. The first thing I practised was public speaking. Before Youth Power, I didn't even dare to talk to my colleagues, but now I can stand before 10 or 1000 people and express myself fully.

Thanks to the sparkfunding...



Young changemakers could expand the reach of their initiatives, and SOS Children's Villages in Liberia organised capacity-building sessions for educators and young people.

Environment
and Community
Sanitation



Liberia



Simplemente Libres/ Simply free

Fostering acceptance
through education and support

Greysi Russo

Our youth-led initiative

We wanted to improve the everyday acceptance of people with sexual or gender diversity. It is necessary to say "No to Homophobia." We constantly see rejection and bullying towards people with sexual diversity which hurts their self-esteem. This discrimination is wrong, so we created 'Simplemente Libres,' a great initiative with Nakary Rojas and Kevin Foothm.

We invite adolescents, young people, and adults to join our project to combat harassment, promote acceptance, and provide mutual support to impact our society positively. We developed workshops about gender, sexual orientation, and gender expression and created educational and recreational activities to raise awareness. In the preparation phase of the project, we managed to carry out a "NO TO HOMOPHOBIA" awareness campaign to help young children and adults know more about the topic and prevent discrimination.

Our Youth Power experience

Youth Power motivated me to become a young changemaker who inspires and can change society. I have learned not to lower my head when obstacles arise and to move forward. Youth Power has also reinforced my values and self-esteem by wanting to do things, face the difficulties that arise, and thus have good results in our project.



Diversity and
Inclusion



Venezuela



Thanks to the sparkfunding...

Young changemakers could promote diversity and inclusion, and SOS Children's Villages in Venezuela activated more young people and organised powerful training sessions for 26 young people on the topics of:



Youth participation.



How to start and plan a youth-led initiative.



Bus Stop

Enhancing community life

Adilet Oktyabrov

Our youth-led initiative

In our beautiful Cholpon-Ata city in Kyrgyzstan, we saw elderly and pregnant women standing and waiting for the bus - every day. There was no space to sit. We thought this was a problem. Our team decided to install bus stop benches with our sparkfunding project to encourage young people to participate and contribute to our local community life.

We met with the city's mayor and discussed the project. He assigned a lawyer to help us get the permits to install the benches. Baktybek, my team member, found a company to manufacture the benches. We installed four benches at two bus stops in Cholpon-Ata city. After installing the bus stops, we saw residents using them. Nobody knows that we were the ones who did it. But it doesn't matter to me because I am proud of the great job that we did.

Our Youth Power experience

Youth Power is special, compared to other programs, because we gained new skills, new experiences, and not just theory. Here, I discovered that I enjoy the process of implementing projects. I like doing team meetings at specific times, planning and executing our activities, and teamwork. This experience improved my leadership skills, and I became more confident. It was inspiring to meet and exchange with young people from other countries during the online meetings who also presented their youth-led projects. They are doing a good job, and that makes me feel good. Because of Youth Power, I became more responsible and attended more activities. Most of all, I realised that by doing small things, we change and improve the world.

Thanks to the sparkfunding...

Young changemakers could implement two youth-led initiatives, and SOS Children's Villages in Kyrgyzstan raised awareness about youth participation among children, young people, staff, community, and government partners via:



One training session on violence awareness and prevention for 160 children and young people.



Two training sessions on child and youth participation for 34 caregivers, such as youth workers and SOS mums and aunts.



Two training sessions on child and youth participation for 63 children and adolescents.



Two trainings on child and youth participation for 53 government partners.

Community and Infrastructure



Kyrgyzstan



Zero Waste SOS - SOS Children's Villages in Cochin

Revolutionising waste management

Gopika K. R.

Our youth-led initiative

We observed that waste management in our village was ineffective; therefore, we created Zero Waste SOS. All types of waste were collected together, which increased pressure on our resources. We decided to create awareness in our village about biodegradable and non-biodegradable waste and the proper way to separate them before disposal. We held sessions for children on managing waste effectively and provided posters to each household and the SOS Children's Villages' main office. We visit each house once a week to ensure that the waste management is conducted correctly.

One of the happiest things is that now everybody is aware, even children, will place chocolate wrappers in appropriate waste bins. Similarly, biodegradable waste from home is deposited in the waste pit and used as manure in the kitchen garden.

Our Youth Power experience

In Youth Power, we are heard, which was a totally new experience and gave us a lot of confidence. I enjoyed presenting our initiative, 'Zero Waste SOS,' and learning from other children from Asian countries. I want to inspire and think about solving the issue of an unclean environment for children from a young age. I now feel I am a changemaker.



Thanks to the sparkfunding...

Young changemakers could conduct awareness-raising sessions for 70 children, purchase waste bins, and visit Puthenkurizu Grama Panchayath to learn about waste management. SOS Children's Villages in India encouraged more young people to take the lead and create a multi-disciplinary learning approach for young leaders to develop the ability, skills, and mindset to become changemakers via:



Regular youth committee meetings to promote peer-to-peer interaction for 300 young people.



Youth representation in different local forums and government meetings.



Awareness-raising sessions on communication and decision-making for 75 young people.

Environment and Education



Promoting healthy and responsible sexual health among youth

Skill building and peer education to foster informed decisions

Déborah Rapaogwendé Ouedraogo

Our youth-led initiative

Healthy sexuality means living a sexuality that is egalitarian, consistent with one's values, and respectful of oneself and others. Responsible sexuality refers to the ability to make informed decisions about protecting oneself and others. We noticed a lot of young people had undesirable pregnancies in Ouagadougou. As a fourth-year medicine student and a young girl, I thought it was important to be part of providing training to my community to eradicate undesired pregnancy and sexually transmitted diseases. This project will help reach as many young people as possible and raise awareness among those participating in the SOS Children's Villages programme and the community. We achieve this through skill-building activities, the organisation of awareness-raising sessions, and peer education through the training of peer educators; 100 young people developed the ability to make decisions to adopt safe and healthy sexual behaviour.

Our Youth Power experience

Youth Power is for young people, led by young people, and implemented by young people. I already had the idea for my initiative before Youth Power but needed more funding to implement it. The opportunity during Youth Power with its sparkfunding came at a perfect time to implement my project and promote reproductive health. The first thing that really helped and guided my youth-led initiative was the strengthening of capacity I received from our youth workers. Youth Power also gave me a network where I met other young people to exchange on these issues. Finally, I became more leadership-oriented with higher self-esteem and self-confidence, enabling me to be more involved in social life and bring about change.



Sexual and Reproductive Health



Thanks to the sparkfunding...

Young changemakers could implement their initiative, and SOS Children's Villages in Burkina Faso raised awareness of sexual and reproductive health for young people and SOS parents via:



Five awareness-raising sessions on the impact of early pregnancy for young people



One capacity-building session to train SOS parents to have a dialogue with children and young people on the topic of sexual and reproductive health and dialogue



One training session of 100 young people on sexual and reproductive health rights (including awareness-raising sessions on sexually transmitted diseases)

BioGas

Transforming waste into biogas for cooking and organic fertiliser

Lasantha Ranasinghe

Our youth-led initiative

During the COVID-19 pandemic and the economic crisis in Sri Lanka, we received quotas on national gas that limited our ability to cook food. I developed 'BioGas' to cook our food and save our budget during this time, with support from the National Youth Council. I created biogas by effectively managing and separating waste, which produces biogas when biological waste is enclosed with bacteria. Together with other young people, we motivated each other to effectively manage waste, generate gas for cooking and organic fertiliser for the garden, and protect the environment.

This is how the initiative 'BioGas' then became a part of the SOS Children's Villages organisation and community and has been really helpful in supporting young people through the financial crisis. Our neighbours have also been very supportive as we reduce bad odours in our neighbourhood, and they can manage their waste better. Finally, we have replicated 'BioGas' in two other programme locations, SOS Children's Villages in Galle and Pilyandala.

Our Youth Power experience

I was not used to being communicative with other young people. Youth Power taught me to communicate and collaborate with others and how to gain their ideas and enthusiasm. We learned sophisticated techniques and best practices in my field that I never encountered before. The mentoring, too, was deeply rewarding. However, the most vital part was collaborating with other young people and co-workers to gain confidence by learning to adapt to unexpected challenges.

As a result, 'BioGas' has had a major impact on our young community, and we increased youth participation by working with young people to develop innovative solutions and inspire them with communication and budgeting skills. The project that I initiated should not stop with me; it should continue. I want someone from the youth village to take over, and I will give them our fullest support.



Environment
and Energy



Thanks to the sparkfunding...

Young changemakers could scale their project, and SOS Children's Villages increased youth participation in other programme locations by:



Replicating the 'BioGas' project to two other programme locations.



Establishing six youth committees in every six SOS Children's Villages locations in Sri Lanka.



Organising two training sessions on youth participation for young people and staff members as well as one workshop on environmental protection for young people.



Home Based Care

Creating inclusive healthcare services

Miski Siefedin

Our youth-led initiative

Our home healthcare services initiative was born out of a desire to provide accessible and quality healthcare services for people with disability and older people in our community. We founded this initiative with support from Youth Power, and our team comprises passionate individuals committed to making a difference in healthcare delivery, including healthcare professionals and doctors. We aim to provide holistic and compassionate care to those in need while creating employment opportunities for healthcare professionals.

Our Youth Power experience


The support from Youth Power has been instrumental in the success of our initiative. I established and grew our initiative through the Youth Power resources and guidance, ensuring our service reaches those most in need. On a personal level, Youth Power has been a catalyst for growth and development. Being part of this program has instilled a sense of responsibility and purpose. It has empowered me to take charge of our ideas and turn them into tangible solutions that benefit our community. Youth Power has significantly enhanced my personal ability and confidence to lead and enact positive change.

The training, mentorship, and resources have equipped me with the skills and knowledge to navigate challenges and overcome obstacles in pursuing our goals. It has also fostered a sense of resilience and determination, enabling me to persevere in the face of adversity and continue making a difference.

Health, inclusion, and employment

A world map with a red location pin over Ethiopia. To the right is a circular icon representing the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), with the letters 'SDG' in the center.

Thanks to the sparkfunding...

 Young changemakers established and grew their initiative with the support of SOS Children's Villages in Ethiopia, which accompanied the young people on this exciting journey.



Green Travel Agency, Mogadishu

Facilitating access to quality education and opportunities abroad

Farhan Dirie Mohamed

Our youth-led initiative

Somalia is still recovering from the civil war. Thankfully, it's peaceful today, but our infrastructure has to be rebuilt from the ground up. The education sector is unregulated, and the quality is still not up to the world standard. Many young people are therefore looking for recognised higher education abroad. However, they are unable to access proper information about universities and other travel-related issues. 'Green Travel Agency' in Mogadishu is unique in helping youth get quality education abroad and making the process easier. We offer advice on what universities and countries, like Turkey and Malaysia, offer full or partial scholarships. We also provide internship opportunities for young people from SOS Children's Villages.

Our Youth Power experience

Youth Power helped me and the Green Travel Agency in several ways. Firstly, I got the motivation to start our initiative and not wait for the perfect time or condition. Secondly, the networking and knowledge transfer between other young people were of great influence. I'm still connected to my friends from all the Youth Power countries and continue exchanging experiences. Fourth, the organisation of Youth Power was excellent from start to finish. The youth leaders, mentors, hosts, and trainers were perfect. Fifth, one of the activities allowed me to visualise my personal story, challenges, and opportunities and helped me evaluate my journey and career - and made me realise that I could do more than I thought.

Thanks to the sparkfunding...

Young people could grow their initiative, while SOS Children's Villages in Somalia increased awareness and knowledge on youth participation among young people and co-workers. They organised two trainings targeting 27 young people and nine youth workers with the aim to:



Increase young people's practical knowledge and skills to ensure their leadership and meaningful participation in the matters that affect their lives.



Reflect on the status of youth participation in the National Office and build recommendations on how to strengthen it.

Education and Employment



SOS Salud Mental y Bienestar / Mental Health and Wellbeing SOS

Empowering young people and adults with mental health tools and support

Luis Vásquez

Our youth-led initiative

During the COVID-19 pandemic, we realised we had suitable physical health, water, and food. But we went nearly two years without seeing our friends, which made us sad. Mental health is an innovative topic in our country because the Guatemalan government does not prioritise or invest in it. Since everything is connected to our mental health, we wanted to provide young people with tools to manage their emotions in everyday and difficult situations.

The 'SOS Salud Mental y Bienestar' campaign was born out of Youth Power, and we hosted workshops and forums and created media focused on mental health, youth participation, and leadership. Our target audience is young people, educators, and staff from SOS Children's Villages in Guatemala. We hope to give participants tools concerning mental health, find support networks and self-help groups, and provide management tips on emotions.


Our Youth Power experience


Youth Power has been an excellent experience and extremely different from other projects because we got to lead and be responsible for implementing the projects. I had a high degree of commitment and learned how to plan, prepare reports, execute a budget, and carry out activities for young people at a scheduled time.

Thanks to the sparkfunding...

Young people could establish and run their initiative, and SOS Children's Villages in Guatemala implemented activities promoting youth participation through workshops, forums, and media focusing on mental health via:

 Facilitated safe spaces within family-like care programmes and family-strengthening communities for young people to express their thoughts and feelings

 Creation of different resources (infographics, comics, and a podcast) to increase knowledge of youth participation among young people

 Workshops for adults to strengthen youth participation skills



Mental Health



Guatemala



