



Youth Workforce & Skills Development

By 2030, the global population is expected to reach 8.6 billion, with the [youth population increasing to more than 1.3 billion](#). UNICEF reports that 63 million adolescents (aged 10-19) are out of school. According to the ILO, 267 million young people (aged 15-24) are not in employment, education, or training (NEET), and young people are 3X as likely as adults to be unemployed. Over 75% of young workers are engaged in informal employment, and many face poor working conditions. Many youth need more skills, networks, and opportunities to succeed in their communities and workplaces. There is a shortage of skilled workers to meet employer demand. The ILO estimates that nearly 75% of the world's 1.8 billion young people lack the skills needed for the labor market. Young people struggle to find jobs or remain underemployed for extended periods, especially in crisis and conflict-affected contexts.

CARE's Vision: Equipping Young People to Navigate the World of Work

By 2030, CARE aims to support 50 million people including adolescents and youth to have more equitable access to and control over economic resources and opportunities. 52% of CARE's global projects work with adolescents and youth as a key impact group.

CARE partners with individuals, communities, and systems to deliver participatory, advancing gender equality education and workforce development programs. Our interventions contribute to better outcomes in flexible learning systems, inclusive livelihoods, and viable employment for underserved groups. We support communities to overcome unequal social and gender norms that constrain choices and the ability to gain skills and earn livelihoods—especially for women and girls.

CARE's experience in education and livelihoods has resulted in bold theories of change, transformative frameworks, and innovative delivery models to achieve social and economic empowerment of women and youth. We are committed to achieving collective impact on a scale through the participation of the hardest-to-reach adolescents and youth. Our teams partner with youth-led and youth-serving organizations to ensure the relevance and sustainability of our programs. This experience allows us to scale up successful models and multiply our impact, ensuring more young people have access to the opportunities they deserve.

CARE partners with adolescents and youth across the humanitarian-to-development continuum to ensure they have the competencies, resources, and enabling environment to actualize their empowerment. Our goal is to allow more children, adolescent girls, and youth access to the education, skills, and support services they need to thrive. CARE advocates for greater engagement with adolescents and youth across the humanitarian-development continuum to build agency, competencies, and systems for improved access to education and work.

CARE's Adolescent/Youth Empowerment Framework

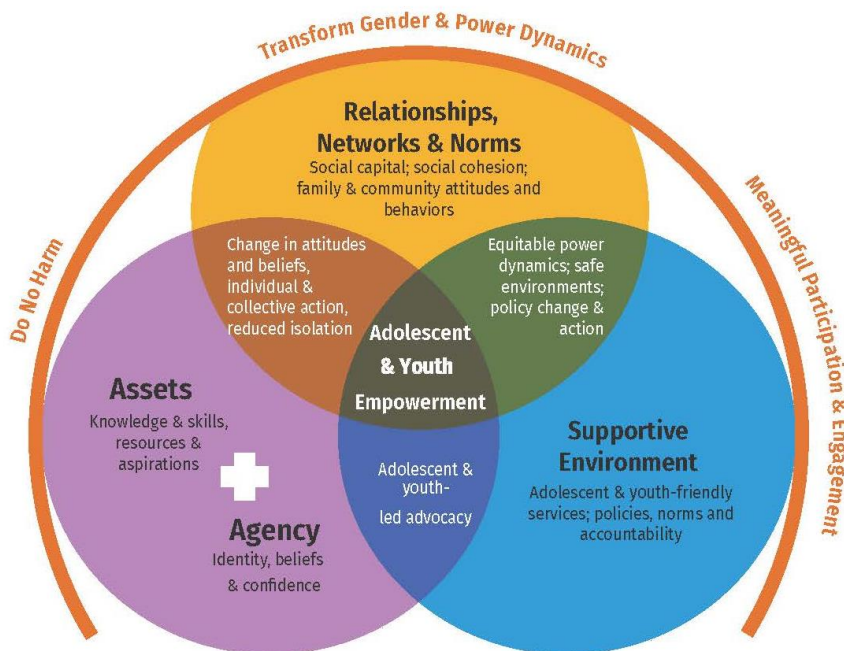
Guided by Positive Youth Development principles, we work to improve quality education and inclusive skills development, implement advancing gender equality approaches, and build capacity at the individual, community, and systems levels.

CARE works to:

- *Build* adolescent/youth assets and agency;
- *Enhance* supportive relationships, networks and norms; and
- *Transform* the structural environment.

At the nexus of the three areas, change is sparked across the empowerment model to:

- Re-envision gender and power dynamics
- Pave the way for meaningful participation and engagement
- Do No Harm (safe spaces for living, learning and work)



To address the skills shortage and mismatch between skills employers need and the skills job seekers have, CARE works to give young people the knowledge, capacities, and tools to make informed choices, live healthy and productive lives, and pursue opportunities to realize their aspirations. Our approach is designed to create multiple pathways for young people as they transition into adulthood. It creates a culture of enterprise, market access, awareness, and agricultural and financial literacy that empowers them to launch, lead, or scale micro-enterprises and employment opportunities.

CARE's **key interventions in workforce and skills development** include:

- Improve quality of education for school-to-work transition
- Offer accelerated and/or nonformal education for out-of-school youth
- Connect young people to TVETs and other community training providers
- Connect youth to internships, apprenticeships, and jobs
- Build government capacity in inclusive, quality training
- Provide market-driven skills training for jobs of tomorrow, including in blue and green sectors and STEM
- Provide training and linkages for market-driven life skills and leadership skills
- Encourage non-traditional employment opportunities for women and other marginalized groups
- Provide training on safe and dignified employment, addressing workplace harassment and policy development
- Support entrepreneurs with training, access to capital, and other business development services

Supporting Locally Led, Sustainable Learning and Livelihood Outcomes

Supporting Community-centered, Inclusive, and Quality-driven workforce development systems

CARE's approach to youth workforce and skills development elevates local partners and youth voices in the following ways:

1. We foster partnerships with local organizations and the private sector– specifically partners that value, represent, or are led by women, girls, youth, and marginalized groups.
2. We support our local partners to lead the design and implementation of programming.
3. We shift power, decision-making, and leadership to local youth-led organizations, leaders, and communities through participatory and inclusive programmatic approaches, including feedback and social accountability mechanisms, co-creation, and locally led MEL practices.
4. We use our convening power to bring partners together into robust networks that harness the power of collective action.

Highlighted Programs and Partnerships

In **Cambodia**, we have built adolescents' STEM and digital literacy skills. CARE and Team4Tech focused on content creation, coding, and critical thinking skills, as well as increasing student access to information, in particular for girls from minority groups. A total of 2,889 students (52% from minority groups, 52% girls) accessed computer labs and

tablets, developed student-led magazines, and used EdTech in science and mathematics classes. This program trained EdTech master trainers to increase the capacity of the education system to support teachers to use EdTech in classrooms. An evaluation showed students in EdTech **intervention schools had significantly higher learning scores in Grade 7 and Grade 8 vis à vis those from comparison schools.**

Also, in **Cambodia**, we worked from 2015 to 2021 with secondary schools in remote indigenous areas to enhance 21st century skills, including ICT, critical thinking, and STEM. CARE partnered with the private sector to improve STEM education for girls in secondary schools of Ratanak Kiri and Mondul Kiri Provinces by enhancing teacher capacity, providing STEM teaching materials such as microscopes, computer labs, laptops and biology and chemistry equipment.

The Bijoyee Activity is a USAID-funded program focused on locally led youth development in **Bangladesh**. It is designed with Positive Youth Development (PYD) principles and seeks to improve youth systems while empowering youth to engage in decision-making. We partner with the Ministry of Youth and Sports and the Department for Youth Development (DYD) to empower 250,000 diverse youth, strengthen youth-led organizations, and create an enabling environment for youth engagement. Bijoyee targets NEET youth (82%), women (60%), communities in Cox's Bazaar (6%), youth with disabilities, indigenous youth, Dalit youth, and those with diverse sexual orientation and gender identities. Prior to Bijoyee, the USAID-funded SHOUHARDO III program used a PYD approach to build technical, critical thinking and interpersonal skills of youth. It worked with DYD and the private sector to set up 1,067 youth as local service providers and **trained 9,500 youth (50% women) in market-oriented trades that increased incomes by 358%.**

Youth or Village Savings and Loan Associations (YSLAs/VSLAs): Recognizing that entrepreneurs in marginalized communities need access to working capital, role models and moral support.

VSLAs are groups of 15-30 members whose collective savings seed loans to individual members for education, entrepreneurship, and other transformative investments. Loan repayment supports a cycle of community development and economic growth. VSLAs also create an entry point for building social capital, gender equity, health, and can also support the cost of education. In several programs, CARE involves youth and adolescents in village savings and loan associations to enhance their income and business opportunities.

- **In Somalia, the average monthly income of VSLA members increased from \$15 to \$24.**
- **In Mali, CARE has established 18,349 VSLA groups with 404, 973 young women participants.**
- **In addition to encouraging young female entrepreneurs, some of the groups now support their own children's participation in school.**

In **Zimbabwe**, CARE-led Takunda Resilience and Food Security Activity (RFSA) funded by USAID/BHA builds on non-formal education and TVET programming to provide youth with skills development and employability services. The interventions include life skills and adapted upskilling services in center-based TVET and through trainers in public institutions and private community-based providers. The program was informed by youth-focused assessments and gendered labor market analysis to determine upskilling and employment opportunities in on-farm, off-farm, and non-farm sectors. TVET curriculum integrates basic numeracy and life skills followed by work readiness and financial and entrepreneurship competencies. Such a holistic approach to youth training improves their chance of securing employment in formal jobs, informal self-employment, and microenterprise development. The program targets 2,500 youth for upskilling in relevant trades for the rural and urban economies. Of the trained cohorts, **20 percent (500 graduates) are supported to pursue apprenticeship and placement in formal enterprises.**

In **Thailand**, the 'She Feeds the World' Program with funding from PepsiCo Foundation implements the Next Generation Farmers-YANG Project to engage young farmers in on-farm and off-farm skill development and linkages with markets and global value chains. Young farmers are trained in the Farmers Field and Business School (FFBS) approach to improve climate resilient agriculture practices, extension services and agro-enterprise development. Microgrants are distributed to established farmers to support the capacity-building of young farmers, particularly women. Key initiatives include income generating activities in green skills for the agriculture sector including potatoes, high value vegetable and fruit crops, sales of improved soils, aggregation services, and agrifood services. Utilizing phone-based communication apps including Line, build participants' skills in marketing, finance, and decision-making. **The project will reach 10,000 participants in five provinces.**

Michelle Uses Entrepreneurship Skills to Continue Her Education



Michelle participated in CARE's *Empowering Adolescents for Lifelong Learning* project. "My teacher taught me that in every business I should be able to calculate whether I am making a profit or loss," she says. "When I visited my grandmother, I found her roasting maize. She gave me a brief lesson on how to do it. When I returned home, I tried to roast some maize, but it did not come out good. The following day I tried for the second time. But it was only on my third trial when my aunt, after tasting, said, 'Apa wagona apa' (these are perfect!)." Michelle decided to start selling roasted maize. "Since then, I have embraced selling roasted maize as my business. I earn enough profit to cover my daily school expenses. I am balancing my schoolwork and business, as I only sell during break and lunchtime. Even when I complete school if I fail to get a job, I can expand my business and make a living."

CARE's **global** accelerated non-formal education and leadership development model, *Strengthening Opportunities for Adolescent Resilience* (SOAR), addresses a critical lack of opportunities for out-of-school children (especially girls) to acquire key academic and life skills. In a compressed 11-month timeframe, SOAR builds learners' foundational literacy, numeracy, financial literacy, digital skills, leadership and life skills, and adolescent hygiene, and sexual and reproductive health.

The initiative has scaled to **nine** countries, providing accelerated education to 705,186 students and life skills to more than 4 million girls and has included impressive results. For example, in **Somalia**, the USAID and FCDO-funded Adolescent Girls' Education in Somalia (AGES) program has reached 90,698 out-of-school adolescents and youth, using accelerated education and leadership and life skills development to transition them to formal education or self- or wage-employment and boost youth-led civic action. Youth have also been supported with business training and apprenticeships, which resulted in 29% of graduates being employed/ self-employed within six months of completion and increased average monthly income from \$15 to \$24. In **India**, **85% of graduates have transitioned into government schools**. Among the graduates, 20% of girls went on to college, and 10% became entrepreneurs, with estimated earnings of \$20,000 after age 25, doubling their income.

In **Egypt**, CARE is partnering with Microsoft Philanthropies, the Ministry of Youth and Sports and the Ministry of Communications and Information Technology on a national initiative to empower over 600,000 underserved youth, upskill them with digital and employability skills, and provide job placement support. CARE is training government trainers to build institutional capacity and has launched an online portal for job and leadership skills, **training over 30,000 young people, developing 35 courses in Arabic on the portal, and partnering with 200 companies for demand-driven training**.

In **Somalia**, CARE enhances local capacity for market-driven, advancing gender equality TVET. The EU-funded program trained national TVET centers to roll out new integrated curricula, including activities supporting girls' enrollment and retention. In Puntland, 530 students enrolled in national TVET centers, 48% of whom were girls. 56% of students benefitted from internships in the private sector, with 55% of the interns being girls. The project trained a group of trainers on constructing and maintaining solar power stations. The selection of trades responds to local market demands and enables the expansion of solar energy use in Somalia. The project also trained MOE quality assurance staff to monitor quality standards for "green" TVET.

CARE's results in adolescent and youth empowerment highlight the potential of all young people — and the critical importance of investing in them. When enhanced agency and assets are coupled with supportive relationships and environments, CARE's programming has demonstrated that adolescent/youth-led action can be impactful and cost-effective. Young people can shape the future in powerful ways that benefit everyone.

For more information on CARE's programs in youth skill development, visit care.org/our-work/education-and-work or contact Rachel Hartgen, Rachel.Hartgen@care.org

