



**Resilient – confident – ready for work**

**Help a Child's vision on youth**

November 2020

# Table of contents

<b>1. Introduction</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>2. Why the youth?</b>	<b>4</b>
2.1 The place of youth in our Theory of Change	4
<b>3. Who are the youth?</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>4. Youth's aspirations and constraints</b>	<b>9</b>
4.1 Access to land	10
4.2 Access to finance	11
4.3 Access to information	11
4.4 Access to business skills	12
4.5 Access to life skills	13
4.6 Perception of agriculture	13
<b>5. Context of youth employment</b>	<b>15</b>
<b>6. Important approaches for youth</b>	<b>17</b>
6.1 Youth & Work embedded in our CCCD approach	17
6.2 Youth & Work embedded in the PiP approach	17
<b>7. Our Youth &amp; Work approach</b>	<b>22</b>
7.1 General framework	22
7.2 Critical elements	25
7.3 Elements and sequence of our Youth & Work approach	26



# 1. Introduction

This document describes the vision of Help a Child on youth. What is the place of youth in our overall Theory of Change? How do we define youth? What are the ambitions and constraints of youth in our programs areas? What are Help a Child's key approaches for youth, and ultimately, what is Help a Child's approach on Youth and Work?

## **Structure of this document**

In chapter 2 we start with our overall Theory of Change. What is the place of youth in the overall Theory of Change of Help a Child? In chapter 3, we take a closer look at the group of youth: who are they exactly and how do we define them? Chapter 4 looks at aspirations and challenges of youth, especially within rural settings. Chapter 5 describes the context of youth employment and the positioning of Help a Child in this field. Chapter 6 describes our main approaches for youth. Chapter 7 is especially about Help a Child's Youth & Work approach, based on the elements presented in the previous chapters.



## 2. Why the youth?

Help a Child is dedicated to support vulnerable children and their families to have a loving and dignified life and a promising future. Help a Child has as its main goal to improve the well-being of children through supportive communities.

### 2.1 The place of youth in our Theory of Change

The Theory of Change of Help a Child<sup>1</sup> shows how Help a Child contributes to its main goal. The Theory of Change shows four pathways of change:

- A. Children are resilient to overcome barriers and are prepared for the future ;
- B. Parents are able to take care of themselves and their children;
- C. Youth are resilient, confident and economically active;
- D. The Community has social cohesion, can participate in economic development and is able to cope with crises.

Pathway A involves interventions that deal directly with the primary target group of Help a Child, namely the children.

Pathways B and D have an indirect positive influence on children, by ensuring that parents and caregivers are able to provide for their children and by creating an enabling community environment which contributes to a positive development of children.

Pathway C reflects the fact that within the target group of children (0-18 years) a considerable proportion of this group comprises youngsters who will soon become parents and who will need to be prepared for this task. Also, they will take on responsibilities as family caretakers and as full-fledged citizens within their communities. Help a Child wants to support these youngsters to become role models and leaders of tomorrow who can play an important role in positive transformation of the communities they are part of.

The Youth pathway of Help a Child has been defined as: 'Youth are resilient, confident and economically active'. The long-term objective is formulated as: Marginalized youth are empowered, have decent work and grow out of poverty.

---

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.helpachild.org/explore-help-a-child/theory-of-change/>.



From this point of view, there is a focus on ensuring a smooth transition from education to work, whereby the youth are well-prepared to enter the world of work and able to earn a decent and sustainable income. Empowerment, however, should not only be seen in relation to (self)employment, but should also be seen in a wider sense, as a process of becoming stronger and more confident, especially in controlling one's life and claiming one's rights.



### 3. Who are the youth?

International organisations such as the UN, the OECD and others, as well as national governments, use varying definitions of 'youth' or 'young people'. Most UN bodies (including the ILO and the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization – UNESCO) define youth and young people as anyone between the ages of 15 and 24; this is also the definition used for official UN statistics. However, some bodies use other age ranges, such as the African Youth Charter and the AfDB who define youth as between 15 and 35.

Regarding the variation in definitions, the UNDP finds that while most countries and institutions use an age-based definition, others adopt a more sociological 'life cycle' approach. In this approach, a major transition that is assumed to occur in young people's lives is the school-to-work transition. The problem with defining a narrow age range like 15–24 is that the relevant transitions can also occur outside this age range. For example, within the ILO there is growing pressure to increase the age range of 'youth' to 15–29, precisely because not all youth have finished education or entered work by the age of 25. In other cases, young people may assume adult roles at earlier stages (e.g. be financially independent or breadwinners already during childhood).

In the table below are illustrated the definitions of 'youth' by various international organizations. The considerably different scales of who is considered 'youth' or a 'young person' and the different cut-off points illustrate the difficulty of such delineations.



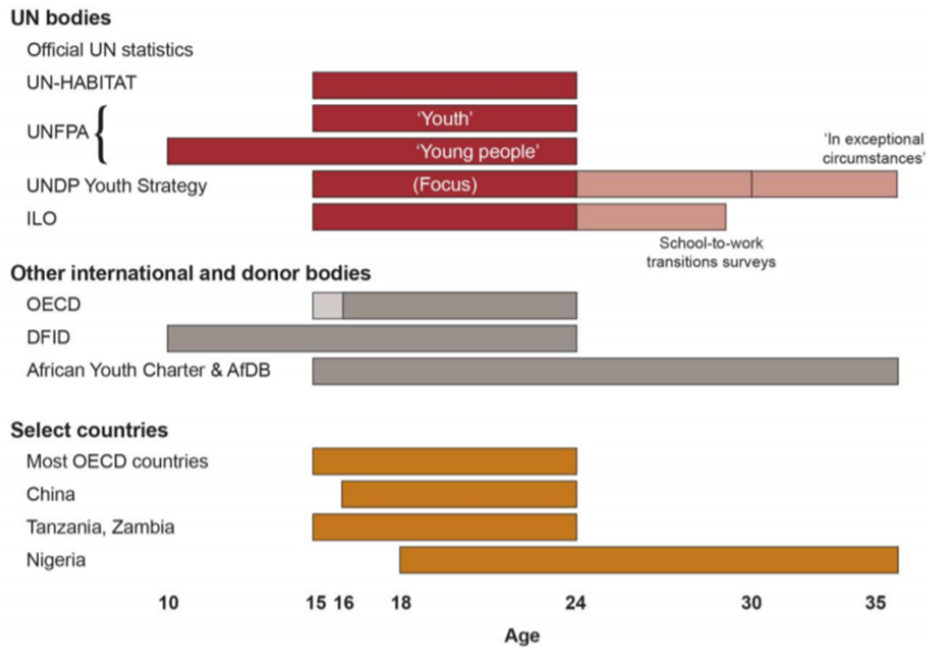


Figure 1: Age ranges commonly identified with 'youth' in the policy literature

The following table depicts the official definitions of youth for the different countries in which Help a Child is active.

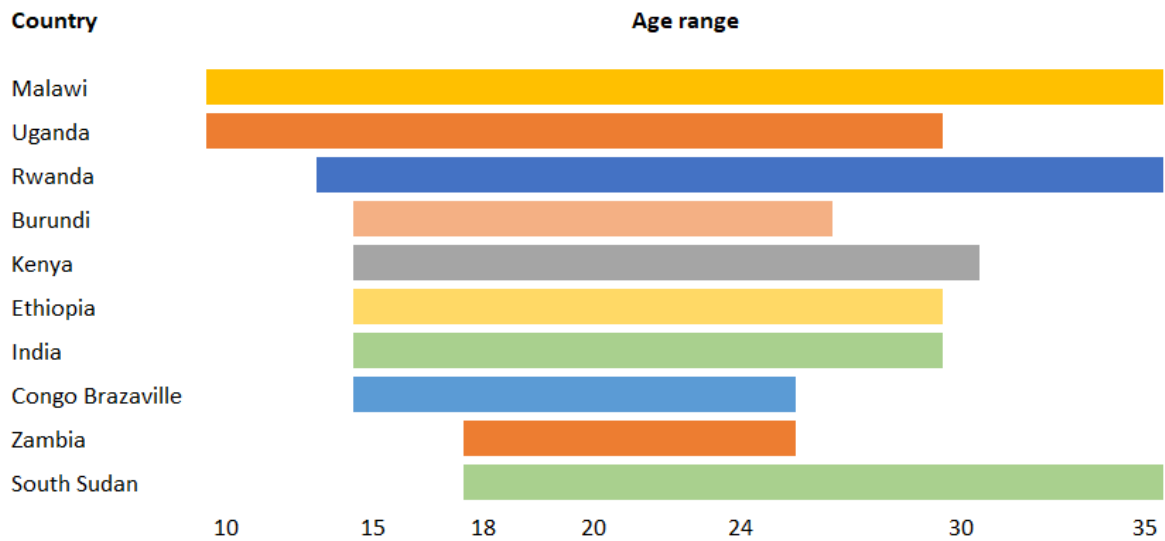


Figure 2: Age ranges identified with 'youth' in countries where Help a Child works

Also here we see that considerable variations can be observed on what these different countries define as the age range of 'Youth'. For 7 out of the 10 countries the age range of 'Youth' goes up to the 30 years (and even beyond).

Within Help a Child country offices, youth are defined according to the national youth policy definitions; however, in practice within development programs sometimes a sub-categorization is made whereby the age range of 15-25 was mentioned several times as a category of its own<sup>2</sup>. Even though an age bracket was attached to these sub-categories, it appears that age on itself was not so much determining the distinction between what we may call adolescents and young adults. A more important determinant was the moment that a young person would become married. In Uganda, for instance, it was mentioned that once you become married you are not really considered as youth anymore<sup>3</sup>. For the male youths, the moment of marrying is also the moment that they inherit land from their parents, thus it also represents the time when they are able to make decisions of their own and transition into a new phase of their life.

For young women, marriage definitely plays a role in the transition from adolescence to adulthood, and since young girls often marry very young they also become 'women' at a very young age. But there also appears to be a more culturally determined age (around 20 years<sup>4</sup>) at which they no longer want to be called girls but women.

The distinction between adolescents and young adults seems pertinent, as both groups tend to differ in their behaviour and aspirations. The adolescent group is very active and dynamic, and also very flexible. They can participate in a lot of different activities and switch quickly between one and the other. Young adults, especially when they are married and responsible for an own household, are a bit more stable than adolescents.

The selection criteria for determining if someone pertains to the youth will apply at the moment that the person actually joins the programme (thus usually at program start).

---

<sup>2</sup> Uganda (AEE) and Burundi (FECABU)

<sup>3</sup> Queenie Adriko

<sup>4</sup> Queenie Adriko and Burundi (FECABU)



# 4. Youth's aspirations and constraints

Young people have aspirations, but they are forced to consider these (as well as the steps to take to realise them) in light of their structural contexts and constraints. Indeed, while young people aspire to having a livelihood that provides stable and higher levels of income, these are not the only drivers of what makes a job desirable, or what young people aspire to. Additionally, the desire to contribute to one's community or country, or to be recognised by one's peers, or to gain greater independence can all be strongly influential in pursuing a specific livelihood. The idea that income is the most important – or only – benefit from work or motivator in shaping one's aspirations thus falls short.

Interviews with different Help a Child field practitioners from Uganda, Burundi and Rwanda also revealed that decisions of the youth are influenced by the family and by the community at large. Choices for specific trades are often seen in light of what they can contribute to the bigger structure, and not only for the individual person. Sometimes the family co-decides in what kind of small businesses the youth engage. And community leaders may advise the youth towards the specific activities that they may be engaged in in order that these activities have a benefit for the community. At the same time it was mentioned that this influence may differ from case to case<sup>5</sup>. Often the choices of the youth are also merely guided by the opportunities that present themselves in a given situation and by the particular interests that they have for certain trades. Usually the larger family is more focused on agriculture, while the youth is inclined to look at other sectors as well.

Concerning the particular aspirations of the youth, one should be careful to generalize as youth is a very heterogeneous group<sup>6</sup>. However, some interesting characteristics that were mentioned during interviews with Help a Child staff were:

---

<sup>5</sup> Ezekiel Rukema: community influence is only relative.

<sup>6</sup> In her PhD research, Maya Turolla described three major dimensions of youths' heterogeneity (value chain specificities, socio-cultural background and territorial disparities), and recommended a context-specific approach for development programmes. In fact, she

- youth are interested in quick returns (conventional agriculture requires patience and is more for adults).
- Trades such as horticulture, beekeeping and poultry were mentioned as interesting to them, but also things such as bricklaying and phone repair.
- They also like to be involved in agri-related activities such as processing, transformation, transport and selling. Youth also tend to favour modern agricultural practices and use of technology<sup>7</sup>. Youth also see opportunities to produce and sell within cooperative structures.

It was also mentioned that the choice for specific trades was often influenced by perceptions in the community about what are typical male jobs and typical female jobs. For instance, hairdressing and tailoring were mentioned as typical female jobs, while the male go for more heavy trades such as electrician, bicycle repair and car mechanics. In agriculture, on the other hand, the distinction between genders was much less pronounced. Both male and female youths could be seen in activities such as production of chilli's, passion fruit and horticulture. In livestock and animal husbandry male youths seem to be more represented than female youths.

As was mentioned above, the aspirations of the youth have to be seen in light of the constraints that they face within their specific contexts. According to Help a Child practitioners and partners in the field, the three major barriers for the rural youth are lack of access to land, capital and information. Other constraints mentioned were: little or no voice in decision-making processes; lack of access to agriculture extension services, to affordable input supplies, or to marketing opportunities; and negative perceptions of agriculture.

#### **4.1 Access to land**

When asked about this particular constraint, the interviewed Help a Child field staff mentioned that there has to be made a distinction between use of land and control of land. Within a family household, young people (including women) usually have the opportunity to make (temporal) use of a small piece of land of the household. However, they are not in a position to make longer-term plans and investments for that land because the household head may suddenly claim the land for something else.

Young women face an additional disadvantage in this respect, as even after marriage they usually don't have ownership and control over land. In the African culture the land is

---

concluded by stressing that the barriers to youths' employment in agribusiness are very specific to youths' socio-cultural and economic identity, and local context.

<sup>7</sup> This was actually mentioned by Maya Tuolla as being a myth: technological development is a general trend of the last years and not only something picked up only by the youth

inherited to the sons and not to the girls. The extent to which women can really have a say on how the land is used thus depends on the intra-household agreements made.

Even though young men have better opportunities to access land than women, this also depends on the particular country and the total availability of land. In some countries like Burundi problems of land tenure also occur because land is subdivided among the children, leaving less land for each following generation. Despite of this, it may be that the community holds land in property, and in these cases it is possible for youth to organize themselves in groups and advocate for the use of community land. In Rwanda, for instance, 30 young chilli producers organized themselves in order to advocate for a plot of land at the District<sup>8</sup>. Still in other cases, land may be rented from landowners within the community<sup>9</sup>.

#### **4.2 Access to finance**

Access to finance is a critical factor in developing self-employment opportunities for youth. Unfortunately young people usually face considerable constraints when trying to access and use formal financial services. Some major barriers that youth encounter include:

- Financial products are inaccessible due to inability of youth to provide collateral, for example land.
  - Inappropriate financial products offered by financial service providers (they may not offer, for instance, smaller short-term loans).
  - Poor financial capabilities of youth.
- i) Likewise, youth are rarely organized in self-help groups which could provide them with the means for generating savings and improving the borrowing power of individual members and the group.

In many African countries governments are promoting youth entrepreneurship and facilitating loans for organized youth groups<sup>10</sup>. This could represent an important opportunity for the groups in the communities in which Help a Child works to improve their access to capital.

#### **4.3 Access to information**

Youth have limited access to important information that can help them to make better decisions, especially related to (self)employment. This includes information about profitable markets, prices of commodities, employment opportunities, training opportunities, government subsidies and support programmes, and socio-political conditions.

During interviews with Help a Child field personnel, it was mentioned that youth have limited access to strategic spaces within the community where information is shared and plans are being developed. In view of this situation, in Rwanda the Help a Child office decided to

<sup>8</sup> Ezekiel Rukema

<sup>9</sup> In some cases (eg. Rwanda) land can also be borrowed from CLAs.

<sup>10</sup> Specifically mentioned by AEE Uganda, Help a Child Rwanda and SAO Uganda.

organize the youth into formal committees to take part in community decision-making meetings, as now they would be recognized entities. These committees would be represented in Youth District Networks, whereby these networks would join at national level. In this respect it is noteworthy to mention that in most African countries governments have developed particular policies and programs that favour the youth. Interviewed Help a Child field staff indicated that in order to make use of these programs it is required that the youth be organized in groups.

#### **4.4 Access to business skills**

Standard education often fails to equip rural youth with the knowledge and skills needed to seize the few available productive and decent employment opportunities. This also limits young people's capacities to pursue viable livelihood alternatives, including starting their own rural enterprises. Meanwhile, Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) programmes often ignore the specific characteristics of rural labour markets (which are often very limited or absent) and fail to address specific vocational training needs of rural workers. Even when institutions do offer education that is relevant to the agricultural sector and rural areas (e.g. AVET), rural youth often have difficulties accessing these skills development opportunities because facilities are too far away or the education itself is prohibitively expensive.

In interviews with Help a Child field staff it was mentioned that important skills that were missing were business skills, marketing skills and agricultural skills. A partner in Uganda<sup>11</sup> also mentioned that although agriculture should be a priority, Help a Child should also focus on skills training in the area of complementary trades, like processing and value addition. These could be trades that also appeal to the youth. Something similar was mentioned by a partner organization in Burundi<sup>12</sup>: youth can very well position themselves around the agricultural value chain. However, a first step should be to support farmers to increase their production in order to have a marketable surplus. Concerning the transfer of skills, it was mentioned several times that direct exposure to innovative and successful projects or businesses has a big effect on youth. They need to have role models and see successes for themselves in order to become more engaged. As such, learning trips and exchange visits were mentioned as very effective awareness and knowledge transfer methods.

In discussions with field personnel of Help a Child and partner organizations, there is a shared understanding and agreement on the need to promote agricultural development through AVET whereby learning by doing should be a key part of the teaching methodology. On the role of TVET the opinions differed a bit more. In Rwanda, for instance, the Help a Child program manager mentioned the use of local artisans in training people between 6-8 months in certain technical skills. In Uganda mention was made of trades outside the agricultural sector and specific trainings in technical areas. In a discussion with the CPD of Kenya, she mentioned that Help a Child should not be involved in setting up and running

---

<sup>11</sup> AEE

<sup>12</sup> FECABU

TVET centres, but rather contribute to trainees receiving a certification that would really lead to a job. Help a Child could also play a role in linking people to TVET centers and informing them about suitable trades with opportunities for work. With a view to sustainability, possibilities could be explored to see whether CLAs could 'adopt' a batch of young people and support their capacity building at specific TVET centers.

#### **4.5 Access to life skills**

Finally, general life skills are also considered to have a positive contribution to employment and self-employment opportunities of the youth. According to the Help a Child field staff, life skills are contributing to mind-set change among the youth and build the basis for many other follow-up activities. These life skills should thus always be part and parcel of any (self)employment approach. Life skills should be seen from a broad perspective and include topics such as nutrition, hygiene, self-confidence, SRHR, and parenting (for the ones that have young children) As Help a Child, we have collected relevant life skills materials for these topic and we see these life skills as an essential part of our Y&W strategy. In chapter 6.3 we elaborate more on this so called " life skills approach".

With respect to the transfer of skills: during discussions with Help a Child field personnel they indicated that youth like to work in groups, interact with each other and also learn from each other. However, with the youth it is very important that the meetings are dynamic and very goal oriented. The traditional SHG approach whereby a myriad of different more 'general' topics are discussed is not suitable for the youth. In this sense the SHG curriculum should be adjusted and made relevant to the youth. According to their experience this is especially true for male youth: if meetings have a clear goal that is interesting to them, than they participate. But as soon as the objective and benefit is not clear, they lose interest and stop attending the groups. They suggested to always paint the bigger picture and show from the beginning how the particular training sessions will benefit to them.

#### **4.6 Perception of agriculture**

Many young rural people grow up watching their parents working their plots of land with hoes and pangas, and may even have contributed as child labourers. They have seen their parents struggle to make a living with agriculture despite the hard work that goes into it. Low productivity and profitability has tainted their perception of agriculture, and inhibits their ability to understand the real potential that the agricultural sector possesses in terms of employment opportunities.

If the youth is to be involved in agriculture they have to see the benefits of it and see for themselves that this activity can generate a satisfactory income. Evidence from different countries where Help a Child works is showing that the youth are attracted to activities that can generate quick returns. Conventional agriculture is not so appealing and according to the youth requires too much patience<sup>13</sup>. One of the areas that particularly attracts the youth is horticulture. It is a short-term activity with potential for high returns. Besides, the products

---

<sup>13</sup> SAO, Uganda

are easy to sell, even within the own community. Other 'typical' youth activities mentioned were beekeeping and poultry.

Agricultural and rural transformation and mechanization could be key to shifting this negative perception. Youth tend to favour modern agriculture practices, use of technology, and opportunities for "quick money" with relatively higher returns. In order to engage youth more in the agricultural sector pertinent awareness raising activities have to be conducted whereby exposure to successful practices should play an important role.



*Youth are interested in short-term activities with potential for high returns.*

# 5. Context of youth employment

A dominant policy approach to youth un- and underemployment has been the funding of skills-building programmes that seek to enhance the employability of young jobseekers. Also a number of behavioural change for activation, mentorship, incubator and entrepreneurship programmes are being developed and implemented. Many of these interventions are based on the assumption that young people are either insufficiently equipped or not sufficiently motivated to support the agricultural transformation agenda. And these programmes suggest that markets do (or would) hold sufficient opportunities and empowering young people would suffice to enable them to enter these markets.

However, it is increasingly clear that in many cases the structural problems of their environments, and not young people's attributes, are the key constraints to their finding work. Where market conditions do not offer young entrepreneurs many opportunities to make sales, entrepreneurialism does not resolve the underemployment problem and instead merely makes young people (what we may call) 'entrepreneurially underemployed'. Interventions that focus on supply-side solutions are not on itself wrong, but they should take into account the specific context in which they operate. Does the market offer sufficient opportunities for (self)employment? And is there an enabling environment which allows youth to actually seize these opportunities?

One-size-fits-all solutions should be avoided by distinguishing between long-term approaches (employment through on-farm productivity) and short-term approaches (youth self-employment and entrepreneurship), as well as "demand-side" versus "supply-side" solutions, tailored to the specific context of the country and its agri-food system, the local context and its stakeholders, and the target youth segments.

The Wageningen University and the Technical Centre for Agricultural and Rural Cooperation (CTA) have developed a holistic model that shows the supply and demand factors impacting youth employment and entrepreneurship (figure 4). Research shows that interventions addressing youth and work can only be effective if they focus on the whole system, which includes PUSH factors (orange), PULL factors (blue) and Enabling Environment (green). This doesn't mean that one organization has to cover everything; by working in partnerships, organizations can specialize in what they are good at, while taking into account the different supply and demand factors.

**PUSH** strategies (orange) usually focus on: education, skills training, behavioral change for activation, mentorship, incubator and entrepreneurship programs. Most approaches in the development sector nowadays focus on PUSH strategies. One important reason is that they appear to promise quicker results on smaller budgets. However, they often make the assumption that markets hold sufficient opportunities to absorb empowered youth, which especially in poor areas, is not necessarily true.

**Enabling Environment** (green): these strategies focus on lowering or removing barriers that would inhibit certain groups to participate in (self)employment activities. For instance: increasing access to land and capital, simplifying business procedures, enhancing participation of women, giving a voice to the marginalized, etc.

**PULL** strategy (blue): Facilitating the transformation of the agri-food sector in such a way that decent employment and entrepreneurial opportunities are generated thereby creating demand and attracting the youth who are themselves responsive and receptive.

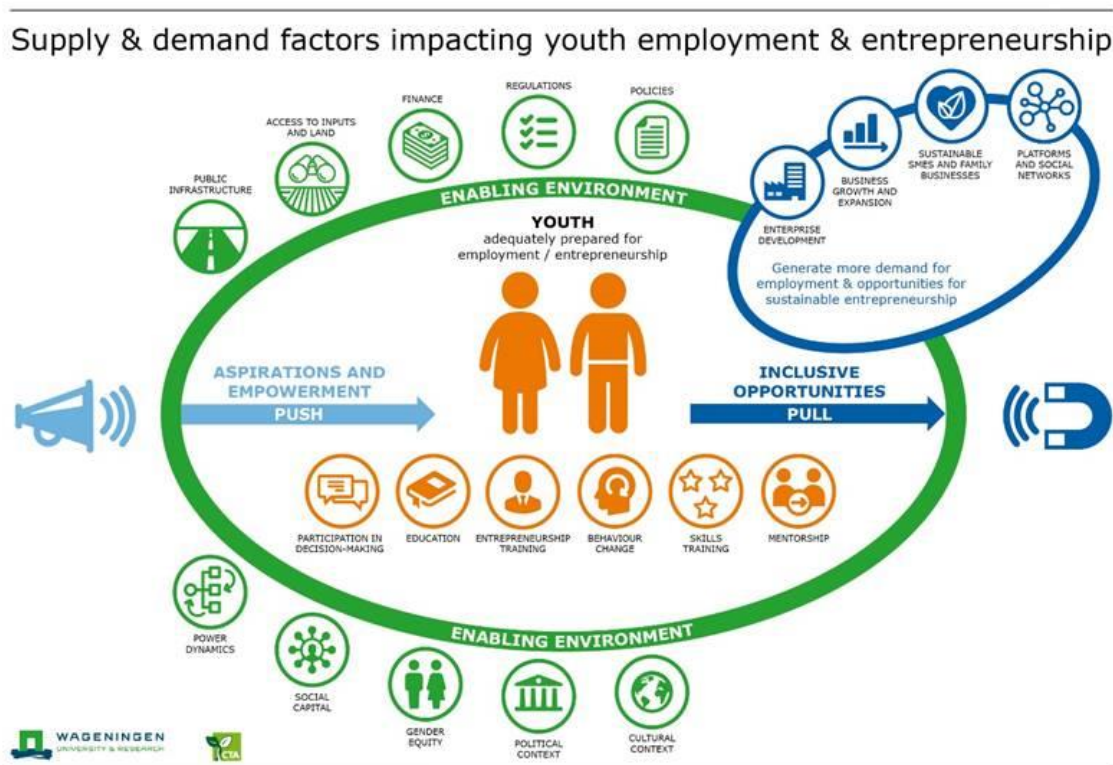


Figure 3: Factors influencing (self)employment

Considering all the above it is clear that working with the youth requires a holistic approach that takes into account the heterogeneity of youth, their aspirations, the enabling environment surrounding them and the particular market opportunities. Only if we understand the particular context in which the youth operate, will we be able to design effective interventions that really lead to empowered youth who have decent work and grow out of poverty.



# 6. Important approaches for youth

As seen above, an effective Youth & Work strategy requires a holistic approach in which there is attention for the supply and demand sides of employment and entrepreneurship and also for the enabling environment surrounding the youth. In this respect it is therefore important to consider the context in which activities with youth take place. Help a Child distinguishes 3 focus approaches that are intertwined elements of our Youth approach.

## 6.1. Y&W embedded in the CCCD approach

At the centre of Help a Child's work is the Child Centred Community Development (CCCD) approach. This is a multi-annual Community Development process which has child-wellbeing as its ultimate goal, whereby interventions not only target the child but also its immediate environment, such as its parents/caretakers, the youth and the community at large. A typical CCCD project has a duration of about 7 years whereby Help a Child will gradually hand over responsibilities to local structures and eventually phase out of the community. An important feature of the CCCD projects is the establishment of SHGs at an early stage. Two kinds of SHGs can be distinguished:

- 1) Regular SHGs (based on the CAM<sup>14</sup> selection criteria)
- 2) Youth SHGs

These Youth SHGs can form an important basis for working with the youth in the target communities.

## 6.2 Y&W embedded in the PiP approach

Recently, Help a Child adopted the so-called PiP approach, the Integrated Farm Planning approach (PiP from French 'Plan Intégré du Paysan') developed by Wageningen University & Research. The PiP approach is explicitly mentioned here because it plays an important role in improving farm household systems, and as mentioned earlier on, agriculture is the sector where most gains are to be obtained in the context of Help a Child's work when thinking about youth employment in a rural setting

---

<sup>14</sup> Community Ambassador Model. This model is central to the child sponsorship program of Help a Child.

The objective of the PiP approach is to foster resilient farming systems and resilient landscapes, as such contributing to sustainable local development. The holistic and integrated orientation of the PiP approach, characterized by empowerment, integration and collaboration resonates closely with the Help a Child Community Development principles and Theory of Change. Crucial within the PiP is that the whole family is involved in developing the farm plan, including the youth. This provides opportunities to include the needs and aspirations of the youth within a family setting, whereby also allocation and use of resources such as land can be discussed. Important to mention here is that the PiP approach doesn't remain an isolated household exercise, but instead tries to connect different farmers in the community and even seeks to develop a joint community vision, involving relevant external stakeholders as well. In this sense, the wider community can be engaged in the process of creating enabling conditions for the youth, as well as removing important barriers for them.

It is believed that the structures established and activities carried out in the CCCD projects (which will usually include the PiP approach) can promote and reinforce the activities carried out with youth in the area of (self) employment. These synergies and interdependencies will be explored further in chapter 7.

### **6.3 Holistic focus on youth**

Work is an important element in the life of youth, but many other factors determine whether youth can find and retain work. Therefore this paragraph highlights important aspects in the life of youth, which bring a holistic youth focus.

According to the Worldbank<sup>15</sup>, life skills are contributing to mind-set change among the youth and build the basis for many other follow-up activities. These life skills should always be part and parcel when reaching out to youth. Life skills should be seen from a broad perspective but as Help a Child we promote focus on certain skills like:

- self-esteem
- communication and interpersonal skills
- decision-making and problem-solving skills

Besides these general life skills Help a Child wants to stimulate healthy meals (nutrition) and healthy families (hygiene & parenting) as mainstreaming (life skills) topics. Help a Child has collected and will maintain relevant life skills materials for these topic and sees these life skills as an essential part of the Y&W strategy. These life skills modules can be given via the (Youth) SHGs that are formed or via other community structures as these are already in

---

<sup>15</sup>

[https://www.worldbank.org/content/dam/Worldbank/document/Gender/1323447\\_AGI\\_LearningFromPracticeSeries.pdf](https://www.worldbank.org/content/dam/Worldbank/document/Gender/1323447_AGI_LearningFromPracticeSeries.pdf)

place in the community. The life skills modules that Help a Child provides are just recommended and helps to build a coherent track record for Help a Child internationally. If local context needs adaptations or other life skills are of more importance, partner organisations can decide to adapt the life skills curriculum to the communities needs.

### 6.3.1. Nutrition

It is important for youth to live and eat healthy. What is healthy food and what is the effect of macro nutrition's and micro nutrition's on your body? Help a Child has developed two modules regarding nutrition. These modules can be found on the new knowledge website of Help a Child.<sup>16</sup>

### 6.3.2. Hygiene

Depending on the local circumstances hygienic topics can be: personal hygiene, WASH related hygiene (toilet, OD(F), hand washing practises), safe sex (more about this under SRHR), environmental hygiene and Covid 19 related hygiene. Link for relevant tools can be found on the knowledge website of Help a Child.

### 6.3.3. Self esteem

Help a Child wants to work on resilient & confident youth. Youth that has Self-esteem and can evaluate his or her own achievements. Young people with high self-esteem have a positive image of themselves, are confident and can be proud of their achievements. Young people with low self-esteem have a negative image of themselves and may feel bad, ugly, stupid or not likeable. They lack confidence and are not proud of what they achieve. If youth is punished often, neglected or abused, he or she is more likely to develop a low self-esteem later in life. Help a Child wants youth to know that they are loved and made in the image of God. That we praise them for what is going well and that they feel the warmth of a loving and caring family and community around them. On the knowledge website of Help a Child 2 Modules about self-esteem can be found.

### 6.3.4 SRHR

Life skills regarding Sexual Reproductive Health and Rights has a wide variety of topics. Best is to choose most relevant topics for the community in mind. And best results can be achieved when youth will be involved themselves in determining and setting up of the SRH program, since this will heighten acceptance and ownership. Help a Child has collected info and material regarding the following topics, which are relevant for a lot of communities and Youth groups in the countries Help a Child works. Please use or adapt materials in the way it fits your values and that of your organisation.

#### *SRHR: Sex(ual) education*

Nowadays, a little over half of the world populace is below 25 years old and one in four

---

<sup>16</sup> <https://howto.redeekind.nl/themes-and-tools/youth-work-life-skills>

is below age 18 (UNFPA, 2014). Only 34 % of young individuals around the world can show correct information of HIV avoidance and transmission. And two out of three girls in a few nations have no idea of what is happening to them when they start discharging.

These are a few of the reasons why there's a critical require for quality sexuality education (CSE) (Vanwesenbeeck et al. 2016). And not only education about the practical side , but there is also need in the behavioural and social side of sexual education. How do boys and girls interfere with each other? What is social accepted and what not. What is dangerous behaviour and what is acceptable behaviour in the communities they live?

#### *SRHR: STI's and HIV/Aids*

The HIV epidemic is far from over with many countries experiencing sharp increases in new infections across the world. In 2020 about 1.7 million people acquire HIV every year and 10 million people await treatment.<sup>17</sup> Among youth, the prevention of sexually transmitted infections (STIs) and HIV/AIDS requires educational interventions that target youth as well as parents to prevent the risk of infections with accurate medical knowledge and statistics for these groups (Drwal et al., 2016). Youth and their parents may be unwilling to discuss this topic in an open setting so it is important for providers to offer knowledge that will inform these groups of the risks and how to prevent infections that could cause complications and harm to youth. (Drwal et al., 2016). The prevention of STIs and HIV/AIDS among youth is a priority because when they become sexually active at a young age, they face this risk that is preventable if they take the appropriate precautions.

#### *SRHR: Gender equality*

Women and girls represent half of the world's population and, therefore, also half of its potential. Gender equality, besides being a fundamental human right, is essential to achieve peaceful societies, with full human potential and sustainable development. Help a Child is gender sensitive as well as gender transformative. Help a Child stimulates equal participation in their programs, and encourages men and women to work together where possible. Specific programs are designed to address gender-inequalities and harmful social norms, including Sexual and Gender Based Violence. Moreover, it has been shown that empowering women spurs productivity and economic growth. Unfortunately, there is still a long way to go to achieve full equality of rights and opportunities between men and women. Therefore, it is of paramount importance to end the multiple forms of gender violence and secure equal access to quality education and health, economic resources and participation in political life for both women and girls and men and boys. It is also

---

<sup>17</sup> <https://www.unfpa.org/updates/now-available-evaluation-unfpa-support-hiv-response-2016-2019>

essential to achieve equal opportunities in access to employment and to positions of leadership and decision-making at all levels.

### 6.3.5 Parenting

Many of our youth are young parents themselves or will become parents in the very near future. Parents (or caregivers) are the most essential key players in improving the wellbeing of children. In our project areas, parents face many challenges.

That's why Help a Child introduced The Parenting Challenge, a method to improve the knowledge, attitude and skills of parents. The goal of the Parenting Challenge is to improve the parenting skills of mothers, fathers and other caretakers, so that they can provide adequate and relevant support to their children. It is a group-based method, whereby the parents are actively involved in discussions and group-work and are sharing their thoughts and ideas. The role of the facilitator is more to lead the discussion, instead of teaching. You can find the Parenting Challenge modules on our website.

# 7. Our Youth & Work Approach

## 7.1 General framework

Before looking into the details of the specific Youth & Work approach it is good to first draw the boundaries within which this approach will operate. These boundaries have been drawn based upon the Theory of Change of Help a Child and based upon lessons learned from previous interventions.

- Help a Child will contribute to bringing target groups (mainly farmers) from a state of fragility to social and **economic resilience**<sup>18</sup>.
- Help a Child will take an **integrated approach** towards enhancement of livelihoods, focussing on youth (male and female) and their parents to contribute towards an integrated complementary production system.
- Help a Child will focus mainly on the **agricultural and agri-related sector**, as this is the livelihood activity in which most gains are to be achieved for the youth. In most developing countries the large majority of people are engaged in agricultural activities; however, the sector is largely underperforming and hence represents a huge potential for increased productivity and labour absorption. It is here that youth can benefit by becoming engaged either directly in agriculture or indirectly through activities related to it (for example input supply, processing, transport). The focus here should be on sustainable production systems which take into account climate change factors and which are environmental friendly.
- Help a Child will offer Agricultural Vocational Education and Training (**AVET**) in order to stimulate increased agricultural productivity in its target communities. Practical and discovery-based agricultural trainings will play a key role in this; Help a Child may also provide short-term technical trainings to the youth (e.g. building improved low-cost storage facilities, constructing improved beehives) which are related to the agricultural sector.
- Help a Child will **not offer Technical Vocational Education and Training (TVET)**. In cases where technical vocational skills are required (e.g. tailoring, mechanics, welding) Help a

---

<sup>18</sup> In this process the PiP approach (see chapter 8) will play a central role.

Child will refer the youth to existing organizations and or institutions who provide these services.

- Help a Child will not only contribute to economic resilience but also focus on **social resilience** through working on life skills of beneficiaries and contributing to increased motivation, self-confidence and self-determination. Life skills will also include the topics of nutrition<sup>19</sup>, hygiene and SRHR and parenting for those having children themselves.
- Help a Child will train and empower young farmers so that they are able to **connect to profitable agricultural value chains**. These value chains should be able to absorb larger quantities of agricultural produce, and beneficiaries should be able to overcome barriers that currently hinder them to produce for these value chains. In this respect, Help a Child will work towards creating an enabling environment for the youth by promoting and activating community structures (e.g. CLAs, YSHGs) that can lobby for improved access to inputs, land, agricultural services, etc. Help a Child will also train young farmers to identify profitable value chains and prepare them to make well-informed decisions regarding active involvement with these value-chains.
- Help a Child will promote an **entrepreneurial mind-set** among the youth. This means helping them to think more strategically and on the longer term. This goes along with emphasizing the need to invest in (agricultural) production systems. It also means more market-oriented production.
- Help a Child will offer business skills and marketing trainings and support the youth to set up profitable and sustainable micro businesses. Considering the rural setting of the target communities, these businesses will mostly be agri-sector related. This will include livestock, agro-forestry (wood, fruits), bee hiving, (organic) fertilizer supply, etc. Help a Child will identify **business models that work**, and promote these among its beneficiaries. Should local market studies indicate potential for non-agro-related businesses, then these may be considered.
- Help a Child will **not be actively involved in supporting SMEs at the end of the value chain to grow and expand**. At most it will conduct a mapping of existing value chains and economic actors, and train farmers on critical factors to consider when dealing with these actors.
- Help a Child will **not train people to become employed** at non-agri-related businesses or companies. At most Help a Child will refer people to other organizations that offer these services.

---

<sup>19</sup> This is about having access to sufficient food, but also includes a more diversified diet and improved uptake of nutrients.

- In collaboration with other stakeholders (private and public) a **holistic approach** will be applied to contribute towards an enabling environment for improved livelihoods not only at household level but also at community and regional level.
- Help a Child will seek to **involve the government** right from the start of a programme and – together with responsible government staff members – explore the possibilities for continuous involvement also after the project ends<sup>20</sup>.

## 7.2 Critical elements

After having defined the boundaries that determine Help a Child's work related to youth, the next step is to identify crucial elements that need to be incorporated in a Youth & Work approach. These elements take into account the particular experiences, expertise and strengths of Help a Child, but also important findings from other organizations who have worked with youth and who have identified crucial factors that need to be taken into consideration when working with this target group.

At continuation some of the most important elements are presented that should be taken into account in this respect:

- **Thorough context analysis:** An effective Youth & Work strategy requires a holistic approach in which there is attention for the supply and demand sides of employment and entrepreneurship and also for the enabling environment surrounding the youth. For this to happen, a thorough analysis is required which takes these different factors into account.
- **Comprehensive youth-oriented assessments:** Youth-work interventions should try to understand how young men and women are socially embedded in the family and the community at large, and how this embeddedness influences their choices and decisions. It is also crucial to have discussions with the youth themselves and assess what their needs, aspirations, experiences and potentials are. Taking into account the particular heterogeneities of the youth is crucial. An important distinction to be made here is the difference between adolescent youth and young adults.
- **Scalable and youth-appealing business models that work:** In the literature surrounding the topic of youth in agriculture, it is repeatedly mentioned that a more youth-appealing approach is needed to attract them to agriculture. Experience has shown that youth tend to favour modern agriculture practices, use of technology, and opportunities for "quick money" with relatively higher returns than staple crops. Youth are also more inclined to experiment with new and innovative methods than older farmers. With this in mind, it is important to think of business models that incorporate

---

<sup>20</sup> For instance, through linkages with TVET centres, or trainings by government extensions workers.



these aspects and preferably also can be upscaled in order to involve as many youth as possible.

- **Peer-to-peer cascading models:** Evidence of FAO, among others, indicate that youth are very effective in transmitting agricultural (and other) knowledge to their peers. With a view to reaching as many youth as possible in a relatively short time, models should be sought in which trained youngsters are organized into groups and cascade the acquired knowledge to their peers resulting in an exponential increase of knowledge among the youth. Working in groups also has an important added advantage of being able to tap into resources made available to organized youth groups by the government.
- **Stakeholder involvement:** Young people are not individual, rational agents who craft their life trajectories in isolation, but rather operate within larger socio-economic structures that can influence their decisions as well as their possibilities to successfully participate in society. Within Help a Child programs, stakeholders surrounding the youth will be actively involved to promote an enabling environment, for example by providing support in overcoming specific barriers encountered by the youth like access to land, access to credit or specific training. These stakeholders can be from the community itself, but also from the private sector or the government.

### 7.3 Elements and sequence of our Youth & Work approach

Following the conclusions of Chapter 3, a clear distinction will be made between young adolescents and young adults. The distinction between adolescents and young adults seems pertinent as both groups tend to differ in their behaviour and aspirations. Even though the dividing line between these two categories is not always easy to make, an important characteristic is whether young people are married or not. As we saw before, this usually also determines if they have access to land, representing the time when they are able to make decisions of their own and transition into a new phase of their life. Once young people get married they usually become more settled and their priorities start to change. The adolescent group, on the other hand, is very active and dynamic, and also very flexible. They can participate in a lot of different activities and switch quickly between one and the other.

Roughly speaking, we could make a distinction between youth between 15 and 25 years, and young adults between 26 and 35 year.

The Youth & Work approach consists of a logical step-by-step process in which young people are guided towards employment or self-employment. In the following of this chapter the different steps in the sequence will be explained in more detail. These steps mainly apply to the group of young adolescents (15-25 years); however, depending on their particular situation, also youth between 26 and 35 years could go through this process.

#### 7.3.1. Youth Self-Help Groups

The starting point of the Youth & Work approach will be the Youth Self-Help Groups. As we saw in Chapter 6, these are usually established as part of the CCCD approach early in the

project. In a Self-Help Group members support each other in solving common problems, share resources and find solutions together. All members make decisions in these groups and each member plays a role in the group. Their main aim is to meet emergency, consumption and production needs through accessibility of credit, stimulating members' entrepreneurship and economic development and gain economic prosperity. There is also a strong social dimension whereby affinity, trust, participation and mutual responsibility are key drivers. Among young people, there is an important peer principle: they are influenced far more by each other than they are by parents, teachers, or other authority figures. They talk the same language and they listen to each other far more than to adults. They model themselves on other young people of their own age. Within Youth Self-Help Groups it is thus important to give youth the feeling that they are the drivers of their own development process and whereby staff members play a more facilitating and guiding role.

As mentioned before, with the youth, meetings should be dynamic and very goal oriented. The traditional SHG approach whereby a range of different more 'general' topics are discussed is not suitable for the youth. In this sense the SHG curriculum should be adjusted and made relevant to the youth.

### 7.3.2. Motivation and Awareness

Motivation sessions are often needed as a first step in the process since youngsters may be dealing with negative mind-sets, a negative self-image and a general lack of hope and perspective for the future due to failures in the past or because of a lack of positive examples. If these issues are not addressed from the beginning, any further interventions will most likely be unsuccessful. Rather than mere theoretical courses, motivational sessions should be inspirational and attractive to the youth. This can be achieved through activities using role models, exchange visits, theatre plays, etc.

Closely related to the above motivation sessions are awareness sessions about the potential benefits of agriculture and agri-related activities. Low productivity and profitability has often tainted their perception of agriculture, and inhibits their ability to understand the real potential that the agro sector possesses in terms of employment opportunities. If the youth is to be involved in agriculture they have to see the benefits of it and see for themselves that this activity can generate a satisfactory income. In this respect, youth will be exposed to positive experiences in agriculture and agribusiness. Part of the group will be personally involved in successful practices through the PiP approach of their parents or caretakers.

### 7.3.3 Personal assessment

Personal assessments in the beginning of the process are also crucial. The youth is a very heterogeneous group with each person having different experiences, talents, aspirations and also constraints. Even though in this step also more general assessments will be done in a group wise manner, the main focus will be on individual assessments. Important questions here will be: Who am I? What do I want? What am I good at? A set of different tools & methods will be used that will help to answer these questions. At this stage adolescents can also take tests to assess where their preference lies: employment or self-

employment<sup>21</sup>. After conducting these assessments, youngsters will have a better idea about the direction they can and want to go. The exercises will be motivational in itself and restore positive mind-sets and a positive perspective towards the future.

#### 7.3.4. Orientation

At this stage all the information collected through the personal assessment exercises are put on the table and analysed, whereby a connection is made with existing opportunities. These opportunities should have been mapped using market studies and context analyses. Youth are then supported and oriented towards employment or self-employment. Should the assessment indicate a preference for employment, then the youth will be referred to organizations that are active in this area. If they opt for self-employment, then they still have to decide if they want to engage in agriculture(-related) activities or non-agri activities. The choice will also depend for a great deal on the indications of the market assessments and the particular economic environment in which the youth operate.

#### 7.3.5 Knowledge and skills

Depending on the outcome of the previous step, participants will usually need some specific knowledge and skills in order to be able to successfully find work or set up a business.

*Employment:* youth who choose to become employed and who need technical or practical skills can be linked to organizations or institutions with expertise in this area. Help a Child will not offer technical trainings nor apprenticeships. At most Help a Child could offer life skills trainings (including for example writing job applications, work ethics) which increase possibilities for youngsters to become employed.

*Self-employment:* youth who want to set up a business will need a good training, in which they are taught how to generate a good business idea, how to develop a feasible business plan and how to market their product in an effective way. A very important step here is that participants should be coached during the process of setting up a business. Very often the business plan is only used as a way to obtain capital and then is never followed up. It is crucial that the business plan is realistic and that it is followed up closely. There are business trainings that take participants through this whole process, increasing the chance of success of a business. Youth will be encouraged to become employed in the agricultural sector and agri-related activities. In this case they will also qualify for Agricultural Vocational Education and Training (AVET). Business set-up outside the agri-sector will also be supported; however, if additional technical training is required, Help a Child will refer them to other organizations and institutions who offer these services.

#### 7.3.6. Enabling environment

In Chapter 5 it was mentioned that a holistic approach is needed when dealing with youth (self)employment whereby particular attention should be placed on promoting an enabling

---

<sup>21</sup> A useful tool here can be the Youth self-assessment tool developed by Help a Child.

environment. Strategies are needed that focus on lowering or removing barriers that would inhibit the youth to participate in (self)employment activities. For instance: increasing access to land and capital and simplifying business procedures. Youth Self-Help Groups will be functional in raising these issues and making them known at community level. They can also team up with other Self-Help Groups and become part of a Cluster Level Association which can then lobby at community or government level.

### 7.3.7. Employment and self-employment

In the final step (after having gone through a whole preparation phase) young people either become employed at an existing company or they set-up an own business. Included in the definition of own business are youngsters who decide to engage in agricultural production for the market. It may be that they sell on the local or regional market, but they may also sell to bigger buyers at the end of the value chain. In that case they would need to team up with other producers in the community in order to reach a minimum scale.

### 7.3.8. Youth & Work sequence graph

In the following figure the Youth & Work sequence is depicted in a graphical way.

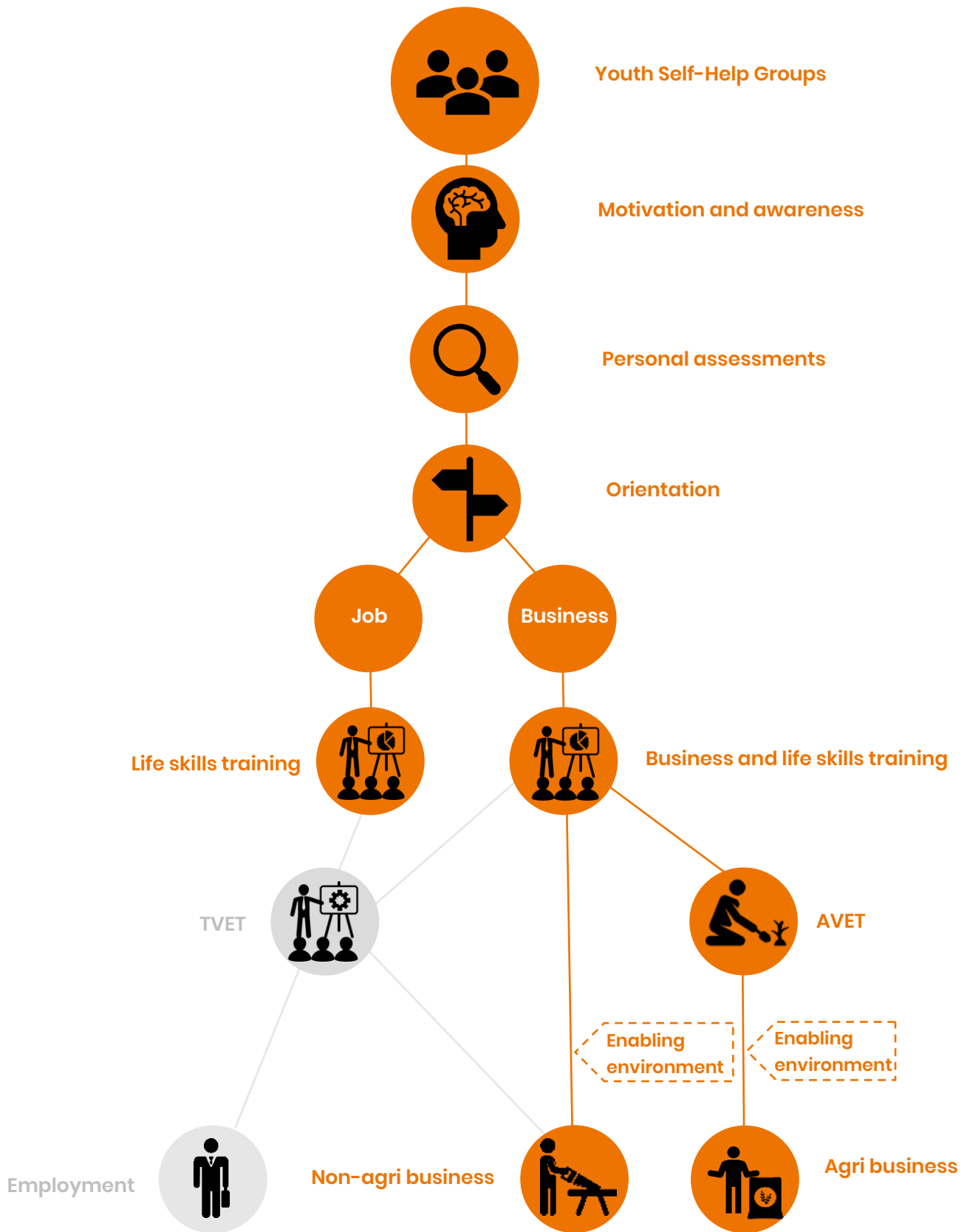


Figure 4: Youth and Work sequence