

## From farm to future: WHH’s approach to youth employment and empowerment for sustainable, resilient food systems.

### THE CHALLENGE

Youth are agents of change for successful food system transformation. Over 60% of Africa’s population are under the age of 25, and 60% of SSA’s youth are engaged in agrifood systems. Youth-owned and driven innovations and businesses in agriculture processing, logistics, and retail are booming.

Yet, youth do not yet receive the recognition, influence, and power that they deserve. Each year, 10–12 million youth enter the workforce, while only about 3 million formal jobs are created across SSA labor markets. Informality dominates youth employment (85–95%), especially in agriculture. Youth are significantly more likely than adults to be working poor. Fewer than 10% of youth own fertile farmland and shrinking farm sizes due to population growth mean on-farm work alone cannot ensure economic or nutritional security. Gender disparities are stark: young women are

more likely to be NEET (not in employment, education, or training) and earn less when employed.

Youth in SSA also face systemic barriers that hinder their entry into gainful work and limit their potential in transforming food systems, including access to relevant skills, finance, markets, and decision-making. At the same time, the systems intended to support them (e.g., TVET) are often fragmented and disconnected from real demand.

Investing in young people as catalysts for change is essential to building food systems that are sustainable and resilient – systems powered by their leadership, innovation, and vision, not just their participation.

### WELTHUNGERHILFE’S STRATEGIC APPROACH

**We envision young people as drivers of change who shape their futures, strengthen communities, and transform markets, empowered with the mindset, skills, and tools to decide, act, and influence.**

**Our impact ambition is to support youth as catalysts for stronger families, communities, and markets.** We focus on three key areas:

1. **Economic Resilience:** Enabling young people to access profitable wage or self-employment, earn a decent income, and build economic resilience.
2. **Agency and Contribution:** Empowering youth to shape their futures and influence communities and markets.
3. **Enabling Systems:** Strengthening the systems surrounding youth to expand their access to opportunities, resources, and support.

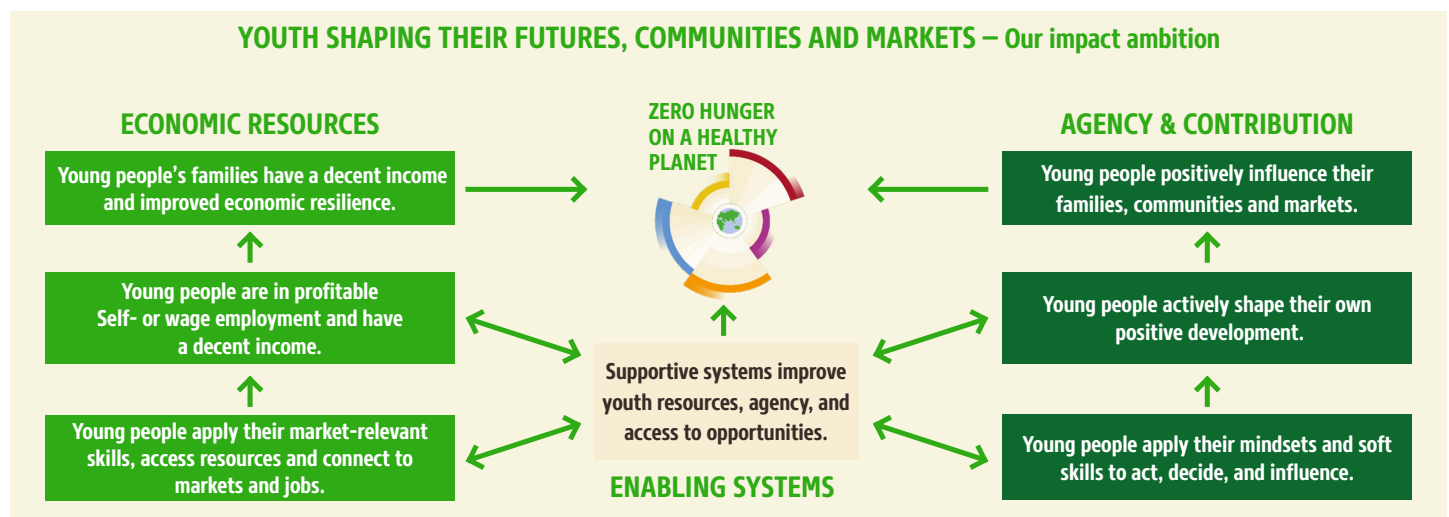
Our impact ambition is underpinned by a **firm commitment to youth, women, and localization.** By 2030, every WHH project in SSA<sup>1</sup> will be locally led, with over 70% being youth- and gender-transformative or responsive.

WHH draws on over 15 years of experience **creating job opportunities and designing pathways to self- and wage employment for vulnerable youth.** This market-driven TVET approach – both formal and non-formal – is applied within a comprehensive skilling framework tailored to diverse local

contexts, including urban, rural, peri-urban, fragile, conflict-affected, and refugee settings. We collaborate closely with **TVET providers, governments, and the private sector** to deliver this approach through strong, results-oriented partnerships.

Our approach integrates **accredited training with practical work-based learning** while **addressing systemic barriers within TVET systems and labor markets.** It emphasizes **four-dimensional skilling:** technical, entrepreneurial, digital, and especially transformative skills. We provide youth with comprehensive **end-to-end support starting at enrollment and continuing beyond training,** including career guidance, coaching, mentoring, and access to financial services, incubation, and acceleration **for early-stage and growth-oriented youth-led businesses.**

Youth skilling initiatives are **embedded into value chain and market systems development and multi-level programming to create job opportunities and drive systemic transformation across food systems.** We promote digital technologies for financial inclusion and climate-smart agriculture and are increasingly expanding our focus on **vocational training that prepares youth for off-farm and digital opportunities.** Program excellence, evidence generation, and agile learning are integral to ensuring meaningful outcomes and lasting impact.



<sup>1</sup> excluding humanitarian aid

## KEY INTERVENTIONS AND RESULTS

WHH strategically integrates youth employment and empowerment into its food systems transformation initiatives, drawing on deep cross-sectoral

expertise to unlock meaningful opportunities for young people across food systems.



Skill Up! is WHH's flagship skills development program, implemented in 15 countries, including fragile and refugee contexts. It provides a holistic, market-driven TVET approach across technical, entrepreneurial, digital, and transformative skills. Skill Up! equips vulnerable young people, 70% of whom are women, with market-relevant skills, hands-on experience, mentoring, coaching, job placement, and entrepreneurship support. Among graduates, 25% transition into wage employment, while 75% pursue self-employment. Skill Up! achieves a 92% completion rate, 70% employment rate, and over a 30% increase in average income.



The Green College initiative – integrated into Skill Up! in select local contexts – creates employment opportunities for rural youth in sustainable agriculture and green sectors. Successfully implemented in countries like Uganda, it blends practical skills, entrepreneurship, and transferable competencies by combining traditional knowledge with modern techniques, alongside improved access to technology, finance, and markets.



The HERIZON Program improves services and products (incl. capital) for growth-oriented, women-led enterprises in food, climate friendly agriculture, digitalization, WASH and vocational training in Kenya and Uganda to increase revenues by 20%.

Global reach: 74,000 young people. Impact: 62,000 jobs.



Inclusive food systems transformation in Mali: Youth skills development in agribusiness and food system transformation through climate-resilient innovation, food systems strengthening, and a nexus approach promoting social cohesion and inclusive governance.

Targeted reach: 225,000 young people (15–40 years) in 8 provinces.



Innovations and digital solutions: Agriculture extension apps, AgriShare (peer-to-peer platform connecting farmers to shared agricultural resources), Child Growth Monitor (AI-based malnutrition detection), Digital Literacy Clinics (DLC), and NatureNow (a solar irrigation pump built from recycled material).

Strong focus on youth as digital multipliers to expand outreach, inclusion and climate-smart and sustainable practices.

Global reach: 400,000 users.

## NETWORKS & PARTNERS

WHH partners with essential system actors in each country, ranging from formal and non-formal TVET institutions and (youth-led) NGOs to government agencies, businesses, and industry partners.

WHH also engages with other actors in skills, entrepreneurship, market systems development and inclusion, including:

In addition, WHH is a member of the networks and working groups facilitated by:



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