



Photo by Mohamed Reefi/CRS

Youth Entrepreneurship

SUPPORTING YOUNG PEOPLE TO START AND GROW THEIR BUSINESSES

CRS' Commitment

Young people, ages 15 to 24, number more than 1.2 billion and represent one-quarter of the world's population. Yet many of them struggle to obtain decent work. Nearly three in four young workers work in informal jobs, and around 39% of young workers are in vulnerable employment, defined by the International Labor Organization as working on their own account or contributing to family work.¹ Moreover, more than 123 million young people are working yet living in poverty. Facing difficulties obtaining formal employment, and whether out of interest or necessity, many young people start businesses at or near subsistence levels. Yet most lack access to entrepreneurship skills development, individualized business development services, and the financing to sustain and expand their businesses. Additionally, the businesses that young people start often fail to respond to market demands. Recognizing these challenges, CRS is committed to ensuring the design and implementation of impactful youth entrepreneurship programs. Our aim is for young people to leverage market opportunities that enable them to support themselves and their families, have sustainable livelihoods, and contribute to more stable communities.

CRS' Approach

Building on the Integral Human Development and Positive Youth Development frameworks, CRS youth entrepreneurship programs strive to incorporate key components that support young people in starting and growing sustainable businesses.

We begin with assessments that include identifying in-demand entrepreneurship opportunities, mapping market actors and understanding the targeted youth population to inform the design of the entrepreneurship program. As a prerequisite for enrollment, young people receive career guidance to develop self-awareness, understand their local market, and career goals and steps for achieving them. If their career goals include entrepreneurship, we ensure that they receive individualized support to select an entrepreneurship opportunity that aligns with their interests, enhance their entrepreneurship skills, develop viable business models, access finance, and link to market actors and their products and services to support business growth and expansion. Key to the success of all these components is the engagement of market actors and multi-sectoral stakeholders throughout the program to contribute to an enabling environment for youth entrepreneurs and their businesses.

¹ International Labor Organization. Creating decent jobs for youth. (2020) [generationunlimited.org/media/3006/file/Action%20Guide%204:%20Creating%20decent%20jobs%20for%20youth.pdf](https://www.generationunlimited.org/media/3006/file/Action%20Guide%204:%20Creating%20decent%20jobs%20for%20youth.pdf).

Key Components

| COMPONENT | WHAT THIS ENTAILS |
|------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Assessments | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Youth needs assessment. ■ Market assessment. ■ Market system mapping. ■ Application of gender lens in assessments. |
| Entrepreneurship Opportunity Selection | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Dissemination of information on entrepreneurship opportunities. ■ Support to young people to select entrepreneurship opportunity. |
| Entrepreneurship Skills Development | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Life skills for entrepreneurs. ■ General business management skills. ■ Supporting entrepreneurial skills. ■ Complementary vocational skills. |
| Business Model Development | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Youth entrepreneurs leading business model development. ■ Unique features of business models. ■ Engagement of potential clients and suppliers. ■ Step-by-step, start-up business plan. |
| Access to Finance | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Investment budget. ■ Contribution of youth entrepreneurs. ■ Youth entrepreneurs' engagement of external sources of funding. ■ Alignment with requirements of lenders or investors. ■ Supporting documentation. |
| Linkages to Market Actors and Their Products and Services | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Advice on connecting with market actors and their products and services. ■ Relationships with market actors. |
| Business Expansion | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Market opportunity identification. ■ Continuous entrepreneurship skills development. ■ Revision of business model. ■ Access to additional finance. ■ Linkages to new market actors and their products and services. |
| Market Actor Engagement | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Market actors' inclusive policies, services and linkages for youth entrepreneurs. ■ Formalized relationships with market actors. |

Photo by Laura Elizabeth Pohl/CRS



PROJECT HIGHLIGHT

Youth Entrepreneurship in Rwanda: *The Gera Ku Ntego Project*

Following market assessments to identify entrepreneurship opportunities and understand market actors, CRS in Rwanda is partnering with government, Church, financial and private sector entities to support 24,000 rural young people interested in starting their own businesses or growing their existing ones. As part of the project, young people form savings groups and develop their entrepreneurship skills through training in life skills, business skills and financial literacy. Participants also enroll in vocational training relevant for their businesses offered by private sector entities and cooperatives. After completing training, young people receive two years of coaching and support from private service providers, as well as employment and agricultural officers. Working with them, youth entrepreneurs can secure additional funding, legalize their business, and access inputs, markets and transportation benefits through microfinance institutions, cooperatives and government programs. After the first year of the project, 82% of participants were self-employed, 15% had obtained wage employment, and youth-led savings groups had collectively saved \$81,000 and borrowed \$61,000 for their enterprises.

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