



# When Investing in Youth Changes Realities

Youth in Action Program-Egypt

January 2017



**He climbed the wall under construction to take this picture. He smiled and said, “Building skills is like building a wall with strong foundation. It will never let you down”.**

Mohammed lives in Asyut, Upper Egypt. He is the son of a farmer and the eldest child in his family. Like many adolescents in his situation, Mohammed grew up with a sense of responsibility, as he had to help his father put food on the table for his family. Mohammed began working at an early age while attending school but this was not sustainable and he had to drop out at age 12 to spend more time helping his family.

Since childhood, Mohammed has always wanted to become a professional construction carpenter. He has enjoyed working in construction sites since he started to work and his big dream has been to have his own carpentry shop. However, this dream was not easy to achieve. He worked for several contractors who mistreated him and did not provide skills or enough financial compensation, which made him feel that securing a safe and viable career in the profession he liked was simply impossible.



***“I became an angry person. I started to smoke, initiate fights and make aggressive reactions against my friends and family members”. Mohammed Said.***

The reality was that Mohammed just needed an opportunity. An opportunity that would give him the skills and knowledge needed to help him have a better future. Mohammed is part of a new generation that is shaping the future of its own country. This generation needs the opportunity to create for themselves brighter tomorrows. Save the Children recognized this and made it a priority to focus on rural, out-of-school young people like Mohammed, through its Youth in Action (YiA) program. In partnership with The MasterCard Foundation, the six-year program aims to improve the socio-economic status of 40,000 rural

out-of-school young people; both girls and boys aged 12-18 in Burkina Faso, Ethiopia, Malawi, Uganda and Egypt. YiA works with adolescent girls and boys who have aspirations and dreams for their future but need the support to build the necessary skills, knowledge and attitudes to put them on a trajectory towards a pathway out of poverty

In Egypt, YiA aims to reach 8,200 girls and boys in two age groups (12-14 & 15-18), living in the rural communities of Assiut, in Upper Egypt, and Al Sharqia, in the Delta region. Since its start in 2013, through its holistic approach, the program has been providing its participants with non-formal education through instruction in literacy, numeracy and transferable skills like financial literacy, market analysis, as well as life skills that foster their work readiness.

When Mohammed joined Youth in Action, he was only looking to learn how to become a skilled carpenter. One month into the program, he realised that there were other skills essential to being a successful entrepreneur, included improved reading, writing and budgeting abilities. Mohammed also appreciated how he improved his communication skills and the way he interacts with his peers and family. He started to control his reactions and feel comfortable speaking in public. Mohammed also knew how to explore the resources in his community and in the local market.

After finishing Youth in Action's first phase – the learning phase - , Mohammed was given the choice to pursue his path by going back to school, establishing a small business, or receiving vocational training or an apprenticeship. With no hesitation, Mohammed chose to go for the apprenticeship. With the support of his facilitators, Mohamed visited several construction contractors and chose one of the best in his community to train him.

"I chose this because I was going to be trained by an experienced professional who respects me and gives me knowledge, network connections and skills that go beyond just how to use the tools," Mohammed added.

During the apprenticeship training, Mohammed received a toolkit from the program and a small start-up fund to help him pursue his dream. He completed his three months of training successfully and got a paid job with the same contractor he apprenticed with.

Mohamed has a steady income now. He is saving part of it to fulfil his dream of having his own business and the other part he spends on himself and his family, including helping to support his two younger brothers through school.

Mohamed also learned how to invest his money wisely. This year, he joined a revolving youth savings group, where youth put a fixed amount of money monthly and in turn, each person receives the whole

amount each month. When Mohamed received his money, he used it to buy a calf to grow alongside his work. The calf grew into a cow, which he sold a few months later. He used part of the profit to build a concrete roof for his family's home and the other part he saved for his business. Mohamed believes that in a year he will be able to buy more tools and equipment, start his own small business, and hire workers to work for him.

Investing in young people's skill building is essential for the creation of sustainable livelihoods that are not just about financial capital or physical assets, but also include human and social capital. It is a combination that can change a generation's economic realities into brighter futures.

***“Doing all this effort to learn and work, especially after reaching a point where I could not see any hope for my future makes me very happy and proud. I feel I have a new lease on life”, Mohammed.***