

Verslag BCNN Netwerkmiddag 2024

Empowerment van jongeren: veerkracht, life skills en betekenisvolle participatie

Op vrijdagmiddag 11 oktober kwam een diverse groep mensen bijeen in Utrecht voor de jaarlijkse BCNN Netwerkmiddag. Thema dit jaar was empowerment van jongeren. Wat hebben jongeren nodig om zich voor te bereiden op volwassenheid? Experts gaven inzicht in en handvatten voor het inzetten van life skills, participatie van jongeren en het vergroten van veerkracht en mentale gezondheid. Het programma vond deels in het Nederlands, deels in het Engels plaats gezien de deelname van internationale experts. In dit verslag vindt u daarom ook deels een Engelse samenvatting van het programma.

Interview with experts from Kenya

The program was started by Marijke Acket, SOS Children's Villages, interviewing experts from Kenya via an online connection.

Marijke: "Today we will be talking about youth empowerment and we invited a young person from Kenya, John. He is a participant in one of the youth programs of SOS Children's Villages in Kenya. With him is Gabriel, his coach. We will speak with John about what youth empowerment means for him."

John: "I am a participant of the computer training program of SOS. I spent my early years in alternative care, in an orphanage. We had a lot of activities I took part in. We felt like brothers and sisters. When I went to college, I left with mixed emotions, leaving all friends behind. I experienced a lot of challenges on the way. Life is in general challenging. It is very difficult to find education in Kenya. It is also very difficult to find a job. That brings insecurity. Basic needs were covered when I left care. During that time I experienced some network of friends, but the transition was not that smooth. I overcame these challenges, mainly with the aid of a friend. I found the will to go on. Looking back on my life, pursuing my goals, challenges, not giving up and finding hope and bounce back."

Marijke: "Gabriel, you have been John's coach and mentor, can you share how you saw John develop over time?" Gabriel: "He came to the hub without knowing how to use computers at all. We help youth to learn about the digital environment. John was very proactive, trying to do things on his own, asking good questions. He was interested in opening a business, he has shown resilience, gaining knowledge and skills. He is now partnering with others, because of his hard work. Youth empowerment means for us trying to make youth independent, getting to the market level. Empowerment is a driving force. Youth need to be given physical assistance, help in moving in the right direction and work on their independence."

Marijke: "Tokas, you are the family strengthening coordinator of SOS Children's Villages. You work on the prevention of child separation. Can you tell us about what youth empowerment looks like?"

Tokas: “We have been working very closely with the family, taking charge of their life. We train soft skills, train life skills, seek job opportunities, train time management, problem solving skills, how to apply for jobs, how to be successful in interviews. We are also working with youth groups, learning groups, coming together to speak how to become responsible within the community. We are taking care of some of the issues that the participants have within the family and in their interaction with peers. We also speak about mental health, financial literacy and economic empowerment. “

Finally, John shared his plans for the future: “My first priority is to expand and diversify my business. To be self-reliant. My dream for all young Kenyans is to be self-reliant.”

Introducties van de thema's

Veerkracht, Ditte van Haalen, Augeo Foudation

Ditte van Haalen werkt als programmamedewerker bij [Augeo Foundation](#). Augeo is een privaat fonds en heeft als missie dat kinderen veilig en veerkrachtig opgroeien. Juist de kinderen die ingrijpende dingen meemaken hebben steun nodig zodat zij kunnen herstellen van ervaringen en zich verder kunnen ontwikkelen.

Ditte heeft een achtergrond in de criminologie en psychologie en haar deskundigheid ligt op het gebied van ingrijpende jeugdervaringen en veerkracht. Bij Augeo werkt ze mee aan diverse projecten binnen het programma Veerkracht. Zoals onderzoek naar veerkracht elementen, het ontwikkelen en evalueren van animaties en het ontwikkelen van infographics en andere materialen voor professionals.

Ditte vertelt in haar introductie dat we allemaal stressvolle dingen meemaken zoals het verlies van een dierbare of ontslagen worden. Iedereen gaat hier anders mee om, hier herstellen we vaak van en gaan vervolgens verder met ons leven. We hebben veerkracht ontwikkeld.

Kinderen maken ook stressvolle dingen mee, bijvoorbeeld in de familie sfeer. Mishandeling, geweld, armoede, dakloos raken. Al dit soort crises hebben invloed op je ontwikkeling. Kinderen hebben hier geen invloed op, het is overweldigend. En soms bedreigend en onvoorspelbaar. Hierdoor zijn kinderen vaak continu in een alerte toestand.



Het versterken van de veerkracht is hierin belangrijk. Iedereen kan deze veerkracht ontwikkelen. Vaak hebben deze kinderen de mensen om zich heen daarbij nodig. Het startpunt van het onderzoek naar veerkracht was een onderzoek op Hawaii in 1955. Als kinderen een betrouwbare volwassene om zich heen hadden, bijvoorbeeld een ouder of een professional, dan hielp dat de ontwikkeling van kinderen. Goede hulp en ondersteuning blijft belangrijk en veerkracht is geen wondermiddel. In de workshop ging Ditte daar verder op in (zie pagina 4 en verder).

Meaningful Youth Participation, Luisa Tesch, ICDI

[International Child Development Initiatives \(ICDI\)](#) is a knowledge organisation promoting the psychosocial well-being of children growing up in difficult circumstances by working in the fields of early childhood education and development, child protection and well-being

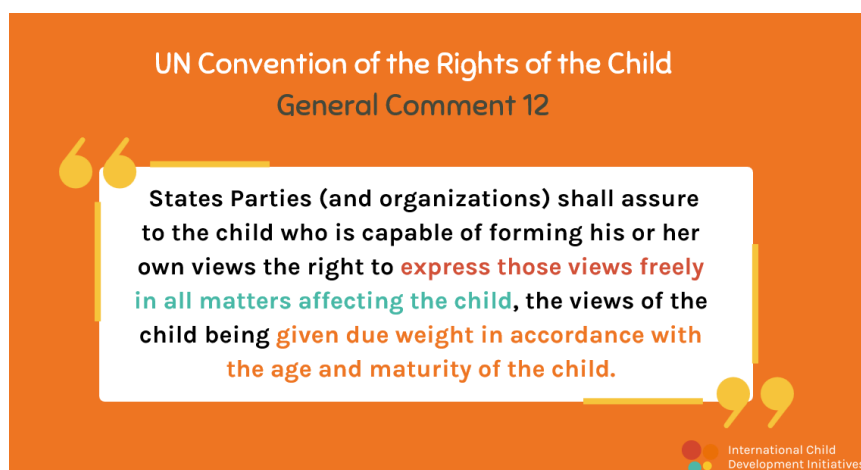
Luisa Tesch holds a master's degree in Social Policy and Public Health from Utrecht University and studied Psychology at the Pontifical Catholic University of Chile. After college, she specialised in Childhood and Public Policies. She has a background in research and consultancy regarding childhood and youth policies in Chile. She has worked on different projects regarding education, alternative care, and adoption. Her main areas of interest are children's and adolescent well-being (especially those in the child protection system), evaluation of social programmes, and social policy.

Luisa tells why meaningful youth participation is important: it is a mean. It helps to improve programs. It can help us develop more context-based and context-driven programming. We hear what are the priorities of youth, connecting to their ambitions and dreams. But meaningful youth participation is also an end. It helps to develop ownership, gives the feeling you contribute to something. This will also make a project more sustainable. We also avoid doing unintended harm.

Youth participation helps a project to get better but it also helps the youth with:

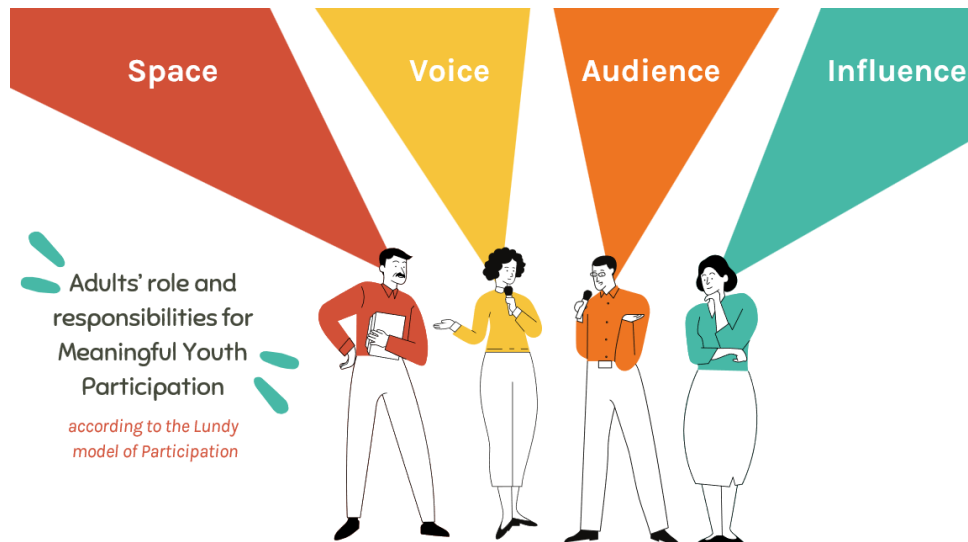
- Empowerment and agency
- Skills development
- Civic engagement (meaningful perspective)
- Social and emotional development
- Voice and advocacy (have a platform)

How we think about youth participation have changed over the years, the UN convention helped on this.



What is the role of an adult in this? We get to be trainers, we get to be challengers (ask the right questions), we get to be legitimisers, we can take an idea and see how this is related to other ideas and society, we get to do logistical things.

The Lundy model of participation is the basis: Space, voice, audience and influence. In the workshop she elaborated this (see page 7 and further).



Life Skills – Young Africa

Founded in the Netherlands in 1998, [Young Africa](#) (YA) currently operates in 6 countries as a confederation of independently and locally registered affiliated organisations. Each Affiliate operates TVET centres, youth (self-)employment programmes and community activities in a total of 9 Technical and Vocational Training and Education (TVET) centres. Young Africa's core business is skills training for employability and entrepreneurship. YA delivers its skills training through an innovative franchise business model (UNEVOC/UNESCO endorsed best practice training model). The sustainable integral approach addresses the multi-dimensional nature of development needs (i.e. economic, social and emotional) of young people in a highly synchronized way. Young people receive on-the job vocational training (70% practical, 30% theory), life skills education, and entrepreneurship training. Young Africa's integral approach for youth development is based on the conviction that for young people to reach their full potential they have to develop holistically. See page 11 and further for more information on the life skills program of Young Africa.

Workshop programma

Workshop 1: Stress en veerkracht (Augeo)

Doel van deze workshop:

- Inzicht in stress
- Herkennen van stress
- Inzicht veerkracht

- Wat kan veerkracht versterkend werken

Er volgt een kort kennismakingsrondje waarin de volgende vragen beantwoord worden. Wie ben je, waar werk je, wat zijn je uitdagingen en wat wil je leren vandaag.

Wat is stress

Stress is een natuurlijke reactie op uitdagingen. Je lichaam geeft een alarm af. Dingen in je lichaam worden automatisch actief. Je hart gaat bijv. sneller kloppen, je gaat zweten, etc. Je reptielenbrein wordt actief en gaat aan de slag. Dit is normaal en hoort bij het leven. Stress is per definitie niet slecht, kan ook nuttig zijn, voor gevaar, snel in actie komen. Helpt je om te focussen. Je systeem raakt geactiveerd, daarna neemt je hartslag weer af.

Wanneer het chronische stress wordt, is dat niet meer goed. Je stresssysteem is te lang geactiveerd. Er is dan te veel cortisol en je stresssysteem raakt ontregeld. Je raakt gevoeliger voor dingen en sommige kinderen gaan helemaal niet meer reageren. Extra schadelijk is het wanneer je op jonge leeftijd te veel mee maakt. Dit kan de structuur van het brein beschadigen. Je stresssysteem kan ernstig ontregeld worden. Het kan je emotionele geheugen beschadigen (moeite om na te denken omdat je constant stress hebt) en het kan genetisch materiaal beïnvloeden (doorgeven aan volgende generatie).

De extra impact van stress geldt tot ca. 21-23 jaar (periode van breinontwikkeling), maar kan ook dus herstellen.

Stressfactoren zijn o.a. armoede, conflict, slecht onderwijs, gezondheidsproblemen, etc.

In tweetallen wordt besproken: Welke specifieke stressfactoren zie je in je werk? Of wat verwacht je te zien?

Voorbeelden:

- Mensen binnen een organisatie ervaren stress omdat ze te veel verschillende taken hebben.
- In Zuid-Afrika veel armoede. Onderwijs is bijvoorbeeld wel gratis maar men moet zelf de schooluniformen betalen.
- Langdurige stress in oorlogsgebieden.
- Tijdens zwangerschap al stress oplopen door bijv. drugsgebruik, het leven op straat, onveiligheid.
- Seksuele uitbuiting. Moeite om mensen te vertrouwen. Weinig hulp ervaren.

Herkennen van stress signalen

- Kan bij iedereen anders ervaren worden.
- Ook niet eenduidig.

Casus (2 jongeren) oefening in tweetallen

- Welke stresssituaties zie of verwacht je?
- Wat zie je juist niet?
- Fysiek, gedrag, emotioneel

Fysieke klachten: bijv. hoofdpijn, buikpijn.

Gedragsverandering: bijv. terugtrekken, agressie.

Emotionele reactie: bijv. angst, apathie, huilen.

Rolomkering: bijv. ouderlijke verantwoordelijkheid dragen.

Wat zien we nou bij de kinderen / jongeren waarmee wij werken? Goed om dit met je collega's te bespreken.

Wat is veerkracht

Veerkracht is het vermogen van kinderen om zich aan te passen en te herstellen na tegenslag. Goed kijken hoe kinderen al omgaan met tegenslagen en wat werkt voor ze.

Visie op veerkracht: Augeo Foundation ziet het als een rugzakje waarin je dingen kunt stoppen en ook weer uit kunt halen. Het is een proces waarin je ook een rugzak vult en weer dingen weg kunt nemen.

Hulpmiddelen:

- Reguliere vaardigheden: wat zijn je gedachten, hoe kun je ze veranderen. Ook in je lijf. Emoties leren herkennen en begrijpen.
- Interpersoonlijke krachten: samenwerken, relaties, conflicten oplossen, vaardigheden leren, hoe ga je met anderen om.
- Pro sociale vaardigheden. Persoonlijke krachten, zelfvertrouwen, succeservaringen opdoen, complimentjes, geloof in eigen kunnen.
- Betekenisgevende vaardigheden. Bijv. ik kom hier sterker uit. Positieve betekenis. Omdraaien: ik heb het verdiend. Of anderen gaan helpen met jouw ervaring.

Al deze vaardigheden zijn vaak niet ontwikkeld door te veel stress of door het niet hebben van een goed voorbeeld.

Externe hulpbronnen:

- School
- Sport
- Buurthuis
- Familie
- Leeftijdsgenootjes
- Tradities / cultuur / geloof

Coping is een manier om met stress om te gaan. Helpen om andere manieren te kiezen. Door bijv. muziek te maken. Zelf creatieve oplossing zoeken.

Ook kleine dingen kunnen effect hebben. Kinderen willen gezien en gehoord worden.

Interessant boek: *Iedereen kan het verschil maken* van Leony Coppens. Over trauma en veerkracht bij kinderen. Meer weten? [‘Het was zo mooi om te zien wat steun met hen gedaan heeft’ | Augeo Foundation](#)

Hoe kun je veerkracht versterken?

- Elk positief contact heeft invloed.
- Kom je beloftes na.
- Wees transparant en open.
- Vaste routine (hoe klein ook).
- Help kinderen om succeservaringen op te doen.

- Kijk naar wat er in de gemeenschap aanwezig is.
- Stimuleer relaties.
- Zorg voor positieve ervaringen.
- Psycho-educatie. Niet veroordelend in je houding. Vraag niet: “wat is er mis met jou?”, maar “Wat is jou overkomen en wie was er voor jou?”. Uitleggen en inzicht krijgen in gedrag en emoties. Gedrag is normaal, de situatie niet.

Hier vindt u de [presentatie van Augeo](#) over veerkracht.

Andere nuttige links

- De Augeo Veerkrachtwerkplaats: <https://www.augeo.nl/nl-nl/steun/>
- Augeo magazine over Veerkracht: <https://www.augeomagazine.nl/veerkracht-augeo-magazine-26/veerkracht-augeo-magazine-26>
- Animatie de Breinbijsluiter: <https://www.augeo.nl/breinbijsluiter>
- Psycho-educatie animaties: <https://www.augeo.nl/psycho-educatie>
- Gratis online cursus van Augeo voor vrijwilligers, o.a. over het herkennen van stress bij kinderen en hoe je kinderen kan steunen: <https://www.augeo.nl/nl-nl/augeo-academy/sector/vrijwilligers/>
- Pagina met o.a. de animatie Window of Tolerance in meerdere talen: <https://www.augeo.nl/vluchtelingenkinderen>
- Engelstalige pagina over veerkracht: <https://www.augeo.nl/en/resilience/stress-and-trauma/>
- Engelstalige pagina over ingrijpende jeugdervaringen, hier staan ook de infographics in het Engels <https://www.augeo.nl/en/aces/>

Workshop 2: Meaningful Youth Participation (ICDI)

Introduction of all the participants. How does child participation looks like in your projects and organization?

- Care leaving, youth councils
- Counselling and working with police and judicial system
- Support projects from other countries
- Inform youth/girls focus on gender issues
- Support all kind of initiatives, release children back to family situations
- Life skill program, youth councils
- Child protection committees, to keep an eye on their own community, very active, involves everyone.

Guiding Principles for Meaningful Youth Participation



Some are already related to another. It is informative, why are they being asked, we get to be sensitive, constantly checking on consent, it needs to be accountable, give feedback and ideas, are their views being reflected or not? It needs to be relevant: the topic needs to match, be in line and sensitive what they find important in their everyday life. It needs to be youth friendly, how we design things, is it accessible and inclusive. Supported by training is also important, we train and reflect.

There are two levels of meaningful participation: organizational level and project level.

Today focus on project level. How can we introduce youth participation in a project cycle: identification, design, implementation and evaluation.

Excercise

Brainstorm on ideas how we can increase youth participation in a project.

Fold a paper in 8 parts, to get to 8 ideas in 8 minutes. 1 minute per square to fill in an idea on youth participation. (alarm being set after every minute). The further you come to the end, the more difficult it will get. We will share one (Luisa will take pictures and send it to everyone) and see where it fits in the cycle:

- Spark an interest by organizing a contest and the winner gets to implement.
- Youth should get involved in recruitment process (over 18), they have a different perspective and voice. (out of experience it works very well), or what questions would you ask in an interview.
- Connecting older children with younger children (to create a mentorship)
- Convince the youth that you can do it, to have a better life and better future (how can we do this in a more practical sense? Show how others have done this, share experience).
- Providing incentives to get them more active (like earphones, screensavers, small but meaningful).
- More creative activities (like a drawing focus groups)
- Project implementation, work with podcast, use social media
- Laboratories, invite professionals and youth, everyone is equal.

How could we increase youth participation in a project?

This document compiles the ideas participants shared in response to the question of **how to increase youth participation in a project**. With so much knowledge and expertise in the room, we wanted to pass along the long (and diverse!) list of ideas.

Participant 1

1. In the recruitment committee: ask a young person from the target group to come into the committee that decides on new workers
2. Kinderperspectief Lab: bringing professionals, young persons, teachers and guardians together to brainstorm over one topic
3. Mentor projects: Peer-to-peer young people can learn from each other
4. Expert: Use knowledge of experienced people
5. Use Appgroups about a specific item
6. Put youth councils into place
7. Let youth visit other organizations to get ideas from other youths
8. Make a connection between countries: what can we learn from each other?

Participant 2

1. Interpretive Dance: to demonstrate storytelling
2. I mixed youth groups per community
3. Peer-to-peer counselling/awareness raising
4. Recruitment processes: what would young people ask?
5. Project design: elevate pitches on activities
6. Youth ambassadors or youth councils
7. Social media expression
8. Youth seminars

Participant 3

1. Creative Activities: drawing focus groups or cooking
2. Anonymous idea boxes: that are always available when scared to speak up
3. Identification of groups by collaborating with community leaders and coaches
4. Collaborate with schools and councils developed by youth
5. Sports and games: share your ideas and let youth share theirs
6. Trust building: activities first to create an open and safe place
7. Making projects tangible and creating awareness: value their input
8. Participate in their environments and understand their context, share outcomes and research results

Participant 4

1. Psychological uplifting: Tell them "Yes, you can"
2. Better life in the future
3. Teach them about sustainable life, climate change and neo-colonialism
4. Talk about what a valuable citizen is
5. Provide motivation and resources to alleviate poverty
6. Encourage them to get out of the box, and rethink our discrimination system
7. Match them with professionals who might be able to help them to learn about topics they are interested in

Participant 5

1. Peer Education
2. Podcasts

3. Afterschool activities
4. Youth Programmes
5. Clubs of interest: building social/religious
6. Make youth take responsibility for certain tasks within the community
7. Designate youth leaders
8. Intervision groups
9. Toolkits

Participant 6

1. Share Prospect Proposals with young people over focus groups
2. Get feedback from youth on impact and progress
3. Involve youth in recruitment processes (for example care leavers)
4. Promote/Facilitate youth Councils and assemble to review projects
5. Involve young people in project design / Co-creation
6. Publish success stories (18+) written by young people affected by the programme
7. Survey young people to identify issues that might matter to them
8. Listen to youth

Participant 7

1. Use social media as a means: ask youth from a community to share input via Instagram or TikTok
2. Go to school to ask youth about their priorities
3. Focus groups: to identify the problems with relevant actors, including youth
4. Organize a sport activity and link this to a needs assessment
5. Create a safe space for youth (designed) by youth where they feel safe to be able to better involve them.
6. Incorporate life skills training at schools so youth feels empowered to voice their interests
7. Include youth at the board level of the implementing organization, so that they are part of the decision making
8. Organize contest in common to design a project and ask youth to think along

Project cycle

1. Identification : Mapping, Dream Tree, Theatre
Dream Tree: what are the roots, trunk, flowers and landscape.
2. Design: Stakeholder analysis, focus groups and how does success looks like?
Stakeholder analysis: mobile play hub for Ukrainian refugee children in Hungary and Slovakia.
3. Implementation: Empathy mapping, youth-led research, boys & girls club (example; through a sanitary pad initiative they started talking about other subjects as well)
Youth-led research: Children are experts on their lives, children's experiences different to adults, acknowledge their right to be heard. (Example: what does girls keep from continuing education, contest, solution sanitary pads, improving bath rooms).
4. Evaluation: start, stop, continue and sandwich feedback, and photo voice (Example, take pictures in their home to see what places are important to them, then in an exposition let them explain the pictures.
Sandwich feedback: positive feedback, constructive criticism and positive feedback. Include food!

Here you can find the [presentation of ICDI](#).

Workshop 3: Life Skills (Young Africa)

The Life Skills Education (LSE) is a series of lessons that helps students develop essential skills such as self-confidence, problem-solving, effective communication, leadership, and assertiveness. Furthermore, the training raises awareness on various topics, including human rights, HIV/AIDS, domestic violence, peace and war, and living with purpose.

The program's methodology is based on interactive tools, such as role-plays and group discussions, following the principles of participatory learning. The Life Skills Curriculum, Life Skills Training Methodology, and facilitation practices (peer and student engagement) are all integral to the approach.

The methodology builds on personal (**ME**), relational (**US**), and community (**ALL**) development of the individual:

ME: Focuses on individual development, encouraging self-reflection, self-esteem, and recognizing self-worth. It provides tools for leadership, management, and information on topics of social and cultural interest, such as HIV prevention and stigma reduction.

US: Develops skills related to effective communication, assertiveness, empathy, friendship, gender awareness, and sex and relationships. This helps individuals improve their interactions with family, friends, and colleagues.

ALL: Prepares individuals to actively engage in their community by developing problem-solving, budget management, and media awareness skills. This way, participants are better equipped for future employment or entrepreneurship.

The program assesses impact at different levels:

1. **Personal Impact:** Through topics like "**The Gift You Are**," the program fosters self-esteem and confidence, providing tools to manage peer pressure and stress.
2. **Interpersonal Impact:** Topics such as "Effective Communication," "Friendship," "True Love," and "Assertiveness" equip young people to build respectful, empathetic, and supportive relationships.
3. **Cognitive Impact:** Lessons on the "Problem-Solving Process," "Dream Island," and "Media Awareness" help youth analyse situations critically, develop sound judgement, and make informed decisions.
4. **Social Impact:** Topics like "Gender Awareness" and "Our Norms and Values" instil respect for diversity, equality, and shared societal responsibilities.
5. **Preparing Youth for a Bright Future:** Modules like "Ready for the Future" and "Your Happiness, Your Decision" empower young people to approach post-school life with confidence and direction.

Q&A:

Each organization shared its experiences with life skills programs in their activities:

Liliane Fonds is running a pilot project for trauma healing for children with disabilities, addressing the stigma they face. Intensive emotional support is required to help these children absorb the skills and

information provided. The curriculum includes topics on social- and emotional well-being, using peer facilitators and individual mentoring.

Wilde Ganzen focuses on practical life skills such as emotional management and time-keeping. They base their curriculum on the “21st Century Skills,” which include creativity and digital literacy.

Red een Kind offers a curriculum focused on agricultural and vocational skills for parents to improve their family’s economic situation.

Kinderpostzegels’ methodology is based on the Dutch system of awarding achievement badges, helping children recognize their strengths.

Free a Girl’s Life skills training focuses on trauma healing, tailored to the needs of survivors. It includes positive parenting and helping survivors reclaim agency over their lives.

Kerk in Actie develops life skills to enhance personal improvement. The material is contextualized for each country.

Point discussed:

- Why create new materials when there is so much available?
- For ngo’s it can be helpful to employ a consultant to gather online open-source materials, then contextualize them for their group’s needs.
- How do life skills programs differ in countries with strong social norms or religious expectations? Methodologies and approaches are contextualized for different countries and religions. When a topic is taboo, like teenage pregnancy, conversations are introduced from a neutral perspective to avoid confrontation. Video materials that relate to participants are also used. Homework assignments allow participants to conduct their own research, which fosters deeper personal engagement.
- How do you connect individual expectations with community needs when vocational training doesn’t align with ambitions or interests? The needs of the community are considered to avoid mismatches. Children who discover their passion are more likely to succeed, but in youth care, many haven’t had the opportunity to explore their interests. In these cases, the methodology facilitates connections with role models who can share their stories and expand the children’s perspectives. Long-term support is also necessary to guide children in their life choices.
- How are contemporary issues addressed in life skills training? The Young Africa program continuously updates its content based on students’ needs and feedback from entrepreneurs.
- How is spirituality approached? Participants are encouraged to respect and understand each other’s beliefs, promoting values of diversity and inclusion. The concept of Ubuntu, which emphasizes community and shared humanity, is a key theme throughout the training of Young Africa.

Here you can find the [presentation of Young Africa](#).

Afsluiting

De middag werd afgesloten met een plenaire terugkoppeling van de workshops, en een sneak preview van de BCNN campagne tegen vrijwilligerswerk in kindertehuizen, die in december gelanceerd wordt. Als wensen voor een volgende netwerkmiddag werden genoemd: trauma, stigma

en marginalisatie. Het herkennen en hoe kan je hier mee omgaan, bijvoorbeeld bij kinderen of jongeren met een beperking of HIV.

We bedanken alle deelnemers voor hun aanwezigheid en inbreng, en Marlou de Kuiper voor het voorzitterschap, alle sprekers, zowel aanwezig als online, voor het delen van hun kennis. We hopen jullie volgend jaar weer te zien!

FOTO'S NETWERKMIDDAG 2024

