

Africa Yoga Project Independent Study

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What is Africa Yoga Project (AYP)?

- A non-profit organization based in Nairobi that empowers young people to advance through the practice of yoga
- Founded on the idea that social change and development can be achieved through a positive outlook and motivated individuals



AYP was founded in 2007 by Paige Elenson. Since 2007, over 200 young people have been trained to teach yoga and are now earning a living wage

Goals

- Reduce the high unemployment rate among young people in Kenya by providing people from informal settlements a way to earn a living wage
- Help young people from informal settlements enhance their mental and physical wellbeing
- Provide young people with the tools to become leaders within their communities and inspire others to join the wellbeing chain

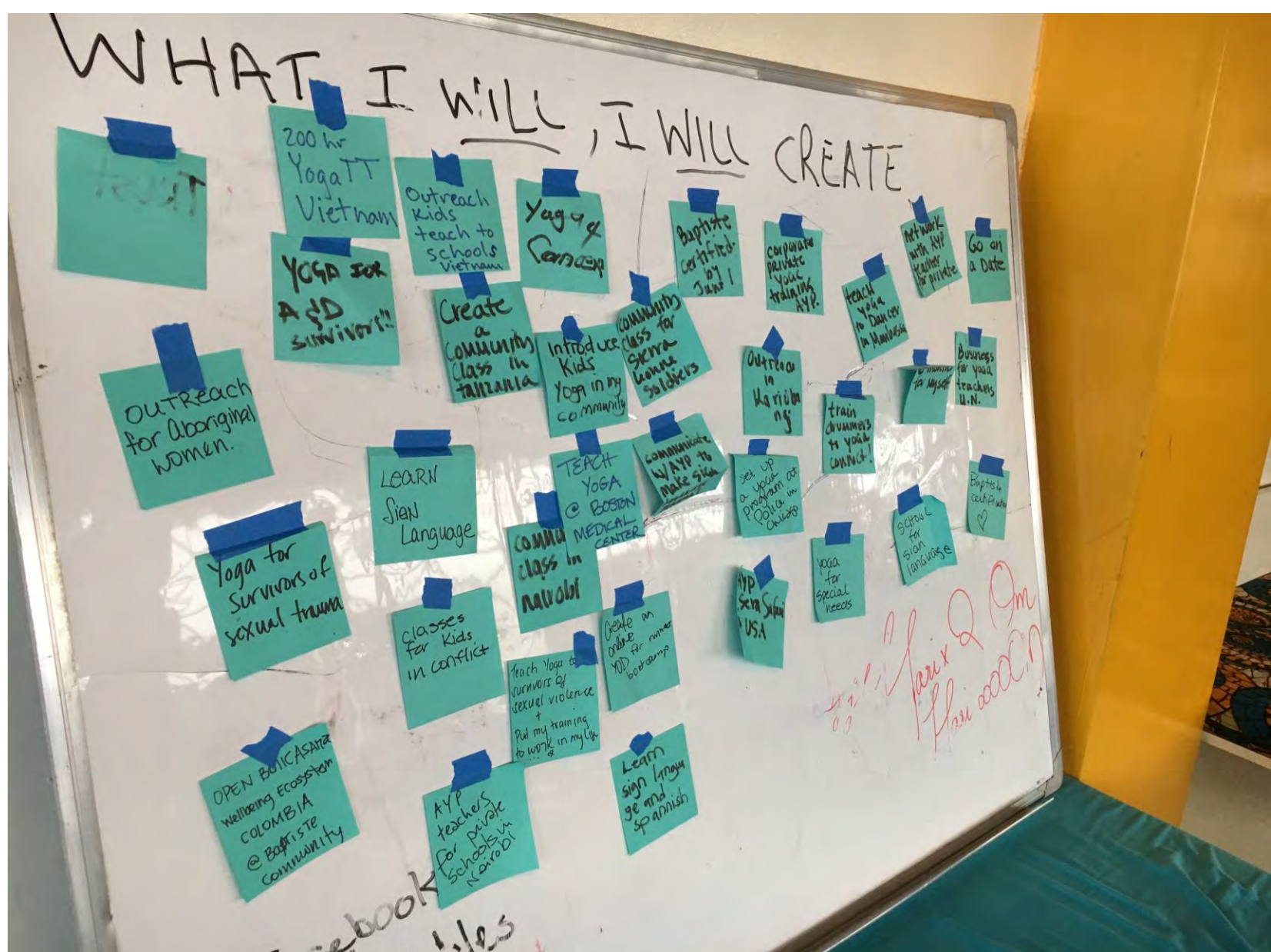


Structure

- The program gives scholarships to young people in low-income areas or informal settlements across Africa to attend a two-week yoga teacher training class
- Following the class, the teachers are a part of an academy in which they must teach 3-5 free classes within their communities each week to empower other people as well

Program Results

- Improved Financial Status
 - Following AYP academy graduation, teachers earn salaries that allow them to support themselves and sometimes six to eight family members.
 - AYP Development Director, Billy Sadia, attests to the successes of the program: "I have heard testimonies and seen examples where AYP has totally transformed people's financial status. Through the mentorship program, all of our teachers have a minimum wage."
- Improved Personal Wellbeing
 - A 2013 Boston College study found that teacher training enhanced physical and mental health among teachers.
 - Many AYP teachers have attested that being a part of the AYP academy has helped them overcome personal challenges such as problems with drugs or alcohol
- Spreading Wellbeing
 - Through their outreach classes and a free community class every Saturday, AYP teachers are able to not only empower others to take care of their mental wellbeing but also practice their own leadership skills



My Project with AYP

- Currently, AYP has little infrastructure to be able to measure the impact of the organization. The only way AYP checks that teachers are actually teaching the classes is through random spot checks
 - These can be time consuming and often give inaccurate data
 - There is currently no way to collect data on students
- I worked with the AYP manager, Andreas Kidane, to apply for a grant from an Italian Company called ICT that would allow AYP to set up the infrastructure to collect data through a smart phone application. Applying for the grant included
 - Researching 3G data and cell phone accessibility in Nairobi
 - Using data to demonstrate that AYP has the ability to implement a program like this
 - Analyzing the organization's budget to show that AYP has enough funds to supplement the grant to actually make this program functional
 - Showing why AYP is the best candidate for this grant
- Winning this grant would allow AYP to develop the infrastructure to better assess the impact of their organization, which would allow them to enact changes to the structure of the organization in order to maximize its impact



Sport As A Tool for Social Change

- Part of my independent study included researching the ways in which sports can be used as tools for social and economic change.
- Other organizations in Africa that use sports for the basis of their Non-Profits:
 - Waves for a Change in South Africa- surfing
 - Development Through Sport in South Africa- football, paddling, dance and swimming
- Benefits of Sports-oriented non-profits:
 - Improves mental and physical health
 - Helps foster connections between people
 - Improves academic performance
 - Improves social cohesion
 - Lowers depression rates
 - Reduces poverty
 - Builds leadership skills

"Sport has unique attributes that enable it to contribute to the development process...its potential to set the foundation for healthy child development together with its ability to connect people make it a tool that can be used to meet a range of development objectives."
2017 Australian governmental study



References

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