

Programme Report: February 2025



Introduction

February was an eventful month for YOSA. We received social work interns from Wits, UP and SACAP universities as demonstrations of our programme effectiveness. The social work interns will be with us throughout 2025; hence we ran a full-scale orientation programme in the first week of February. We further conducted activities; categorized under learning support, behavioral support, psychosocial support, digital skills training, leadership development, learner pregnancy support, and parental engagement. This year we do have a functional component of multitasking social workers.

YOSA Relevance

The challenges confronting learners in township communities manifest in their disengagement from school and all the learning activities. The learners are thrust into a condition of learned-helplessness and are easily drawn to negative role models. The township school is further crippled by parental disengagement in the education of their children, family breakdowns, lack of teaching resources and big class sizes that treat learners as mere numbers. The ten schools currently supported by YOSA have an aggregate enrollment of 12 204 learners. YOSA is therefore providing a layer of social support for learners, educators and families. Our social workers are largely the significant adults in the lives of many young people living with parental deficiencies.

YOSA strategy execution

We address learning barriers through an innovative response that involves effective learners' engagement and amplifying their school connectedness. The digital skills development and psychosocial support are crosscutting programmes in all YOSA responses to entice learners to attend school and improve education outcomes. These two programmes are embedded in learning support, behavior support and learner leadership development. Our experience has shown that adding parental engagement and teacher support to this mix brings transformation to the school culture. Our programmes are driven by a complement of 22 staff members comprising of 7 qualified social workers and 15 social work interns.



YOSA Social workers and social work interns

1. Learning support

Our support programme has started well in all the supported schools and at the Centre. Three hundred and fifty-three (353) learners had enrolled for our learning support programme by the end of February. These learners are participating in Spelling Bee competitions, the book club, group based and one-on-one tutoring, and computer aided literacy programme. Our curriculum coaching is mainly focused on STEM subjects.



Computer aided study and group based curriculum coaching

2. Behavioural support

Our staff are running various sizes of therapy and support groups of learners with total enrolment of one hundred and thirteen learners who were identified during our baseline study in January. These learners were ear-marked for the attention of social workers. Many of them have issues of substance use, violence, absconding lessons and habitual late coming. The therapeutic interventions involve home visits and engagements with families to address the root causes of the problems. Parental engagement is yielding tremendous positive change.





Afterschool behavioural support group and social workers on a community familiarisation tour

3. Digital skills training

Digital skills development and psychosocial support are the main programmes that drive learners' adherence to education. Psychosocial support ensures that change is inspired by partnerships and positive social connections of learners, social workers, parents and educators. Sustainable and exciting learning is provided through digital tools with total buy-in from learners. The three computer laboratories are currently supporting a total of 890 learners who have enrolled for digital skills development by our staff. We noticed that with proper guidance, learners of all ages can spend the whole day learning in the computer lab!



Grade 3 learners being taught through digital learning support platforms

3. Psychosocial support

This is one of our bedrock programmes for addressing the mental wellbeing of the many vulnerable learners in the school communities we serve. This programme enrolled 976 learners by the end of February. Increasing number of learners are living in vulnerable circumstances owing to the declining economy and the fragility of the family unit in South Africa. For effective learning to take place, it is imperative for learners to feel accepted, cared for and belonging. All children need significant adults to emulate and identify with. YOSA Social workers and social work interns provided individual counselling, emotional support and group-based interventions to address various social challenges impinging on learning.





YOSA youthful staff group addressing learners' emotional, social, and mental needs



Chess in one of our high schools and digital skills training as psychosocial support instruments

4. Learner leadership development

Learner engagement through leadership development is a powerful approach to enhance learning outcomes. We have targeted an initial cohort of 100 learner leaders from the ten schools to train them to nurture a positive teaching and learning environment. Sharing power with and involving learners in decision-making has proved to have a motivational impact on the young people and the education ecosystem.

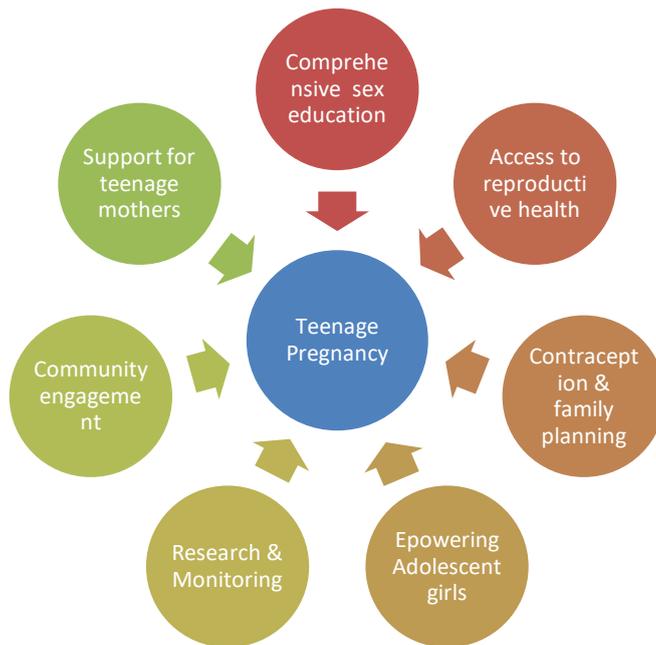


Some of the learner leaders in two of the supported schools



5. Learner pregnancy support

YOSA programming reduces teenage pregnancy rates, improves adolescent health and well-being and facilitates school completion by teenage mothers. Last year we had 73 teenage mothers in the YOSA programme. Sixty-four of them were contributed by our newest school on the programme. Since enrolment on our programme in June last year, there has not been any new pregnancy in the school to date. Twenty-eight of the teenage mothers successfully completed grade 12 last year. There are currently 45 teenage mothers on the programme 39 of them are in the newest school while 6 are shared among 5 schools. Some schools have no teenage mothers or pregnant learner as a response to our programme. We are mentoring teenage mothers to develop strong coping mechanisms and serve as advocates/resources to fight the scourge. We are grateful for the support we received from Karen, Donna and Rachel that helped us to provide for the mothers and their babies. Our comprehensive engagement model is as depicted below:



Teen mothers receiving provisions donated by the YOSA Friendship Circle-Australia

6. Parental engagement

In February YOSA conducted 6 parents' meetings in 4 schools comprising of 212 parents. The parents are embracing our meetings and communication routines. The schools we support experience and exhibit the following tangible improvements:

- Enhanced parent-teacher relationships
- Increased learner motivation
- Parents' responses to learners' needs
- Improved academic performance





Local community grandparents welcoming social work interns and parents' meeting



Grannies running their sewing and knitting programme at the Centre.

7. Material Provisions

The support from Karen Glass and some of our YOSA Friendship Circle in Australia made it possible for us to provide 15 food parcels and 170 dignity packs for girls. These vulnerable children would find it very difficult to attend classes without this support. Supporting teaching and learning demands that we also look into the conditions of living for the young people and their basic needs, without which learning would be impossible.



Acknowledgements

YOSA is eternally grateful for the support from **FNZ**, a global financial services and fintech company supporting us from their Africa headquarters in Sandton. The support is very important for the implementation



of YOSA programmes. We are also exceedingly grateful for the sustained monthly debit order contributions made by **Jennifer Van Oerle**. This is significant to support our learning support programme. We also receive regular support from **Karen and Trevor, Mary, Donna, Rachael** and a generous supply of programme uniforms from **Barker College** in Australia. The material and financial support from these friends were significant in scaling up our implementation.

Conclusion

YOSA staff group has tremendously improved in numbers and capacity. This has immediately scaled up our programme implementation. Quite significant numbers of beneficiaries were reached in February. Our staff are motivated to continue making a difference in learning support, behavioral support, psychosocial support, digital skills training, leadership development, learner pregnancy support, and parental engagement. All these programmes mainstream digital skills development and psychosocial support. We are grateful for the support from our regular partners. We are also appealing to possible partners for more resources to further scale up our implementation. Any financial or material resources received go toward reaching deeper change in our programming.

