

## THE GAP CLASS - Bridging the GAP



The GAP class was started by five High school students in Ghana, West Africa. Our story begun when we realised that we were part of the small percentage of Ghanaian students who had access to holistic education that exposed us to knowledge about global issues and the ability to make impact. We imagined a Ghana where all young people would be exposed to all these issues and actively participate in targeting them. Through this, we targeted the Sustainable Development Goals 4 (Quality Education), 6 (Clean Water and Sanitation), 13 (Climate Action) and 10 (Reduced Inequality).

Our logo, which was donated by a teenage graphic designer, Jeremiah Angelo, explores how the African youth and eventually the world – represented by the world map print design – can actively participate to close the knowledge and skills gap. We emphasise on the GAP to show how serious we are about closing it especially among young leaders. Our motto is “Think about the Impact”.

Over five months, we have spent 190 hours in total planning two workshops and two projects. Our first workshop was at the Community Library in the deprived area of Zamraman Line in Accra on 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> December 2018. In total, there were 35 participants (aged between 8 and 15) and 5 volunteers. On day one, we had sessions on leadership qualities, world issues, current affairs and goal setting. Day two was filled with discussions on climate change and sanitation. Our highlights were the Recycling Masterclass where we brainstormed how to recycle old shoe boxes into creative things and the SDG 6 and 13 Clean up Hunt. This was where three groups were supposed to clean up the community and educate as many people as they could about climate change as they cleaned.

Secondly, we had a clean-up campaign where we cleaned a stretch of the Dansoman Sahara Community. Six volunteers from the Alpha Beta Boarding House alongside our members cleaned for six hours. Our long-term project is to partner with Jekora Ventures, a recycling company and Forbes recognized recycling venture, Mckingtorch. Additionally, for one month, we had a bottle drive at our school. Students were asked to put their used plastic bottles in rubber bags instead of the trash. This was to reduce the number of plastic waste that is improperly disposed off in the school. Lastly, on 18<sup>th</sup> April 2019, we had our last workshop at the Community Library. Inspired by the Ashesi Design Lab Workshop, we decided to teach the participants design thinking so that they could solve problems effectively. After our presentation, we gave them an opportunity to present by allowing them to creatively come up with ways to solve water pollution in Ghana. They performed in groups and the winning team captured the judges’ attention by mentioning awareness creation and provision of water cleaning tablets and methods to those who do not have access to them.

To fund the GAP class, we collaborated with our school’s Events Committee and Management to establish various food stands on campus. With this, a percentage of our profit went into funding the GAP class. One vital partner was The Alpha Beta Charitable Trust Community Library in Zamraman Line. The Library provided us with the venue for the workshops and the staff helped greatly by persuading the students to attend the workshops. Items such as Snacks, wheelbarrows, gloves, water cleaning tablets and stationary for the workshops were provided through parent and student donations. Our posters were printed for free through a parent’s printing venture. For impactful content, we collaborated with the C.E.O. of the African Internship Academy, teaching fellows from the Meltwater



Entrepreneurial School of Technology, the C.E.O. of Skill Up Africa and the International Association of Young Geographers of West Africa.



We are proud that we imparted these skills to the children. At the beginning of our first workshop, many of them were afraid to approach us and share ideas. During our second workshop, some of them approached us boldly. From the feedback cards and questionnaires we handed out, we realised that some of them appreciated the “leadership skills” and knew that they were “not supposed to be afraid”. One student, Mabel, mentioned that she had now envisioned herself as a leader in future. After the workshops, they spread the word about their new knowledge to

their friends, parents and even teachers. What excited us most was how some parents even wanted to join. We feel that this knowledge would be carried with the participants into adulthood. The involvement of student volunteers created opportunity for the advantaged youth to help the disadvantaged youth. Teens helped teens. One volunteer, Daniella, realised her love for helping children in our last workshop. As we spread awareness in the halls of our schools, we inspired students to take on the SDG challenge including students from Ethiopia and The Gambia. Year 8 girls pitched an idea to us on a project they want to commence about helping rural girls. Notably, we gained recognition from Ghanaian T.V. presenter, Naa Ashokor. She stated that such projects really helped in making Ghana better in the future.

Although, our outcome was beautiful, we had some challenges along the way. At the start, we were unsure about whether we could create this. Our doubts came from lack of motivation during group meetings, the lack of original ideas, clashes from part-time jobs, extra-curricular activities, school events and academic assignments. At a point, nobody was ready to write the reports or come for meetings or design posters. We all wanted to quit. Yet, in all this, we realised that quitting would be so cliché because it takes extraordinary people willing to take risks to survive in this world. So with help from our coach, Mr. Isaac Osei Appiah and Global Social Leaders Advisors, we accepted our flaws and decided to manage our time better, to communicate frequently and to balance all our tasks. This is a life skill that would benefit us in the university and our future careers.

Even though there were times of financial constraint and low cooperation from the school’s management, we acquired the skill of project management. The grueling tasks of typing reports, letters and long term plans educated us on accuracy and teamwork. There were some times where effort in the team was imbalanced but soon, we adapted to sharing our roles and relieving one another of the burden of balancing so many things at once. Our group’s Social Media Manager did find a challenge getting stable internet connection for our posts because we had to operate at a time where broadband connection was rather poor. Our Secretary battled the clock with deadlines he had to meet for the project. Overall, distance was a major issue because one of us lived in a different region and two of us live out of town. Sometimes, we were unsuccessful in persuading our parents to drive us all the way to our meetings. Lastly, some companies who we hoped to collaborate with were either out of town or too busy to attend to us. Many of our collaborations were cancelled.



However, through all the difficulties, the greatest highlight is how our project would go a long way to improve the lives of people from disadvantaged backgrounds. The education on these 21<sup>st</sup> century skills (public speaking and leadership and knowledge) on how small daily tasks they do might hurt the environment in the long run would change how they see the world. Our project inspires many teams to do more as teenagers, to bridge the gap every time we share our work with them. This joy of adding to such a large global agenda will always be our motivation to keep moving forward.