Fostering Healing, Self-Sufficiency, and Sustainability
The heart of ASYV’s mission, and the scale against which we judge our work, is in the healing and dignity of our students. Since both our founding and the beginning of our last strategic plan in 2018, ASYV has made significant strides in improving our program to increase student success and well-being. This success can be seen in quantifiable metrics, throughout the Village, and across Rwanda (see figure to right).

Today, alumni hold positions in the banking industry and in the Prime Minister’s cabinet, as military peacekeepers, teachers, entrepreneurs, farmers, community leaders, and more. In the Village, progress is seen on the individual, communal, and programmatic levels. Our students have achieved a new level of empowerment, best exemplified by our Student Government, which led self-help networks during the Covid-19 shutdown and developed a mentorship program when they returned to the Village. Individual students have reached new heights, designing summits for young artists from around Rwanda and presenting on the world stage at events like the UN’s Global Girl Up Summit. Our student to staff pipeline is increasing, with our 25 alumni staff members serving in a wide variety of roles, from Finance Assistant to Visitor Services Officer. Programmatically, we made significant strides by digitizing our curriculum, reducing the impact of teacher turnover, and increasing the time students have to engage critically with the material and their teachers.

Our model and brand have found their place on the national level. In 2021 and 2022, with funding from the Mastercard Foundation and in partnership with the Rwandan Ministry of Education and the Gashora Girls Academy of Science and Technology, we began our national Educational Resilience Program, training teachers from around the country in student-centered education and digital teaching technologies. At the unveiling of our new Intore Learning Community, we announced our first major domestic corporate partnership, with the Bank of Kigali. As our educational model spreads beyond our gates through the Educational Resilience Program, the Intore Learning Community will bring philanthropic, job-readiness, and corporate partnerships into the Village, broadening the skills we can offer our students and increasing our financial sustainability.

### Our Progress

- **97%** Pass their national exams*
- **98%** Feel more confident and better equipped for a happy future*
- **71%** Have enrolled in higher education compared to 6% of young people nationally
- **46%** Are employed, which is at least 25 points higher than the national average.*

* Rates vary slightly by class.

**MISSION:** Through healing, education, and love, the Agahozo-Shalom Youth Village empowers orphaned and vulnerable Rwandan youth to build lives of dignity and contribute to a better world.

**VALUES:** ASYV’s Core Values are commitment, integrity, role model, respect, support, integrity, learning community, and, at the center, interest of the child.
Towards the Next Chapter

In fall 2021, ASYV was emerging, as much of the world was, from a challenging period. The Village had been closed for seven months of the previous school year due to Covid-19, and our kids returned to the campus with new, and continuing, traumas. In addition, our target student population was shifting, as the face of Rwanda and its vulnerabilities changed.

As we embarked on a year-long strategic planning process, our goal was to identify how our program needed to respond to the ways Rwanda, our students, and ASYV’s own capacity have evolved. Our Executive Director, Board Chair, and Managing Director, with expert facilitation from an outside consultant and support from the Strategic Planning Community of Board members, designed the process to be grounded in the knowledge of those who know the Village best. To prioritize Rwandan voices, we started with a wide listening tour that included individual interviews with 20 people, including current and former students, current and former Rwandan staff, and Rwandan friends in many levels of society, as well as long-time donors.

Focus groups with our Program Committee and New York staff were also held, reaching an additional 18 people.

Voices from 2022 Listening Tour

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“Living in the Village, [there are] things you don’t have to think about—like how is my family going to survive? Am I being a burden to my family? Thinking of survival to the next day re: food. These problems are taken off your hands, and you can focus on what comes after the ASYV journey.”

“The model was very impressive. It is holistic, addressing trauma, formal education, parenting roles, and healing. It provides kids with the foundations of humanity, and gives them a pathway to reintegrate themselves back into their community. It also equips them with tools to reinvest in their own communities in a way they can be proud of.”

“We evolve through caring. In the beginning, arriving to a new mom can seem very strange/challenging, but later it becomes a blessing and that bond continues even after graduation.”
There’s a small group of kids for whom college is not necessarily the obvious next step. For those kids who are going to graduate and go back to their villages/go to Kigali to search for a job, we probably need to do a better job preparing them for life. – FORMER STAFF
Our Board of Directors and staff leadership dove deeply into these questions and needs during an in-person Board Retreat. The emerging pillars, together with the challenges and goals, were then workshoped in Rwanda by our Executive Director, Board Chair, Rwandan members of the Board, and Village management. Out of this work, our Theory of Change and Strategic Priorities emerged.1

**OUR THEORY OF CHANGE**
UNDERGIRDING OUR NEXT STRATEGIC PLAN IS AN EMERGING THEORY OF CHANGE THROUGH WHICH WE’LL BRING OUR VISION TO LIFE:

- To enable our students to build lives of dignity and impact, we recruit vulnerable children who exhibit resilience, critical thinking abilities, and the motivation to benefit from the opportunities offered by our rigorous and holistic model.
- Our model prepares them for the world through healing, a formal education, practical skills, social and emotional education, and love.
- This is enabled by a core-values based culture, institutional sustainability, committed leaders, and talented, caring staff.

1 See asyv.org/strategicplan for full slides

“ASYV can best support Rwanda’s future by forging a new generation with critical thinking skills and an open mind.”
— CURRENT STAFF

“I want to see more ASYV students and graduates as entrepreneurs and leaders in the next five to ten years, as well as returning to support our cornerstone foundation, ASYV.”
— CURRENT STAFF
ASYV will build a new recruitment model that allows recruitment of vulnerable students whose resilience and critical thinking abilities will enable them to be actively involved in all programs and acquire skills to prepare for life after graduation.

**KEY RESULTS**
- A recruitment policy that (i) reflects the target population; (ii) formalizes the criteria for selection; and (iii) defines and specifies methodology for assessing critical thinking and resilience.
- Detailed data-informed selection guide based on existing and ongoing data collection/assessment.
- Students who score below benchmarks are provided with the remedial education to be promoted to the next level.
- Enrichment programs (as described further in Strategic Pillar Two), mentorship, and job training, beginning in EY, create career path options for struggling students.
- A 5% annual increase for three years in the number of graduates who are self-sufficient (two years after leaving the Village).

**OBJECTIVE**
ASYV provides resources and tools that enable struggling students to lead self-sufficient lives post ASYV.

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**FINANCIAL IMPACT:**
- Recruitment data provided through our Evidence-Based Innovative Program Management Collaboration with the Tulane University School of Public Health is partially funded by the Five Together Foundation.
- Remedial education for struggling students will continue to require expenditures for additional teaching time from existing teachers, as in past years.

**ADDITIONAL CONSIDERATIONS:**
- Shifting to recruit students with demonstrated resilience and critical thinking skills will enable us to better meet the Ministry of Education’s requirements.
- Basing the process more on data and less on empathy will clarify our choices but may also feel challenging for us, in a model based on love.
- As we adjust our recruitment criteria to meet the Ministry’s requirements while maximizing program impact on our students, we remain committed to enabling the best possible outcomes for all of our current students.
- Building additional pathways will require both staff time and financial resources, which may split our focus.
- Additional pathways may have unexpected repercussions for students’ academic or other performance, and we need to be prepared for them to fail or shift their focus.

“I’d recruit the students who are most vulnerable but also have a positive mindset of using the Village to contribute to the world, country, community.”

– CURRENT STUDENT
Our model will become more rigorous and holistic, drawing upon data to educate, heal, and support the whole child through all aspects of our program.

**KEY RESULTS**

- LEAP framework and goals reviewed and revised to develop program specialization paths.
- M&E framework for LEAP devised.
- Trauma-informed curriculum expert contracted.
- Evaluation conducted of current programs that address self-agency in students.
- Staffing, curriculum, and professional training plan completed.
- Curriculum implemented.
- Assistant Student Life Director hired with responsibility for gender equity.
- Key performance indicators track gender equity.
- Implementation strategy developed for Gender Equity Assessment findings.
- Institutional gender equity policy approved.
- Student pregnancy policy reevaluation completed.
- Remaining funding secured.
- Logframe and KPIs developed.
- Qualitative and quantitative assessments of impact completed.
- Staff training program in data literacy and M&E implemented.
- Model kit for external communities developed.
- Includes programs like arts, science labs, performing arts, and sports.

**FINANCIAL IMPACT:**

- Practical skills programs will require an additional cost of roughly $350 per participating student per year for trainers, facility improvements, and access to external TVET (vocational) programs.
- The Evidence-Based Innovative Program Management Collaboration has been partially funded by the Five Together Foundation, but ensuring M&E department maximum effectiveness will require up to an additional $600k over five years.
- Hiring new student life staff will require budget additions around $78,000 in year one, with increases between 4-5% year to year.

**ADDITIONAL CONSIDERATIONS:**

- To ensure trauma-informed care through a trust-based relational intervention, we need to be prepared to invest in extensive training for our current and new team members.
- We may encounter resistance to gender equity improvements on many levels within our community, as gender equity is an entrenched communal and global challenge.
- There are questions around our future regarding scale and impact that will inform the M&E work and the resulting monograph, and allow us to answer longer-term questions strategically.
- Relational educator culture can be difficult to translate into data-based culture, and we need to be prepared to invest in training to support our educators in this adjustment.
- This strategy represents our commitment to fully succeed in incorporating trauma-informed care, integrating practical skills programs, and addressing gender disparities—and assessing their impact—before we consider other curricular and programmatic strategic shifts.

**OBJECTIVES**

1. **Life Enrichment Applied Programs**
   - Enable students to acquire practical skills, healing, passion, and critical thinking skills.

2. **ASYV will refit departments to incorporate a comprehensive emotional and social wellness program.**
   - Trauma-informed curriculum expert contracted.
   - Evaluation conducted of current programs that address self-agency in students.
   - Staffing, curriculum, and professional training plan completed.
   - Curriculum implemented.

3. **ASYV will have taken formal, documented action to address gender disparities.**
   - Assistant Student Life Director hired with responsibility for gender equity.
   - Remaining funding secured.
   - Logframe and KPIs developed.
   - Qualitative and quantitative assessments of impact completed.
   - Staff training program in data literacy and M&E implemented.

4. **ASYV will be a model of quality and effectiveness, utilizing data to inform program impact and effectiveness.**
   - Remaining funding secured.
   - Logframe and KPIs developed.
   - Qualitative and quantitative assessments of impact completed.
   - Staff training program in data literacy and M&E implemented.

3 For example, we hope to gather additional data on our impact by gender, age, and program component, on student mental health, and more.
### Strategic Pillar

Formalize practices to attract and retain top Rwandan talent deeply committed to the mission of ASYV.

**OBJECTIVE**
Create a pipeline of talented leaders through marketing, referrals, and creative outreach.

**KEY RESULTS**
- Recruitment incentives, such as a referral bonus, exist for current staff.
- Existing partnerships are leveraged for referrals.

**OBJECTIVE**
Create a competitive compensation and benefits package to both attract and retain talented staff.

**KEY RESULTS**
- Compensation packages are aligned to the appropriate market rate percentile.
- A robust benefits package exists that meets the needs of Rwandans and incentivizes longevity.

**OBJECTIVE**
Increase staff engagement and support and strengthen our culture of excellence.

**KEY RESULTS**
- Overall staff retention increased from current 90% to 92% by year three.
- Staff incentive, recognition, and reward systems exist.
- Kigali-based work is enabled as appropriate by position.
- Avenues for feedback from staff and targeted development from management.

**OBJECTIVE**
Develop a strategic approach to performance.

**KEY RESULTS**
- Clear competency assessments/KPIs developed for all positions.
- Career growth within and across departments is transparent.
- Professional and leadership development opportunities available.
- Consultants provide strategic support on performance management system.

**ADDITIONAL CONSIDERATIONS:**
- Developing a strategic approach to performance and a rigorous evaluation and recognition system will require significant time and effort on the part of all managerial staff, which may require trade-offs in the attention they can give to other aspects of their jobs.
- This strategy represents our recognition that the quality and tenure of our staff members are critical to our ability to implement our theory of change. We must align the way we treat our staff to the way we expect them to treat our students—with love and respect. Additionally, we cannot refine our model without their buy-in, development, and retention.

**FINANCIAL IMPACT:**
- Aligning compensation packages to market rate will increase our personnel costs by roughly $450,000 in year one, with further increases year over year at 4–5%, but reducing turnover will also reduce costs over time.
- Year to year, financial outlays for Kigali-based remote work and other non-financial improvements may be required.
4 Strategic Pillar

ASYV’s institutional practices support sustainable, mission-engaged work by Board and staff.

1. OBJECTIVE
   Develop deep bench of Rwandan Board and committee leadership.
   KEY RESULTS
   - Increased Rwandan representation on Board and committees.

2. OBJECTIVE
   ASYV will have a deep and meaningful organizational culture around core values.
   KEY RESULTS
   - Training framework in Village philosophy and values-based policies developed.

3. OBJECTIVE
   Pipelines result in Board and leadership staff succession.
   KEY RESULTS
   - Formal process and deadlines for Board position and committee chair succession developed.
   - Successors identified and cultivation plans created.
   - Staff successors identified for key positions and trainings created for skills development.

4. OBJECTIVE
   The Intore Learning Community supports sustainability and mission-engagement.
   KEY RESULTS
   - Long-term staffing goals are established.
   - Business plan with annual income goals completed.
   - Marketing strategy recruits international visitors.
   - Comprehensive ongoing and long-term maintenance plan and budget completed.

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FINANCIAL IMPACT:
- The Intore Learning Community is a state-of-the-art facility that can sleep over 100 guests and houses specialized career and workforce development programs for students and alumni.

ADDITIONAL CONSIDERATIONS:
- This strategy represents our commitment to building the foundation for sustainability in our leadership processes and our financial and other fiscal-related decision-making, in order to drive future impact and ensure values-adherence.

“Sustainability, reducing the reliance on the donor community [is most important for the future of ASYV].” — DONOR
When we began the strategic planning process, our community told us that, to improve our students’ outcomes, we needed to understand the way Rwandan society — and its youth — had evolved since our inception in 2008. Through this process, it became clear that it was time to also take an ambitious step forward by investing in our staff, ensuring our long-term financial sustainability, and rigorously assessing the impact of our program in order to refine our model moving forward. These steps will shape both our future and future generations of kids who call the Village home. As Rwanda and the world are ever-changing, this plan must be able to shift and evolve as it progresses. At its completion, we will have entered a new phase of effectiveness, accountability, sustainability, and most importantly, preparing vulnerable youth to build lives of dignity.

Looking Forward

THIS PLAN ADDRESSES THOSE SHIFTS BY CREATING A DATA-INFORMED RECRUITMENT MODEL AROUND VULNERABILITY, RESILIENCE, AND CRITICAL THINKING; DEVELOPING NEW SYSTEMS FOR TRAUMA-INFORMED CARE AND GENDER EQUITY; AND STRENGTHENING RESOURCES FOR STRUGGLING STUDENTS.

In the community I was living in before I came to ASYV, it was not okay to be yourself. I didn’t feel like I was free. The Village is a place where I can be 100% myself. A place where I feel I am loved and cared about and accepted. And I think that was what made the biggest difference in my life.

— GRADUATE

TO LEARN MORE ABOUT ASYV AND ITS WORK, PLEASE CONTACT

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