

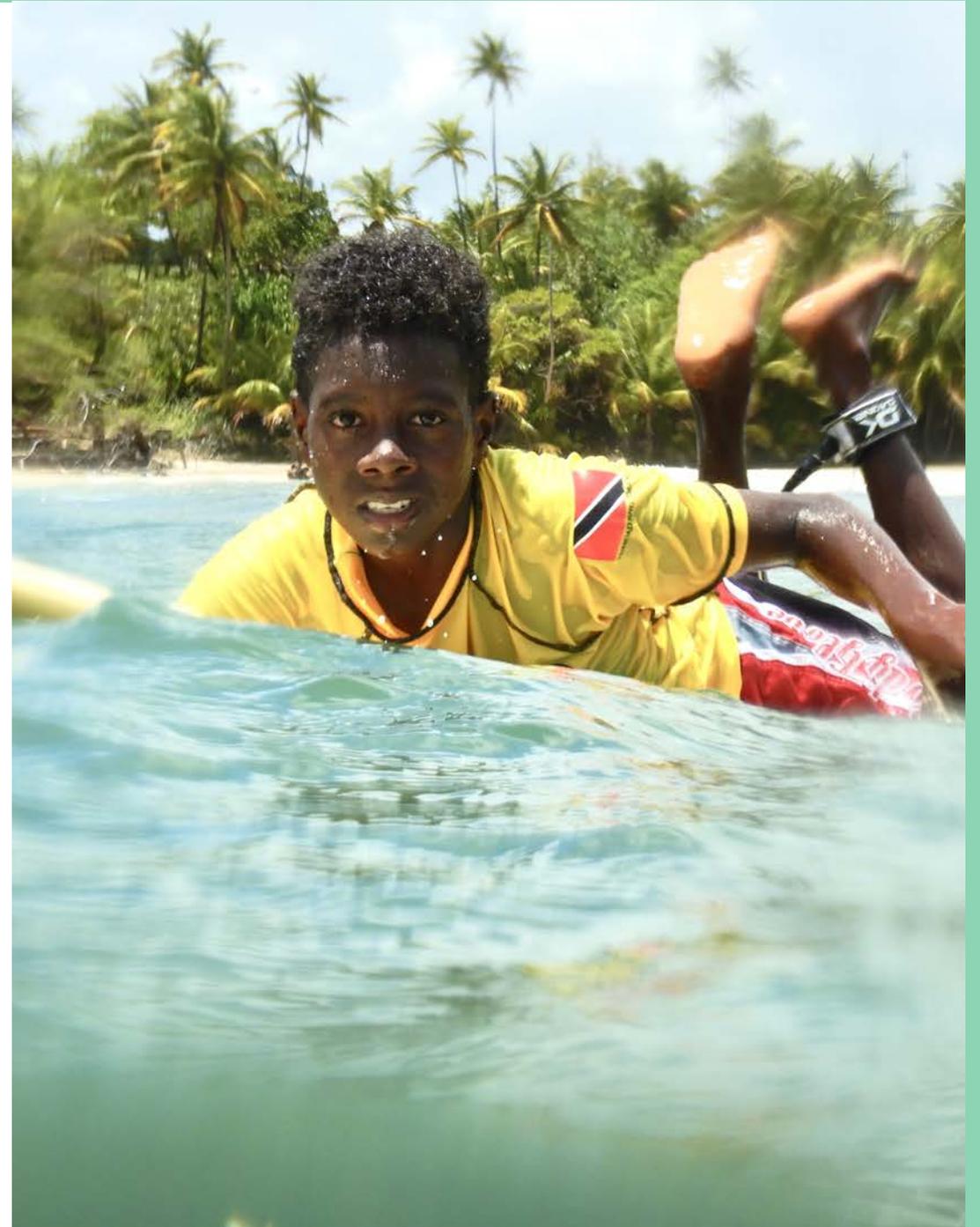


WAVES FOR HOPE

# Impact Report.

Surf Therapy Intervention  
November 2020 - April 2021  
Balandra, Trinidad & Tobago

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# The Waves for Hope Mission.

Waves for Hope offers youth development programs that utilize surfing, group discussion and mentorship to empower and provide positive psychology education to at-risk youths in under-served communities across Trinidad & Tobago.

# The Surf Therapy Intervention.

Waves for Hope's mission is to improve the physical, emotional and mental well-being of young people by fusing the sport of surfing with therapeutical activities and mentorship. A safe space, caring mentors, the fun activity of surfing and evidence-based exercises are used to build healthy relationships, develop coping skills and improve confidence and self-esteem.

The overall goal is to encourage positive life choices and create role models in under-served communities in Trinidad & Tobago.



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# 1

# Introduction.

*“When I come and surf I forget about all the negative things and that makes me happy. I learned how to cope with stress and I learned a few things to do when I am feeling angry or sad.”*

*Participant, 2021*



This report summarizes the second cycle of our surf therapy intervention that ran from November 2020 until April 2021 in Balandra, Trinidad.

The surf therapy program is a mental health intervention with the goal to encourage positive life choices and create role models in under-served communities in Trinidad & Tobago.

This cycle only ran with 10 participants, less than half the number of a normal cycle, in order to be in line with Covid-19 regulations. Fortunately, we were able to run the intervention without any interruptions as beaches remained open over the last few months.

# 2

## Surf therapy intervention.

Our program design combines local knowledge with a grounding in theory. This combination allows us to deliver a relevant, high-quality program.

*"I learned how to be kind, caring and loving. But most, I learned how to meditate." Participant, 2021*

Our program design is informed by the **Self-determination theory**, which says that to promote positive development and health, we need to provide people the opportunity to experience:

1

### Competence.

Gaining mastery over challenging situations and having new experiences are essential for developing a cohesive sense of self. Surfing and other activities offer the perfect playground to experience this.

2

### Relatedness.

People need to experience a sense of belonging and connection to other people. The surf therapy program has an inclusive character, enabling social interactions and positive friendships.

3

### Autonomy.

People need to feel in control of their own behaviors and goals. This sense of being able to take direct action will result in real change and plays a major part in helping people feel self-determined.

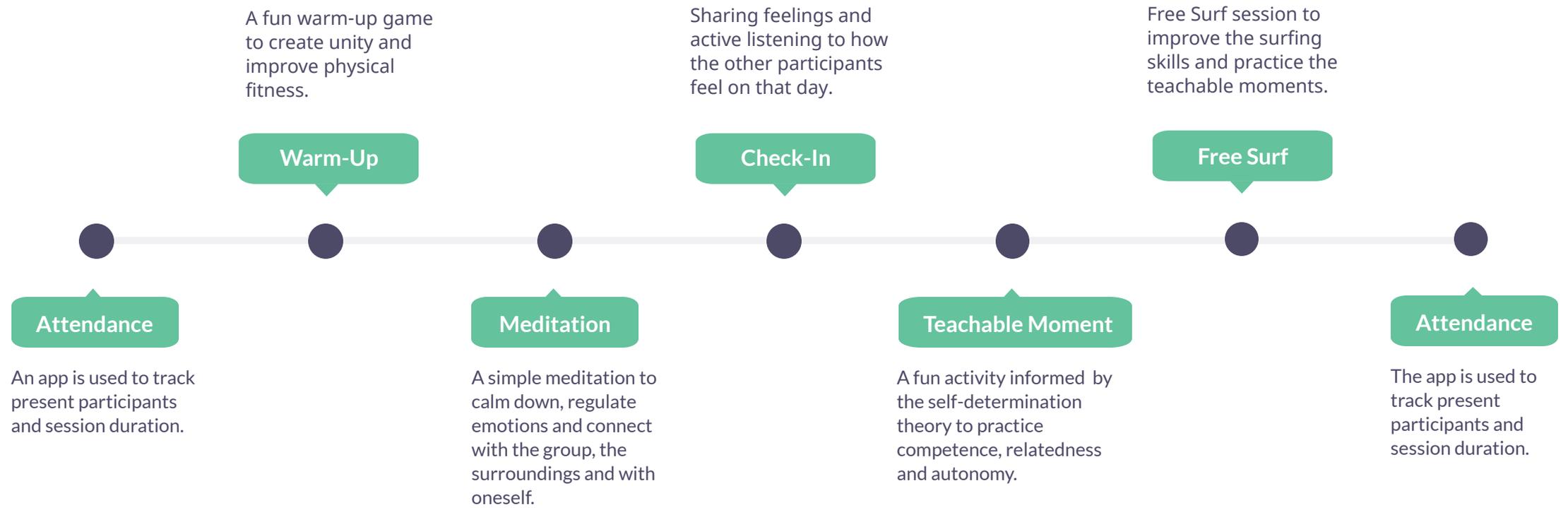
In psychology, self-determination is an important concept that refers to each individual's ability to make choices and be in control of their own life. This plays an important role in psychological health and well-being.

Research suggests that these basic psychological needs are universal and not depending on culture, social background etc.

Our surf therapy intervention aims at fusing the fun activity of surfing with the achievement of these 3 basic psychological needs.



The surf therapy intervention has a curriculum with structured sessions grounded in theory and local adaptations:



*"I noticed being more calm and relaxed since I start surf therapy." Participant, 2021*

The surf therapy sessions were held once a week on Saturday morning for a duration of approx. 2 hours. The intervention aims at at-risk youths from under-served communities.

**1 Participants.**  
The group initially started off with 11 participants. One of the participants moved away and thus, the group size was adjusted to 10. Eight participants were from the village of Balandra. 2 participants from close-by communities.

**2 Female participation.**  
Female participation made up 30% and female attendance was with 86% slightly above male attendance.

**3 Age distribution.**  
Participants ranged between ages 9 and 18. The average age was 13, with the biggest group being 12 years or younger.

**4 Mentors.**  
3 mentors/surf coaches and 1 assistant led the intervention.

**5 Living situation.**  
The majority of participants lives with their mother alone (40%). 30% lives with both parents and 30% lives with other people.

**6 Sessions.**  
A total of 20 sessions was delivered over a period of a little less than six months.

**7 Equipement.**  
On average, 14 surfboards and 2 bodyboards were used during the sessions.

**8 Beaches.**  
2 beaches were used to run the sessions, depending on waves conditions.

*"It means everything to me to be able to come and surf. I learned to meditate and use it at home to be calm and relaxed and to not get angry at everything."*

*Participant, 2021*





# 3

## Impact.

The impact report is based on pre and post surveys, group discussions and direct feedback from the participants.

*"I see a huge difference in behaviour and respect comparing Balandra youth to other communities."*

*Member of regional corporation, 2021*

The World Health Organisation- Five Well-Being Index (WHO-5) was used in pre and post surveys to measure current mental well-being (time frame the previous two weeks). The WHO-5 is suitable for children aged 9 and above.

All measures were administered before the start of the surf therapy intervention and at the end. Session participation, duration and gender distribution was captured using an attendance app.

In addition, we assessed participants access to social support alongside satisfaction scores. To support the data, we collected qualitative feedback from the participants, mentors, guardians and stakeholders.

**All 10 participants submitted usable paired data. The intervention led to an improvement of overall well-being of 3.6%.**

The small sample size and confounding impact of the COVID-19 pandemic may have impacted upon or suppressed scores seen.

The Covid-19 pandemic has limited gatherings to small groups, not allowing sporting and social events to take place. Schools have been operating online since August 2020. These restrictions hit under-served communities like Balandra even harder as the financial and structural resources for online school are very limited.

*"I learned to react in a calm/respectful way when someone does something to me that I don't like."*

*Participant, 2021*

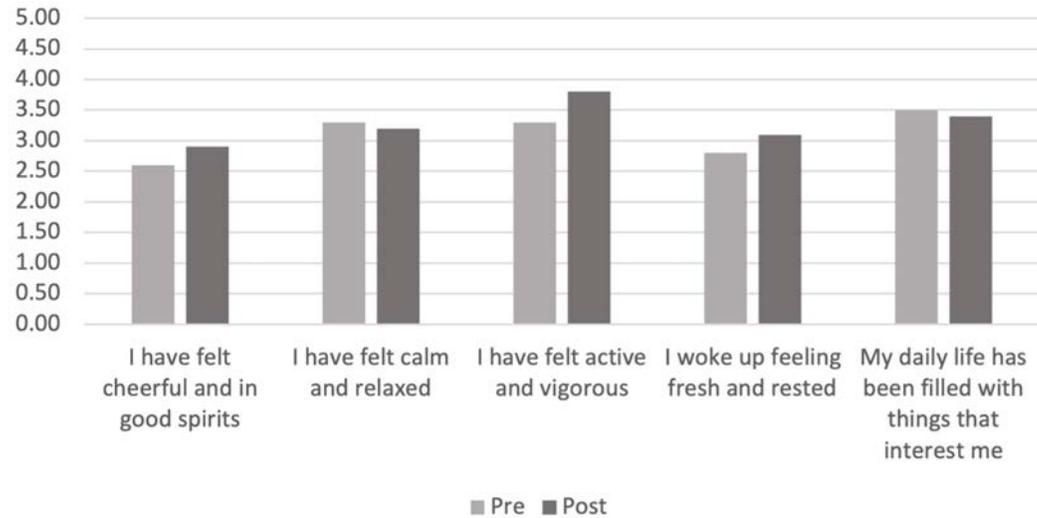
When breaking the scale down to individualized items, the most notable difference was an improvement in "feeling cheerful and in good spirits", "feeling active and vigorous" and "feeling fresh and rested".

The items "feeling calm and relaxed" and "life being filled with things that interest me" showed a small drop.

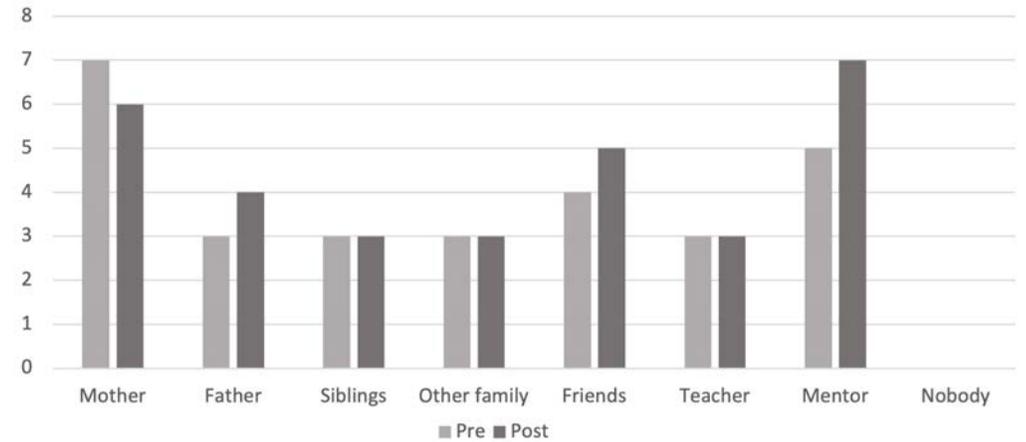
The findings below highlight the changes in use of social support, which correlate with the positive overall well-being changes.

The biggest change in terms of encouragement was related to the interaction with the mentors.

Wellbeing Changes using WHO (FIVE) Wellbeing Index



When I try hard at things, I am supported by



The use of social support when having problems or feeling upset showed a negative overall development.

A large number of participants reported talking to friends when upset and 70% made new friends.

This suggests that the intervention is possibly creating new social support networks for young people.

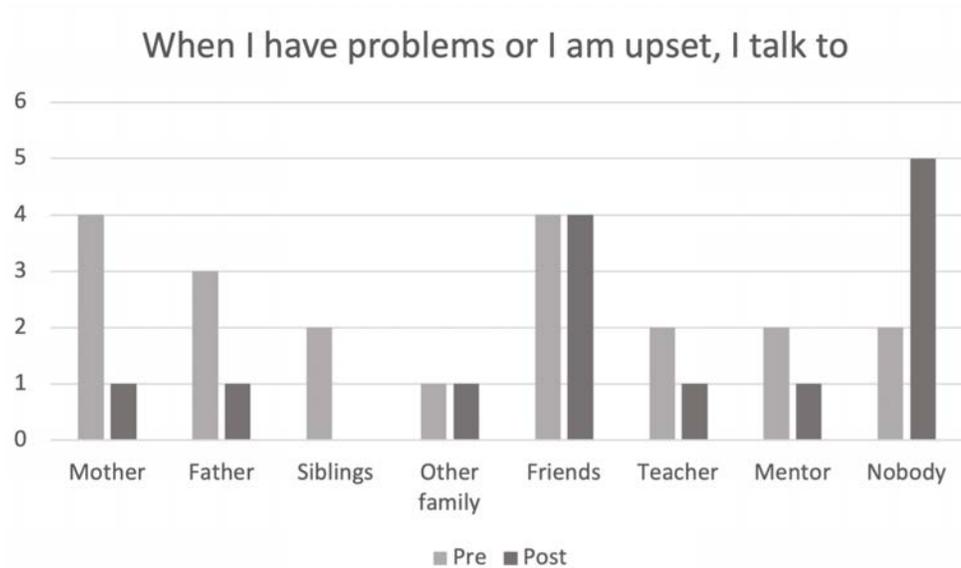
Adding a "structured" informal time to future surf therapy sessions should encourage conversations and interactions between mentors and participants.

The satisfaction and learning scores showed very positive results and are in accordance with the three basic psychological needs of the Self-Determination Theory (competence, relatedness and autonomy).

All of the participants noticed positive changes in themselves. The positive changes include being more supportive at home, being able to calm down in stressful situations, being more relaxed and having improved at surfing.

All of the participants want to join the Waves for Hope club and continue with their surfing.

70% of the participants stated to have made new friends in the surf therapy intervention.



*"The mentors are really supportive and helpful."*

*"The mentors are great. They train the kids to become better in who they are. "*

***Participants, 2021***



# 4

## Learnings.

Here are the learnings that came forward from participant 's and mentor's feedbacks. The goal is to improve upon the working structure for the next cycle.

1

The smaller group size allows to focus more on every single participant and thus, the learning curve is bigger.

2

A Waves for Hope chant will be included in future surf therapy sessions to create more unity and to keep participants engaged at all times.

3

More beach and water safety protocols will be created and practiced regularly.

4

Pre and post surveys need closer supervision to make sure that the participants truly understand the questions and their mental well-being is captured, instead of their mood.

5

An informal time will be added to the session structure as a time for mentors to engage with participants, being present to ask for help, modelling and celebrating behaviours.

6

While running a next surf therapy intervention in Balandra starting in May 2021, we will also move to another community and introduce our program there.



# 5

## Team.

Former participants and the co-founders of Waves for Hope make up the dedicated and caring team of mentors.

*"The mentors are kind, gentle and respectful."*

*Participant, 2021*

- ✓ Our mentors are respected members of the communities we work with and know the challenges of growing up in under-served communities.
- ✓ All mentors are certified in First Aid and CPR.
- ✓ Safeguarding: Code of Conduct and a Child Protection Policy are in place to guarantee a positive experience for all participants.
- ✓ Weekly training sessions in the classroom and on the beach are held to educate and train the mentors.
- ✓ Our team consists of 3 mentors, 4 assistants and a driver.



*Meet Tyrel,  
one of the caring surf therapy mentors of Waves for Hope.*

Tyrel has been a mentor of Waves for Hope since its beginning. Growing up and still living in the community of Balandra, Tyrel knows of the challenges and issues of growing up in an under-served community. Surfing helped him to stay focused and not get distracted.

"I am a product of an absent father and a poor, abusive mother. And I see this same family setup in the whole community. And seeing young girls making the same mistakes as their mothers is really heart-breaking."

Poor households headed by single women represent prime conditions for inter-generational poverty to take hold, promoting a 'learned helplessness'. Sexual violence, drug and alcohol abuse are more likely to occur in these households as opposed to non-poor households with common-law or married couples.

"Seeing these things in my community made me angry, sad and frustrated. I promised myself not to repeat this cycle and to help anybody to keep them from repeating this cycle."

"Surf therapy helps the kids in my community by making them feel free, it helps them get along better with others, teaches them respect and it helps build their self-confidence."

Tyrel's speciality are the always fun and energizing warm-up's, he knows how to engage and entertain the participants. Besides running the surf therapy and surf club sessions, Tyrel also supports when it comes to repairing surfboards.

If you don't find Tyrel in the water, he is either playing football, watching movies or pursuing his studies.

"Waves for Hope changed my life a lot. It gave me the tools and coping skills so I can deal with my stresses better."

*"My vision for the future  
of surf therapy in Trinidad  
is to have surf therapy  
programs in all the  
villages so we can make  
our country a much better  
place."*

*Tyrel, 2019*



*And some more Waves for Hope mentor voices.*



*“I joined Waves for Hope because they were offering a lot of opportunities. Being a mentor in my community means I can be the change I want to see.”*

**O'marion, 2021**

**O'marion joined Waves for Hope as participant for the surf therapy pilot project. He impressed with attending every single surf therapy session and always being very supportive, interested and caring.**

For the last 7 months, O'marion has been part of our Mentorship Program, training to become a surf therapy mentor.

Being the Junior National Champion, O'marion is very dedicated to improving his surfing and spending as much time as possible in the water. Besides surfing, he loves art and photography.

*“I can impact my community by being a role model to the youths and I can teach them what I learned so that they will be a change in my community.”*

**Luciano, 2021**



**Luciano and Theon graduated with this surf therapy cohort. Both have shown a great interest in becoming mentors with the surf therapy intervention.**

Their desire to positively impact the youths around them and their calm and supportive personality make them a great addition to the Waves for Hope Mentorship Program.



*“Being part of Waves for Hope impacts my life by helping me to encourage myself and to work hard.”*

**Theon, 2021**

# 6

# Finances.



The programming expenses are all related to this surf therapy cycle, Nov 2020 to April 2021. In total, this cycle cost USD 4'117.

Items	Cost in USD
Equipment	1'294
Snacks	143
Transportation	857
Graduation	145
Training	1'529
Administrative costs	149
Excursion	0

### Equipment (USD 1'294)

First aid kit, rashguards for participants and mentors, ponchos and accessories. No new surfboards had to be purchased for this cycle.

### Snacks (USD 143)

Snacks were provided during each surf therapy session for the participants and mentors.

### Transportation (USD 857)

A local driver from the community transported the participants to the beach and back. A private pick-up was used to transport the equipment.

### Graduation (USD 145)

A graduation ceremony was organized at the local school with food, drinks, certificates and give-aways.

### Training (USD 1'529)

Two-day First Aid/CPR certification course for all the mentors and assistants, conference room to run the course.

### Administrative costs (USD 149)

Accountant fees, printing .

### Excursion (USD 0)

Due to Covid-19 restrictions, no excursions or skill exchange days could be held.



# Other initiatives.

Beside the surf therapy program, Waves for Hope offers the following youth & community development initiatives.

## Waves for Hope Club.

After graduating from the surf therapy program, all participants move on to the Waves for Hope club.



*“I can't wait for the week to finish so I can come and surf on Saturday. It's the only good thing of my whole week.”*

In the Waves for Hope club, the kids and youths are offered weekly surf session but also have access to a variety of other opportunities such as life-skills workshops.

For the near future, other sporting opportunities, inspirational talks and a home work center will be part of the club offer.

The club structure gives the youths the opportunity to maintain the positive relationships and skills forged through the surf therapy teachings.

# Mentorship Program.

The mentorship program trains and educates young people to become mentors for the surf therapy program and for the Waves for Hope club.



*“I have become a much more aware and better person since I became a mentor.”*

The mentorship training involves weekly theoretical and practical lessons and on-site training, including First Aid and CPR certification.

The goal of Waves for Hope is to have both their surf therapy program and the club run by youths from the communities.

# Covid-19 Support Program.

Because of Covid-19 and the governmental restrictions, the economical hardship in the communities we work in has worsened.



*“Thanks to Waves for Hope, my children can attend online school now.”*

Job opportunities have become less and school has been held completely online since summer 2020.

A Back to School campaign was initiated and more than 20 smart devices and laptops could be distributed among the youth and kids in the communities.

Food and clothes drives were organized to support families in various communities.

**Thank you.**

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WAVES FOR HOPE

Thank you to our partners and supporters who made this surf therapy cycle possible:

Vans | Maritime Financial | Wave Alliance | Friends & Family

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