Yacha

A MULTIPLATFORM SOLUTION TO BOLIVIAN YOUTH'S EDUCATION AND LABOR INCLUSION

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Executive Summary

Our proposal introduces YACHA, which tackles the "Three E's" of youth inclusion—Education, Employment, and Experience, to create a network of engaged Bolivian leaders that, in true Andean-culture fashion, celebrates and fosters community-driven knowledge sharing.

At its core, YACHA is an innovative and accessible multi-platform solution for Bolivians aged 16-25 who seek educational opportunities, vocational orientation, and mentorship. Facilitating vocational and professional connections, YACHA advances youth inclusion by simultaneously bridging inter- and intra-generational gaps and engaging young Bolivian leaders, especially minorities and disadvantaged youth.

Inspired by the community-driven nature of YACHA, a Quechua term that refers to "the practice of acquiring knowledge from experiences," our solution takes an interdisciplinary approach to the challenges of youth's social inclusion. In this way, we do not seek to extend beyond the problem at hand but, rather, we seek to "return to the roots" of Andean learning from an innovative and inclusive perspective.

This report sheds light on the issue of education and employment in Bolivia, grounding our proposal on data-driven research that cuts across the fields of economics, sociology, development studies, and politics, among others. YACHA is a first step in the direction for the inclusion of Bolivia's young leaders.

Keywords

Youth, Inclusion, Mentorship, Community-Driven Knowledge Sharing

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Introduction

> "If we want to be inclusive of Bolivian youth's potential, we need to give them the right tools and encourage them to be agents of change"
>
> Jhanira Rodriguez (age 25), May 2020

Despite a trend of increased efforts to defend human rights, ensure equal opportunities, and foster democratic processes, Bolivia is still a country marked by exclusionary practices and deep socio-economic divides. Following a history marked by underdevelopment and social instability, Bolivia has consistently struggled to include marginalized communities into policy and decision-making processes that have the potential to challenge the social status-quo and break the poverty cycle. This has been particularly noticeable among Bolivian youth who, despite constituting a growing portion of the population, have remained on the sidelines of development programs.

Among the challenges to youth inclusion, access to and quality of education and employment stand out as important barriers. There are few opportunities that leverage youth's potential against the changing socio-cultural dynamics of the Latin American country. Our proposed solution YACHA tackles the "Three E's" of youth inclusion—Education, Employment, and Experience—to create a network of engaged Bolivian leaders that, in true Andean-culture fashion, celebrates and fosters community-driven knowledge sharing.

At its core, YACHA is an innovative and accessible multi-platform solution for Bolivians aged 16-25 who seek educational opportunities, vocational orientation, and mentorship. Facilitating vocational and professional connections, YACHA fosters youth inclusion by simultaneously bridging inter- and intra-generational gaps and engaging young Bolivian leaders, especially minorities and disadvantaged youth. To discuss the need for and impact of YACHA, the first section of this proposal elaborates on the Bolivian context within which our solution will operate. This section expounds on the literature and data relevant to the problematic at hand.

The second and most important section of this proposal presents YACHA as an innovative and much-needed solution to youth inclusion. A detailed exploration of the app's features is included. A description of the justification for YACHA is presented as well, highlighting the "Three E's" of youth inclusion that our app will address. This section argues for the need of YACHA as a pathway for the inclusion of youth in terms of vocational orientation and mentorship through an interdisciplinary approach.

Problem Landscape

The impactful role of youth in public policy and decision-making has gained attention in academic and professional fields in the last few decades. Across the globe, international organizations highlight the importance of empowering young people. Among its aims, for instance, the United Nations Sustainable Development Solutions (SDSN) includes initiatives of youth empowerment and inclusion. These follow three key steps: emphasis on education (awareness), increased collaboration (across communities and through the fostering of connections), and supporting innovation (SDSN Youth, n.d). Other youth-led movements like the Global Youth Action Network and TakingITGlobal recently initiated global education programs through digital engagement that go hand in hand with the latter's motto: "inform, inspire and involve" (TakingITGlobal, n.d). Narrowing the scope to regional territory, the report of the Latin American Economic Outlook in 2017 remarked that there is a need to ensure youth talents match labor market demands and structures in order to create inclusive growth, achieve productivity, and reduce inequalities (OECD/ECLAC/CAF, 2016).

The following section presents indicators of educational and employment disparities in Bolivia, followed by a description of youth's experiences and perceptions. A discussion of access to information and communication technologies (ICTs) and the importance of menthorships completes this section.

Education and Employment in Bolivia

Limited opportunities during the early years of one's professional development can have detrimental impacts on the development of an individual's capabilities later in life. This section presents the current educational and employment-related landscape of Bolivia, with a special focus on minorities and disadvantaged communities.

Like several of its neighboring Latin American countries, Bolivia faces significant problems of inequality. Following a convoluted political history that finds its most remote antecedent in the times of the Spanish colonization, indigenous people have remained politically, economically, and culturally oppressed (Shoaei, 2012). Despite significant changes to the socio-economic structures of Bolivia in recent years, indigenous communities and marginalized youth continue to experience the effects of deep social divides (Shoaei, 2012). According to the most recent Bolivian census, barriers to education and employment exist for the 41% of the population that self-identify as indigenous (INE, 2012).

Education remains a challenge across the social and economic spectrum. In spite of making significant progress in education, especially by achieving higher enrollment rates in primary and secondary education and experiencing an increase in tertiary enrollment during the last decade, indigenous students have lower learning outcomes compared to their non-indigenous counterparts (Andersen, Mercado and Muriel, 2003). The educational attainment gap widens further if gender or

geographical location are taken into account (Gantier, Herrera and Martínez, 2016). Thirty-five percent of indigenous adolescents living in rural areas are not schooled, compared to only 2.52% of the richest urban and male adolescents who do not attend school (UNESCO, 2018; Reimao & Tas, 2015). Carrasco (2001) and Mercado and Ibiett (2016) have shown that this intersection of gender and ethnicity deepens labor market gaps, thus furthering income inequality in Bolivia.

For instance, focusing on gender disparities and educational attainment, it is evident that most of the population only finish highschool and only around 28% get a degree beyond high school (see Table 1). Also, there are significantly more women than men that have not achieved any level of education.

Table 1: Level of Educational Attainment by Gender (%)

Level of Educational Attainment	Men	Women
None	3,53	12,32
Primary	27,50	28,44
Secondary	39,90	32,02
Tertiary	28,26	27,58
Other	0,28	0,53

Source: INE – Household surveys (2018)

When looking at employment, there is evidence of a gender gap in monthly salaries in every job category. Table 2 shows average monthly salaries and evidence of the existing wage gap between women and men. In every category, men earn more and the gap is even greater among self-employed workers.

Table 2: Monthly salaries by job category (average BOB)

Job Category	Men	Women
	3.029	2.363
Blue collar workers	2.919	1.832
Self-employed workers	2.246	1.760
Unremunerated employer	4.943	4.355
Housemaid work	2.042	1.550

Source: INE – Household surveys (2018)

To begin the diagnosis of what is happening in Bolivia and contrast it with the Latin American region, we used the Latinobarómetro survey of the year 2018. This survey highlights two of the most pressing problems per public opinion: problems of

education, and the lack of opportunities for youth. Table 3 shows at three different levels—the country, the community or municipality, and at a personal level—the importance of these issues, per interviewees responses[1].

The first part of table 3 shows that 5% of the population consider the problem of education to be the most important in their country (Latinobarómetro, 2018). In the case of youth opportunities, there is a greater difference between Bolivia and the Latin American region. Around 3% of people in Bolivia consider that there are no opportunities for young people against 0.5% of people in the region (Latinobarómetro, 2018).

The second part of table 3 shows that lower proportions of Bolivians consider education to be the most important problem in their own community or municipality compared to the country-level. It is observed that almost 4% of people in Bolivia consider that education is the most important problem in their own community or municipality (Latinobarómetro, 2018). The proportion of the Latin Americans who consider this issue to be the most important is lower in the region than in Bolivia. In the case of youth opportunities, optimism is low in both Bolivian and Latin American perceptions (Latinobarómetro, 2018).

In the third and last part of table 3, even smaller proportions of the population consider education and opportunities for youth to be important at an individual level. Only 1.8% of the Bolivian population considers education to be their biggest problem (Latinobarómetro, 2018). Now the opposite of the conclusions observed in the previous two levels occurs: perceptions across Latin America on education and youth opportunities at an individual level have higher percentages than those of Bolivia.

Table 3: Own opinion: Most important problem by levels in 2018 (%)

Problem	Bolivia	Latin America
1) Country		
Education	5.08	5.14
Opportunities for Youth	3.03	0.50
2) Community or municipality		
Education	3.95	2.61
Opportunities for Youth	0.30	0.26
3) Personally		
Education	1.82	2.50
Opportunities for Youth	0.00	0.24

Source: Latinobarómetro (2018).

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[1] The population is in a range of 18 to 64 years.

In consideration of the educational problem, it can be seen that a significant part of the population considers that the education they received is not adequate to face the labor market in the future. Table 4 shows that approximately 30% of people in Latin America consider that their education does not prepare them correctly for professional life (Latinobarómetro, 2018). In Bolivia this figure is lower, reaching a quarter of the population who have negative views on their academic formation. Despite this, only 8% in Bolivia consider that their education prepared them well for their future jobs, against 15% in the region. Table 4 shows that there is an educational problem visible to the population (Latinobarómetro, 2018).

Table 4: Personal opinion: My education allows me to be prepared for jobs of the future in 2018 (%)

Opinion	Bolivia	Latin America
Strongly Agree	8.39	15.44
Agree	66.35	55.31
In Disagreement	23.36	24.03
Strongly Disagree	1.91	5.22

Source: Latinobarómetro (2018).

The perception of the educational problem varies when we take into account only young people between 18 and 25 years old.[2] Table 5 shows young people's perceptions on the education they received and its relevance to their future careers and goals. The survey shows that 21% of Bolivian and Latin American youth consider that the education they received does not properly prepare them for their future jobs (Latinobarómetro, 2018). On the other hand, those who consider that they are very well prepared are only 12% in Bolivia and 19% of interviewees in the region. This information further highlights the educational problems and limited preparedness of youth in Bolivia.

Table 5: Personal opinion: My education allows me to be prepared for jobs of the future in 2018 (youth, %).

Opinion	Bolivia	Latin America
Strongly Agree	11.19	19.52
Agree	67.12	58.87
In Disagreement	18.98	17.69
Strongly Disagree	2.71	3.91

Source: Latinobarómetro (2018).

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[2] The database does not account for people under the age of eighteen.

Youth's Experiences and Perceptions

Alarmingly, many Bolivians consider that their education does not adequately prepare them for future jobs, as noted in the previous section (Latinobarómetro, 2018). In order to expound on these perceptions, we conducted a series of interviews; our interviewees ranged from professionals who began their political careers at a very young age to young citizens from different backgrounds. Boxes 1, 2 and 3 summarize three of the interviews that were carried out for the purpose of this project.

A number of our interviewees were young politicians since we sought to inquire on the historical exclusion of youth from political positions. In the list of candidates for Deputies and Senators for the 2009 elections, for instance, only 20% of candidates were between the ages of 18 and 30 (OEP, 2009, 2019). Moreover, in the last election cycle of 2019, 10 years later, there was only a 17% of youth representation in the list of candidates (OEP, 2009, 2019).

Box 1: **Interview with Soraya Rodríguez, Feminist Leader of** ***Pan y Rosas*** **Movement**

Soraya Rodriguez (26 years old) is a feminist activist based in La Paz, Bolivia who attributes the lack of youth representation in leadership positions to one of the most a common feature of Latin American governments: corruption. In her words, "the corrupt governmental system, along with prosecution threats to those who think differently, is to blame for the aversion of many young leaders to engage with and be a part of the political sphere. I am personally afraid of getting prosecuted tomorrow—and at a very young age—if today I engage with any political party."

For this reason, she advocates for independent activism as a means for young leaders to make their voices heard—a form of social movements which is currently and undeniably having important repercussions all over the world.

According to her, the problem is no longer the lack of young leaders, but the notable absence of a bridge of communication between activists and the rest of the youth. Besides this intra-generational gap, there is a strong inter-generational gap in knowledge that creates additional barriers to change. Within her particular domain of activism, the lack of articulation of young feminist movements with old and traditional ones is inefficient both in terms of economic and human resources.

She identified the Programas Inteligentes con Adolescentes (PICA, per its acronym in Spanish, Intelligent Programs with

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Adolescents) Platform in Bolivia as a first and good attempt to bridge these gaps through interviews and videos of young leaders teaching the rest of their communities. However, the lack of opportunities for actual interaction with the leaders remains a problem, as well as the lack of representativeness of adult leaders whose insights and experiences could be of great contribution.

(Rodríguez, personal communication, 2020 April 29)

Box 2: Interview with Andrea Barrientos, senatorial candidate for *Comunidad Ciudadana*

Young people are still excluded from high domains of decision-making processes, a situation which is particularly harmful to the democratic development of a country in which youth constitute the vast majority of citizens.

Andrea Barrientos (31 years old) is one of the exceptions to the *gerontocracy phenomena* that characterizes the Bolivian government: she is one of the few young leaders who is running as senator for the department of Cochabamba in the upcoming Bolivian elections. According to Andrea, Bolivia is currently experiencing a political process of change, with more and more young people getting involved in civic movements and political parties. However, the *intergenerational gap* in leadership positions remains the elephant in the room at every political level.

The problem is not that elders are still part of high-level leadership positions—since democracy is all about embracing diversity—but that the young are still treated as inexperienced and naive, which can be a debilitating and frustrating experience for young professionals. In the end, young leaders get discouraged from going against an "old" system with no mentoring or actual support; more often than not, youth step out of the political race, hence contributing to the widening of the intergenerational gap.

Given this particular challenge, then, what mechanisms can be set in place to attract more young people to leadership positions? In response to our query, Andrea believes that the solution is not immediate, since every political process takes time. However, she would recommend investing in political education at the high school and university levels so that young potential leaders acquire basic knowledge on governmental structures and the workings of political processes. Also, an important component of education is to make the work of current young leaders visible. Since the

influence of peers plays an important role in motivating and engaging young potential leaders it is vital to showcase them.

(Barrientos, personal communication, 2020 May 7)

Box 3: Interview with Jhanira Rodriguez Torrez, Food Policy Coordinator at the Fundación Alternativas

"How can we talk about democracy if more than half of the bolivian population remains excluded from decision-making positions? We are not just young people, we are the future!"

Jhanira Rodriguez (25 years old), is a young economist who is committed to the development of Bolivia, particularly that of rural communities in the country. From a very young age, she has sought to get involved in different platforms of research and leadership in order to broaden her knowledge horizons and develop the soft-skills needed for success.

When asked about her opinion on the reduced number of young Bolivian who, like herself, take up leadership positions in policy-making domains, she answered that most young people are not inclined to participate because "why would they choose to potentially ruin their political careers by tying themselves down to a single political party at a very young age?" For her, it is not about lack of interest or skills—although leadership schools play an important role. Rather, youth's aversion to potentially be a part of a corrupt system that seems difficult to defeat from the inside is the key problem.

For this reason she highlighted the role of leadership schools and platforms that are helping young potential leaders to connect, debate and engage with their communities. The "Red de Líderes para la Democracia y el Desarrollo", best known as Relidd, is probably one of the most outstanding examples of such platforms, of which she forms part.

Although these types of platforms play an important role in the profesional future of Bolivian leaders, most are restricted to a small, select part of the youth. To be a part of Relidd, for instance, one must have passed through specific leadership schools that have restrictive admissions. According to her, "if we want to be inclusive of Bolivian youth's potential, we need to give them the right tools and encourage them to be agents of change".

(Rodriguez, personal communication, 2020 May 30)

Even across different fields of specialization, our interviewees agreed that young Bolivians face significant barriers in terms of knowledge of and access to leadership positions. This obstacle is particularly difficult to overcome in the political system, in which being "youth" seems to be considered synonymous with idealism and naivety. This has created a deep-rooted system in which *"having muñeca"* (a Bolivian term for having the right contacts) is valued over one's merits, and in which communication and collaboration between experienced and young leaders is rare. Our interviewees confirmed the problem our research brought to light: the current social, economic, and political structure of Bolivia does not take advantage of the Bolivian youth's potential.

Access to Information and Communication Technologies

Because we work with a mobile application, it is necessary to know the overall access to the internet, cell phones and computers of the Bolivian population. Table 6 provides an overview of individuals' access to cell phones and computers. First, young people between 16 and 25 years old, who are the target population of the project, and the population between 16 and 64 years old, the potential pool of mentors, are observed. For both groups, over 87% of the population have access to a mobile phone (INE, 2018). In the case of a desktop or laptop computer, it is observed that 52% of young people have access, against 33% for the rest of the analyzed population (INE, 2018). With this in mind, our proposal is made available mainly on cell phones so as to foster greater connectivity.

Table 6: Cellphone and computer access in 2018 (%)

Access	Youth	Everyone
Cellphone	87.58	87.36
Computer	51.69	33.47

Source: INE – Household surveys (2018)

To analyze internet access and availability we take into account two key indicators: the frequency with which individuals use the internet and the way in which they access the internet. Table 7 shows the frequency of internet usage. It is shown that 54% of young people between the ages of 16 and 25 have internet access every day and 20% enter at least once a week (INE, 2018). The survey shows that approximately 78% have internet access (INE, 2018). Across the age group between 16 to 64, 41% have internet access every day and 14% at least once a week (INE, 2018). In total, it is known that 57% of individuals have internet access (INE, 2018). This may be a limitation when implementing our proposal, since there is a group of young people (22%) and a group of the entire population (43%) who will not be able to access the mobile application (INE, 2018).

Table 7: How often did you use the internet in 2018? (%)

Frequency	Youth	Everyone
At least once a day	54.60	40.67
At least once a week	20.08	13.78
Less than once a week	2.76	2.39

Source: INE – Household surveys (2018).

The second indicator surveyed internet access, as can be seen in table 8.[3] The first group are those who have unlimited internet access in their homes. The survey shows that approximately 34% of young people and 36% of the entire population have ubiquitous internet access at home (INE, 2018). A second category is for those who access to the internet through the mobile data of their cell phones; 44% of both age groups fall into this category (INE, 2018). In the last category, "others," encompasses wide-ranging opportunities for internet access at jobs, schools or universities, commercial premises, among others. Also, 23% of young people and 21% of the entire population, respectively, have internet access through "other" means (INE, 2018). Taking this into account, our YACHA app will be easily accessible to approximately 77% of the population, due to the convenient availability of the internet.

Table 8: Where did you access the internet in 2018? (%)

Frequency	Youth	Everyone
At home	33.71	35.63
Mobile cell phone	43.60	43.75
Other	22.70	20.63

Source: INE – Household surveys (2018).

Mentorship and Inequality

Young Bolivians lack support and motivation that is often instrumental for success in life. Most do not consider their country to be one which offers a wide range of labor opportunities, given that minorities still face challenges and disparities in their educational and labor outcomes (Latinobarómetro, 2018).

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[3] The population with internet access, 78% of young people and 57% of all people, are taken into account.

Reducing inequality is vital since the issue requires an integrated solution that empowers the young population and, at the same time, narrows the existing gap among minorities. There is a historical imbalance that makes it difficult for young minorities to come into direct contact with people that can inspire them, a problem that cuts across generations. The disparities may start very early in life but if they are deepened in every stage, the final outcome will not change. If we compare the first destinations and the lifelong professional outcomes for women and men, there are some notable disparities. Since there is evidence of the existing glass ceiling that excludes women from top-paying jobs (Bertrand, 2017), they might prefer to follow a different path if shown they could achieve leadership positions.

There is extensive literature that shows that having a mentor helps empower youth and close the gap of inequality. For instance, having a mentor of the same gender or race influences the occupational choice of women or racial minorities, as demonstrated by Kofoed et al. (2019) in their writings on role models for cadets. They found that assigning the same race/gender officer increases the probability that young mentees will choose their mentor/officer's branch as their first occupational preference (Kofoed et al., 2019). Moreover, given the lack of women in traditionally male-dominated fields such as STEM or economics programs, a recent article shows the importance of female role models in the likelihood of choosing an economics major (Porter & Serra, 2020). Exposing students to a woman majoring in economics increases female enrollment in further economic classes (Porter & Serra, 2020).

YACHA

Connecting Youth with Bolivian Leaders

YACHA is a multi-platform application that connects young people aged between 16 and 25 years with experienced Bolivian leaders who are making a difference in their fields of specialization. The idea behind this platform is summarized in its own name YACHA, a word in the Andean language Quechua that makes reference to *"the practice of acquiring knowledge from experiences"*.

The YACHA is the learning cornerstone of Andean communities. According to García (2005), it is an ancient concept that makes reference to their circular understanding of learning. Andean communities believe learning is a process through which children are motivated from an early age to participate in productive and social activities alongside adults from their community, who were once taught in the same way.

In this form of community-based learning, children acquire essential, productive, and social skills just by looking, listening, and participating in communal activities. Adults complete the learning circle by freely sharing their knowledge and experiences with young minds. In this way, grownups make an important contribution to the development of their communities by becoming mentors.

What if we could expand this Andean wisdom to other spheres of learning? What would be the result of receiving, while still young, the guidance of Bolivian citizens who are making a difference in their country and/ or in the world? What if getting to know the right person for one's personal and professional growth was not a matter of luck or exclusive contacts, but a reality made readily available for Bolivian youth?

Furthermore, how could mentorship complement and strengthen youth's education while simultaneously preparing them to face the complexities and challenges of the world? Could this circular structure of learning contribute to the inclusion of young people into leadership positions in their communities?

YACHA has the mission to expand the Andean circular dynamic of learning, by easily connecting the youth with potential mentors and becoming a space where the diffusion of knowledge and experience takes place. YACHA is a platform accessible to every young person seeking guidance or advice for their personal and professional development directly from an expert. YACHA fosters inclusion and communication between Bolivian leaders of all ages and the country's youth.

Moreover, with the objective of including the concept of YACHA in all spheres of society, we propose to use this platform to digitally promote and make the work of mentors available to everyone. We consider that the diffusion of knowledge is vital to achieving the "leave no one behind" promise of the 2030 Sustainable Development Goals.

In short, YACHA is the solution for young people to connect with mentors who can help them to boost their potential, and a platform for these mentors to contribute to the formation of the youth through the diffusion of their work.
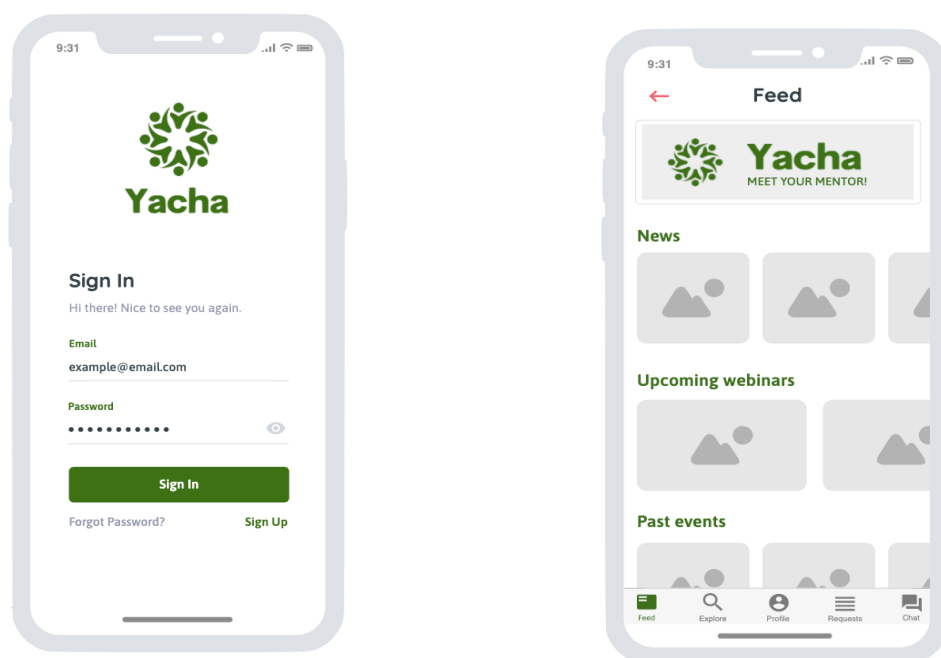
YACHA: The Mentorship Application

YACHA is an application designed to connect mentors and mentees in an agile and easy way, for free. The platform will be made available through our website and as a mobile application for download in the AppStore and Google PlayStore. In this way, any person with access to an internet connection will be able to use it from any device.

THE COMMUNITY

The main goal of YACHA is to create a platform that contributes to the education and professional growth of the Bolivian youth, thanks to the advice and knowledge of experienced and successful leaders from different fields. This main feature of the project is hereafter referred to as the YACHA virtual mentorship program.

Considering many mentors are busy professionals who might not be able to engage with multiple mentees at the same time, we plan to put additional virtual resources at the mentors' disposal, so that they can share their know-how and insights. Moreover, recognizing the importance of sharing knowledge for the development of the community as a whole, the YACHA organization will be in charge of making additional virtual resources freely available for all members of the community (see panel b. *Feed* of Figure 1).

Figure 1

(a)
SIGN IN - The members need a user account to use the application.

(b)
FEED - A page with all the content available for the community.

Source: Own elaboration.

With this idea in mind, and in addition to our virtual mentorship program, we propose to host webinars for all the young app-users who seek an introduction to the mentors and their areas of interest. This allows mentors to upload their own videos-courses and articles.

In summary, YACHA enables users to share valuable knowledge and information within the platform.
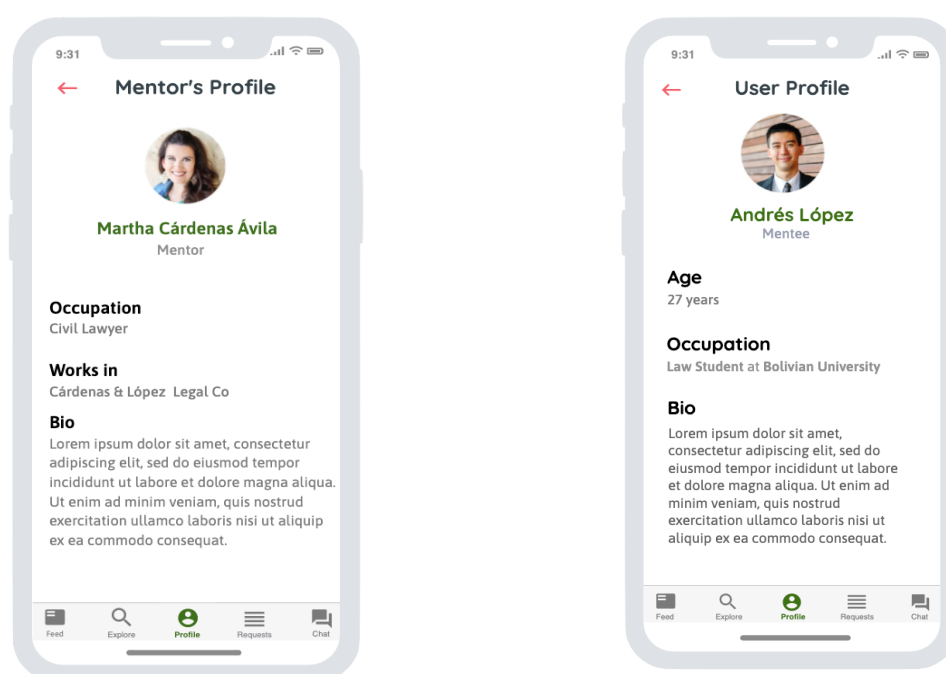
THE MENTORS

Mentors are Bolivian men and women of all ages, who are contributing to the development of their country from within their different fields of specialization, and whose work might not be properly showcased. Mentors are passionate political leaders, entrepreneurs, outstanding academics, artists, professors, activists, and educators, among others, who want to share their knowledge and engage with young people. The YACHA organization makes this possible by both connecting leaders with young mentees through our one-on-one virtual mentorship program

and by sharing leaders' insights and best practices with a wider audience through webinars and other virtual resources.

The YACHA organization is in charge of designating mentors from different backgrounds. The organizers contact potential mentors and set up the corresponding user accounts (see phases of project implementation). Once a person becomes part of YACHA's network of mentors and is granted access to the platform, they will be asked to customize their mentor's profile (see panel a. *Mentor Profile* of Figure 2).

This allows YACHA to introduce the mentor to the community and facilitates the successful match with a potential mentee. For this reason, mentors will be encouraged to provide information about their skills, education and/or professional experience, their areas of expertise, and their latest projects.

Figure 2

(a)
MENTOR'S PROFILE - All mentors have a public user profile to help mentees find them in the application.

(b)
MENTEE'S PROFILE - All mentees have a public user profile that serves as their presentation to the community.

Source: Own elaboration.

THE MENTEES

Mentees are curious young Bolivians aged 16 to 25 years who are either in search of professional advice and vocational guidance and/or are seeking to understand and boost their own talents, motivations, and passions. As highlighted by Robinson, K., & Aronica, L. (2014), mentorships throughout the early stages of individuals' educational and professional life are a key ingredient for youth's full development into economically independent and self-sufficient professionals in the future.

In order to use the application, the mentees need to create a user account by entering their email address and creating a password. Once mentees have access to their user accounts, they can begin to configure their profiles and explore the platform. Mentees' profiles are important because it serves as a presentation-card to mentors when they submit a mentorship request. Hence, mentees are encouraged to complete their profile with information on their education, professional perspectives, latest projects and even their non-professional interests (see Panel b. *Mentee's Profile* in Figure 2).

Figure 3
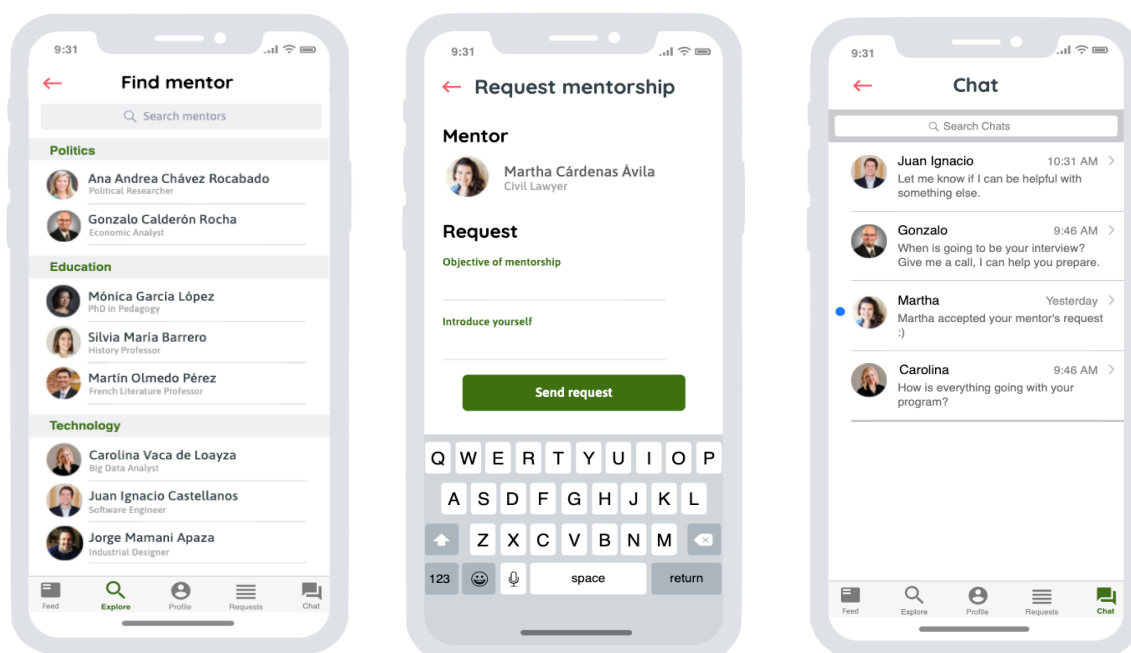
(a)
FIND MENTOR - Young app-users can explore the list of mentors until they find the right mentor for them.

(b)
REQUEST MENTORSHIP - Potential mentees request a mentorship to a mentor by filling a form.

(c)
CHAT - The chat function is available for all the mentorship match-ups made in the application.

Source: Own elaboration.

THE MENTORSHIP REQUEST

Potential mentees can explore the profiles of registered mentors by searching for particular individuals or by exploring the lists of categories and areas of expertise (see panel a. *Find Mentor* in Figure 3). Once a potential mentee has found a mentor that could provide him or her valuable advice, they can request a mentorship.

To do so, potential mentees fill out the mentorship request form, introducing themselves to the mentor, showing their interest in the mentorship program, and explaining their request motives (see panel b. *Request Mentorship* in Figure 3). This

step is important because mentors that are in high demand will use this information to determine the best fit.

Once the request is sent, the mentees await a response from the mentor. If a mentor accepts the mentee's request, the application puts them in contact by creating a chat conversation. Through the chat, both parties can communicate, coordinate a videoconference or set up a personal meeting, depending on the purpose of the mentorship and the mentor's preferred communication channel (see panel c. *Chat* in Figure 3).

Project Implementation Phases

1. Build a team of software designers and developers to work on the design and development of the website and the mobile application. During this phase the right technology and development tools are going to be selected depending on the time and costs required for the development and maintenance of the platform.
2. Search and invite Bolivian leaders to become a part of the pool of mentors in our mentorship network. Convinced that the diversity of knowledge is the key to development, we plan to look for mentors of all ages, occupations, and professional fields in two ways:
    a. Through our built-in "Search for Talent Labs." These labs are spaces designed exclusively to search, find, and invite potential mentors. These labs will also facilitate the showcasing of Bolivian leaders' work through the YACHA webinars.
    b. Through networking and media outreach, by inviting society at large to participate in our search of mentors. Individuals can nominate agents of change whose work is not yet recognized or fully visibilized. This process would be made public through social networks and mass media.
3. Before scaling-up across the country, we will assess the effectiveness of YACHA in addressing the inclusion of youth into leadership positions, on a small scale. For this, we will carry out a pilot test in the following manner:
    a. The geographical scope will be limited to the city of La Paz, which is the seat of government of the Plurinational State of Bolivia.
    b. In agreement with interested universities, we would launch the application and promote it among their students. This will facilitate a follow-up survey with mentees at the conclusion of their mentorship programs with the help of higher education institutions.
    c. Surveys for mentees and mentors will be created to assess progress and outcomes based on overall satisfaction and other relevant indicators.
    d. Based on the results of the feasibility assessment of the application, decisions will be made to define its final scope and determine partnership options with higher education institutions.
4. Consolidate strategic alliances with potential investors and local authorities, in order to guarantee the financial and logistic success of our solution.

5. Identify the appropriate promotion and marketing strategies for social and mass media with the help of interested parties. In an effort to maximize social inclusion, particular attention will be paid to reaching indigenous and marginalized communities.
6. Permanent follow-up and monitoring of connections made between mentors and mentees in the following way:
   a. By releasing mandatory virtual questionnaires to both the mentors and mentees, soon after the first contact through our platform is made.
   b. As a continuous monitoring alternative, we plan to make use of satisfaction and feedback questionnaires for those currently engaged in a mentorship program.

Limitations

A few key limitations to our proposal include financing and gauging mentors' interest. First, after initial financial investment in the development of the app and website, a detailed funding plan will have to be devised. This could include requesting partnerships or enabling advertisements. Furthermore, during the pilot phase a few of the most remote communities of La Paz will be excluded, given our limited initial partnership with universities. We foresee overcoming this limitation during the scaling-up phase of this project, described below. Third, the initial selection of mentors will be entirely up to the YACHA team, which could potentially limit the initial scope of mentors. However, once appropriate outreach and marketing strategies are in place, we anticipate points 2.a and 2.b above to facilitate the selection of mentors.

Justification

The lack of youth inclusion in Bolivia is apparent: young Bolivians have limited access to opportunities for education and professional growth, especially if they belong to indigenous or rural communities. Barred from access to a wide-range of professional fields, many young leaders do not have mentors in their own gender or ethnicity. YACHA addresses the issue of youth inclusion by tackling the Three E's central to our problem and solution: Education, Experience, and Employment through vocational guidance and mentorships.

THE MENTORS
Education. Bolivian mentors arise from a wide range of professional and vocational backgrounds. True to Andean community-driven knowledge sharing that inspires the name of our platform, mentors will actively engage in the learning process of young mentees and app-users. First, the webinar and conference aspect of YACHA mimics the word-of-mouth learning style of Andean culture. Each mentor is expected to educate young app-users from within his or her area of expertise or interest. Webinars are structured around a

key topic of the mentor's choice and chosen from among the topics of interest for Bolivian youth. For instance, a mentor could choose to hold a session on "domestic violence."[4] Throughout his or her webinar, the mentor would be expected to define the problem and offer an introductory approach to the topic from within his or her field of expertise. In this sense, a lawyer could speak on the generalities of domestic violence law or a nurse could speak to his or her experience on carrying for victims of domestic violence. In conducting this "seminar-like" webinar, mentors act as vital elements of the educating process, conveying through imagery, videography, or simply through word-of-mouth the fundamentals of their professional background. Second, while during the first 45 minutes of the webinars the mentors will be tasked with conveying the key concepts related to their chosen topic, the last 15 minutes of the webinar will provide an open space for young app-users to ask questions or raise comments on the content of the webinar. Continuing their task of educating, mentors are expected to engage with young leaders in the Q&A portion of the webinar, hereby furthering learning opportunities and making these accessible to Bolivian youth.

The educational role that mentors fulfill helps bridge the intergenerational gap and fosters networks between young and experienced professionals. This is particularly important once young app-users move on to the "mentorship" phase of YACHA. Mentors receive the applications of potential mentees and continue the teaching-learning process on a one-on-one basis.

Experience. Vocational orientation is a crucial element of YACHA. Mentors are expected to convey their personal experiences in a relatable and accessible fashion. A mentor might, for instance, share that the reason she became interested in children's psychology is because she knew of children in her neighborhood that were victims of domestic violence. The mentor's first-hand experience, valuable in itself, could encourage young leaders to discover a new professional field. Another mentor could explain that she grew interested in researching labor trends in agriculture because she read an article that demonstrated that domestic violence is more likely to occur during less-labor intensive phases of agricultural work (like crop selection and crop growth) than in their labor-intensive counterparts (like land preparation and harvesting) because men are more likely to be home and idle. Each of these unique experiences, though related to the same topic, evidences the existence of many and diverse personal paths available to young Bolivians. The focus of "experience" for mentors is personal—YACHA provides a pathway for the vocational orientation of youth that extends beyond commonplace vocational quizzes and rankings.

YACHA's mentorship program is also crucial to the shared-experiences aim of the app. As previously argued, mentors play an important role in shaping mentees' choices. In this sense, YACHA encourages inclusivity by attracting a wide range of mentors not only from different professional and vocational backgrounds but also from across different parts of Bolivian society. Gender and

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[4] For the purposes of this report, the justification section is written in reference to "domestic violence" as an area of interest for mentors and mentees.

ethnicity are particularly important in the Bolivian case. YACHA seeks to match young Bolivians with experienced individuals of similar backgrounds so as to encourage the participation of minorities and marginalized communities. Once again, this is furthered in the mentorship phase, in which one-to-one connections enable tailored professional and educational guidance.

Employment: Mentors will also share the steps they took in their professional paths as a means to encourage community-driven learning. Importantly, YACHA provides a platform for mentors to network and make their work visible. The app's search function enables mentors to find professionals working in the same area or with similar interests; mentors can even attend the webinars of other professionals.[5] Moreover, YACHA creates much-needed visibility of mentors' work. An activist could, for instance, indicate his or her interest in feminism and gender-violence and thus list an upcoming protest against domestic abuse in his or her profile. Similarly, a non-profit professional could "filter results" in the search bar and connect with a politician doing similar work on domestic violence policy. YACHA successfully fosters employment networking and visibility opportunities for mentors.

THE MENTEES

Education. The webinar function of YACHA enables easy, remote, and introductory access to educational and professional knowledge. YACHA is unprecedented: it is geared toward young Bolivians in accessible language, terminology, and content. Unlike other webinars or professional conferences that often use highly technical terminology and presuppose existing knowledge in the field discussed, YACHA makes its content accessible to young minds. The webinars are intended to function as introductory seminars, providing a platform from which young leaders can then further explore their interests. The Q&A section of webinars furthers the educational aim and enables young people to learn from their peers as well as the mentors.

Moreover, during the mentorship program, mentees are given wider access to their field of interest. They can, for instance, ask their mentors for reading recommendations or get feedback on research topics. Given the initial interaction they have with Bolivian leaders through webinars, young people are better prepared to engage with their mentors in a significant way so as to make the most of their time as mentees. In doing so, young attendees will be encouraged to develop critical thinking and professional-communication skills.

Experience. Insight into the educational and professional development of Bolivian leaders is an important aspect of YACHA. First, young app-users will learn about different career and educational paths within their fields of interest. A young high schooler unsure about which degree to pursue might attend several webinars on her area of interest (e.g. domestic violence). After listening to experts in the field, the high schooler might realize that "social worker" is not the only professional available to her, as she originally thought. Based on her

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[5] It should be noted that in order to maintain the youth-oriented aim of the app, mentors cannot participate in the Q&A portion of the webinars. They are encouraged, nonetheless, to connect with other professionals via the chat function of YACHA.

interactions with peers on YACHA and the knowledge gained through the webinars she might choose to pursue a communications degree and focus on advocacy and outreach to give visibility to the issue.

The mentorship broadens young Bolivians' experiential learning by providing them first-hand contact with other leaders that can directly relate to their experiences. In this case, mentors of similar backgrounds become a relevant factor to the success of YACHA.

Employment. YACHA creates new avenues for youth employment by connecting seasoned professionals with rising, young talents. The mentorship program could lead to the creation of internships or other forms of career experience, for instance. Moreover, YACHA broadens young app-users' knowledge of career and educational opportunities, further increasing youths' prospects of social and economic inclusion.

Beyond the "Three-E's," it is important to note YACHA's role in advancing connections between and among generations. On the one hand, the chat function of YACHA is intended to also serve young leaders seeking like-minded peers. The intra-generational connection is advanced through the in-app features of YACHA. Individuals attending similar webinars could reach out to one another through the chat function; they could also search for individuals with similar interests through the search function of the app. This creates a network of driven young leaders that can coordinate efforts through YACHA.

On the other hand, an inter-generational networking platform of the sort that YACHA provides is unprecedented in Bolivia. Very few opportunities are available to young students and professionals to engage with experienced leaders in their fields of interests. The gap is further widened in consideration of gender and ethnicity; role models are far and few between. YACHA creates a *sui generis* connection between leaders young and old.

Scaling-Up

Upon the completion of the pilot phase and the assessment of feedback surveys, we anticipate the following scaling-up options.
1. Provide free classes online for young people. These classes would have limited availability (require application) and would be interactive. We anticipate the online classes to be run by partner organizations and mentors. Priority would be given to minorities and indigenous people.
2. Add a jobs board to the app and website. Many companies have positions they are looking to fill with young people and YACHA provides a valuable platform for employers to advertise their openings. An incentive could include having employees of the company volunteer to be mentors—mentees would then have direct experience with people in the company of their interest. Moreover, young people could apply to the jobs

and list their mentors as references, thus increasing their chances of receiving a job offer.

3. The app will be developed in minority and indigenous languages, so as to increase the outreach of the platform.

In this way, YACHA is an important first step in the direction for the inclusion of Bolivia's young leaders.

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