



The quote above is from Siziphiwe, a 13-year old from Masiphumelele in Cape Town, South Africa. Siziphiwe is a new female participant of the award-winning **Waves for Change** surf therapy program and her involvement is as a result of research carried out last year, in 2015, between the University of Cape Town (UCT) and **Waves for Change**.

The research was conducted by two Master's students and involved evaluations of both the **Waves for Change** *Child Surf Therapy* and *Coach Training* programs. The purpose was to assess the plausibility of the programs to achieve their intended aim(s) of improving the wellbeing of local children and young adults. The researchers were also tasked with making recommendations for future program implementation. The study sample included 115 child participants, 15 coaches, 40 parents, 14 teachers and 3 members of W4C administrative staff.

**Waves for Change** is a surfing-based organisation that provides a range of services to 3 local impoverished communities; namely Lavender Hill, Khayelitsha, and Masiphumelele. Unemployment, violence, school drop-out, gangs, substance abuse, disease, and lack of resources, are common features of these communities. Exposure to these risk factors contribute to the development of enduring anti-social behaviours. **Waves for Change uses the sport of surfing to "hook" vulnerable children, then through support from trained local coaches provide them with tools to cope with life.** The coaches also create networks in the community by conducting home visits and teacher training sessions at local schools. Interacting regularly with the key caregivers ensures a more holistic engagement with participants and promotes community support for the program.

Both evaluations found that the program theory was high in utility and plausibility meaning that if services are delivered as intended, **Waves for Change** should achieve its intended objectives. In interviews, 88% of the children rated their experience at Waves for Change as AMAZING; 97% reported that they had learnt new things (surfing skills, respect, communication skills); and 71% rated their coaches as GREAT. 90% of parents and 64% of teachers reported seeing positive changes in **Waves for Change** children.

**Recommendations** included: increasing female attendance, simplifying the curriculum, improving internal monitoring, addressing gaps in staff roles and diversity; and providing better support to coaches.

The **Waves for Change** team swiftly acted upon these recommendations and by early 2016 changes were occurring:

- Female attendance:

The research showed that low attendance and high drop-out rate was highest amongst girls. Waves for Change now run girls-only surfing days at two of its sites. One of these sites is Masiphumelele, where Siziphiwe (opening quote) is from. The research contributed to **Waves for Change's** decision to start girls-only sessions and provide girls like Siziphiwe with the opportunity to comfortably participate in a traditionally male-dominated sport. At the third site where there are safety concerns when the girls walk to the site, coaches are also accompanying girls. These changes have led to a more than three-fold increase in female participation numbers from 24 (in 2015) to 84 (in 2016)!



- Curriculum simplification:

“We learnt that our curriculum was too complicated for our coaches to deliver and that several concepts were too abstract for children to fully understand and apply. We simplified our curriculum to focus on key topics aligned with our Theory of Change (nurturing relationships, pro-social functions, coping with anxiety and forming goals). The sessions are more practical and provide children with opportunities to apply learnings outside of surfing. To improve participants’ exposure to the curriculum content, the curriculum is now 5 months in length and repeats twice in the year.” W4C Curriculum Designer, 2016.

- Improving internal monitoring:

The employment of a full-time monitoring and evaluation manager in January 2016 showed commitment in making significant progress in improving monitoring, evaluation and learning capacity. The program is now able to track implementation, in real-time, and can respond to programmatic challenges as they arise. Improving the capacity of Site Managers to capture attendance remotely on electronic devices has meant that **Waves for Change** can action 1:1s and home visits for participants with poor attendance and can refer individuals to the in-house social worker if necessary. This could lead to reduced drop-out rates, higher dosage and stronger program effects.

The improved MEL system is also being used to improve the management of the program. **Waves for Change** now sets attendance, 1:1, home visit and self-assessment targets for their coaches which are factored into site and coach performance reviews. These help monitor the quality of service delivery and implementation.

- Addressing gaps in staff roles and diversity:

The evaluations found that the organisation lacked staff in key positions and lacked cultural diversity (most management positions were filled by white foreigners). By early 2016 the organisation had employed three more South African citizens to fulfil management positions on the interdisciplinary (ID) team. This means that the ID team is currently 100% South African consisting of 1 black male, 2 black females, 1 coloured female, and 2 white females.

- Providing better support to coaches.

The **Waves for Change** coaches are recruited from the same communities as the target children and are often exposed to the same risk factors. Based on the recommendation that the coaches needed more support the organisation has made several changes:

“Coaches now receive a weekly training and debrief, with additional counselling on offer. We have also improved our recruitment, training and placement process, ensuring we are able to bring in coaches who have the key child-care skills we need boost their employment prospects” W4C Director, 2016.

Unlike a lot of other organisations who use the services of foreign volunteers who pay to come and volunteer in South Africa, **Waves for Change** employ young adults who were previously "Not in Education, Employment, or Training" (NEET). A recent report by GrassRoots Soccer, an organisation with a similar coach training model as Waves for Change, entitled *Young People in Meaningful Work: Using Sport to Generate a Positive Social Return on Investment in South Africa* showed how investing in a sports coach yields a return on investment of 72%. Making it financially and socially viable to invest in the training and employment of local young adults instead of volunteers.



From the above it is clear that Waves for Change values and uses feedback to improve the delivery of the service they provide to young South Africans. It is also evident from the smiles when one visits any of the sites that they have been successful in creating a safe space for children to momentarily escape their daily challenges whilst simultaneously learning new ways to cope with them.

Waves for Change is interested in hearing from any organisations who wish to partner with them to provide their “graduates” with additional skills to improve their life prospects. They also wish to acknowledge the support for Laureus, Comic Relief, World Childhood Fund, EMPOWER, Murray & Roberts <add more>