



SiyaSurfasana

Annual Evaluation Report

November 2021



Photo @gareth_hubbard



1. Mission statement	3
2. Summary of findings	4
3. Background	5
Chintsa East	5
Intervention Rationale	5
4. Intervention description	6
SiyaSurfasana’s surfers	6
Parent/Caregiver engagements	6
Programme duration and frequency	6
Session content and structure	7
The SiyaSurfasana team	8
On the beach - Sisi’s	8
Off the beach - Mama’s	9
5. Evaluation methods	9
Programme duration and attendance	10
Participant feedback in pictures and words	10
Participant subjective psychological well-being	10
Participants’ social support networks	11
Participant satisfaction	11
Parents/caregivers and teachers (stakeholders) feedback in words	11
6. Results and Discussion	12
Programme duration and attendance	12
Feedback from the participants	13
Participant feedback in pictures and words	14
Participant subjective psychological well-being	17
Participants’ social support networks	18
Participant satisfaction	19
Feedback from the parents/caregivers and teachers (stakeholders)	19
1) Changes in participants as observed by their parents/caregivers	19
2) Changes in participants as observed by their teachers	20
3) Parent/caregiver feedback on how SiyaSurfasana could improve and if they would recommend us to others	21
4) Teacher feedback on how SiyaSurfasana could improve and if they would recommend us to others	22
7. Challenges and things to be done differently	22
The participants’ age	22
Retaining Sisi’s	23
Engaging Mama’s	23
Evaluation timing	23
Creatures great and small	24
Non-profit organisational structure	24



1. Mission statement

SiyaSurfasana provides surf therapy in the natural ocean environment as a mental and physical health care intervention programme for Xhosa girls. Through the fun and challenging experience of surfing, our mission is to facilitate a safe space in which girls feel confident to learn new social and emotional skills to thrive in their daily lives.



Photo cred: @gareth_hubbard

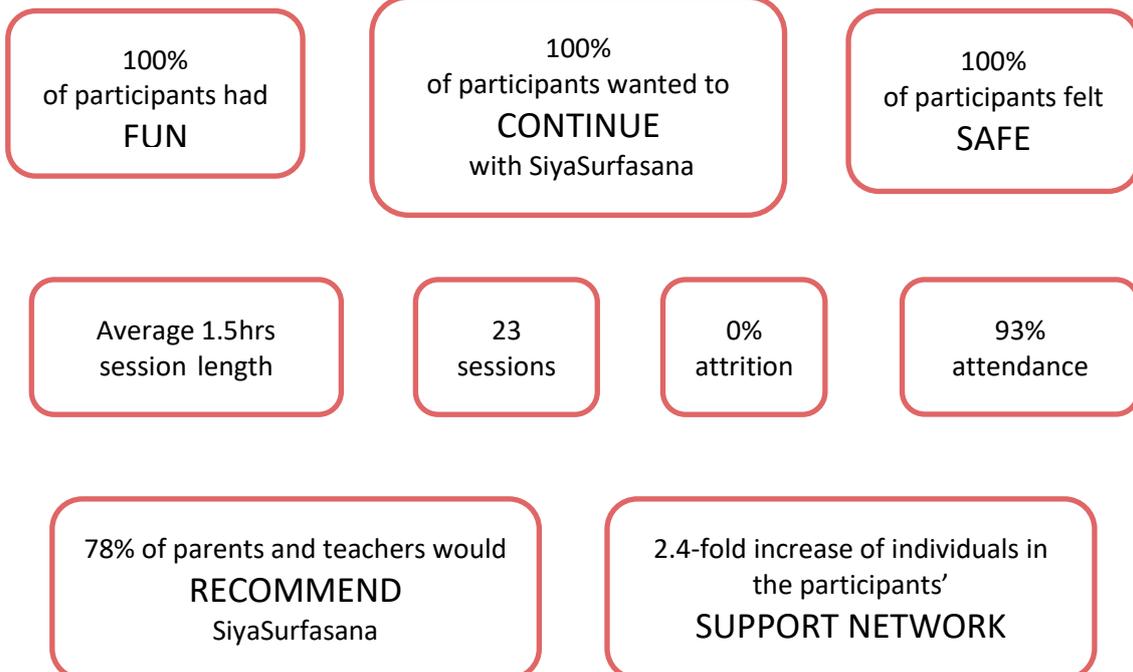


2. Summary of findings

The **participants'** words used to describe SiyaSurfasana appear in the word cloud below. The more often the word was used, the bigger the word.



The participants' **caregivers and teachers** perceived an increase in sharing, caring, confidence, happiness, concentration and energy; decreased jealousy and fighting; and improved discipline at home.



3. Background

SiyaSurfasana is a surf therapy intervention that works with Xhosa girls aged eight to 12 years of age from Chintsa East, Eastern Cape, South Africa. The following is an evaluation report of SiyaSurfasana's first year of operation. Founded in 2020, the programme is facilitated by a diverse team made up of caring adults, who support the development of social and emotional skills through activities which help the girls cope and thrive in their daily lives. These activities are part of the evidence-based Surf Therapy curriculum developed by [Waves for Change](#) who also provided training and mentoring support through the [Wave Alliance](#) (an initiative of Waves for Change made possible by the Swedish Postcode Lottery Foundation and Comic Relief). Our invaluable local partner is the [Chintsa East Soup Kitchen](#).

Chintsa East

Chintsa East is a semi-rural coastal village situated 45 km north of East London. Surf Therapy participants come from the low-cost and informal housing area of Chintsa East where there is a minimum of 2 000 Xhosa residents, of which 370 are girls aged 18 years and younger. Roughly 63% of these girls live in single-headed households while 73% of all children receive a child grant¹. Illegal shebeens are rife along with alcohol and drug abuse, and related violence. Gender-based violence is also widespread and unaddressed. The closest police station is 40 km away and governmental social services are not accessible.

Intervention Rationale

In this context, many girls are exposed to violence in their daily lives and live through potentially traumatic experiences. This impacts their mental and physical health and wellbeing which in turn, can negatively affect the way they behave and learn. Research has shown that if children feel safe and are given the space to explore and learn something new, they are more likely to have an increase in confidence and transfer the skills they learn into their everyday lives. Positive experiences paired with the belief that one can overcome challenges increases one's ability to cope. Research has also shown that positive experiences lead to an increased sense of self-worth resulting in more positive life choices.



Learning how to protect themselves while surfing

Photo cred: @gareth_hubbard

¹ Survey conducted by the Chintsa COVID-19 Community Support Program in 2020

4. Intervention description

SiyaSurfasana's surfers

In 2021, a group of nine Xhosa girls aged eight to 12 years participated in the programme. These girls were recruited through our partner organisation - the Chintsa East Soup Kitchen. Potential participants were identified on the basis of their consistently high attendance at the Soup Kitchen over the previous two school terms, while aiming for equal representation from all three local primary schools. This method was used to work with girls that find value in the Soup Kitchen (for a variety of socio-economic and emotional reasons) and to enable more equitable access to extra-mural activities and support across the schools. Fifteen girls were identified and they and their parents/caregivers were invited to an information meeting at the Soup Kitchen. Eleven of the 15 attended. At the meeting, the programme was explained, along with its potential health and social benefits. Time was allocated for questions and answers throughout. The meeting was held in English with isiXhosa interpretation. Interested families were encouraged to register their child by completing a consent form.

Parent/Caregiver engagements

Two more parent/caregiver meetings were held over the year. The second was in response to a fatal shark encounter that occurred at Chintsa East beach (see Section 7 - Challenges for more information). The third meeting was to discuss the evaluation process and provide the parents/caregivers the opportunity to participate. The parents/caregivers were also engaged through a WhatsApp group and sms's to help ensure all communication was received. Weekly messages regarding the upcoming session were sent through these platforms and the parents were encouraged to reach out to any of the SiyaSurfasana team, if they so wished.



**First parent's and caregiver meeting
at the Chintsa East Soup Kitchen**

Programme duration and frequency

SiyaSurfasana is a year-long programme with sessions held once a week on Wednesday afternoons, except during school holidays, when Covid-19 protocols inhibited the authentic nature of the sessions, and when Summer-rainfall weather and sea conditions deemed the sessions unsafe. The number of sessions held and the level of attendance is explored further in Section 6 - Results and Discussion - below.



Session content and structure

The weekly sessions centred around activities outlined in the Waves for Change surf therapy curriculum. Each activity was repeated over two consecutive sessions to help embed the learning. The activities included ocean immersion; paired floating and surfing; take-5 check-in with yourself; body-scan and senses; power hand and object; thankfulness and developing our mantra going forward. Each session started with a warm-up or energiser which was followed by meditative breathing. Each activity was preceded by a facilitated discussion and followed by a debrief and free time. Each session ended with the girls eating their meal at the Soup Kitchen which the volunteers and staff had put aside for them.



Offloading boards made possible through the Wave Alliance

Photo cred: @gareth_hubbard

Although a surfing-based initiative, SiyaSurfasana spent most of the year developing swimming skills. There are two main reasons for this. Firstly, previous experience with Xhosa girls in Chintsa East found that they would more readily participate in surfing if they believed they would not drown. We therefore held the first few sessions of the year developing swimming skills in a swimming pool at Buccaneers, a local Backpackers who supported the SiyaSurfasana programme. Secondly, Chintsa East experienced a fatal shark interaction in mid-April 2021 after which we continued holding our sessions in a tidal pool. The first session the girls had with surfboards in the open sea was on 22 September 2021.



Practicing water safety signs on the beach

Photo cred: @gareth_hubbard



Sharing the learnings and feelings of the day

Photo cred: Ash Heese



The SiyaSurfasana team

On the beach - Sisi's

The facilitation team on the beach consisted of a minimum of two and an average of three caring female adults. It included young local Xhosa women (“Sisi’s”) - role models who the participants could identify with and who provided interpretation support while gaining competencies and work experience. It was intended that the Sisi’s would participate in all the sessions throughout the year and increasingly take the lead in session facilitation while ensuring our approach remains socio-culturally relevant. However, due to understandable life realities, this was not possible. Overall, the programme was supported by four Sisi’s starting with three (Zikhona Goli, Thabisile Chiliza and Amvuyele Kofi) and ending with one (Temie Makefungana - the founder and manager of the Chintsa East Soup Kitchen). See Section 7 - Challenges for further discussion.



SiyaSurfasana Sisi supporting on the beach and in the water

Photo cred: @gareth_hubbard

Due to these changes, the sessions were primarily co-facilitated by two local white English first-language women (Caitlin Fisher and Catherine Andersson) with backgrounds in nature-based therapy; speech and language therapy; international development and project management. The two also received training in the Wave Alliance/Waves for Change surf therapy curriculum in November 2020. This training formed the basis of the Sisi interview process and orientation held at the beginning of the year. The orientation focused on what it means to offer support in a caring way. Training sessions were also held every second Monday afternoon in preparation for each new activity that would be facilitated over the following two weeks.

Off the beach - Mama's



**Mama experiencing the SiyaSurfasana sessions
to provide feedback**

Photo cred: @gareth_hubbard

Off the beach, SiyaSurfasana is supported by an advisory of local Xhosa women (“Mama’s”). The team of three includes Nokuphumla Pakamile (a primary school teacher), Alutha Mangali (a home-based care worker) and Temie Makefungana (mentioned above). The intention was to hold monthly Saturday morning sessions where the Mama’s participated in the two upcoming activities that were to be held over the following four weeks. This was to provide a platform for the Mamas to critically reflect on and discuss the socio-cultural and age-based appropriateness of the approach (see Section 7 - Challenges for further discussion).

5. Evaluation methods

The first year of SiyaSurfasana was evaluated through four different approaches which are outlined below and discussed in Section 6 - Results and Discussion. Quantitative data (i.e. number-based) was gathered through an attendance register and a globally validated well-being scale developed by the World Health Organisation (WHO-5). Qualitative data (i.e. word-based) was gathered through two different questionnaires - one for the participants, and another for their parents/caregivers and teachers.



Getting ready

Photo cred: @gareth_hubbard

Programme duration and attendance

An attendance register app (Teampact) developed by Waves for Change was used to record the participation and duration of each session.

Participant feedback in pictures and words

The nine participating girls were asked to provide feedback both written and in pictures. The questionnaire was developed by the Wave Alliance and adapted for our situation. The questions were translated into isiXhosa by one of our advisors - Nokuphumla Pakamile and were verbally explained in isiXhosa:

- 1) What are your favourite things about SiyaSurfasana?
- 2) What have you learnt at SiyaSurfasana?
- 3) How do you feel at the beach with SiyaSurfasana?
- 4) Write down three words you associate with the beach and surfing.
- 5) Draw SiyaSurfasana.

The girls could reply in either or both isiXhosa and English. The questionnaire was run in the session directly after the post-test survey (see Section 7 - Challenges).

Participant subjective psychological well-being



Happy!

Photo cred: @gareth hubbard

The World Health Organization Well-Being Index (WHO-5) was used to measure the impact of the intervention on the participants' subjective psychological well-being based on questions pertaining to their previous two weeks. The WHO-5 has been validated for a range of populations and contexts across the world. The participants were asked to (anonymously) fill in the survey right at the beginning of their first session (referred to as the pre-test) and after 23 sessions

(post-test). The questions were written in both isiXhosa² and English and explained in isiXhosa.

² The WHO-5 was translated into isiXhosa by Thatha iLiza, an organisation within the same Wave Alliance cohort. The translation process was done by first translating the document from English to isiXhosa, then back to English by a different individual who had not seen the English version. The translations were then compared and changes were made if/where necessary. This final version was then given to a third individual, who had not seen any of the previous versions, to do a last check. The translation of the additional questions in the post-test was done by one of SiyaSurfasana's advisors - Nokuphumla Pakamile.

Participants' social support networks

Social support is well established as a key mediator to mental health and reduced risky behaviour (i.e. substance abuse, risky sexual behaviour). To gain an understanding of the participants' support networks, with regards to who provides them with support and encouragement and who they can talk to when upset, the girls were asked to complete the following questions:

- 1) When I try hard at things, I am encouraged by my ...
- 2) When I have problems or I am upset, I talk to ...

In answering the questions they could choose the relevant people from the following list: mother, father, brother/sister; other family members; friends; teacher; social worker; surf coach/mentor.

Participant satisfaction

Finally the participants were also asked if they felt safe, had fun, made friends, and wanted to carry on surfing to help determine if our goals of providing a safe, fun space where the participants felt they belonged, were met.



Photo cred: @gareth_hubbard

Parents/caregivers and teachers (stakeholders) feedback in words

Written feedback forms developed by the Wave Alliance, and adapted for our context, were used to gain an understanding of the parents'/caregivers' and teachers' perceptions of SiyaSurfasana. The questions were written in both isiXhosa and English (translation by Nokuphumla Pakamile) and were verbally explained to the parents/caregivers in isiXhosa at a meeting after the 21 SiyaSurfasana sessions. All respondents were given the opportunity to reply in either language. The questions were:



- 1) Please tell us about any changes that you have seen in your child/student from attending SiyaSurfasana?
- 2) How do you feel we could improve our surf therapy service and would you recommend it to others?

6. Results and Discussion

Programme duration and attendance

The first session with the SiyaSurfasana participants was held on the 3rd March 2021. In total, 23 sessions were facilitated before the evaluation started with the girls (on the 15th September 2021). The average duration of each session was 1.5 hours. All the girls continued to participate throughout the year with an average attendance rate of each session at 93% (i.e. an average of eight out of nine girls attended each session with 57% of the sessions having full attendance). Reasons for girls not attending included too much school homework to complete and feeling sick.

Interestingly, the participant who showed the greatest fear of water and the ocean, and the oldest participant (a 12 year old) had the highest attendance by participating in all 23 of the sessions (see Section 7 - Challenges for a discussion on the age-appropriateness of the intervention).



Surfboard fun in the tidal pool

Photo cred: Ash Heese

Participant feedback in pictures and words

The participants' feedback from the four questions are outlined and discussed below:



Help and care

Photo cred: Ash Heese

1) Favourite things at SiyaSurfasana

The participants shared that they enjoyed the practical fun activities of swimming, floating, pop-ups, surfing, drawing and playing games at the beach. Some participants expressed that their favourite things were a practical activity followed by “with my friends” which highlights the development and/or strengthening of relationships and connectedness which as mentioned above, is linked to emotional and mental wellbeing. One participant expressed that her favourite thing was the empathy, kindness and care received at SiyaSurfasana from the group:

“Love that you are given when you feel sad and love that others show to me”

Another participant shared that:

“I like ... playing with the sand, rolling in the sand, and I feel happy when I'm in the water”

This aligns with the emerging understanding of the value of Blue Space and Green Space environments in support of our wellbeing (as mentioned above). Breathing and taking-5 were also listed as favourite things which suggests that the social and emotional skills were not only experienced and learnt, but enjoyed. This would increase the likelihood of these skills being practiced outside of the SiyaSurfasana setting.

2) Learnings at SiyaSurfasana

Practical skills that the participants felt that they gained included swimming, floating, and surfing. Interestingly, these beliefs were held even when the participants only had surfboards for a maximum of five out of the 23 sessions. One could interpret this as a healthy sense of accomplishment and confidence. The participants expressed that the social and emotional skills they developed included being kind and nice; sharing; helping others; being safe; being friendly and making friend:

“It is important to help each other. It is important to make friends and take care for people you love at the same time share with them all good things”

One participant learnt to ask questions if there are things they don't understand:

"call the teacher when I see something I don't understand in the water"

Many said they learnt to breathe:

"I've learnt to breath[e] inside"

3) Feelings experienced by the participants on the beach with SiyaSurfasana

The participants shared that they experienced uplifting and energetic feelings such as happy, good, excited and fresh which is congruent with the fun nature of the intervention. The participants also expressed that they experienced nurturing and protective feelings such as safe, secured, cared for, friendly, kind and love:

"I feel safe and secured when I'm at surf school"

Others shared feelings of relaxation, such as calm, in peace and relaxed. One participant expressed that they felt confident at SiyaSurfasana, which highlights the intervention's impact on developing a healthy self-concept.



Take-5 deep breathing

Photo cred: Ash Heese

"Feel so in peace, love, cared ... I feel safe and I learn a lot of things like to help and have confidence of who I am"

4) Draw SiyaSurfasana

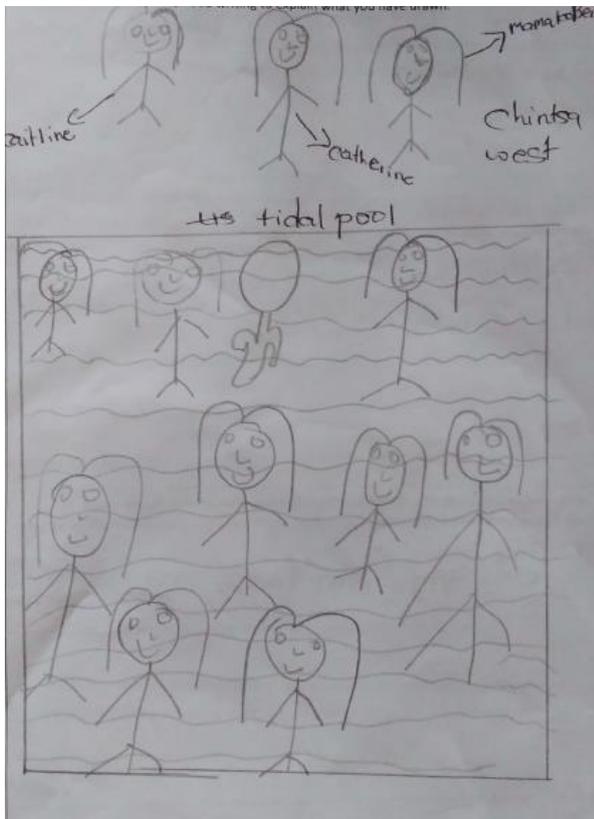
The drawings done by the girls told stories of SiyaSurfasana as a group of nine girls (Pictures 1, 2 & 3), which shows group cohesion and belonging; of the practices (swimming in the tidal pool - Picture 3); of the positive affirmation received by the Sisi's ("Wow guys" - Picture 5); how they feel about SiyaSurfasana ("I love you SiyaSurfasana" - Picture 4) and of impactful events namely the shark encounter (Picture 6) and the visit by the Wave Alliance's, Ash Heese (Picture 7).



Picture 1: Drawing of the nine participants



Picture 2: Drawing of the nine participants



Picture 3: Drawing of the nine participants and three Sisi's in the tidal pool



Picture 4: Participant drawing of how she feels about SiyaSurfasana

Participant subjective psychological well-being

The WHO-5 outputs subjective psychological well-being as a percentage with 100% indicating highest well-being. When comparing the pre- and post-tests for all participants, we see there is a drop in the average well-being (see Figure 2 below). We were not able to determine if the drop was significant through statistical analysis as anonymity prevented the pairing of the individual's pre-test and post-test. A very small subset could however be paired (the pre- and post-test of two participants, $n=2$) and showed an increase in average well-being with a medium effect size ($r = 0.32$). This finding must however be viewed with this very small sample in mind. Furthermore, due to the small sample size the change remained statistically non-significant ($p = 0.655$).

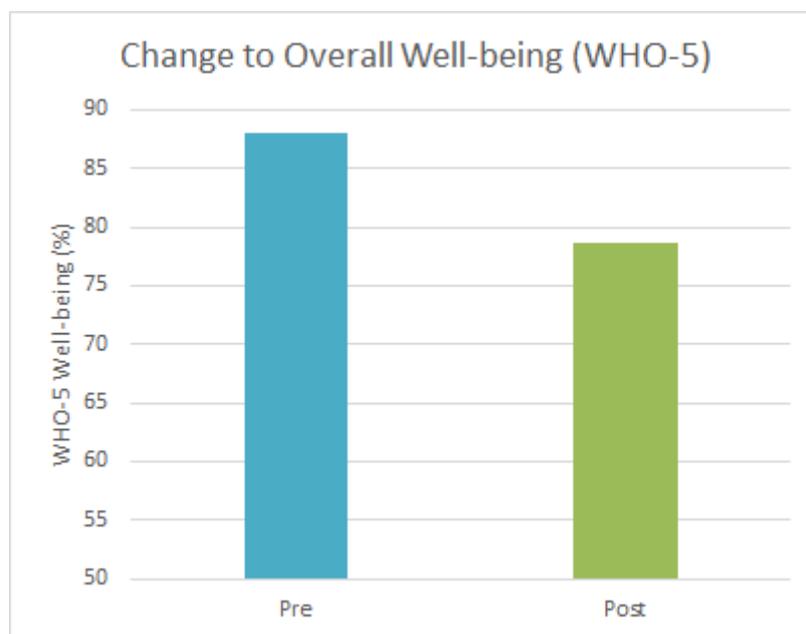


Figure 1: Participants average WHO-5 well-being score before and after the SiyaSurfasana surf therapy intervention

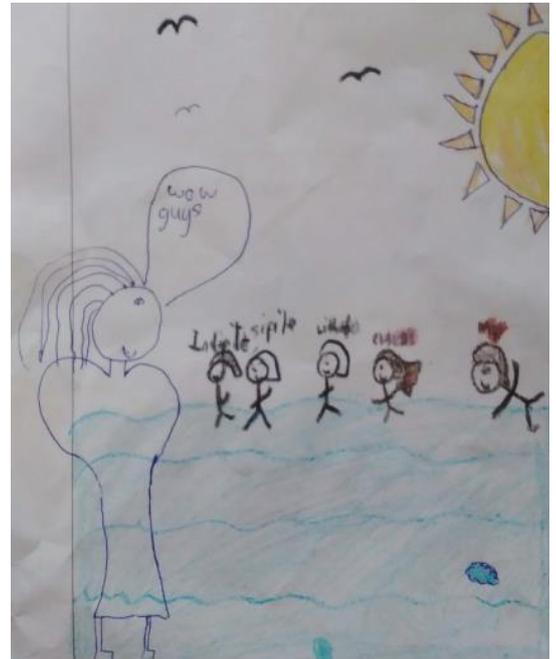
There are a few contextual items to note about the results from the whole group when exploring them. The baseline for participants was extremely high (88%), well above expected national averages for this population. It may be that the participants responded in a way that they believed the SiyaSurfasana surf coaches/mentors (Sisi's) wanted them to (known as response bias). The drop in well-being could represent the participants being more honest about their well-being having built up positive relationships with the Sisi's. The drop could also be as a result of an increased understanding of the concepts explored in the WHO-5. Finally, although the questions were translated into isiXhosa; written in both isiXhosa and English; explained in isiXhosa; and individual support was provided by a first language isiXhosa speaker; it is possible that there was a misunderstanding of the questions themselves, and the answering process. Further exploration of baseline collection and contextually sensitive tools for measuring well-being may be warranted.

Participants' social support networks

The possibility that the participants had built up honest and positive relationships with the Sisi's is supported by the exploration into the participants' social networks (Figure 2 and 3) below.

It is notable at baseline (pre-test) that none of the participants saw their surf coaches/mentors as individuals for support and help, despite the girl's having engaged with some of them before. There were however multiple reports of surf mentors fulfilling this role in the post-test. This could suggest that there was both response bias in the pre-test, as well as the possibility that SiyaSurfasana provided a safe space and framework for these relationships to be honestly and openly strengthened.

Overall, the social support data seems to show an increase in individuals included in the participants' social support networks. This is both in terms of individuals who provide encouragement (Figure 2) and individuals who provide support when the participants are upset (Figure 3). Social support is well established as a key mediator to mental health and this expansion during the intervention is an important finding.



Picture 5: Participant acknowledging positive affirmation from the Sisi's

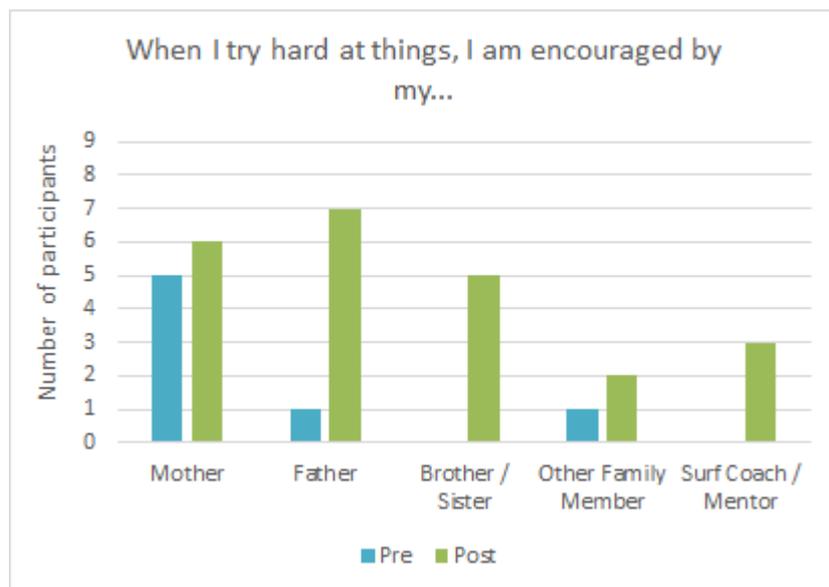


Figure 2: Individuals identified by participants' as giving support and encouragement before and after the SiyaSurfasana surf therapy intervention.

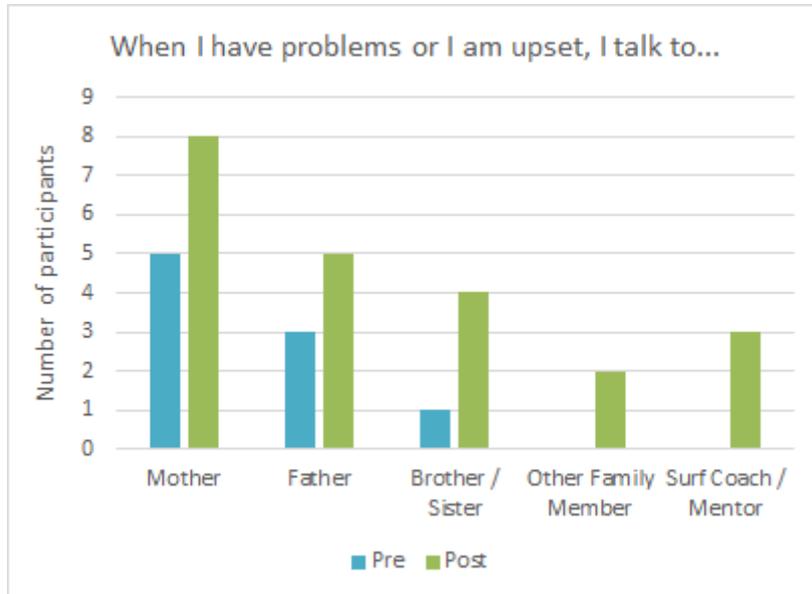


Figure 3: Individuals identified by participants’ as providing support when they have problems or feel upset.

Participant satisfaction

Participants clearly valued the SiyaSurfasana intervention with 100% of participants wanting to continue with SiyaSurfasana next year and 100% of participants reporting that they had fun. Eight of the nine participants felt that they made new friends, which reinforces the perception of the intervention increasing a sense of belonging and connectedness. One of the reasons why the ninth participant may not have felt that she made new friends is because she was already friends with all of the participants.

It is also notable that all participants reported feeling safe at the intervention despite safety threats of sharks and COVID-19 (see Section 7 - Challenges for further discussion). This is also an important metric as young girls in South Africa can face a range of obstacles to personal and emotional safety. Having access to a safe space such as that offered by SiyaSurfasana is an important contributor to their mental health.

Feedback from the parents/caregivers and teachers (stakeholders)

1) Changes in participants as observed by their parents/caregivers

Six of the nine parents/caregivers provided feedback through the questionnaire. The parents/caregivers perceived an increase in behaviours such as sharing, caring and decreased jealousy. One parent/caregiver shared that their child can now “*play with others peacefully [and] is no longer aggressive*”. These behaviour changes suggest that participants have learnt certain social and emotional skills through the programme and transferred to their everyday lives. Other behaviour changes include being serious about school, conscious about time, and not coming home late. These could indicate an increase in positive lifestyle choices as a result of SiyaSurfasana.



One parent/caregiver shared that their child is always keen to attend SiyaSurfasana while another wrote:

“I keep hearing her encouraging other girls to join SiyaSurfasana”

This could suggest that the participant is excited about SiyaSurfasana, is able to recognise the value of the initiative for themselves, and generously wants others to share in the experience with them.

Five out of the six parents/caregivers commented on their child’s behaviour at home, expressing that participant have become more well behaved, disciplined and more inclined to listen to their parents. The parents/caregivers seem to really value this aspect, as one put it:

“behaviour is more good now, thank you for playing a good role assisting me as a parent”



Taking turns talking and listening

Photo cred: @gareth_hubbard

2) Changes in participants as observed by their teachers

We received feedback from seven teachers from two of the three schools at which the girls attended. Four of the responses were not used as they did not answer the questions (despite the respondents being invited to reply in either isiXhosa and English language and the questions being written in both languages and explained in English). The answers received could be due to overcrowding in the school which makes it difficult to differentiate between the learners, and notice individual change.



The remaining teachers commented that the participants looked forward to going surfing and that they enjoyed sharing their experiences with them and their friends. The teachers also perceived an increase in confidence and happiness which is aligned to the aims of this surf therapy intervention. Lastly, an increase in energy and concentration was perceived by one of the teachers and explained in the quote below:

“ [Participant] showed a huge difference after attending a few lessons. She was a lethargic child that had to be encouraged to sit up straight to get her work done before surfing. She rarely completed her work in class. Now she sits up straight and finishes all her work and has enthusiasm. A great program“

3) Parent/caregiver feedback on how SiyaSurfasana could improve and if they would recommend us to others

Throughout the year, the SiyaSurfasana team needed to change plans and approach due to a number of different considerations including the participants’ age, a fatal human-shark interaction at Chintsa East, COVID-19 and Sisi turn-over (please see Section 7 - Challenges for more information). Despite this one parent/caregiver shared:

“to me everything is going smoothly”

Remaining recommendations centered around continuing with SiyaSurfasana into the future. Indeed, five of the six respondents said (either explicitly or implicitly) that they would recommend SiyaSurfasana to others. The parents/caregivers saw immediate benefits of the programme focusing on safety:

“I so wish that next year you can take more girls so that they are also safe”

“I would love to encourage other parents about SiyaSurfasana, because it opens children's minds. If kids can always attend SiyaSurfasana seriously they will be safe from all the bad things that happen in the village. We are happy and wish you to continue with the good work you are doing. Thanks”

As well as future benefits with regards to future skills (which could be employable):

“I would love you to develop [...] SiyaSurfasana so that in years to come our girls can also be good coaches in Ocean”



4) Teacher feedback on how SiyaSurfasana could improve and if they would recommend us to others

One respondent suggested that we provide swimming lessons for those who can't swim so that they can also join the programme. This feedback, although possibly not fully aware of what the programme entails, provides support to our approach which does focus on developing swimming skills (ordinarily primarily at the beginning of the year). Remaining feedback from the teachers was supportive of the initiative:

“From what I can tell you are doing a fantastic job and it is making such a positive impact on the children in the programme. I would definitely recommend it to others”



Photo cred: @gareth_hubbard

7. Challenges and things to be done differently

The participants' age

The participants ranged from nine to 12 years of age. Although it is a wide age gap, the difference was not perceived to have a negative impact. In fact, one of the older girls often provided valuable support (e.g. at the end of the session at the Soup Kitchen). The level of the curriculum and the age of the participants was however not always aligned in terms of both content and the duration of attention required. This led us to adapt the approach and discussions used in implementing the curriculum. For



future interventions using the Waves for Change curriculum, we would target girls around the 12 year old age group. This could however necessitate the securing of bigger sized wetsuits.

Retaining Sisi's

As discussed, we started with three local young Xhosa women and ended with a fourth (Temie Makefungana - one of SiyaSurfasana's advisors and the founder/manager of the Chintsa East Soup Kitchen). Two of the initial three had school commitments (Grades 11 and 12) and the third secured full time employment. Their decisions were fully supported and celebrated. Finding and retaining suitable young people is a challenge in Chintsa East (as experienced over the years by a number of projects). Going forward we have been in discussions with a locally based youth development initiative which has full time employed youth who could be involved with SiyaSurfasana in the Sisi role.



Engaging Mama's

As with the Sisi's the Mama's have important commitments both in their professional and home lives. Coordinating a Saturday when we would all be available was often difficult. The intention of working with Xhosa women from Chintsa East was to help ensure that the intervention approach and content was relevant, and not counter, to both the community where the participants come from and their culture. Many insights were gained, with a lot of care and laughter. However, this aspect could definitely be deepened and strengthened. Future interventions would need to investigate how to best facilitate such processes.

Evaluation timing

Due to uncertainties surrounding COVID, the Well-Being Index World Health Organisation-Five (WHO-5) post-test was brought forward, and the participants were asked to provide their feedback in pictures and words in the session directly after the WHO-5 (see Section 5 below for information on the evaluation methods). The session containing the WHO-5 was also directly after the second Mantra session where the participants were encouraged to make themselves a small poster of all the behaviours they would like to commit to going forward. The participants shared verbally, in writing and in energy that these three sessions back-to-back was not enjoyable. Future interventions should ensure that these activities are more spread out.

Creatures great and small

This year, the Sardine Run (bringing fish, birds, dolphins, whales and sharks closer to our shores over the winter months) came early. In mid-April 2021, one of Chintsa's bodyboarders went missing while in the water. Only his bodyboard bearing bite marks of a very large great white shark was found. It was decided in consultation with the parents/caregivers and advisors to continue our sessions at the Chintsa West tidal pool. Here swimming, surfboard and ocean skills were strengthened. During this period, SiyaSurfasana also received *Stop-the-bleed* training and included in our beach first aid kit the equipment to deal with shark bites. We only returned to the open ocean after Chintsa's surf community in August/September 2021. For future interventions, the tidal pool will be used during the high-risk Sardine run winter months. Funds will need to be secured to cover the transportation of participants to and from the tidal pool.

As with everyone globally - the COVID-19 pandemic resulted in us needing to pause sessions during the heavier lock-down sessions.



Picture 6: Drawing showing how present sharks were in the participants minds

Non-profit organisational structure

The organisation under which SiyaSurfasana was established is an umbrella NPO with several largely-autonomous initiatives operating underneath it. Over the past couple of years, the organisation has been experiencing lack of coherent leadership and cohesive direction from the board. In the end, SiyaSurfasana made the difficult decision to step out of the organisation, leaving it without a formal NPO structure. Even within the NPO structure, the fundraising, social media and administrative roles needed to be filled by the SiyaSurfasana facilitation team which proved to be difficult given their other professional paid and unpaid commitments. Establishing an independent NPO would require additional time commitments.

Going forward however, we would be able to operate as we did this year (2021) with a new group of participants if we are able to secure funds for the new cohort's swimsuits, larger wetsuit sizes (if needed) and transport to and from the tidal pool during the Sardine Run months. Furthermore, contributions in terms of time and skill would be valuable in supporting the establishment of a NPO.

8. Conclusion

Participants felt that SiyaSurfasana was a safe and fun space for them where they experienced a sense of belonging and learnt social and emotional skills to develop healthy relationships and keep calm. All of this supports mental and emotional health and well being. The caregivers and teachers (members of the community) felt it was a beneficial programme.

Challenges faced by the programme and steps that were/can be taken to mitigate these include:

- The developmental stage of most of the participants (measured by age) was not yet aligned to the level of the curriculum used. Adaptations were needed to be made. Future interventions would target the oldest age group at the Soup Kitchen (around 12 years of age). This will require funding or donations of bigger sized wetsuits
- The increased risk of human-shark interactions during the Sardine Run means that future interventions should make use of the tidal pool during these winter months of high activity. This would require funding to transport participants to and from the tidal pool as it is too far to walk.
- Increased COVID-19 lockdown levels during the year resulted in SiyaSurfasana suspending the sessions during those periods.



Photo cred: @gareth_hubbard



- Retaining Sisi's proved to be difficult due to their completely understandable schooling and employment commitments. Future interventions aim to partner with initiatives who have full-time youth available to work on such projects.
- Finding the time and correct approach to engage the Mama's (advisory committee) proved to be tricky. Future discussion will likely be more easily facilitated through strengthened relationships built over the year.
- The participant WHO-5 post-test and the questionnaire were held over two consecutive sessions and just after a session which had a writing activity in it (My Mantra). This resulted in too much time with paper and pens. Future interventions should ensure they are more spread out.
- NPO organisational challenges linked with time constraints proved to be an obstacle. There is however potential for collaboration that can be explored.

Despite this, we would be able to sustain the initiative during 2022 with a new cohort of girls if we are able to secure funds for swimsuits (approx. R2 000), bigger wetsuits (approx. R6 000) and transport (approx. R3 600). The sale of second hand surf boards and new (small) children's swimsuits donated to us will contribute to the overall amount required. Support around the establishment of a NPO would also be valuable for long term sustainability.

Finally, we would like to say enkosi, tack and thank you for the generous support from the Wave Alliance team and the funders - Swedish Postcode Lottery Foundation - without which none of the change would have been possible.



Picture 7: Very impactful visit by Ash Heese from the Wave Alliance team