

4LIFE FACILITATORS

Strengthening the resilience of vulnerable children

For three years the concept of 4Life Facilitators was tested by members of the STOP AIDS NOW! South African partnership. This pamphlet shares what we have learned about the impact of this work. We believe that 4Life Facilitators, can be an important part of creating a South Africa – and a world – where children are able to grow in to their very best possibility. We therefore encourage you to implement and support this simple and cost-effective intervention, both in your own community and as a national approach to child well-being.

Many children in South Africa live in environments that do not adequately support their well-being. The combined effects of poverty, disease and a lack of access to basic services undermine the solid ground that children need to stand on. Additionally, many children spend a large part of their childhood without parents or proper adult supervision. Some are orphaned. Others' parents work in cities far away from home or are employed for long hours as farm labourers. As family structures have broken down there are an increasing number of single parent and child-headed households.

The result is children who far too often suffer physical deprivation – hunger, illness, physical and sexual abuse – as well as emotional stress. They experience feelings such as loneliness, despair, anger and guilt – emotions that they are ill-equipped to navigate by themselves.

I stay with my aunt and little brother in Luckau village. It is a thirty minute walk to my school. My aunt does not work. My older sister passed away in 2007 and my mom died in 2005 when I was eight years old. I don't know my dad.

Every day I wake up at 5am and wash myself and eat breakfast of tea and bread at home. At 7am I leave for school after doing my chores. I live in a shack. We get food from the welfare and sometimes other families give us money for electricity. I attend the drop-in centre after school for a meal but this is only during the week. Sometimes it is more difficult to get food on the weekends. We have a garden at home but no money to buy seeds to plant.

When I am big I want to buy a tombstone for my mom and also a house for my aunt and brother.

(facts slightly altered to protect the privacy of the child)



4Life Facilitators help children to access services and engage them in positive activities that **promote well-being**.



The concept of 4Life Facilitators is rooted in a deep commitment to promoting the well-being of children in South Africa. It does this by reaching children where they spend most of their time – in schools and communities – and providing them with opportunities to experience joy and self-expression. At the same time, it uses these interactions with children to identify individuals in need of support and to link them and their families to the services they require.



4Life Facilitators was a programme of the STOP AIDS NOW! South African Partnership. Participating organisations included Save the Children UK (SCUK), the Catholic Institute of Education (CIE), OneVoice South Africa, the South African Scout Association, Twilight Children, Targeted Aids Interventions, God's Golden Acre and Stellenbosch University.

STOP AIDS NOW! is a partnership between Aids Fonds and four Dutch organisations which provide international development aid. For more information visit <http://www.stopaidsnow.org>

What is a 4LIFE FACILITATOR?

4Life Facilitators are responsible people who are passionate about supporting the children living in their community. They do this through organising activities that promote child well-being and by identifying children who need support and referring them to relevant services. 4Life Facilitators do not replace or replicate existing services. They play a linking role – helping to build and strengthen a local safety net of services for children and families.

Some organisations have found that young people can play this role exceptionally well. The title – ‘4Life Facilitator’ – reflects their positive energy and empathy.

“I believe that children have a right to colour, music, dance and happiness – and they so often do not have any of that in their lives. Young facilitators can offer them some of their exuberance, energy and enthusiasm. They can give children, who often live in a context where things are difficult, positive energy.”

Lynette Mudekanye, Save the Children UK

What do 4LIFE FACILITATORS do?

“We are the eyes, ears and mouths of our communities”

Mandla Ndaba, Twilight Children 4Life Facilitator

Organisations have used the 4Life Facilitators in many different contexts – rural and urban, community based or school based. In general they:

- Organise safe and child-friendly activities and discussions where children and youth can express themselves, develop their skills and talents and be supported to make informed choices and decisions.
- Build relationships with individual children and youth.
- Identify specific children and youth who need support and link them, and their families, to the services they require.
- Strengthen networks of care for children in communities by collecting and sharing information about services, resources and issues affecting children. 4Life Facilitators can act as a link between children and teachers, between children and parents and between children and organisations and services in the broader community.

“While the facilitator’s job is to link children to networks of care, they also develop an individual relationship with children. They have time to get to know an individual child. This is very powerful. Often the 4Life Facilitators can help a child make sense of the very complicated life circumstances they find themselves in.”

Lynette Mudekanye, Save the Children UK



4Life Facilitators from the South African Scout Association motivate school children to work in a food garden

School-based 4Life Facilitators

Schools are a natural home for 4Life Facilitators as they provide an effective way to reach large numbers of young people. Schools can be found in the most remote communities and are accessible to the majority of children. No other government service reaches as many young people in South Africa as education.

The Catholic Institute for Education has introduced 4Life Facilitators in four of its schools. They work as part of a reference group which is made up of the principal, teachers and other local stakeholders. Save the Children UK uses 4Life Facilitators in a similar way, placing one young man and one young woman within the Site Based Support Team.

In both these projects 4Life Facilitators assist schools in identifying individual children who need support and linking them to relevant social services and government departments. They support the school staff and lead community outreach initiatives by conducting home visits. They organise extra-mural activities such as drama, sport and homework activities and are active in setting up children’s groups in the schools. They support projects such as school gardens and feeding schemes.



A member of the local Child Care Forum doing homework supervision

Teachers can also be 4Life Facilitators. The Adolescent Project of the Department of Obstetrics and Gynaecology of Stellenbosch University trained teachers to implement their life orientation curriculum. With ongoing training and support, these teachers are able to support adolescents through the process of developing a realistic self-image, building self-esteem and making decisions about sexuality and sexual health.

Although 4Life Facilitators can be based within a single school, they can also be used to implement a specific programme in a cluster, or grouping, of schools. For example, OneVoice South Africa trained 18 young people to help set up youth clubs in Secondary schools as a way of complementing their Life Skills and Sexual Reproductive Health work.

Dear Miss Ngcobo,

I'm writing this letter to thank you for the information that you gave us. Because you are that kind of person who is easy to talk to and easy to ask questions, I [would] like to tell you that you are a good example to us. We hope we never disappointed you. I learnt much from Onevoice. You are the person who has love and who is patient. The information that you gave us we don't get from our parents. If you ask them about HIV and AIDS they tell you: "What do you know about that? You are still young to know those things."

We thank you very much about the knowledge that you gave us. Now I trust that I can even teach other people about how to prevent HIV and AIDS and how to live with HIV people.

Letter from a Grade 8 learner to a 4Life Facilitator in KwaZulu Natal



Gifts 4Peace - young scouts involved in community projects

Community-based 4Life Facilitators

While schools are an effective place to locate 4Life Facilitators, it is also possible to utilise 4Life Facilitators in a community context. The South African Scout Association used this approach to enhance their programme by training existing Field Officers as 4Life Facilitators. They gave them the skills and expertise to identify children in need of support, link them to services and involve them in scouting activities.

"Since I came back from this [4Life Facilitator's] training, we are visiting children who are living with HIV and Aids to support them. We are [implementing the programme] Food for Life. We visit the children monthly and teach them some of the Scouting games and songs."

Field Officer, South African Scout Association



OneVoice training workshop to set up youth clubs

You can use **4Life Facilitators** to **strengthen** your existing projects.



The organisation God's Golden Acre also used 4Life Facilitators in a community context. They trained 17 members of their Young Zulu Warriors choir and 13 local youth leaders as 4Life Facilitators. These facilitators run a life skills programme for rural youth using song, dance and theatre. As part of their work, they identify children in need of support and refer them to social services and schools.

Similarly, Targeted Aids Interventions identified six young men who were already involved in their community projects, as 4Life Facilitators. While they already had a depth of experience, they received additional training in advocacy, lobbying skills and communication. In addition to their usual activities, they became involved in researching the content of a life skills programme being developed for local youth.

Twilight Children too, used 4Life Facilitators to enhance the life skills programme it runs in schools, shelters for street children and in the inner-city community of Johannesburg. They found that training young people as 4Life Facilitators encouraged their peers to attend workshops and programmes, and were more willing to come to the Centre to collect condoms. Since the introduction of 4Life Facilitators, Twilight has noticed that more young people want to be trained as peer educators.

How can 4LIFE FACILITATORS strengthen your programme?

We have found that 4Life Facilitators add value to the programmes they work in. You can use them to re-energise your programmes and make them more effective, passionate and responsive to the needs of children.

“Although the youth facilitators were not the crucial issue in the design of our Caring Schools programme, it became clear in the implementation that they were “the heartbeat” of this programme and made an enormous difference to the level of care and support that a caring school can give to individual children.”

From SCUK, Caring Schools Report 2008

They build relationships between teachers and learners

In some schools, Site Based Support Teams have been revitalised and given new focus as 4Life Facilitators refer cases to them. Through participating in home visits, teachers have come to better understand the realities of their students. Where teachers have not been able to visit homes, 4Life Facilitators have helped them to better understand the community in which the school is situated as well as the home lives of their students. Based on this new understanding, teachers become motivated to start clothing banks, feeding schemes and other initiatives to address the needs of their learners. This positively affects their relationship to the children and to their own work.

“The 4Life Facilitators in our school helped us to link the schools to the community. Now parents and children talk more openly about their problems. We now know about children who are living alone at home and if there are sick people at home”.

Mr Majomane, principal, Makeke Primary, Limpopo

They strengthen the resilience of children

4Life Facilitators can give children a sense of hope, joy and of possibility. Through activities and programmes that focus on child wellbeing and provide direct support and referrals to services, children can discover their own resilience. This resilience does not only help them to succeed in school, it helps them to succeed in life.

Using **4Life Facilitators** to strengthen the resilience of children can help them to **succeed in life.**



They help children make positive choices

Through their interaction with the children, individually and in group activities, 4Life Facilitators can help children see their options and make positive choices for themselves. As children become more empowered, their behaviour changes. Schools have noted improved attendance, a lower dropout rate and improved academic performance.

“I enjoy what I am doing. Especially because young ones were not aware of their rights and they were treated badly sometimes by family members. But now they know their rights. We have managed to identify learners that did not have uniforms and money for transport and school fees and we provided these things to them. In some cases this has reduced absenteeism and school dropout.

If I had the power to change things I would encourage all schools to have 4Life Facilitators.”

4Life Facilitator, Limpopo

They open new possibilities through child participation

Through the establishment of children’s groups, 4Life Facilitators support children to actively participate in creating a more caring environment for themselves and for those around them. Children join these groups on a voluntary basis. Supported by teachers and 4Life Facilitators, they hold meetings, share their dreams and find ways – however small – to bring those dreams to life. These children’s groups are encouraged to have a strong ethos of caring and get involved in outreach programmes and HIV awareness campaigns. In this way, children take the lead in identifying and addressing important issues, and gain valuable life skills in the process.



Once a month the Passionates children’s group from St Paul’s Secondary, visits a home for disabled children where they play with the children and cook for them

How can you use 4LIFE FACILITATORS most effectively?

The right match

4Life Facilitators are most effective where there is capable and committed leadership and management. It is therefore important to determine whether your school or organisation will be able to use facilitators effectively. Likewise, 4Life Facilitators need to be carefully screened. They need to be able to fit into the organisations they are working in and remain motivated, responsive and energetic. And they need to understand their limitations.

What should 4Life Facilitators NOT do?

- Be expected to provide professional intervention.
- Do administrative work for teachers or other members of staff.
- Do formal teaching in the classroom.
- Judge, counsel, dictate or instruct.
- Become too involved.
- Make choices for children.

Training

Well-structured, high-quality training for 4Life Facilitators is vital to their ability to make a positive impact on young people. The training needs to be regularly updated to equip them with current information.

To be effective, training of 4Life Facilitators should include the following:

- Key concepts in child and youth care work
- Promoting and upholding the rights of children – including child participation
- Understanding ethics, ethical choices and ethical behaviour
- Basic communication and interpersonal skills
- Self development and caring for yourself – physically, emotionally and spiritually
- Team work and cooperation
- Understanding HIV and AIDS and the importance of knowing your status
- Programming and project management

Support

You will need to give 4Life Facilitators structured and ongoing support and supervision, including debriefing to help them to process the painful stories that they hear so often. To some extent this can be provided by training organisations, but on a day-to-day basis support needs to be provided by the schools and organisations they work in. Support also needs to be given in terms of resources that help them to do their work. This includes sufficient remuneration, transport, access to communication and materials.

“For me, becoming a [4Life] Facilitator has been a way of giving back to the community. As a teenager I lived in the streets and Twilight Children helped me. The 4Life Facilitator training helped me improve my skills. It taught me about boundaries and about not judging the people I work with. They also taught me to always speak to everyone in a way that they understand. I got more information about HIV and human trafficking.

As a result of the training I have managed to travel and get to know other facilitators so that we can help each other.”

Mandla Ndaba, 4Life Facilitator Twilight Children’s Home

Motivation

Making time to acknowledge the work and dedication of 4Life Facilitators is an important part of keeping them energised and motivated. Providing opportunities to share ideas through organising exchange visits between programmes can also be motivating. Facilitators gain new ideas and inspiration for their work. Finally, it is important that the position of 4Life Facilitator realistically leads to other opportunities. 4Life Facilitators must be actively assisted to move into more challenging positions, and to undertake advanced studies, as part of a long-term career path.

Publicity

4Life Facilitators can play an important role in advocating for changes in policy and practice that support child well-being. To do this, they should be supported to document and present evidence related to the challenges and impact of various interventions.

Sustainability

Although this concept has been tried in South Africa it can be useful in a variety of contexts and countries. Structures that are well positioned to use and to champion 4Life Facilitators include Non Governmental Organisations, Community-based Organisations, Faith-based Organisations, schools, government departments and the private sector (for funding through their corporate responsibility programmes).

For 4Life Facilitators to be sustainable, this approach should ideally be formalised as part of an existing government programme.

We encourage you to advocate for the placement of 4Life Facilitators in communities and schools in South Africa, and use them to strengthen your own programmes.



USEFUL RESOURCES AND ORGANISATIONS



This publication is a product of STOP AIDS NOW! which raises funds for HIV and AIDS projects in developing countries; obtains (inter-)national political and public support for the efforts against HIV and AIDS; innovates or redefines strategies to improve the response to HIV and AIDS, and meet the needs of people affected.

Visit <http://www.stopaidsnow.org/downloads> for a range of resources on HIV and AIDS and related issues.

Members of the STOP AIDS NOW! South African Partnership who have used 4Life Facilitators in their programmes:



Website: <http://www.cie.org.za>

The Catholic Institute of Education is mandated by the Southern African Catholic Bishops' Conference to serve a network of Catholic schools throughout South Africa. They have used 4Life Facilitators in their commitment to addressing the needs of the most vulnerable and marginalized members of school communities.



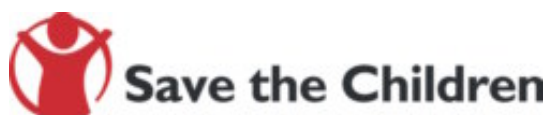
Website: <http://www.godsgoldenacre.org.uk>

God's Golden Acre Khayelihle is a non-profit making charity involved in the care of children who have been orphaned or abandoned because of HIV/AIDS related illness and violence. The project is located in the South African province of KwaZulu Natal, in the valley of a 1000 hills.



Website: <http://www.onevoice.org.za>

OneVoice South Africa is a non-governmental organisation which uses innovative and creative ways of actively involving young people in HIV and AIDS prevention. Their schools programme provides young people with a platform to discuss and address HIV and AIDS, life skills, sexual reproductive health, gender and human rights issues.



Website: <http://www.savethechildren.org.uk>

Save the Children UK is a children's rights organisation committed to a child's rights approach. They use 4Life Facilitators in the schools they work in.



Website: <http://www.scouting.org.za>

The aim of the South African Scout Association is to encourage the spiritual, mental, social and physical development of boys, girls and young adults in achieving their full potentials as individuals, as responsible citizens and as members of their local, national and international communities by developing their character; training them in citizenship; and developing their spiritual, social, mental and physical qualities.



Website: <http://www.arhp.co.za>

The Family Planning and Reproductive Health Care Unit in the Department of Obstetrics and Gynaecology of Stellenbosch University, aims to create and sustain an environment - with a specific focus on reproductive health and HIV - within which knowledge can be discovered, shared, and applied to the benefit of the community. They have therefore developed a sexuality education curriculum, Today's Choices, and are currently training and supporting Life Orientation teachers throughout the country.



Website: <http://www.targetedaids.co.za>

Targeted Aids Intervention strives to provide men and other target groups with appropriate information and skills (negotiation, decision-making etc) in STIs, HIV and AIDS and other health related issues by using a non-directive approach. This enables their clients and beneficiaries to design their own programs and make informed decisions.



Website: <http://www.twilightchildren.co.za>

Twilight Children is one of the largest and most specialised street children projects in Johannesburg. It provides a temporary shelter to accommodate boys living on the streets of Hillbrow. The organisation uses 4Life Facilitators to communicate with street children around the issues of HIV and AIDS and become a part of the inner city's regeneration process.