

The loveLife groundBREAKER and mpintshi programmes: harnessing youth leadership to define an HIV-free generation

1. About loveLife

loveLife is South Africa's HIV prevention campaign targeting, and implemented by, young people. Its aim is a fundamental shift in the sexual behaviour of 12 to 17 year-olds that would result in halving the new HIV infection rate for that group. It is an integrated multimedia, services, and outreach campaign, and is by-and-large implemented in its face-to-face component by 18 to 25 year-old volunteers who sign up for the loveLife mpintshi or groundBREAKER youth leadership programmes.

2. Service at loveLife

The concept of “service” is rarely referred to at loveLife, although it is at the core of its behaviour change model. As a brand-driven campaign centred on a set of core values (love, dignity, respect, shared responsibility, and healthy sexuality), loveLife does not encourage service participants to think of themselves as being in service to itself, or even to their peers (though this interpretation is common). Rather, participants are orientated around the idea of providing leadership for a “love life generation”. Altruism is an uncommon motive for serving as a groundBREAKER or mpintshi. Healthy self-interest, self-motivation, and self-esteem are key elements of the programme.

This presents a challenge to the programme designer. Leadership is hard to pin down. It is difficult – if not impossible – to create it through training. Instead it has to be identified, and nurtured. The service model at loveLife has evolved in response to this problem over the past eight years, and will evolve further in coming years.

3. Identifying leadership

a. Start-up phase: breaking new ground

Volunteers had been a part of loveLife since the first youth centres, called loveLife Y-Centres, were launched in 2000 and 2001. Initially volunteers were recruited by peer educators from the Planned Parenthood Association of SA (PPASA), at that time the consortium partner tasked with face-to-face programme implementation. Peer educators were paid a salary and volunteers received some branded clothing. They were largely unaligned with the loveLife campaign.

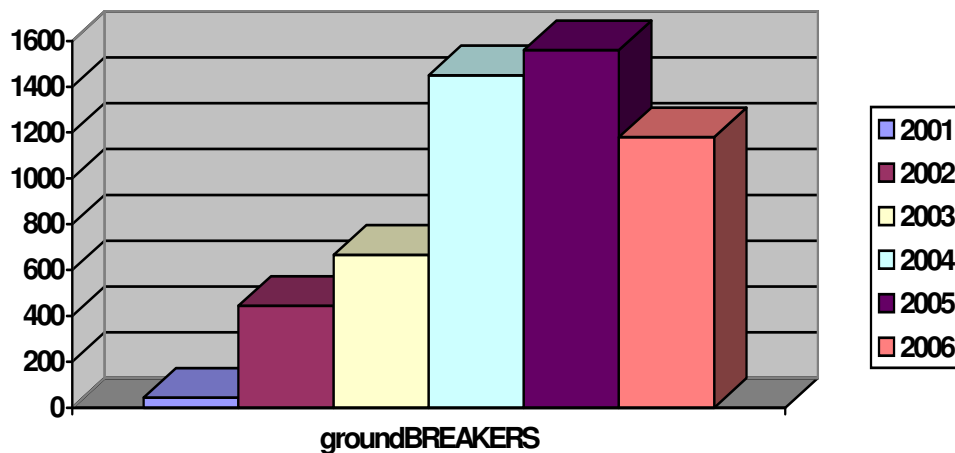
In 2000 a drive to formalise voluntarism as part of the loveLife campaign resulted in the birth of the Community Mobiliser Programme – dubbed the groundBREAKER programme the following year. It was a programme structure intended to reward and sustain (with a small stipend), brand (with loveLife gear), and train (with programme-specific training) the existing PPASA unpaid volunteers. Potential groundBREAKERS thus had to have been successful and committed unpaid volunteers before they could enter the more formal programme.

This principle – that participation in a structured service programme is contingent on proven, unblemished community voluntarism – is the key to the success of the groundBREAKER programme.

The same principle was employed during loveLife’s rapid expansion over the next six years. The loveLife Y-Centre model was extended from five to 11 communities by the end of 2001, 16 by the end of 2002, and will reach 18 by the end of 2007. loveLife franchises – community-based organisations that choose to partner with loveLife – reached 126 communities by 2003. A quality improvement programmatic partnership with the National Department of Health, the National Adolescent Friendly Clinic Initiative (NAFCI), ballooned from about 30 public clinics in 2002 to 350 in 2005. The same year saw a new programmatic drive in partnership with the National Department of Social Development, which rolled out loveLife to 250 new communities through what was called the loveLife Outlet model, a structured partnership with schools, clinics, and community-based organisation in marginalised communities across the country.

In each new community, volunteers already active are identified by the relevant local agency, and invited to join the groundBREAKER programme. The growth of the groundBREAKER programme thus tracks the forging of new community partnerships. For every Y-Centre, initially ten, and later (after 2005) eight groundBREAKERS are chosen; at every loveLife franchise, three (2002 – 2005) or two (2006 – present); at every NAFCI clinic two (2002 – 2005) or one (2006 – present); and at every loveLife Outlet two are chosen.

Figure 1: groundBREAKER recruitment per annum, 2001-2006



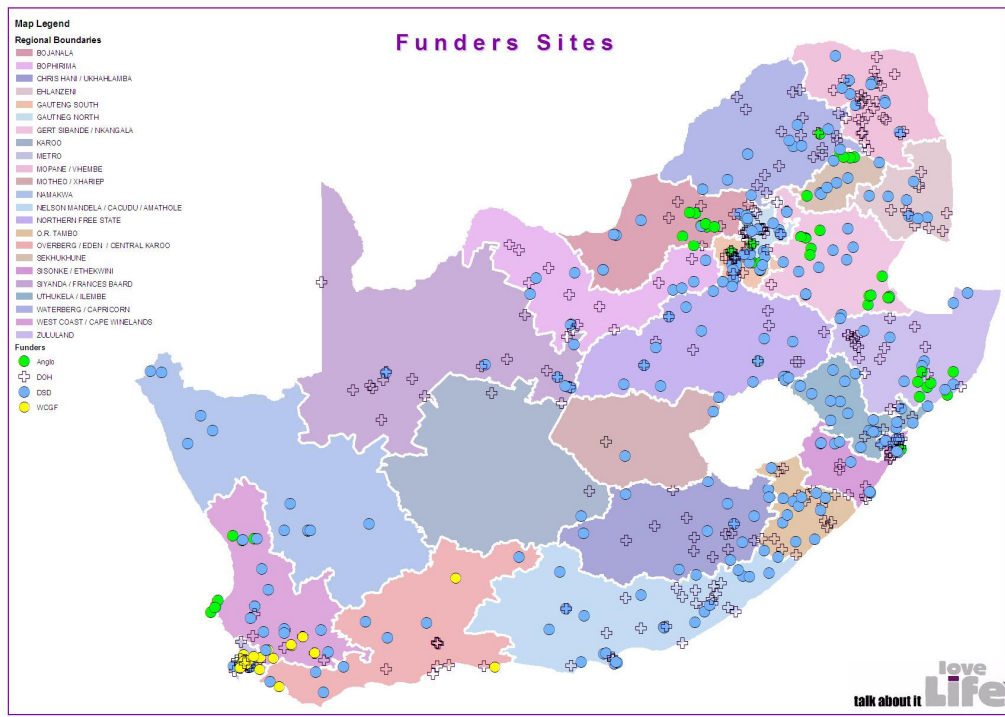
b. Full implementation

Over the past three years loveLife has recruited over 6,000 service participants every year. This is because after groundBREAKERS have been appointed and trained, their first task is to form a team around them that will assist with implementation. This team is made up of 18 to 25 year-olds who want to align themselves with the loveLife campaign, and serve as leaders for the “love life generation”. They are the friends of youth, colloquially referred to as “mpintshis”. Each groundBREAKER works with an average of five mpintshis.

Mpintshis currently do not receive a stipend. Their commitment to loveLife is thus rewarded only with a training package, some transport money, and loveLife-branded clothing. If in the future mpintshis were to be stipended service participants (a goal that is being worked towards at present by the loveLife team) this would present a new challenge: groundBREAKERS would not be able to recruit willy-nilly as the self-selection factor (where the fact that much is given for little reward filters out unsuitable candidates) would be taken away. If funding is found for mpintshi stipends, a large investment will also have to be made into regional and provincial administration of the programme, where now the focus is almost entirely on skills transfer and programmatic support.

At the end of every groundBREAKER cycle (which is usually 12 months, but in some implementation cycles has been extended to 18 months) the groundBREAKER intake is made exclusively from the pool of available mpintshis. If there are available and suitable mpintshis, outside candidates are not considered. The criteria for used selection are those outlined on the mpintshi scorecard, a performance measuring tool used regularly by the groundBREAKER to monitor programmatic performance of mpintshis.

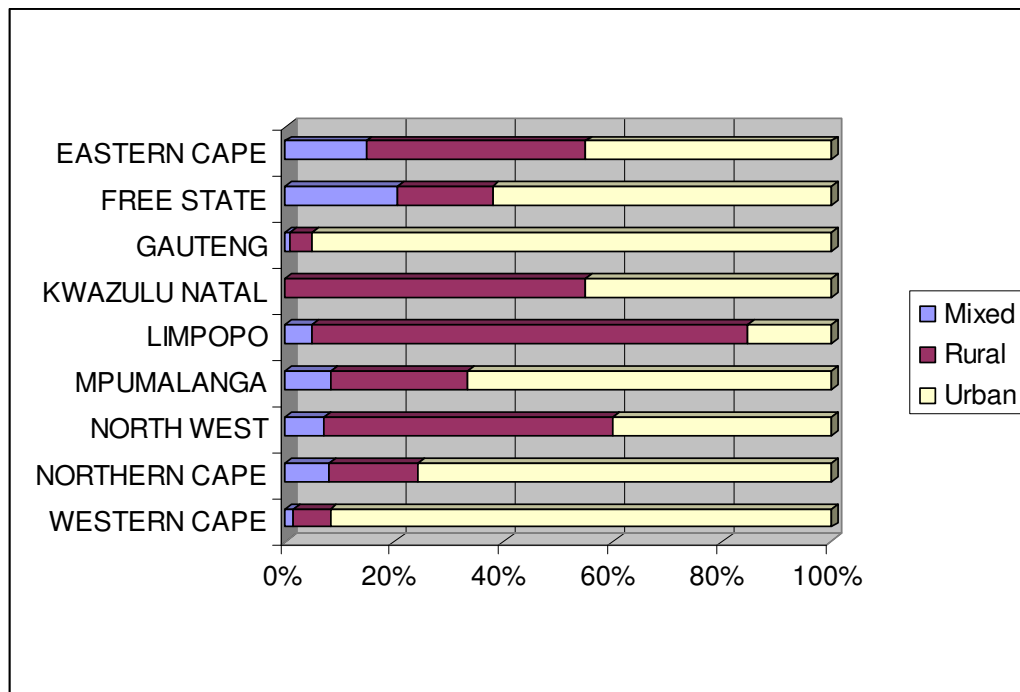
Figure 2: Distribution of groundBREAKER ~ mpintshi teams across SA, with key to show funder and site type



For an mpintshi to become a groundBREAKER, the following three tools are used:

1. Mpintshi score-cards (completed weekly by groundBREAKERS)
2. National computer-generated score (generated by national database based on the data that has been captured)
3. Peer assessor scores (done at year-end by other mpintshis and the Line Manager and Area Coordinator)

Figure 3: Rural-urban split of loveLife groundBREAKER ~ mpintshi teams



The loveLife monitoring team is currently analysing data from the loveLife database, the MRC’s geographic information system, and Census 2001 to try to establish our exact geo-type reach. The above image reflects rather general definitions of “rural” and “urban” and does not distinguish between urban informal and formal, and farm areas as opposed to rural. We thus need better analysis and data to say for sure what the current reach of loveLife’s groundBREAKER and mpintshi programme is.

4. loveLife programmes and services

a. loveLifestyle programmes

loveLifestyle is a systematic programme, specifically designed to structure the interaction between service participants and beneficiaries – i.e. 18-25 year-old groundBREAKERS and mpintshis interact with 12-17 year-old young people (in and out of school) using the following tools:

- Guide 2 ACTION 2010 (personal development programme with workbook and facilitators manual; 24 modules in 12 themes; facilitated in-school,

includes projects, activities surrounding loveLife's core messaging; ends in graduation for young person).

- Motivation (facilitated programme about goals, values, and choices; 21 modules; participants and facilitators manual; ends in graduation for young person).
- Body Ys: (fitness and health promotion – which in resourced schools and community centres includes Sports & Recreation programmes, healthy sexuality – 13 module intensive sexuality education, gender rights and access to adolescent health services, treatment literacy – this programme is especially important in the clinical setting where it forms an integral part of the NAFCI programme mentioned above).
- Creative problem solving (challenges aimed at enhancing innovation among young people; includes modular and competitive components.)
- Debating (promoting, interaction, addressing stereotypes and difficult life issues; includes modular and competitive components.)
- Cyber Ys (dedicated groundBREAKERS in Y-Centres run this programme, which is a computer training programme that integrates with Healthy Sexuality for its content; facilitated in computer laboratories by mpintshis).
- Radio Ys (dedicated groundBREAKERS in Y-Centres run this programme, which includes training in broadcasting for all volunteers, and “narrow-casts” to Y-Centre surrounds.

b. Outreach and events

- loveLife Games: SA's premier schools sports competition is based on groundBREAKER and mpintshi site-based activity; the Games create the incentive for on-site participation in activity-based programmes.
- Youth Festivals: The local competitive platform for activity-based programmes; provides the “feeder-system” for the loveLife Games.
- “Face it” sessions: These are run in addition to normal loveLifestyle programmes as sessions where implementers discuss / present topical issues based on a local imperative to participants.
- BORN FREE Dialogues: Every week all over the country parents and their children get together with loveLife to debate issues that affect their lives, their relationships, and their futures. Early and honest discussion of sex and relationships is an important contributing factor to future healthy sexual behaviour. Although loveLife's primary focus is teens, an important additional focus is the parents and guardians of teenagers and young children. BORN FREE Dialogues are designed to encourage parents to talk more openly to their children – and children to their parents – about sex and other difficult issues.

5. The three levels of support for groundBREAKERS and mpintshis

a. Training teams

loveLife has one national training team that aligns programme content and training methodology with loveLife's behaviour change communication model, relevant unit standards, and programmatic needs, as well as implementing training of trainers and

driving the national capacitation strategy. This team is located at loveLife's national office in Wierda Valley, Sandton, and has about 10 staff.

Provinces have either one or two provincial trainers, depending on the size of the province. These trainers are responsible for training of trainers, quality assurance at training events, and monitoring of programmatic progress. They work closely together with loveLife provincial managers to ensure that Regional Training Leaders are implementing the training model correctly.

loveLife has a dispersed training infrastructure of 23 regional offices, each with a Regional Training Leader and two Regional Trainers. This team is almost always on the move: they go from site to site doing on-site training, facilitating conference-style training, and doing on-the-spot problem-solving and programme implementation quality assurance. They are loveLife's main interface with groundBREAKERS and mpintshis.

The recruitment policy for trainers depends on the position. Regional trainers are very often ex-groundBREAKERS or mpintshis, or have worked closely in a voluntary capacity with them in the past. They are encouraged to have furthered their studies, but the real proof of their ability is in their understanding of loveLifestyle programmes and this is rated above other criteria.

National and provincial trainers and staff are qualified facilitators or moderators where necessary; some have specific social science or programme design-oriented skills. All training design is done in-house.

groundBREAKERS have one 14-day Core 1 training at the beginning of their service year, and one 7-day Core 2 training at the conclusion of their year.

In the interim, both groundBREAKERS and mpintshis attend ongoing on-site training facilitated by the regional teams that corresponds in outcomes to those of Core 1 and 2.

b. Line Management

Line managers are not employed by loveLife; they are generally employed by the partner organisation on-site. If groundBREAKERS are situated at a clinic, then very often the clinic manager will double up as a Line Manager.

The Line Manager's core function is to ensure that the groundBREAKER complies with the basic contractual requirements as laid down by loveLife and the partner agency. This includes signing a daily register, abiding by the code of conduct, and following all normal Human Resources procedures.

Line Managers do not report to loveLife staff, but are encouraged to pursue an open and friendly working relationship with the team. Regular meetings and training events for Line Managers help build these networks. The initial Memorandum of Understanding signed between loveLife and the prospective site contains a clause specifically relating to co-operation with loveLife; bad Line Management or no Line

Management will result in the termination of the relationship between loveLife and the site.

c. Area Coordinators

Area Coordinators are top-performing ex-groundBREAKERS who are recruited by regional teams to serve for a year (but this contract, unlike the groundBREAKER contract, can be extended to two or more years) as a groundBREAKER mentor.

Area Coordinators are essentially programme and personal development experts who “stay on” to help their area (usually 4-5 sites) perform well within the key performance areas expected by loveLife (outlined below). They are not however managers at all – they are facilitators and problem-solvers. The idea is not to have a hundred new bosses in loveLife, but to have a hundred new pillars of support.

Like regional training teams, Area Coordinators report directly to the provincial office. This arrangement can be taxing for provincial managers who are supposed to deal with all other aspects of the province’s functioning, and very often they delegate this responsibility to Regional Training Leaders.

6. Tools for managing groundBREAKERS and mpintshis

All five of the groundBREAKER and mpintshi key performance areas (KPA) have the outcome of increased outreach to the community, primarily through schools, enabling increased interaction with young people. The extent to which groundBREAKERS and mpintshis share KPAs and responsibility for outputs is detailed below.

a. KPA #1: Represent and market loveLife in local and surrounding communities

Service participants are expected to ably represent the loveLife campaign and market its services to local and surrounding communities. They are expected to develop community partnerships that will support the implementation of loveLifestyle programmes and outreach activities, such as recruiting adult members for the Local Organising Committee for BORN FREE Dialogues and other events. They are also expected to recognise and refer youth in need, and log all referrals made to other organisations in the community.

Outputs

- Increased participation of young people in loveLifestyle programmes and outreach activities.
- Parents, teachers, other community leaders support and encourage the implementation of loveLifestyle programmes and assist with recruiting participants, and team leaders.
- Increased participation of parents in BORN FREE Dialogues.
- Community-based Local Organising Committees assist with implementation of quarterly events, BORN FREE Dialogues, and graduations.
- Community database compiled of all organisations that address youth issues and needs

b. KPA #2: Recruit, lead and coordinate a team of young people to implement loveLifestyle programs

groundBREAKERS are expected to recruit a team of 5 mpintshis for implementation of loveLifestyle programs. They have to register these mpintshis, and ensure that their details are submitted to the province for capturing on the database. Mpintshis and groundBREAKERS are expected to mobilise vulnerable youth to participate in loveLifestyle programme and outreach activities. Both groundBREAKERS and mpintshis must attend the on-site training provided by the Regional training team. groundBREAKERS are responsible for coordinating weekly planning and support meetings with mpintshis and their line manager. They are expected to lead, coach, and support mpintshis, encouraging their personal development and recognising and rewarding their commitment to leadership. They are also expected to track the actual performance of mpintshis on the mpintshi scorecard against target performance, and communicate this to the team. All team members are expected to help the rest of their team-mates problem solve.

Primarily though, each groundBREAKER and mpintshi must implement at least one loveLifestyle programme in addition to the loveLifestyle Guide 2 ACTION 2010 (which is the core loveLifestyle programme) in schools and community-based organisations in the area, and their targets and performance evaluations are all linked in to these indicators. They are also expected to coordinate on-site leagues and tournaments in partnership with surrounding schools. They also identify popular youth activities and introduce them at site to attract young people. They compile monthly and quarterly work plans and reports, and submit monthly implementation statistics. Mpintshi score cards should be filled out weekly.

Outputs

- Established group of team leaders – including groundBREAKERS and on average five mpintshis per team.
- All mpintshis registered on the database (groundBREAKERS are already registered on the national payroll).
- An increased number of young people are participating in and graduating from loveLifestyle programmes.
- An increased number of young people are participating in new on-site activities, including sports and recreation leagues and events.
- Implementation data is being tracked at site level.
- Mpintshis are being recognised for outstanding achievement in programme implementation.

c. KPA #3: Uphold the loveLife brand

groundBREAKERS and mpintshis are expected to contribute to the maintenance and upkeep of the loveLife branded site, and to bring to the notice of regional teams any branding issues. They are also expected to behave at all times in a manner consistent with the core values of loveLife and the pledge they have signed. All groundBREAKERS and mpintshis are expected to wear clean loveLife-branded clothing while engaged in service work.

Outputs

- Well-maintained loveLife site/hub.
- Properly dressed service participants.
- Community-level brand integrity.

- d. **KPA #4:** Drive local HIV prevention campaign, organise local events and drive community-based HIV projects

groundBREAKERS and mpintshis are expected to drive the implementation of community-based youth festivals, BORN FREE Dialogues and “Face it” sessions (these are local debates held to facilitate community discussions around issues that drive the cycle of infection). They are also expected to run a quarterly youth festival for local teams (from the leagues they have started) to display talent and compete for entry into the regional loveLife games. They should also organise events around topical calendar days in order to and engage the community.

groundBREAKERS specifically are expected to assist with regional outreach activities, the loveLife Games, loveTrain, and loveTours events. They must also introduce new phases of loveLife’s media campaign to the community through schools, dialogues, “Face it” sessions, community and radio and newspapers. A key expectation here is the integration of loveLife national media tools (such as UNCUT magazine) with loveLifestyle and event implementation.

Outputs

- Two community-based festivals per year to provide young people with platforms for expression and competition.
- Two site-based BORN FREE Dialogues implemented every year.
- Young people, parents, and other stakeholders informed on and understand old and new loveLife campaign phases.
- Local organising committee and loveLife team assist with driving regional outreach activities when they occur in their community

- e. **KPA #5:** Drive personal development

A key part of service at loveLife is that service participants take ownership of their own development. They are expected to complete all “Passport to Success” (a personal development manual) exercises, and maintain a Portfolio of Evidence (groundBREAKERS only) in order to qualify with NQF level 4 credits. The keeping of a personal journal to document and reflect on personal growth, dreams and aspirations is encouraged. loveLife also offers them opportunities to join other programmes that will assist with their future career development.

Outputs

- groundBREAKERS have a complete portfolio of evidence, including all exercises associated with passport to success and all evidence of work completed while serving.
- groundBREAKERS and mpintshis are excited about their futures, and have made concrete plans for the following year.

7. Dealing with exceptions: pregnant groundBREAKERS

loveLife affirms that no groundBREAKER may be discriminated against or dismissed on account of pregnancy. Management recognizes that a supportive and caring response is an important factor in managing a groundBREAKER who is pregnant. Managers are encouraged to provide an environment of acceptance, and encourage the groundBREAKER to disclose their pregnancy as early as possible. They are also encouraged to demonstrate personal support and offer counselling to the groundBREAKER.

Their work environment is maintained as safe and healthy, and, where possible, the groundBREAKER continues with their normal duties. At later stages of pregnancy this is reliant upon the health of the groundBREAKER concerned. If the groundBREAKER is able to contextualize their experience in line with the core messaging of loveLife it may be possible for them to continue working until late in the pregnancy. When the groundBREAKER leaves on maternity leave, an mpintshi is appointed as an acting groundBREAKER.

8. Showing results

Unfortunately, the groundBREAKER and mpintshi programmes have yet to be properly studied. What has been studied, however, is the sexual behaviour of young people. And here it has become apparent that interaction with a groundBREAKER is a good indicator of lower risk of HIV.

International evidence has shown that behaviour change is arduous and incremental, requiring efforts of sufficient scale and intensity and sustained for long enough to make a difference. Furthermore, measurement of change is difficult and open to variable interpretation over the short term. Attribution of effect of a *national* programme is even more difficult, with likely contamination of control sites by pervasive media components and spillover of programme elements. Randomised control trials are not practicable in this situation, and assessment of impact is likely best demonstrated by monitoring trends and associations between HIV, sexual behaviour and programme exposure over time through repeated cross-sectional surveillance.^{1,2}

In 2003, the first nationally representative household survey of close to 12,000 youths aged 15-24 years found significantly lower HIV rates among those who have participated in loveLife's services [Table 1].³

¹ Global Consultation held in Talloires, France 25-28 May 2004 (<http://www.who.int/child-adolescent-health/publications>)

² World Health Organization (2005) Guide to indicators for Monitoring and Evaluating National HIV/ AIDS Prevention Programmes for Young People. www.who.int/hiv/pub/me/youngpeople/en/index.html

³ Pettifor A, Ples H, Kleinschmidt I, Steffenson A, MacPhail C, Hlongwa-Madikizela L, Vermaak, Padian N. Young people's sexual health in South Africa: HIV prevalence and sexual behaviours from a nationally representative household survey. *AIDS* 2005, **19**:1525-1534

Table 1
Adjusted Odds Ratios (AOR), 95% Confidence Intervals (CI) and associated p-values for HIV infection associated with participation in loveLife programmes vs not having participated

HIV infection	Males 15-24 yrs AOR (95% CI)* p-value	Females 15-24 yrs AOR (95% CI)* p-value
	0.6 (0.40-0.89) 0.01	0.61 (0.43-0.85) <0.01
<p>Adjusted for completed high school or not, race, age, urban/rural residence, marriage, electricity in the home, awareness of two different national HIV prevention campaigns, participation in youth groups in past month, knowing someone who died of AIDS, and testing for HIV</p> <p>Source: Pettifor et al AIDS 2005 19:1525-1534</p>		

While there is not direct (causal) evidence to link declines in new infection rates in teenagers to loveLife intervention, those exposed to loveLife face-to-face programmes report greater self-motivation, more discussion about HIV and AIDS with friends and family, higher likelihood to be tested for HIV and higher levels of condom use.

Table 2 **Adjusted Odds Ratios (AOR), 95% Confidence Intervals (CI) and associated p-values for a number of self-reported behavioural outcomes associated with participation in loveLife programmes vs not having participated**

HIV protective factors	Males 15-24 yrs AOR (95% CI)* p-value	Females 15-24 yrs AOR (95% CI)* p-value
There are ways to prevent HIV	2.4 (1.4-4.0) p=0.001	1.3 (0.8-2.2) P=0.3
Changed behaviour due to HIV and AIDS	1.9 (1.4-2.7) p<0.001	1.6 (1.3-2.0) p<0.001
Talked to parents about HIV AND AIDS	1.8 (1.6-2.1) p<0.001	2.1 (1.5-2.9) p<0.001
Ever started a conversation about HIV and AIDS	3.2 (2.5-4.0) p<0.001	2.4 (1.9-2.0) p<0.001
Strong sense of future	1.8 (1.4-2.4) p<0.001	1.5 (1.3-1.9) p<0.001

Always uses condom, most recent partner	1.75 (1.36-2.25) P<0.001	1.63 (1.20-2.22) P<0.001
High condom self-efficacy	1.1 (0.9-1.3) p=0.3	1.1 (0.8-1.3) P=0.5
Youth knows HIV status	1.7 (1.0-2.9) p=0.05	1.9 (1.5-2.4) p<0.001

Source: Pettifor et al AIDS 2005 19:1525-1534

Both sexually experienced males and females who reported having participated in at least one loveLife programme were significantly less likely to be infected with HIV compared to youth who had not participated in the programme, after adjusting for possible confounding factors such as age, education, and exposure to other prevention campaigns.⁴ Similar significant associations are not demonstrated among young people who have not had a face-to-face (i.e. facilitated by a groundBREAKER or mpintshi) experience with loveLife's programs.

Overall, the analysis shows strong treatment effects of loveLife programming across the board for 4 out of 6 outcomes [Table 3]. For females, the effect of loveLife programming on HIV zero-status is also significant (3.2 and 4.5 percent for one and two programs respectively.)

Although these findings are quite robust, results should still be interpreted with caution. Like any method of covariate adjustment, propensity score methods are not immune to omitted variable bias. The risk of self-selection bias was mitigated by employing several behavioural covariates in the model, in addition to the standard demographic controls. Even with these adjustments, we cannot be certain we have fully accounted for selection bias, because data are cross-sectional. Nevertheless, it is significant that the "loveLife effect" substantially withstands statistical scrutiny for systematic bias.

Our understanding of the implications of the above for loveLife is that we need to sustain the multi-pronged mass media campaign that drives demand for service components. At the same time, we need to sustain face-to-face engagement through groundBREAKERS and mpintshis with enough young people to have realistic prospects for behaviour change.

⁴ Pettifor A, Rées H, Kleinschmidt I, Steffenson A, MacPhail C, Hlongwa-Madikizela L, Vermaak, Padian N. Young people's sexual health in South Africa: HIV prevalence and sexual behaviours from a nationally representative household survey. *AIDS* 2005, **19**:1525-1534