

EVALUATION RESEARCH



dance4life international is not only dedicated to supporting young people becoming change agents in a very innovative way, we also acknowledge the importance of knowledge generation and development of theoretical discourse such as in the fields of communication for social change and social sciences.

The overall aim for dance4life evaluation research will address outstanding questions about the impact of dance4life on the lives of young people and their communities, build the research capacity of dance4life countries by making local researchers central to the research process as well as including the target group in design and execution of research, and make recommendations to improve the efficiency and impact of the dance4life programme.

During 2009 and 2010, the University of Amsterdam (ASCoR) conducted research in 20 countries participating in dance4life to understand the underlying factors for young people to get involved in dance4life. Using these outcomes, we developed together with the KIT (Royal Institute for the tropics) a multi-year evaluation plan to assess whether the organisation and its partners are creating impact and achieving the mission, and to see if social change is really being created at global and community level.

The outcomes of the 2009 research were presented at "Etmaal 2010" that took place in the city of Gent in Belgium during February 2010. The conference is about recent communication research.

In 2010 the first scientific publication on dance4life was written, with the title: [dance4life: Evaluating a global HIV and AIDS prevention programme for young people using the Pre-Im framework for process evaluation.](#)

RESULTS

The results showed that, from a theoretical point of view, dance4life provides a **robust** HIV and AIDS prevention programme. Both the implementing partners and the participants assess the dance4life concept and the health prevention school programme as **strong**. This is an important prerequisite to realise successful implementation. However, the social movement concept needs more attention and has therefore been the main focus throughout 2010.

APPROACH 2011-2015

Furthermore, we developed our 2011-2015 evaluation approach and are currently working with KIT to execute the research plan and finalise impact evaluations in 2 countries in 2011. These two countries are **Uganda** and **Russia**. In Uganda, a researcher from the Makerere University is leading the field work. In Russia, a researcher from the Centre for Studies of Civil Society and Non-profit Sector from the National Research University Higher School of Economics, Moscow is in taking the lead.

In this research the following questions will be answered:

- How many young people and agents4change have been effectively involved?
- How do the respective programmes influence the knowledge, empowerment, leadership skills and self-esteem of the youth involved during and after their involvement?
- How do the programmes challenge local stigma and taboos around HIV and SRHR?
- How is the programme impacting young people's own and others' sexual and reproductive health and rights?
- How do the respective programmes contribute to the mobilization and engagement of young people, them acting as agents of change?
- To conclude how does the programme contribute to meaningful social change and which recommendations can be made to enhance?

With the KIT impact assessment addressing outstanding questions about the impact of dance4life on the lives of young people and their communities, its conclusions will support our work in the field by:

- a) Assessing whether the organisation and its partners are achieving the mission and to see if social change is really being created at the global and community level.
- b) Assuring dance4life is evidence-based and able to contribute to current debates around effective HIV prevention programming and advancing SRHR for young people. This can in turn open up new opportunities to collaborate with a larger range of partners, as well as create stronger links with current stakeholders, such as policy makers, school authorities and funders.
- c) Suggesting potential necessary adjustments to the concept for a fuller achievement of our mission and for a better fit with global developments and the specific regional context.

CONTRIBUTION OF THE IMPACT ASSESSMENT TO SOCIAL SCIENCE RESEARCH

In addition to serving as an evaluation of the work of dance4life, the proposed research has its own relevance in the broader field of sexual and reproductive health and rights, youth empowerment, and mixed methods research.

Research on Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights

The proposed research within the context of the evaluation looks beyond the confines of the dance4life programme itself into the broader social and cultural setting in which it takes place. In order to understand the impact of the programme, it is necessary to explore broader issues of sexual health that are on the cutting edge of the field, such as empowerment, stigma, taboos, self-esteem and psychological support systems. In particular, this research is unique in examining these issues in relation to youth and from a multi-country perspective, allowing for comparison and contrast between different settings.

The research will document the successes and challenges in a programme that actually links HIV and sexual health. This integration has been the subject of much talk in the past several years, but this research will contribute a much needed practical example of integration in practice.

Youth Empowerment

The concept of empowerment is a rich and complex one, involving debates about meaningful participation, structure versus agency, and theories of change. This study can contribute to ongoing debates about how to define and measure empowerment, in particular by providing several cases from different country contexts. Through the design and implementation of this research, we will be able to contribute meaningfully to these debates by giving examples of how youth have experienced empowerment within their own settings and what the opportunities and challenges were along the way. By involving youth themselves in the research, the study also contributes to capacity development and building self-confidence among the youth.

Methodological Developments

The unique design of the study can also set an example for future research and contribute to discussions about research methodology. First, the research process centres on capacity building. By creating a research team involving junior and senior Dutch researchers as well as junior and senior local researchers, the stage is set for a rich cross-fertilization of approaches and ideas. Unlike some capacity building processes, this set-up is not a purely North to South exchange – there is, in contrast, an emphasis on building the capacities of junior researchers from all countries involved, as well as



broadening the horizons of the senior researchers. Moreover, the regional and international meetings create an opportunity for the research teams to learn from each other in order to better address the challenges they encounter in the field. Finally, the research builds on at least two existing methodologies – Appreciative Inquiry and multi-country studies – which it will be able to contribute to by feeding the research experiences back to the wider scientific community, so future researchers can utilize the methods in a more nuanced and appropriate way.