

BEYOND "GUT FEELING"

Report on the arepp:Theatre for Life Evaluation

Project

2002-2004

Prepared for arepp:Theatre for Life

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arepp

Theatre for Life



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report reflects, in the main, the findings of the arepp:Theatre for Life evaluation project which ran from 2002 to the end of 2004. This was an attempt by arepp:Theatre for Life to move beyond anecdotal evidence of the impact of its work and its particular approach to impacting and to try to quantify this impact. The quantitative process involved operationalising the indicators by which arepp:Theatre for Life measures its impact, and then administering questionnaires to a cohort of learners who were seeing one arepp:Theatre for Life production per year from their Grade 10 to their Grade 12 years. Learners were from a range of schools in different economic categories in the Western Cape and in Gauteng. Initially there were 7 744 learners in the arepp:Theatre for Life sample but this dropped to 2 802 by the end of the process, partly because of schools dropping out and partly because of learners dropping out. In the analysis of the data, there were 55 schools initially, and this dropped to 53 for the fourth and final batch of survey questionnaires. School profiles were drawn up, covering certain variables which might influence impact, and this were included in the analyses. A flaw in the original implementation was the lack of control groups. *Post facto* efforts were made to address this and, although these were not entirely satisfactory in terms of scientific practice, they generated interesting data. In addition, focus groups were conducted with both the arepp:Theatre for Life sample and control groups. These largely verified the quantitative findings. The report deals in detail with some of the scientific flaws in the study, however, the evaluators conclude that the project was a courageous and worthwhile endeavour, yielding useful and interesting results, and that it engaged the arepp:Theatre for Life staff in a rigorous process of improving their product.

Key findings from the quantitative study included confirmation of a number of things which arepp:Theatre for Life already knew at a “gut level”. So, for example, it is clear that learners are at different points along a continuum of a sense of self-efficacy and that the weaker they are in this regard initially, the greater the difference is likely to be after intervention. There is a clear indication that, where learners have had no previous input on the issues related to sexuality and self-efficacy, those who then experience the arepp:Theatre for Life interventions show an impact that is not evident in similar profile control groups. Thus, the results do indicate that if x (where x is the arepp:Theatre for Life intervention) then y (where y is the desired impact). While we accept that there are always major questions around attribution in all social psychology studies and, indeed, in all development work, we believe that the validation of this claim shows, at least, that the arepp:Theatre for Life intervention is worthwhile.

The findings indicate some confirmation about the arepp:Theatre for Life expectations about impact. The arepp:Theatre for Life sample showed:

- ◆ Improved understanding about gender equality;
- ◆ A more constructive view of relationships;
- ◆ An understanding that there are choices, that people have the right to make choices, and that some choices are more constructive than others, even when they do not necessarily make constructive choices;
- ◆ Greater tolerance around making mistakes – both for oneself and for others;
- ◆ A strong sense that one can make a difference in one’s community;
- ◆ Increased self-esteem.

It also does seem, from the focus groups, that the arepp:Theatre for Life approach encourages a degree of openness, plain speaking and debate. We think it is fair to say that this adds up to “increased self-efficacy”.

There also seems to be a fairly clear indication that arepp:Theatre for Life is not really winning the battle (and nor is anyone else) on issues such as:

- ◆ Celibacy as a real option;
- ◆ Condom use;
- ◆ Homophobia (although those with arepp:Theatre for Life exposure appear to be less homophobic).

It is worth noting some findings for arepp:Theatre for Life to keep in mind:

- ◆ Girls seem to be more open and tolerant on key issues than boys;
- ◆ Co-ed schools seem to create an environment where boys are able to grow in self-esteem but less so in tolerance;
- ◆ Learners in small schools start off stronger on most indicators;
- ◆ The learners from the less affluent schools are less likely to be tolerant of homosexuality;
- ◆ Boys find it harder to accept that it is alright to make mistakes;
- ◆ Learners from schools where teaching is worse (indicated by poor matric results) are less likely to feel it is alright to make mistakes.

We believe that arepp:Theatre for Life staff could usefully explore the output of the data analysis in more detail than has been possible here. There is a commitment from arepp:Theatre for Life to incorporating some form of statistical data collection and analysis into its work in a more routine way in future. This should include:

- ◆ Revision of the indicators and the survey questionnaire;
- ◆ Clarity on the variables about which information is needed and improved methods of collecting this information;
- ◆ Review of the administrative systems that support the process;
- ◆ Ongoing entering of the data on a programme like SPSS;
- ◆ Regular analysis.

In general, we concluded that:

- ◆ The arepp:Theatre for Life model is a valid one.
- ◆ arepp:Theatre for Life implements its model self-consciously, rigorously and professionally.
- ◆ The humanist and rights-based framework provides for a non-judgmental but constructive context to which young people respond with openness and trust.
- ◆ The evaluation project has been of inestimable value in assisting the organisation to understand better what it is trying to achieve, and to refine all aspects of its presentations.
- ◆ Although flawed scientifically, the evaluation project did go beyond “gut level” and showed that arepp:Theatre for Life can legitimately claim to have a positive impact on the young people with whom it works.
- ◆ There is a need for arepp:Theatre for Life to explore in more depth “self-efficacy” as an indicator of what it is trying to achieve.
- ◆ In future such attempts to employ quantitative methods to measure impact, the “science” can be better done.
- ◆ Administrative record-keeping could also be improved.
- ◆ arepp:Theatre for Life still needs to master the process of embedding its interventions in an ongoing supportive context, a need it recognises. This may require a focus, at least initially, on smaller numbers.

Overall, we commend arepp:Theatre for Life for a very worthwhile effort, yielding important findings.

PREFACE

This external evaluation was a long and, in many ways, a difficult process. We are grateful for the patience of the arepp:Theatre for Life production managers and administrative staff who were always pleasant and helpful even when, drowning in data, we were sometimes irritable and impatient. We are deeply indebted to Lizette Meyer and Gregg Dardagan of Development Research Africa (DRA). Their willingness to take on the job of data entering and analysis, their forbearance in the face of administrative muddles, confusing data and client ignorance, their engagement with what we were trying to do, made what at first seemed impossible, possible. Any NGO setting out on the arduous journey of moving beyond “gut feeling”, and any consultants trying to make sense of the output, need support such as we had from them.

We must also pay tribute to the Executive Producers of arepp:Theatre for Life, in particular Gordon **Bilborough**. Although there were moments, in the midst of making sense of it all, when we cursed Gordon, without his vision of what could be done and his commitment to engaging with the complexities of all that needed to be done, without his enthusiasm for learning and improving and getting it right, the evaluation project would not have happened. We think it has been a very worthwhile endeavour. We are impressed by the way in which all staff members at arepp:Theatre for Life have embraced the process and made it their own. arepp:Theatre for Life dares to go where few NGOs dare in its pursuit of excellence.

Most of all, however, we salute those young people who, in a context that is often desperate and defeating, refuse to be defeated and find a way to take control of their lives, to take responsibility for themselves, to reach out to the future and make it their own. We believe that this report shows that arepp:Theatre for Life is making a very real contribution to supporting them in this. We consider ourselves privileged to have been a small part of an ambitious exercise aimed at ensuring that they get the help they deserve.

Marian Nell
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April 2005

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SECTION 1: INTRODUCTION

1.1 BACKGROUND TO arepp:THEATRE FOR LIFE¹

The arepp:Theatre for Life Trust is an educational theatre organisation which has been operating nationally in South Africa since 1987. It offers repertory tours which travel nationwide, providing interactive, social lifeskills education to school-going young people. The intention is to encourage learners to make sound, informed choices about what is best for them and their society in specific situations. The issues directly addressed are those inherent in sexuality, including the development of self image and self esteem. The shows highlight and encourage thought and debate around the issues of relationships, pregnancy, gender, discrimination, sex, HIV/AIDS and STIs and all forms of abuse. In the period covered by this evaluation (2002 to 2004), the company ran six national repertory touring teams each year, performing for four specific age or grade groupings: Grades 1-3, 5-7, 8-9 and 10-12. The shows were specifically designed to support the initiatives and objectives within the National AIDS plan and the Lifeskills Curriculum in government schools. arepp:Theatre for Life works with approximately 1 000 specifically identified schools each year, performing about 1 300 shows a year and reaching about 300 000 school-going young people. The organisation has offices in Johannesburg and Cape Town and is a not-for-profit organisation.

The vision of arepp:Theatre for Life is “a society in which the individual members are directors of their own lives, making informed choices which lead to constructive decisions for their holistic growth and development, and which, in turn, contribute to the healthy growth and development of their society”. The intended outcome of arepp:Theatre for Life’s endeavours is that those who see the shows “are enabled with informed choice for sustainable decision-making”. It is an underpinning tenet of arepp:Theatre for Life’s approach that the initiation and reinforcement of the processes of self-growth, self-development and self-knowledge in individuals leads towards a change in social attitudes and mores regarding sex, sexuality and gender, and so contributes to a reduction in the rates of HIV transmission, discrimination, abuse and rape. This impact results in the increased mental and physical health of society. Basic to the arepp:Theatre for Life approach is the importance of being non-judgemental and non-directive. The idea is to give the young audiences information, understanding and skills that enable them to respond constructively to situations in which they find themselves. One choice might be not to have unprotected sex; another might be to return to school despite being pregnant; another to accept one’s sexuality without self-hate even if one is attracted to people of the same sex; and so on. This approach acknowledges that we do not always have control over what happens to us but what is important is how we respond to what happens to us. Thus, it is not only about “lifestyle choices”, but perhaps even more about “life choices”. In this arepp:Theatre for Life differs from many organisations offering “products” of comparable topic content and even dramatic presentation to school age youth. The emphasis is not so much on specific changed behaviours, but rather on

¹ For the factual information about arepp:Theatre for Life in this section, we are indebted to the arepp paper: *After the Curtain*, 2004. This paper provides necessary background to the arepp aims and objectives and methodology. It also begins the process of analysing the evaluation schools which form the main subject of this evaluation and is well worth reading in its own right.

seeing and experiencing oneself positively in the world. The arepp:Theatre for Life assumption is that this will lead to constructive choices in life. It does not tell audiences what to do but rather “invites them to share and ‘live’ other options”. In an interview, the Executive Producer tasked with managing the evaluation project said:

The methodology of what we do is particularly suited to concepts of self-esteem, self-efficacy and making choices in life ... It focuses on how to deal with the world... and the notion of what we call accepting responsibility. We believe that we have an impact on people’s understanding that we can make mistakes and deal with consequences and not become a victim.

The plays offered are for different age groups and those of significance for the evaluation project reviewed in this report are the three in the *Look Before You Leap* series for 16 years and older: *Re-Play* (2002), *Big Time* (2003), and *Hangin’* (2004). They are one-off experiences. arepp:Theatre for Life does not do more than one play a year for a particular audience. The arepp:Theatre for Life methodology is based on the following principles and assumptions:

- ◆ The plays offer an emotional route to understanding and acceptance of knowledge and information, allowing audiences to truly internalise the issues and make them their own. The audience members identify with the characters, seeing themselves in the situation and, thus, how to move beyond it.
- ◆ Edutainment theatre is particularly suited to impact on individuals, creating mini epiphanies which raise people’s levels of awareness and consciousness about their rights, their personal worth and the way in which they relate to others.
- ◆ The experience of public performance in a relatively “closed” and homogeneous micro-community (the school) where people know one another, exerts a social pressure on the members of the audience through creating a basis from which they can challenge one another.
- ◆ The effect is enhanced by travelling or repertory theatre which goes to the target audiences, approaching them on home ground and addressing the issues as their personal issues, in their own space and in their specific context. In the case of arepp:Theatre for Life, the fact that the actors use local languages and are very little older than their audiences, further adds to this effect.² The plays allow audiences to encounter attitudes in situations that are real for them, as a part of their lives and, because they have the appearance of being “real”, they reinforce and strengthen messages in a subtle way. They address, in a non-threatening way, the “very fabric of the beliefs that the audiences hold regarding themselves, their culture, and their identity”. The intention is to show young people **why** they should consider altering their beliefs or behaviour and **how** they can go about it, and to empower them to feel **able to do so**.
- ◆ Once the performance is over, the emotional experience needs to be internalised and contextualised by the audience. To quote *After the Curtain*:

² The teacher evaluations of the performances repeatedly refer to the way in which the learners identify with the characters. This also comes out in the questions asked after the performances and it came out in the focus group discussions we had with learners who remember the plays largely in terms of the characters and issues.

The emotional experience needs to be supported by an intellectual one to holistically enforce the learnings.

To achieve this, all arepp:Theatre for Life performances are followed by facilitated discussion, separately, with both the learners and their educators. This is intended to provide an open and non-judgemental forum in which issues can be raised and peer interaction and shared understanding encouraged. Because of the shared experience, the audience feels able to engage in a discourse they might not otherwise be comfortable with. The actors, all of whom are professionals, are specifically trained to facilitate these discussions. They are also specifically selected not only for their language skills and acting skills, but also for their attitudes to the core issues with which arepp:Theatre for Life deals.³

- ◆ arepp:Theatre for Life believes that these discussions are best conducted in an environment where other structures exist which will already have made an input that is likely to make audiences more receptive, and which will help to maximise and support the impact once the presentation is over. If there is an active desire for behaviour change, then these structures would facilitate and support this process. So, quite specifically, arepp:Theatre for Life is not suggesting that the one-off plays in themselves are sufficient. It sees the existence of other organisations and institutions that can provide support for people trying to change their own behaviour as “vital to the success of any edutainment theatre programme”. These structures might be individual teachers, the schools, the relevant government departments, and the appropriate health, education and welfare civic organisations in each area. The aim is for a tour to be arranged and designed to complement the current and ongoing programmes of organisations in the area, as well as those of the relevant government departments. At the end of the presentation, learners are given a factual/information brochure⁴ and referral numbers for local organisations. Teachers are given a lesson plan for a Life Orientation Guidance class.

These assumptions and principles provide a framework for the implementation of arepp:Theatre for Life’s work. The following are the quality criteria applied to each of the shows:

- ◆ The issues and needs of the audiences are researched;
- ◆ The shows are of a high performance quality;
- ◆ They are educationally sound, and appropriate to the age groups and developmental stages;
- ◆ The shows are performed, at least in part, in the home language of the audiences;
- ◆ The shows enhance and support such things as the lifeskills curriculum and the campaigns/work of other organisations where these are related to the issues;

³ We sat through a half day of auditions for new acting teams and were impressed by the thoroughness with which the attitudes of the auditioning actors were explored through a range of techniques. arepp:Theatre for Life auditions literally hundreds of young people across South Africa each year to form its six four person teams. Actors are warned that, once they get “too old” for audiences to identify with them, they will no longer be employed in this role. Once they have been selected, they also go through what appears to be rigorous training.

⁴ An activity puppet booklet for the six to nine year olds.

- ◆ The shows have their greatest impact with audiences of between 100 and 200 and will not be performed to audiences of more than 250 or fewer than 80;
- ◆ A show will not be performed to an inappropriate age group;
- ◆ The shows will not be performed outdoors;
- ◆ All actors are professional actors and are thoroughly oriented and inducted in terms of the relevant issues and methodology;
- ◆ Each performance/tour is arranged with the knowledge and support of at least one “issue” related organisation in the area so that the effects of the performance can be maximised after arepp:Theatre for Life has moved on;
- ◆ A variable charge based on school fees is levied for every show (partly as a form of income generation and partly to encourage audiences to expect quality and value it more);
- ◆ There is a debriefing session with the acting troupe after each tour;
- ◆ Shows are constantly adapted and re-developed, based on feedback.

1.2 BACKGROUND TO THIS EVALUATION

An evaluation of the work of arepp:Theatre for Life, done in 1998, recommended that a future evaluation focus on issues of impact measurement and partnership support. Following up on this, the organisation decided that it needed a process that would:

- ◆ Provide arepp with a workable ongoing monitoring and evaluation system which would help it to identify areas of maximum impact and areas where impact could be improved;
- ◆ Lead to the development of a computerised database which could generate reports reflecting efficiency, effectiveness and impact;
- ◆ Engage all members of the company in impact issues and clarify each person’s role in monitoring and evaluating impact;
- ◆ Use the system developed as a way of getting partners and potential partners to buy into an emphasis on impact and, in particular, the notion of impact being enhanced by collaborative efforts;
- ◆ Demonstrate to donors that money invested in this kind of educational effort can be shown to be having an impact.⁵

In 2001 arepp:Theatre for Life initiated a novel project aimed at assessing the impact of its work against impact indicators identified by the organisation.

To some extent, arepp:Theatre for Life had evaluated the effectiveness of its work. In the short-term, young people who saw their shows came out more factually informed about HIV/AIDS, they understood the messages around sexuality generally and were able to talk about them in the discussions after the shows. What arepp:Theatre for Life did not know was whether this made any difference to the way they led their lives afterwards. The evaluation of the longer term cumulative impact on society that arepp:Theatre for Life believes its work will have lies beyond the scope of what it is possible for the organisation to measure. Nevertheless, arepp:Theatre for Life wanted to address the issue of impact and answer the

⁵ Taken from *Draft Terms of Reference for the Development and Implementation of a Monitoring and Evaluation System for arepp*, May 2001.

question: Does our work contribute towards a positive change in the attitudes of the young people in our audiences to themselves and to themselves in their communities, and does it contribute to laying the groundwork for healthy life choices? Until this evaluation project, arepp, like many organisations doing this kind of work, had relied largely on anecdotal information to show that there was a change in how audiences perceived themselves and in how they made life choices. From the anecdotal information, arepp:Theatre for Life had good reason to believe that the intended changes were taking place, but it had no idea how comprehensive the changes were and no way of measuring them. The evaluation project was, therefore, an ambitious and courageous attempt to put some kind of measurement to the changes taking place, beyond “gut feeling”.

The particular arepp:Theatre for Life methodology is described above. For the purposes of this evaluation, what arepp:Theatre for Life expects from its presentations, with the appropriate follow-up and support, in terms of individual responses is:

- ◆ Audiences are (further/better) informed about HIV/AIDS, STIs, sexuality, relationships, gender relations and abuse and their options in relation to them.
- ◆ Audiences are given (more of) the skills necessary to make informed choices about their activities with regard to relationships, society, sex and sexuality, and are surer of their right to make those choices.
- ◆ There is an increased understanding about the roles and place of sex, sexuality, relationships, condoms and men and women among the audience, and about how that affects their choices.
- ◆ There is a decrease in the misunderstandings, myths and taboos around these issues.
- ◆ Myths and taboos regarding the use of condoms are diminished, and the condom itself is demystified.
- ◆ Audiences gain a (better) understanding of the situation(s) and option(s) available to them.
- ◆ Audiences gain a (better) understanding of their rights with regard to these issues.
- ◆ Audiences gain (more) confidence and (a better) understanding of themselves, and how they relate to society.
- ◆ Audiences have discovered where and how to exercise their rights and options, should they so choose to, and where and how to get support and aid for those choices.

What the evaluation project hoped to do was to measure, in a systematic and relatively comprehensive way, at an individual level, the impact of the work in terms of the empowerment of people to make unforced choices which change their lives. It is important here to note that arepp:Theatre for Life defined impact as:

Significant or sustainable changes in the lives of people arepp:Theatre for Life works with. In the arepp:Theatre for Life context this is understood as giving the audiences the skills and information to make their own choices.

In a 2004 review of the evaluation process, arepp:Theatre for Life refined this to:

Significant or sustainable changes in, or validation or re-enforcement of, the lives of the people arepp:Theatre for Life works with, which, in the arepp:Theatre for Life context is to be understood as giving to, or affirming, or entrenching for the audiences the skills, information and confidence to make and validate their own sustainable choices.

We return to this notion of a continuum in looking at the results of the study.

It is also important to note that this does not in itself tell us anything about behaviour. In relation to the arepp:Theatre for Life paradigm, the intention is not to prescribe behaviour and arepp:Theatre for Life does not, at this stage, measure its success in terms of behaviour change. It measures it in terms of what it defines as an increased sense of self-efficacy to make choices about behaviour change or, as arepp:Theatre for Life expresses it, to “become active directors of their own lives”. Over time, it believes that this is reflected in behaviour change but, in order to test this hypothesis, it would need to track the evaluation participants over the next five years to see how they live out this increased sense of efficacy and that is not practicable.

arepp:Theatre for Life was also interested in what variables made an impact on individuals more or less likely, or affected the degree of impact, in the context of its particular model or paradigm.

In order to measure both impact and the effect of the variables, arepp:Theatre for Life needed to define impact indicators that were specific to the nature of the intervention itself, and then to find a way of measuring those. To do this, it designed and implemented the evaluation project which is described in detail in Section 2 of this report. The intention was that the results of the evaluation project would be used as the basis for an external evaluation after three years. Ideally, the results would have been available on a computerised system which arepp:Theatre for Life hoped to install.

The external evaluation was intended to look primarily at the following:

- ◆ Examine, evaluate and make recommendations for the refinement of the tools, methods, systems and approaches which arepp:Theatre for Life used to identify, capture and assess impact;
- ◆ Examine the differences between ratings on the impact indicators at the beginning and the end of the evaluation project process;
- ◆ Examine what variables to do with the school and the school environment impact on the degree of difference between indicators at the beginning and end of the process.

arepp:Theatre for Life also wanted the evaluators to examine, evaluate and make recommendations for the refinement of the tools, methods, systems and approaches it uses with clients (schools), education departments and service organisations to assist in the follow-up and support to maximise its impact. Initially, the evaluation project had hoped to be able to measure the differences in teacher attitudes over the three year period as well. There are, however, many difficulties even in accessing the same teachers in each school over a three year period and this intention was not

pursued in a systematic way. Teacher input remained at the qualitative and anecdotal levels and is reflected as such in this report.

Overall, the external evaluation was asked to look at whether it is possible to go beyond “gut feel” in evaluating this kind of work, to assess whether the evaluation project had succeeded in doing so and, if so, to evaluate what impact had been achieved.

The challenges of developing the learner impact measurement system were considerable. Some of the mistakes made and problems encountered are reflected in Section 2. One of the arepp:Theatre for Life staff members said in an interview:

I worry about the validity of the entire thing – of the concept of trying to put feelings and anecdotal feedback into a scientific thing. The process has been incredibly valuable for the organisation – but is it scientifically significant? I’m not sure.

It also turned out that analysing the results gave a fascinating insight into the kinds of differences that economic category, gender and various other variables have on how young people in South Africa experience and react to the difficult world in which they live. Another staff member said:

It is also so useful to track what development South African youth is going through.

1.3 ACKNOWLEDGING THE MODEL

There are many critics of the arepp:Theatre for Life model. Part of the intention in the evaluation project was to answer these critics by showing that the approach does have an impact, does make a difference. However, there were enough problems with the scientific validity of the process (see below) to allow the sceptics to say that nothing has been proven and, in any case, any intervention aimed at individual attitude change is suspect because the issues are really about social context, culture and gender relations. The issues around the scientific validity of the study are dealt with below. However, there is no point in even getting that far without at least trying to understand the particular arepp:Theatre for Life model that shaped the development of the impact indicators. It is important, therefore, to state upfront, and at the risk of some repetition, that, as evaluators, we believe that this model does include:

- ◆ An understanding that decisions around individual sexual activity and other lifestyle choices are the outcome of complex interactions between context, relationships and individuals and not simply individual choices.
- ◆ A belief that people are not always in control of their environment or what happens to them but that it is possible for them to be able to control how they respond to what happens to them so they are not victims of their lives but rather directors.
- ◆ A belief that an individual sense of self-efficacy, multiplied, can impact on communities and societies.

- ◆ A belief in the importance of what has been called “social capital”. This acknowledges the need to build strong social networks which support people in their life choices (hence arepp:Theatre for Life’s insistence on performing in schools and its recognition of the importance of embedding its interventions in an environment where there are, potentially at least, existing networks of information and support).
- ◆ A recognition that an arepp:Theatre for Life intervention on its own cannot be sufficient to achieve the ends it desires. This recognition is, however, supplemented by a belief that such an intervention can play a role, along a continuum from a mini- epiphany that provides an impetus to understanding and to thinking about life choices to a reinforcement of existing understanding and choices, to a reminder of the implications and consequences of choices. There is literature that supports the notion of a continuum that goes from “not interested in changing” to “sustained change”. arepp:Theatre for Life believes that its intervention engages people appropriately along this continuum.
- ◆ A belief that it is better to engage young people in non-judgemental debate and discussion around difficult issues related to life choices than to tell them what they “ought to do”.
- ◆ An acknowledgement of the “attribution gap”: the impossibility of attributing directly a complex development impact such as increased self-efficacy to any single intervention.

The attempt on the part of arepp:Theatre for Life to quantify the impact of its interventions has, therefore, been implemented in the context of this model. The real point of the evaluation project was to improve the arepp:Theatre for Life intervention by engaging with the subjects of the intervention at different points over a critical three year time span and attempting to identify what contribution arepp:Theatre for Life had made to the process of change. As the external evaluators, we then attempted to corroborate the indications from the quantified data through a qualitative process. As a whole, the process should inform the direction of the arepp:Theatre for Life work, and the refinement of both the understanding of, and implementation of, the model.

1.4 EXTERNAL EVALUATION METHODOLOGY

The detailed methodology used by arepp:Theatre for Life in its evaluation project is described in Section 2. Because it had not been possible for the organisation to computerise the data it collected in the monitoring process, the external evaluators spent considerable time, firstly trying to find a service provider able and willing to enter the data and run statistical tests on it, and then on co-ordinating this process. Once we had the statistical analyses, we had to make sense of them and draw out evaluative learnings. This left very little time for the more qualitative aspects of the evaluation process. Nevertheless, the process included the following:

- ◆ Seven control focus groups (with learners who had not been exposed to an arepp:Theatre for Life intervention).
- ◆ Ten focus groups with learners who had been exposed to arepp:Theatre for Life interventions.

- ◆ Interviews with all permanent staff members at arepp:Theatre for Life and with one acting team.
- ◆ Interviews with teachers from evaluation project schools.
- ◆ Interviews with representatives of sister organisations.
- ◆ Interviews with representatives of Education Departments.
- ◆ Some qualitative assessment of documentation.
- ◆ Attendance at an audition for members of the acting teams.

The list of interviewees is included as **Appendix 1**.

The process began in October 2004 and was only completed in April 2005 with the writing of this report. The delays were caused by the difficulties around getting the data entered and analysed, by attempts to address problems such as the initial absence of control groups, and by the schedules of arepp:Theatre for Life, the schools and the evaluators.

SECTION 2: THE FINDINGS OF THE EVALUATION PROJECT: QUANTITATIVE ANALYSIS

In this Section, we look at the quantitative findings from the evaluation project conducted by arepp:Theatre for Life over the three years from 2002 to 2004 and the control group exercise conducted in early 2005.

2.1 THE PROCESS OF DESIGNING AND IMPLEMENTING THE EVALUATION INTERVENTION

2.1.1 Introduction

Our focus here is on the process of designing and implementing the survey questionnaire for audience members, the learners. This formed the basis of the detailed statistical analysis dealt with in this section. For arepp:Theatre for Life, the process went beyond this as it hoped to develop a system that would incorporate not only the impact survey for audiences, but also triangulating information on impact from the acting teams and the schools, and basic contact information used in organising the logistics of the school visits. The hope was to develop a computerised system that would deal with all of this and, despite attempts to do so, such a system is not yet in operation.⁶ This affected the implementation of the external evaluation intervention because it meant that the information from the survey questionnaires was not entered into an electronic system until the external evaluation took place. All the other information collected remains in written format. So, for example, variables for participating schools had to be worked out manually and then given to the data analysis service provider; the reflection on the input of the acting teams and the teachers can only be dealt with anecdotally. With hindsight, the attempt to incorporate everything into one system may have been overly ambitious. What is clear, however, from the report prepared by the arepp:Theatre for Life Executive Producer overseeing the evaluation project towards the end of 2004 (*After the Curtain*) is that the attempt to incorporate all aspects of the presentations in one system led arepp:Theatre for Life to refine and clarify its own thinking in very useful ways. The way in which the organisation has attempted to triangulate findings through quantifying the acting team evaluations of the groups in relation to the indicators identified for the learner surveys is innovative and interesting, although ambitious. It has forced the actors to think more clearly and sharply about what they are trying to achieve and, in the medium term, improved the quality of the presentations.

2.1.2 Operationalising the indicators

The purpose of the evaluation project was to test for the potential changes hypothesised by arepp:Theatre for Life in the way audiences perceived and experienced themselves and themselves in their communities. The starting point for

⁶ arepp:Theatre for Life has had enormous trouble with the firm commissioned to produce the database and is currently trying to reclaim money that was paid to the company for a product that has not been delivered. With hindsight, it is probably more viable to keep the impact monitoring system separate from the record-keeping system in the interests of having both systems functional.

the design was to determine valid, real indicators that arepp:Theatre for Life could use to measure the impact of its performances over a period of time, indicators that would reflect its expectations. The process of identifying these indicators began as a facilitated group exercise with arepp:Theatre for Life staff, to help them focus on the construct (in this case, the indicators that would measure what arepp:Theatre for Life was trying to achieve). This produced a concept map which could then be worked on by a smaller group. The staff looked at the desired outcomes and the expected results and determined that it was the transfer of factual knowledge, the fostering of debate, and the encouragement and/or re-enforcement of feelings of control, competency and self worth in an individual which would create or promote the environment in which a change should and is expected to occur. It is in these areas that the arepp:Theatre for Life presentations are specifically targeted in order to spark an awareness, an epiphany, a choice or a change, or provide re-enforcement for the audiences. Therefore, it was here where specific indicators for impact of the presentations were to be found. Six indicators were identified to describe the impact that was expected. These are given below. The statement beneath each describes what change should occur after the presentations. It is important to note that, while the way in which these indicators is described is largely in accordance with conventional ways of describing them, the descriptions do reflect a particular arepp:Theatre for Life view of the indicators, in line with what the organisation sees itself as trying to achieve.

1 Factual Knowledge

There has been a successful transfer of factual knowledge.

2 Options and Consequences

Learners have increased knowledge about the options and consequences of lifestyle choices. This includes the choosing of safer sex options.

3 Control

Learners feel more in control of their own lives. This includes the setting of goals, resisting peers and making decisions.

4 Self-esteem / -awareness

Learners' self-esteem and self-awareness increases. This includes their perception of others' perceptions of them, assessing personal characteristics, and having a role in society.

5 Constructive Relationships

Learner relationships (all kinds) are likely to be constructive. This includes gender perception.

6 Value Judgements

Value judgements that are likely to benefit individuals and society will be made by learners. This includes tolerance and or acceptance of alternate choices and behaviours.

Once these indicators were established, they needed to be operationalised for measuring. This was done through the preparation of a questionnaire for learners,

developed to determine how they perceived themselves in relation to the arepp: Theatre for Life impact indicators. The questionnaires would be completed prior to the first intervention to provide baseline information and then prior to each performance during the process, with a final questionnaire being completed about six months after the third performance in 2004, making a total of four questionnaires.

This learner questionnaire was designed in such a way as to make it possible to aggregate a score which could be compared when the questionnaire was administered at different stages in the process. The questionnaire would take the form of a series of statements against which learners were asked to rate their response along a continuum from “strongly agree”, to “agree”, “not sure”, “disagree” and “strongly disagree” (a Likert scale). Early on it was agreed that the first indicator, factual knowledge, would be omitted as the evidence that factual knowledge was increased by the presentations was overwhelming and this was not the major concern of the evaluation project.⁷

Working on the concept map from the joint session, the smaller group came up with the following statements for the five remaining indicators:

Options and Consequences

Learners have increased knowledge about the options and consequences of lifestyle choices. This includes the choosing of safer sex options.

1. HIV is mainly a sexually transmitted disease.
2. I believe that I can always choose whenever I have sex and with whom.
3. I know where to get help if I feel sexually threatened.
4. I believe that sexual abstinence (not having sex until marriage) is an option for me.
5. I believe that becoming parents is a choice my partner and I will make together.

Control

Learners feel more in control of their own lives. This includes the setting of goals, resisting peers and making decisions.

1. I know what I want from life.
2. I believe that I can achieve what I want from life.
3. I believe that I can make decisions that are right for me.
4. I don't always do what my friends do.
5. My friends respect what's important to me.

Self-esteem / -awareness

Learners' self-esteem and self-awareness increases. This includes their perception of others' perceptions of them, assessing personal characteristics, and having a role in society.

1. When I look in the mirror I like what I see.
2. Most of the people I know like the "real me".
3. I believe that I am a decent person.
4. I believe that it's ok if I make mistakes.
5. I believe I can make a positive difference in other people's lives.

⁷ The findings suggest that this may have been a little premature, or more likely, that knowledge can be eroded.

Constructive Relationships

Learner relationships (all kinds) are likely to be constructive. This includes gender perception.

1. All my relationships (with friends, partners and peers) are based on trust and respect.
2. I respect and I am respected by most of the adults around me.
3. I believe women can do the same things that men can do.
4. My boyfriend/girlfriend is always someone I like a lot.
5. If I didn't have a boyfriend or a girlfriend it would be OK.

Value Judgements

Value judgements that are likely to benefit individuals and society will be made by learners. This includes tolerance and or acceptance of alternate choices and behaviours.

1. When I am sexually active, it is my responsibility to protect others from diseases such as HIV/AIDS.
2. When I have sex I believe it should be "real" (have meaning to me).
3. When having sex it should be an enjoyable experience for everyone involved.
4. As long as you don't hurt others, sex with anyone is acceptable.
5. Sex between people of the same sex is acceptable.

Quite early on in the process, and after working with the indicators, arepp:Theatre for Life realised that there were two concerns about the indicator "Value Judgements". arepp:Theatre for Life specifically does not dictate a values framework although it operates within the context of a rights-based and humanist approach. It operates on the understanding that people should be able to apply their own values framework in making decisions about their lives and that arepp:Theatre for Life should deliberately avoid value judgements. The use of the term "value judgements" was, therefore, contradictory and inappropriate. The second concern was that, for the actors, also operating within their own values framework, assessing responses on the basis of a "values judgement" indicator was very difficult and, at best, subjective. After careful examination arepp:Theatre for Life determined that it was the tolerance aspect of the statement that was the real impact indicator, and that tolerance was something that could be measured via the methodology. So the impact indicator was rephrased as follows:

Tolerance

Learners have increased tolerance of alternate choices and behaviours. This includes racial, religious and sexual tolerance.

The questionnaire statements were not, however, changed as the process had already begun.

2.1.3 The evaluation framework

arepp:Theatre for Life decided it would work with the same group of learners in 60 specially chosen schools in Gauteng and the Western Cape⁸, where its offices are

⁸ One Eastern Cape school was included because it was so difficult to find Category A schools that spoke Afrikaans or English in the Western Cape and arepp:Theatre for Life was interested to see what results would come from a rural school in that category. arepp:Theatre for Life works about

located, making monitoring easier, over a period of 3 years, performing a different *Look Before You Leap* (Secondary Schools)⁹ programme each year.

These schools would be chosen on the basis of interest, will and involvement and would cover the full economic range of schools in South Africa (the five categories into which arepp:Theatre for Life classifies the schools – see below).

The project would begin in 2002 with the Grade 10s (approximately 16 year olds) of that year and perform for that same group of learners once a year until 2004 when they would be in Grade 12 and preparing to leave school.

arepp:Theatre for Life categorises the schools at which it performs according to an income profile based on the school fees of the schools, as follows:¹⁰

A	Very Poor	(Schools fees R100 or below per year)
B	Poor	(Fees R101 – R250)
C	Average	(R251 – R500)
D	Middle Class	(R501 – R 2000)
E	Affluent/Commercial	(R2000+)

In this analysis we have looked mainly at the results from the first administration of the questionnaire (prior to the learners seeing any of the arepp:Theatre for Life plays in 2002) and the fourth one (administered approximately six months after they had attended the third presentation towards the end of 2004). This does not mean that there are no valuable insights from an analysis of the second and third questionnaires and, in fact, arepp:Theatre for Life has done its own analysis, comparing the first and second survey responses¹¹. However, we were constrained by time and chose to focus on the initial and end points.

Initially, in terms of questionnaires available for analysis, there were 28 schools from Gauteng and 27 from the Western Cape. The total number of learners initially was 7 780, of whom 4 279 were from Gauteng and 3 501 from the Western Cape. In the second half of 2004, there were 25 schools from Gauteng and 27 from the Western Cape. The total number of learners was 3 902 (50.2% of the initial number), of whom 2 002 came from Gauteng and 1 900 from the Western Cape. Reasons for the drop out in schools included major organisational problems at schools, making it impossible to work with them, inability to re-establish contact with schools, and, in one case, discomfort in the school with the explicit messages, particularly around masturbation and homosexuality. Speaking on the telephone to the arepp:Theatre for Life Executive Producer, the headmaster of that particular school said:

While I personally can see why we must start discussing these issues with the learners, you must understand I will lose my job. The whole town was against

equally in the Eastern Province, the Western Cape, the Free State and KwaZulu/Natal, more in Gauteng than elsewhere, and less than these locations in the North West, Mpumalanga and the Northern Cape.

⁹ *Look before you Leap* is a series of plays. The schools in the evaluation project saw three of these: *Re-Play* (2002), *Big Time* (2003), and *Hangin'* (2004).

¹⁰ These were the categories when the schools were initially recruited. Since then, however, the actual fee range has changed, although the categories remain the same.

¹¹ In *After the Curtain*. This analysis, which was done through manual counting, has very valuable insights to which we are indebted and it is well worth looking at.

it. Everyone was upset. It was discussed in Church the next Sunday. The parents do not allow discussions about masturbation and homosexuality in school. It is wrong. I'm sorry, you must please understand. (translated from Afrikaans)

Although the drop-out in schools does account for some of the drop in numbers of learners involved, there was also a significant drop in the number of learners in most of those schools which participated in both the first and fourth surveys. The number of drop-outs varied from 6% to 83%, with a few schools showing small increases.¹²

The gender breakdown was:

	2002	2004 (final)
Boys	3 408 (44%)	1 533 (40.3%)
Girls	4 336 (56%)	2 269 (59,7%)

The drop-out rate for girls was, thus, 48%. For boys it was 55%, further exacerbating the initial situation where there were more girls than boys in the sample, partly because there were more all-girls schools than there were all-boys schools, and partly because, even within the co-ed schools there seemed, in many cases, to be a preponderance of girls. (See below)

The main variable with which arepp:Theatre for Life was concerned when it selected the original schools was economic category. The intention was to get an equal spread across categories. It was anticipated that this would be a significant variable. As it turned out, an even spread was never achieved, not even initially. In the Cape, there are almost no schools in Category A whose learners' spoke English or Afrikaans as a home language, so Category B was inflated here as they were the target disadvantaged audience. Also in the Western Cape, there was an administrative problem which led to schools having to be contacted at the last minute. As a result, those which were most interested were included, leading to an inflation of Category E. In Gauteng there were very few Category B schools, so Category A was inflated. And, again because of poor administration, Category E was also inflated in Gauteng.

The figures for the schools for which survey questionnaires were available were as follows:

¹² There were three schools which showed increases, one in the E economic category and two in the A category, from which it is difficult to infer anything. The school that showed the biggest gain in numbers was an A Category school but it was for girls only and this may have been a factor in parents and learners choosing to go there for the final years of schooling. Of the five schools which showed over 70% drop-out rate, two were B schools, two were C schools and one an E school. However, of the seven schools which showed under 30% drop-out rate, four were E schools, two were D schools, and one was a C school.

	Western Cape 2002	Western Cape 2004 (final)	Gauteng 2002	Gauteng 2004 (final)
A	2	2	6	6
B	6	6	4	4
C	8	8	3	2
D	4	4	6	4
E	7	7	9	9

Overall, therefore, in terms of schools, Category E was inflated. The number of learners in each category was as follows:

Economic category	2002	2004 (final)
A	1 238	742
B	1 442	634
C	1 830	797
D	1 468	617
E	1 802	1 112

While the lowest drop-out rate was in the Category E schools, it was less than 2% lower than that of the Category A schools, with Categories B, C and D having considerably higher drop-out rates. While we cannot draw any inferences from this, it does mean that the assumption that there will necessarily be a higher drop-out rate in poorer schools needs to be questioned.

The breakdown by province was as follows:

	Western Cape 2002	Western Cape 2004 (final)	Gauteng 2002	Gauteng 2004 (final)
A	138	73	1100	669
B	810	325	632	309
C	1382	688	448	109
D	438	242	1030	375
E	733	572	1069	540

Overall, the drop-out rate in Gauteng was 53.2% and in the Western Cape 45.7%. In the Western Cape, the biggest drop-out rate was in Category B, and in Gauteng it was in Category C. The smallest drop-out rate in the Western Cape was in Category E, but in Gauteng it was in Category A.

The intention was also to compare results against other variables about which data was supposedly collected when a school was enrolled for the evaluation project. These included variables such as parent involvement in the school and teacher attitudes. However, the initial contact is usually the lifeskills teacher and s/he is often not privy to the actual data. The figures and information arepp:Theatre for Life did manage to gather usually represented the *impressions* of the lifeskills teachers. They were not necessarily accurate and were often incomplete. However, for analysis purposes, and in the hopes of getting some indication of which variables might be important in terms of impact, we did go through the information gathered on

enrolment, used these in drawing up profiles of the schools, and asked the data analysis service providers to use them in the analysis. Those for which we were able to get some information were:

- Province
- Economic category
- Religious level (teacher opinion in most cases)
- Size of school
- Gender type of school
- Gender split where the school was co-ed (rough estimates)
- Worked with arepp:Theatre for Life before
- Level of inputs received by the cohort (other than arepp) (again a rough estimate)
- Matriculation pass rates (usually given at the initiation of the process and, as we discovered during focus groups, in some schools pass rates differ dramatically from year to year).

The only variables where we can be sure that the information we had was correct are province and economic category. We have, however, looked at the other variables to see if they suggest that it would be worth the trouble to collect more accurate information in the future. Analysis was done on the basis of the following:

Religious level:	Secular Religious Not given
Size of school:	1000+ 500-1000 Fewer than 500 Not given
Gender type of school:	Girls only Boys only Co-ed
Gender split for co-ed schools:	More females More males Roughly equal Not given (more here was defined as a difference of about 100)
Worked with arepp:Theatre for Life before:	Yes No Not given
Levels of input received by cohort (other than from arepp):	Lots Some Little (bare minimum required in curriculum)

None
Not given

Matric pass rates: High (90% and plus)
Reasonable (65% to 89%)
Poor (50% to 64%)
Very poor (40% to 40%)
Lamentable (below 40%)
Not given

Using these variables, the breakdown of the schools was as follows:

	Number of schools 2001	Number of schools 2004
Religious level:		
<i>Secular</i>	17	15
<i>Religious</i>	32	32
<i>Not given</i>	6	5
Size of school:		
<i>1000+</i>	28	25
<i>500-1000</i>	15	15
<i>Fewer than 500</i>	3	3
<i>Not given</i>	9	9
Gender type of school:		
<i>Girls only</i>	6	6
<i>Boys only</i>	2	2
<i>Co-ed</i>	47	44
Gender split in co-ed schools:		
<i>More females</i>	24	21
<i>More males</i>	3	3
<i>Roughly equal</i>	18	18
<i>Not given</i>	10	10
Worked with arepp:Theatre for Life before:		
<i>Yes</i>	21	19
<i>No</i>	29	28
<i>Not given</i>	5	5
Level of inputs received:		
<i>Lots</i>	9	9
<i>Some</i>	22	20
<i>Little</i>	12	12
<i>None</i>	3	3
<i>Not given</i>	9	8
Matric pass rates:		
<i>High</i>	17	17
<i>Reasonable</i>	22	21
<i>Poor</i>	2	2
<i>Very poor</i>	2	2
<i>Lamentable</i>	2	2
<i>Not given</i>	10	8

arepp:Theatre for Life had also hoped to be able to gather pre-information about the problems being experienced by the schools and the general environment within the schools. Here the intention was to look at issues of abuse, peer pressure, substance abuse, unwanted pregnancies, suicide and violence, including bullying and fighting. However, this did not work out. The principals are often the only ones who have the actual information regarding such things as pregnancy, drug abuse, suicide etc in their student body. Often this information is regarded as confidential, and thus is not shared. Where some lifeskills teachers tried to give such information, they were often wrong and the acting teams complained that they did not go into the schools with accurate information about problems. Details about level of organisation in the school and teacher attitudes were also not consistently recorded. If arepp:Theatre for Life seriously wants to collect this kind of information in a rigorous way, it will have to give more time and resources to the process of information collection.

2.1.4 Data analysis

In the absence of a computerised database and system at arepp:Theatre for Life, all four intakes of learner survey questionnaires were given to a data analysis service provider. The questionnaires were “double captured”, guaranteeing accuracy. Incomplete questionnaires or unclear questionnaires were discarded. The analysis was done using SPSS and the evaluators and arepp:Theatre for Life were provided with descriptive statistics as well as cross-tabulations as requested.

In getting scores for the indicators the data analysis service provider added all the relevant questions and divided by the number of learners responding. Strongly agree was given a value of “1” and strongly disagree a value of “5”, so the lower the differential from Survey Intake 1 to Survey Intake 4, the greater the change.

The data analysis service provider also provided us with measures of significance for changes between Survey Intake 1 and Survey Intake 4, and between the *post facto* control group analysis and Survey Intake 3. (See below)

2.1.5 Some concerns about, and limitations of, the design and some methodological issues

It is important to remember that research is not the main aim of arepp:Theatre for Life. This evaluation project is a laudable attempt to give quantitative measurement to the impact of the organisation in terms of the outcomes towards which it is working. There are, however, certain limitations and potential concerns, some of which have to do with the constraints under which arepp:Theatre for Life, as an NGO with very restricted resources, works. Others have to do with the difficulties inherent in social psychology studies, even for those with a focused research commitment.

Some of the limitations of arepp:Theatre for Life itself have already been mentioned. These include the need to fit the evaluation work into the normal administrative work of the organisation which meant that crises occurred and had to be addressed as best as possible but not necessarily ideally for the study. As an NGO, arepp:Theatre for Life needs to focus its resources on “doing the job”.

The problems with getting a representative group in the sample have already been mentioned. The spread of schools across economic categories could have been better. Nevertheless there is a spread and sufficient numbers to enable us to look at the effect of the economic category variable usefully. Administrative problems also meant that some schools had to be omitted from the data analysis because questionnaires went missing.

The problems with setting up a database were another factor that hampered the implementation of the overall research design.¹³ Both this, and the inability to get accurate information from schools on matters such as parental involvement, external support and teacher attitudes limited the number of variables that could be used in analysis.

One of the more important gaps in the design was that the organisation did not have the capacity, finances or time to set up a control group of learners with a similar profile to those in the evaluation project, with whom the survey questionnaire could be implemented. When the external evaluation got under way, this was identified as a major concern in terms of being able to identify a specifically “arepp:Theatre for Life change”. Working with the evaluators, arepp:Theatre for Life has attempted to address this, not ideally, but certainly usefully, in the following ways: the evaluators have conducted focus group interviews with Grade 12s in comparable schools where the arepp:Theatre for Life plays have been presented and schools where they have not. Except in one case, those who had seen the arepp:Theatre for Life presentations were not from the evaluation cohort. By the time the evaluation got under way, towards the end of 2004, that cohort was already in the thick of matriculation examinations and has now left school.¹⁴ Input from the focus groups is used as part of the qualitative analysis of the evaluation process. arepp:Theatre for Life has also just (early 2005) implemented the survey questionnaire with 29 control groups, comparable with the evaluation schools, and these are compared with the survey questionnaire results of the third administration of the questionnaire in early 2004, the group closest in age and school career to the learners in the control groups. Analysis here provides some sense of whether changes are simply those of normal maturation or whether the arepp:Theatre for Life input is reflected in some way. (See below) These are *post facto* attempts to simulate control group design and they are certainly not ideal. But we believe that they do yield useful information and that it is important to recognise the realities of the conditions under which arepp:Theatre for Life works, and the fact that its staff are not researchers but very busy implementers.

¹³ This problem has still not been solved although, at the very least, the data analysis service provider who worked with us and arepp:Theatre for Life on analysing the learner questionnaires has provided arepp:Theatre for Life with a computerised set of data about the schools and the participants in the evaluation project. The learning may be that it is not possible to have the comprehensive system towards which arepp:Theatre for Life was working and that a programme such as SPSS is the best compromise.

¹⁴ In 2004, just before the matriculation examinations, we ran a focus group in one of the evaluation schools in Gauteng (Category B) and with a control group from a Category B school which had had no arepp:Theatre for Life contact. In both cases, the learners were in Grade 12. In February 2005, in an attempt to replicate a similar situation, we ran seven focus groups in the Western Cape with learners in Grade 12 at schools which had had arepp:Theatre for Life input, and two at schools which had not (These were all Category B schools). In Gauteng, we ran four in control group schools and two with groups that had seen arepp:Theatre for Life productions, in Category A schools.

The issue of the reliability of the statements grouped under each indicator to measure that indicator was raised by the reliability analysis done for us by the data analysis service provider.¹⁵ The analysis showed that there was adequate internal consistency in the responses on the indicators of “control” and “self-esteem”. It showed that there was some consistency on “constructive relationships” and “options and consequences”, but not sufficient to warrant confidence in terms of reliability that all the questions related to these indicators, and on the indicator of “tolerance” the correlation between the responses to the five statements was weak. What this means is that the statements grouped under the indicators did not necessarily all measure the same indicator, although the statements themselves may have remained reliable indicators of “things arepp:Theatre for Life wanted to measure”. One way to overcome this might have been to use standardised tests which do exist for at least some of the constructs (for example, self-esteem) or to have used existing standardised measures of self-esteem and compared results with those obtained from their own instrument. However, self-esteem was one of the constructs for which there was internal reliability and, in any case, there might well have been problems with trying to standardise using tests developed elsewhere because of the cultural differences between, for example, the arepp:Theatre for Life sample and one in the USA. In the focus groups, the evaluators were even aware of cultural differences between the Gauteng and the Western Cape cohorts on issues such as the differing roles of men and women and issues of choice. Some of these differences were notable in the statistical analysis comparing the provinces.

The issue of the reliability of the indicators as measured by the statements has been an ongoing concern for arepp:Theatre for Life. The organisation remains satisfied with the indicator of “self-esteem and self-awareness” and the statements under it. For the rest, however, it would now rework the indicators and related statements, in most cases moving statements under different indicator headings, rather than taking them out. (See **Appendix 2**, a memo from the Executive Producer to the evaluators.) Instead of the indicator of “control”, arepp:Theatre for Life would have an indicator heading “decisions”, or “decision-making” keeping most of the same statements but adding some from the “constructive relationships” indicator in here. It would add a new indicator of “responsibility” under which it would group some of the statements now under “tolerance”, and it would rethink the “tolerance” indicator completely.¹⁶ This reflects arepp’s ongoing commitment to “getting it right” and the fact that the evaluation project was meant to be formative in terms of arepp’s work and understanding. For the future, more needs to be done on clarifying indicators and then on translating them into effective operationalisations of the indicator constructs. Nevertheless, we see the flaws here as part of a learning process. Working with the indicator constructs and how to operationalise them has been a very productive aspect of the evaluation project for arepp:Theatre for Life.

For the purposes of this analysis, we are working with the questionnaire as it was originally done and analysed. Overall, we think that the plays presented by arepp:Theatre for Life deal with the issues with which arepp:Theatre for Life is concerned, and that the statements remain valid indicators of what it is trying to

¹⁵ This is also related to “construct validity” – do your constructs measure what you say they measure?

¹⁶ For some more detail on how arepp:Theatre for Life would now group and organise indicators and statements, see Appendix 2.

achieve, and what it was trying to measure, even when they are not necessarily grouped correctly. We take this grouping issue into account in interpreting the analysis of the data.

External validity relates to the validity of generalising from a sample to the population as a whole. Could the conclusions reached in this study hold for other persons in other places and at other times? arepp:Theatre for Life works with a particular grouping of young people in South Africa. It has used a sample that includes different variations within that grouping and has looked at whether the variations impact on the results. Certain sub-groups are excluded (e.g. there is only one rural school) and we cannot, therefore, generalise the findings to them. It is seldom possible to generalise with certainty, but we do believe that the findings here can be generalised to those who have a profile or profiles comparable to those of the sample. The claim to external validity would, however, have been strengthened had it been possible to sample on a more random basis and maintain the original stratified sampling that was intended.

Internal validity relates to the ability to show causal relationships between the intervention (in this case the arepp:Theatre for Life presentations) and the results. Causality is a very difficult concept in the social sciences because of something now known in the development world as the “attribution gap”. Given the multiple influences and interventions to which people in our world are exposed, how does one isolate the impact of any one particular intervention, or attribute change to one particular intervention, especially, as in the case of arepp:Theatre for Life, when the intervention is seen as being necessarily complemented by others?

Threats to internal validity are multiple and a number certainly could affect the findings of this evaluation. They include:

- ◆ Selection history threat: for example, the control group surveys were done after Nelson Mandela has come out openly and said his son died of an AIDS-related illness. Even if they had been done at the same time as the original surveys, a particular school might have just had to deal with a teacher or learner dying of an AIDS-related illness. These “moments in history” may affect outcomes.
- ◆ Selection maturation threat: This results from the normal rate of maturation between the beginning and end of a process, as in the maturation from Grade 10 to Grade 12 in the arepp:Theatre for Life study. To some extent, the *post facto* control group surveys which are compared with arepp groups at a similar maturation stage are meant to address this but could, for example, be affected by the selection history threat (see above).
- ◆ The selection testing threat could also intervene in a control group. The arepp learners knew that the test done after the first presentations and thereafter related to the presentations and to the pre-test. The control group does not have the same experiences but may well try to guess what the desired responses are.
- ◆ The selection mortality threat applies to the arepp study. There was clearly a differential non-random dropout between the pre-test and the final test. Given the current difficult circumstances of learners, particularly in A, B and C category schools, it is likely that those learners who remained to do the final test, and those learners at the control schools who were in Grade 12, were, in any case, the most focused, those most likely to have self-esteem and an internal locus of

control. There is little that can be done about this except to acknowledge it, to adjust interpretations to take this into account, and to note that it will be equally true in the control groups.

- ◆ The selection regression threat also applies in the arepp study. It was already identified by arepp:Theatre for Life in its interim report on the evaluation project, *After the Curtain* (2004). The report notes that, after only one presentation, the greatest positive movement is among the Category A learners and then the Category B learners. This was contrary to what arepp:Theatre for Life had expected, along with previous evaluators and donors. Their expectation had been that the more advantaged the learner, the greater the impact, because of the learner's greater opportunities and access to various options, situations and support. In reality, these learners start off further along the continuum than do those at the A and B Category schools which show a greater improvement or movement along the continuum because "they can only go up from where they are". In the arepp:Theatre for Life context this has been an important learning about its target group and the value of its interventions.

On other factors where we were concerned that there might be some bias (such as learners giving responses that they thought arepp:Theatre for Life wanted to hear, or the wording of all the statements in positive format i.e. the "strongest" answer was always "agree strongly"), there was no indication that they had influenced respondents at all.

Social scientists acknowledge that, when we do this kind of research, we have to deal with the realities of human interaction and its effect on the research process. While steps can be taken to try to minimise or counter this, the cause-effect relationship in social science is unlikely ever to be absolutely attributable. We do not believe that there is any way around the challenge of the attribution gap. It is, however, possible to make reasonable judgements about whether a particular intervention is making a contribution to the overall "good", as the project defines it, through measuring change quantitatively and qualitatively in a fairly large sample, using control groups, and using triangulation to the extent possible. It would, we believe, be a great pity if NGOs such as arepp:Theatre for Life were discouraged from trying to do rigorous evaluation of the impact of their work because of all the potential pitfalls. Too many NGOs operate only on "gut feel" in terms of their impact and focus entirely on implementation, without holding themselves to a more rigorous test of whether what they are doing is worthwhile. While it may never be possible in the social sciences to say: "if not x then not y" where x is the intervention and y is the impact, it should be possible to say "if x then y", even if this needs to be qualified by "if x + a + b + c then better y".

The research methodologies and processes used in this quantitative study were conducted by individuals from within arepp:Theatre for Life, supported by external consultants¹⁷, who had been involved with the organisation over a fairly long period of time. The advantages of this was that there was shared understanding of what arepp:Theatre for Life was trying to achieve and an acceptance of the model within which the organisation was working. However, we acknowledge that this might lead to some bias in the orientation of the statements and the interpretation of the results.

¹⁷ The same consultants who did the external evaluation.

Hence the attempt above to identify possible “threats” and a commitment to taking them into account in the interpretation.

One final point: the learnings from this analysis are not only about change and impact, they are also about where arepp:Theatre for Life has most success, where the presentations are not necessarily having the desired impact and in what sort of context the organisation is most likely to achieve its goals. This makes the usefulness of the whole process far greater than it would have been had it shown only that there was a significant change on all the indicators (which it does, in fact, do).

2.2 THE RESULTS: ANALYSIS OF THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN THE INDICATORS FROM 2002 TO THE SECOND HALF OF 2004 ACROSS THE LEARNER POPULATION INCLUDED IN THE STUDY

The indicators were calculated using the aggregate of the questions of which they were composed, and they were measured with “strongly agree” getting the lowest score of 1 and “strongly disagree” the highest score of 5 on each statement. This means that the lower the mean score, the greater the level of agreement with the statements. All the statements reflected situations that arepp:Theatre for Life was hoping to achieve. It is impossible to reflect the responses to every statement in a report of this nature. We have tried to focus on those that seem to be yielding interesting results, and/or that relate specifically to the variable being discussed.

The changes on all the indicators across the total population were statistically significant at a 95% confidence level. The biggest change overall occurred on the indicator “constructive relationships”, followed by “self-esteem and self-awareness”, then “options and consequences,” with “control” and “tolerance” in fourth and fifth places respectively.

Overall

Both the initial and the final scores on the “tolerance” indicator were the highest (indicating relatively lower levels of tolerance). This indicator showed the lowest level of improvement.

As is noted above, there were problems with the construct of the indicator “tolerance” and a weak correlation between the responses to the five statements making up the indicator. Thus, although overall the improvement on tolerance was the lowest, on a statement such as “When I am sexually active, it is my responsibility to protect others from diseases such as HIV/AIDS” the percentage of those who agreed strongly rose from 63.5% to 83.1%.¹⁸ The percentage strongly agreeing with “Sex between people of the same sex is acceptable” went from 5.2% to 5.0%, and of those agreeing went from 10.6% to 12.6%, barely a net gain. The percentage of “disagree” and “strongly

¹⁸ At one Gauteng school, 100% of the responses were “strongly agree” in the final survey. Another three schools had 100% who either strongly agreed or agreed. In the Western Cape there were 11 schools that had 100% who either agreed or strongly agreed.

disagree” on this statement rose.¹⁹ With hindsight, the two statements clearly deal with very different aspects of the changes arepp:Theatre for Life hopes to see, the first dealing with “responsibility” and the second with “tolerance”, but specifically around tolerance of homosexuality. The positive change around “responsibility” is in accordance with the positive changes on the other indicators, while “tolerance about homosexuality” remains the odd one out, with no indication of change. The responses to the other statements under this indicator indicate slightly less ambivalence around issues such as enjoying sex but clearly, as arepp:Theatre for Life has already noted, the construct needs to be reviewed.

On the indicator “options and consequences” where the analysis indicated some, but not strong, internal reliability in terms of the construct, there was a definite (but not startling) positive change on statements such as “I believe that I can always choose whenever I have sex and with whom,” “I know where to get help if I feel sexually threatened” and “I believe that becoming parents is a choice my partner and I will make together”. The percentage agreeing with the statement “I believe that sexual abstinence is an option for me” actually went down slightly, which might be a reflection of an increasing desire to experience sex as the learners get older and feel they are “more ready”. The construct needs revisiting. However, perhaps of most concern here is that the percentage agreeing or strongly agreeing with the statement “HIV is mainly a sexually transmitted disease” went down slightly, and the percentage disagreeing or strongly disagreeing with the statement went up from 16.3% to 21.8%.²⁰

“Constructive relationships” was the other indicator in which the analysis showed only weak confidence in terms of construct reliability. On the statement “I believe women can do the same things that men can do”, there was a noticeable improvement, from 61.1% to 73.2%. If, as arepp:Theatre for Life now suggests, and we agree, this is more about “tolerance” than it is about “constructive relationships”, then it is not so much that “tolerance” overall has not improved but that it has not improved specifically around the issue of homosexuality. On the statement “My boyfriend/girlfriend is always someone I like a lot”, there was some improvement. On “if I didn’t have a boyfriend or girlfriend it would be okay” (arguably more about self-esteem than constructive relationships) there was an improvement from 65.6% agreeing/strongly agreeing, to 74.2%. There was a very slight increase in agreement with the statement “I respect and am respected by most of the adults

¹⁹ In the final survey, one Western Cape school had no-one agreeing or strongly agreeing with the statement, and 81.3% strongly disagreeing, up from only 33.7% in the first survey. One of the educators interviewed noted that: “When they talk about homosexuality, boys who are slightly feminine come through with hate”.

²⁰ The arepp:Theatre for Life Executive Producer believes that the problem is that the statement is “ambiguous and confusing” because of the way it is phrased and that the problem lies in the use of the word “disease”. The information message at many levels is that HIV is not a “disease” but a syndrome. He says: “because of the potential ambiguity one can’t tell if movement of the statement is positive or negative”. He would now rephrase it as: “HIV is mainly transmitted sexually.” This may be the reason for the movement. It is, however, worth checking with learners in future that they are clear on the information that is being conveyed. “Moments in history”, such as President Mbeki’s insistence that AIDS has its origins in poverty and not in sex, have also occurred in the interim. Another possible interpretation, given to us by an HIV/AIDS scientist, is that, as youngsters “want” sex more, they are more likely to deny the reality of facts of which they are aware.

around me". But on "all my relationships (with friends, partners and peers) are based on trust and respect", the percentage agreeing had actually gone down.

The degree of congruence in responses on the indicator "control" did show confidence in terms of internal reliability. There was a steady and comparable increase in the percentage agreeing with all the statements here. The positive improvement on "I believe I can make decisions that are right for me", while not dramatic, is encouraging for arepp: Theatre for Life.

The "self-esteem and self-awareness" indicator construct did show internal consistency. Here the statements where the percentage agreeing went up by quite a lot were "I believe that it is okay if I make mistakes" (9.8% increase) and "I believe I can make a positive difference in other people's lives" (6.7%).

Gender

On the indicator "control", girls started with a lower mean score than boys (i.e. they were stronger on the indicator), and finished with a lower mean score but boys showed more change on this indicator. Boys showed less improvement than girls on "tolerance", although girls started off less tolerant than boys. In the final questionnaire, the girls' mean score showed greater tolerance than the boys' mean score. Girls showed the most improvement on "constructive relationships", while boys showed the most improvement on "self-esteem and self-awareness". This may reflect different maturation rates between boys and girls in those areas.

Girls were more likely than boys to agree with the statement "Sex between people of the same sex is acceptable", particularly in the final survey. In the first survey, 66.6% of the boys disagreed with the statement, and 57.4% of the girls. In the final survey, 69.9% of the boys disagreed with the statement and only 50.9% of the girls. Both in the initial survey and in the final survey, a higher percentage of girls agreed with the statement "I believe that I can always choose whenever I have sex and with whom", and there was noticeable change in both groups from the initial to the final survey.²¹ Our impression from the focus groups is that boys are quite often afraid that their hormones may interfere with choice! This is borne out by the finding that girls were considerably more likely to agree with the statement "I believe that sexual abstinence is an option for me" and boys to disagree with it²². A higher percentage of girls agreed with the statement "I believe that women can do the same things men can do" (67.7% initially and 81.7% in the final survey, whereas with boys it was 52.4% to 63.1%).

²¹ Initial survey: 66.4% of boys agreed
73.7% of girls agreed
Final survey: 77.7% of boys agreed
84.6% of girls agreed

²² In the final survey, 72.6% of the girls agreed with the statement, and 47.6% of the boys; 29.2% of the boys disagreed with the statement, and only 12.1% of the girls. In one all-boys school in the Western Cape, 31.1% of the respondents strongly disagreed and 21.3% disagreed in the final survey. At an all-girls school close by, 8.8% disagreed strongly and 2.9% disagreed in the final survey. Both schools were in economic Category E.

Province

On the whole, Western Cape learners did better on all the indicators, both initially and at the end of the process, than did those in Gauteng. The exception was on the “control” indicator where Gauteng learners did better than those in the Western Cape, although the Western Cape learners improved more on this indicator.

In the Western Cape, the improvement on the “self-esteem and self-awareness” and “constructive relationships” score was particularly high. Under “self-esteem and self-awareness”, there were particularly noticeable improvements on “most of the people I know like the ‘real’ me”, “I believe that I am a decent person”, “I believe that it’s okay if I make mistakes” and “I believe that I can make a positive difference in other people’s lives”. Under “constructive relationships”, there was a leap in the percentage of those agreeing with the statement “I believe women can do the same things that men can do” in both provinces, but more in the Western Cape where the difference was 13.9% (Gauteng 9.9% improvement).

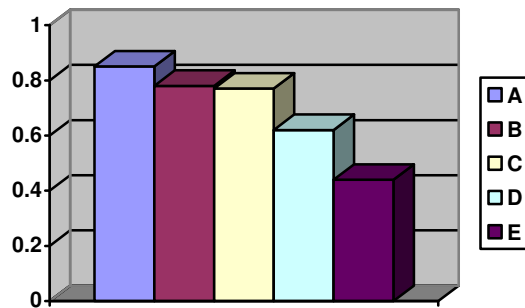
The Western Cape showed a real improvement on “sex between people of the same sex is acceptable” (from 15.7% agreement to 21.9% agreement). The percentage in Gauteng agreeing with the statement showed a minimal drop. The percentage agreeing in both provinces was much the same initially.

The percentage agreeing with the statement “HIV is mainly a sexually transmitted disease” went down in both provinces, while the percentage disagreeing went up noticeably.

Economic categories

Change was statistically significant across all economic categories. On all the indicators, Category A started weakest and on all except “control” and “self-esteem”, Category E started strongest. On “control”, Category E was, in fact the second weakest, with Category D the strongest on that and on “self-esteem”. The change in “self-esteem and self-awareness” in Categories A, B and C was very big, with Category A showing by far the greatest improvement. In Categories D and E, the change was relatively small. At the end of the process, Category C was strongest on “self-esteem”, followed by Category D, with Categories B and E much the same, and A, despite having the biggest increase, was still the weakest. At the end, Category A was stronger than Category E on “control”, and showed the biggest improvement. In fact, Category E was weakest of all the categories on “control” in the final survey, and Category C was again strongest and showed one of the biggest improvements. All the categories showed a big improvement on “constructive relationships” (which may be a maturation issue), but here Categories B and C showed the biggest improvement, followed by D and then A and E showing the same level of improvement. Nevertheless, Category E was strongest both in 2002 and in the final survey on this indicator, and Category A was weakest. Category A was weakest on “options and consequences”, both at the beginning and end of the process, and its improvement was lower than all the other categories except Category E. While Category E had the strongest score on this indicator initially, it was overtaken by Categories D and C in the final survey. E was strongest on the “tolerance” indicator both at the beginning and the end of the process, and its improvement rate was the highest. This may have something to do with the

problems with the construction of this indicator. Category A was weakest on this indicator on both surveys, but Category B, which was second weakest on both surveys, had the smallest change measured. Category A showed the highest average change over all five categories, followed in order by Categories B, C, D and E, with Category E showing considerably less average change than even Category D. Nevertheless, the variations suggest something more than “regression to mean” (“they can only go up from where they are”).



Rates of change, average of indicators, per economic category of school

This finding bears out the preliminary results in the evaluation project (see *After the Curtain*) that attitude change is a continuum and not an event. The impact of the presentations is different depending on the starting point along a continuum of self-awareness, understanding, knowledge and context. The arepp:Theatre for Life presentations are likely to impact at different points on the continuum, depending on where the audience is at the time of the presentation, from before moving on to the continuum towards change, to just starting on it, to moving along the continuum, to maintaining a sense of self-efficacy. So, the impact, as outlined in *After the Curtain*, could be “sparked awareness”, “re-enforced understanding”, “encouraged choices”, “supported decisions or validated lifestyles”. To a considerable extent, the findings of this study reflect this, but there are anomalies and some indication that there are areas where learners are regressing along the continuum, not progressing. There could be any number of contextual factors contributing to this. For arepp:Theatre for Life, however, the value of the finding is that its presentations need to take this into account, as well as the implications of learners being at different places on the continuum.

Some points to note in the findings:

- On “sex between people of the same sex is acceptable” there was actually an improvement in percentage agreeing for Categories C, D and E, but deterioration in Categories A and B.
- On “HIV is mainly a sexually transmitted disease”, all the categories showed a lower percentage agreeing with the statement in the final survey.²³

²³ We have already noted the Executive Producer’s concerns that this may have more to do with the way the statement is worded than any ignorance about how HIV is transmitted (see above).

- On “I believe that I can always choose whenever I have sex and with whom”, all the categories showed an increased percentage agreeing in the final survey.
- On “I believe women can do the same things that men can do” there was a notable increase in agreement across the categories, with a marked reduction in the “not sures” across categories but also an increase in “disagrees” across categories.
- The rural Eastern Cape school that was included in the sample showed much the same trends as other Category A schools, starting with weaker scores than the average (in terms of percentages agreeing with statements) and then improving more than the average on most of the key questions analysed. As with other Category A schools, the improvement on “self-esteem and self awareness” was most notable.

Religious categories

The results showed statistically significant changes across all “religious categories”. The only indicator on which it seemed to make a difference whether the school (or school liaison person) saw the school as secular or religious was “tolerance” where the improvement was greater in the learners from schools that were labelled as religious. Given the problems with this indicator, it is probably unwise to read too much into this. For the rest, this variable did not seem to make much difference. Interestingly, in both groups, the percentage disagreeing with the statement “As long as you don’t hurt others, sex with anyone is acceptable” went down, while there was a minimal improvement on “sex between people of the same sex is acceptable”. For both groups, the percentage disagreeing with “HIV is mainly a sexually transmitted disease” increased. On “I believe that sexual abstinence is an option for me”, both groups showed a minimal shift towards disagreeing. In contrast, both groups showed a definite shift towards agreeing with “I believe that becoming parents is a choice my partner and I will make together”. Both groups showed a strong movement towards agreeing with “I believe women can do the same things that men can do”.

Size of school

For the variable “size of school”, there were two indicators on which there was not a statistically significant change for schools in the “fewer than 500 learners” category. These were “options and consequences” and “self-esteem and self awareness”. The first point to make here is that very few schools fell into this category (3), with correspondingly smaller numbers of learners. Secondly, learners from these schools were already stronger on both these indicators than learners from schools in the “1000+” and “500-1000” categories (and on all other indicators, both at the beginning and end of the process, except possibly slightly weaker on tolerance than the middle category initially). In almost all cases, the learners from schools with 500-1000 were stronger than those from the schools with 1000+ learners both at the beginning and the end of the process. (The exception was the final score on “control” where the learners from the bigger schools were slightly stronger.) This suggests that smaller schools are generally better at nurturing the kinds of skills and attitudes that are supported by Theatre for Life, but this is hardly surprising. On the one statement that clearly relates to tolerance: “Sex between people of the same sex is

acceptable”, there was a notable move towards agreeing from the learners in the “fewer than 500” and the “500-1000” groups, but a slight move towards disagreeing among the learners in the “1000+” grouping. The learners from the smallest schools showed a noticeable move towards agreement, against the general trend and in contrast to the other two groups, on “I believe that sexual abstinence is an option for me”.

School type by gender

In the all-girls schools (of which there were six), there was no statistically significant change on the indicator of “options and consequences” on which, in any case, these learners were stronger than either those at all-boys schools (of which there were two) or co-ed schools. Of interest here is that learners from the co-ed schools do better on “self-esteem and self awareness” than those at either all-girls or all-boys schools and better than those at all-boys schools on “constructive relationships” but not better than those at all-girls schools. The learners at co-ed schools were particularly weak on “tolerance”, both before and after the arepp:Theatre for Life intervention. Again, this may have something to do with the weakness of the construct, both in terms of the focus on homosexuality, and in terms of the emphasis on what the learner himself/herself would choose to do, rather than what s/he would accept in others. On the “sex between people of the same sex is acceptable” statement, the “strongly disagree” percentage had gone up in co-ed schools but not in the others. The percentage agreeing with the statement had gone up noticeably in both the all-girls (11.2%) and all-boys (8.9%) schools, but only minimally (0.4%) in the co-ed schools. On “I believe women can do the same things men can do”, all-girls schools were, not surprisingly, initially stronger and also stronger at the end, but the change was the smallest, with the biggest change coming in the co-ed schools where those agreeing with the statement increased by 12.4%. On the statement “If I didn’t have a boyfriend or a girlfriend it would be okay”, the movement towards agreeing was higher among the all-boys school learners than in either of the other two categories (an increase of 13.4% from 70.8% to 84.2%) with the all-girls school learners showing the smallest increase but from the strongest initial response.

Where a co-ed school had more boys than girls (the minority in this sample), learners generally were weaker on all the indicators except the indicator of “control” where they were stronger. Given that girls were stronger than boys on this in the overall sample, not much can be inferred from the difference. However, of interest is the finding that those in co-ed schools that are predominantly male are more likely to think it is not “okay if I make mistakes” and slightly more likely to disagree with the statement “I believe I can make a positive difference in other people’s lives”.

Previous contact with arepp:Theatre for Life

We could see no real differences between learners from schools where arepp:Theatre for Life had done work prior to the evaluation process in 2002 and those where it had not. The fact that schools had had contact with arepp:Theatre for Life previously does not seem to have impacted on learners in the evaluation project cohort.

Input from sources other than arepp: Theatre for Life

”Levels of input other than that from arepp” was assessed through the lifeskills teacher who answered the initial intake questions. While we cannot assume that the assessment was necessarily accurate, it seemed worthwhile to get some idea of whether this variable impacted at all on the changes. In general, the greatest changes could be seen in those schools where there had been “some” input other than that of arepp: Theatre for Life, but not “lots”. Those with “some” input, showed the greatest change on “tolerance”, “self-esteem and self-awareness”, and “constructive relationships”. On “control” these learners showed the greatest change, equal to that of those who had had “little” input previously. On “options and consequences” those who had had “little” input showed a slightly bigger change. Those who had had “lots” of input showed relatively little change except on “constructive relationships”, while those who had no input at all other than from arepp: Theatre for Life showed no statistically significant change on the three indicators of “tolerance”, “constructive relationships” and “options and consequences”. In several instances, those who had had “some” input outscored those who had had “lots”, both initially and after the intervention. In one instance (“control”), those who had received “little” additional input outscored those who had received “lots” on the final score. On “tolerance” those who had received “lots” of input were strongest both before and after the arepp intervention. On “options and consequences”, those who had had “little” input started in fourth place and moved to first place. Those who had had “lots” started in second place and stayed there. Those who had had “none”, surprisingly started in first place but moved to third (this was, however, one of the indicators on which they showed no statistically significant change). Those who had had “some”, although they showed the greatest level of change, started in third place and ended in fourth. On “control”, “some input” started and ended in first place, “none” started and finished in second place, “Little” started in fourth place and moved to third, and “lots” started in third place and finished in last place. On “self-esteem and self-awareness”, those with “some” input started in third place but moved to first, those with no input started in first place and moved to second, those with lots of input started in second place and moved to third, and those with “little” input started in fourth place and stayed there. On “constructive relationships”, those with lots of input started in second position and moved to first (this was the one indicator on which they showed considerable change).²⁴ Those with “none”, started in first place and finished in second place (and showed no statistically significant change), those with “some” started in third place and stayed there, but showed considerable change, those with “little” started in fourth place and stayed there, but also showed quite a lot of change. The following table shows the degree of change for each indicator for each category. The figures give the difference between the mean scores from the first survey to the last.

²⁴ This also seems to fit with the notion of a continuum. It could be that those with a solid base on other indicators can now engage with relationship issues more strongly.

Level of inputs				
	Lots	Some	Little	None
Tolerance	0.4122	0.5701	0.3416	0.2230
Options and consequences	0.3648	0.6276	0.7300	0.0667
Control	0.2636	0.6654	0.6816	0.3542
Self-esteem and Self-awareness	0.4247	0.8752	0.7855	0.4128
Constructive relationships	0.7773	0.8901	0.6993	0.3247

These results are interesting. They suggest that the arepp:Theatre for Life presentations work best in soil that has, to some extent, been prepared but not over-prepared. When input reaches saturation point, learners may well “switch off” on certain indicators. However, this does not mean that they are not still open to change on others which are more engaging from their position on the continuum. When there has been no preparation, it appears to be more difficult for arepp:Theatre for Life to make a difference.²⁵

Matric pass rate

On the variable of matric pass rate, it is difficult to know how much one can infer from differences in the “poor”, “very poor” and “lamentable” categories as there were only two schools represented in each category (although, of course, learner numbers are higher than this.²⁶) In the “poor” category, neither “options and consequences” nor “tolerance” showed a statistically significant change, although there was a notable improvement on “control”, “self-esteem and self-awareness” and “constructive relationships”. In the “very poor” category, there was no statistically significant change in any of the indicators except “self-esteem and self-awareness” where it was quite considerable. In the “lamentable” category, the changes on “options and consequences” and on “constructive relationships” were not statistically significant, but again, the change on “self-esteem and self-awareness” was considerable. All the changes in the learners from schools that were in the “high” and “reasonable” categories were statistically significant. The change for those in the “high” group on “self-esteem and self-awareness” was relatively low, and considerably lower than in any of the other groups. The only group that did not show a considerable change on “constructive relationships” was the “lamentable” group where the change was negligible and statistically insignificant. These learners started with the weakest scores on all the indicators and ended there too. This raises the issue of how much the context impacts on the degree to which change is possible. If learners are not generally exposed to the role modelling of constructive relationships, either at school or at home, can they develop an internalised concept of such relationships?²⁷

²⁵ However, the comparison with the control group (see below) shows that, even if they improved least, the learners with no additional input, after two arepp shows outstripped those in schools with no additional input and no arepp shows on all the indicators.

²⁶ There were 614 to 268 learners in the “poor” category; 112 to 130 in the “very poor” category, and 402 to 198 in the “lamentable” category.

²⁷ We are aware that the assumption that these learners are not exposed to constructive relationships is rather sweeping. However, the very low matric pass rate does suggest problems at the school level

The response to the statement “I believe that it’s okay if I make mistakes” on this variable is also interesting. A relatively low percentage of those learners in the “poor” (56.1% to 72.1%), “very poor” (42% to 46.9%) and “lamentable” (45.5% to 57.5%) results categories agreed with this statement, both initially and in the final survey. A very high percentage of those in the “high” category (89.2% to 91.5%) and quite a high percentage of those in the “reasonable” category (71.8% to 86.5%) agreed with the statement. The percentages “not agreeing” were correspondingly high in the lower categories and low in the higher categories. This suggests that there may be a correlation between poor teaching and fear of making mistakes. This discrepancy was not repeated in response to the “I believe I can make a positive difference in other people’s lives” statement where differences between the categories in both the 2002 and the final survey were only minimal.

2.3 FINDINGS FROM THE CONTROL GROUPS

Once the external evaluation began, the concern was raised that, without control groups, any changes between the first survey responses and the last might simply be attributable to maturation. arepp:Theatre for Life and the evaluators then decided to attempt to address this by setting up control groups that were comparable to the groups in the evaluation schools. However, it was necessary to take into account that these control groups would be conducted in the first quarter of 2005. This meant that it would be more “like” to compare them with the survey questionnaires that had been administered in the same period to the evaluation project schools, rather than with the final survey done later in 2004. Although selection history threat and selection testing threat still applied (i.e. the impact of intervening events and the different testing context), this would go some way towards looking at issues of maturation and would not be distorted by the mortality threat as all schools would be similarly affected by drop-out rates.

Twenty-nine control groups completed the survey questionnaire in February and March 2005, 16 in Gauteng and 13 in the Western Cape. All the learners were in Grade 12. In some cases they came from the same schools as the evaluation project learners, but had never seen an arepp:Theatre for Life presentation. As previous contact between arepp:Theatre for Life and the school had made no difference to the results from the evaluation project schools, this did not seem to be a problem. More problematic was that none of the control groups in the Western Cape came from Category A or Category B schools. Overall, there were five groups from Category A schools, three from Category B schools, six from Category C schools, seven from Category D schools, and eight from Category E schools. Once again, and for similar reasons, Category E was inflated.

The total number of learners in the control groups was 2 420. Of these, 856 were boys and 1 456 were girls. Thus, a higher percentage of the control group sample were girls than was the case with the original sample, but in both samples there were more girls than boys. There were no boys-only schools represented in the control group school sample. As in the original sample, most of the schools categorised

and, in our experience, this does often have to do with poor teacher/learner relationships and even teacher/teacher relationships.

themselves as “religious” (65.5% compared to 58% in the original sample). A higher percentage of the control group sample schools fell into the “high” matric pass rate than in the original sample. However, a higher percentage also fell into the “poor”, “very poor” and “lamentable” groupings put together.

The data analysis service provider provided an analysis of the difference between the control group sample responses and those from the original group for the third administration of the survey questionnaire. The original group (i.e. the evaluation project cohort) scored significantly better on “tolerance”, “options and consequences” and “self-esteem/self awareness”. There was no significant difference on “control”, and a minimal significant difference on “constructive relationships”. On all indicators, the original group were stronger than the control group. As in the original group, scores were weakest on “tolerance”. Without going overboard in terms of attribution, the significant differences do indicate that differences between the original scores for the evaluation project cohort and their later scores are not simply attributable to maturation. The learners who have been exposed to the arepp:Theatre for Life presentations show a significant difference, on at least three indicators (“tolerance”, “options and consequences” and self-esteem/self awareness”), from a comparable group that has not been exposed.

In some cases, groups in the control group had come from the same schools as learners in the evaluation project cohort. Comparisons on statements such as “When I am sexually active, it is my responsibility to protect others from diseases such as HIV/AIDS”, “HIV is mainly a sexually transmitted disease”, “I believe that women can do the same things that men can do” showed the evaluation project cohort at the same time (early in their Grade 12 year), repeatedly scoring more strongly than their school mates who had not been exposed to the arepp:Theatre for Life presentations.

However, on statements such as “Sex between people of the same sex is acceptable”, “I believe that sexual abstinence is an option for me”, the opposite trend was sometimes noticeable (i.e. the control group from the same school was stronger). This suggests, as do some of the earlier findings, that these are issues on which the arepp:Theatre for Life intervention is not making an impact.

Learners who came from control group schools that had had no additional input on sexuality and related issues were far weaker on all the indicators than were the learners in the arepp:Theatre for Life sample who had started the arepp process at schools with no additional input but had had two presentations from arepp at the point when the comparison was made. This suggests that, although this group did not necessarily learn the most from the process (see above), it did make a big difference to their views compared with others who did not have the input. This is the most useful indication that, even with the problems of attribution, the arepp presentations do make a difference (i.e. if x then y where x is the intervention and y is the impact).²⁸

²⁸ The 50 learners who fell into this category in the control group came from one A Category school which had not been involved in the evaluation project at all. In the original group from the evaluation project schools with whom the control group learners were compared, there were 364 learners from schools that had had no input.

2.4 ANALYSIS OF THE FOCUS GROUPS

Although the focus group input is qualitative rather than quantitative, we have included it here as a way of triangulating the results from the control groups in the statistical survey. The question for us was whether the differences between the learners in the focus groups who had been exposed to arepp:Theatre for Life presentations, and those who had not, in any way confirmed the statistical findings from the control group survey responses, and the gut level impressions of arepp:Theatre for Life personnel that the arepp:Theatre for Life input made a difference to the learners exposed to the presentations.

In total, there were 10 focus groups with learners who had been exposed to arepp:Theatre for Life presentations (arepp groups) and seven with learners who had not been exposed (control focus groups). In the arepp groups, there was a total of 44 boys and 51 girls and in the control focus groups, a total of 29 boys and 37 girls. This made a total of 95 in the arepp groups and 66 in the control focus groups. In the arepp groups, 67 were from the Western Cape and 28 from Gauteng. In the control focus groups, 16 were from the Western Cape and 50 from Gauteng. Of the schools represented in the arepp group, there were three in Category A and seven in Category C. In the control focus groups, there were five in Category A, one in Category B and one in Category C. All the learners were in Grade 12 at the time of the focus groups, although one arepp group and one control focus group were run at the end of 2004 and the rest in early 2005.

The same (experienced) facilitator ran all the focus groups. Except in one instance (where she felt the boys in the group were not serious), she thought that the learners took the discussions seriously, they were remarkably open and they did not try to give her the answers they thought she wanted to hear. The record of the focus group discussions bears this out. We acknowledge, however, that, while focus groups are a useful tool, many of the concerns about data collection and analysis apply to them (the influence of historical events, the bias of the facilitator and the person doing the analysis, just something as simple as whether the learners or facilitator are having a good or a bad day).

Nevertheless, and again without jumping to any dramatic conclusions about attribution, it was evident from the notes on the focus groups that those in the arepp groups were far more likely to argue and discuss issues among themselves than were those in the control groups. On the whole, learners in the arepp groups were far more vocal than those in the control groups and they seemed to have a better grasp of the issues. So, for example, when the facilitator asked for examples of high risk behaviour, all the arepp groups included high risk sexual behaviour but several of the control groups did not and instead listed things like gossiping about teachers and not doing homework. The emphasis in the arepp groups in relation to high risk behaviour was clearly linked to consequences and this was not evident in most of the control groups.

The input from the focus groups was analysed as follows:

- ◆ General comments about the arepp:Theatre for Life presentations and their impact (from those who had seen them).

And then analysis of attitudes around the arepp:Theatre for Life indicators:

- ◆ Options and consequences;
- ◆ Tolerance;
- ◆ Control; and
- ◆ Self-esteem/constructive relationships (these indicators merged in the focus groups and it was difficult to separate them out).

2.4.1 General comments

One of the reasons for conducting the focus groups was to get a sense of how those learners who saw arepp:Theatre for Life presentations reacted to them. The learners in the arepp groups were all from Category A or Category C schools. The statistical data suggests that learners from Category A and Category C schools are likely to have a noticeable increase in strength on all indicators. In terms of the arepp:Theatre for Life model, these learners are likely to be at an earlier stage on the continuum of impact at the beginning of the process than learners in the higher income Categories, D and E. We were interested to see just how the presentations had impacted on them and to what degree they had experienced some kind of a “mini-epiphany”. Most of the learners in the focus groups had seen presentations other than those of arepp:Theatre for Life as well. Initially, they could not think of anything that was “special” about the arepp presentations.²⁹ (Most of the learners in the control focus groups had also been exposed to some “dramatic” input on the issues.) However, most of them remembered the presentations and were able to distinguish them from others.³⁰ They also noted in the discussions that they felt “comfortable” with the arepp actors. In one group, they specifically mentioned that they did not feel embarrassed to discuss things that they would not normally discuss:

I remember that one guy asked if you would get AIDS if you sucked your girlfriend's vagina and they answered straight.

Those who remembered well repeatedly commented on the fact that the presentations “rang true” and were “familiar”. In a number of cases they remembered the plot but, more often, they remembered the issues and many of them recalled the immediate impact on them of the presentations, even when these had been up to two years before. While some of the responses quoted were suspect because they lacked specificity (“Use condoms or abstain”), many seemed to arise directly from the plays:

It gave me the confidence to say “no” and not just do what my friends do. I don't let my friends dictate to me any more.

It made me think about my own life – I realised you don't need to fall for pressure from your friends. And I choose my friends more carefully now.

²⁹ Several of the learners said they preferred it when arepp did more than one production i.e. came back again. Some also felt that arepp needed to “brand” itself better.

³⁰ Some were vague and clearly not sure which of the inputs they had had was from arepp:Theatre for Life. On the whole, the learners in the Western Cape remembered detail better than those in Gauteng.

I walk away. I got rid of friends who used drugs and were a bad influence.

I thought: You don't have to take abuse from anyone.

It showed me how guys use girls. (Girl)

Boys usually tell girls that, if they love them, they must have sex – but the play made me feel differently. (Boy)

Now I think about choices all the time. I realised life is about the choices you make and that you have to deal with the consequences. It made me rethink unprotected sex.

I understood that people make mistakes.

It made me more understanding and accepting of people's differences. Everyone is different and we must accept them as such.

Most of the groups said that the presentations had led to much discussion in the cohort that had seen them:

As a group, we felt like we had shared something and wanted to talk about it and about our own situations more openly.

I think it made us more supportive of one another.

On the other hand, in one of the groups the feeling was:

It made the group more tolerant and supportive – but not for long!

And another:

As individuals there was a change but not as a group.

While it is difficult to define exactly what a “mini-epiphany” is, and we did not speak to the learners immediately after the initial impact, the presentations certainly seem to have made an impression and, as one learner said, to have made “us think twice”.³¹ They seem to have allowed the audiences to internalise the issues and make them their own, to have raised the awareness of participants about their self-worth, to have used the micro-community effectively to reinforce the impact.

2.4.2 Options and consequences

Most of the learners, from both the arepp:Theatre for Life groups and the control groups, believed that they should be role models for others in society and that, to that extent, what they did mattered. Learners in both groups felt that what one did

³¹ Any behaviour changes claimed suffer the dubiousness of being “self-reported” but several of the learners said they had stopped drinking or smoking or smoking marijuana.

reflected on what one was and also on one's parents and this was important to them. The learners in some (not all) of the arepp:Theatre for Life groups were, however, far more considered and articulate about these issues:

I need to ask myself: Do my decisions build or destroy?

I need to think about my future input in the country – I am going to be a parent, a teacher of tomorrow.

When I am a parent, I want my children to respect the choices I have made.

You are part of your community. You make your community.

While it came out more often in the arepp:Theatre for Life groups, the sense of being part of a community and one's choices making a difference in the community was also there in at least one of the control groups:

Yes. What you do matters. If you are a human you can't live like an animal. You always have to depend on people and people have to depend on you.

The arepp:Theatre for Life groups articulated a sense of responsibility more clearly:

You should wait (for sex) until you are economically ready and can deal with the consequences (babies).

A child needs to grow up with both parents.

But it was there in the control group learners who expressed it more like the learner who said:

It is OK to have sex if you are over 21.

Learners in the arepp:Theatre for Life groups were more likely to say that it was the responsibility of both the boy and the girl to avoid an unwanted pregnancy.

Despite their understanding of the need to consider consequences, very few of the learners in either the control groups or the arepp:Theatre for Life groups saw celibacy as an option for them. On this, the learners in the control groups were less politically correct than those in the arepp:Theatre for Life groups:

A man has needs.

At this school, girls want to be forced – they don't like it at the time but they go back for more.

Absolutely not (re celibacy)!

But when the facilitator "polled" the learners in the arepp:Theatre for Life groups, it was clear that very few of them saw celibacy as a realistic option. This is borne out by the statistical findings as well.

Most of the arepp:Theatre for Life group respondents said they would use condoms, but, when they were pushed it was clear that it was not as simple as that. In one group of six girls, when pushed, four said they would not. The boys were also very ambivalent:

I'd only use a condom if it was a decent girl.

It depends on the moment, time, mood.

The same applied to the control group learners. Some were quite clear that they would:

I don't want to die so I would wear a rubber suit.

But several of the control group boys voiced their ambivalence along the lines of:

If you love a person you don't use condoms because it shows a lack of trust.

2.4.3 Tolerance

As is noted above, this indicator was not well defined in the learner survey questionnaires. In the focus groups we looked specifically at:

- ◆ Homosexuality
- ◆ Abortion/unwanted pregnancy
- ◆ Gender differences

Although we did not explore issues of discrimination around HIV/AIDS specifically, most of the focus groups took place just after Nelson Mandela's revelation that his son had died of an AIDS-related sickness and the facilitator discussed this in the focus groups. Most of the learners in both the arepp:Theatre for Life and the control groups said that it showed that AIDS could happen to anyone. While they had some concerns about confidentiality, they thought he had been right to make the revelation "because people don't believe there is AIDS". Very few mentioned the importance of countering stigma specifically, and those who did were in arepp:Theatre for Life groups.

While there were high levels of intolerance in both groups (arepp:Theatre for Life and control), there was more doubt and less conviction about intolerant views in the arepp:Theatre for Life groups. On gender differences, the arepp:Theatre for Life groups were more open.

Homosexuality

A large number of the learners in both the arepp:Theatre for Life and the control groups insisted that homosexuality was illegal. Some who doubted this thought it should be so! There were plenty of learners in the arepp:Theatre for Life groups who made comments such as:

Disgusting! (arepp:Theatre for Life group boy)

But there were also some who took a softer line, mainly among the girls.

It's acceptable if you love someone. (arepp:Theatre for Life group girl)

If you have feelings for someone, you can't compromise on your happiness.
(arepp:Theatre for Life group boy)

I would support a gay friend - but I don't want the details. (arepp:Theatre for Life group girl)

If you develop feelings for someone, you can't push them back. (arepp:Theatre for Life group girl)

If a friend approached me in that way I would make it clear how I felt but I wouldn't dump her. (arepp:Theatre for Life group girl)

Control group learners were more uniform in their condemnation:

It's wrong. (control group girl)

Hang them! (control group boy)

It's culturally unacceptable. (control group boy)

If you can't persuade them to get involved with the appropriate sex – the rope!
(control group boy)

Abortion/unwanted pregnancy

This issue led to lots of discussion among the arepp:Theatre for Life group learners, with opposing views on whether a foetus was a child or a blessing from God. The girls tended to be less rigid, putting forward arguments such as “is life in a shack so precious?” and, in some cases, the boys conceded in the end that “the girls convinced me that it (abortion) is sometimes OK”.

Abortion is bad but it depends on the situation. (arepp:Theatre for Life group girl)

The baby could be the president one day but sometimes you can't look after the child. (arepp:Theatre for Life group girl)

The girl deserves a second chance and abortion gives her that. (arepp:Theatre for Life group boy)

The girls, on the whole, believed that a girl who got pregnant should be entitled to an education, whether she had the child or not. Boys were less sure of this.

Girls fall pregnant for money and to keep their boyfriends – they must deal with the consequences. (arepp:Theatre for Life group boy)

Girls shouldn't stay in school if they are pregnant – it is a bad example for the lower grades. (arepp:Theatre for Life group boy)

Girls shouldn't come to school – they might injure themselves or get emotional. (arepp:Theatre for Life group boy)

It's right for boys to come to school and not girls – the boy has to support the child. (arepp:Theatre for Life group boy)

The girl must stay at home to look after the baby and the boy must go to school to learn how to support the baby. (arepp:Theatre for Life group boy)

It's the girls who open their legs – they must take responsibility. (arepp:Theatre for Life group boy)

The boys should also leave. (arepp:Theatre for Life group girl)

Most of the control group learners, boys and girls, agreed that abortion was immoral, although one boy said maybe it would be alright if the girl was raped and a few of the girls said that there might be circumstances that made it alright. There was far less discussion and argument in the control groups around this issue.

It (abortion) is a sin, it is murder. (control group girl)

Gender differences

What can't girls do? According to the arepp:Theatre for Life group learners:

- ◆ Girls can't shoot someone, or rob, or steal.
- ◆ They can't rape.
- ◆ They can't fix a car.
- ◆ They can't do technical things.

According to the control group learners, girls can't:

- ◆ Play rugby.
- ◆ Take leadership roles.

Some of the arepp:Theatre for Life group learners had very fixed ideas about gender differences. In one group, four out of five boys said:

I don't think it is right for men and women to do the same thing.

Those in the control groups agreed:

Man is the breadwinner and can do what he wants. (control group boy)

Women who play soccer are lesbians. I prefer a lady. (control group boy)

We are much stronger ... they think they are like us but they don't have leadership qualities. (control group boy)

For leadership it needs to be strictly a man. (control group girl)

But those in the arepp:Theatre for Life groups were more willing to concede that some of the distinctions were person-made and not biological destiny:

Men dominate the corporate world but it doesn't have to be like that. (arepp:Theatre for Life group boy)

Despite the concerns about this indicator (tolerance) in the survey questionnaires, on the whole the focus groups bore out the findings of the statistical data that those learners who had been exposed to the arepp:Theatre for Life presentations were likely to be more tolerant on key issues such as gender differences. To some extent, although with a long way to go, it seems that they are more tolerant of homosexuality and more open on issues such as abortion and teenage pregnancy.

2.4.4 Control

This was another area in which the learners from the arepp:Theatre for Life groups were far more articulate about their feelings, and they also seemed to have a greater sense of their ability to control their lives and destinies. However, when it came to sex, both the arepp:Theatre for Life and the control group learners had serious doubts about their control. These doubts were often different for boys and girls.

Boys focused on their “needs”:

Sex is not in one's control. (arepp:Theatre for Life group)

I can't control myself. (arepp:Theatre for Life group)

Control is limited by passion. (arepp:Theatre for Life group)

You want to do it so you do it. (arepp:Theatre for Life group)

The boys in the control groups, while agreeing with this, also had more of a tendency to “blame” the girls:

It's difficult to resist the girls when they tempt you.

It is girls who are responsible – they attract boys by wearing short miniskirts and give boys mixed signals.

Girls did talk about “getting carried away”, but girls in both the control groups and the arepp:Theatre for Life groups also expressed a sense of vulnerability:

Sometimes you can be forced. (control group)

If your partner disagrees you might have to compromise.
(arepp:Theatre for Life group)

One girl in a control group, perhaps trying to show that girls do have control, said, somewhat pathetically:

If a girl is walking at night and a boy grabs her she must say that she won't unless he uses a condom.

The other major issue around control was peer pressure and this overlapped considerably with issues around self-esteem. Learners in both the arepp:Theatre for Life groups and the control groups described the desire to resist peer pressure but also a desperate need to be accepted:

I don't want to be alone. (arepp:Theatre for Life group)

I am afraid to lose my friends. (arepp:Theatre for Life group)

I want a feeling of belonging. (arepp:Theatre for Life group)

When I resist peer pressure I feel stupid, wrong, out of sync. (arepp:Theatre for Life group)

They think you are a jerk if you don't do what your friends do. (control group)

Boys pressure each other to have sex. (control group)

However, learners in the arepp:Theatre for Life groups seemed to feel that they should and could resist this to some extent:

It's very difficult. You end up thinking "why not?" about everything. But you have to resist it otherwise saying "yes" just becomes a habit. (arepp:Theatre for Life group)

Now I think: if my friends are pressurising me to do something I don't want to do, I should just get new friends. (arepp:Theatre for Life group)

Now I am in Grade 12 I have fewer friends, more of a sense of humour. I feel more in control. (arepp:Theatre for Life group)

Now I am in Grade 12 I use common sense about chicks. (arepp:Theatre for Life group)

Being in Grade 12 was definitely a factor for both groups, Those who had got to Grade 12 were, in a sense, an elite and they recognised this and felt that they had to take their work seriously. This meant exerting more control.

2.4.5 Self-esteem/constructive relationships

Many of the comments on peer pressure belong here as well. So, for example, one of the control group girls admitted:

If I want to be friends with someone badly enough I will bow to peer pressure.

One boy in an arepp:Theatre for Life group was honest about wanting to be “cool” and said

I try to be myself as much as possible.

Learners in the arepp:Theatre for Life groups were more likely to say that they felt they were respected than those in the control groups. They made statements such as the following more often than those in the control groups³²:

When you feel respected, you are not afraid to take risks.

It doesn't matter if people love you or not, as long as you love yourself. When you respect people, they respect you.

Asked what they would look for in a good relationship, they said things like love, respect, honesty, communication. One group noted that such things are not that common in relationships they had observed. The learners in the control groups could not really articulate, certainly not this clearly, what they were looking for in a good relationship.

The indicators tend to merge in the focus groups, where discussion is led, to some extent, by the participants. The focus groups were not the main part of the external evaluation and were added as a way of testing the statistical findings further. They yielded fascinating input and did, on the whole, in terms of the overall set of issues with which arepp:Theatre for Life is concerned, show encouraging results. There did seem to be a greater sense of self-efficacy in the arepp:Theatre for Life group learners than in the control group learners, and a greater openness and willingness to discuss issues and argue them through. The focus group facilitator had one general comment to make about all the learners, those in the arepp:Theatre for Life groups and the control groups:

They are lovely kids – open and bright and engaged.

That in itself should be a great encouragement to arepp:Theatre for Life in its endeavours.

2.5 CONCLUSIONS FROM EVALUATION PROJECT STUDY

The statistical and focus group findings confirm a number of things that arepp:Theatre for Life knew at a “gut level”. So, for example, it is clear that learners

³² Which is not to say that no-one in a control group expressed such feelings. It was just much rarer. And there was a noticeable difference (actually counted) between the control groups and the arepp groups in terms of their sense of being respected.

are at different points on a continuum of self-efficacy and the weaker they are in this regard, the greater the difference is likely to be after intervention. While some of the differences between the 2002 and end of 2004 surveys may be a result of maturation, there is an indication that the arepp:Theatre for Life approach has a specific impact. The clearest indication of this is the fact that, when learners had had no previous input and then had two arepp:Theatre for Life presentations, they out-scored those in the control groups who had had no previous input either but did not get the arepp:Theatre for Life presentations. In other words, if x (the arepp:Theatre for Life presentation), then there will be y (a change in sense of self-efficacy). This does not mean that “x” could not work equally well if it were some other intervention, but it does mean that arepp:Theatre for Life is not wasting its time and donors’ money. In addition, the focus group comparison does indicate that the arepp:Theatre for Life intervention has a specific effect.

The findings also seem to confirm at least some of the arepp:Theatre for Life expectations about impact:

- ◆ Improved understanding about gender equality;
- ◆ A more constructive view of relationships;
- ◆ An understanding that there are choices, that people have the right to make choices, and that some choices are more constructive than others, even when they do not necessarily make constructive choices;
- ◆ Greater tolerance around making mistakes – both for oneself and for others;
- ◆ A strong sense that one can make a difference in one’s community;
- ◆ Increased self-esteem.

It also does seem, from the focus groups, that the arepp:Theatre for Life approach encourages a degree of openness, plain speaking and debate.

We think it is fair to say that this adds up to “increased self-efficacy”.

There also seems to be a fairly clear indication that arepp:Theatre for Life is not really winning the battle (and nor is anyone else) on issues such as:

- ◆ Celibacy as a real option;
- ◆ Condom use;
- ◆ Homophobia (although those with arepp:Theatre for Life exposure appear to be less homophobic).

It is worth noting some findings for arepp:Theatre for Life writers and, particularly, actors to keep in mind:

- ◆ Girls seem to be more open and tolerant on key issues than boys;
- ◆ Co-ed schools seem to create an environment where learners are able to grow in self-esteem but less so in tolerance;
- ◆ Learners in small schools start off stronger on most indicators;
- ◆ The learners from the less affluent schools are less likely to be tolerant of homosexuality;
- ◆ Boys find it harder to accept that it is alright to make mistakes;

- ◆ Learners from schools where teaching is worse (indicated by poor matric results) are less likely to feel it is alright to make mistakes.

Some of the useful learnings that emerge for arepp:Theatre for Life, and which may influence how it does its work in the future, include:

- ◆ There is a need to check that the transfer of information has not been compromised, for whatever reason, and to reinforce it, particularly where historical events may impact negatively on it.
- ◆ It seems that, while arepp:Theatre for Life does impact on the cohorts that see its presentation, it does not make an impact on the school as a whole.
- ◆ The presentations are more likely to have a greater impact when there has been “some” previous input but not “lots”.
- ◆ Position on the continuum affects the ability to “learn” – this may mean huge impact on indicators such as “self-esteem/self-awareness” for those just starting along the continuum, and almost no impact on something like “constructive relationships”, whereas those much further along may show little improvement on “self-esteem/self-awareness” but more on “constructive relationships” and “tolerance”.
- ◆ Learners in general have a sense of community and of being part of a community that is important in the development of their self-efficacy and probably to the form it takes.
- ◆ There is lots of work still to be done around issues of gender equality.
- ◆ There is lots of work still to be done around tolerance and human rights in general and the de-stigmatisation of a range of issues including homosexuality, HIV/AIDS, abortion, teenage pregnancy.

We believe that arepp:Theatre for Life staff could usefully explore the output of the data analysis in more detail than has been possible here. There is a commitment from arepp:Theatre for Life to incorporating some form of statistical data collection and analysis into its work in a more routine way in future. This should include:

- ◆ Revision of the indicators and the survey questionnaire;
- ◆ Clarity on the variables about which information is needed and improved methods of collecting this information;
- ◆ Review of the administrative systems that support the process;
- ◆ Ongoing entering of the data on a programme like SPSS;
- ◆ Regular analysis.

We are aware that arepp:Theatre for Life is already experimenting with a process which involves comparing feedback from some learners, the actors and educators on the same set of indicator-related questions, after a performance, as a way of triangulating perceptions of impact. We see this as a useful way of ensuring that there is ongoing monitoring of impact and as a way of increasing the rigour with which the actors assess their own work in each school. The ability to do this effectively has clearly been enhanced by the rigour engendered by the evaluation project. The building up of a comparative statistical data set over a three year period remains, however, a unique attempt for the organisation to move “beyond gut

feeling.” Although scientifically flawed (perhaps inevitably, given the context), we believe it has been a very worthwhile exercise.

SECTION 3: FINDINGS FROM OTHER INPUT TO THE EXTERNAL EVALUATION

3.1 INPUT FROM arepp:Theatre for Life STAFF

The arepp:Theatre for Life staff believe in the arepp:Theatre for Life model and, at a gut level, are convinced that it works and that what they do makes a difference to the young people with whom they work. Nevertheless, they acknowledge the limitations of the model and also engaged fully with the attempt to apply more rigorous methods to evaluating the degree of impact. So, for example, they understand that the arepp:Theatre for Life level individual intervention cannot solve major societal problems that result in teenage pregnancy or HIV/AIDS. They know that to create an ongoing impact, more than one intervention is needed, but they believe that “one event can totally change people”. They believe that what they do does support those who become pregnant or are living with HIV/AIDS to do so with a greater degree of self-efficacy and a lesser degree of victimisation. They also believe that the schools with which they work become “healthier”, at least during the time of the cohorts with whom they work.

There was consensus from all the staff members whom we interviewed that the evaluation project and three year process had been enormously useful, both in helping them understand what they are doing and what they are trying to achieve, and also in improving the quality of their work. As the Executive Producer overseeing the evaluation project said:

Focusing on indicators made me aware it was not so simple – we kept refining them more and more. It meant grappling with ideas and finding ways of discussing them. It led to our understanding of attitude change and behaviour change as a process. We can see that when we measure impact we are measuring the potential for change. That is what we are increasing. We got a clearer and clearer idea of what we were trying to achieve. It showed in the training of the teams – they grew by leaps and bounds. The teams began to see the real issues underneath the questions and to handle them much better.

Another Executive Producer said that the process had led to more rigorous selection of the actors and to a change in the training to allow actors to grapple more with their own lives to prepare them for dealing with those of the learners. She sees the evaluation project as being “much more important for what we can learn than for what we can prove to the donors”.

This engagement by the team has, by all accounts, kept them aware of what the work they are doing is trying to achieve and has pushed them to pick up on problems and necessary changes. The actors say they approach both the performance and the facilitation differently now that they have a more in-depth understanding of what they are doing. This understanding gives them a picture of where they are working best and in what circumstances they are more likely to achieve the desired end, which is, in essence, that audiences know they can address issues themselves, that they have a sense of self-efficacy. It also seems to give a greater “gravitas” to the actors in the perception of the school. The actors noted in an interview that the

educators from the evaluation schools took them more seriously and not just as a bit of entertainment for the learners and free time for themselves.³³ There are still challenges around measuring self-efficacy which is, in fact, different from the indicators with which the evaluation project has been working. But one of the major learnings from the process has been the importance of asking the right questions and being clear about what answers can be expected to answer or measure. This is learning that can be carried forward in future work.

Their growing understanding of the continuum along which learners move in being “prepared” or ready for change (a continuum that is reflected quite clearly in the results of the quantitative study), has enabled the company to refine the arepp:Theatre for Life input. It has also reinforced their belief that while, in general, impact comes from ongoing and supported input, it is possible for one event to change people and their approach to life dramatically. Such events can range from, as in one school, the suicide of a learner, to an “aha!” experience during the kind of presentation that arepp:Theatre for Life gives.³⁴ The actors interviewed described:

when you see that moment that the light bulb goes off in a child’s head – it is a very rewarding experience, even if it is only one child.

3.2 COLLABORATION - EMBEDDING THE WORK

One of the tenets of the arepp:Theatre for Life work has been that there is a need to embed the work done by arepp:Theatre for Life in the school and local context so that there is preparation before the arepp:Theatre for Life presentation and support afterwards. There is, in principle, agreement on this, and a belief that “you don’t want to leave the kids more vulnerable and exposed than they were before”, “just a show and discussion would be irresponsible”. Despite this, arepp:Theatre for Life has struggled to find an appropriate and effective way to implement its understanding of the importance of this aspect of the work. arepp:Theatre for Life has envisaged three possible ways of embedding its work in this manner: in the school context by working with the educators; in the national and provincial education departments by fitting in with the curriculum for life orientation; and in the community through working with organisations already active there.

3.2.1 Embedding the work in the schools

One of the arepp:Theatre for Life Executive Producers noted that it should be the organisation’s role to “support the school so that it is better able to support its learners”. He would like to establish partnerships with the schools and to facilitate the schools forming partnerships with support organisations working in their communities. At the moment, this relationship is not working as well as it might.

³³ So, for example, they describe educators walking across the stage where they were performing and putting out cooldrinks on the crates they were using for props!

³⁴ Indeed, it is the recognition of the potential power of a dramatic presentation that makes society so concerned about the impact of violent or controversial television and that leads to warnings such as “parent control advised”.

On the whole, the educators with whom we spoke³⁵ (and this applied also to the completed evaluation sheets done by the educators after a presentation) were positive about arepp:Theatre for Life. They liked the youth of the cast, the use of a number of languages and the way in which the shows were presented with an emphasis, as one said, “on others are also going through this; you are not alone”.³⁶ Said one educator:

They come and do what they are tasked to do in a simple but profound way.

The educators with whom we spoke believed that arepp:Theatre for Life presentations encouraged the learners to “speak openly about the issues” and that the discussion with the cast went further than most similar interactions and that the actors became role models for the learners.³⁷ One educator said:

We were teaching the same things in class, but not getting through to the kids. They did ... afterwards some of the kids came and talked to me about what adults did to them outside of school.

One of the biggest attractions for the schools seemed to be that arepp:Theatre for Life is not a “one issue organisation” and deals with a range of issues, interacting with one another.³⁸

Most educators found arepp:Theatre for Life administratively “on the ball”, “very efficient”, “very professional”, “efficient and professional, but warm”. Those who understood what the evaluation project was trying to achieve thought it was important:

It is very difficult to measure but it is important. You can't offer kids something and not know if it is getting somewhere or not.

Anecdotally, several of the teachers said that they believed that the evaluation project cohort (which had had three presentations over three years) had had fewer problems than was usually the case. They were referring to discipline issues, the use of marijuana, gambling and pregnancy. One said that there were normally up to about 10 pregnancies in a cohort but that this cohort had had only two, another that there had been no pregnancies in the cohort although there usually were some every year, and yet another that there were usually five or six pregnancies a year, but none in that cohort. The difference, however, seemed to be more in attitude:

³⁵ Interviews covered Category A, B, C, D and E schools.

³⁶ The perception of the educators about what arepp:Theatre for Life is trying to achieve is not always the same as that of arepp:Theatre for Life. So, for example, one educator talked about the presentations “always showing what is the right and what is the wrong way”, which is not the intention at all. However, another had it absolutely right: “They were non-judgmental – they just showed the kids alternatives.”

³⁷ One educator said: “There were some teachers who thought the show was leading the kids to hell”; another said: “one teacher thought it was a bit ‘in your face’”. From the cast reports, it does seem that the audiences were eager to talk about issues such as masturbation, homosexuality, eating disorders, pregnancy tests, suicide, abortion and even whether the size of the penis “counts”.

³⁸ Most of the school where we spoke to educators had had other external interventions from organisations such as LoveLife, Narcotics Anonymous, Dance for Life, FAMSA, SANCA, Drugwise, Scripture Union, Youth in Action.

But it's attitude – they are active in sport, dance, they model, act on TV. They seem to know how to make positive life choices.

They know what they want from life and are trying to achieve goals.

They take responsibility for themselves and their friends.

The educators spoke of the learners from this cohort “being more able to deal with conflict”, “more self-directing in discussions around careers”, “better able to talk, even in English orals”.

Even with the caution of the attribution gap in mind, such comments are encouraging. They also confirm what came out of the focus groups and the quantitative data.

arepp:Theatre for Life does provide a lesson plan to educators as a follow-up to the presentation. However, one of the educators noted:

Teachers find it easier to follow a textbook. They need to do some sort of training of the teachers. If they present their lesson plan, teachers are more likely to use it. The way they do it now assumes that the Life Orientation teachers are trained in Life Orientation and they aren't.

A number of the educators interviewed had not seen the lesson plan at all. One said she had used the workplan but only once “because we have to teach trade and tourism in Life Orientation in Grade 11”. One of the Executive Producers told us that they had not had feedback on the lesson plan workbook and that they needed “to totally re-look at them and what they need to be”. He sees the purpose of the lesson plan as being to engage the educators and get them to engage with the issues.

3.2.2 Department input

We spoke with someone who had worked for the Gauteng Department of Education (Lifeskills Co-ordinator) and now is Deputy Director for HIV/AIDS in the National Department of Education, and with someone who is the Western Cape Education Department Co-ordinator of the provincial HIV/AIDS Lifeskills Programme. Both seemed to be in touch with the arepp:Theatre for Life work and the Western Cape person said arepp:Theatre for Life contacts him every year, invites him to see the productions and sends an Annual Report with the questions that young people are asking. According to him, the presentations meet the requirements of the Department in terms of language and the messages put out; the actors are well-trained and know how to deal with the educators if they are present; they pick up on issues that the educators are not comfortable with or that the learners are not comfortable talking to educators about. From his point of view, the presentations add value to Life Orientation, they are professional and they “deal with real issues in a responsible way”. He believes that the educators should be able to take it further and should be able to incorporate the issues and materials in their Life Orientation classes. He believes the arepp:Theatre for Life approach and understanding “need to be congratulated”.

The other informant (now National Department of Education³⁹) said that the Department knows that it needs civil society to complement its own programmes and, so, programmes of this kind, which are in line with government programmes are welcome. They support the Life Orientation curriculum and should support learning outcomes for this area in future. In addition, they expect such programmes to put out an ABC (abstinence, be faithful, condomise) message and to be age appropriate. He approved of the emphasis on skills such as assertiveness, informed decision-making and making positive life choices. He also noted that arepp:Theatre for Life presentations received a good response from schools and that there were reports of requests from schools for the presentations.

From this, it would appear that the various Departments of Education are positively disposed towards arepp:Theatre for Life and that the ground has been prepared for further interaction, in line with the organisation's own thinking about greater integration of its work into the Life Orientation approach. This will probably require some more research into the decision to make Life Orientation a compulsory and examinable Grade 12 subject, to be introduced from Grade 10 in 2006. This could well be an exciting opportunity for arepp:Theatre for Life. It could also be a death knell for the sexuality aspect of Life Orientation as a relevant subject for youngsters. The challenges to keep the issues meaningful and intimate in the context of an "examinable subject" are great.

3.2.3 Input from other organisations

Collaboration with other non-governmental organisations (NGOs) has long been an aim of arepp:Theatre for Life. While it has still not been integrated as part of the programme, arepp:Theatre for Life staff members have been maintaining and attempting to build on contacts in the NGO sector for some time. So, for example, in Gauteng relevant NGOs are invited to attend showings of the arepp:Theatre for Life productions, they receive regular updates on what is happening on the arepp:Theatre for Life schedule and annual reports, all of which they seem to value. There have been some joint activities with NGOs in Gauteng (Childline, the National Institute for Crime Prevention and the Reintegration of Offenders [NICRO] and Nisaa were all mentioned). However, there are problems with scheduling (for example, Childline only works one day a week in schools, and it works provincially rather than nationally) and with ensuring that there is a concurrence of approaches or, at least, not a clash⁴⁰. There have been some recorded successes in collaboration. In one area, for example, after an arepp:Theatre for Life tour, Childline reported a 37% increase in calls.

We spoke with representatives of Childline and NICRO. Both organisations were positive about the arepp:Theatre for Life presentations:

They are quite unique and clear and specific.

³⁹ And also on the arepp:Theatre for Life board.

⁴⁰ For example, one person with whom we spoke felt that arepp:Theatre for Life should focus on one issue per production whereas arepp:Theatre for Life believes that it needs to integrate the complexity of the different issues and (see above) the schools find this one of the advantages of using arepp:Theatre for Life.

The actors are very skilled in facilitation, the issues are relevant, they situate the shows in life situations and do it very well.

It is a great organisation, with a sense of urgency, attempting to look at things and learn and grow.

Childline would like to see the actors better trained to deal with disclosures and trained social workers more closely involved. An arepp:Theatre for Life staff member described how, on one occasion, when there had been a number of disclosures during a session, the arepp:Theatre for Life team went to the local Child Welfare department and had a face-to-face debriefing with a social work practitioner. This proved to be very valuable for them, both in terms of dealing with their immediate feelings and in terms of dealing with future disclosures. Both the Childline and NICRO practitioners with whom we spoke were concerned about the lack of follow-through. One suggestion was that arepp:Theatre for Life spend more time in the schools so that educators are more involved.

While there do seem to be a number of opportunities to embed the arepp:Theatre for Life interventions more firmly in the schools and communities in which it works, this aspect of the work has not yet been sufficiently explored, nor has it become an integral part of the work. Given that arepp:Theatre for Life fully acknowledges the importance of its work being embedded in this way, special attention should be paid to the area in the next strategic planning process.

SECTION 4: CONCLUSIONS

We have already noted the major specific conclusions that arise from the quantitative data. More generally, we make the following points:

- ◆ We believe that the arepp:Theatre for Life model, which emphasises the importance of a sense of self-efficacy in enabling young people to make informed choices, is a valid one. Our findings support this opinion although neither we nor arepp:Theatre for Life can take this further to measure the implications in terms of behaviour change. In any event, attributing behaviour change to any one intervention is not feasible in societies like ours in which there is a multiplicity of interventions and influences. Moreover, behaviour change itself needs to be explored as a concept. It is not as simple as “condom use” or even “abstinence”, although such choices will clearly have an impact on rates of HIV infection and teenage pregnancies. In a society where child and woman abuse, violence in general, HIV/AIDS, unemployment, crime, racism, homophobia, corruption and religious intolerance (to mention but a few of our problems) are rampant and often define the parameters of our behaviour, a more nuanced view of behaviour change is needed.
- ◆ We also believe that arepp:Theatre for Life implements its model self-consciously, rigorously, professionally, and with a commitment to quality and to learning from mistakes and experience that is rare in the not-for-profit sector and admirable.
- ◆ The arepp:Theatre for Life approach recognises that people operate from within different values frameworks (for example, and probably most predominantly, a religious framework). It accepts differing frameworks within the broad parameters of its own humanist and rights-based values framework. This provides for an intervention context that is non-judgmental but constructive and is one to which young people respond with openness and trust.
- ◆ The evaluation project has been of inestimable value in assisting arepp:Theatre for Life to understand better what it is trying to achieve and what it is possible for it to achieve, and to refine all aspects of the presentations. While valuable lessons can be learned from the quantitative data about impact of the arepp:Theatre for Life intervention, the findings of the evaluation project go far beyond this in highlighting a range of actual and potential issues that are currently impacting on young people in South Africa. Many of these require further exploration including:
 - the potential erosion of information and knowledge over time;
 - the meaning of celibacy and abstinence for young people;
 - attitudes towards condom use;
 - the tension between a progressive and tolerant legislative framework and often conservative and intolerant religious views;
 - how patriarchy plays itself out in the reality of the lives of young people;
 - the effect of poor schooling on a general sense of self-efficacy;
 - the consequences of high drop-out rates in terms of life orientation skills;

- the effect of poor schooling on how young people view themselves in relationships;
 - how young people understand “making mistakes” and the implications of this for their future;
 - how individual impact translates into community impact;
 - the implications of young people being at different points on the continuum of understanding, self-esteem, self-efficacy when it comes to making choices about the way they live their lives.
- ◆ The quantitative study also raised the question of assumptions that are taken as truisms but really need to be questioned. So, for example:
 - drop-out rates are not necessarily higher in lower economic category schools;
 - learners from higher economic category schools are not necessarily the ones most likely to learn from an intervention and a great deal depends on what the learning is and where on the continuum of self-efficacy growth learners are;
 - when a school is more religious, it is not necessarily true that it will be less tolerant of “aberrations”.
 - ◆ With all its flaws, the evaluation project did show that arepp:Theatre for Life is making a difference and it went far beyond “gut level” in doing this. In particular, we believe that it did show that: if x (the arepp:Theatre for Life intervention) then y (an impact on the sense of self-efficacy of the learners). This does not mean that: if z (some other intervention) then not y. Too often, however, y is assumed without being proven. arepp:Theatre for Life has gone beyond this and donors should be able to see that their funds are being well used.
 - ◆ Self-efficacy as an indicator of impact for arepp:Theatre for Life interventions needs to be thoroughly explored. What is self-efficacy? What tells us that self-efficacy is present? What are the consequences of self-efficacy? While, in general, as noted above, the indicators and statements linked to them need rethinking, we believe that self-efficacy is a key indicator for what arepp:Theatre for Life is trying to achieve.
 - ◆ Clearly, if arepp:Theatre for Life intends to continue to try to apply quantitative analysis to its impact, and we think it should, then the “science” could and should be improved. Partly, this can be achieved through aiming at a less ambitious system in terms of data collection and analysis and accepting a separation between the data collection and analysis system from the more basic administrative systems of the organisation. Partly, better administrative systems are needed. Mostly, however, and this was recognised by arepp:Theatre for Life early on in the process, more work needs to be done on the indicators and on how they can best be measured.
 - ◆ A major difficulty in the current external evaluation process was actually getting the impact analysis data entered on to a system that could provide useful reports. The fact that this process was delayed for three years, until the external evaluation, meant that problems that could have been picked up earlier were not addressed until the end of the process, and then could only be addressed fairly inadequately. The most important one here, from our point of view, was the

importance of having a control sample. Once we began looking at the statistical analysis of the arepp:Theatre for Life sample, the significance of having a control group providing comparable data was inescapable. It would have been useful, also, to be able to review the usefulness of the different variables earlier so that those which do show indications of being useful could have been more rigorously determined. In the end, the indications from the analysis are that gender, size of school, quality of education, level of input previously received are all variables that do affect impact. However, a useful finding for arepp:Theatre for Life is that the variable of previous contact with arepp:Theatre for Life in a particular school does not affect impact. This raises useful questions about the strategy of interaction with schools. Overall, for the system to be used as a monitoring as well as an evaluation system, arepp:Theatre for Life needs to have ongoing access to the data being generated.

- ◆ arepp:Theatre for Life also needs to think about whether it is possible for it to collect external data that confirms its findings about impact. Here we are talking about suicide rates, pregnancy rates, critical incidents of conflict, critical incidents of peer support. Attempts were made to get this kind of information for the evaluation project, but they were not adequate. arepp:Theatre for Life needs to decide whether there are better ways and whether they are worth the investment of time and money.
- ◆ There were problems with the administrative record-keeping in the evaluation project. There are simple practices which would make the production managers' lives easier and accessing information less time-consuming. These include standardising forms and making sure that the forms meet the purposes, using only one cover sheet, dating accurately, separating out information on each school more visibly, standardising alphabetical rules. We also believe it would be useful if project managers had a better understanding of the data collection and analysis process, including, for example, the role of school profiles and how the variables and control groups fit in to the overall process.
- ◆ arepp:Theatre for Life has not yet mastered the process of embedding its interventions in an ongoing supportive context, despite recognising the importance of this aspect. This may well require that it focus more on the aspect, at the expense of quantity in terms of numbers reached, in the future. Some of the legwork has been done in departments, schools and with other NGOs, but the programme design needs to incorporate this aspect directly, with the necessary investment in time and money to make it work.
- ◆ It is difficult to know exactly how much the evaluation project cost, in addition to the regular work of arepp:Theatre for Life which it encompassed. The records suggest that it is something in the region of R 160 000. In future, similar projects should cost considerably less. We think the money was well-spent.

Finally, we believe that the following questions posed for us as external evaluators of the evaluation project have been answered:

- ◆ Is it possible for an organisation such as arepp:Theatre for Life to go beyond gut level in assessing its impact?

- ◆ Did arepp:Theatre for Life succeed in doing this?
- ◆ Did the results show an impact?

The answer to all three questions is “yes”.

SECTION 5: RECOMMENDATIONS

The recommendations are not intended as a blueprint but rather as suggestions, in the context of the report as a whole.

5.1 BROADER PROGRAMME RECOMMENDATIONS

- 5.1.1 That, if arepp:Theatre for Life agrees with us that a sense of self-efficacy is the major impact it is trying to achieve, it spend time defining the term and developing sub-indicators that would signal its presence.
- 5.1.2 That arepp:Theatre for Life design its future programme so that embedding of the interventions in schools and communities is an integral part of the process. This may, at least initially, mean working with fewer schools and communities but ensuring that there is ongoing support for the interventions.
- 5.1.3 That arepp:Theatre for Life develop its own protocol for working with other organisations that covers clearly: why this organisation rather than another; advantages and disadvantages of the arrangement for arepp:Theatre for Life; what each of the parties expects to gain from working together; how communication will take place and who will be responsible for it; how the effectiveness of the joint work will be measured.
- 5.1.4 That more work be done on the model lesson plan, including modelling how, ideally, it should be used. This work should be done in the context of expected changes in the education system which are likely to see Life Orientation a compulsory and “examinable” Grade 12 subject.
- 5.1.5 That, in terms of content, arepp:Theatre for Life revisit some of the past themes (including provision of information and condom use), explore themes such as homophobia, tolerance in general and gender more, and include new themes such as community and being members of a community.
- 5.1.6 That more emphasis be put on “getting to know the school” in preparation for interventions. Here the concept of the continuum is important. In order for actors to go into schools with a better idea of where on the continuum learners are likely to be, the form of the prior contact needs to be reviewed. At the very least, production managers need clearer criteria for getting answers to questions about the context. So, for example, not just “How much previous input have the learners had?” but “How many external service providers have given input to this cohort on issues related to life or lifestyle choices in the past year?” “How many external presentations have there been for this cohort?” “What issues has this cohort covered in Life Orientation in the past year?” or other indicators for making the determination in a uniform way. arepp:Theatre for Life needs to agree on a limited number of variables that it thinks are important and explore only those.
- 5.1.7 That arepp:Theatre for Life agrees on a limited number of external impact indicators that it believes will support a finding that its work has an impact and then invest the necessary time and money on keeping data on these indicators up to date. Examples of such indicators are pregnancy rates and suicide rates within a school, violent incident rates, records of conflict resolution incidents, records of human rights-related incidents. To do this, it will be necessary, in some cases, to define the indicators clearly. So, for example, “Has there been any incident of conflict between learners during the

past year? How was it (were they) resolved?" On this basis, arepp:Theatre for Life will be able to categorise impact. It may be necessary to interview the principal to get useful information.

- 5.1.8 That the monitoring of the impact of each show through triangulating the perceptions of impact from the learners, educators and actors be reviewed in terms of value to arepp:Theatre for Life on a regular basis.
- 5.1.9 That more efficient and uniform administrative systems be put in place for storing and retrieval of data on each school. This should cover forms and formats, filing systems, cover sheet information, dating conventions, ordering and anything else that production managers agree is important. Information should be easily accessible to people who do not normally use the system.
- 5.1.10 That arepp:Theatre for Life address the issue of how better to brand itself so that the name and the intervention are inextricably linked.

5.2 RECOMMENDATIONS SPECIFIC TO THE EVALUATION PROJECT OR FUTURE SUCH PROJECTS

We believe that the evaluation project was very valuable, for arepp:Theatre for Life in terms of the learnings, for other organisations who wish to be more rigorous in looking at impact, for donors in demonstrating quantitatively the value of the work and, ultimately, and most importantly, for young people who get the benefit of an improved product. We, therefore, hope that arepp:Theatre for Life will attempt more such evaluation projects. If it does, we recommend the following:

- 5.2.1 That the indicators of impact be reworked (to ensure confidence in their reliability: that they are measuring what they say they are measuring), be made appropriate to the relevant age group; be, to the extent possible, standardised against existing instruments. Here all the issues raised by arepp:Theatre for Life itself (see Appendix 2) would need to be considered.
- 5.2.2 That control groups be established from the beginning of the project and be evaluated in the same way and at the same time as the arepp:Theatre for Life sample.
- 5.2.3 That the data from each evaluation intervention be entered immediately on to computer, using a programme such as SPSS, and then immediately be used to generate reports that could be useful to the ongoing development of the arepp:Theatre for Life programme. If arepp:Theatre for Life does the entering itself, then someone from the organisation needs to go on a course to learn how to use the software optimally.
- 5.2.4 That appropriate school and individual variables be identified initially and then that data be collected systematically and uniformly from the beginning of the project.
- 5.2.5 That production managers play a role in deciding on the variables and then in keeping up-to-date profiles of the schools involved.
- 5.2.6 That focus groups (both an arepp:Theatre for Life sample and a control sample) be conducted to provide confirmation (or otherwise) of the quantitative findings and for the rich texture they add to quantitative findings.

***Nell and Shapiro cc
April 2005***

APPENDIX 1: PEOPLE INTERVIEWED

arepp:Theatre for Life Staff Members

Gordon Bilbrough Executive Producer
Annette Brokensha Executive Producer
Charlene Le Roux Production Manager, Cape Town
Vusi Mpela Production Manager
Lulu Nxosi Production Manager, Gauteng and Mpumalanga
Brigid Schultz Executive Producer
Estelle Steenkamp Production Manager, KwaZulu/Natal

Teachers at evaluation schools

Miss G Bhikha Life Orientation Teacher, C J Botha Secondary School,
Bosmont
Mrs Marilyn Devlin Wendywood High School
Mrs B Fick Coronationville Secondary School
Miss F Joseph C J Botha Secondary School, Bosmont
Mr I P Lyon Principal, Ashton Combined School (by telephone)
Mrs N C Mafatshe Head of Guidance, Reasoma Secondary School
Mr Wayne Parsons Head of Careers, SACS
Mr W Swartz Tafelsig Secondary School
Mr D Tommi Head of Department, Gardens Commercial High School
Mr A Trout Deputy Principal, Uitzig Secondary School

Actor groups

Team X 2004

Tali Cerrati
Roxanne Mckaiser
Gustav Pöhl
Hein van Zyl

External Stakeholders

Navesh Asimkumar Childline
Lynn Cawood Director, Childline
Peter Fenton Co-ordinator, Provincial HIV/AIDS Lifeskills Programme,
Western Cape Education Department
Nico Giwu Diversion Co-ordinator, NICRO
Barbara Lancaster previously Head of Department for Child Rights and
Responsibility Project, Childline
Warren Parker Cadre
Brennand Smith Deputy Director, HIV/AIDS Director, Department of
Education

Focus Groups

arepp:Theatre for Life evaluation school groups

Cedar High School
KwaBhekilanga Secondary School
Modderdam High School
Mountview Senior Secondary School
Mpotsang Secondary School
Peak View High School
Perseverance Secondary School
Reasoma
Uitzig Senior Secondary School
Valhalla High School

Control groups

Kgothlang Secondary School
Bonteheuwel High School
Henry Gwala Comprehensive Secondary School
Landulwazi Comprehensive School
Lethukuthula Secondary School
Masiqhakaze Secondary School
Range High School

APPENDIX 2: PROBABLE REALLOCATION OF LEARNER QUESTIONNAIRE STATEMENTS TO FIT REVISED INDICATORS

arepp:Theatre for Life Executive Producer

March 4 2005

Options and Consequences: Learners have an increased understanding about the options and consequences of lifestyle choices.

1. HIV is mainly a sexually transmitted disease.¹
 2. I believe that I can always choose whenever I have sex and with whom.
 3. I know where to get help if I feel sexually threatened.
 4. I believe that sexual abstinence (not having sex until marriage) is an option for me.
 5. I believe that becoming parents is a choice my partner and I will make together.
-
4. My boyfriend/girlfriend is always someone I like a lot.²

¹ In hindsight I'm not sure if this question is about *Options and Consequences* at all, it's a question. Certainly it seems out of place here. I might consider dropping it.

² I think I would add this question previously in *Constructive Relationships* to this Indicator now.

Self-esteem & Self-awareness: There has been an increase in the learners' sense of worth, confidence, self-respect and self-knowledge.

1. When I look in the mirror I like what I see.
2. Most of the people I know like the "real me".
3. I believe that I am a decent person.
4. I believe that it's ok if I make mistakes.
5. I believe I can make a positive difference in other people's lives.

These are fine, and appear to be very similar to similar tests available on the internet.

Decisions: Learners are more able to make decisions regarding their own lives.³

1. I know what I want from life.⁴
2. I believe that I can achieve what I want from life.
3. I believe that I can make decisions that are right for me.
4. I don't always do what my friends do.
5. My friends respect what's important to me.

1. All my relationships (with friends, partners and peers) are based on trust and respect.⁵
2. I respect and I am respected by most of the adults around me.
5. If I didn't have a boyfriend or a girlfriend it would be OK.

³ This would be the new name and meaning for what was *control* previously

⁴ In hindsight I would drop this question, it's not a valuable question to ask adolescents, and I don't think indicative of anything arepp's trying to do, and far too vague and open ended.

⁵ I would add these three statements from *Constructive Relationships* to this Indicator now, though the 5th one might also be a self-esteem question.

Responsibility: Learners will accept more responsibility for their decisions.⁶

1. When I am sexually active, it is my responsibility to protect others from diseases such as HIV/AIDS.
2. When I have sex I believe it should be "real" (have meaning to me).
3. When having sex it should be an enjoyable experience for everyone involved.

6 Totally new indicator, but I would use the first three statements from *Value Judgements* here.

X

Tolerance & Open-mindedness: Learners have increased tolerance of alternate choices,⁷ beliefs, behaviours, lifestyles and views.

4. As long as you don't hurt others, sex with anyone is acceptable.⁸
5. Sex between people of the same sex is acceptable.

3. I believe women can do the same things that men can do.⁹

⁷ I don't think any of the statements we have are suited to this indicator at all, because our thought processes were so different and misplaced (see *After the Curtain*)

⁸ These two statements, because of the way they are phrased and in light of the rest of the questionnaire don't, in my view, test tolerance, because they ask from a personal point of view – i.e “would it be ok for me”. They also really only ask about homosexuality, I think. I would expect that here we are likely to get a +/-10% positive reading, matching the % of the population that is homosexual.

⁹ You might take issue here, but I would put this question here – for adolescents I think gender issues are very much about tolerance and understanding.