Star for Life

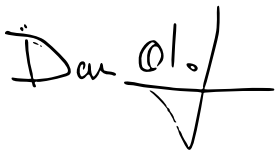
Dear partners,
At Star for Life we are fortunate to have Per Strand, a doctoral research manager. This is quite unusual, but is a reflection of just how important we regard science, impact, monitoring and evaluation. In this report, we present the results from Per's latest surveys, focusing on our students' attitudes and knowledge as well as their study results and exam grades.

Star for Life's work is based on a well-thought-out model in three stages, our Theory of Change, where we go step by step from knowledge, to changed attitudes to changed behaviour. The pertinent question is: Does the model work and does it produce results?

It is gratifying to see that the surveys that have now been carried out show significant improvements in the three steps as a result of Star for Life's work. You can read about this in the attached summary by Per Strand.

This work is only possible through the invaluable support we receive from our partners. You contribute to a better future for the many tens of thousands of young people who have the privilege of participating in the Star for Life programme.

A big and heartfelt thank you for your support
and wishing you a very Merry Christmas.



Dan Olofsson
Chairman Star for Life

"Education is the most powerful weapon you can use to change the world"

- Nelson Mandela

New evaluation shows positive results

Star for Life's model involves bringing about change by gradually moving from knowledge, to changed attitudes, to changed behaviour. The question is: Is it possible to see improvements in the students as they move through the steps?

Our Theory of Change - our model

The change that Star for Life contributes to usually starts with us giving students new knowledge. This happens through interactive exercises where our Coach guides the students to new insights, for example about their health and emotions, or about their education. In turn, this new knowledgsegives rise to changes in attitudes. The young people feel that they have the potential to create a better future for themselves. They begin to prioritise their health and homework. They start planning to succeed. It is no longer as ‘cool’ to live dangerously and not care. The third and crucial step in this change is that the attitudes lead to changes in their actual behavior.

Going step by step from knowledge to changed attitudes to changed behavior is the 'causal chain' that Star for Life's programme is based on. That is our Theory of Change .

How do we evaluate?

The aim of our evaluation is to test whether change really takes place in these three steps. Research-wise it is not an easy task, but we have an ambitious strategy where we use different types of data and analysis. Our students answer surveys, we interview students and teachers and we collect data from the authorities.

Pleasing results

In this report we would like to share our latest results and it is very good news to round off the year with.

2,500 students at 40 schools have participated in our recent surveys focusing on knowledge about HIV/Aids, self-esteem, and relationships with others and how to reach one's goals as well as academic results.

Let's start with knowledge, because when we compare the students' survey responses from 2023 when they started High School with their answers after almost two years with Star for Life, we see a strong increase in correct answers to questions about safe sex. 153% more of the girls have learned how to use protection so they don't have to rely on the man. When asked what they have learned from Star for Life, 63% of students say they have learned new things about their health in general, and as many as 78% say they have learned more about what HIV and AIDS are and how you can protect yourself. 27% more of both boys and girls learned that a girl can get pregnant the first time they have intercourse.

Through our discussions about feelings, self-esteem, and trustful communication the students are equipped to understand both themselves and others better. As many as 78% more think they understand themselves better, and 54% think they understand others more easily. It is this new knowledge about health, emotions and relationships that lays the foundation for changed attitudes – the second step in our causal chain.

More than two-thirds of students (69%) say they have learned that they have an inner potential to make their dreams come true. This is not 'knowledge' in the true sense but an attitude they have adopted with the help of Star for Life. An equal proportion of students (66%) say that Star for Life has made them feel more motivated to work hard at school. We can connect these results to what we learned in a series of in-depth interviews with former students in late 2023 and early 2024. Several of these said that Star for Life's greatest contribution was teaching how hope for a better future can be realised by creating an ambitious but realistic study plan for the years in High School when students are 13-18 years

old. They said that Star for Life did indeed inspire them to dream big, but that the most important was that they learned to plan concrete steps to make practical changes in their behaviour.

This is important because if we want to see real change in students' lives, if we want to help them realise a better life for themselves, then it is not enough that they learn new things or merely absorb positive attitudes. They must also change behaviours that might erode their dreams, e.g. stop using drugs or refuse unsafe sex. Instead, they must choose behaviours that lead to their success. This is nothing new, it applies to all of us, regardless of the change we want to bring about in our lives.

When attempting to measure impact in the social sector – even the most ambitious and resourceful – it is difficult to prove this last step in the causal chain. In previous evaluations, Star for Life has based the analysis on the students' own statements about how they behave, which is associated with a degree of uncertainty. In one case, however, using school authority data from 2013, we were able to show that the number of pregnancies in Star for Life schools in northern KwaZulu-Natal was 30% lower than in other comparable schools. In 2025, we hope to once again have access to this type of data, so we will report back on the results of that analysis. The official data that we have analysed in 2024 focuses on the students' academic results.

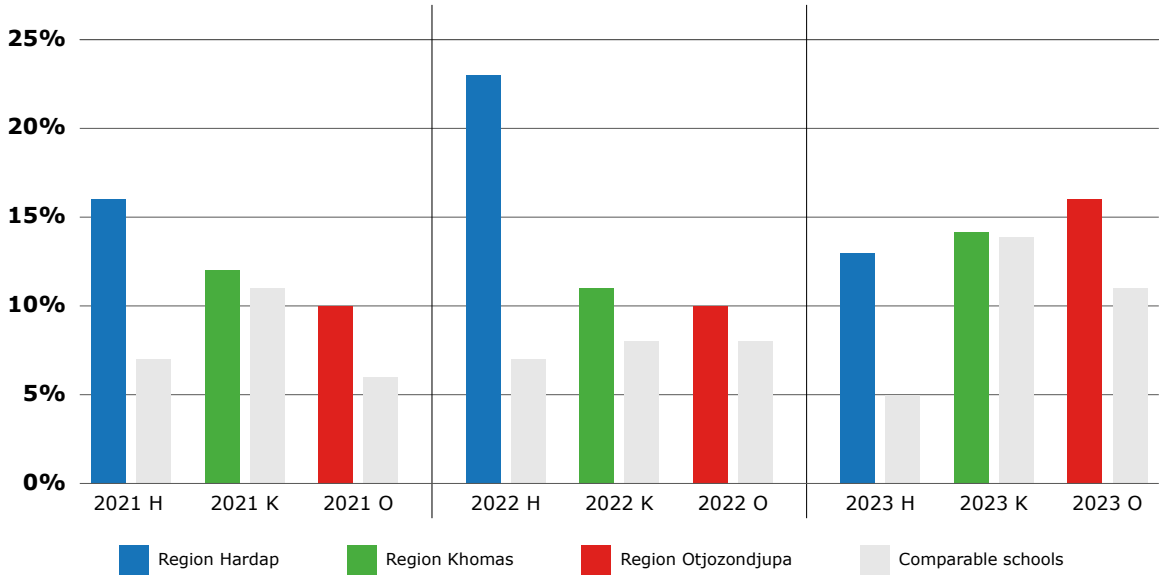
Several international analyses have shown that the type of programme that Star for Life runs can contribute to better academic results in the traditional academic subjects. The reason for this is that the programme helps students focus on their studies. Partly because we strengthen their motivation to study, but also because we help them deal with the stress that often affects them during puberty. The indicator 'academic results' is, so to speak, an indirect effect of our program.

Let's start with the academic results from South Africa. The students in year 12 sit a final exam, which in several ways determines how the students' lives develop after graduation. Those who succeed best can go on to university. Those who pass the basic degree level can go on to various more practical courses and thus have much better chances of getting a job. Our analysis shows that, for three consecutive years (2021-2023), a higher percentage of students at Star for Life schools passed this basic exam than students at other comparable schools in the same school district. Our results are even better than the national average (see table).

Year	Star for Life Average (%)	National average (%)
2021	78.2	75.7
2022	87.3	82.3
2023	91.1	85.2

Table. The percentage (%) of students who passed the basic exam level or higher, year 12 final exam, years 2021-2023.

In Namibia, the examination is handled a little differently. Already in year 11, students sit an exam that determines whether they qualify for further studies in year 12, which in turn gives them the chance to qualify for university studies. It is incredibly pleasing for us to be able to report that a higher proportion of our students managed to qualify for further studies compared to pupils in comparable schools in the three regions where we work. These results also apply to the years 2021-2023.



The percentage (%) of students in SFL which qualified for further studies in grade 12. H, K and O are different regions where Star for Life runs the programme.

Our work monitoring and evaluating impact involves many nuances and complications that cannot be described briefly. I therefore welcome questions and comments from about what I have written here, or about how we plan to measure impact in 2025. Do not hesitate to get in touch if you have any questions.

A big thank you for your support of Star for Life.
Together we are making a difference!

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