Sierra Leone Surf Therapy

Evaluation Report
Aberdeen Beach Pilot
August 2019 – May 2020

An evaluation of the impact of surf therapy on 15 young people between the ages of 10 to 18 from the Aberdeen community who are exposed to some social, economic and environmental challenges.
Mission Statement

We are Moseray Fadika Trust Foundation (MFTF) and we run the Aberdeen Wave Runners Surf Therapy programme, currently working with children and youth between the ages of 10 to 18 on a weekly basis at the Aberdeen beach community. These young people are exposed to some social, economic and environmental challenges.

MFTF provides a safe space, caring mentors, fun activities, copying and lifelong skills, and uses an evidence-based surf therapy programme to support these young people to become bold, confident, and positive role models in their community as well as being able to overcome challenges in their life and have good mental health.

Our commitment, like that of our founder, Ambassador Moseray Fadika, and the movement he spearheaded, is to contribute to the making of a just society that engages and empowers young people, listens to them, and help them work their way out of poverty. Our mandate is to promote Amb Fadika’s legacy and work by delivering sustainable development programmes and creating platforms for engagement around critical issues to eradicate poverty, create jobs, empower young men and women, advance education and health, and promote social justice.
Sierra Leone Surf Therapy

Background

Aberdeen is a coastal neighborhood in Sierra Leone’s capital of Freetown, founded in 1829 to provide accommodation for recaptives, liberated enslaved Africans, who had been brought to Freetown by the British Royal Navy West Africa Squadron.

Aberdeen is now the home of Sierra Leone’s amputee football club/league. The game is a bitter legacy of the civil war that terrorised the country of six million people for 10 years. Each of the player has his/her own horror story of war and how he lost a limb. Amputation was used by the rebels to send a message to opponents that they could act with impunity and would go to any lengths. Thousands of people are estimated to have had their limbs cut off.

The civil war in Sierra Leone ended in 2002, four years before Hollywood went to town with the Leonardo DiCaprio film Blood Diamond. In doing so, it arguably undermined the tourism industry; it’s a shame, given that the real jewels of Sierra Leone may just be the miles of stunning coastline draped around its capital, Freetown, bathed in tropical sunshine in the depths of Europe’s winter and less than seven hours from London. The war has long ended with no more blood diamonds! The country has excellent weather, beaches and islands, mountains and rich biodiversity, interesting wildlife, friendliness and rich social capital. Aberdeen is home to numerous up-scale restaurants, hotels, and other tourist facilities. The Radisson Blue Hotel, Mamba Point/Scarlett, Family Kingdom and Bintumani Hotel are all situated in Aberdeen, and shares border with the famous Lumley beach, which is also known for massive touristic attraction.

While some milestones have been achieved and development appears to be gathering pace in the country, Aberdeen’s young people are exposed to some social, economic and environmental challenges. The country has been bludgeoned over the last three decades by traumatic event after traumatic event — from the bloody violence and chaos of the civil war, to catastrophic natural disasters like the mudslide and flooding, through the Ebola virus disease epidemic, and now the COVID-19 pandemic. All these events and beyond have induced conditions from post-traumatic stress disorder and grief, to anxiety, depression, psychosis, acute stress, and harmful substance abuse. Combine this with autism, epilepsy, bipolar and psychotic disorders, intellectual and cognitive disabilities, and more, and we recognise that as a nation, we must act now. We must invest heavily in mental healthcare.

Indeed, prevention is critical to tackle mental health challenges. Since 2019, the Moseray Fadika Trust Foundation has been running a surf therapy programme in Aberdeen beach for youth and children who are exposed to some social, economic and environmental challenges and lack of opportunity. The team participated in the Wave Alliance surf therapy training and vetting process in Cape Town, South Africa. The training was supported by Comic Relief and the Swedish Postcode Lotto. This has helped the organisation design surf therapy programme that aligns with the needs of the Aberdeen community as well as best practice and evidence globally.
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Project Aims

1. Through access to a safe space, caring mentors, fun activities, copying and life skills and a provision of weekly surf therapy sessions, the programme aims to give young people skills to cope with stress, regulate behaviour, build healing relationships, and make positive life choices.

2. To mobilise resources, partnerships, services, community commitment and public support needed to promote the mental health of children and young people in Aberdeen.

3. To support tourism development, economic growth and empower young people to contribute to transforming Sierra Leone, attract investment, support empowerment programmes for young people—specifically to establish a safe space in the Aberdeen community.
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Participants

Fifteen (15) participants were referred to the course, and fourteen completed the course. The one participant who did not complete the course is due to her travel out of the country. Participants were all between aged 9 to 20, and were referred by parents, guardians, Aberdeen community leaders, Children’s organisations and some local institutions.

The ratio of female to male was 5:1 (see below)

Table 1: Participants gender / age:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age</th>
<th>9-12</th>
<th>13-16</th>
<th>17-20</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Sierra Leone is home to about 16 ethnic groups, each with its own language. This is consistent with the diverse demographics of Aberdeen community with majority of the population consisting of the 16 ethnic groups living in the Aberdeen community.

Table 2: Participants gender / ethnicity:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ethnicity</th>
<th>Temne</th>
<th>Mende</th>
<th>Creole</th>
<th>Mandingo</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
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**Intervention Description**

The pilot programme is a result of intensive work in the Aberdeen community. The surf therapy project was developed in response to the needs of the young people in the community, and modeled on a similar programme being implemented by Waves for Change in South Africa and other parts of the world. MFTF participated in a two weeks training organised by The Wave Alliance in Cape Town, South Africa. The training helped MFTF design surf therapy programme that aligns with the needs of the local community. Prior to the training in Cape Town, MFTF received remote support from The Wave Alliance with a beginners’ curriculum on surf therapy/mental health course.

MFTF team held sessions on Sundays, between 2.30pm to 4.00pm. Sessions ran from the Beach, in the Aberdeen community. Surf boards, kids uniform, food, transportation, training, space were supported by MFTF, The Wave Alliance, National Tourist Board, and Messeh Leone. Sessions were managed and ran by the lead project coordinators Mr. Mohamed Missalie, Ms. Fanta Tonkara and a local mentor Miss Fatmata Bundu. Mr. Arnold Koroma who is a trained lifeguard working for the National Tourists Board was assigned to the programme. Sessions were led in person and organised by mentors to work 1:1 with participants in the water.

Participants met up at local mentor Fatmata’s home where they change into their wetsuit and then walked about 20 minutes to the beach for the session. Participants assembled on the beach for a safety briefing with the mentors and everyone participated in the activities for the day. Participants had their own mentor in the water. The programme considered child protection including water safety as a matter of high priority. No child was allowed in the water without a trained lifeguard and adult mentor and there was a RED line for the kids not to cross. The programme did not record any incident or safety issues throughout the course.

Over the course of the programme, participants got to know the mentors and each other, and the mentors helped the children improve their surfing skills, which in return boosted their confidence in the beach/water as the programme evolved. The children coped well with both the cold and warm water. A bad-weather plan had been put in place in case of raining season and in the case of rough water at the beach.
Measures

This evaluation utilised The Stirling Children’s Well-being Scale (SCWBS). This scale was developed by the Stirling Council Educational Psychology Service (UK) as a holistic, positively worded measure of emotional and psychological well-being in children aged eight to 15 years.

Drawing on current theories of well-being and Positive Psychology, the scale measures the effectiveness of interventions and projects designed to promote children’s well-being and emotional development. It has proved to be a reliable and valid measure of well-being meeting the benchmark criteria set out for measurement validation and has been used effectively to assess interventions in a wide range of contexts. Satisfaction scores related to fun, safety and wish to continue participating in surf therapy were also assessed as part of the evaluation.

All measures were administered before surf therapy commenced and after the culmination of a surf therapy curriculum cycle to measure any changes over the course of the intervention. Qualitative feedback was also gathered at the culmination for the curriculum cycle from participants, parents, and other key stakeholders.

More information on the scale used can be found at the following reference:


Fourteen participants submitted usable paired data from before and after the surf therapy for this evaluation report.
Results

Figure 1. Changes to participants’ wellbeing (group mean)

As can be seen in the above results the surf therapy delivered is associated with a large improvement to participant well-being. The intervention is linked with an improvement of 4.9 points on the SCWBS highlighting the success of this local pilot.

Figure 2. Changes to participants’ well-being broken down by components
The graph above breaks down overall well-being into its components as measured by SCWBS. The large change in item 1 (I think good things will happen in my life) highlights improvements to participant outlook and hope in the future which are major indicators for mental health and positive functioning within day to day life. The positive change in item 5 (I think lots of people care about me) is of note given the intervention’s focus on delivering a safe space and providing participants with additional access to social support. Finally, the positive changes to item 7 (I’ve been feeling calm) and item 12 (I’ve been feeling relaxed) may represent successful uptake of the emotional regulation tools embedded within the intervention’s curriculum. Improved emotional regulation is associated with improvements in larger aspects of life wider life such as reductions in antisocial behaviours and improved school engagement.

Participant Satisfaction

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>While I was surfing...</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I felt safe</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I had fun</td>
<td>93%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I made new friends</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I want to join a surf club</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The results of participant satisfaction surveys are very encouraging, the feeling of safety that all participants reported is of particular note given surfing is a completely new sport in Sierra Leone. The results for fun were very high, it must be noted that there were no negative responses to this question but some participants did not answer it. New social connections matched with improvements on the SCWBS. The wish from all participants to continue surfing highlights the value participants placed on the intervention and need for continued service provision.
Results and Findings

Qualitative Data

Participant descriptive words:

In post-evaluation, participants were asked to write down up to 5 words to describe ‘Me and Surfing’. This was designed to give a different insight into their experiences. More frequently occurring words have been written in a bigger font:
Results and Findings

Participant’s feedback

As part of the evaluation process, participants were asked to describe what made them feel different, and what they achieved from participating in the programme. They were also asked to give any comments about the programme including challenges and opportunities presented.

A number of participants completed this section, but the following comments were common among participants and appeared frequently amongst the feedback received.

“"My favorite thing about the surf therapy is the fun, the games. I like the take 5 breathe in and breathe out. I have learned how to surf. I have learned how to care for each other. Our coaches taught us a lot. Whenever, we are in the beach, I always felt happy, joyful and also relaxed" PARTICIPANT

“It encourages me more and also taught me the way to interact with my friends. I feel good because it is a great adventure and a great privilege for me to be among others, I feel good”. PARTICIPANT

“I love to play games. I love to have fun. I love to swim [surf]. I like when we talk about our school work. I feel fine, and not having stress. When I am in the water, I do not think about anything at all”. PARTICIPANT

“I am excited and grateful. Sometimes, when I sit at home I feel so lonely because I have no one to play with, nowhere to go, unless I do some excise like take five or read my notes. To be alone is not a good thing for me, and I usually wish for Sunday to come [to see my friends in surf club]” PARTICIPANT

“The day, I started surfing was one of my happiest moments. Whenever, I surf, I feel happy, and feel proud of myself. It helps me to calm down when I am stressed. It helps me to feel safe when I feeling sacred. It’s a very interactive game which makes me feel good around friends”. PARTICIPANT
Results and Findings

Comments from parents/guardians

“This surf therapy program has significantly helped my daughter in various ways such as building her confident in socialising with her colleagues. She has also started developing a stable mindset.”

Parent of Surf Therapy Participant

“As a parent, I saw a lot of improvement in my child. He was not that outspoken child, but now he can speak in public with friends and also behaving maturely doing things he never did. I am impress. Thank You.”

Parent of Surf Therapy Participant

“If more time is scheduled for the kids and various beaches are instituted, it would greatly improve the surf therapy program. I would definitely recommend it to others because it has worked for my child. My daughter has a lot of friends now and she is more open minded than before.”

Parent of Surf Therapy Participant

“You should expand the surf therapy program in our community and beyond, because other children need this same opportunity.”

Parent of Surf Therapy Participant
Results and Findings

Comments from professionals and community leaders

“I have been present at the beach when the kids are doing session. This surf therapy project is creating great impact. If kids don’t have a place to connect and feel belong, they will engage in negative activities in the community. So it is really good for them to engage in the surf therapy project. The kids need mentors that are humble and honest to lead them. We are happy for that and we know that’s what the project is offering. We are always monitoring the kids in the community, and we seeing that things are going on well. The surf therapy project is good and we wish for more improvement and more practices so that the students/participants will excel.”

A community leader and member of the Aberdeen Police Partnership Board.

“The kids are now very much stable. The kids are not into drug abuse, or any bad lifestyles. The surf therapy project helps encourage the kids to learn and concentrate on their academic work. The kids are always excited to go to the beach for sessions. The kids are very much happy to join the surf therapy project. The project is necessary for the kids especially for this type of community, near the beach where they are exposed to many challenges.”

Community Staff Nurse
Results and Findings

Comments from professionals and community leaders

“On behalf of the Ministry of Tourism and Cultural Affairs and the National Tourist Board of Sierra Leone, I wish to thank the Moseray Fadika Trust Foundation, Messeh Leone, Waves for Change, Wave Alliance Sierra Leone and all the organisations/communities/individuals who are part of this initiative. From the activities I have personally witnessed and the reports submitted; I have learnt that, this programme is creating a safe space where young people and members of the community can come together to play, relax, express themselves and learn skills to deal with the challenges they face in their respective communities. This surf therapy programme is helping to build a more United Sierra Leone, create stability, peace and social cohesion in society and help prevent young people from being exposed to inappropriate activities (crime, drug abuse, negative behaviours etc.). This programme is good for mental health, youth employment and tourism in coastal beach communities. We will continue to collaborate to support this initiative to grow to higher height.”

Umaru Woody - Planning and Development Manager, National Tourist Board of Sierra Leone.
**Key Findings**

This evaluation builds on an evidence-based surf therapy that the programme can enable young people to build a better mind, better body and better community. Although surf therapy alone cannot resolve complex social, economic and environmental challenges, it can serve as a mental health service, an education platform, a mobilisation process, a way to strengthen young people and communities, and a source of joy, resilience and hope for the future.

The safe space, caring mentors, fun activities, coping skills and social connection dimensions of the surf therapy programme, and their careful application in the Aberdeen community and young people, hold enormous potential to help achieve social, economic and environmental goals. The results from self-evaluation, participants and parents’ feedback and (in particular) attendance levels give a strong indication that the pilot programme had a positive impact on the lives of participants who took part in the course. Our findings revealed that the programme helped normalise participants’ existence and rebuild a sense of self-confidence, community and hope.

14 out of 15 participants completed the course, and average attendance was 59.7%. Of the 14 children and youth who completed the course, all showed positive change across at least one measure of wellbeing. Participants recorded an improvement on wellbeing measures, which indicates that the course had an overall positive impact on the wellbeing of the group. These changes were reflected by parents/guardians’ feedback, which found that all participants demonstrated a healthier lifestyle.

Participant’s narrative feedback also reflects these qualitative measures. Some of the narrative reports given by participants described beautifully their own personal, social and emotional progress. Those participants who were less able to articulate their feelings were able to describe their progress using individual words. Findings show that the surf therapy inspired hope, unity and determination to succeed. The common feedback that came out
clearly from the evolutions were "I love surfing", "I am comfortable in the water", "I like the exercise", "fun and I love it". However, some participants shared some little concerns with words like: "tiring", "cold", "water" "help", "hungry"; but interestingly the same participants also used positive descriptive words too.

The programme has created a safe space to promote tolerance and encourage the establishment of new relationships among young people from different backgrounds regardless of tribe, economic status or community affiliations. This safe space has helped remove the psychological barriers that hinder the creation of relationships among them, and helps to spread the spirit of community cohesion and tolerance.

The evaluation indicates that surf therapy programme has the potential to help youth who live in under-served communities to overcome the root problems associated with poverty, poor education, violence and crime. This is only true, however, when clear values that emphasise youth engagement and empowerment are built into the program. Placing these types of values at the centre of the surf therapy program makes them more effective at combating negative social, economic environment and involvement with gangs, violence, crime and drugs, as well as the incidence of teenage pregnancy and early marriages which are prevalent in some local communities.
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Challenges

Although significant progress has been made in this surf therapy programme, much work remains. By embracing surf therapy as an innovative tool for youth engagement and empowerment, and by joining together in collaborative undertakings in addressing the challenges presented, local communities and young people can strengthen their efforts to overcome social, economic and environmental challenges and attain positive outcomes for young people and the community at large. A future priority for MFTF is to secure sustainable funding to provide suitable and safe transport for all local youth who would benefit from surf therapy.

Overall feedback from participants and parents was very positive, but some also made suggestions for improvements. These included:

Introduction of a new programme

Like every new programme in the community, delivering it to a group of new participants who have no prior experience can be challenging. At the initial stage, our challenge with the pilot programme was that young people, particularly those new to surfing, sometimes found the surf activity and sessions a little challenging, albeit new participants expressed that they enjoyed the session (“It’s fun”) and always wanted more sessions. So our aim is to continually engage and simplify the sessions and allow the young people to remain in control. By using simple activities to check understanding, by exploring emotions, providing frequent positive feedback and by adapting the surf therapy curriculum provided by Waves for Change which served as a reference throughout, the programme helped to ensure young people understand and are able to participate at all times as they work through the curriculum.

Food & drinks

After every session most of participants requested for food, as they stated that the physical exercise and surfing made them hungry especially kids from disadvantaged backgrounds with limited food at home. However, no participant dropped out or missed sessions for this reason.
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The issue of food was subsequently brought to the attention of the chairperson of the Moseray Fadika Trust, Mrs. Khaidja Fadika, who provided funds to cover cost of food for the weekly sessions. Food and other items were sometimes prepared/cooked by local mentors together with the young people. So the issue of food was addressed. It is hoped that food will continue to be provided, moving forward. Future schemes, it would be important to provide food.

The programme should consider offering nutritional support as part of the physical activity and wellbeing provision, and promote a range of healthy eating options. Lack of food and poor diet affects the health and behaviour of young people. It is important to note that diet and nutrition are not only important features of health promotion, they also have a direct impact on behaviour and mood. The programme should recognise that participation in exercise can raise awareness of diet and nutrition, mentors should exploit opportunities to offer guidance and support around healthy eating, nutritional content and meal planning for the kids.

Cold and health concerns

Most of the parents and participants complained about a medical facility being available in case a child got sick due to the cold. However, no participants dropped out or missed sessions for this reason. Aberdeen is home to community hospitals and so there was always help for kids who needed medical assistance. More importantly, kids had the option to enter the water or not, no pressure. The kids are not obliged to enter the water and surfing sessions are held occasionally. Parents were sensitised and they later understood that the programme is not all about water, and that the programme provides support in various platforms including the safe spaces where kids can always come and benefit from other services provided by the programme without going into the water.

The weather in Sierra Leone is beautiful and the water is mostly warm, and so some of the concerns raised by parents about the cold are mostly connected to traditional barriers/views about water. Kids in the Sierra Leone always go to the beaches to swim and with adults around to support. However, the programme mentors recognised that it would be important to always provide first aid/medical facilities, on standby so the parents and kids can be assured of their safety and health.
Transport and disability issues

Transportation appears to be the most complex and common of the challenges faced by participants and mentors on the programme. It affects the hours of programming, who is able to participate and the cost of the program. Programmes operating in communities where a majority of the children live within safe walking distance are at a considerable advantage when it comes to engaging participants. Yet the nature of urban and large coastline communities like Aberdeen makes the likelihood of this rare. On this pilot programme, the mentors and participants close to the beach walked approximately over 21 minutes and those from the outskirts of the beach travelled via car for about 35 minutes to the beach to run session due to traffic delays. They became exhausted before getting to the beach. Given the limited availability of public transport, as well as their cost, there is a challenge to bring more kids to the programme.

The consequences of inadequate transportation are substantial. Participants who live beyond walking distance from the beach and lack caring adults who can pick them up simply cannot participate in the surf therapy programme. Local mentors and programme coordinators consistently highlighted their concerns about the challenges of transportation. They were particular about those children whose parents worked weekends and can neither arrange a pick up nor help with schoolwork at home. The evaluation found that these are also frequently children of lower-income and single-parent families, who need surf therapy programme the most. Participants who live beyond walking distance from the beach and lack caring adults who can pick them up simply cannot participate in this important programme, thus many young people face the possibility of being left out of the programme; but the situation has proven to be equally problematic for families who will have to cover the travel costs for their kids.

The evaluation of the programme suggests that while the surf therapy program may reach many children who live in disadvantaged circumstances, additional effort is needed to attract the most disadvantaged young people including children with disabilities. According to the coordinators/mentors’ report, many of the early referrals to the programme were young people who were probably more close to the beach and able to walk. Coordinators indicated that the program was less successful in getting referrals for young people who are disabled and living far away from the beach.

However, of the 14 participants, 5 participants came from the outskirt of the beach. It is important to note that transportation support was provided to them on a weekly basis. Thanks to the Moseray Fadika Trust, The Wave Alliance and Messeh Leone for the support provided. Funds to cover transportation for mentors and some of the young people were also provided. Of special commendation is the effort of local mentor – Fatmata who had taken on the responsibility to go around the community and pick up the kids from their homes and bring them to her home and walk with them to the beach, on a weekly basis. This was seen as a good example of a caring mentor.

Moving forward, it would be important to provide motor vehicles that will bring participants to the beach and to their community /various houses. The next round of the programme should provide persons with disabilities with opportunities and support to participate in surf therapy programme adapted to their physical and mental condition. The goal is to help persons with disabilities improve their mental and physical health, and quality of life. This requires training and support, making an adapted safe space available for young people with different abilities, and removing barriers preventing persons with disabilities from accessing, and travelling to and from, the beach and helping them participate in fun activities.
NEXT STEPS

The evaluation provided a better understanding of the future steps needed to promote the engagement and empowerment of young people through surf therapy programme. The recommendations that follow have been distilled from the feedback from participants and parents, mentors involved in the surf therapy programme, members from the community, and the MFTF. To be relevant to the young people and community we serve, the recommendations that follow are appropriate, necessary and highly significant for the sustainability of the surf therapy programme at Aberdeen beach.

Weekly Sessions

The weekly surf therapy session cannot only improve health and behaviour for young people, but can also contribute to efforts to mobilise the community and provide a platform to promote the programme, particularly by providing a route into programmes that promote mental health services and tackle social-economic and environmental challenges. The programme has received some funds to cover travel expenses for the next six months, with the hope that more funds will be secured to sustain the programme on a long term basis. The Wave Alliance and Messeh Leone have indicated that they will assist in developing a project proposal and applications for funding. The evaluation showed that more young people have a desire to coach/lead the surf therapy but only a small number are currently taking up the opportunity due to age limitations and training requirements. It is hoped that participants who are old enough can act as mentors in due course.
Raising Awareness and engaging state and non-state actors.

Close cooperation with the media can help ensure that campaigns on the programme get wide exposure, which is critical for the continuity of the programme. A wide range of communications avenues will be used (TV, radio, print, Internet) to promote this important work in Sierra Leone. A video of this pilot programme has been produced and the plan is to broadcast on local and international media platforms wherever possible.

Engagement with state and non-state actors including government and the private sector will provide the programme with a solid foundation on which to build the surf therapy in the community and reflect the evaluation, research, experience and best practices that are emerging from the programme. The plan is to share the evaluation report with the government and partners and solicit support for the programme.

The Moseray Fadika Trust is now working with The Wave Alliance, Messeh Leone and other partners to host a regional and international forum on tourism and sport for peace and development. This conference will provide a platform for collaborative Sport for Peace and development research, knowledge exchange, and share challenges and best practice, particularly on surf therapy.

Safe Space

There is an urgent need to establish a designated safe space in the Aberdeen community to serve as the primary point of contact for all the young people where they can access caring mentors, fund activities and develop copying and life skills. This safe space can function as a one-stop source of information on all relevant institutions helping to connect young people to the services that meet the objectives and needs of the local community, in particular the surf therapy programme.

At the moment, the surf therapy programme is being hosted around the vicinity of the National Tourist Board in Aberdeen. The availability of appropriate space is critical to the character and nature of the program: it fundamentally affects the type and quality of activities that can be offered. For example, many activities require open, and a safe space that can accommodate sessions. The surf therapy activities are thus constrained by the unavailability of appropriate large space on the beach. Aberdeen is a very busy beach with crowded victors.
and so ill-suited for this purpose, and the existing places in the beach are often already in considerable demand. But having access to a dedicated area on the beach can help greatly in running a successful programme and bring on board more kids.

It is important to mention that Moseray Fadika Trust and Messeh Leone through the Wave Alliance are now in discussion with the Ministry of Tourism and Cultural Affairs and the National Tourist Board to secure a safer space on the beach for the programme. The chairperson of Moseray Fadika Trust has indicated that some funds will be provided to construct a small space for the short time once space is provided.
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Project Coordinators Report

As this report has been informed by the participation of the above-mentioned young people, parents and stakeholders, the information it contains provides a compelling and comprehensive surf therapy pilot evaluation of how surf therapy can be harnessed to support the attainment of development objectives for young people and the community. The process of running a pilot programme of this magnitude, however, was not without its challenges. Although the Moseray Fadika Trust, The Wave Alliance and Messeh Leone were able to provide some support, some of the challenges stated above may have affected the delivery of the programme at the initial stages. Despite these challenges, we are confident that the surf therapy programme has been very successful and achieved positive impact on 15 young people.

It is important to note that disseminating information to key stakeholder is crucial. Fostering discussion on this issue of mental health and youth development can improve collective awareness and facilitate programme and policy support. This requires an ongoing, concerted effort to generate, update and disseminate knowledge about the benefits of surf therapy, and best practices. Evidence of programme effectiveness alone, however, is insufficient to drive programme and policy change. State and non-state actors must allocate scarce resources to address a wide range of competing development and health priorities, particularly in supporting a safe space for young people in deprived local communities. Providing resources to this new surf therapy may be difficult in these circumstances. However, cost-effectiveness and benefit analysis can contribute additional information to aid in making these decisions, more importantly to support the programme in Sierra Leone.

While local momentum around surf therapy in the Aberdeen community is growing, more meaningful advances can still be made. We hope that the government, NGOs, and private sector will embrace the power of surf therapy and seize the opportunity to make true policy change, allocate funding and support this programme that will contribute to attaining the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

On behalf of the participants, mentors/coaches, parents and all those involved in the surf therapy programme would like to acknowledge all those who have contributed to this great initiative thus far.

We would like to thank the Chairperson of the Moseray Fadika Trust, Mrs. Cathy Kadiatu Fadika and her very supportive team of Trustees including Miss Tigidankay Fadika, Miss Nancy Fadika, Ambassador Anthony Navo, Mr. Amadou Fadika, Mr. Muctar Kamara, Mr. Messeh Leone and Miss Marie Fadika who spent sometime in the local Aberdeen community as a mentor and positive role model to the participants on the programme and provided materials to the team. The efforts of the trustees of the Moseray Fadika Trust cannot be underestimated in driving the programme forward.

We are grateful to our international partner –The Wave Alliance under the distinguished leadership of its founder and CEO Mr Tim Conibear, and his amazing team Ms. Ash Hesse, Mr. Matt Mattila, Ms. Paula Yarrow for their passion, commitment and dedication to bring surf therapy to Sierra Leone, working in partnership with the Messeh Leone Foundation Trust. Their leadership, commitment and mentorship have been at the forefront of the Surf Therapy movement and have contributed greatly to the momentum gained since the start of the programme. We are grateful to Comic Relief and the Swedish Postcode Lotto for supporting the training. This has helped us design surf therapy programme that aligns with the needs of the Aberdeen community as well as best practice and evidence globally. We would like to
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acknowledge Mr. Jamie Marshall from Edinburgh Napier University in Scotland for playing a pivotal role in developing the evaluation report, as well as for his ongoing surf therapy-related support to the programme in Sierra Leone. Thank you all.

Many thanks to the Ministry of Tourism and Cultural Affairs, the Ministry of Social Welfare, Gender and Children’s and the Sierra Leone National Tourist Board who came forward to support an internationally recognised evidence-based surf therapy programme.

The benefits of the surf therapy in promoting psychological and physical health are well understood as participants participate in fun activities, gain coping skills, and are part of a safe space with caring mentors. These are important contributors to the wellbeing and quality of life of young people. The young people who participated in the programme have developed more coping and life skills, healthier lives, better ways to deal with mental health problems and the diminished likelihood of being exposed to some negative social, economic and environmental challenges.

Today, local momentum around surf therapy in Aberdeen is growing. With this momentum comes mounting evidence of the value and development power of surf therapy to help young people and communities take preventive measures to tackle mental health. There is tremendous enthusiasm in the Moseray Fadika Trust Foundation and Aberdeen community to fully harness the social, economic and environmental power of surf therapy.

We believe that the unique perspectives, insights and commitments, coupled with the information provided in this evaluation report, will ensure the programme is well-positioned to advocate for local, national, and international action in support of surf therapy in Sierra Leone.

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