



CENTRE FOR AIDS DEVELOPMENT, RESEARCH AND EVALUATION

## Youth divided: A review of loveLife's Y-centre in Orange Farm, Gauteng

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### Introduction

Under the heading “Y-centres lead the way” loveLife’s brochure describes the Y-centre initiative as follows:

*“Y-Centres provide a positive, dynamic, and youth oriented outlet for social development, and have become extremely popular among young people – each Y-Centre serves approximately 3,000 young people weekly and provides:*

- *Sexual health education, counselling and care*
- *Voluntary counselling and testing for HIV and other STDs*
- *A radio studio with live broadcasts, run in partnership with local radio stations*
- *A computer training facility*
- *Recreational activities, such as basketball and volleyball*
- *Additional elements, developed in partnership with the local community”*

*(Lovelife 2002)*

The Y-Centre in Orange Farm is one of the longer established facilities, initiated in May 2001 and building upon a previously established Youth Centre, which was run by the Planned Parenthood Association of South Africa (PPASA).

The Y-Centre received wide publicity during a September 2002 visit by former presidents Nelson Mandela and Bill Clinton, actors Kevin Spacey and Chris Rock. Speaking at the event, Drew Altman, president of loveLife’s founding funder, the Henry J Kaiser Family Foundation described the campaign as follows:

*“loveLife is not only big, but I think anybody who knows the programme would say that it is cutting edge, and it is bold and it is different. It is not just a safe sex campaign, though there are elements of that. It is not even just an HIV prevention campaign, but it is a national movement led by young people themselves about positive lifestyles and better futures”.*<sup>2</sup>

This report provides an overview of the Orange Farm Y-Centre, including perspectives of youth and members of community-based organisations based in the area. The various activities of the Y-centre are described in detail, and it is clear that a range of useful services are being provided. It is however not on the scale suggested by loveLife’s brochure, nor does it

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<sup>2</sup> Transcript from [www.kaisernetwork.org](http://www.kaisernetwork.org)

foreground community level youth leadership as claimed by Altman. Instead, the centre's activities take place outside of a framework of consultation with organisations working in HIV/AIDS in the Orange Farm community and this has fostered a sense of disharmony. The youth lifestyle promoted by loveLife marginalises many youth who find it narrow and exclusive. This exclusivist vision of youth fosters a dichotomy of us and them, creating unnecessary tensions, of which some appear to be resolved through violent means.

## **Methodology**

A qualitative approach was followed in this study, comprising in-depth interviews with Y-Centre personnel, Groundbreakers, Y-Centre members and users, as well as community leaders, members of community-based organisations, and youth of Orange Farm.

Interviewees at the Y-Centre included the Programmes Co-ordinator; the Vitality Provider (nurse); two Groundbreakers, a Motivational Facilitator, young women waiting for the family planning service, young boys watching basketball, and gay members.

Interviewees in the community included leaders of six organisations working with HIV/AIDS and youth including Let Us Grow, St Charles Lwanga Advice Office, Inkhanyezi HIV-AIDS Project, Amurtahanang Primary Health Care Project, Sisonke, and Grow Bacha. Two organisations working on social issues were included: Orange Farm Water & Electricity Crisis Committee (OWECC) and Orange Farm Youth Against Privatisation (OYAP).

Youth workers and activists were interviewed from all the above organisations. Most of the community interviewees work in projects that offer support and care directly to HIV positive people, doing home-based care, providing food parcels, caring for AIDS orphans, and conducting awareness activities. A number are HIV positive and view their projects both as a service to other PWAs and the community in general as well a space for their own self-healing and development. With the exception of two individuals who were above the age of 40, all other interviewees were between the ages of 19 and 30 years. In total, 18 people participated in the community interviews.

Interviews were conducted in October 2002 utilising a semi-structured interview approach. A focus group with community-based youth workers was also conducted. All interviews and the focus group were tape-recorded, translated where necessary, and transcribed.

## **Orange Farm**

Orange Farm is a township approximately 45 km south of Johannesburg, with an estimated population of 300 000. Informal settlement in the area began in 1987 on what was then vacant farmland as a result of the housing crisis in Gauteng, and it was subsequently declared a formal township in September 1997. The majority of residents are unemployed and youth unemployment is very high. Most homes are constructed of metal and have a single tap in the yard, a pre-paid electricity system, and a pit latrine. Some areas still do not have access to electricity and running water, and water cut-offs are a regular occurrence. There are few sports and recreational facilities, and community services are limited. Alcoholism, substance abuse, domestic violence, child abuse and rape are reported in the community.

Young people's opportunities are constrained and challenges include teenage pregnancies, lack of funds for further education, depression, despondency, alcohol and substance abuse, violence (including rape and domestic and family violence), crime and gangsterism.

HIV/AIDS is a serious problem in the community, and pressing issues include care of ill community and family members, AIDS orphans, sexual violence, under-resourced clinic services, and limited ambulance services.<sup>3</sup>

There are a number of community based projects and organisations in the area. They have generally been established by community members and are mainly run by volunteers who receive little to no remuneration for their work.

### **loveLife Y-centre**

The Y-Centre in Orange Farm was established in May 2001, working from the infrastructure previously established by the Planned Parenthood Association of South Africa (PPASA). The centre comprises two buildings, one housing offices for the centre management, a computer centre, a sound studio (Y-Station) and an activities room, whilst the other building provides the space for the Vitality Centre (clinic), a boardroom for workshops, an office for the Groundbreakers and a counselling room. Facilities include basketball and netball courts, tables and chairs as well as a pool table. Both buildings have a kitchen and toilets with condom dispensers.

The Y-Centre is run by a staff of seven, including the Manager, Programmes Co-ordinator (Deputy Manager), Vitality Provider (Nurse), Educator for HIV-AIDS, Educator for Sports and Recreation, Administrative Assistant and the General Assistant. They are assisted by a team of five male and three female Groundbreakers. Groundbreaker posts are promoted through advertising and a process of interviews determines successful applicants. To qualify as a Groundbreaker, one needs to be a full participating member of loveLife, between the ages of 18 and 25 years, and to be informed about loveLife and other youth issues. Each Groundbreaker receives a monthly stipend of R800.

Volunteers include activity leaders, facilitators and peer educators. Volunteers are unpaid, but receive a transport allowance when doing outreach work. The centre is open from 10am to 6pm on weekdays and on Saturdays and Sundays.

In order to become full participating members of the Y-Centre, youth have to complete a five-day 'Lifeskills and Sexuality' workshop. Access is then provided to all services offered by loveLife and the Y-Centre. Membership is restricted to young people between the ages of 12 and 25, with the main target group being 12-17 year olds.

According to staff of the Y-Centre, its main aims are:

- ❑ to reduce rates of teenage pregnancy and sexually transmitted infections (STIs), including HIV-AIDS;
- ❑ to encourage a 'positive lifestyle' amongst young people.

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<sup>3</sup> See: The Status of Women in Orange Farm: Experiences & Responses to GEAR, Khanya College, Johannesburg: 2001.

### ***Sexuality and Lifeskills Programme***

This programme entails the running of five-day workshops for young people at the Y-Centre, and involves education about reproductive health (e.g. menstruation, teenage pregnancies, STIs) as well as issues such as relationships and substance abuse. These workshops are compulsory for membership of the centre, and two workshops are held per month at the Y-Centre. Through the workshops, young people are identified for training as peer educators. A young person chosen for this task is one “who can communicate with others, who’s free when communicating and is committed”.<sup>4</sup> ‘Commitment’ here refers to regular attendance and participation in the five-day workshop. Those chosen then undergo a five-day peer-training programme, held outside of the centre. Content includes communication skills, leadership skills, handling of conflict and group dynamics. Trained peer educators then return to the centre where they begin to mentor young people.

At the time of the research, there were 30 peer educators who were supervised by a Groundbreaker. Peer educators go to schools in the area to conduct talks, and the guidance or life orientation period is used for this purpose. These talks include discussion of puberty and adolescence, reproductive physiology, teenage pregnancy, termination of pregnancies (TOPs), STIs, relationships, and HIV/AIDS. Grades 7-11 are targeted. Pupils are also encouraged to teach others and so extend the reach of loveLife. In the period before the third quarter of this year loveLife had worked with six schools. In some cases, schools request specific modules (for example, teenage pregnancy was requested by a school where this was a major problem).

There is a separate three-day workshop that focuses specifically on HIV/AIDS, which is held at the Y-Centre on a monthly basis.

In general, the orientation is towards ‘positive sexuality’. According to one Groundbreaker, positive sexuality is “all about feeling good about yourself. The most important thing is that I should feel good about myself.”

In the Lifeskills & Sexuality workshops, participants are introduced to different types of sexuality, including ‘heterosexuality’, ‘bisexuality’, ‘homosexuality’ and ‘asexuality’.<sup>5</sup> According to the Groundbreaker, their most important task is to give as much information as possible to young people to enable them to make informed choices. “We don’t tell people. We just give alternatives or choices.”

Users and members of the Y-Centre felt that the loveLife approach to sex and sexuality was a positive one because it educated and informed in an open manner about these issues. However, they did indicate that many of their peers did not take the work of loveLife seriously, throwing away their publications and laughing at the images and slogans in them. Interviewees also spoke of young children at the Y-Centre playing with the condoms that are distributed in the centre, blowing them into balloons and throwing them around.

### ***Motivational Programme***

This programme has been outsourced by loveLife to Miles & Associates, a management consultancy which trains Groundbreakers and facilitators. The programme is run by a

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<sup>4</sup> Interview with Programmes Co-ordinator

<sup>5</sup> It was noted that priests were said to be ‘asexual’ as they have no feelings of a sexual nature

Groundbreaker and 23 facilitators. It is an outreach programme, with facilitators going to schools in the area where young people are recruited into the programme for training at the centre. Young people in the programme have to commit themselves to attend and complete all 21 two-hour modules. Completion of all modules results in graduation from the programme. Two graduations are held per year. 440 young people would have graduated on 2 November 2002. Approximately 350 young people graduated in the previous group.

Groundbreakers, together with the Sports Educator, have also started to work in prisons. For prisoners with long-term sentences (usually males), they run courses or workshops on how to deal with life in prison. For those with short-term sentences (usually females), they provide information to enable them to “make right choices once they leave”.

### ***Debate Programme***

This programme began in February 2002 and is co-ordinated by a Groundbreaker. It is also an outreach programme, where different schools form teams which compete against each other. The winning team in the league attend the loveLife provincial games.

### ***Cyber-Y Programme (Computers)***

A computer room is overseen by a Groundbreaker and five facilitators, and allows for the provision of basic computer literacy for youth between the ages of 12 and 25. Members receive training in MS-Word, Excel and Powerpoint. Although ordinarily members would have internet access, the modem had been stolen at the time of the research.

Different sessions are conducted on different days of the week for different age groups. On all three days that the researcher visited the Y-Centre, the computer room was almost empty. Reasons given for this were that exams were being written and that the Groundbreaker had allowed members time off for another activity.<sup>6</sup>

### ***Sports & Recreation***

Sports played at the Y-Centre are basketball, netball and volleyball and by all accounts, basketball dominates. Many reasons are given for this. According to the Programmes Co-ordinator, “Most young people didn’t have the chance to participate in basketball and now is their chance.” Some of the users interviewed felt that the Y-Centre was not attended by many youth because it did not offer soccer, which is much more popular with young males in Orange Farm.

With all three sports, loveLife runs internal leagues with the Orange Farm schools. Different teams are formed, coaches go to the schools to provide training ‘sessions’ and ‘clinics’, and games are played at the Y-Centre over weekends because schools in the area do not have the facilities required. Other Y-Centre activities include ballroom dancing, gumboot dance, ‘township dance’, karate, aerobics, drama, art and design.

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<sup>6</sup> From the roster on the notice board, it would appear that only 1 session of 1.5 hours was being held each day.

### ***Y-Station***

Since April 2002, the Y-Centre in Orange Farm has had a fully-equipped sound studio, called the Y-Station. Its ‘broadcast’ radius is the Y-Centre grounds, and is managed by the Y-Station Groundbreaker who also deejays and organises events. There had been an attempt to get a licence to broadcast to the community, but Orange Farm already has a community radio station. The Y-Station has no relation with the Orange Farm community radio station – however, it does have links with Y-fm with which it links up on special events e.g. the visit of Nelson Mandela to the Y-Centre. Further support is provided by 12 volunteers (six males and six females) between the ages of 12 and 17 years. They do interviews or chat shows on various topics being covered in the motivational, life-skills and debating programmes.

One show is produced each day of the week and there are two shows on a Saturday. Before and after interviews or chat shows, two pieces of music may be played. Music played includes kwaito, house and hip-hop. The Groundbreaker says that “only cool hip-hop, not hard-core hip-hop” may be played because the Y-Centre management feels that some of the lyrics are “too vulgar”. During the research visits, content was predominantly music. The studio functions from 3-6pm daily.

A staff member noted that the music is “drawing more people to the Centre” and as the Y-Station Groundbreaker notes, “Before, people only came to the Centre for other services, but now they come also just to chill and listen to music<sup>7</sup>”.

### ***Vitality Centre (clinic)***

In the interests of being ‘youth friendly’ and removing a perceived ‘fear’ and dislike that young people have for public sector clinics, health services at the Y-Centre have been organised in a manner that tries to provide a comfortable, safe, and inviting space for young people to deal with their physical and mental health in the form of the Vitality Centre, co-ordinated by the Vitality Provider. While waiting for the Vitality Provider, people can read loveLife’s print publications, which are displayed in the waiting room.

Services offered by the Vitality Centre include counselling and provision of contraceptives (oral, injectables and condoms), pregnancy testing, treatment for STIs, general counselling, and counselling on HIV/AIDS (including pre- and post-test counselling, but not HIV testing).

The Vitality Provider provides education to young people about both oral and injectable contraceptives as well as condom use. Injectable contraception is the most common contraceptive choice amongst young women visiting the Centre, and ‘dual protection’ is promoted<sup>8</sup>. It was estimated that about half of the young women on contraception were using dual protection.

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<sup>7</sup> There has also been an increased demand from youth older than 17 years to participate in the radio station.

<sup>8</sup> The interview with the Vitality Provider suggested that the injection is being actively promoted over the use of oral contraceptives because of its ‘reliability’ as teenage girls are thought to be forgetful and incapable of remembering to take the pill. The high use of the injection from such an early age is problematic, given its side effects. It is also of concern that there is a low uptake of dual protection – particularly given the obvious risks of unprotected sex for HIV infection.

Both male and female condoms are provided by the Vitality Centre. The Vitality Provider says, “If women say they are having problems with male condoms, I give them female condoms and teach them how to use them.”<sup>9</sup>

### ***Pregnancy Testing***

While pregnancy tests are offered, once a young woman has found out that she is pregnant, there is no direct support offered to the mother-to-be by the Y-Centre other than counselling. She is given information, her options are explained to her and she is referred to another centre. For TOPs, women are referred to Chiawelo clinic (a free service) and offered pre- and post- TOP counselling by the Vitality Provider.

### ***STI Treatment***

Youth coming in with STIs are counselled and treated. In more serious cases (such as genital ulcers) referrals are made to a clinic or doctor.

### ***General Counselling***

According to the Vitality Provider, counselling is mostly required for rape. After initial counselling, rape survivors are referred to the police station for them to complete the necessary paper work and receive the necessary treatment. They usually return to the Vitality Provider for further counselling. The Vitality Provider recalls how the police station “was not good at all” when she first arrived. “Clients would come back crying, saying they do not want to go back because of verbal abuse and emotional abuse”. Since then, she has spoken with one of the policewomen at the station and says that the situation has improved.<sup>10</sup>

Other problems requiring counselling include substance abuse (of marijuana and Mandrax), and depression (often leading to suicidal tendencies). In these cases, the Vitality Provider provides counselling, contacts parents for joint counselling sessions, and in some cases refers to other service providers, such as Alcoholics Anonymous (AA) for further counselling.

Another problem is that of children living in violent homes. In these cases, the Vitality Provider tries to speak to all parties individually and then tries to bring them together. The Vitality Provider did, however, highlight the fact that counselling is difficult and that she is not fully qualified for the nature and scope of the problems she handles.

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<sup>9</sup> Interviews with young girls waiting for family planning advice, showed that use of the female condom is not preferred, and that often the female condom is not used for the purpose of contraception (interviewees spoke of girls wearing them as bangles) or using them incorrectly.

<sup>10</sup> Other organisations that have been working in the area for many years still do not trust the police enough to just refer rape survivors to them. Instead, they go with them to the police station to ensure that they are treated fairly and most importantly that they receive post-exposure prophylaxis for HIV prevention afterwards. Transport is however a problem, since none of the four clinics in Orange Farm provide Post Exposure Prophylaxis – the nearest facilities being in Soweto or Sebokeng.

### ***HIV-AIDS Counselling***

Pre- and post-test counselling is provided by the Vitality Centre, but tests are conducted at local clinics. Pre-test counselling involves mainly young men whose partners test HIV positive at antenatal clinics.

Plans are currently underway to introduce Voluntary Counselling & Testing (VCT) at the Vitality Centre. According to the Programmes Co-ordinator, this is an initiative from the national office. Its implementation will depend on the national office as well as on the employment of a fulltime nurse. At the moment, the Vitality Provider is only a part-time nurse who was hired in July 2002 when the fulltime nurse resigned.

The Vitality Centre is visited mostly by young women for contraception, with about half coming for counselling. On average, at least 15 young people aged 15-25 are seen a day and between July and October 2002, 830 young people were provided with services – an average of just over 200 per month. It is estimated that three quarters of people visiting the Centre are not members, although most of the young people counselled do become members.

Since September this year, the Vitality Centre has been visited by HIV positive young people who do not want to go to hospitals and clinics. The Vitality Centre provides a “nice and quiet” place with some degree of privacy. At present there are ten HIV positive young people between the ages of 18 and 21 years who attend the centre. They are offered counselling and have been advised to set up support groups. No form of treatment is, however, provided by the Y-centre.

### ***Access and Target Group***

According to staff and Groundbreakers “anyone is welcome to the centre”. However, they have recently decided to restrict access to the age of 21 to avoid a problem that arose in the past of older youth expecting permanent jobs after participating in the Y-Centre for a few months. While staff and Groundbreakers are at pains to show that the 12-17 target group does not restrict access to the Y-Centre and its services, it is clear from interviews with Groundbreakers, members, users and community interviewees that there are certain restrictions on the kinds of activities young people can participate in based on their ages. For example, if you are over the age of 17 and you want to play basketball, you can only play as a coach and not as a contender. Similarly, running of the Y-Station is restricted to youth between the ages of 12-17 years.

Approximately 60% of Y-Centre attendees are male, and this is attributed to basketball being attractive to young males. Young females tend to do basketball, netball, aerobics and ballroom dancing. Female attendance is said to be constrained by the need for them to be at home after school, performing domestic chores.

During the research visits approximately 50-150 young people were noted at the Centre between 15h00 and 18h00 every day. This included 12-17 year old’s participating in sports, and teenage girls waiting for family planning, There were also many young people sitting



around in groups or reading loveLife publications and listening to music. There were also a large number of children under the age of 12 years.

In general discussion with youth at the Y-Centre, the following points were noted:

- ❑ Most young females come to the Y-Centre for family planning, while most young males come to play basketball and if they visit the Vitality Centre it is for STI treatment.
- ❑ loveLife members do meet to discuss issues arising at the centre. It was noted that there were divisions and tensions between youth who attend the Y-Centre and those who do not. Y-Centre members spoke of being called ‘cheeseboys’ and ‘snobs’ and being seen as more privileged than other young people. For example, one noted:

*“They (other youth) do criticise us... They call us orphanage. They say ‘here come the orphanage kids.’ ... Like cheeseboys. They call me cheeseboy. I don’t know what is cheeseboy... They say that we’re snobs. Y-Centre people are snobs. They think that they know much... But we try to show them that we are equal... I mean there’s no one who’s (more) important than anyone... And we’re trying to show them that this is not our centre. This is our centre – with them.”*

- ❑ Tensions are beginning to manifest themselves in the form of violence against Y-Centre members. For example, one member had recently been murdered at a loveLife function being held at a local school and on the day of President Mandela’s visit to Orange Farm, one member was assaulted by other youth and had to be taken to the clinic for stitches. Groundbreakers say that they are being targeted for muggings.
- ❑ The concept of Miss loveLife was raised as follows: Local school runs a competition to select their own Miss loveLife ‘queen’ and ‘first princess’, who then qualify for the Miss loveLife finals. Miss loveLife is supposed to be someone who is “not only beautiful”, but also “has a lot of information about loveLife”. A Groundbreaker remarked that they decided to start with a Miss loveLife “because girls, they are the ones who like to contest most”, but that they are planning to have a Mr loveLife soon. A Miss Gay loveLife was also mooted. Miss loveLife contestants have to choose a superstar or role model whom they aspire to be like (usually sports stars or popstars) and they wear this person’s name throughout the competition. The current Miss loveLife was identified as “Left Eye”, a member of the group TLC.
- ❑ Staff and Groundbreakers are proud of the fact that the Y-Centre has ten gay members. Three gay members were interviewed. All were positive about the fact that gay and lesbian people are welcomed by staff at the Y-Centre. They spoke of having to walk around Orange Farm in groups because of the harassment they face, but that they felt free to walk around the Y-Centre and mingle with people as individuals. However, they feel that the Y-Centre does not really do much for gay and lesbian people: “They (loveLife) are doing nothing for gays and lesbians but they’ve accepted us.” Interviewees felt that not enough was being done in general to address the specific situation of gay and lesbian youth in Orange Farm.

## Community organisation and youth perceptions

### *Reach of the centre*

Amongst youth interviewees, it was noted not everyone was welcome at the Y-Centre. Many interviewees felt that the Y-Centre excluded people on the basis of their age and were not aware that the age limit extended to 25. Some felt that there was favouritism going on at the Y-Centre – for example, some were refused access because they were too old but then noted older youth at the centre. There was also a feeling that the Y-Centre made it difficult for young people to gain access to the Y-Centre by ‘asking too many questions’ when enquiries are made. Being asked whether one has completed various courses often leads to people feeling unwelcome and not returning to the Y-Centre. One interviewee said, “You start distancing yourself from the Y-Centre because they start asking you so many questions. It’s not good at all. People are afraid to go there because they’ll ask those questions.”

Interviewees also felt that the promotion of certain kinds of sport and music, and the adoption of certain kinds of fashion, styles and language by Groundbreakers and Y-Centre members, made some young people feel that they could not go to the Y-Centre if they were different or like different things.

Organisation members felt that loveLife was only reaching a very small portion of the Orange Farm population.

### *Role of the Centre*

There was very little understanding amongst HIV/AIDS and youth organisation members of loveLife and the Y-Centre. Most people interviewed knew about the distribution of condoms, the family planning services and the sports and recreation programmes offered by the Y-Centre. However, there was very little knowledge of their outreach work in schools. One organisation member noted: “We can’t even refer in the field to loveLife because we don’t know what they’re doing.”

Interviewees noted that loveLife and the Y-Centre provided very little information about themselves and their services and felt that there was a need to publicise the centre and its services, as well as general guidelines. It was noted that the Y-Centre only publicised its chat shows and events in the locality within which it is situated.

love Life’s key messages and slogans as well as discussion of sex and sexuality and ‘lifestyle’ are carried in its billboards and print publications (Scamto Print and Thetha Nathi), which are available at the Y-Centre. With regard to the billboards it was noted that:

*“I have a problem more especially with their billboards... because if you never came across somebody who can tell you who is loveLife, to me it means nothing, you know. It means nothing because they don’t have even a billboard where they explain what kind of activities they are involved in.”*

There were also a strong feelings expressed that, in the absence of any libraries in Orange Farm, it would be more important for loveLife and the Y-Centre to provide other reading materials for young people attending the Y-Centre, beyond loveLife’s own publications.

It was also felt that loveLife were not visible in the community: “There’s nothing much they are doing for the community. We never see them in the field.”

The conceptual framework of the Y-Centre was problematised:

*“I think they should go back to their boardroom and look at the problems facing Orange Farm because if they are getting funding just to make youth happy, it’s not a bad thing... But, in terms of priorities – to prioritise this thing? We have many problems...”*

In relation to HIV/AIDS, community interviewees noted that many young people were infected with HIV, and that the stigma of living with the disease was a major struggle. This included cases where young people were rejected by their families. These youth, together with a growing number of AIDS orphans, face many challenges and community workers noted that these youth do not have any adult supervision nor any sources of income. While there are a few organisations and projects trying to address this issue by providing food and shelter, there are a number of child-headed households and young girls are reportedly forced into prostitution or into entering relationships with older, employed men – “to get money they have to be in love with some people who earns some money” – and some youth had resorted to drug dealing and crime to support their families.

Unemployment amongst parents and youth as well as lack of access to basic services compounded the problems of youth and it was felt that loveLife and the Y-Centre seem far removed from reality of youth affected by HIV/AIDS.

Community health workers illustrated how unemployment and related poverty could lead to death from starvation as sick people have no food. For PWAs this could mean death in the early stages of the disease since TB drugs, for example, needed to be complemented with good nutrition. Unemployment contributed to young people becoming despondent, indulging in drugs and alcohol and sex.

Community health workers highlighted the problems created for home-based care providers when electricity and water cut-offs occurred.

*“If we have a patient with AIDS inside the house, you don’t have electricity, you don’t have water, it’s a disaster because home caregivers need water, they need electricity to cook for that patient, to clean or whatever they need.”*

Referring to the dislocation of loveLife from community issues such as these another interviewee noted:

*“My appeal to them (loveLife) is to be involved also and to network with other organisations and to hear and share whatever the problems that the community are encountering. I think by so doing we will be building the nation of tomorrow. Because those youth that are there are our children. So, they should have known the social problems. Because not all of them will be in loveLife forever. One day they will have to go out and face the world.”*

While community interviewees accepted that HIV prevention was important, they felt that loveLife’s neglect of other issues, including treatment, support and care for young people affected by the disease in general, prevented it from making an impact in the community. As one community health worker stated:

*“In most cases, I think it [loveLife’s model of prevention] is not working because most of the people are sick... We have to move at least to the treatment side of it because most of the people are sick... and young people are sick at the moment. So, to only concentrate on prevention is not working.”*

Other community organisations are working in the field of prevention, also doing peer education and trying to bring about behaviour change. However, they see their role as different from loveLife’s, falling within a much broader approach to the problem that combines prevention with treatment, support and counselling, and the addressing of other social problems. They also see the need for adults and youth to work together in the addressing of these problems as younger people “can learn strategies and tactics from older people” and differences in terms of outlook, values, and beliefs can be discussed openly and frankly and resolved.

*“A lot of young people, they have to be educated in a way that we can be sure they are aware about it. You don’t have to do it the entertainment style and the young people they end up doing the very same wrong thing because through entertainment you are not 100 percent sure that they will be doing the right thing, whether they condomise or whatever, because it ends up being entertainment – everything, even sex.”*

Another community health worker said,

*“When you talk to people between 12 and maybe 21, you can’t just talk to them today and think that everything is done. You must make sure that you do follow-ups to see to it that they are living the way you taught them.”*

For community workers interviewed, loveLife’s approach was “just a way of creating a sexually active society.” A number of interviewees felt that the main focus of loveLife was the distribution of condoms, and argued that by promoting condom use for such a young target group, loveLife was not addressing the issues of sex and sexuality in a holistic manner. “I once thought loveLife was going to address the issues that affect most young people in Orange Farm, but, no, they are promoting condoms.”

Interviewees noted that there was little emphasis on abstinence and delayed sexual debut amongst very young people, and it was felt that loveLife actually encouraged young people to become sexually active. For both young and older community workers and activists, promoting behaviour change and assisting youth to address their problems holistically as members of a community, was preferred. loveLife’s approach to positive sexuality is not seen as an effective strategy for addressing the problem, but rather was felt to be exacerbating youth risk as it encouraged sexual activity and ‘talk’ in a manner foreign to the community of Orange Farm.

One community health worker spoke of young people becoming sexually active at the centre, where they meet their partners. Many interviewees spoke of young couples being seen in the streets around the Y-Centre after it closes at night. They said that this is seen by many older people as disrespectful and foreign to the culture of black people. One community health worker said:

*“Talk about it – that should be their (loveLife’s) responsibility... to go into houses, speak to parents, children and the community generally, not just in the centre and on billboards... to the elders in the community.”*

Many interviewees acknowledged that the Y-Centre played a positive role in the community by providing a safe space for young people where they can “expose their talents”, engage in various sporting and recreational activities, and “stay off the streets”. A number of interviewees said that the Y-Centre changed their lives by providing them with something to do other than drugs, alcohol, crime and sex. Many of the Groundbreakers and members pointed to having experienced these changes in lifestyle, which community workers see as positive. However, two of the community workers felt that this role was contradicted by the fact that the Y-Centre only provided this space for a limited period of time in a person’s life and that youth who have been loveLife members return to their old ways once they are no longer within the appropriate age group. This was seen as a result of loveLife’s neglect of all-round support for young people in an area with such a high rate of unemployment and related social ills.

### ***Parents***

While Y-Centre staff are at pains to show that they are addressing the problems that parents have had with the Y-Centre by inviting them to the centre, community interviewees do not feel that parents are now comfortable with loveLife and the Y-Centre. They argue that loveLife’s approach to youth is actually causing further divisions between parents and children by promoting certain ideas, values and beliefs that are foreign to the culture and expectations of most people in Orange Farm, and there is insufficient engagement with parents. One community health worker spoke of the experience of his own sister, who had started going to the Y-Centre at the age of 16. Within six months she “changed dramatically”, coming home late at night, “telling us about rights and so on”. For the first time she brought her boyfriend home, and this was something that his parents found difficult to accept as it was not “usually done in African culture... Since then she became a stranger to us, you know, the way she behaved.” She was grounded and prevented from attending the Y-Centre. She had since begun working for Inkhanyezi HIV-AIDS project as a voluntary caregiver to keep herself busy.

Another community worker said, “Most of the parents regard loveLife as teaching their children to be in love, you know. Because, after their activities you will see them walking in the street two by two.”

Two community workers noted that they had had parents come to them with their children who had been to loveLife and “become uncontrollable”. Interviewees spoke of “a lack of respect” amongst loveLife members. One community worker felt that the Y-Centre encouraged a situation where very little time was spent by parents and children together:

*“It’s not like what I would call a normal life whereby now a child is able to share the adventures of the day with the parents so that just to promote that communication. So, the whole thing, I think, is leading to the communication breakdown within the family”.*

Interviewees also noted that they did not know of any parents meetings where loveLife could report to parents and get input from them.

### ***Divisions Amongst Youth in Orange Farm***

Youth interviewees confirmed the problem raised by Y-Centre members that there are growing tensions between youth who attend the centre and those who did not. This was particularly related to aspiration to fashion and materialism that were contradicted by the general poverty experienced by youth in the community at large. It was noted that this led to tensions between parents, many of whom are unemployed, and children, who needed money to spend on clothes, hairdressing, and other aspects of fashion.

*“Yes, there is tension... I mean youth that are attending Y-Centre... they seem to be on the other stage now. They call themselves names and stuff like that. And you can just see them. You can tell ... they are doing dreadlocks on their heads. So... we feel like, if you don't have dreadlocks then you don't belong to the centre”*

*“... there's somehow like high class people who go to Y-Centre whilst it was supposed to be a community thing – no one is above who. So, they are just promoting hairstyles, fashion, those kinds of things...”*

*“You know, they (loveLife members) are always in groups. Whenever they go to Y-Centre and whenever they come back. So, you know, one will think that okay... it's a specific group, so they've called them or they've sent in something, whilst you don't need a CV to go to a community centre. So, looking at them in a group, they are all dressed in expensive clothes and everything. So, as Orange Farm it's a very much poor area, so most people don't work. Young people feel that there's a tension between them because they can't afford to buy those expensive clothes they have there at Y-Centre”.*

*“I think at Y-Centre most young people are affected by peer pressure... Peer pressure happens within the centre because, if you don't have expensive clothes... you start pressurising your parents for more money, clothes, etc.”*

It was noted that young women, in particular had groups that “whenever you don't suit their style you are excluded.” One interviewee who had participated in Y-Centre activities argued that there were ‘in-groups’ within the Y-Centre which were very difficult to gain entry into if one did not have the right clothes, hairstyles, and way of speaking. She spoke specifically of young girls moving in groups in the Y-Centre and discriminating against others who were different from themselves.

It was noted that the schools people attended played a role in determining whether one was accepted or not. One youth interviewee said that those young people who attended schools in Lenasia South were treated with more respect and accepted more easily by Y-Centre members than those who went to school in Orange Farm. Another interviewee mentioned two very close friendships that he had enjoyed had broken down over the Y-Centre as the two friends who joined the Y-Centre changed within the space of a few months. These changes occurred in terms of the way his friends dressed and spoke as well as in the way they approached their old friends. It would seem that the Y-Centre facilitates the creation of a group of young people who are seen as separate from the Orange Farm community. Said one: “... there's some division between youth from loveLife and youth from the township”.

Community interviewees felt strongly that the prioritisation of basketball, the styles adopted by the Groundbreakers and some members (hair, clothes, language), and the music that dominates (hip hop) at the Y-Centre, encouraged a youth culture that was foreign to the community of Orange Farm:

*“... already it is the adoption of American sports and then at the same time now they start behaving like Americans... the whole thing is actually destructive in terms of culture. Because, at the end of the day, you’ll see now people aping the very same Americans – the language they speak and so on, irrespective of whether that is the right word to say or whatever, they just say it because they are trying to emulate someone else.”*

In visits to the Y-Centre it was noted that Groundbreakers, for example, gave themselves names in the basketball style – for example, one Groundbreaker preferred to be called ‘Mad Dog’. This adoption of American styles extends to the educational approaches in the Lifeskills & Sexuality workshops as well as the Motivational Programme, where consultancies that train Groundbreakers and facilitators are American-oriented. This has resulted in an American, ‘corporate-style’ approach to facilitation and workshops, that does not take into consideration the specific contexts of youth in Orange Farm. In general terms, it would seem that loveLife are encouraging aspirations amongst youth that appeal only to a small group of youth. Instead of encouraging young people to find collective solutions to the problems in Orange Farm, they encourage them to develop differently so that they can escape the community to a better world. For example, Groundbreakers and facilitators interviewed aspired to become project managers in big companies.

Divisions were noted between loveLife peer educators and facilitators and other youth activists and community workers who provide peer education. Community educators interviewed said that there was competition growing between themselves and loveLife in the schools as individual members of loveLife “undermine” them by saying that “their skills are better than ours”. Community educators also noted that loveLife had many more resources and materials for outreach work than they do. They felt that those resources could be made more effective if shared. They also felt that there would be a lot to gain in their work from sharing experiences and approaches with loveLife peer educators and facilitators. However, they felt that loveLife members were “not open” and that there would only be a possibility to work together with them “if they become open to all stakeholders and networking”.

There is the perception in the Orange Farm community that loveLife and the Y-Centre are very well-resourced and this is the source of many problems. The Y-Centre Programmes Co-ordinator noted: “People are looking at loveLife as people who have money.” She spoke of how people and organisations come to the Y-Centre to request funds for various things “and when we don’t give them what they need they start withdrawing and saying to their people ‘no, you shouldn’t go there...’ suggesting that they even went to the extent of coming and breaking in at the Centre. “We don’t know why they break in, but I think they have their reasons. So, they don’t take it as *our* centre or a centre for *our* young people. They just say ‘no, it’s a centre and they have money, so they should do 123 for the community’.”

The Y-Centre has been broken into three times since over a period of nine months. Mainly equipment was stolen, and Y-Centre management had responded by stepping up

security measures, installing an alarm system with armed response, an electric fence and two security guards at night.

Focus group members related their experiences of attending a ‘Youth Power Conference’ together with loveLife members. When there was a shortage of food at the conference, loveLife members called their Director, who arrived with transport and took them away from the conference. Community youth workers felt that this showed that “they only care about themselves. We were all attending the conference together. We were all hungry together. But they had to get special attention.”

It was felt that resources devoted to loveLife could be spent more equitably:

*“I feel disappointed, you know, that huge amounts of money has been sent to loveLife while it doesn’t have any relationship with any organisation, nor, in fact not addressing problems of youth – only entertainment... Maybe it’s a rehabilitation centre for stress.”*

Another noted:

*“I think there must be somebody up who’s on top there who’s trying to promote loveLife, to make it as if it is doing good for the community, you know. But, at the end of the day it’s not doing much. More especially if you look at the funds that are allocated to them. We are small organisations, we don’t get such a lot of money, but we are helping the people who are marginalised. And, I think we are doing good. We are trying to do good. But, with such a huge amount of money, I think somebody’s doing something up there. But, one day’s one day. One day the truth will come out.”*

### ***Relationships Between the Y-Centre & Other Organisations***

The Y-Centre Programmes Co-ordinator noted that they had relationships with community groups, but that they were not strong. She attributed this to the fact that target groups were different: “We target young people, they target any age”. However, the Y-Centre does refer to local organisations if problems cannot be solved at the Centre. For example, St Charles Lwanga Advice Office has received referrals for assistance with disability grants and child support grants. Staff at the Advice Office noted however that the relationship did not extend beyond referrals. One staff member noted that it while loveLife referred people to them, they didn’t ever invite them to workshops or events at the Y-Centre.

Organisational interviewees referred to the visit to the Y-Centre by Nelson Mandela and Bill Clinton and the exclusion and disappointment they felt at not being invited to a major event discussing HIV/AIDS in an area in which they work everyday for little to no remuneration. They felt snubbed, as health workers and as activists, and noted that the community at large were extremely disappointed at being left out of the event. Interviewees spoke of crowds of people being fenced off from the event. They also noted that there had not even been a reportback meeting to the community by loveLife.

Positive interactions between organisations and the Y-centre appear to have been short-lived. Interactions were either based on a relationship with a specific person, whose departure from loveLife resulted in the end of the relationship, or on loveLife needing something from



another organisation. Organisations interviewed felt that they were only invited for specific events and when they were needed, which was not in the interests of building proper long-term relationships. One noted: “From my point of view, they (loveLife) don’t exist. Because everything we are doing here, we are also doing on our own.”

While the only formal local network of organisations working in the field of HIV/AIDS collapsed due to funding problems, there are still informal networks which exist between organisations working in the field. These organisations work together to share skills, resources and ensure that they cover as many aspects of the problems between themselves in their work. On the whole, community interviewees felt that there was the space to work together with loveLife. However, loveLife would have to “open up”. Perspectives included:

*“loveLife is distancing itself from other organisations. Maybe they want to work alone. I don’t know why.”, and*

*“loveLife... want to work like an island. So, we have difficulty approaching them. So, I don’t know whether it is their structure or their role or whatever. So, it is very hard for other organisations around to work with them. So, I don’t know if it is their motto or whatever.”*

Another noted:

*“To be honest... we know people are not the same. And we can’t be the same. There are others that can say that loveLife is playing a very big role and also there are those who will be like me – And I’m not against them. The only thing I’m looking for is how we can serve the community, the needs of the community with them.”*

Community interviewees spoke of having approached the Y-Centre in the past for use of the venue as well as other resources (such as computers and printing facilities) and not receiving a warm response – for example, being referred from person to person as staff change and being faced with changing approaches as new staff were appointed. Others spoke of being asked to pay for services, which they saw as being community services, which ought to be free.

Some community workers felt that it would therefore be impossible to work together with loveLife and the Y-Centre. As one noted:

*“I don’t think they are willing to work with us because they have everything that they need. They have the offices, clinics and things. We have nothing. We are working from shacks in Orange Farm. As poor as we are, I don’t think we can work with them. To me, they are more advanced than us so when they look at us they see someone who cannot do anything to contribute to what they are doing. But, we are doing a very great job.”*

There was also a feeling that loveLife were not committed to building proper relationships with the community and other organisations, and if were, they would have made some attempt to do so already:

*“If there was space (for working together), I think it should have happened long time ago because, you know, problems are just keep on increasing instead of decreasing, while the Y-Centre is there. We should have seen different by now.”*

## Conclusions

In a community as vast and as under-resourced as Orange Farm, any services for youth are bound to fill a gap and provide some service. A gap being filled by the Y-Centre is that of providing a space for sports and recreation for young people, in a community where recreational facilities are limited. In providing recreational facilities, specific choices have been made – for example, basketball predominating.

The Y-Centre provides a safe space for some youth to meet after school, off the streets and away from the dangers of alcohol, drugs, crime and gangsterism. Young people interviewed at the Y-Centre either knew of others, or had themselves, changed from lives of crime or drug/alcohol addiction to “positive lifestyles” encouraged by the Y-Centre. For the Groundbreakers and youth who are actively involved in the Y-Centre, it does seem to have played a positive role in shaping their lives. It is to be expected that such a facility would do so, but it is also clear that it is only able to do so for a small proportion of the young people living in Orange Farm.

Unfortunately, loveLife’s approach brings with it a concept of exclusivity that is attached to a single vision of how young people should engage with the world. Specifically a ‘lifestyle’ that affirms individualism and aspiration to materialism. The centre is also not integrated with other organisations working in the HIV/AIDS field in the community, and is strongly perceived as being disproportionately resourced.

The Orange Farm Y-Centre fails to address the broader HIV/AIDS context in Orange Farm – in particular, the potential role that a well resourced facility can play within in a community whose core problems are rooted in unemployment and poverty. Community activists and health workers struggle with very few resources to address problems such as AIDS orphans, lack of basic healthcare and treatment for PWAs, lack of food, unemployment, lack of access to basic services such as water and electricity, rejection of HIV positive youth by their families, continued discrimination against PWAs, and a lack of support structures. These issues are at odds with loveLife’s slick media campaigns and the lifestyle advocated through the Orange Farm Y-Centre is far-removed from the reality of the lives of young, poor people in the Orange farm community.

Although it is well resourced, the Orange Farm Y-Centre it does not have capacity to provide services to youth in proportion to the Orange Farm community as a whole. Services provided in relation to providing support to teenage pregnancies, STIs and HIV/AIDS, are limited. For example, the most common response to such problems at Vitality Centre was to refer youth to a clinic. Other than counselling, for which the Centre lacks the capacity, family planning and the treatment of minor STIs are the only other direct health services offered.

In terms of its approach to combating the spread of STIs (including HIV) and teenage pregnancies, and encouraging ‘positive lifestyles’, loveLife claims to be wanting to change the gendered status quo (biased towards males and heterosexism) by talking about sex in ways that are tolerant of difference and encourage responsibility and respect in relationships. However, in its own broader programmes, it exhibits signs of perpetuating this gendered status quo (through its billboards, its chatshows, and workshops). In addition, real situations, which prevent gender equality within the Y-Centre (such as the fact that girls are constrained from attending the Centre because of the domestic chores they are expected to perform at

home, or that there is no shared responsibility between male and female partners for contraception), are not tackled head on by loveLife.

loveLife's approach to youth causes further divisions between parents and children by promoting certain ideas, values, beliefs and aspirations that are foreign to the culture and expectations of most people in Orange Farm. The fact that there is no attempt to bring parents and children together in discussion exacerbates the problem.

loveLife and the Y-Centre have also been seen as sowing division amongst youth and in the community. These divisions are evident in terms of the differences between youth who attend the Y-Centre and those who do not, as well as in the perceptions amongst community workers and youth about the role of the Y-Centre in the community. It is clear that there is a growing division between the community and the Y-Centre, with even Y-Centre staff and Groundbreakers acknowledge this.

While Y-Centre staff and GBs express a willingness to work with community organisations, and community organisations express a willingness to work with the Y-Centre on condition that they "open up" to proper consultation and communication with the community, it is unlikely that we will see the coming together of these divided perspectives. This is largely because of the vast difference in terms of the approaches of loveLife and community organisations, with the former expecting the community to buy in to a predetermined 'lifestyle' and the latter taking the community as their starting point and building collective approaches to problems.

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