



IMPACT REPORT

2024 - 2025



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1 INTRODUCTION

Surfpop is a registered non-profit organisation in Cape Town. At Surfpop, we believe that every wave has the power to change a life. Each afternoon, children from Masiphumelele, Ocean View, and Khayelitsha are welcomed in our safe space. Through surfing, education, life coaching, and nutrition, we help them boost their wellbeing, strengthen their resilience and prepare them for a better future.

This year, we expanded our program and set up new partnerships in Khayelitsha, introduced a mental health curriculum to our primary school learners, expanded our career readiness workshops for high school youth and launched a new social enterprise - the Surfpop Surf School in Muizenberg for anyone who would like to learn how to surf - to fund Surfpop and employ future Surfpop graduates.

OUR MISSION

To empower children from township communities in South Africa through a long-term, holistic program that nurtures body, mind, and spirit – from their first wave to their first job.



"Surfpop helped me turn my dream into reality – I'm the first in my family to go to university."

- Graduate Liyabona



"THIS PAST YEAR MARKED OUR 10 YEAR ANNIVERSARY!"

What was once a dream, is now a reality. A strong program led by a passionate team to a growing number of Surfpop children.

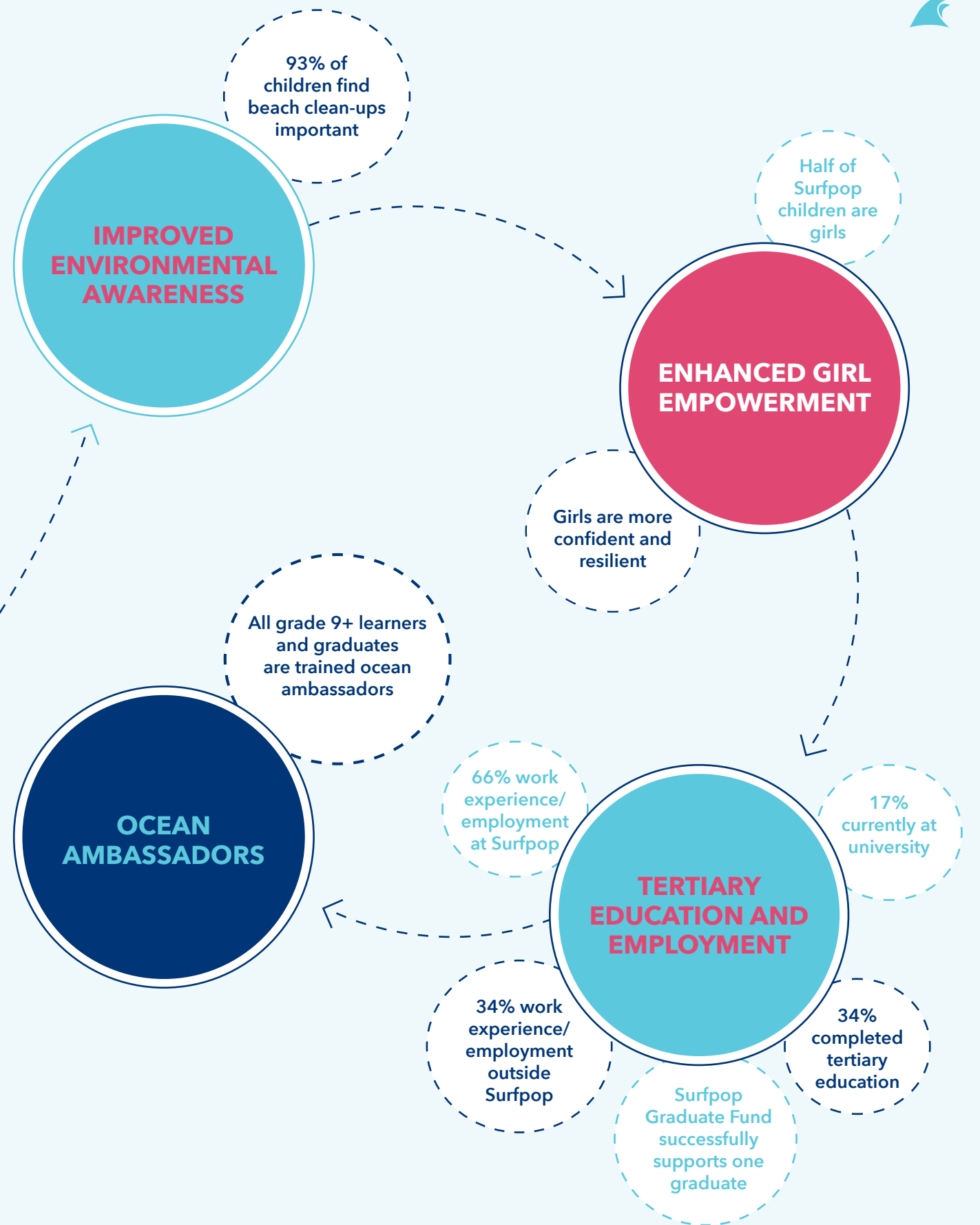
We have created a beautiful Surfpop family where the children can laugh, learn and belong. A place where they can build their confidence, discover their strengths and work on a brighter future."

– Daniel Botha, Founder and Director



Watch the Surfpop story on CNN, told by our founder and changemaker Daniel Botha, as part of the CNN African Voices Changemakers Program via www.surfpop.co.za/media

2 OUR IMPACT AT A GLANCE



CONTRIBUTING TO 8 UNITED NATIONS SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS



3 SURFPOP MODEL

3.1 THEORY OF CHANGE

We believe in a holistic and long-term approach to support each child from their first wave to their first job.

APPROACH

HOLISTIC | LONG-TERM
5 days/week safe space after school

ACTIVITIES



OUR 8 OUTCOMES



IMPACT



3.2 SURFPOP ACTIVITIES

SAFE SPACE

Surfpop offers a safe, family-like environment guided by caring mentors and a child psychologist. By working closely with the foster care organisation Home from Home, social workers, caregivers, and schools, we support each child's unique strengths and dreams – creating a nurturing community where confidence and belonging can grow.

SURFING

Surfing connects our learners to the power and beauty of the ocean – a space of healing, confidence, and joy. It builds resilience, focus, and perseverance, while creating a deep sense of belonging within a diverse surf community. Each session strengthens both body and mind. Led by qualified surf therapy coaches – including one Surfpop graduate – the children begin with mindful breathing and movement, surf together for an hour of fun and growth, and close with reflection and gratitude. New learners start with swimming lessons at Swimmattix, ensuring everyone feels safe and confident in the water. To nurture their love for the ocean, Surfpop learners also take part in beach clean-ups and ocean education, growing into true guardians of the sea.

EDUCATION

Our after-school program strengthens school performance and opens pathways to future opportunities. Qualified teachers provide homework support and engaging lessons in English and Maths, aligned with the South African CAPS curriculum, helping children build strong academic foundations and a love for learning.

LIFE COACHING

Life coaching equips learners with the skills and support to achieve their dreams. Through life skills and vocational training, children learn problem-solving, teamwork, and professionalism while gaining exposure to real workplaces. These sessions also help them develop emotional intelligence, learn healthy coping strategies, and build the confidence to set goals and discover their strengths.

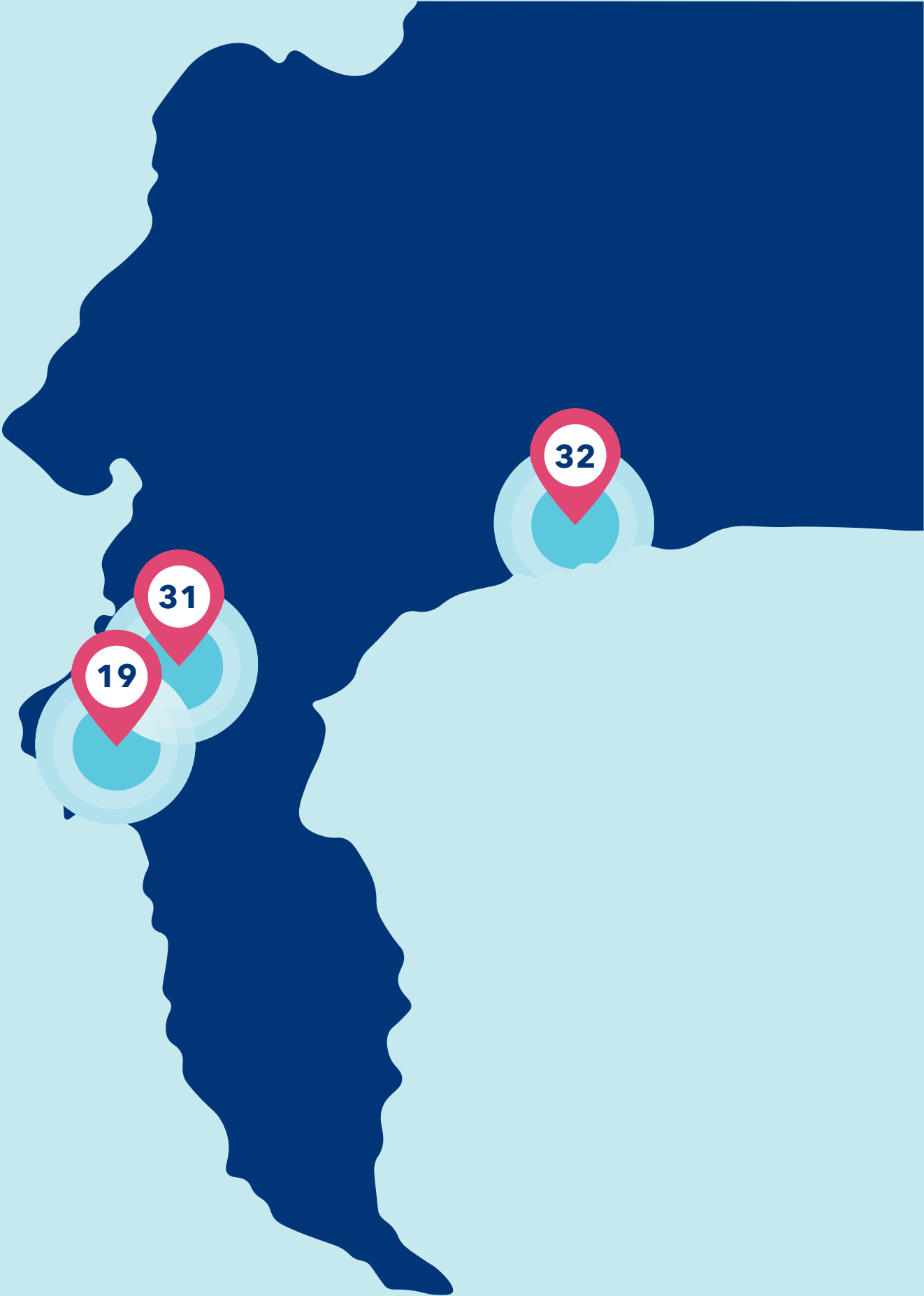
NUTRITION

Every day, Surfpop provides a nutritious meal that fuels energy for the waves and focus in class. Meals are prepared with dried foods from the Lunchbox Fund and fresh vegetables from our Surfpop garden, where learners also grow their own produce and learn about healthy living.

GRADUATE SUPPORT

We continue to guide learners beyond school through the Surfpop Graduate Fund, offering mentorship and interest-free financial support. This ongoing connection helps graduates access tertiary education and employment – turning dreams into lasting opportunity.

3.3 OUR BENEFICIARIES



Surfpop adopts an inclusive approach by including children with a variety of learning levels and special needs and by fostering relationships between children from different cultural and linguistic backgrounds.

REFERRED BY:



4 | SURFPOP OUTPUTS

4.1 ACTIVITIES



4.2 SURFING

80% like the surf lessons

86% like the swimming lessons

“The surf sessions make me feel happy; they change my life”

HIGHLIGHT:

Participation in 7 surf competitions and one surf camp, backed by competition training to truly empower our surfers.



4.3 EDUCATION

73% like the education classes

"What I like about the classes is that I get to learn from peers at school"

93% say that they make them better at school

"The classes make it easier for me to understand what I learn at school"



4.4 LIFE COACHING

63% like the life coaching sessions

"It helps me to be confident in speaking in front of people"

Our activities reflect the diverse interests of our learners. While not every child enjoys every activity or finds it easy to share feelings or speak in public – we gently encourage them to build these important life skills at their own pace.



HIGHLIGHTS:

- Mental health curriculum in partnership with Little Lions Mental Health Coaching.
- Yoga classes at Soulspace Yoga Studio.
- Computer literacy curriculum developed by an IT student Katinka Wilkinson.
- Adolescent health activities in partnership with Desmond Tutu Foundation.
- Second Ocean Ambassador Course in partnership with Ocean Pledge, helping our learners develop public-speaking skills to advocate for ocean conservation.
- Vocational workshop series focused on tourism, hospitality and nature conservation in partnership with Southern Xplorer Tours, SANParks, the University of the Western Cape and Cape Radd.

4.5. GRADUATE SUPPORT

With no children finishing high school this past year, we supported no new graduates, but continued to support four graduates through mentoring, work experience, networking and the Surfpop Graduate Fund.

HIGHLIGHT:

In 2024, Surfpop launched the Surfpop Graduate Fund pilot – a revolving, interest-free loan that helps dedicated Surfpop graduates access tertiary education or employment opportunities after high school. Graduates begin repayment two years after finding work, allowing the fund to support the next committed learner and keep the cycle of opportunity growing. One graduate is studying nursing at university with support of this fund.



“Because of Surfpop’s support, I can focus on my dream of becoming a nurse without the constant worry of financial strain. Surfpop has given me the chance to study, grow, and one day serve my community with care and compassion.”

– Liyabona, Surfpop Graduate Fund recipient



5

PROGRAM
OUTCOMES

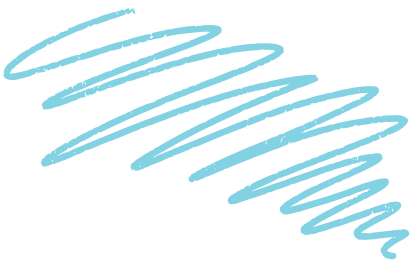
5.1 MENTAL WELLBEING

WHY IT MATTERS!

South Africa faces a growing mental health crisis – with an estimated one in four people experiencing depression. For many children, neglect, trauma, and instability during childhood greatly increase the risk of mental health challenges later in life. Surfpop helps break this cycle by fostering happiness, stability, and emotional connection. Through caring mentorship, consistent routines, and the joy of surfing, children find a sense of calm, belonging, and confidence that strengthens their overall mental wellbeing.



“The surf sessions make me feel confident and proud of myself”



Since joining Surfpop, the children are happier, more confident and more positive about their future.

“At Surfpop I feel relaxed and forget about the things that are happening at home, at school and in my community”

STATEMENTS	POSITIVE RESPONSE BASELINE	POSITIVE RESPONSE 2025
Over the last year, I have been feeling happy about things	36%	68%
Over the last year, I have been feeling in a good mood	38%	58%
Over the last year, I have been feeling relaxed	36%	66%
Over the last year, I have been enjoying what each new day brings	49%	71%
I think there are many things I can be proud of	41%	68%
I think good things will happen in my life	44%	74%
I feel that I am good at some things	46%	71%
I can find lots of fun things to do	36%	66%
I make choices easily	21%	66%



5.1 MENTAL WELLBEING

HOW CHILDREN FEEL IN THE SURF

HAPPY
RELAXED
CALM
FREE
CONFIDENT
EXCITED
COMFORTABLE
GOOD
LIFE CHANGING

WHAT CAREGIVERS SAY

“My child is happier and calmer”

84% of caregivers noticed improved mental wellbeing



“My child has a more positive attitude and is extremely excited to be part of Surfpop”



WHAT SOCIAL WORKERS SAY

100% of social workers noticed improved mental wellbeing

“We have seen some of our most quietest and shyest children assume leadership roles in the classrooms and volunteer for public speaking during assembly and camps. They are more vocal, assertive and definitely more confident in their abilities to participate in activities and lead small groups.”

5.2 RESILIENCE

WHY IT MATTERS!

In many township communities, children face daily pressures – from peer pressure and bullying to violence, drug abuse, and gangsterism – often with few safe places to turn to.

Surfpop offers an alternative – a safe, structured environment, wherein learners build inner strength, perseverance, and healthy coping strategies through surf therapy, life coaching, and positive role modelling. These experiences help them face challenges with confidence and resilience – both in and beyond the water.

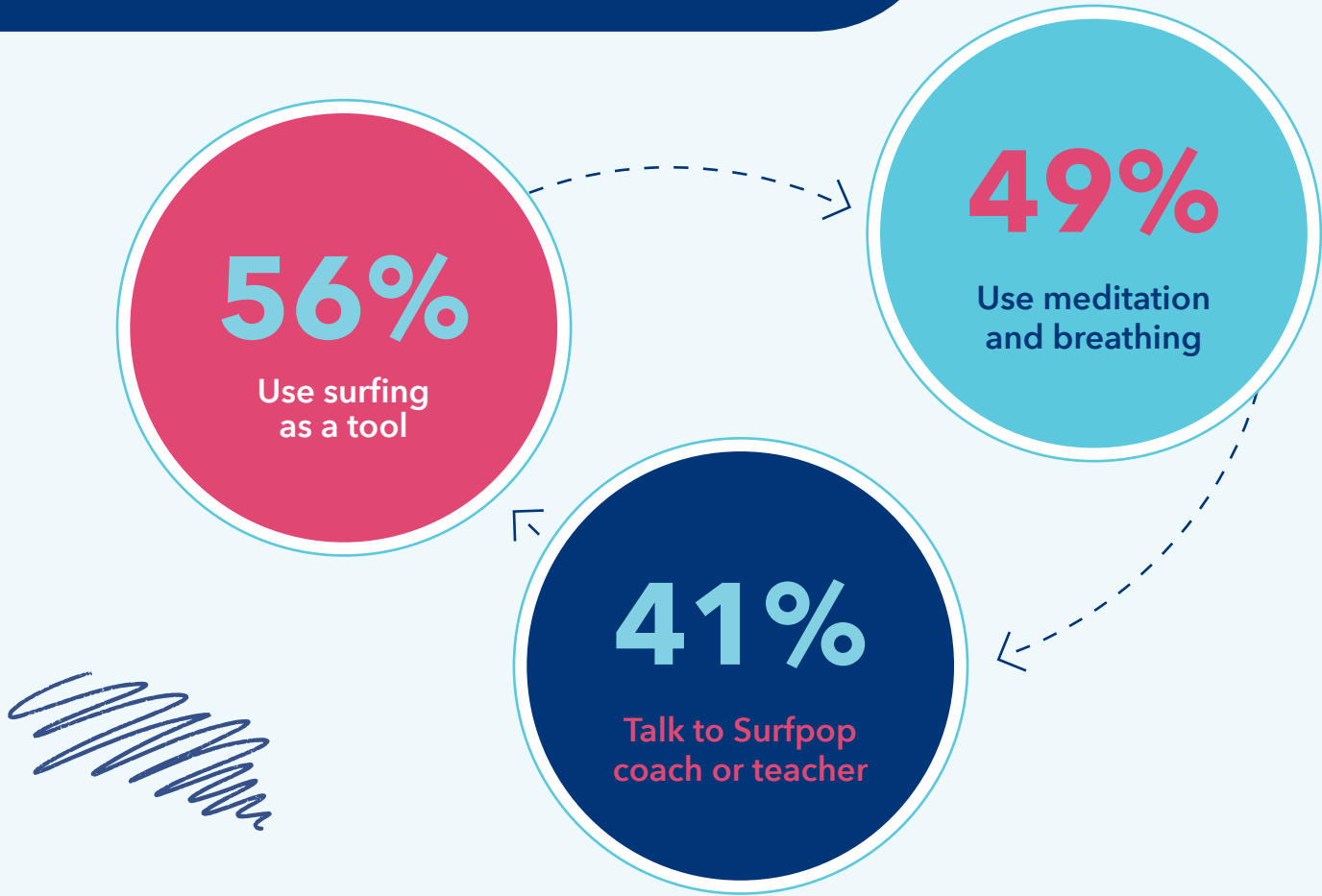
Since joining Surfpop, the children show greater focus, solve problems more effectively, feel supported by their friends and learn valuable skills for their future.

STATEMENTS	POSITIVE RESPONSE BASELINE	POSITIVE RESPONSE 2025
I have chances to learn things that will be important when I am older	62%	89%
When I have a problem I can come up with lots of ways to solve it	28%	39%
I solve problems without hurting myself or others	44%	71%
I feel supported by friends	33%	63%
School is important for me	90%	97%
I try to finish activities that I start	41%	66%

COPING SKILLS

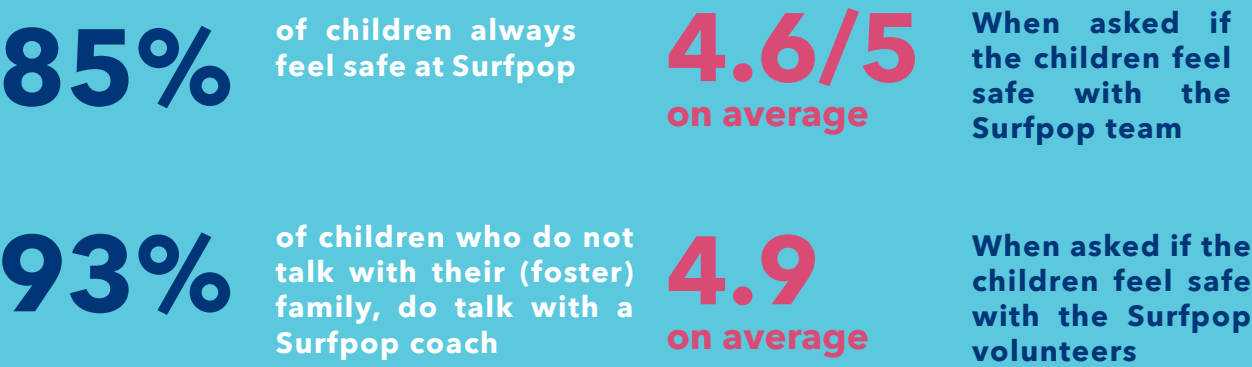


100% of children say that Surfpop gives them tools to calm themselves after something bad has happened



5.2 RESILIENCE

SURFPOP AS SAFE SPACE



WHAT CAREGIVERS SAY



"Surfpop has created a safe and trusted environment for my child: he expresses his emotions in a healthier way than he did before, recovers quickly from disappointment/failures and he sees every mistake as a learning opportunity for growth."

"My child is more focused and career-oriented"

WHAT SOCIAL WORKERS SAY

"One of my motivated Grade 7 learners has already requested transport support to stay in the program next year – showing great leadership and initiative in planning ahead to continue her journey with Surfpop."



5.3 PROSOCIAL BEHAVIOUR

WHY IT MATTERS!

Developing prosocial behaviour – kindness, respect, and cooperation – is essential for creating a safe and caring environment where every child feels valued. Within Surfpop’s diverse group of learners, these skills also help bridge cultural and linguistic differences, fostering connection and understanding in post-Apartheid South Africa. By learning to communicate positively, support one another, and take responsibility as role models, Surfpop children grow into compassionate, confident young leaders – both in the water and in their communities.

WHAT CAREGIVERS SAY

“My child used to be shy around other people, but now is more open and likes being with others.”

81%

of caregivers noticed improved prosocial behaviour

“My child’s social skills have improved and he is more kind, caring and respectful”



WHAT SOCIAL WORKERS SAY



“I have observed some elements of generosity in a number of children although some still need more education on that aspect”

“The children are more disciplined now”

100%

of social workers noticed improved prosocial behaviour



5.5 SCHOOL PERFORMANCE

WHY IT MATTERS!

South Africa faces a serious education crisis. Only about half of learners who start Grade 1 complete matric. According to the 2023 Progress in International Reading Literacy Study, 81% of Grade 4 learners cannot read for meaning, and the Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study shows that most learners perform far below the global average, with only a small percentage demonstrating foundational numeracy. At Surfpop, our goal is to change that story. By offering small-group, engaging sessions in a safe and caring environment, we help learners improve their academic performance and unlock brighter futures.

Compared to a nationally observed declining trend in English and Maths performance as children move through the school system in South Africa

61% improved their English performance

59% improved their Maths performance

WHAT CAREGIVERS SAY

"She is more committed to her school work and I see a great improvement in her school report"

90% of caregivers noticed improved school performance

"He is more centered and calm and his school marks have improved"

WHAT SOCIAL WORKERS SAY

80% of social workers noticed improved school performance

"Our students have achieved quite high marks and some of this new found confidence and performance can be attributed to the extra classes and support from Surfpop."



5.6 ENVIRONMENTAL AWARENESS

WHY IT MATTERS!

Children growing up in township communities grow up without nature, as shacks are built on top of each other. With limited transport options, it is challenging for children to experience and appreciate nature and understand the importance of protecting it. That is why it is an important objective for Surfpop to let the children enjoy the ocean through surfing, teach them about the natural world and encourage them to protect it.

"It is important to clean the beach because I feel that we must take care of the enviroment and the sea creatures"

"My child developed a deeper appreciation for nature"

93% of children find beach clean-ups important



5.7 SKILLS, NETWORKS AND OPPORTUNITIES FOR THE FUTURE

WHY IT MATTERS!

Youth unemployment remains one of South Africa's greatest challenges – with 46.1% of young people aged 15-34 unemployed in 2025. For children growing up in township communities, limited access to education, networks, and opportunity makes breaking this cycle even harder. Surfpop helps change that path by inspiring children to dream beyond their circumstances and equipping them with the skills, confidence, and connections to reach those dreams. From life coaching and vocational training to post-matric support, we guide each learner towards tertiary education or meaningful employment – turning potential into possibility.

WHAT CHILDREN SAY

90%

of children say that the things they learn at Surfpop are helpful for their future

74%

of children dream about what they would like to be when they are older, compared to 50 percent who dreamt about their future before they joined Surfpop

WHAT CAREGIVERS SAY

"I am so happy that my child joined Surfpop: he is more positive about his life and his future"

77%

of caregivers noticed improved future outlook

"My child has a broader outlook on his life and doesn't feel limited or afraid to take risks."

5.7 SKILLS, NETWORKS AND OPPORTUNITIES FOR THE FUTURE

WHAT SOCIAL WORKERS SAY

"Some are already planning to be surfing professionals in the future"

100% of social workers noticed improved future outlook

"When we drive past Muizenberg they become all excited mentioning the surfing with a sense of pride and belonging"



5.8 GIRL EMPOWERMENT

WHY IT MATTERS!

In township communities, girls face extra challenges – from caring for siblings and managing household duties to a higher risk of teenage pregnancy, HIV/AIDS, and gender-based violence. These pressures often limit their education, confidence, and future opportunities. Creating equal opportunities for girls and boys is therefore essential to breaking cycles of inequality and building stronger, more resilient communities.



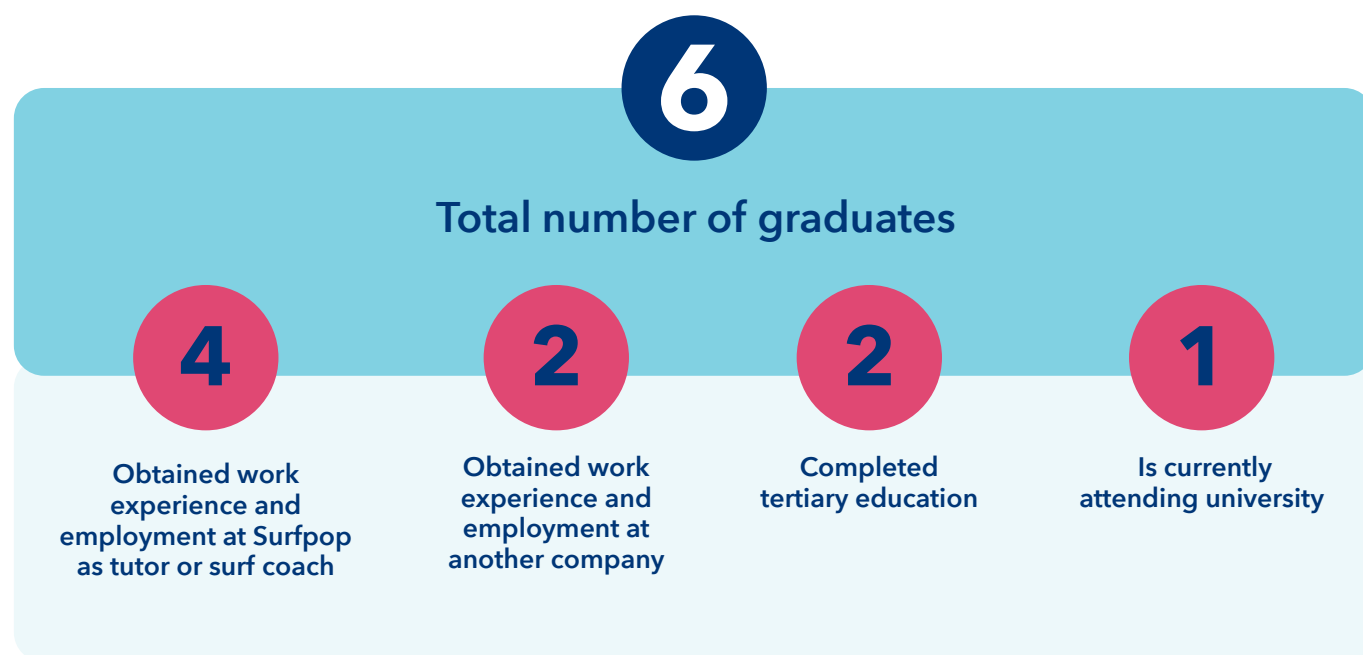
"People told me surfing was for boys - but Surfpop showed me it's for anyone brave enough to try."

STATEMENTS	POSITIVE RESPONSE BASELINE	POSITIVE RESPONSE 2025
I have chances to learn things that will be important when I am older	62%	94%
When I have a problem I can come up with lots of ways to solve it	28%	41%
I think good things will happen in my life	44%	82%
I think there are many things I can be proud of	41%	71%
I dream about what I want to be when I grow up	44%	72%
I make choices easily	21%	65%



6 PROGRAM IMPACT

Our graduates are now coaches, students, and role models – proof that waves create futures.



“Surfpop changed my life – it kept me out of trouble, taught me to surf, and helped me turn my passion into a career.”

GRADUATE LIYABONA – THE DREAMER:

“My name is Liyabona and I am the first in my family to go to university. I joined Surfpop in 2020 and finished my high school in December 2023. It has always been my dream to become a nurse. Caring for other people I love with my whole heart. To get the marks to achieve my dream, I worked incredibly hard at school. I really value the support I got from the Surfpop tutors and the safe and good learning environment that Surfpop provided me with. With the support of Surfpop and the Surfpop Graduate Fund, I successfully applied for the University of the Western Cape in Belville, which I would not have been able to do on my own, and I am also able to live on the university premises. This has allowed me to focus fully on my studies, instead of travelling four hours per day to and from my university. I hope other Surfpop learners will be able to follow in my footsteps.”



Liyabona is the first graduate to successfully use the Surfpop Graduate Fund. Without this support, she would not be studying nursing at university today – a reality many talented young people from townships face when they lack financial support.



The Surfpop Graduate Fund supported Liyabona with:

UNIVERSITY
APPLICATION
FEE

MONTHLY
STIPEND
FOR LIVING
EXPENSES

LIVING SET-UP
AT UNIVERSITY
RESIDENCE

REQUIRED LAB
EQUIPMENT

UNIFORM

LAPTOP

We engage with Liyabona regularly to make sure she has all the support she needs to stay focused on her studies, as financial stress is the most important reason for the high university drop-out rate in South Africa. Her mid-year marks are reflecting the effort that she is putting in with all her marks in the 70-80% range!



GRADUATE ASENAKO - **THE PIONEER**

"My name is Asenako and I am working at the Village Hub in Scarborough. I live in Masiphumelele township and I am originally from the Eastern Cape. I joined Surfpop in 2017 as the first and only girl. I didn't even know what surfing was. On my first Surfpop day, we went to the ocean and I was so scared, but then as the time went by I realised that surfing is the best thing to do. It makes me feel strong and confident. People were saying to me "surfing is for boys", but it is not. I got so excited when the other girls joined Surfpop in 2020. Surfpop helped me with so many other things. They helped me with my school work and with my application for False Bay College."

With the help of the Surfpop tutors I finished my hospitality degree. I even got a laptop that helped me study at home. Once I finished my degree, Surfpop helped me get this job. I see myself opening my own restaurant one day, and my restaurant will have a surf shop on one side and sell coffees and food on the other side. Together with Surfpop I am currently exploring additional courses to reach my dream. I see Surfpop as my family, because Surfpop has always been there for me."



GRADUATE BABONGILE - **THE MENTOR**

"My name is Babongile, I am from Masiphumelele and I am a surf instructor at Surfpop. I joined Surfpop as a beneficiary in 2015. I love Surfpop. Surfpop is like a family to me. It helped me stay out of trouble and I learned a lot through my journey at Surfpop. Surfpop taught me how to surf and introduced me to the ocean, my safe and happy place. Surfpop also helped me improve my grades at school and assisted me with my application for False Bay College where I studied IT. It also taught me many different life skills through the Friday life coaching and vocational workshops, introducing me to many different jobs, including tourism. I have been able to move out of my township to the surf town of Muizenberg and next to being a surf instructor for Surfpop, I am also learning to become a tour guide by joining tours with Surfpop volunteers and through a mentorship by Southern Xplorer Tours. I love what I am doing and where I am at: I live in my dream place and I get to teach and encourage other Surfpop children to follow in my footsteps."



LAUNCH OF THE SURFPOP SURF SCHOOL!

This year, we launched the Surfpop Surf School in Muizenberg for anyone keen to learn how to surf – the first surf school in Cape Town designed to make a positive community impact.

15% of every lesson fee supports the Surfpop Foundation and creates job opportunities for Surfpop graduates as surf instructors.

LEARN TO SURF AND HELP CHANGE A LIFE!

www.surfpop.co.za/surfschool



7 LOOKING AHEAD



We are proud of our well-rounded program outcomes that prove our holistic and long-term program model with surfing being Surfpop's heart and soul.

The outcomes provide us with further insights on how to continuously improve the Surfpop program. Next year, we'll

keep riding the wave of impact – building on the strong progress of the past year and deepening our commitment to long-term change.



OUR PRIORITIES

- Further strengthen our focus on mental health through caring mentors, surf therapy, and the Little Lions Mental Health Curriculum.
- Continue our focus on adolescent health and development, supporting learners through key life stages.
- Expand career readiness and graduate support, helping young people step confidently into their futures.
- Grow the Surfpop Surf School for the general public as a social enterprise to ensure financial sustainability and create jobs for our graduates.

We're proud of how far we've come – and excited to keep on surfing for a better future.

**To every partner, donor, volunteer,
and friend – thank you for believing
in the power of surfing to change lives!**

Because of you:

- 82 children learned, surfed, and grew with purpose
- All our graduates gained valuable work experience and half accessed tertiary education
- Countless smiles filled Muizenberg's waves

**"Each wave brings us closer to
a better future– not just for our
children, but for their families
and communities."**

– **Daniel Botha**, Founder and Director



