



The SISTER2sister Program

Evaluation Report 2008

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For and on behalf of Life Changing Experiences Foundation

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1 Introduction

The SISTER2sister Program has been in operation since 2003. The aim of The SISTER2sister Program is to alleviate the cycle of poverty, destitution, and suffering for at risk teenage youth. An initiative of Life Changing Experiences Foundation, it is a unique 12 month mentoring and personal development program empowering ‘at risk’ teenage girls to reverse the detrimental effects of low self esteem due to circumstances beyond their control.

As part of the program, each girl is assigned a ‘Big Sister, herself a successful woman who has undergone a three day comprehensive mentor training program. Where possible, we match girls who have a particular passion/skill with a Big Sister who is successful in that field. Big Sisters are volunteer mentors who give up their time to help these young girls reach their full potential. These volunteers may then be called upon by email or telephone for the next twelve months for advice, support and guidance. The program starts with an intense five day ‘Butterfly Bootcamp’, involving a number of workshops, seminars and team building activities. Each month after this, outings are held where Little Sisters and Big Sisters get together for risk management workshops, motivational and team building activities. Little Sisters and Big Sisters also have the opportunity to meet up on a one on one basis should they choose to do so.

The SISTER2sister Program targets girls who are ‘at risk’ due to extreme suffering as a direct result of trauma, bereavement, poverty, sexual abuse, mental abuse, physical abuse, neglect, homelessness, sickness/disability, and destitution. This includes girls from all nationalities, religions and socio economic groups. Girls are identified and nominated by, school welfare systems, women’s refuges, ‘at risk’ youth programs such as ‘On Track’ and ‘Don Bosco House’, rape crisis centres, and the general public (including parents). We accept all candidates nominated, including those in foster care, in the ministers care, women’s refuges, the juvenile justice system, young women who are in specific housing programs that accommodate mentally ill and drug addicted youth.

The benefits of The SISTER2sister Program for the community include:

- Increase in further education/ school attendance
- Community ‘wellness’ through happiness, fulfilment, and recognition of self worth
- Purposeful use of talents to enable a better life for themselves and their community, assisting them to break the cycle of suffering
- The transformation of life through mastering life’s challenges
- Reduced crime
- Decline in anti-social behaviour
- Decline in domestic violence
- Substantial increase in part time employment and decline of girls living on benefits (with the exception of living away from home rental assistance)



- Management of mental illness
- Decrease in substance abuse
- Reduction of unplanned teenage pregnancy.

This report aims to evaluate The SISTER2sister Program 2008. This Program commenced in January 2008 with a four day Butterfly Bootcamp, and completed in November 2008 with the Graduation Celebration. This report provides a snapshot of the participants in the Program. Following this, the report addresses the key performance indicators of the Program for the year ending November 2008, specifically addressing the areas of:

1. Intake/ Retention
2. Attendance
3. Behaviour
4. Relationships
5. Education and Employment
6. Goals, Ambition, and Levels of Learning

Finally, areas of improvement have been identified for implementation in future programs, as well as suggesting refinements to the evaluation model. Concluding comments aims to summarise the key points raised in the report.

2 The SISTER2sister Program Master Evaluation Plan

What Outcome are we going to measure and what outcome indicators will we use	How will we collect the data	When will we collect the data	Who will perform the data collection
Intake/Retention			
100% retention within the course of the program for Big Sisters	Attendance Roll	Monthly	Program Coordinator
90% retention within the course of the program for Little Sisters	Attendance Roll	Monthly	Program Coordinator
10% increased intake of big/little sisters per program up to maximum capacity (50 matches per program)	Recruitment	Annual	Program Director
Attendance			
90% of Little Sisters with 80% attendance rate at outings	Attendance Roll	Monthly	Program Coordinator
100% of Big Sisters with a 90% attendance rate at outings	Attendance Roll	Monthly	Program Coordinator
100% of Big Sisters with a 80% attendance rate at Big Sister meetings	Attendance Roll	Monthly	Program Coordinator
Behaviour			
Demonstrated reduction of anti social behaviour in 80% of Little Sisters over the program	Evaluation	Mid and End Program	Evaluation Team
Demonstrated improvement in pro social behaviour in 90% of Little Sisters over the program	Evaluation	Mid and End Program	Evaluation Team
90% demonstrated improvement in self confidence and self esteem in Little Sisters	Big Sister survey	Mid and End Program	Evaluation Team
Relationships			
95% develop a positive relationship with Big Sisters by the end of the Program	Little and Big Sister surveys	Mid and End Program	Evaluation Team
50% develop a positive relationship with a parent, guardian, carer and/or sibling by the end of the program	Little and Big Sister surveys	Mid and End Program	Evaluation Team
50% develop a positive relationship and/or are able to manage their relationships with their peers	Little Sister surveys	Mid and End Program	Evaluation Team
Education and Employment			
75% improve in educational outcomes including attendance, grades, participation levels	Little Sister Survey	Mid and End Program	Evaluation Team
80% employment in part time work for girls who are eligible and capable of being employed	Little Sister Survey	End Program	Evaluation Team
Goals and Ambitions & Levels of Learning			
100% achievement of a goal in relationship to at least 3 levels of learning as identified within the Program	Program, Little Sister Surveys	End Program	Program Director

3 The SISTER2sister Program 2008 Participants

Overall, 43 females between the age of 13 to 18 years participated in the program, with the average age of participants being approximately 14 and a half years. Participants all attended 29 High Schools in NSW, whereby the Schools providing students included:

Bass Hill High School	Sylvania High School
Jamison High School	Seven Hills High School
Erskine Park High School	Cheltenham Girls High School
Ambarvale High School	St Peters Catholic College
JJ Cahill High School	Casula High School
Our Lady Mercy College	Kingsgrove High School
Sarah Redfern High School	Airds High School
Cambridge Park High School	Birrong Girls High School
Doonside High School	Mitchell High School
Dulwich Hill High School of Visual Art and Design	Canterbury Girls High School
Westfield Sports High School	Miller Technology High School
Lurnea High School	Warilla High School
Bankstown Girls High School	Wyndham College
Cabramatta High School	East Hills Girls Technology High School

It is again acknowledged that for the 2009 SISTER2sister Program, the recruitment pool of possible schools has again widened, thereby demonstrating the continued success of raising the awareness of the Program. In particular, it is noted that the development of a positive relationship with School Counsellors and the Department of Community Services has meant that referrals to the Program occur based more on initiative rather than by request.

4 Assessment of Key Performance Indicators

1. Intake/ Retention

The matters for these three key performance indicators for Intake/ Retention have been assessed on an annual basis via the recruitment of participants and mentors into The SISTER2sister Program.

1. 100 per-cent retention within the course of the Program for Big Sisters

For 2008, 46 Big Sisters completed the program (from a pool of 55 applications), with nine returning to participate as Big Sisters from the 2007 Program.

In terms of attrition, six Big Sisters were not able to complete the Program, for reasons of natural attrition, one Big Sister withdrew pre-program due to personal responsibilities, two Big Sisters were relieved of their duties at Boot Camp, and two Big Sisters acted as relief Big Sisters when the substantive Big Sister was not able to attend.

Additionally, it is noted that in relation to the core team of volunteers, two Team Leaders (of five) were replaced, for personal reasons. Moreover, the start of the program saw the absence of a substantive Program Director, whereby support for this role was being provided by the CEO and the Program Co-ordinator. It is noted that later in 2008, new appointments being made, Program Manager, and Program Director. Finally, it is noted that over the course of the 2008 Program, the PA to the CEO was replaced. These roles provided additional support to the Big Sisters toward the end of the 2008 Program.

Overall, this is a retention rate of 87 per-cent, whilst not ideal, is pleasing, suggesting that the selection of Big Sisters was overall appropriate, with attrition being due to changes to personal responsibilities that were not within the realms of being controllable. However, it is still acknowledged that the target is for 50 Big and Little Sister matches, and as such modifications still need to occur for future programs. Similar to recommendations made from the 2007 Program, it is recommended that a broader marketing approach be adopted for the 2009 Program, in order to obtain a higher application rate of Big Sisters, over 50. This would also account for any natural attrition that may occur as well as ensuring that standards for selection benchmarks are met.

For the 2009 Program, changes will be made to the selection criteria, recruitment, and training of Big Sisters in order to further refine the possibility of recruiting motivated and committed Big Sisters.

2. 90% retention within the course of the program for Little Sisters

Fifty two Little Sisters were accepted into the 2008 Program, from a pool of 78 nominations and then 54 applications. Two Little Sisters withdrew their interest pre Program commencement, and one withdrew during Boot Camp.

At the end of the Program in November 2008, 42 Little Sisters remained, with six Little Sisters leaving the program during the course of the Program for reasons of natural attrition. One of these Little Sister's was replaced mid program.

It is noted that a higher level of applications were accepted for the 2008 program, to accommodate for the likely natural attrition that occurs. Overall, this is a retention rate of 81 per-cent, thereby slightly falling short of expectations for this performance indicator.

The aim is to constantly refine our intake and retention strategies in order to maximise intake and retention outcomes for Little Sisters. For the 2009 Program, the selection criteria, nomination forms, and methods of recruiting will be refined in order to provide a more accurate assessment of Little Sister motivation to participate in the program.

3. 10% increased intake of Big and Little Sisters per program up to a maximum capacity (50 matches per program)

Forty three Big and Little Sisters graduated in the 2007 Program, compared with 42 for 2008, resulting in a 2% decrease, thereby not meeting this key performance indicator. It is suggested that the reasons for this relate to a higher attrition rate of Little Sisters compared to previous years.

However, it is considered that the application rate for potential Big Sisters was appropriate for selection. Therefore, the issue to be addressed for future programs is to appropriately assess the motivation and commitment of both the Big and Little Sisters to remain for the duration of the program

It is again acknowledged that the issue of intake and retention for Big and Little Sisters requires ongoing attention. The aim is to constantly refine our intake and retention strategies in order to maximise intake and retention outcomes for Big and Little Sisters. It is recommended that for future programs, a constant PR program continue to be maintained to sustain visibility and interest for potential Big and Little Sisters to become part of the Program.

2. Attendance

The three key performance indicators for Attendance have been assessed by the monthly attendance rolls.

1. 90 per-cent of Little Sisters with 80 per-cent attendance at outings

On average, each Little Sister attended nine out of 11 workshops over the year, 86 per-cent. Overall 86 per-cent of Little Sisters attended 80 per-cent or more of the workshops, thereby only slightly falling short of this indicator. This result is a great improvement from the 2007 Program, which saw only 68 per-cent attend 80 per-cent or more of outings.

Whilst this performance indicator has not been met, it is suggested that the vast improvement from previous years can be attributed to promptly addressing low motivation via questioning commitment to the program, whereby the program is designed for those Little Sisters who want to make positive changes to their lives. To this end, it is suggesting that attaching a consequence for non-attendance/non-participation for the Little Sister, something which may need to be considered to ensure that the Little Sisters get the maximum benefit from their participation in the program. Such a consideration may need to be made for future programs.

It is noted that some workshops were more poorly attended than others. This may be due to a number of factors, such as travel limitations, personal issues impacting on their ability to attend, and a lack of motivation to participate (whereby this is particularly noticeable mid-program). Outings that were poorly attended included Artescape, Whitewater Rafting, CD Recording. It is acknowledged that the Artescape and CD Recording outings have been poorly attended for two consecutive years. For the 2009 program, these two outings will be closely scrutinised and placed on trial. Whilst it is recognised that both these activities are intuitively perceived as potentially being of great benefit to the Little Sisters, a few modifications can potentially be made to improve attendance such as: have a more interesting morning work shop associated with the event; prompt the Big Sisters to put a positive emphasis on the potential benefits gained from Little Sister attendance at these outings; and have these outings occur at a different time in the sequence of outings to maintain interest. It is suggested however, that if poor attendance at these outings is also observed for the 2009 Program, their future applicability to form part of the program curriculum needs to be questioned.

2. 100 per-cent of Big Sisters with a 90% attendance rate at outings

On average, Big Sisters attended 89 per-cent of outings, with 70 per-cent of Big Sisters attending at least 90 per-cent of outings. Whilst this key performance indicator has not been met, it is a vast improvement from the 2007 results, suggesting that the tightening of requirement of a Big Sister to remain motivated and committed to the program. Specifically, attendance, commitment, and participation for the duration of the program were constantly reinforced for the 2008 program, which has in turn lead to positive attendance outcomes emerging.

For the 2009 Program, attendance will continue as an issue for close attention in order to maintain these high standards.

3. 100 per-cent of Big Sisters with a 80% attendance rate at Big Sister Meetings

For Big Sister monthly meetings, an average attendance rate of 76 per-cent was observed, with 57 per-cent attending 80 per-cent or more of meetings. This result, whilst not meeting the performance indicator, is a marked improvement on the previous year. It is suggested that the improvement across years is due to closer scrutiny and consequence associated with attendance, or non attendance. Nevertheless, reasons for not attending the meetings included competing commitments of work and home.

There is still an effort to make meetings for future years more meaningful for the Little Sisters. In addition to this, consideration will also be made for a remote dial-in service for those who can attend meetings over the phone, but not face to face.

3. Behaviour

These three key performance indicators for Behaviour have been assessed via surveys completed by Big Sisters and Little Sisters at the start and finish of the program.

1. Demonstrated reduction of anti-social behaviour in 80% of Little Sisters over the program

The 2008 addressed the issue of consequences of anti-social conduct was constantly reinforced through providing parameters of conducted for the Little Sisters by the SISTER2sister Program. Additionally, presentations and workshops also served to address the issue of anti-social conduct, such as the presentation from an Officer from the NSW Police Force. During this workshop, the Police Officer discussed options and consequences of conduct, thereby stimulation thought and discussion for the Little Sisters. The workshop was positively received.

An assessment of anti-social behaviour was compared both qualitatively and statistically at the beginning and end of the program, to note any changes over time.

In relation to specific reporting of anti-social behaviour, 78 per-cent of Little Sisters responding (N=37) noted a reduction of some form. In particular, the most frequent endorsed reduction in anti-social conduct were items “I hang out with those who get into trouble”; “I lie and/ or cheat”; “I skip school”; “I disobey my teachers at school”; and “I get into many fights”.

It is acknowledged that these reported changes are only slight in frequency, however it is also recognised that many of the Little Sisters did not report an increase in anti-social conduct, which is also promising. To this end, self reports from the Little Sisters show that approximately 68 per-cent acknowledged that their rate of behaviour had remained the same. Therefore, on consideration, it is suggested that the given that there had not been an increase in anti-social behaviour is a promising outcome. It is acknowledged that some time is required for behaviour change to occur. As such, it is hoped that over time, we are able to assess continued reduction in anti-social behaviour.

In addition to this statistical result, qualitatively, there was an overall improvement in Little Sisters attitude and self perception which has resulted in a reduction of anti-social behaviour, such as smoking, drinking, self harming behaviours, or being mean to others.

Overall, these results demonstrate that Little Sisters have changed the manner in which they behave around others in a variety of ways, which is promising.

2. Demonstrated improvement in pro-social behaviour in 90% of Little Sisters over the program

Pro-social behaviour is defined as being helpful, sharing, and kind to others. These messages were delivered to the Little Sisters over the course of the 2007 Program via the role modelling and relationship building that regularly occurred for the entire SISTER2sister team, as well as through workshop via discussions about positive relationships with others, and assertively addressing negative relationships with others.

An evaluation of pro-social behaviour occurred by comparing responses qualitatively and statistically at the beginning and end of the program, to note any changes over time.

In relation to the specific reporting of pro-social behaviour, 68 per-cent of Little Sisters responding (N=37), noted an increase in some form. In particular, the most frequently endorsed items to increase pro-social conduct were items “I try to make sad people happier”; “I help others with their homework”; “I trust others”; “I help others to develop skills that they need help with”; “I compliment and encourage others”; and “I avoid having fights with others”. Moreover, 69 per-cent of Little Sisters reported that they had remained the same with their pro-social conduct, whereby it is recognised that almost all Little Sisters reported between “sometimes” and “always” demonstrating these behaviours, which is a promising indicator.

In addition to this statistical result, qualitatively, the Little Sisters reported changes such as caring more for others, being true to themselves, treating others with respect, and having a solution focus to problems. To this end, it appears that the Little Sisters have changed the manner in which they behave around others in a more positive manner.

Overall, these results demonstrate that the Little Sisters have improved the way they relate and behave toward others

3. 90% demonstrated improvement in self confidence and self esteem in Little Sisters

The issue of developing self confidence and self esteem is constantly reinforced throughout the SISTER2sister program. For 2008, the Little Sisters were consistently encouraged to try new activities, break out of their comfort zone, as well as being made aware that the past does not necessarily equal the future. This remains a core feature of the SISTER2sister program

Self confidence and esteem was compared both qualitatively and statistically at the beginning and end of the program, to note any changes over time. Self confidence, otherwise known as efficacy beliefs, were assessed in several core domains of functioning: resisting peer group pressure, being self assertive, enlisting support, enlisting social resources, meeting others expectations, and achievement orientation. Workshop activities specifically addressed some of these domains of functioning, such as strategies to be self assertive and resist peer group pressure, setting and achieving goals, and also recognising and utilising avenues for support.

In relation to resisting peer group pressure, 54 per-cent of Little Sisters responding (N=37) reported improvement within this domain of functioning (with 22% reporting no change). This is a promising result and an improvement on the 2007 program, suggesting that key messages pertaining to resisting peer group pressure may have been acknowledged. It is hypothesised that this may be a feature of the younger age group that participated in the program in 2008. It is hoped that the SISTER2sister program provides these Little Sisters over time to make better choices with respect to their friendship groups, thereby possibly improving this domain of functioning over time.

With reference to being self assertive, 54 per-cent of Little Sisters who responded (N=37) reported some improvement within this domain of functioning (with 27% reporting no change). This is a promising result, particularly given that it is likely to influence other domains of functioning over time, such as resisting peer group pressure.

In relation to enlisting support, 51 per-cent of Little Sisters who responded (N=31) reported some improvement within this domain of functioning (with 19% reporting no change). This is a positive



indicator, suggesting that increasingly, the Little Sisters have become increasingly aware of how and where to enlist support.

With regard to enlisting social resources, 59 per-cent of Little Sisters responding (N=37) reported some improvement within this domain of functioning (with 30% reporting no change). This is a positive result, providing an indication that Little Sisters are able to create positive social resources for them to create desired outcomes. This is again an improvement shown when compared to the 2007 program

In relation to meeting the expectations of others, 51 per-cent of Little Sisters who responded (N=37) reported some improvement within this domain of functioning (with 24% reporting no change). Such a result demonstrates an improvement on the results of the 2007 program, and indicates that as a result of the program, the Little Sisters become increasingly aware of the potential impact that they have on others and mindful of how they behave as a result.

With reference to achievement orientation, namely being able to set and achieve goals, 65 per-cent of Little Sisters responding (N=37) reported improving within this domain of functioning (with 16% reporting no change). This result is very encouraging, and on consideration, not surprising. To this end, it is acknowledged that goal setting is something that the Little Sisters are unfamiliar with at the commencement of the program, and as such is heavily emphasised and reinforced throughout the program content.

Overall, it is noted that 92 per-cent of Little Sisters who responded (N=37) reported some demonstrated improvement within one or more of the abovementioned domains of functioning, with 49 per-cent of these respondents noting an improvement within four or more of the six domains of functioning. This is a very encouraging result, suggesting that the Little Sisters who participate in the SISTER2sister Program increase in their levels of self efficacy and confidence, providing them with a positive outlook for their futures. Again, it is noted that these results are an improvement when compared to participants in the 2007 program.

4 Relationships

There are three key performance indicators for Relationships, where this has been assessed via surveys completed by Little Sisters at the beginning and end of the program. In addition, observations have been made over the course of the program.

1. 95% develop a positive relationship with Big Sisters by the end of the program

The Little Sister/ Big Sister relationship is constantly referenced and reinforced throughout the SISTER2sister program. Bootcamp and the workshops are all geared to ensure that the relationship between the two parties is developed and supported.

This key performance indicator was assessed at the beginning and end of the program statistically. It is assessed via levels of communication, mutual support, as well as overall. Overall, 78 per-cent of Little Sisters reported a positive collective relationship with their Big Sister (N=37) at the conclusion of the program, with 45 per-cent reporting an improvement in their relationship with their Big Sister over the course of the program (N=29). Whilst not meeting the key performance indicator, this is still considered to be a promising result, whereby 22 per-cent of Little Sisters were unable to quantify the

relationship with their Big Sister at the start of the program as they felt that they had not known their Big Sister well enough to make a judgement.

It is acknowledged that some of the Little Sister/ Big Sister matches were not ideal in the program, however this was more the result of the Little Sister having preconceived expectations of their Big Sister which were difficult to address (for example, young, fun, trendy), rather than there being inadequacies of the Big Sister. It is suggested that this perceptual issue is therefore tapping into an issue of the Little Sisters self concept which is difficult to shift. This issue appears to be ongoing across programs, and seems to be best address via managing the expectations of Little Sisters with their Big Sister.

Nevertheless, on closer analysis of the data, when assessing specific aspects of communication between the Big Sister and Little Sister, some positive trends have emerged. In particular, 95 per-cent of Little Sisters felt that they could discuss their thoughts with their Big Sister without feeling embarrassed, 100 per-cent of Little Sisters felt that their Big Sisters were good listeners, 92 per-cent of Little Sisters felt that they could tell their Big Sister if they were in trouble, 95 per-cent reported that their Big Sister tried to understand their point of view, 89 per-cent of Little Sisters said that they could discuss their problems with their Big Sister, and 92 per-cent of Little Sister advised that they could express their true feelings to their Big Sister. Also of note is the finding that there was an improvement in the nature of this communication over the course of the Program. These are very positive results, suggesting that the nature of communication between the Big Sister/ Little Sister is positive, and develops over the course of the program.

Two areas which had lower levels of positive responding were that 38 per-cent of Little Sisters said that they were not afraid to ask their Big Sister for what they wanted, and 76 per-cent of Little Sisters noted that their Big Sister were able to tell how they were feeling without asking. These results are somewhat understandable, given that Little Sisters have generally come from a life whereby it is not safe to ask for what they ask. Coupled with this, given that the mentor relationship generally occurs outside of the home environment, it is understandable that some Little Sisters may want to suppress their true feelings to their Big Sister until they feel comfortable to do so.

Overall, it is suggested that the nature of the relationship between the Big Sister/ Little Sister over the course of the program is positive, and the nature and levels of communication between the two parties is developed to become positive, open, and based on respect and understanding.

2. 50% develop a positive relationship with a parent/ guardian/ carer and or sibling by the end of the program

The relationship between Little Sisters and their key home relationships, namely parent/ guardian/ carer (care givers) and siblings, were assessed over the course of the program.

In relation to care giver relationships, overall, 33 per-cent of Little Sisters reported a positive collective relationship with their care givers (N=36), with 50 per-cent reporting an improvement in their relationship with their care givers over the course of the program. Overall, this is a positive result, and whilst not necessarily meeting this key performance indicator, there has been some improvement shown over time. To this end, it is acknowledged that some of the Little Sisters experience difficult home lives with their care givers, however it appears likely that in instances where change can occur, it has done so.



On closer analysis of the data, when assessing specific aspects of communication between the Little Sister and care giver, some generally positive trends have emerged (N=35). In particular, 49 per-cent of Little Sisters felt that they could discuss their thoughts with their care givers without feeling embarrassed, 46 per-cent of care givers were able to tell how the Little Sisters without asking, and 51 per-cent of Little Sisters felt that they could tell their care givers if they were in trouble, and 49 per-cent of Little Sisters felt that their care givers would try to understand the Little Sisters point of view. Also of note is the finding that there was an improvement in the nature of this communication over the course of the Program, which is promising.

On comparison with the Big Sister/ Little Sister relationship, it is noted that the levels of communication with care givers/ Little Sister is lower. It is suggested that this may be the case for a number of reasons, including consideration of the complex personal lives that the Little Sisters have, as well as acknowledging that the goal of the Big Sister is to be entirely present and attentive to the Little Sister, whereby this is not the case with the Little Sister's home life. Notwithstanding, it is noted that qualitatively, comments made by the Little Sisters explained that they were more patient with their parents, less argumentative, and listened more.

Overall, the Little Sister acknowledged that their participation in the program has helped improve their relationships with their parents.

With regard to sibling relationships, whilst not directly assessed, it is noted that Little Sisters had become more aware of the impact that they have on others as a result of the program. As a result, Little Sisters reported listening more, respecting others, and caring about the lives of others. It is posited that this may also include relationships with siblings. This theme is consistent with those observed from previous programs.

It is suggested that future programs pay closer attention to assisting the improvement of the Little Sister's relationship with respect to their family dynamics (where appropriate) in order to ensure more longstanding changes to the Little Sister and their environment after the completion of the program is observed.

3. 50% develop a positive relationship and/ or are able to manage their relationship with their peers

Sixty seven per-cent of Little Sisters responding to the survey at the end of the program (N=39) stated that they had improved their relationship with their peers over the course of the year. Comments made by the Little Sisters indicated that they were more understanding of their friends as a result of the program, as well as making better choices in relation to who they became friends with. In addition to this, Little Sisters also reported that they were able to better able to manage their relationship with their peers, not succumbing to bullying, being able to resist peer group pressure, and being less likely to engage in fights and other antisocial conduct. This theme is consistent with outcomes observed from previous programs.

The majority of the Little Sisters again came to realise throughout the 12 month program that they made new friends in the form of their Little Sister and Big Sister network. This is again testament to the Support Structure within The SISTER2sister Program, where a close bond and foundation of support is formed through the program with not only the Little Sisters, but also Big Sisters and other volunteers who participate in the program.



It is suggested that it is still important to pay attention to improving the Little Sister relationships with their peers in order to provide a more protective wider community network for the Little Sister after she formally completes the SISTER2sister program.

5. Education and Employment

These two key performance indicators for Education and Employment have been assessed via surveys completed by Little Sisters at the beginning and end of the program.

1. 75% improve in educational outcomes including, attendance, grades, and participation levels

For the 2008 program, educational outcomes assessed included attendance, grades, participation in school events, school interaction, reports from teachers, and homework being done. Overall, a 71 per-cent improvement in educational outcomes of those attending school and participating (N=37) was observed. This response is an improvement on the outcomes of the 2007 program.

On closer analysis of these educational outcomes, 73 per-cent of Little Sisters reported attending school more which is a considerable improvement from the 2007 program (53 per-cent improvement reported). The remainder of Little Sisters responding to this question noted that they did not report any difficulty in attending school in the first instance.

Additionally, 76 per-cent of Little Sisters reported an improvement in their grades over the course of the year, with 65 per-cent of Little Sisters also reporting that they experienced more positive reports from Teachers. Moreover, 59 per-cent reported an improvement in getting their homework done. On the whole, these academic outcomes are a positive result, indicating some positive behaviour change over the course of the year. Again, it is noted that these changes are an improvement on the results observed from the 2007 program.

With respect to participation levels, 73 per-cent of Little Sisters reported an improvement in participating within class, with 62 per-cent of Little Sisters reporting that they have also improved their participation in School events. Finally, 86 per-cent of Little Sisters reported an improvement with their interactions with others within the School environment. Again, these results are an improvement from those seen in the 2007 program.

Qualitatively, Little Sisters reported that since completing the program, they felt a greater level of comfort participating within the School environment, were more likely to ask for help when needed, listened more, were less aggressive towards others, showed more respect toward others, and attended class on time. This feedback was similar to that observed in the 2007 program, which is a positive sign that they key messages of the program are being heard.

Overall, these results are promising in that the commitment to educational outcomes has improved over the course of the year that the Little Sister has participated in the program.

2. 80% employment in part time work for Little Sisters who are eligible and capable of being employed

In the 2008 program, 16 Little Sisters were of the age of being able to work both in terms of age as well as consideration being paid to other factors. In particular, it is noted that there was a group of Little Sisters who were of the age to find employment, they were unable to do so for other reasons, such as mental health issues, family issues, general health issues, and a stable living environment.

Of those 16 Little Sisters who were of the age of being able to work, seven have been or are currently in part time work as at the end of the 2008 program. This is a result of 44 per-cent, with a further 25 per-cent job seeking, which is slightly under target for this indicator.

Throughout the 2008 program, considerable workshop time was again spent on addressing careers as an issue, covering such topics as identifying talents, selecting subjects for school, determining strengths, resume writing, dressing for success, having interviews, and applying for jobs.

Given the importance of this issue to aid the Little Sister to transition into adulthood, for the 2009 program, the workshop on careers with the Little Sisters will be continued, as well as incorporating the notion of jobs and careers into the Little Sister goal setting process, such that Little Sisters identify what they might like to do, list some goals associated with it, and then measure their progress on a quarterly basis against those goals. Community support for Little Sister vocations continues to grow in terms of apprenticeships, study grants, and employment offers, which will continue to embrace and be passed on to the Little Sisters.

6. Goals, Ambitions, and Levels of Learning

There is one key performance indicator for Goals and Ambitions, where this has been assessed via surveys completed by Little Sisters at the beginning and end of the program. In addition, observations have been made over the course of the program.

1. 100% achievement of a goal in relationship to at least three levels of learning as identified within the program

For the 2008 program, goal setting has been a stronger feature in the program, commencing with Boot Camp. A workshop was conducted at the beginning of the program at Boot Camp, and then incorporated into all the ensuing workshops on a monthly basis, such that the Little Sisters learn to set and achieve goals through a formal style of goal setting. The goal setting and achievement process reflects the levels of learning, which are incorporated into monthly workshops for the program. The Levels of Learning are diagrammatically represented in the figure over the page.

With respect to the Little Sisters achieving outcomes pertaining to the Levels of Learning, 79 per-cent of Little Sisters responding (N=39) reported achieving three or more levels of learning identified within the program. Whilst this falls short of meeting this key performance indicator, it is suggested that this may be in part a function of the reporting requirement of the level of learning, rather than falling short of expectations.



With specific reference to each level, 64 per-cent of Little Sisters responding noted that they achieved a goal around getting out of harm's way. Examples of this included leaving an unsafe home environment, moving out and living independently, and ensuring that the Little Sister can feel safe.

Sixty two per-cent of Little Sisters responding had achieved a goal in the area of survival skills. Examples for this included utilising services such as Centrelink, calling someone when needing help, and being able to live independently.

In terms of risk management skills, 72 per-cent of Little Sisters reported achieving a goal within this domain. Examples included being honest and telling a care giver of a Little Sister's whereabouts, calling for help if in trouble, and asking for advice.

The area of healthy lifestyle observed a 69 per-cent achievement by Little Sisters. Goals achieved in this area included better food choices, healthier eating, and incorporating exercise into the daily routine.

Seventy two per-cent of Little Sisters reported achieving a goal in relation to life skills. Examples of their goals achieved include admitting to when help is needed, taking responsibility for one's future and completing school or getting a job, and perceiving self in a more positive light.

For employment skills, 79 per-cent of Little Sisters achieved a goal in this area, the highest achieved outcome area. Goals achieved were around improving study habits and grades at school, completing the school year, and finding suitable work.

Finally, goals around tapping potential was achieved by 59 per-cent of Little Sisters, with examples including being more open, realising that goals can be achieved, and thinking more about consequences.

Levels of Learning

The SISTER2sister Program is based on seven levels of learning which attempt to develop life skills in the Little Sister. Figure 1 shows the Levels of Learning diagram.

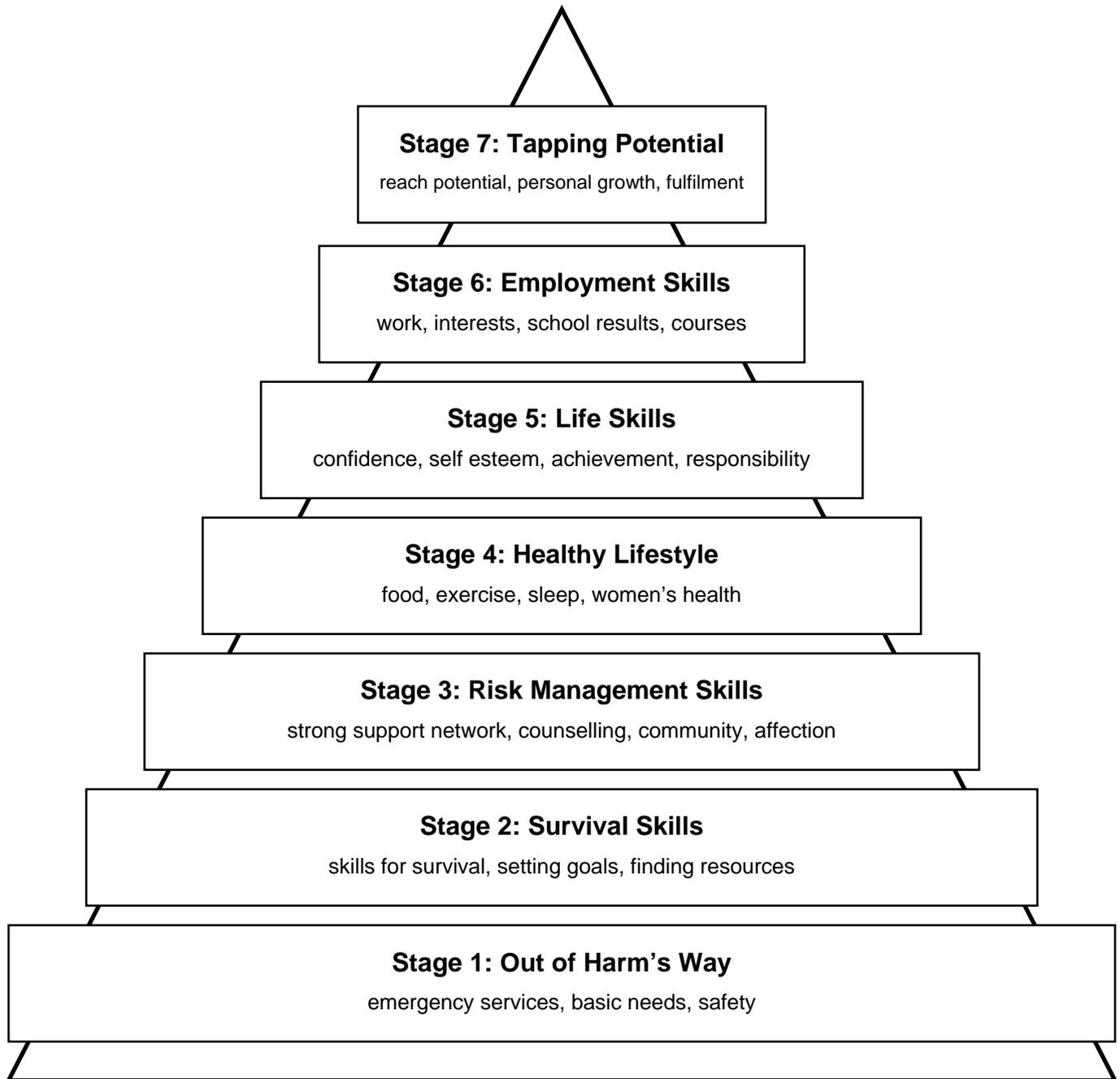


Figure 1: Levels of Learning within The SISTER2sister Program

5 Concluding Comments

In sum, it is considered that the SISTER2sister program for 2008 has been very successful, with credit and acknowledgement being levelled at the achievements of the Little Sisters, Big Sisters, Team Leaders, and the Management Team.

The workshops which comprised the SISTER2sister program addressed the identified needs of the Little Sisters by incorporating the Levels of Learning across the year. As such, the Little Sisters were exposed to issues such as overcoming obstacles, healthy lifestyle, the power of choice, employment and careers, relationships and friendships, community resources, presenting yourself, getting out of harm's way, celebrating success, goal setting, and self esteem building. As part of these learning, at each workshop Little Sisters were given the opportunity to participate in life changing experiences, such as going on a Bootcamp, visiting Luna Park, learning how to surf, visiting the top of Sydney Tower, visiting the Blue Mountains, trapezing, and climbing the Sydney Harbour Bridge.

Overall, the SISTER2sister Program for 2008 has achieved very positive results, which can be summarised by through the Key Performance Indicators indicated below.

Intake and Retention

Fifty two Little Sisters were accepted into the 2007 Program, with 42 Little Sisters completing the program. This is a retention rate of 81 per-cent, thereby slightly falling short of expectation for this performance indicator. The retention rate of Big Sisters for the 2008 program was 87 per-cent. This retention rate, whilst not ideal, is pleasing.

It appears that there is an ongoing issue that needs to be addressed in relation to intake and retention to maximise the benefit for all those participating in the program. It is noted that given the target is for 50 Big and Little Sister matches, continued modifications will need to occur for future programs to broaden the application and intake of Big Sisters and Little Sisters in order to meet the requisite 50 matches, as well as ensuring that the appropriate motivation to participate and intention to complete the program is present.

Attendance

For 2008, on average, each Little Sister attended nine out of 11 workshops over the year. Overall 86 per-cent of Little Sisters attended 80 per-cent or more of the workshops, thereby slightly falling short of this meeting this indicator. Some challenges were noted in attracting attendance by the Little Sisters based on interest and motivation for outings. Big Sister attendance at workshops was 89 per-cent, with 70 per-cent attending a minimum of 90 per-cent of the workshops. For Big Sister monthly meetings, an average attendance rate of 76 per-cent was observed.

This result is noted to be an improvement on the 2007 program, which is a positive result. Strategies aimed at ensuring engagement and commitment to the program are being constantly reviewed in an attempt to improve this indicator. To this end, it is acknowledged that the Big Sister role modelling behaviour is an important element in Little Sister attendance and participation, and as such it is important to pay closer attention to this issue for future programs.

Behaviour

In relation to specific reporting of anti-social behaviour, 78 per-cent of Little Sisters noted a reduction of some form. For the specific reporting of pro-social behaviour, 68 per-cent of Little Sisters noted an increase in some form.

Ninety two per-cent of Little Sisters reported some demonstrated improvement within one or more domain of functioning pertaining to self confidence (efficacy beliefs) and esteem, with 49 per-cent of these respondents noting an improvement within four or more of the six domains of functioning. This is a very encouraging result, suggesting that the Little Sisters who participate in the SISTER2sister Program increase in their levels of self efficacy and confidence, providing them with a positive outlook for their futures.

This result is pleasing and points towards changes made to the Little Sisters self concept and behaviour as a result of their participation in the program.

Relationships

Seventy eight per-cent of Little Sisters reported a positive relationship with their Big Sister with 45 per-cent reporting an improvement in their relationship with their Big Sister over the course of the program.

Thirty three per-cent of Little Sisters reported a positive collective relationship with their care givers, with 50 per-cent reporting an improvement in their relationship with their care givers over the course of the program.

Finally, 67 per-cent of Little Sisters responding to the survey at the end of the program stated that they had improved their relationship with their peers over the course of the year.

Whilst these results show an improvement in relationships over the course of the program, it is acknowledged that further gains can be made in future programs. To this end, closer attention will be paid to developing and improving core relationships for the Little Sisters in future programs in an effort to help change the Little Sister's community that they live in, with particular reference to care givers and peers, thereby providing an additional support for the Little Sister upon their completion of the program.

Education and Employment

There was a 71 per-cent improvement in educational outcomes of those attending school and participating, which is a pleasing result, despite not meeting this indicator.

In terms of employment, almost 44 per-cent of Little Sisters who were of the appropriate age to gain part time work, were actually engaged in part time work.

Future programs will continue to pay closer attention to addressing these issues for the Little Sisters in an effort to improve these key outcomes.

Goals, Ambitions, and Levels of Learning

Goal setting was a more prevalent feature of the SISTER2sister program in 2007. As such, 79 per-cent of Little Sisters achieved goals in at least three levels of learning throughout the program, which is a



promising result. Of note, the most prominent changes made were in the areas of developing a healthy lifestyle, getting out of harms way, and developing risk management skills.

Nevertheless, the principle idea underpinning the Levels of Learning is to “plant a seed” of the practical use of these concepts for the Little Sisters. It is hoped that all key messages for the Little Sisters to utilise in their lives are incorporated across all the workshops. It is acknowledged that whilst these key messages and skills may not be adopted during the course of the program, it may happen some later time. In other words, as the SISTER2sister Program continues, it is anticipated that the Little Sisters who have been part of the program will be flourishing and leading positive futures based on the lessons learned from the program.

As part of the SISTER2sister Program’s commitment to the well-being of at-risk youth, it is intended that the program continues to leverage off its strengths, as well as continuously finding areas in which to improve. Together, it is hoped that the continued development of the program will result in increasing positive benefits for those who have been fortunate enough to participate as Little Sisters.