

YouthActionNet®

CASE STUDY SERIES

Mundo a Sorrir:

*Bringing Smiles to Communities
in Need*

A partnership between:



GEORGETOWN UNIVERSITY

School of Foreign Service
Global Human Development Program



Introduction

This is one of a series of case studies produced by students enrolled in the Global Human Development Program at Georgetown University through its partnership with the International Youth Foundation (IYF). Students enrolled in a course exploring the role of social enterprises and social entrepreneurs were paired with young leaders of social ventures identified through the IYF's YouthActionNet® program. The students were given the assignment of analyzing the venture's assets, successful methodologies, and opportunities for investment to increase impact. Through this experiential learning process, the student consultants gained hands-on experience and exposure to the needs of social enterprises. The ventures, too, benefited from student insights into their strengths, areas for growth, and recommendations for enhancing their impact and sustainability. The Georgetown practicum is part of YouthActionNet's larger efforts to partner with institutions of higher learning around the globe to integrate social change into the academic experience and career interests of students.

International Youth Foundation

The International Youth Foundation (IYF) invests in the extraordinary potential of young people. Founded in 1990, IYF builds and maintains a worldwide community of businesses, governments, and civil society organizations committed to empowering youth to be healthy, productive, and engaged citizens. IYF programs are catalysts of change that help young people obtain a quality education, gain employability skills, make healthy choices, and improve their communities.

www.iyfnet.org

YouthActionNet®

Since 2001, YouthActionNet, a program of the International Youth Foundation, has provided founders of social ventures, ages 18 to 29, with the training, networking, coaching, funding, and advocacy opportunities they need to strengthen and scale their impact. These young social entrepreneurs have pioneered innovative solutions to critical local and global challenges, resulting in increased civic engagement, improved health, education reform, economic opportunity, environmental protection, and more inclusive societies. Our work is carried out through a network of 23 national and regional youth leadership institutes that collectively support over 1,350 young social entrepreneurs globally.

www.youthactionnet.org

Global Human Development Program at Georgetown University

The Global Human Development Program of Georgetown University is home to one of the world's premier master's degree programs in international development. An innovative, academically rigorous skills-based graduate program, the Master of Global Human Development degree prepares the next generation of development professionals to work with public sector agencies, private businesses, and non-profit organizations that advance development. Through coursework, extracurricular activity, and practical fieldwork experiences, our graduates develop the insights, skills, and experiences necessary to become leaders in development and make a difference in our global community.

<https://ghd.georgetown.edu>

INTRODUCTION

Meet Dr. Miguel Pavão & Dr. Mariana Dolores: Co-Founders

Mundo a Sorrir's journey began in 2004 when newly-graduated dentists Dr. Miguel Pavão and Dr. Mariana Dolores joined a medical campaign headed to Fire Island, Cape Verde. Their objective was twofold: to use their skills to serve the island's inhabitants and to develop hands-on practitioner experience. Through their experience, they were also exposed to the effects of severe oral health neglect and corresponding social implications.

Upon arriving, Dr. Pavão and Dr. Dolores discovered that Fire Island completely lacked dentists and oral healthcare services. The two were committed to supporting the community of 42,000 for three months, but continued dental service thereafter was doubtful. There was an obvious gap in oral healthcare. The doctors quickly realized the gravity of the issue and that lack of health services was not a nuanced characteristic of Fire Island, but a reality for underprivileged populations worldwide—including in their home country of Portugal.

Greatly affected by this experience and acknowledging the necessity for oral health services in underprivileged communities, Dr. Pavão and Dr. Dolores took steps to establish Mundo a Sorrir (MaS), or 'World of Smiles,' a social enterprise with a mission to promote health (specifically oral health) as a universal right. MaS obtained official accreditation as a nongovernmental organization in 2006, and shortly thereafter started developing a portfolio of oral health projects for Portugal, Cape Verde, Sao Tome and Principe, and Guinea Bissau.

Mundo a Sorrir is promoting oral health as a universal right.

The Problem

MaS beneficiaries share the characteristics of being economically disadvantaged and lacking access to dental healthcare. Internationally, MaS implements projects in Cape Verde, Guinea Bissau, and Sao Tome and Principe (and aspires to one day expand projects to all Lusophone countries in Africa). Typical recipient communities include those with profiles similar to that of Fire Island: communities lacking dental health facilities, services, and knowledge.

MaS manages a large program portfolio on the domestic front, which comprises numerous projects for vulnerable groups commonly found in low-income populations. These groups include individuals living with HIV/AIDS, recovering drug abusers, pregnant adolescents, children, the elderly, homeless populations, victims of domestic abuse, immigrants, victims of human trafficking, individuals with psychological/behavioral disorders, and institutionalized youth.

In addition to having limited access to oral healthcare and basic resources, MaS observes that its target populations struggle with accessing clean water, maintaining healthy lifestyles, and/or obtaining full enfranchisement and human rights. As MaS expands, these are topics it would like to address in its programming.

The Solution

MaS' portfolio of projects has successfully delivered quality health services and products to over 500,000 individuals. Each project has been designed to address the specific health needs, gaps, and nuances of target populations. This has bolstered both the reach and effectiveness of interventions.

Domestically, MaS provides oral health and education services to vulnerable groups as well as contributes to related advocacy efforts; this work is carried out through six main projects.

1. **Learning to be Healthy**, prioritizing child knowledge of basic oral health, hygiene, nutrition, and healthy lifestyles;
2. **Dr. Chuckles**, focusing on general oral healthcare and activities geared for children and pregnant adolescents;
3. **Inclusion and Healthy Lifestyles**, extending oral healthcare services to children, adolescents and caregivers as well as providing education on nutrition, oral health, diabetes, and sportsmanship;
4. **Porto Oral Health Support Center**, providing oral healthcare services to those within social welfare institutions;
5. **Braga Smiling**, conducting oral healthcare services throughout the city of Braga; and
6. **Smiles from Door to Door**, which educates elderly populations and geriatric healthcare professionals.

MaS belongs to a movement dedicated to improving impact metrics in Portugal, and has prioritized organizational efforts to determine its own social return on investment (social ROI).

MaS also works internationally under the general mission of promoting health and expanding healthcare access to underprivileged populations. In doing so, it has provided valuable education and health services to vulnerable communities in Cape Verde, Sao Tome and Principe, and Guinea Bissau. Since 2005, MaS' international projects have operated with the support of 114 volunteers and benefited nearly 60,000 people.

Monitoring & Evaluation

In addition to tracking services offered and products distributed, MaS measures program performance and contributions to society. The organization developed a series of quantitative and qualitative measures with which it analyzes the adoption of dental hygiene practices and gauges community satisfaction. MaS also receives ongoing support from universities and other organizations which, as impartial third parties, assess service quality and impact.

MaS belongs to a movement dedicated to improving impact metrics in Portugal, and has prioritized organizational efforts to determine its own social return on investment (social ROI). MaS recently found that the services it provides to underprivileged populations through its clinics are 4X better than any other services available to underprivileged populations in Portugal. This was determined through a social ROI method MaS and its partners conducted comparing service cost, service quality, and the long-term effectiveness of treatment.

Operational Model

MaS gained official recognition as a nongovernmental organization in 2006 and is currently a small enterprise consisting of 33 individuals. The organization is steered by a General Assembly, which works with the Executive Director and Vice Executive Director, Dr. Pavão and Dr. Dolores, as well as the Fiscal, Governance, and Advisory boards to make strategic decisions for the organization.

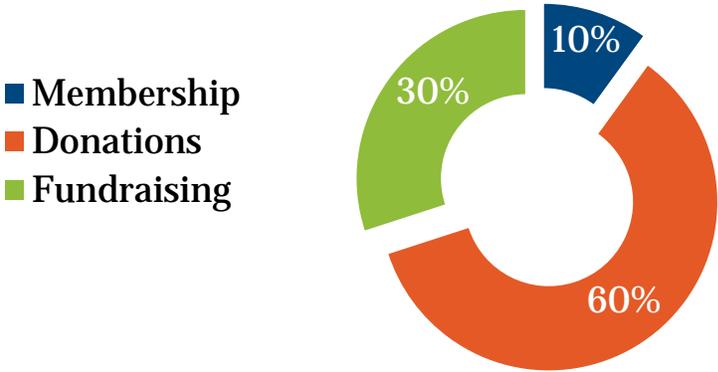
Unique notables of MaS’ leadership model pertain to the qualities encompassed by the General Assembly and the role of the Advisory Board. The General Assembly consists of seasoned health professionals with experience in social enterprise, along with representatives of the medical community and academia. It has vast connections spanning the federal government to small community groups, and is unique in that each member has supported MaS since its inception. The Advisory Board, on the other hand, brings new perspective and innovation to MaS. It comprises individuals without oral health backgrounds and helps the organization absorb lessons learned from other industries.

On the programmatic front, Dr. Pavão and Dr. Dolores oversee 22 team members. The program team is divided among four areas—the national program, the international program, finance and administration, and business development—and staff fill specific roles in overseeing projects and/or operations.

Funding

Although MaS seeks to generate revenue through the sale of dentistry-related products and/or services, current funding comes primarily from donations (60%) and fundraising (30%). The rest of the funding comes from membership fees.

Figure 1: Funding Breakdown for Mundo a Sorrir



KEY ASSETS AND SUCCESSFUL METHODOLOGIES

MaS’ General Assembly President recently remarked that in the face of a national economic crisis and strong structural deficiencies, MaS leads the field in leveraging funds and alleviating difficulties. He proudly proclaimed that the organization has benefited from a “dreams command life” approach. But a question that logically follows is ‘how?’ In such a tough environment, what enables MaS to

expand healthcare and education services—particularly to populations that are often the hardest to reach?

A closer look into MaS reveals that the organization has many assets to support its sustainability and effectiveness, the most salient being a great team of technical staff and advisors, a strong network and a volunteer-friendly approach (particularly attractive to health professionals).

Staff Expertise, Development & Leadership

MaS stands on the axiom that smiles can open doors to opportunities, and being founded by a pair of dentists assuredly gave the organization an advantage. Early on, the provisioning of quality services established a positive reputation for MaS. Its ability to sustain this reputation has gone hand-in-hand with the successful expansion of domestic and international programming. Additionally, MaS has utilized its growth and skilled staff as platforms for creating population-customized projects and activities—the success of which has not only benefited recipients, but attracted funders and positive press. Customization has created a cycle of opportunity for MaS, which has led to more programs, better served populations, and an expanding portfolio of target groups.

Although health expertise has always been at the organization's core, Dr. Pavao and Dr. Dolores have also relied on their prior experience working in the social sector to inform approaches for engaging communities and developing programs. This served the organization well for a while; however, as MaS grew, it became apparent that the leadership framework needed revision. In 2010 MaS adopted a new organizational model. In the newer model, strategic decisions are determined through a process of ongoing dialogue within MaS' leadership team (consisting of General Assembly, Executive Directors, and Board Members).

Equally as beneficial as the framework is the network the leadership team brings to the organization. Leadership team members are established practitioners, researchers and/or salient figures in their communities and social spheres. Having them at MaS establishes a reputation and credibility which precedes the quality services it provides.

Strong Network & Volunteerism Appeal

MaS has established a vast network of partners and affiliates through the leaders of the organization. It has also done so in its own right through 12 years of engaging community groups and nurturing longstanding relationships. In the national media, MaS is acknowledged for its bottom-up approach and, on numerous occasions, engaging directly with communities to assess conditions and establish agreements. Through thoroughness and diligence, the organization has developed robust dialogues with local stakeholders. This has not only led to the creation of customized projects, but has reinforced MaS' ability to stage program interventions and better reach hard-to-reach populations. MaS has also succeeded in maintaining the attention and trust of those higher up, and has secured ongoing support from foundations, universities, the science community, large corporations, and banks. The organization prioritizes network strengthening and work ethic. These characteristics have earned it recognition from the national government and governments abroad.

MaS also gains invaluable programmatic support from the 1,000+ volunteers attracted to the organization's mission. Although MaS benefits from every contribution and act of volunteerism, its appeal to young, motivated, and recently-graduated health professionals sets it apart from similar

organizations. With more than 100 projects domestically and close ties with a broad range of stakeholders, MaS puts itself in a position to be seen, attracting a large number of volunteers. In turn, these volunteers provide a valuable function to the organization, as they contribute to the provisioning of high quality services while bringing an abundance of energy. As the reputation of MaS continues to grow, one can expect its popularity within this demographic to grow as well, supplying the organization with the skilled human resource needed to serve more communities.

Lastly, volunteers help MaS to expand its network. Each volunteer has a valuable and unique network, and his/her engagement with MaS represents an opportunity to connect the organization with other valuable groups and resources.

OPPORTUNITIES FOR INVESTMENT

Mundo a Sorrir has excelled in utilizing (and expanding) its network to develop customized approaches and provide essential health services to marginalized communities. It is unique in that despite economic crisis and a poor funding environment it has experienced continual expansion. However, it now faces an impasse. Despite tremendous success, financial constraints are preventing the organization from further growth. MaS realizes that something must change. Moving forward, it is recommended that the organization explore increased opportunities for revenue generation, increasing donor contributions and improving organizational efficiency.

Revenue Generation Through Services & Products

Apart from grants and donations, MaS obtains revenue from membership fees. The organization has adopted a tiered membership model in which members are charged an annual fee according to their statuses: student/unemployment (20€), regular (30€), or company (120€). Members are thanked for their support and receive benefits in the form of discounts on merchandise (should there be any), regular communications, and preferential selection for project activities and international campaigns. Although this model generates revenue for the organization, it has proven not to be as financially beneficial as desired (membership fees amounts to 10% of total funds). MaS has therefore decided to explore other services and products to generate revenue.

Currently, MaS is looking into the sale of slotted sugar spoons (or perforated spoons intended to help individuals reduce daily sugar intake). MaS has incorporated nutrition into some of its programs and staff thinks that this product will be both relevant and desirable to supporters. Additionally, the organization has contemplated selling toothbrushes through a one-for-one arrangement, in which it would give away a free toothbrush for each toothbrush it sells. Final decisions on these revenue-generating additions are still under consideration.

The Opportunity

MaS realizes the importance of prioritizing revenue-generating activities and actively seeks opportunities to make sales; yet the organization could benefit from conducting further analysis before selecting the products (and services) it will sell. Additionally, MaS should investigate vending locations and platforms.

MaS has a vast network of professional and community partners. Moving forward, the organization should: (1) take inventory of all the skills and services network members provide, (2) identify the

most common, and (3) match products and services to them. For example, MaS' network includes numerous healthcare providers. Its decision to sell toothbrushes is a good decision given the product complements the services these individuals bring to the market. Furthermore, toothbrushes are directly relevant to the organization's mission and general programming. By analyzing its network, identifying several salient groups, and matching products to these groups, MaS may find items that are more popular and will generate greater sales. Additionally, it is important that the organization not ignore services, as MaS and its partners could perform a number of services to bring significant revenue to the organization.

The second part to this recommendation is for MaS to further consider locations and platforms for selling products and services. MaS partners and members may be able to broker arrangements with prime venues. In terms of platforms, MaS could advertise and sell products on its website or the websites of partner organizations. Lastly, MaS could explore crowd sourcing and/or cost-effective advertising opportunities.

It is clear that MaS is ready to focus attention on generating revenue as it has a strong programmatic framework and could easily scale up with additional funding. Additionally, the organization confirmed that it would like to sell products and has engaged in ongoing dialogue over potential products. Recommendations are therefore expected to support this dialog.

Evolving Member Relationships & Improving Financial Efficiency

MaS' defining characteristic has been its ability to form long-lasting relationships with a vast range of stakeholders. This distinguishes it from similar organizations. However, MaS now faces the challenge of funding its continued growth. In response, the organization decided to diversify its funding streams and, for the first time, explore the possibility of generating revenue through the continual sale of products and services. This approach shows great promise—but further success may be contingent upon developing MaS' network, particularly by exploring ways to evolve relationships with existing members.

Current financial constraints also compel MaS to look for opportunities to increase efficiency. The organization oversees myriad activities and resources, and through robust investigation it may be able to find opportunities to streamline processes and share costs, which would allow it to mobilize more funds for its projects.

The Opportunity

Members in MaS' network have the reputation and resources to significantly support the scaling up of project activities, and there is potential to more effectively engage them. Before members are approached, however, MaS should conduct a large-scale assessment to better know its network. This will help the organization to further acquaint itself with members and remember those it may have lost contact with. Through this assessment, MaS should shortlist key members uniquely contributing to the network as well as those with potential resources. Once the shortlist is compiled, it is recommended that MaS further research member affiliations, past and present interactions with MaS, and the circles in which these members operate. In doing so, MaS will better understand members and can customize its approaches to better engage them.

Better understanding its members and investigating member circles will also help MaS to identify similar and relevant groups with which it could form partnerships. In the past, partnering with other groups has not only added an interesting twist to projects, but has assisted MaS in reducing related expenditures. Following suit, being more proactive in finding partners (and forming partnerships) will lead to significant savings for future programming. MaS should focus on forming partnerships, particularly for international campaigns, which tend to involve greater repetition and higher costs. Savings would be substantial and those partnerships formed could help all parties involved to offer more comprehensive packages of services to visited communities.

MaS is a seasoned organization with a specialized team of program managers and a strong portfolio of projects. It must now focus on financing and thoroughly explore options enabling it to both increase funding and reduce expenditures, when possible. Better engaging its network is a cost-effective task with great potential. Additionally, partnering with other groups to share costs for international campaigns could potentially save MaS thousands of euros.

CONCLUSION

Over the past 12 years, Mundo a Sorrir has gradually evolved from a single-expertise project into a multifaceted program responding to the needs of vulnerable populations around the world. The organization has successfully managed to tap into resource-rich networks as well as form direct bonds with underprivileged communities, and connect the two. This makes MaS unique and important, distinguishing it as a leading community broker. It confronts a gap untouched by other agencies, and as it continues to strengthen its health approaches, MaS increasingly strikes upon other (related) issues for which its support is needed. This indicates that MaS is getting through to communities, tackling issues that other organizations cannot address, and forging bonds with communities that others are incapable of making.

Moving forward, it is likely that the need for these unique abilities will push MaS to grow—and it is important that it does. Nonetheless, potential growth could be severely stunted if the organization cannot find innovative ways to access more funding.

Although financing will remain a barrier in the long-run, there are some prudent short-term actions MaS can take to mitigate future financial constraint. Primarily, it is recommended that MaS focus efforts on (1) better utilizing its network and deepening network relationships, and (2) building more partnerships, particularly when implementing costly programmatic activities. If done thoroughly, initial analyses leading into these actions may last multiple months and require a significant human resource commitment. However, the result could lead to tremendous (and quick) organizational growth, which would strengthen MaS' agency in served communities as well as increase its bargaining/negotiating power in forming new partnerships.

FURTHER INFORMATION ABOUT MUNDO A SORRIR

- Mundo a Sorrir Website: <http://www.mundoasorrir.org/>
- Mundo a Sorrir on Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/MundoASorrir/>
- Miguel Pavão's YouthActionNet Profile: <http://www.youthactionnet.org/fellows/222/>
- 2016 Video on Mundo a Sorrir: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xUX9TopFM_Q
- 2012 Video on Mundo a Sorrir: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4AF0tCefw9I>

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