

Umthombo Youth Development Foundation: Training up a new generation of medical professionals in rural South Africa

South AfricaSouth Africa
Andrew Ross



[1]

Year Founded:
1995

Organization type:
nonprofit/ngo/citizen sector
Project Stage:

Scaling

Budget:
\$1,000 - \$10,000

Website:
<http://www.umthomboyouth.org.za/> [2]

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Project Summary

Elevator Pitch

Concise Summary: Help us pitch this solution! Provide an explanation within 3-4 short sentences.

The Umthombo Youth Development Foundation (UYDF) is meeting the shortage of medical professionals in rural South Africa by recruiting young people from these areas and offering them full scholarships through university. After graduation and during the holidays, the UYDF assists them to get placements in rural hospitals.

WHAT IF - Inspiration: Write one sentence that describes a way that your project dares to ask, "WHAT IF?"

thousands of youth in rural South Africa could be trained as medical professionals?

About Project

Problem: What problem is this project trying to address?

The shortage of healthcare workers is the biggest challenge facing public healthcare in rural South Africa today. In rural areas where 43.6 percent of the country's population lives, only 12 percent of doctors and 19 percent of all nurses work, which translates into 13 doctors and two specialists available for every 100,000 people without medical aid in these areas. These rural communities often face considerable health challenges, such as malaria, tuberculosis, and HIV/AIDS.

Solution: What is the proposed solution? Please be specific!

The Umthombo Youth Development Foundation identifies, trains and supports youth from rural South Africa to become qualified medical professionals to address the shortage of healthcare staff at rural hospitals. This solution is premised on the idea that the best people to serve as medical professionals in rural communities are those native to the area, as research has shown that local youth are more likely to remain in the area once qualified since they have family attachments and commitments in the area and can communicate with patients in a shared mother tongue. Furthermore, graduates of the program become positive role models for other rural youth to emulate, creating a positive cycle of upliftment.

Impact: How does it Work

Example: Walk us through a specific example(s) of how this solution makes a difference; include its primary activities.

The UYDF first selects young people to participate in the program in collaboration with the community, which identifies potential applicants through traditional rural councils and other participatory citizen bodies. The second step is School Outreach: UYDF graduates organize Hospital Open Days at local hospitals to share their experiences with prospective applicants from rural public schools. Once students selected by their community for participation in the UYDF are accepted into a university, they qualify for financial support from UYDF, which covers full tuition and board, a book and food allowance, and any other essential expenses required by the curriculum. Alongside financial support, the UYDF offers ongoing mentoring support by a network of mentors, who are in contact with the students monthly and hold them accountable for their academic work. After graduation, all students sign a formal year-for-year Work-Back Contract, which stipulates that for every year of studies supported by UYDF, graduates must work at the rural hospitals.

Impact: What is the impact of the work to date? Also describe the projected future impact for the coming years.

The UYDF supports almost 200 students per year (with about 50 of them expected to graduate every year) and has to date produced 185 graduates who received degrees in 16 different health professions: the majority in medicine, but also in nursing, optometry, social work, radiography, physiotherapy, biomedical technology and psychology. Almost 70 percent of graduates are working at rural hospitals. The retention of these professionals really works: even with no further work-back obligations, 60 percent of them continue working in the rural hospitals and the remaining are working in urban public hospitals, doing research or specializing. By 2016, the UYDF plans to increase intake to manage about 250 students per cycle in the program and to scale out into other provinces.

Spread Strategies: Moving forward, what are the main strategies for scaling impact?

Over the next few years, the UYDF plans to increase student intake and to scale out into other provinces in South Africa facing shortages in medical personnel by sharing the critical aspects of the program and encouraging them to adapt their bursary programs. The UYDF has also signed an agreement with the Student Financial Aid Scheme (NSFAS) of the South African government, who will provide loan funding to half of UYDF's students every year, and is working closely with the provincial Departments of Health. In the next five years, Andrew plans to create a whole new branch of the UYDF to concentrate on post-graduate training opportunities.

Sustainability

Financial Sustainability Plan: What is this solution's plan to ensure financial sustainability?

Sustainability in the UYDF comes with the long term supply and presence of the healthcare professionals, many of whom stay on after their work-back obligations have ended. This is largely due to the fact that many of the health workers are native to the area and thus have a strong bond to the hospitals and villages in which they are serving. Furthermore, the strong network of alumni and mentors encourages healthcare professionals to stay on and students to apply for the program.

Marketplace: Who else is addressing the problem outlined here? How does the proposed project differ from these approaches?

The problem of staffing of rural health care facilities is a problem throughout the world. A number of different approaches have been used. However those with the most evidence are: Recruiting students from rural areas to train as health care professionals Ensuring that the content of the curriculum has a rural focus and Ensure that the context of training is appropriate (rural exposure or longitudinal rural attachments). The Australians are probably the most advanced in thinking about this. In South Africa there are a number of organizations that support rural youth to train at institutions of higher learning. Most provincial departments of health have bursary programs which provide funding to needy young people and the University of the Witwatersrand has a scholarship program which supports rural young people to train as health care professionals. The UYDF program differs from these programs in a number of important areas 1. All our students are of rural origin 2. The local district hospital chooses the students and it is at the local district hospital where student would come back to do holiday work and eventually to work out 3. We provide extensive mentoring support and expect students to be accountable to the scheme.

Team

Founding Story

When Andrew was working as the superintendent of the Mosvold Hospital in rural KwaZulu-Natal, he was confronted by the critical issue of staff shortages when building his team. When he met other medical superintendents, he discovered that they too had similar problems with staffing. This led to the development of a training program for 2,000 junior doctors to encourage them to work in the province's rural hospitals. While this improved the situation somewhat, Andrew realized that the only long-term solution to tackle the problem of understaffing was to develop local human capital in rural youth and thus founded the Friends of Mosvold Scholarship Scheme, which later became the Umthombo Youth Development Foundation.

Team

The Umthombo YDF has 5 staff: the Director; the Student & Operations Manager, Graduate & Youth Development Coordinator, an Office Administrator and an Office Assistant.

About You

About You

First Name
Last Name
Twitter URL
Facebook URL

About Your Project

Organization Name
How long has your organization been operating?

Please select

The information you provide here will be used to fill in any parts of your profile that have been left blank, such as interests, organization information, and website. No contact information will be made public. Please uncheck here if you do not want this to happen..

Project

Organization Country

Country where this project is creating social impact

What awards or honors has the project received?

Funding: How is your project financial supported?

Supplemental

Awards: What awards or honors has your solution received, if any?

Tell us about your partnerships

Challenges: What challenges might hinder the success of your project and how do you plan to overcome them?

How does your idea help young people create bright futures and improve opportunities for meaningful and long-term careers?

Target Age Group(s): What age group(s) do(es) your solution target through it's programming?

Intervention Focus: Identify which of the following best explain key parts of your solution

Do you have separate programs or initiatives that target the following types of populations?

Impact - Reach: How many people did your project directly engage in programmatic activities in the last year?

Please select

Number of People Directly Employed by Your Organization

Please select

Number of Volunteers

Please select

Does your project utilize any of the innovative design principles below? Select a theme below that most applies to your work. If none of them do, no problem, you can skip this question.

Is your project targeted at solving any of the following key barriers? Select a theme below that most applies to your work. If none of them do, no problem, you can skip this question.

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