



CONFÉRENCE • PARIS

# POUR LE BRÉSIL

## REPORT

**GOOD PRACTICES AND  
CHALLENGES FOR CIVIL  
SOCIETY ORGANIZATIONS  
DURING THE PANDEMIC**

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# ABOUT POUR LE BRÉSIL



Created in 2019, Pour le Brésil is an initiative led by students and former students of Sciences Po Paris that produces online discussions with high-profile Brazilian and international personalities, scholars, experts, and representatives of organizations. Our main objective is to debate how to overcome the main political, economic, and social challenges towards sustainable and inclusive development in Brazil.

Pour le Brésil is a student initiative officially recognized by the administration and the student community at Sciences Po Paris, and an association registered at the Paris City Hall.

Given the challenges brought about by the Covid-19 pandemic, and the desire to get closer to civil society organizations that work directly with the promotion of human rights and the fight against inequalities, Pour le Brésil has created the Advocacy axis for its second term of office, in 2021. Through this axis, we intend to collaborate directly with the activities of NGOs operating in Brazil, as well as disseminate their actions and become a source of analysis for the "backstage" of these activities.

# INTRODUCTION

The coronavirus pandemic affected all layers of Brazilian society. However, some populations were more affected than others and inequalities became even more visible. In a scenario of even more violent social vulnerability and in the face of a lack of political action, civil society organizations have seen their role become even more essential than before.

Whether performing the same activities or completely restructuring the projects that were carried out before, CSOs continued to act during the pandemic context. But to do so, new challenges and complex contexts had to be faced.

The role of CSOs became paramount in fighting the pandemic and the disenfranchisement of vulnerable populations. The organizations had different tools and difficulties to readapt, varying according to the thematic of action, their experience, or resources. Between logistical, financial, or even contextual barriers, the way these organizations were able to reorganize themselves in the midst of such a complex event as a global pandemic deserves a special focus of analysis, which will be part of this report.

Thus, this material aims to be an instrument for sharing the best practices used by the organizations that took part in this study. However, we also intend to indicate the main obstacles for the NGOs' operations, which were severely hampered during the Covid-19 pandemic.



To achieve these objectives, we divide our analysis into information obtained from the four NGOs, followed by a compilation of best practices and major challenges, and finally, concluding remarks.

This material is relevant to all those who work in the third sector, nationally or internationally, as well as those interested in learning more about the actions of civil society organizations during the pandemic period.

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# METHODOLOGY

The organizations that were part of this product are different in themes, size, resources, and years of activity. All, however, are united in the promotion and defense of human rights of their target population.

**Pour le Brésil** has also collaborated with these NGOs on other fronts that can be seen on our social networks, our website, and our page on Medium.

The strategy used by **Pour le Brésil** to allow the NGOs to share their particular perspectives from common references was to ask the same questions to all, which involved topics such as the scope of each organization, its operational capacity, as well as fundraising and administrative organization. They were sent to the participating organizations, and when there was acceptance from the members, Pour le Brésil also conducted interviews.

We are thankful for the possibility of dialogue with all the organizations that participated in this project and for sharing Pour le Brésil's vision. We believe that sharing the good practices and the challenges faced at this momentous time can teach us a lot about adaptability, resilience, and the ability to act in the face of crisis.

We hope you enjoy reading this report!



## ORGANIZATIONS THAT CONTRIBUTED TO THE DEVELOPMENT OF THIS REPORT:





# EDUMAIS

**EduMais** is an international non-governmental organization specialized in giving high-quality education and social and emotional support to unprivileged children. Founded in the Netherlands, EduMais operates in two communities of Rio Janeiro since 2016.



The **Edumais** team consists of **Diana Nijboer**, the founding director of this NGO, a part-time employee who is an EduMais alumni, and approximately 25 volunteers.

Their scope of work includes the development of social and emotional life skills and high quality academic education for children and youth. To this end, they offer English classes, courses in entrepreneurship, web and game design, and summer and winter camps. Edumais also provides assistance to students so that they can access the job market. In addition, the organization has an exchange program related to social and emotional development and English.

During the pandemic, the activities of EduMais, had to reinvent their support to the communities they serve. The organization started distributing food baskets, established a new mentoring program for students, provided English classes for adult students, and most importantly designed all the programs to be available online.

**It should be noted, however, that the NGO was also affected by the pandemic.** One of the essential elements for the execution of an NGO's activities depends on its funding, and with the pandemic, these funds were reduced. Another point of difficulty existed due to the exchange volunteers that are part of the organization. Most of the volunteers are in exchange programs, and so when the Ministry of Education announced the closing of schools, many exchange volunteers had to leave the city.

Fortunately, the food basket program is well known to the public and their work was broadcast in the Dutch press during the pandemic. As a result, EduMais received more and more funding for this program and many people came to the organization to become volunteers.

# EDUMAIS

Some of them are former volunteers, others are in their first volunteer experience with Edumais and have reporter training. Edumais' communication has increased dramatically after creating a professional newsletter and an e-book, thanks to the volunteers.

All this was possible because the NGO adopted several good practices. Edumais has a tradition of selecting highly educated young people willing to make a serious commitment to the cause. By carefully selecting the profiles of the volunteers, the quality of the work is remarkable.

Moreover, thanks to creativity and flexibility, the organization was able to adapt during the pandemic, adjusting the online teaching. This created new opportunities, even for the post-pandemic phase. Many former volunteers are eager to join the adventure again.

Another good practice of the organization is its transparency towards donors and sponsors. Edumais really cares about sharing its work and campaigns with civil society. This has allowed us to access essential donations, especially during a time of pandemic.

## CHALLENGES

- Ever-changing circumstances: obstacles for future planning;
- Lack of on-site volunteers: many might not be able to return for in-person teaching;
- Uncertainty about the ability to provide 'hybrid learning' modules;
- Building people's resilience;
- How to convince donors and sponsors to reallocate their funds back to the primary educational programmes because currently more funds are allocated for the food baskets program;
- Securing sufficient and additional funds to grow the organization.

## GOOD PRACTICES

- Early fundraising campaigns: a way to engage more people;
- Create meaningful work and provide emotional support through open and regular communication will form a sense of family and belonging for future challenges.



# INSTITUTO ADUS

**Instituto Adus** is an NGO based in São Paulo with the mission of providing aid to refugees and promoting their integration into Brazilian society. Created in 2010, **Adus** has nearly 80 volunteers and 12 employees whose main target is the insertion of refugees in Brazil, in particular through workshops, legal support, training for the labor market, and language courses.



During the Covid-19 pandemic, the Instituto Adus had to diversify its products to meet the new demands of the public, mainly due to the growing need for assistance. This led the organization to start a food distribution system and a fundraising campaign to provide food cards for almost 200 families. The social distance also led to the need to adapt to the digitalization of services, through online classes and attendance.

Because of the pandemic, it became more difficult to organize events, which led to a loss of resources. But, on the other hand, other types of income could be integrated into the process without causing too much damage, such as the creation of the "Ambassadors of Diversity" project, in which global artists used their social media to publicize the work done by the Instituto Adus, as well as online webinars and cultural events.

The social distance caused changes in the volunteers' habits, as they had to adapt to new online teaching methods. As a result, the number of available volunteers decreased. The lack of Internet access was also a problem when it came to reaching all beneficiaries, but at the same time it also represented an opportunity to reach refugees, for example, who live in other parts of the country.

## CHALLENGES

- Diversification of resources;
- New and urgent needs of the beneficiaries;
- Digitizing services;
- No guarantee that all beneficiaries have internet access;
- Decrease of the number of volunteers

## GOOD PRACTICES

- Provision of new services (food distribution);
- Possibility of partnerships due to digitalization;
- Adaptability to the needs of the target population.



# MINAS PROGRAMAM

**Minas Programam** is an organization created in 2015 that aims to democratize access to information about technology for women through training and education.



Although it started as an informal project, the organization was formalized in 2020 and became the **Instituto Minas Programam**.

During the Covid-19 pandemic, one of the main challenges was the inability to hold in-person courses, which revealed several obstacles. In particular, Minas Programam experienced logistical problems due to the fact that several students were in different locations, some without computers. To circumvent this problem, the Institute now donates the machine to students who do not have one.

In addition, creating an atmosphere conducive to developing interpersonal relationships has been a challenge. This is due to the loss of spontaneity and the fact that the staff is able to devote less time to Institute activities because of factors such as other responsibilities and fatigue. Despite the implementation of various measures, creating an environment conducive to education remains a major challenge.

However, it is also possible to identify distinct innovations to respond to the pandemic of COVID-19. First, **Minas Programam** has expanded its audience thanks to an increased online presence and the use of language accessible to all audiences. This increased visibility has contributed to raising more funds (through new partnerships at the national and international level). In addition, the topic of technology has proved especially important during the pandemic, which has also contributed to the increased visibility.

Second, the organization created new content to adapt to new realities, such as the implementation of study groups and the offering of more technical courses, always with a focus on the intersectionality between gender and technology.

# MINAS PROGRAMAM

The digitalization of the activities also allowed the redistribution of part of the funds to respond to new needs, such as food and caregiver services for the student mothers. This process was made easier by the fact that **Minas Programam** has no physical headquarters and, before the pandemic, the team's internal communication was already online.

However, challenges remain. The **Minas Programam** team recognizes that the separation between the professional and personal spheres remains difficult. In order to respond as fully as possible to this concern, the organization must take into account the fact that the people it works with face different challenges and that priorities may change.

## CHALLENGES

- Logistical challenges, such as delivering material to distant communities
- Employee burnout and mental health issues
- Creating an environment conducive to building interpersonal relationships
- Taking into account the different power relations when establishing activities
- Simplifying the language used in workshops and study groups

## GOOD PRACTICES

- Diversification of activities during the pandemic
- Establishment of a clear internal hierarchy
- Development of an extensive network of contacts and communication
- Adaptation of the speech language
- Command of online tools, saving time and facilitating digitalization processes
- Assessment of beneficiaries' priorities
- Clear separation between professional and personal life



# REDES DA MARÉ

**Redes da Maré** is a civil society organization, created by Maré residents more than two decades ago (1997). Its mission is to weave the necessary networks to guarantee and support the rights of the population of Maré's 16 slums, where about 140,000 people live.



**Redes** directly benefits more than 4,500 residents, with actions ranging from education and culture to public security and territorial development, seeking to overcome the historical inequality faced by slum populations.

As the impact of Covid-19 invaded Maré, the pandemic forced the NGO to reorganize itself in an unexpected way, to find ways to respond to the demands of the neediest residents during the pandemic period. In record time, Redes da Maré managed to build the campaign “Maré Says NO to the Coronavirus”, mobilizing several partners. The campaign was designed to take place around a few pillars, namely: to ensure the food and nutritional security of residents, to provide assistance to homeless people, to generate income and work, to ensure access to health care and rights, to produce and disseminate safe information and content about the virus, and to support artists, producers and local cultural groups.

The NGO's greatest concern was to alleviate the main effects of the pandemic on the most vulnerable populations. Baskets with food and personal hygiene and cleaning items were distributed door-to-door, as well as daily ready meals for the street populations. The role played by the local population was also central in all stages of the campaign, always favoring and fostering dialogue and collaboration. Most of the professionals hired for the campaign were Maré residents, with special attention given to women that are in charge of their household. In addition, many projects were aimed at recognizing and strengthening local artists and encouraging the artistic expressions of Maré residents, including support for journalistic production about the pandemic.

# REDES DA MARÉ

The organization also ensured daily online service to handle demands related to health issues, and created a project for testing and a program for safe home isolation. More than 1,000 streets and alleys of Maré were disinfected, and the NGO was able to collect Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) for Maré's health unit and those serving the area. Redes da Maré also launched a series of communication products that still today help residents to keep updated on the pandemic situation in the favelas and peripheries, with indications on how to stay safe: this is the case of the podcast "Maré em Tempos de Coronavírus" ("Maré in Times of Coronavirus", in English), the journalistic series "Por dentro da Maré" ("Inside the Maré", in English), or the bulletin "De Olho no Corona!" ("Keeping an eye on Coronavirus", in English).

**Redes da Maré** believes that civil society should, at this moment, contribute effectively to mitigate the suffering brought by the humanitarian crisis that, in an acute way, hits precisely the populations with whom they work. The work done by the NGO since the beginning of the pandemic is impressive and is worthy of applause, but it is far from being easy, and many challenges have been encountered along the way.

## CHALLENGES

- Quantification of the target audience;
- Exponential increase in the demand for work;
- Logistical challenges in deliveries
- Training and mobilization of the collaborator network;
- Urgency in implementation;
- Difficulty of access to official data;
- Dealing with exacerbated discriminations: racism and violence against women;
- The pandemic's unequal factor;
- Intelligent, user-friendly data capture;
- Communication effort: need for reliable and fast information;
- Direct contact actions.

## BOAS PRÁTICAS

- Protagonism of the local population;
- Articulation of a broad network of partners;
- Use of existing information'
- Social interviews;
- Creation of an information bank to enable an operational system;
- Use of technology to expand actions;
- Constant dialogue;
- Networks of support and solidarity;
- Contextualized interventions;
- Inventiveness in the way of communicating;
- Actions for income generation;
- Food baskets in card format.



# CHALLENGES

A term that is used frequently throughout this report, the term **challenges** demonstrates the obstacles that were created, aggravated, and that generated the need for the reorganization of NGOs during the pandemic. It is expected that the recognition of these challenges will generate support actions in other social spheres, especially from the public authorities.

- **Reduction** in the number of **volunteers**
- **Internet access** for all of the target audience
- **Loss of resources** obtained through events
- Emergence of **new needs** of beneficiaries and **increased demand**
- **Protection and mental health** of the organization's staff
- Maintain the **spontaneity** of the activities in the online format
- **Urgency** of implementation
- Need to work in **unstable conditions**
- **Logistical** difficulties
- **Adaptation** of services and staff to the **virtual world**
- Ability to **collect data** frequently

# GOOD PRACTICES

The main highlight of this report, the good practices are initiatives identified during conversations with civil society organizations. Our expectation is that they will serve as sources of inspiration and demonstrate the ability of these organizations to adapt.

- **Diversification** of activities and services provided
- **Clearer definitions** for professional life
- Investment in **networking and partnerships**
- Expanded use of **online tools**
- **Adaptation to the needs** of the organization's target audience and staff
- **Investment in organizational culture** and staff well-being
- Providing importance for **updated information**
- **Frequent dialogue** and listening with the organization's **target audience**
- **Diversification** of resource **sources**

# CONCLUDING REMARKS

Civil society organizations maintained their continuous activities even during the pandemic. To do so, they had to face old and new challenges created in this exceptional context, such as achieving logistical efficiency to quickly adapt to the challenges brought, ensuring mobilization around human rights and social progress, obtaining funds, and maintaining a balance between the emotional wellbeing of workers and the complex nature of the work. The NGOs interviewed had different means and difficulties dependent on their thematic of operation, experience, and resources.

Despite facing a very challenging context, the organizations participating in this study showed resilience and determination to build a better and more just world, through new strategies for raising financial and human resources, as well as administrative and operational changes.

Finally, this material is designed to be a tool for inspiration of good practices adopted by the third sector, while highlighting what challenges have been overcome. It is hoped that these objectives have been met and that important reflections on the performance and adaptive capacity of Brazilian NGOs have been fostered.





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