



Case Study

Noor Dubai Foundation: Initiatives in developing countries



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1- The Noor Dubai Foundation

The Noor Dubai Foundation (the foundation) is a non-governmental and not-for-profit international charity based in Dubai - one of the seven Emirates that constitute the United Arab Emirates (UAE). According to the World Health Organisation (WHO) almost 80% of visual impairments are preventable or curable, and the foundation's vision is, therefore, a world that is free of preventable forms of blindness. The foundation is committed to reviving the gift of sight, particularly for those living in low-income and developing countries where access to eye care and curative services is not easily available. The foundation started as an initiative launched in September 2008 by His Highness Sheikh Mohammed Bin Rashid Al Maktoum, Vice-President and Prime Minister of the UAE and Ruler of Dubai, in response to alarming statistics published by the WHO about the prevalence of blindness - every five seconds one person in the world goes blind:

"I am pleased to announce a personal initiative aimed towards easing the pain of millions in our region and our world, those who were hidden behind the sufferings of wars, conflicts and markets crisis and poverty."

- Extract from Kemp, L.J., Moonesar, I.A. & Al Banna, S. (2011).

After the first year, when the initiative had successfully reached over 5.8 million visually impaired people across the world, a decree was passed by His Highness Sheikh Mohammed Bin Rashid Al Maktoum, launching the Noor Dubai Foundation. The foundation recognises the devastating effect that visual impairment can have on people's lives. By reviving sight, it therefore aims to empower adults and children by enabling them to pursue education and participate in gainful employment which in the long term can help reduce poverty and improve the quality of life of individuals, their families and communities.

The foundation’s intervention model is holistic and designed around providing prevention, treatment and education programmes around the world. **The table below highlights the activities under each of these programmes.**

Table 1: Noor Dubai Foundation Initiatives	
Treatment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Mobile eye camps that are led by a team of doctors and provide eye care, disease management and surgery for thousands of people over a five-ten day period
Prevention	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Investing in regional and global plans for disease eradication ▪ Increasing public awareness about the importance of eye care and health
Education	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Training local ophthalmologists to ensure sustainability of provision ▪ Educating and training primary health care workers, women and teachers to identify early signs of eye disease and the importance of eye care for children

2. The Challenge – Accessing hard-to-reach communities in developing countries

The work of the foundation tends to be guided by targets and recommendations made by the WHO and the International Agency for the Prevention of Blindness (IAPB). According to the WHO, 90% of visually impaired people live in low-income and middle-income countries. More specifically, according to the IAPB and the WHO, Asian countries such as Pakistan, Bangladesh, Indonesia and Nepal, and African countries such as Sudan, Yemen and Ethiopia, all have a high incidence of visual impairment. However, accessing communities and patients in these countries can often present the foundation with significant challenges. For instance, access can be difficult because in some countries there is often a cultural stigma that surrounds blindness and disability, particularly in small towns and villages. Individuals that are visually impaired are often regarded as cursed or blindness is believed to be contagious and this can result in the alienation of those that are affected as well as their families. Such prejudices can not only prevent patients from presenting themselves publically for treatment but also greatly hamper any attempts to educate and inform communities about eye health.

Access to communities by international NGOs is also hindered by the political instability, lack of security and turbulence that is often characteristic of low income developing countries. Foreign workers therefore face very real risks including kidnapping and assassination and NGOs need to take great care with regards to how they operate. Furthermore, it is also difficult for international NGOs to navigate the bureaucratic and legal landscape in such countries. A significant amount of time and resources are often needed to gain the necessary permissions to provide treatment and education for local communities.

3. The Strategy

To overcome the challenges discussed above, the foundation relies on a multi-faceted strategy that works to expedite access to local communities. Firstly, the foundation recognises the importance of respecting local culture and values and, therefore, employs local doctors and volunteers to deliver treatment and education programmes. For example 32 local doctors have been involved in running the foundation's mobile eye camps in Pakistan. These locals can better communicate with communities, break down barriers, facilitate conversations and thereby challenge stigmas and prejudices associated with blindness. Local staff are also better placed to navigate the legal and regulatory laws and protocols and this significantly reduces the 'red tape' faced by many international NGOs. Moreover, employing local staff rather than relying on foreign workers also helps to keep the latter safe from any threats to their safety. Where foreign workers are involved, they are careful to dress appropriately and make efforts to 'blend in'.

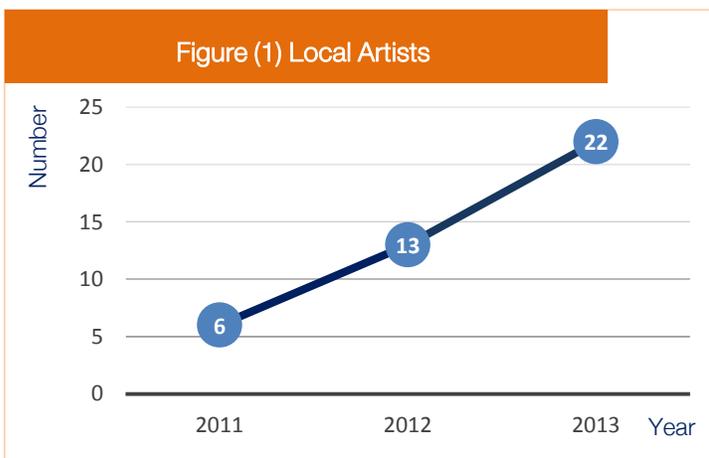
The foundation also overcomes these challenges by relying and capitalising on the esteemed reputation of its CEO -Dr. Manal Taryam. As the President of the Emirates Ophthalmology Society and the Executive Director of Primary Health Care at the Dubai Health Authority she is widely renowned for her expertise and has over the course of her career developed a network of influence and contacts. Dr. Manal plays a big role in helping to ensure that the foundation can to access local communities and successfully deliver treatment, education and prevention programmes. Dr Taryam is, therefore, the 'face' of the foundation and reinforces her commitment to the work by making an effort to attend mobile eye camps herself to quality assure the work of local volunteers.

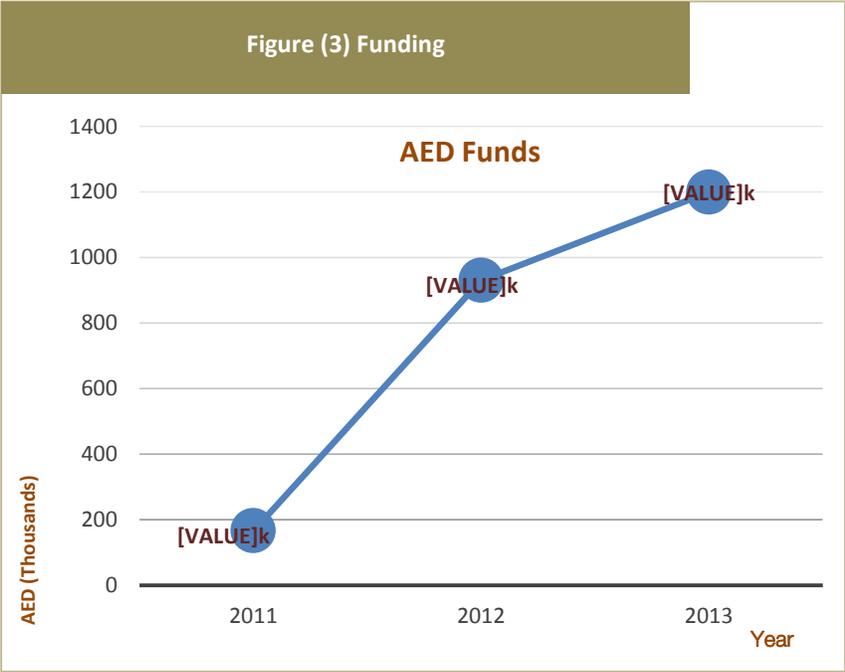
4. Outcomes and achievements

In spite of the challenges discussed above, the foundation has worked in over 10 countries in Asia and Africa since its inception. More specifically, it has organised an impressive 25 mobile eye camps, screened 185,805 individuals, conducted 19,595 surgeries and distributed 44,337 glasses to people living in remote areas with little access to primary health care. **The table illustrates the achievements of each of the mobile camps in 2013.**

Country	Month	Treated	Surgeries	Glasses
Ethiopia	February	7500	237	700
Pakistan	April	2031	351	1160
Ghana	June	3477	351	1070
Yemen	September	4380	464	1198
Morocco	November	4500	534	1000

The foundation has also had a lot of successes using social media such as Twitter, Facebook and Instagram to increase awareness and educate the public about eye health and care. For example, its' Twitter followers have jumped from 121 in 2011 to 1,374 in 2013. The Foundation has also been active in running campaigns - one of the most significant of which is the Art4Sight campaign - an annual art exhibition and auction that showcases the work of local artists and raises funds for the foundation. The charts below demonstrate the steady growth of the campaign's reach and accomplishments, in Figure 1-3.





5. Conclusion

It is clear that in the short time that the foundation has been running it has demonstrated significant success and has reportedly met and exceeded all its targets. It has drawn on its valuable human resources – an experienced CEO, a small but committed full-time team based in Dubai, and an enthusiastic and dedicated volunteer workforce - to be ambitious in the scope of its work and deliver outcomes. The foundation’s long-term mission is to promote and support the sustainability of eye care by working towards developing eye care centres in countries with need.

References

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This short case extract summary was written by Sanaa Sheikh (sanah.sheikh@mbrsg.ac.ae) and Immanuel Azaad Moonesar (Immanuel.moonesar@mbrsg.ac.ae) based on a previously published case study. It was prepared using an organisation information, and its intention was to provide material for class discussion through publication. The authors do not intend to illustrate either effective or ineffective handling of a managerial situation. The authors may have disguised certain names and other identifying information to protect confidentiality.

Potential Case Questions:

1. What are the Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats (SWOT) facing this organisation in relation to the strategic planning/management/operations?
2. Compare and contrast this case with your current organisation, in terms of operations, management and/or leadership. Discuss.

About Mohammed Bin Rashid School of Government

Launched in 2005 under the patronage of His Highness Sheikh Mohammed Bin Rashid Al Maktoum, UAE Vice President, Prime Minister and Ruler of Dubai as the first research and teaching institution focusing on governance and public policy in the Arab world. The School aims to support good governance in the UAE and the Arab world, and build future leaders through an integrated system offering education and training programs, as well as research and studies. The School's operations are founded on global best practices developed in collaboration with the Kennedy School at Harvard University, and it is considered a unique model for academic institutions in that it focuses on the practical side of governance. The School also collaborates with several government and private institutions both regionally and internationally. The overall design and implementation of training programs is built on the foundation of scientific thought and is inspired by the reality of Arab public administration and with a view to addressing the issues and helping future leaders meet the challenges facing public administration in various parts of the Arab world. The School also organizes international and regional conferences and specialized workshops, and holds forums to facilitate the exchange of ideas and knowledge between Arab region and the world.