



## **2026 Activity Plan**

**SOMA SURF ASSOCIATION**

**Non-Governmental Organization for Development**

**São Tomé and Príncipe**

**Founded in 2020**

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## Organization Identification Form

- Organization name: SOMA Surf – Surfers Proud of African Women
- Legal nature: Non-profit association
- Statute: Non-Governmental Development Organization (NGDO)
- Year of foundation: 2020
- Scope of activity: Cooperation for development
- Country of operation: São Tomé and Príncipe
- Priority target audience: Girls and women
- Approach: Surfing as a therapeutic, educational, empowering, and inclusive tool.

### Mission

To promote gender equality and reduce the social exclusion of women in Africa, using surfing as a pathway to well-being, education, professional development, and economic autonomy.

### Vision

A future in Africa where surfing is not only a space for healing and empowerment, but also a source of dignified work, leadership, and long-term autonomy; driven by local women who transform their own lives and the industries around them.

### Values

- Surf – Surfing is at the heart of everything we do: a space for healing, learning, identity, and economic opportunity, where girls and women build confidence, skills, and futures.
- Equality – We work to challenge gender norms and redistribute access to space, opportunities, and leadership, ensuring the full participation of girls and women, including in the surf industry.
- Autonomy – We support the development of skills, confidence, and economic independence that enable free choices and sustainable life trajectories.
- Community – We believe that lasting change is built collectively, through strong local leadership, shared responsibility, and collaboration with families and communities.
- Sustainability – We are committed to environmental, social, and economic models that reduce dependencies, generate decent work, and ensure lasting impact for communities and the organization.

## Framing and context

The period between 2024 and 2025 was a defining moment in SOMA's journey. In 2024, the organization invested heavily in consolidating its social intervention model, namely in developing the theory of change, strengthening impact measurement, and revising methodologies. Simultaneously, it adopted a fundraising strategy based on the international visibility it had achieved, which, despite the recognition obtained, did not translate into the expected funding volume, increasing pressure on its financial sustainability.

In late 2024 and early 2025, the departure of key personnel in the areas of resource mobilization and communication, coupled with a strategic reduction in volunteering, exacerbated the organization's operational limitations. This context led SOMA to opt for an internal reorganization and a temporary interruption of part of its intervention in São Tomé, with the aim of protecting the quality of the work carried out and creating conditions for reflection and restructuring.

This period also coincided with the emergence of resistance dynamics from a specific group within the local surfing community, which ultimately accelerated a positive process of community mobilization, leading several people from the community (boys, girls, and families) to assert themselves in defense of SOMA's mission and values and to join the first local team responsible for the continuity of the intervention.

At the end of 2025, the organization benefited from an extraordinary and non-recurring financial contribution, resulting from a previously conducted fundraising campaign, which allowed it to stabilize its financial situation and enable a restructuring process focused on local capacity building, sustainability, and institutional consolidation that informs the planning for 2026.

It is also important to emphasize that SOMA's expansion to Príncipe Island was conceived with external funding (*HBD - Sustainable Hotels*) specifically allocated to the project and with an autonomous structure, not having implied the redistribution of human or financial resources previously allocated to the intervention in São Tomé.

## Description of Programs and Areas of Intervention

Surf therapy is the central axis of SOMA's intervention and constitutes its main differentiating element. Since its creation, the organization has used surfing as a therapeutic, educational, and empowering tool to promote the well-being, self-esteem, and inclusion of girls in contexts of inequality. However, accumulated experience has shown that for girls and young women to become autonomous citizens, agents of change, and leaders in their communities, it is necessary to ensure community involvement and supportive structural conditions. It is within this framework that SOMA's complementary programs emerge, designed to reinforce, deepen, and sustain the impact of surf therapy over time.

### CENTRAL AXIS: Surf/SUP Therapy Program – Gliders & Riders

Goal: To promote gender equality and reduce the social exclusion of girls, using surfing as a means to achieve physical, mental and emotional well-being, access to and retention in education, and the development of personal and social skills;

Target audience: Girls aged 10 to 17, divided into two levels: Gliders (10-13) and Riders (14-17)

Format: Annual program, aligned with the school academic year, with daily attendance, extracurricular activities, and completely free for participants.

Description: The program is based on three pillars: surf therapy, academic support, and psychoeducation/female empowerment. The holistic support benefits each girl with individual mentoring, tailored to her educational, family, social, and well-being journey. The program also ensures the provision of all school supplies, menstrual hygiene products, meals on surf days, birthday celebrations, all necessary equipment for activities, and tuition fees, guaranteeing equal access and dignified participation conditions.

### Complementary Program: SOMA Club Program

Goal: To guarantee continuity, community belonging and regular access to surfing, educational support and safe spaces for personal development.

Target audience: Children and young people between the ages of 3 and 23, with a primary focus on girls;

Format: A community youth space that operates regularly and is open daily;

Description: This is a continuity space for girls who have completed their first year of surf therapy, allowing them to continue surfing semi- or fully independently and using SOMA's resources. The club offers study support, workshops and occasional activities, access to the library, playroom, computers and internet. During the day, the space is exclusively for girls, reinforcing safety and a sense of belonging. At the end of the day, activities open to the community are promoted, involving boys and children of different ages. Boys can also borrow surfboards, integrating in a situated and conscious way, without compromising the central focus on the girls.

### TRANSVERSAL AXIS: PRO Program (professional)

Goal: To empower young people with technical skills (hard skills) and transversal skills (soft skills) related to the surf industry and SOMA's areas of activity, inspiring career paths in sectors with employability potential and limited local training opportunities, and preparing participants to integrate into the organization and its ecosystem.

Target audience: Girls and boys who have completed high school, prioritizing girls whenever possible.

Format: This is an in-person training program with theoretical and practical components, which may include online sessions when necessary. The duration, intensity, and content vary depending on the training area and the specific objectives of each edition.

Description: The program develops personal, technical, and professional skills, tailored to individual needs. The program is tailored to the real needs of the organization and the community. Whenever girls are not interested or available for certain training programs, boys are also included, maintaining a commitment to gender equality and conscious inclusion.

### SUSTAINABILITY FOCUS: AMOS Program -SOMA's Social Business

Goal: To contribute to the organization's financial sustainability and to the creation of local job opportunities linked to the surf ecosystem.

Target audience: Local community, young graduates of the PRO program, and external clients;

Format: Surf school and related services, with a physical location in Santana, operating according to a social business model.

Description: SOMA's social business, developed under the AMOS brand, consists of a surf school providing services and selling products related to surfing, the sea, and sustainable tourism. All profits from the business will be reinvested in the programs described above, thus reinforcing the link between social intervention, training, and local employability, as well as the economic autonomy not only of the local team but also of the NGO itself.

## Recent learnings and assumptions for 2026

Recent experience has allowed us to identify lessons learned that guide planning for 2026. These lessons result from experience, cycle analysis, and observation of the social and institutional context in which the NGO operates, translating into a choice for less direct intervention and greater investment in structure, capacity, and sustainability.

### Learning 1

*"Strategic ambition must be compatible with implementation capacity."*

The investment made in 2024 to improve the social intervention model led to a more holistic approach, integrating responses to various problems. However, this process highlighted that sustainable impact depends less on a technically robust solution and more on the ability to implement it consistently, as well as to respond to the unpredictability inherent in NGO operations. This learning reinforced the importance of prioritizing focused interventions aligned with the actual capacity for implementation.

### Learning 2

*"Facing resistance is part of the work for gender equality."*

The social transformation processes promoted by SOMA, in a context marked by structurally ingrained gender inequality, reveal that changes in the balance of roles between men and women, and the increased visibility and power of women, inevitably generate resistance. This resistance manifested itself through criticism, contestation, threats, and attempts to delegitimize the work being done. This factor not only proved that change is indeed happening, but also demanded a firm and conscious stance from the organization, capable of maintaining alignment with its mission and values, without losing sensitivity to the social and cultural context in which it operates.

### Learning 3

*"Local capacity building is an integral part of the intervention, not a parallel process."*

The sustainability of the intervention depends on the existence of trained, autonomous local teams aligned with the organization's mission. This cycle highlighted that separating the continuity of the intervention from investment in local capacity building is an artificial distinction: training, empowering, and transferring responsibility is not a subsequent step after the intervention, but an essential part of the intervention itself.

### Learning 4

*"Continuity should not be ensured at any cost."*

Recent experience has reinforced that the pressure to maintain continuous intervention cannot override the need to guarantee minimum conditions of quality, consistency, and sustainability. In contexts marked by high dependence on external factors and financial volatility, insisting on continuity at any cost can weaken the intervention and compromise its medium- and long-term impact, requiring responsible decisions that include, when necessary, temporary adjustments to the pace of implementation.

## Strategic priorities for 2026

### 1. Decentralization of leadership and management at SOMA

To promote the progressive decentralization of SOMA's leadership and management, through the implementation of local leadership in São Tomé and the reconstruction of a back-office structure based on area managers, reducing dependence on management by a single person.

### 2. Local training and capacity building through the PRO Program

Utilize this program as a cross-cutting axis for training and capacity building, creating and preparing local teams with clear roles adapted to the different territories and intervention contexts.

### 3. Maintaining and strengthening the SOMA Club in São Tomé

To ensure the continuity of Clube SOMA as an open space for community engagement, promoting progressive improvements in the quality, structure, and impact of its intervention, without compromising its inclusive and accessible nature.

### 4. Implementation of SOMA's social business in São Tomé

To move forward with the implementation of SOMA's social business as a new strategic and innovative axis, focused on medium and long-term financial sustainability and short-term local employability.

### 5. Continuous reinforcement of the mobilization of financial resources.

Ensuring the continuity and strengthening of financial resource mobilization through applications for institutional funding, strategic partnerships, and internal fundraising campaigns. This priority remains central to guaranteeing financial stability during the implementation and maturation phase of the social business.

### 6. Redesign of the intensive surf therapy program

Redesigning the theory of change for the surf therapy program (Gliders & Riders), aligning it with the new organizational reality and actively integrating the perspectives of the participating girls, local families, and former volunteers.

### 7. Implementation of the SOMA Club in Príncipe

To implement the SOMA Club in Príncipe as a pilot project, ensuring continuity and deepening the impact on beneficiaries from previous editions.

## Programs and activities planned for 2026

Not all dimensions of the plan will advance with the same degree of intensity throughout 2026, with several planned in pilot, experimental, or preparatory format, according to organizational capacity and available resources.

### 1st Quarter (Jan–Mar)

- Program SUP Therapy (Issue I) - Príncipe: Continuation of the ongoing edition of the program that began in September 2025.
- SOMA Club - São Tomé: Continuation of daily operations throughout the year for the SOMA Club, which began in November 2025.
- Training and monitoring of the local team - São Tomé: Continuation of the team organization process affecting the SOMA Club.
- Social business - São Tomé: Preparation of operations (local and back office) and organizational structure.

### 2nd Quarter (Apr–Jun)

- SUP Therapy Program (Issue I) - Príncipe: Continuation and completion of the current edition (until June 2026).
- PRO Program (Edition I) - São Tomé: Continuation of the formation of the local SOMA Club team and beginning of team formation for the social business.
- Social business - São Tomé: Start of its official public implementation.

### 3rd Quarter (July–September)

- PRO Program (Edition II) - Príncipe: Formation of a local team for the implementation of the SOMA Club.
- Redesign of the surf therapy program: A process of reflection, analysis, and redesign of the surf therapy program.
- PRO Program (Edition III) - São Tomé: Training of the local team for the implementation of the surf therapy program.

### 4th Quarter (Oct–Dec)

- SOMA Club - Príncipe: Pilot implementation of the SOMA Club in Príncipe, led by a local team.
- Surf Therapy Program (6th Edition) - São Tomé: Beginning of the practical phase of preparing the surf therapy program, based on the redesigned model.

## Monitoring, evaluation and learning

In 2026, SOMA will adopt a structured approach to monitoring, evaluation, and learning, tailored to the diversity of its programs and the organizational context. This system aims to support informed decision-making, ensure the quality of intervention, and strengthen the organization's sustainability.

### Monitoring implementation and organizational capacity

#### What is being monitored?

- Execution of the activities foreseen in the different programs.
- Organization, cohesion and capacity of local teams
- Coordination between the local team and the coordination/back office.

#### Instruments

- Regular meetings
- Simple activity logs
- Direct observation on the ground
- Reports

#### Frequency

- Continuous monitoring
- Quarterly review sessions

### Monitoring the social impact of programs

Impact monitoring will be developed in a differentiated manner, according to the nature and maturity of each program.

#### SUP Therapy Program – Príncipe

- Ongoing impact assessment continues.
- Presentation and analysis of results at the end of the cycle.

#### SOMA Clubs – São Tomé and Príncipe

- Number of beneficiaries, gender and age groups
- Types of activities performed (regular and extraordinary)
- Perception and satisfaction of children, young people and families.
- Community perceptions of the role of Clube SOMA as a space for social interaction, promotion of equality, study, leisure, and sports.
- Qualitative analysis on the importance of a space dedicated to girls, including the shared management of the space with boys at specific times.

#### PRO Program - São Tomé and Príncipe

- Assessment of knowledge, skills, and expectations before and after participation.
- Analysis of changes in participants' ambitions, autonomy, and future perspectives.

#### Social business

- Monitoring revenue generated and reinvested in SOMA's mission.
- Number of jobs created
- Contribution of social business to the financial sustainability of the organization.

Instruments

- Questionnaires
- Informal interviews
- Participation records
- Situational analysis
- Financial and operational data
- Focus group

Frequency

- Pre and post intervention
- Continuous collection
- Final analysis by program/year.

## Monitoring financial capacity and sustainability.

SOMA acknowledges the existence of financial, organizational, and community risks associated with the intervention context, committing to monitor them regularly and adjust decisions preventively whenever necessary.

What is being monitored?

- Available liquidity
- Evolution of revenues and expenses
- Ability to meet financial commitments

Instruments

- Projected budget and execution control
- Internal financial checkpoints

Frequency

- Monthly follow-up
- Quarterly reviews
- Adjustments whenever necessary.

## Continuous learning and adjustment

The information collected through the different monitoring mechanisms will be used as an organizational learning tool. The resulting lessons will support the adjustment of programs, the redesign of methodologies, and the planning of future cycles, ensuring that decisions are made based on the reality on the ground and the organization's effective capacity.

## Organizational capacity and governance

The implementation of the 2026 Activity Plan is based on a process of progressively strengthening SOMA's organizational capacity, aimed at decentralizing management and also strengthening and developing a local team.

### Organizational model

By 2026, SOMA will develop an organizational model that combines local leadership built on the ground with a progressively strengthened back-office structure distributed across areas of responsibility. This model aims to ensure responsiveness, strategic coherence, and proximity to the field in a sustainable way.

SOMA's programs will have specialized technical support, namely through project coordination and management, with local presence during key implementation phases and mostly remote monitoring in subsequent phases, with occasional on-site visits when necessary.

In parallel, the organization is committed to implementing local leadership in São Tomé, responsible for overall coordination on the ground, in conjunction with the back office, recognizing that this is a progressive process. SOMA's organizational structure includes:

- local teams responsible for the direct implementation of the activities;
- A back-office structure organized by areas, with distributed responsibilities and coordinated operations;
- The governing bodies, responsible for strategic guidance, supervision, and fulfillment of the mission and statutory purposes.

### Volunteering, partnerships and external support

SOMA prioritizes an intervention model based on trained local teams and specialized technical support, with no continuous presence of volunteers in the field planned.

Volunteer involvement will primarily occur in back-office roles and through the provision of pro bono services in specific areas, with on-site participation limited to occasional and exceptional moments when specific technical or training needs are identified.

Strategic partnerships continue to play a relevant role in strengthening organizational capacity, implementing programs, and developing the social business, always in alignment with the organization's mission and objectives.

### Guiding principles of organizational capability

- Realism in defining objectives and activities;
- Priority is given to the quality, consistency, and safety of the intervention;
- Focus on local training and leadership;
- Progressive decentralization of management and decision-making;
- Alignment between strategic ambition and actual execution capacity.

## Financial sustainability

Financial sustainability is a central axis of the 2026 Activity Plan, recognized by SOMA as an essential condition to ensure the quality, consistency, and continuity of social intervention. Recent experience has reinforced the importance of aligning programmatic ambition with effective financial capacity.

### Funding sources

- institutional funding, through the submission of applications to public and private programs supporting cooperation and development;
- strategic partnerships, geared towards providing financial and institutional support to the organization's mission;
- internal fundraising campaigns, focusing on audiences close to the organization;
- SOMA's social business development, as a medium- and long-term strategy for generating its own revenue and reinvesting in the mission.

SOMA recognizes that the social business is in an initial implementation phase and is not expected to fully cover the organization's financial needs in the short term. Its implementation will therefore be accompanied by an ongoing strategy of mobilizing external resources.

### Financial management

SOMA's financial management in 2026 will be guided by principles of prudence, transparency, and accountability, recognizing the centrality of financial stability for the quality and continuity of its intervention.

The specific mechanisms for financial monitoring are described in the section dedicated to monitoring, evaluation, and learning.

### Alignment between financial planning and intervention.

The planning and implementation of activities in 2026 will be permanently aligned with the organization's actual financial capacity. SOMA adopts a responsible intervention approach, in which the definition of the pace, scale, and continuity of activities is adjusted according to the evolution of available resources.

Whenever necessary, decisions will be made to adapt the planning, including temporary adjustments to the schedule, intensity, or scope of activities, prioritizing the quality, safety, and sustainability of the intervention. This approach aims to avoid carrying out activities without adequate conditions, protecting the teams, the beneficiaries, and the medium- and long-term impact of SOMA's actions.

## Final note

SOMA's 2026 Activity Plan is presented as a year of strategic consolidation, aimed at strengthening the foundations necessary for the continuity and deepening of its intervention model through surfing as a therapeutic, educational, empowering and inclusive tool.

Although direct intervention in surf therapy will take on a more restrained pace in 2026, this choice does not represent a departure from the organization's mission. On the contrary, it reflects the conviction that the quality, consistency, and impact of the work done with girls and women depend on a solid foundation of local empowerment, financial sustainability, robust organizational structures, and safe and vibrant community spaces.

Throughout the year, SOMA reinforces its work in areas that complement development cooperation, namely local training and capacity building, team and leadership development, the consolidation of community-based continuity spaces (SOMA Club), and the construction of financial sustainability models. These pillars are understood as essential conditions for the surf therapy program to be resumed and developed in a more professional, consistent, and impactful way in subsequent cycles.

SOMA's intervention maintains a central focus on promoting gender equality and the inclusion of girls and women. In some programs and community spaces, the organization also chooses to integrate boys and men, based on the conviction that sustainable social transformation requires coexistence, dialogue, and shared responsibility, without ever diluting the protagonism, spaces, and needs of women and girls.

With this plan, SOMA reaffirms its commitment to ethical, inclusive and sustainable development cooperation, articulating social intervention, capacity building and the creation of structural conditions to generate medium and long-term impact, with communities at the center of the solutions and surfing as a transformative language for its work.