



2025 ANNUAL REPORT

Identity & Purpose

Vision


" We envision 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 both their own lives and the industries around them."


Mission

" To advance gender equality and reduce social exclusion among women in Africa by using surfing as a pathway for wellbeing, education, professional development, and economic autonomy. "

Values

Surf 

Equality 

Autonomy 

Community 

Sustainability 



Founder's Message

2025 in Review

A year of clarity. Not because we discovered something new, but because reality tested our assumptions, our structure and our capacity to sustain impact.

At the end of 2024, we identified financial sustainability, local leadership and organisational autonomy as key priorities for the year ahead. We entered 2025 convinced that we could address these challenges while continuing to deliver social impact. Despite sustained efforts to secure sponsorships, launch fundraising campaigns and strengthen key organisational areas, the resources mobilised proved insufficient to sustain our model at the scale that was designed.

As the year unfolded, this gap became clearer. Intervention costs increased, we consciously reduced our reliance on volunteer labour, and we were unable to retain or replace essential roles under viable conditions. At the same time, team members were no longer able to commit to long-term presence on the ground.

In São Tomé, this moment was further marked by emerging tensions within the local surf space, triggered by SOMA's clearer focus on girls' inclusion within a historically male-dominated surf context. Together, these factors rendered SOMA's operation, as it was structured, unsustainable.

Faced with this reality, and with the belief that impact without stability undermines the communities we serve, we made the difficult decision to temporarily suspend intervention in S. Tomé.

This pause was not an end, but a necessary step to reassess, reorganise and rebuild on more solid ground.

This transition was made possible by an extraordinary, non-recurring contribution, which we deliberately treated not as a solution, but as a bridge to rebuild sustainable structures.

In Príncipe, the experience followed a different path. With secured funding, a stable team and the right conditions in place, the intervention progressed with depth and continuity. This contrast crystallised one of the key learnings of 2025: when resources, people and conditions exist, impact happens; when they don't, stopping is an act of responsibility.

Recognising that social impact and financial sustainability cannot exist independently, 2025 became a year of slowing down; not to start over, but to consciously redesign a structure that had grown while doing. In this context, 2026 is not about doing more, but about doing fewer things well, at the right pace.

We closed the year by investing in local leadership, capacity building, the design of a social business model to support long-term sustainability, and by gradually resuming activities in São Tomé through a reduced but consistent presence.

With these foundations in place, we move forward with greater clarity, responsibility and confidence in our ability to rebuild and grow locally and sustainably, ensuring that surf therapy remains at the core of what we do.

Francisca Sequoia





Biggest Impact Achievements

Emotional Skills & Self-Confidence

Ability to name at least **five different emotions**:

03% → **67%**

Girls who **believed they could achieve their goals**:

52% → **81%**

Girls who felt **"not good enough"** when failing:

52% → **24%**

Body Awareness & Sexual Health

Knowledge of **physical and emotional changes** during adolescence:

07% → **82%**

Knowledge of **contraceptive methods**:

45% → **100%**



Gender Equality & Social Norms

Women must obey their husbands even when they disagree:

33% → **09%**

The belief that a **woman's opinion is less important** than a man's:

33% → **0%**

Belief that **women can pursue any profession** increased:

20% → **78%**

Belief that **men can work in traditionally female professions**:

07% → **44%**

Ocean Skills & Physical Autonomy

Swimming skills (crawl and backstroke):

7-33% → **80-100%**

Confidence in deep water:

0-14% → **100%**



Biggest Strategic & Organisational Achievements

Local Leadership in São Tomé

Fully local-led intervention

Reduced dependency on international volunteers

Program Stability in Principe

10 months of continuous therapy program

70 girls reached through a holistic intervention model

Partnerships

100% partner retention from the previous year

Sustained trust and long-term collaboration

Organisational & Financial Strengthening

Strategic pro bono consulting with Nova SBE Social Consulting

Stronger financial oversight and decision-making foundations

Visibility & Owned Channels

Monthly newsletter launched to 260 subscribers

41.1% average open rate (above NGO sector average)

Community Response

Local girls, families and allies stepped forward during a moment of challenge

Community ownership strengthened and legitimised





Biggest Challenges & Key Learnings

Challenge

Limited financial sustainability to support the existing structure.

Rising operational costs and an over-ambitious organisational setup.

Dependence on volunteer-based systems with limited continuity.

Lack of stable on-the-ground presence in São Tomé.

Pressure to maintain activity despite unstable conditions.

Learning

Intervention models must be built from real financial and operational capacity, not from ideal but unsustainable scenarios.

It is better to do less, well, than to design systems that try to respond to everything but cannot be sustained.

Strong, stable teams, especially local ones, are essential for quality and long-term impact.

Community involvement must be built from the start; impact cannot rely on external presence alone.

Pausing is legitimate: the pressure to “show activity” should never override quality, responsibility and care.



When Resistance Signals Change

1 Context

Over recent years, SOMA gradually shifted its work from supporting the broader development of national surfing in São Tomé, to focusing exclusively on its **core mission: the social inclusion of women through surfing**. In 2025, the temporary suspension of activities in São Tomé, combined with this longer-term shift, brought existing tensions within the local surf space to the surface.

4 A Turning Point

In response, boys, girls and families distanced themselves from that resistant group and organised around SOMA's mission, **forming the current local SOMA team** that later led the reactivation of activities in São Tomé. Showing that community-led programs are not only more sustainable, they are more legitimate.

2 What happened

For a group of male surfers who had long occupied central roles, SOMA's shift in focus was perceived as a threat, marking a turning point within the local surf space. The growing attention given to female surf was perceived by them as a loss of visibility, recognition and audience within a historically male-dominated space. For the first time in five years, **resistance emerged from this organised group**, expressed through opposition, misinformation and attempts to discredit SOMA's work. This resistance never came from the girls or their families.

3 Key Learning

Efforts to transform social realities and structures inevitably **involve redistributing space, visibility and power**. Resistance emerges when those who previously held central roles perceive this redistribution as a loss.





Programs Delivered by Territory



São Tomé

SOMA Surf Club

A community-based continuity program open daily to girls and boys from the Santana community, offering access to surfing, skate, study support, reading and play. The Club functions as a safe and inclusive youth space, where children and young people can build positive routines and maintain regular access to the ocean in a context where structured recreational spaces are limited.

Age range: 3 – 23 years

Period: Jan – Mar; Nov– Dec
(4 months total)

Beneficiaries: ~40 boys and girls

São Tomé

PRO Program

in partnership with Solo Adventures

A professional development program focused on skills-building, exploration of economic autonomy pathways, and preparation for professional opportunities.

Age range: 18–21 years

Period: Jun – Aug (3 months)

Beneficiaries: 20 girls

Príncipe

Gliders & Riders

(SUP Therapy)

A year long after-school program combining the teaching of surfing (or SUP) with a curriculum of psycho education, women empowerment and academic support. These 4 subjects provide a holistic support that looks at each girl as a whole person, considering their physical, emotional, social and spiritual wellbeing.

Age range: 10–17 years

Period: January – July;
October – December (10 months)

Beneficiaries: 70 girls



The numbers that tell the Story

110 girls

and young women impacted.

92 sessions

surf & SUP sessions.

98 sessions

academic support sessions.

9 members

local staff.

28 sessions

psychosocial empowerment sessions.

33 celebrations

community celebrations and collective moments, including birthdays, festive events, and awareness days.

90 families

supported through regular follow-up and community engagement.

+6000 products

menstrual hygiene products were distributed, removing a critical barrier to participation, school attendance and ocean access.





People & Structure

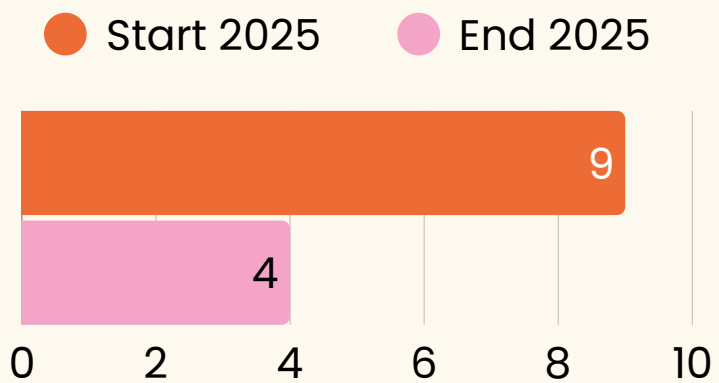
Team Evolution

In 2025, SOMA reduced its back-office team by 56% while increasing its local staff by 100%, reflecting a deliberate shift towards locally led, community-based operations.

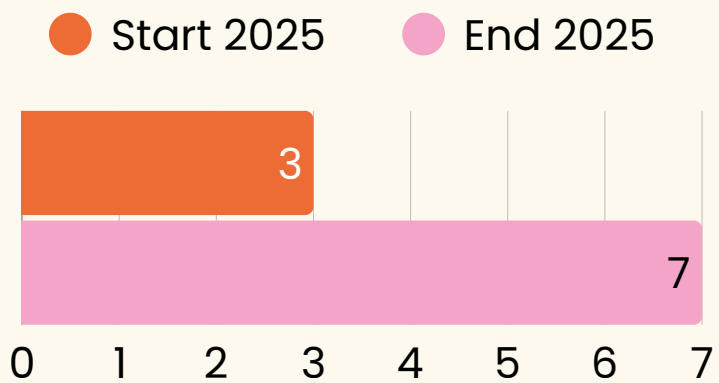
Gender-balanced team !
43% women VS 57% men



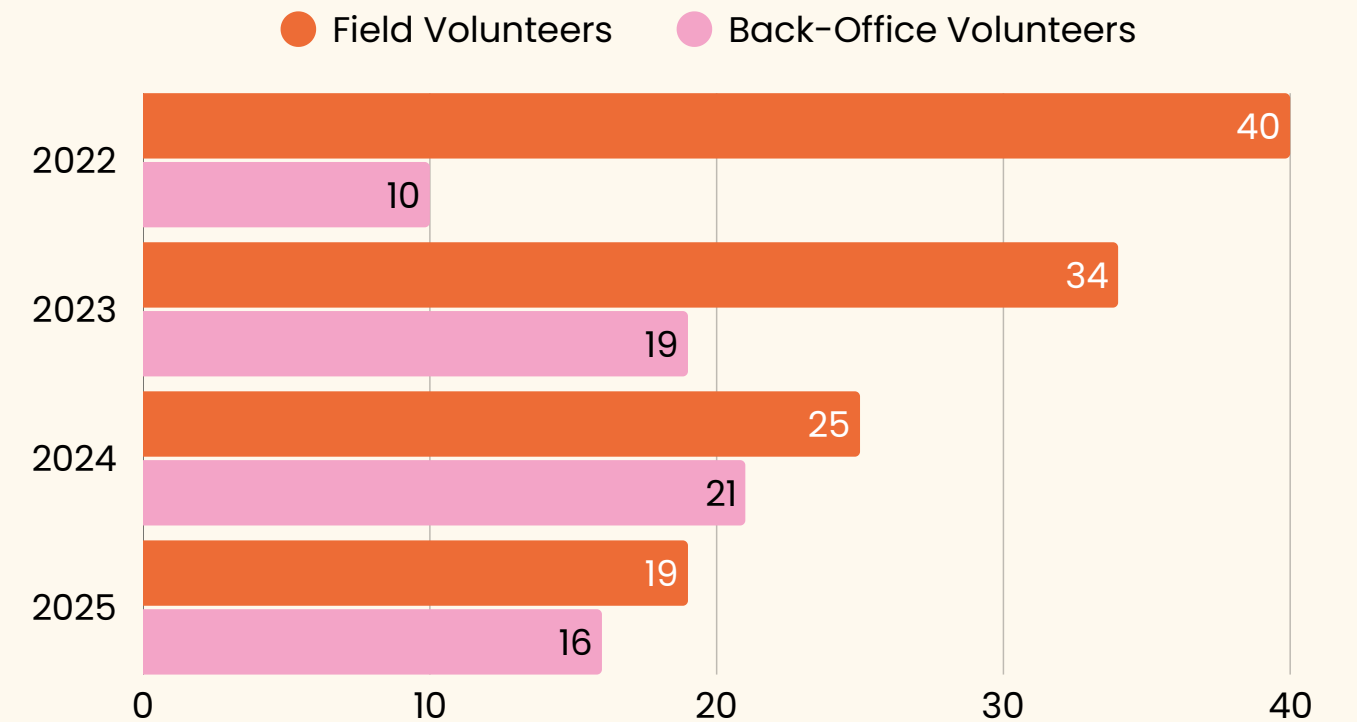
Back-Office Staff



Local Staff



Volunteers - Evolution Over Time



Data according to the annual reports for 2022, 2023 and 2024: pages 4, 10 and 20 respectively.



Partners & Sponsors

Sponsors who renewed their commitment



PRÍNCIPE ISLAND



[Know more](#)

New Sponsors who joined the journey:



[Know more](#)

New partners who joined the journey:



[Know more](#)



[Know more](#)



Partners who renewed their commitment



International Surf Therapy Organization





Brand Campaigns & Activations

Locky x SOMA – “Together on the Right Wave”

September – November 2025

- **768 school and hygiene items raised**, ensuring essential materials for SOMA beneficiaries.
- **€2,500 direct donation** to support program delivery.
- **~30,000 people reached** through joint communication efforts.
- **Creative activation** co-designed with young women from SOMA’s programs.

Outcome

This partnership demonstrates SOMA’s ability to co-create brand activations that generate tangible social impact while delivering meaningful visibility for partners.





Public Presence & Speaking Engagements

In 2025, SOMA focused on targeted visibility, engaging with academic, institutional and sector-specific audiences aligned with its mission, rather than broad-scale exposure.

Academic & Educational

Nova Medical School
— student presentation
20 people reached

Cinfães Secondary School
— student presentation
40 students reached

Institutional & Corporate

Portuguese NGDO Platform
— 40th Anniversary
60 representatives of other NGO's

Thermo Fisher Global Meeting
192 professionals reached

Inspirational & Sector Events

Nova Surf Summit
— “We Are the Current” Conference
30 participants

Surf Talks — Sea Souls
45 participants



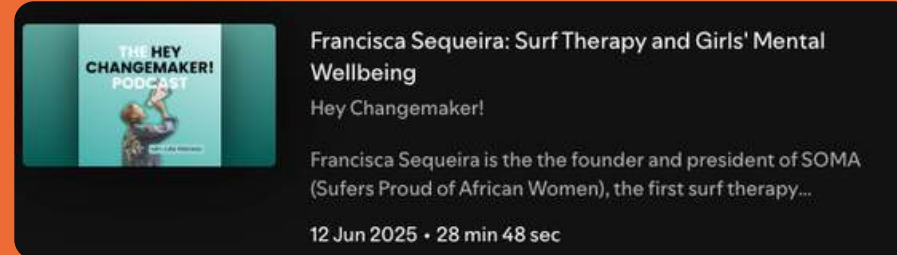


Media & Channels

Earned media

Podcast

[Hey Changemaker!](#)

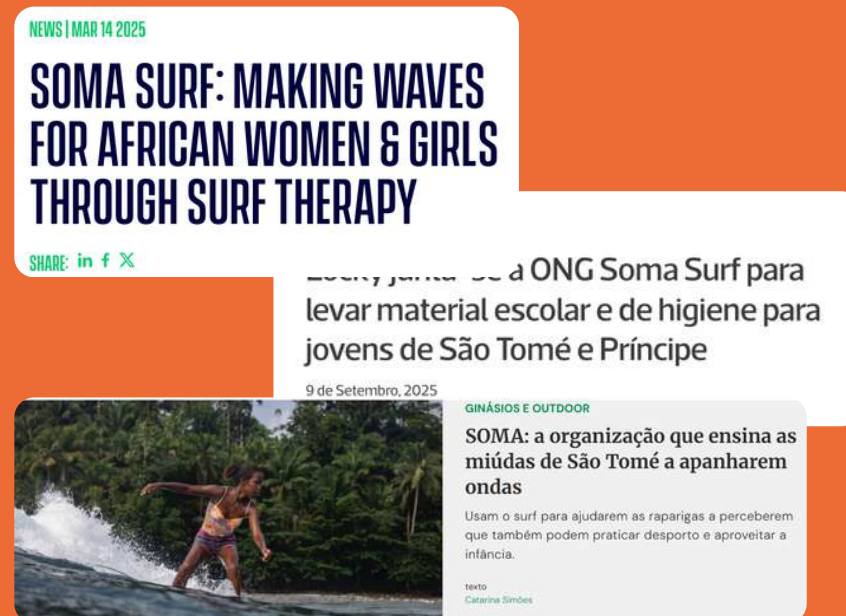


Online features

[Beyond Sport](#)

[NIT](#)

[Locky / CTT](#)



Estimated reach:

~ 3,100 – 25,500 people

Owned Channels

Website and Blog Metrics

Long-form editorial content supporting transparency, storytelling and partner communication.

Website Metrics:

Views: 3725

Active Users: 1382

Blog Metrics:

Nº of articles published: 9

% Active Users: 11,06% of total active users

Average Engagement Time Per Active User: 1m5s

Newsletter (launched in August)

Subscribers (Dec 2025): 263

Growth (Aug–Dec): +24%

Average open rate: 41.1%
(above NGO average)

Click rate: 2.4%

Unsubscribe rate: 0.3%



CLUBE DE SURF
DA SOMA

SOMA

A RESILIÊNCIA É A CAPACIDADE DE SE ADAPTAR E IMPULSAR SUPERANDO

ADAPTABILIDADE
FLEXIBILIDADE
APRENDIZAGEM

Financial Snapshot

2025 closed with a positive financial balance, reflecting a year of restructuring, cost adjustment and organisational strengthening. This result will allow SOMA to stabilise operations and invest in local leadership and long-term sustainability in 2026.

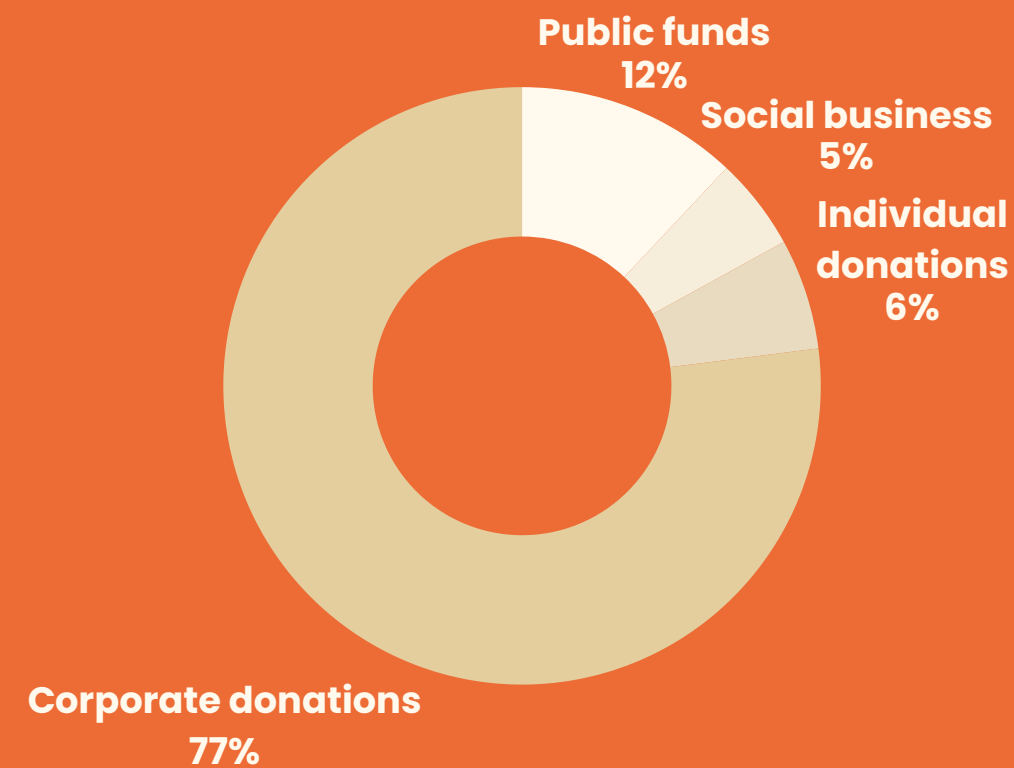
Total Revenue € 110,741
Total Expenses € 72,068
Year Result € 38,673 *surplus*

Key Corporate Supporters



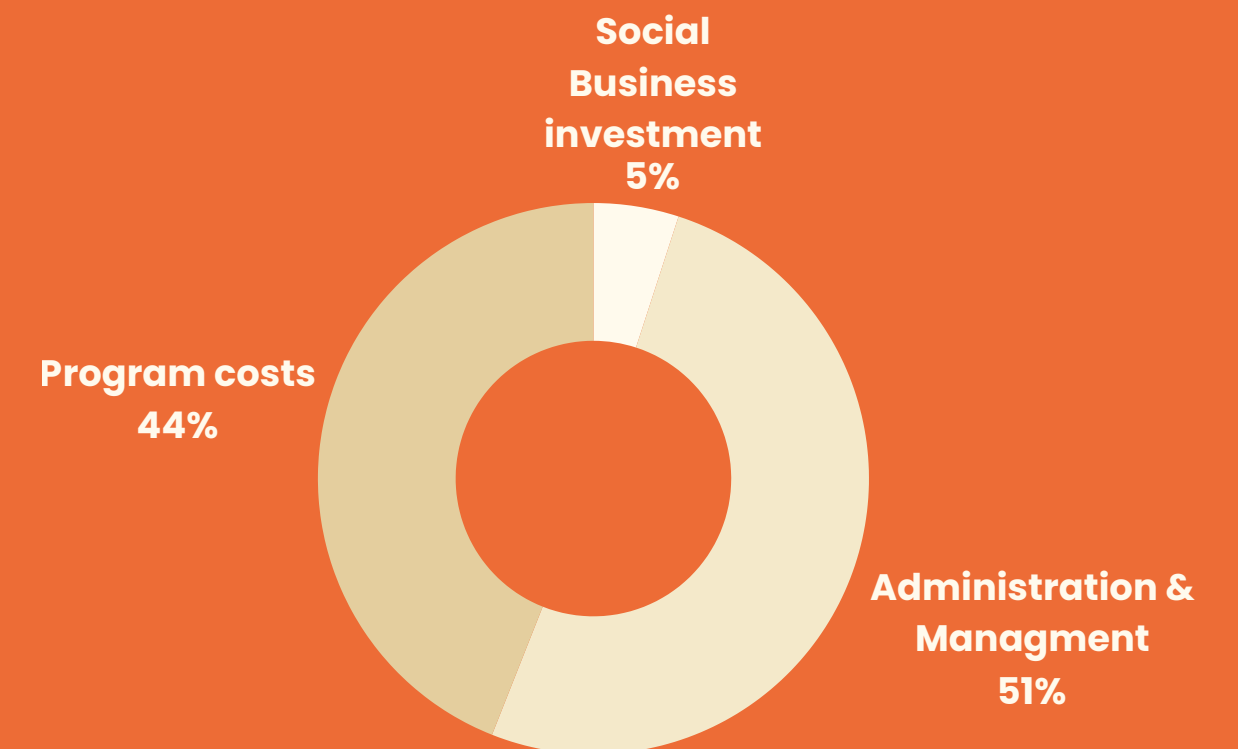
Revenue Breakdown

Corporate partnerships remained our main funding source in 2025, reinforcing the importance of long-term institutional collaboration.



Expense Allocation

Administrative costs reflect investment in restructuring, governance and building long-term operational sustainability.





Looking Ahead 2026

2026 is about consolidating strong foundations so that future growth is responsible, community-led and sustainable.

1 Consolidating the SOMA Club

São Tomé

- Maintain the SOMA Club in Santana open on a daily basis for all children and young people from the community.
- Ensure full operational delivery by the local team.
- Strengthen the Club as a youth space, community hub and foundation for future program growth.

2 Training & Capacity Building

PRO Program

- Prepare and train local facilitators for future Surf Therapy implementation in S. Tomé
- Train local staff to pilot the SOMA Club model in Príncipe
- Build operational and management team to deliver de social business program

3 Implementing the Social Business

São Tomé

- Launch and operationalise the social business with daily on-the-ground autonomy.
- Maintain hybrid management through a non-local Project Manager.
- Position the social business as a core pillar of long-term financial sustainability.

4 Returning to Surf Therapy

São Tomé

- Redesign and adapt SOMA's Surf Therapy model to the current operational reality.
- Implement once operational and financial stability is secured.
- Deliver the program through a fully local team.

5 SOMA Club expansion

Príncipe

- Conclude the current intervention cycle as planned.
- Pilot the SOMA Club model in Príncipe through a locally trained team with beneficiaries from previous editions





REGRAS

1. Chegar a hora
2. Não correr
3. Não se mexer
4. Não deixar lixo
5. Quando uma p...
6. Respeitar todos os...
7. Não podem mexer...
8. Só podem sair...
9. Quando...

With gratitude

SOMA's work in 2025 was only possible because of the people who chose to stand with us, through challenge, change and growth.

To our volunteers, our local and remote teams, our partners and funders: thank you for your trust, your dedication and your belief in this mission.

When change feels difficult, it reveals who truly believes in the mission.

Thank you for believing with us.



"Systems don't resist change unless the change threatens something important."

— Donella Meadows

Thank you!

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[Marisa Espinheira](#)

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