**Semente Verde: the bloom of Bissau's impact ecosystem**

As one of the largest networks for entrepreneurial support, Impact Hub continuously grows in different ways, shapes and colors. One of them is through what we call *seed programs*. With support from partners that believe in the power of social entrepreneurship to transform communities, we are able to bring Impact Hub’s vision of inclusive and sustainable innovation at scale to all corners of the planet, providing the grounds for interested local changemakers to engage and flourish in an empowering environment.

Impact Hub Candidate Bissau, for instance, has recently joined our global family through a seed program supported by the MAVA Foundation and the United Nations Program for Development (UNDP). Discover their beautiful journey - which is just getting started - and learn about the difference they are already making to foster impact entrepreneurship in Guiné-Bissau.

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**Watering the seeds**

Initiated in 2020 and with a strong focus on solutions for environmental conservation, green economy and social development, the Impact Hub seed program in Guinea-Bissau had two main goals. The first was to stimulate, enable and strengthen the local network of entrepreneurial communities, connecting interested stakeholders from all backgrounds (private sector, Civil Society Organizations, government and academy, for instance). The second one was to establish a talent and innovative social entrepreneurship center in the country’s capital, where young men and women with business ideas and passion for the creation of social and environmental impact could gather and learn from each other.

In order to be successful, identifying and developing the capacity of a founding team of entrepreneurial changemakers interested in running the incubator and fostering the ecosystem was key to the process. Impact Hub ran the [Guiné-Bissau Empreende](https://impacthub.net/guinebissauempreende/) campaign, through which a brilliant team of young skilled visionaries was selected to receive in-depth capacity building, training and support and become community agents for innovation, improving local economic development and strengthening its social cohesion.

***“We have a team capable of carrying out the challenges we set ourselves. The candidacy phase [of the selective process] was the opportunity we were given to start creating something that could generate the real change that is still needed in the entrepreneurial field of Guinea-Bissau, and its objective was achieved when we were selected and given the authorization to being able to present ourselves as Impact Hub Candidate Bissau” - Anicet Charles Ateba Mama, Logistics and Communications Manager at Impact Hub Candidate Bissau***

Since March 2021, the team has been working on and improving their business model, receiving tailored support from our network - which included a visit to Impact Hub Bamako - and, most importantly, has already successfully executed their first impact program for entrepreneurs fully dedicated to the circular economy.



**Harvesting the first fruits**

Semente Verde - a program to find new sustainable solutions addressing recycling and reusing of plastic bags - was launched by Impact Hub Candidate Bissau at the beginning of 2022. This first initiative aimed to empower young changemakers and entrepreneurial university students to channel their innovative and creative potential to find new entrepreneurial solutions. The overall goal of encouraging sustainable solutions in the Semente Verde framework stands for an effort to mitigate the consequences of plastic waste generation and the overconsumption of natural resources in Bissau, targeting the Sustainable Development Goals success on a regional level.

***“Running the Sementre Verde program made me grow a lot in many ways and increased my audacity to embrace the challenges that we still have in our society” - Silênia Mendes, Impact Hub Candidate Bissau’s Space & Events Manager***

Among hundreds of interested young innovators, 32 higher education students were selected to participate in Semente Verde’s 64-hour capacity building journey dedicated to circularity and all stages of an impact entrepreneurship project. One of the program’s main pillars was to get the participants involved with different key stakeholders throughout the process, enabling the necessary connections for impact entrepreneurship to flourish in Bissau and allowing for systemic pushes in the direction of the circular economy.

The program was divided into four phases - inspiration, training, idealization and reinforcement. Based on the lessons learned throughout this journey, each student or group of students structured their circular solution ideas into feasible business models and presented them to the public and jury.

As a final result, 2 of the 11 pitched ideas were selected for implementation and awarded with cash prizes. The first place went to Produção de Lonas, represented by Ansumane Sambaú, and focused on the production of canvas based on plastic bags for African fabrics; the second place was awarded to MAJE, represented by Abrão Balum, which was dedicated to building a prototype of a wardrobe made of the same feedstock.

Both Semente Verde winning teams are now being monitored and accompanied by Impact Hub Candidate Bissau’s team to ensure that their projects are executed in a period of three months and keep on generating the necessary ripple effect for systemic changes.

**SLIDING GALLERY WITH PICTURES OF THE WINNERS/PARTICIPANTS**

**Creating roots**

Once Semente Verde wrapped up, the team asked the program’s participants for their feedback. Results were encouraging: the young innovators who took part in the process felt empowered with the ability, autonomy and entrepreneurial spirit to run their own projects in the area of circular economy. Participants also affirmed that they ended the Semente Verde journey with the feeling of being capable of inspiring others to follow the same path, thus are ready to disseminate the seeds of innovation and transformative entrepreneurship to other corners of Guinea-Bissau.

As they consolidate themselves as a catalyst agent in the Bissauense social entrepreneurship ecosystem, stay tuned to watch Impact Hub Candidate Bissau’s growth and new changemaking adventures!

**VIDEO FROM UNDP GUY TALKING ABOUT THE PROGRAM?**

*Do you and your organization have what it takes to help us build healthy, supportive and thriving social entrepreneurship ecosystems? If you are curious to learn more about our seed programs and understand what’s the process to become an Impact Hub partner in this journey,* [*reach out*](mailto:onboarding@impacthub.net)*!*