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About

Humble Smile Foundation provides dental health support to children without access to dental treatment. We are dedicated to providing vulnerable communities with the means and motivation to prevent oral diseases and disabilities, especially child tooth decay, by developing, implementing and sharing effective and sustainable models of oral health promotion.

We are a global group of dental and development professionals who passionately promote oral health as an integral part of children’s well-being.

Over the 25 years of private practice in Australia and Israel, Dr. Darren Weiss realized that access to dental services is an ubiquitous issue especially for marginalized populations. He observed three critical problems with the dental profession from a global perspective: 1) inequitable distribution of dental services: dentistry follows the money and not oral disease patterns, 2) low impact of dental care on oral disease, and 3) dentistry and dental education focus on expensive restorative clinical interventions rather than holistic, communal and interdisciplinary approaches. Being passionate about his profession and being concerned about these three problems, Dr. Weiss was convinced that dentistry could do with an injection of some humility. He founded the Humble Smile Foundation in 2015.

Humble Smile Foundation applies a holistic and human-centred design approach that is unique in each specific location, is culturally, socially and environmentally sensitive, and provides sustainable solutions to the specific needs of each community.
Volunteerism lies at the root of our humble professional work. Our dental student volunteers benefit, personally and professionally, from their experience working in the communities. They come from all over the world to work together, forming relationships that cross ethnic and cultural bridges. Upon their return, volunteers have said that their perception of how dentistry should look, has shifted to a more preventive, holistic and communal orientation - which is a win for both the dental profession and the people it serves.

Our vision is children everywhere living healthy lives with healthy smiles.

We envision a world, where people take ownership of their health, while suffering caused by oral diseases is minimised. In this world, dentistry leads the promotion of oral health and the prevention of oral diseases regardless of peoples' socio-economic status, age, religion, sexuality, gender, nationality, or geographical location. Even in the most remote areas of our planet, children have the option to live healthy lives and to go to school free of oral health burdens.

Humble Smile Foundation’s mission is to help prevent suffering caused by oral diseases by developing and sharing effective and sustainable models of oral health promotion for communities with high unmet needs. We do this by leading and supporting oral health outreach projects that include emergency services, preventive treatments and promotion of hygienic and healthy lifestyles.

Our projects are divided into flagship projects, those that Humble Smile Foundation conceives and manages, and support projects, those that Humble Smile Foundation supports professionally with training, advice, volunteers or in-kind donations.

In addition to the projects we manage and those that we support – there are also projects that we have inspired. Suffice to say that some of our dental student volunteers have gone on to run programs of their own or take up positions in organizations such as the IADS and WHO.

Our vision is children everywhere living healthy lives with healthy smiles.
Introduction

Despite the remarkable advancements in dentistry, millions of people around the world are excluded from receiving the benefits derived from scientific and technological advancements in the field of oral health. Similarly, many millions do not experience the advantages of the growing global economy that should facilitate their access to education, clean water, healthy work and living conditions, including access to preventive, diagnostic and rehabilitative services.

This unequal access to basic oral health care and policies is directly reflected in health problems, especially among school-aged children.

Specifically, we observe 3 major concerns in the current culture of dental care on a global level:

1. Inequitable distribution of clinical health services - where there are no means to pay for services, there is a lack of oral health care.

2. When available, oral health care is often not effective in dealing with population oral health needs.

3. Complex and highly technical treatment may not be as cost-effective, nor appropriate for the patient, as simple preventive interventions.

In the spirit of the United Nations’ Sustainable Development Goals, Humble Smile Foundation is committed to “ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages”.1
Oral diseases are one of the main health issues for many communities around the world, especially among underprivileged groups in both developed and developing countries. WHO indicates that tooth decay is one of the heaviest global health burdens. As the consumption of sugars increases in many developing countries, tooth decay is emerging as a huge health problem, even described as a public health crisis.²

Tooth decay is well understood. It’s not too complicated; to a large extent it’s a lifestyle disease.

Tooth decay can be thought of as the result of our changing diets. As such, tooth decay can be prevented by encouraging communities in economic transition to resist sweetened food and beverages and trust their own traditional diet. Adoption of other behavioural changes, such as daily tooth brushing with fluoride, can also provide great benefit to these communities if guided professionally. While the solutions may sound simple, implementation in places where sodas are cheaper and safer than water, or where families share one toothbrush, requires creative and collaborative programming.


Other preventable oral diseases that Humble Smile addresses include tooth loss, periodontal diseases, oral cancer, oro-dental trauma and Noma (a lethal disease that affects young children living in extreme poverty).

While research has been conducted into the distribution of tooth decay and communal oral care needs, few models have been developed applying dental skills and knowledge effectively in the field, especially in complex areas that suffer from economic, political, and/or environmental challenges.

Humble Smile Foundation, our sponsors and local partners in civil society and local government, all share a vision for a humble and healthy planet. Together, we are dedicated to developing, refining, integrating and sharing effective models of oral health promotion by a human-centred design approach (see page 9) that will improve oral health for children and their communities.

Our sustainable programs aim to promote oral health among children, and their caregivers and teachers, who are their communities’ future influencers, passing on healthy habits to future generations.

In this strategic plan we will therefore focus on collaboration as well as on the development, testing, and promotion of innovative models that support communities in achieving healthy lifestyles. All of these efforts are part of our vision for a humble planet in which each community can live with dignity in healthy and hygienic living conditions.
In this decade, people have suffered from conflicts, climate change, urbanization, and economic challenges, to name only a few. Some people decided to flee from these disasters, while others decided to stay. Regardless of their choices, people around the world are facing huge challenges in their lives, particularly regarding their living conditions.

Living in these challenging contexts puts pressures on people especially those living in remote areas or who were forced to migrate. Each community has its unique challenges.

This global economic inequality directly reflects the unequal access to public health, whereby millions of people around the world are excluded from benefits of scientific developments as well as from improved in quality of life in terms of physical and psychological health. Often rural family members are separated in the quest for work in the cities. In some places HIV/AIDS has ravaged family integrity. These pressures affect the health of communities, especially among school-aged children. As a consequence, many of these children find themselves in a downward spiral in their health initiated by a poor oral health status.

While a wide range of policies address socioeconomic inequality, the gap seems to increase with every passing day. As Oxfam International reports “82 per cent of the wealth created last year went to the richest one per cent of the global population, while the 3.7 billion people who make up the poorest half of humanity got nothing.”

Oral health is fundamental to general health and well-being. Poor oral health affects quality of life as a result of pain or discomfort, tooth loss, impaired oral functioning (such as chewing and speaking), disfigurement, missing school, loss of work hours and sometimes even death. Significant barriers exist to ensuring people receive basic healthcare, including oral healthcare. Amongst these are ignorance, inadequate financial resources and lack of adequate numbers of trained (oral) healthcare workers. This, together with insufficient emphasis on primary prevention of oral diseases, poses a considerable challenge for several countries, particularly for developing countries and countries with economies and health systems in transition.

Humble Smile Foundation takes these global and local challenges as an opportunity to invest in healthy lives. Investing in children and their communities, means positively contributing to a sustainable and healthy world. In this way, we are not only tackling localized problems of poverty and health, but also aim to contribute to the development of sustainable social and economic welfare on our planet.

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Where do we stand right now?

**Strengths**

- Internal knowledge of oral health, oral health promotion and development work
- Aligned with Public Dental Health evidence base and protocols
- Backed by the dental profession
- Relatively small and flexible organisation
- Staff diversity
- Strong sponsor and partnerships with community organizations
- Unique in focusing on prevention and integration
- Human centred design approach
- Easily approachable for local organizations, professionals and students

**Weaknesses**

- Low public and professional awareness of the organisation
- Budgetary constraints
- Limited amount of public and private sponsors and supporters
- Small staff, limited in work capacity
- Lack of involvement and engagement of past volunteers
- Limited amount of academic relations
- Unpublished, as of yet, in scientific journal

**Opportunities**

- Dentistry dominated by curative approach
- Tooth decay is on the rise
- Lack of global dental public health preventive innovations (since fluoridation)
- Consumer interest for socially conscious marketing
- Potential to involve past volunteers
- Networks of academia, public health professionals
- Plethora of Dental Public Health students and recent graduates looking for entry positions
- High interest in outreach work among dental students
- Positive developments with our strategic partner

**Threats**

- Economic setbacks
- Political changes in sponsor countries or where we work
- Loss of strategic partners (imminent in 2021)
- Lack of public trust in non-profit organizations
- Not reaching the right target groups
- Negative developments in relations with our strategic partners
- Financial downturn of partners
- Increased criticism and loss of support for volunteer-based global public health projects
To come a step closer to our vision, we have set 2 main aims for the next three years.

1 Increased numbers of children go to oral health promoting schools and live in healthy homes.

We will continue to help those people, especially children living off the dental grid, to benefit from what dentistry has to offer through community specific, holistic, and sustainable projects.

Instead of using conservative approaches that have failed to adequately address tooth decay, as asserted in the La Cascada Declaration, we adopt human centred design methods to look for innovative and culturally relevant approaches. We will therefore continue to work with local and global partners, including school staff, educators, dental schools, civil society organizations, the private sector, and governmental agencies - while being attentive to the insights of the beneficiaries in the design and implementation of our projects - in order to ensure that more children stay free from oral health burdens.

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Increased global support and recognition of Humble Smile’s oral health promotion models.

We will further develop innovative models applicable to remote communities in Asia, Africa and Latin America by creatively designing, testing and refining innovative projects that are community-specific, effective, holistic, and sustainable. Research will be conducted in order to evaluate and constantly improve our impact, as well as to share with our partners, the dental profession, and supporters at large.

Humble Smile Foundation will further develop its projects that are designed to work optimally in each specific community. We shall continue applying a holistic and human-centred approach. Partnering with governmental actors, community leaders, and local organisations is central in this approach and will help us to address factors interrelated to health burdens, such as agriculture, water, sanitation and hygiene. We will further work to increase the sustainability of our projects, both environmentally as well as socially, by collaborating with the corporate sector and local and international student volunteers for continual and long-lasting impact in communities in which we operate. Through monitoring, researching, and evaluating our projects, we will not only further improve lifelong impacts, but also develop new models of oral health promotion. We are looking for increased influence and collaboration with (dental) health professionals, corporates, non-profit organizations, academics, and the governmental sector by sharing and discussing our models with these stakeholders.
An effective approach is one that provides direction as well as flexibility to reach our aims within the next three years. This means that open-minded attitudes towards the observed needs are required in order to develop holistic approaches and ensure durable impact. This entails finding and working with the right people from different disciplines that want to be part of Humble Smile’s new movement, including, but not limited to, dental students and development workers, international and local partners and beneficiaries that care for the wellbeing of their communities.

How Change Happens
*(theory of change)*

Fig. 1 Developing models of oral health promotion
Strategic goals

To effectively deliver our two main aims by the end of 2021, we will concentrate on key goals.

1st aim: Increased numbers of children go to health promoting schools and live in healthy homes.

1. Goals: Integration of oral health promotion in schools and other institutional environments.

2. Adoption and implementation of oral health promoting policies and structures in schools and homes.

2nd aim: Increased global support and recognition of Humble Smile’s oral health promotion models.


4. Increase and strengthen collaborations with other for-profit and non-profit organizations, dental professionals, and public and governmental institutions around the world that identify with HSF’s vision and preventive oral health models.
Programmatic work

1. Improving oral health of young people with Oral Health Promotion Programs

**Goal:** Integration of oral health promotion in schools and other educational environments.

**We will:**

- Collaborate with local schools, orphanages, child shelters, and educators to raise awareness and help increase knowledge and skills in oral hygiene among educators and their students.
- Provide schools and similar institutions with the products, equipment and skills needed to facilitate daily oral hygiene activity.
- Partner with local schools, civil society organizations and community workers to develop mechanisms favouring healthy local food habits.
- Work with international dental volunteers, local dentists and community health workers to deliver urgent oral care to children.

By working directly with vulnerable children Humble Smile Foundation will continue promoting oral health through its flagship and support projects. Our flagship projects continue to focus on working both formally in schools, orphanages and child shelters, and informally with parents and caregivers to embed positive oral health messages and practices. In our support projects we will continue to support similar minded organisations in order to assure that as many children as possible go to health promoting educational environments and live in healthy homes.

Our Oral Health Promotion Programs aim to integrate oral health promotion in homes, schools and other institutions. Specifically they aim to create an environment favourable to the adoption of healthy behaviours (oral hygiene, use of fluoride, nutrition, tobacco usage) crucial for oral health. Raising awareness, increasing knowledge and improving skills in oral hygiene and nutrition, as well as professionally treating urgent oral health problems, are the most efficient and cost-effective ways to prevent oral diseases.

Behaviour change among children can effectively be promoted within relatively controlled environments. In schools and institutions we distribute biodegradable toothbrushes for each child to use daily in a supervised tooth brushing activity. Additionally, international dental volunteers together with local dentists will continue to deliver first aid and urgent oral care to the school children.

By integrating health promotion in more schools and homes, more children around the world will not only have access to oral health care systems, but also change their unhealthy habits, leading to a decrease in cavities and other diseases.
2. Community advocacy, capacity building and outreach programs to improve oral health

**Goal:** Adoption and implementation of oral health promoting policies and structures in schools and homes.

**We will:**

a. Increase knowledge, awareness and skills in oral health, hygiene and nutrition among educators, parents and caregivers in oral health promotion in schools and homes according to the specific local needs.

b. Help local leaders, School Governing Bodies and educators develop and improve policies for oral health promoting programs in schools.

c. Advocate the promotion of public health policies, on behalf of the communities, to upstream policy makers.

Within our Oral Health Promotion Programs we will promote oral health in remote communities through advocacy, community outreach, and capacity building projects thereby creating sustainable and ever-lasting changes in diets and hygiene practices, such as hand washing and brushing with fluoride, in educational environments at large.

**Involving educators, parents and caregivers**

In our projects, teachers, local leaders, mothers, fathers and other caregivers (such as extended family members) will receive training from Humble Smile’s local staff in oral health and oral hygiene practices through capacity building trainings. The objective of these trainings is to increase knowledge, skills and healthy habits among educators, parents and caregivers in oral health promotion in schools and homes. This change in the public and private sphere will influence children positively.

**Collaborating with policy change makers**

Providing help in developing and implementing upstream policies is important for preventing bad early habits that can damage the oral and ultimately the general health of children and their communities. Our programs will specifically include local leaders, School Governing Bodies and educators to help improve policies on oral health in their schools or other relevant educational environments through workshops and events. We aim to involve governmental actors when advocating the promotion of public health policies, on behalf of the communities. Collaboration with local, regional and national actors will ensure that oral health policies will be effectively implemented in schools, orphanages and child shelters.
3. Global Dental Public Health Impact

**Goal:** Develop plans and activities to accelerate change and integrate dental care in public health promotion.

**We will:**

- Partner with volunteer associations and universities to support structures of volunteerism and encourage new young and professional leadership in public health initiatives.
- Work with corporate partners to support environmental and communal impact and encourage consumers to opt for healthy products from socially and environmentally responsible companies.
- Increase knowledge and skills of public health professionals and development workers in public health initiatives.

**Dental Volunteer Program**

Humble Smile Foundation believes preventive health is a crucial aspect of public health. We believe that a change in the approach to public dental health (preventive-based rather than cure-based) should derive from the global dental society. Lasker’s “principles for maximizing the benefits of volunteer health trips” ⁵, we will further improve our Dental Volunteer Program by partnering with volunteer associations and universities to support international and local structures of volunteerism and encourage new young professional leadership in public health initiatives. In this program we also focus on increasing knowledge and skills of public health professional and development workers in our public health initiatives.

**Conscious Corporate Program**

Additionally, Humble Smile Foundation plans to set up a Conscious Corporate Program in which we will work with more corporate partners to support environmental and community impact. This program should also encourage consumers to opt for healthy products from socially and environmentally responsible companies. In this way we will encourage the profit sector to be more responsible and humble towards our planet.

In short, the Dental Volunteer Program and the Conscious Corporate Program will help embed preventive health, and dental prevention in particular, into global public health thereby accelerating change in public health promotion.

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To advance the promotion of oral health by focusing on preventive rather than curative initiatives, evidence-based models need to be developed and shared broadly. Sharing and promoting these models in different sectors and disciplines will ultimately lead to increased global recognition and support of comprehensive and sustainable preventive health approaches for vulnerable communities. It is therefore crucial to enlarge and deepen our relations with stakeholders interested, critical and supportive towards improving the promotion of primary health care where it is most needed around the world.

Humble Health Network Program

Humble Smile Foundation is seeking to develop a Humble Health Network Program, an interactive and supportive global network of professionals and academics that identify with Humble Smile’s vision and preventive oral health models. We will therefore broaden and deepen relations with partners from profit and non-profit fields, dental professionals, and public and governmental institutions. Our support projects are crucial in deepening working relations with our organisational, dental industry, and corporate partners. Furthermore, we plan to initiate research projects that will contribute to the development of effective and preventive oral health models, thus intensifying our collaboration with academic and public health institutions. Together with these partners we will publish and share the results of the research broadly.

4. Building a global public health network

**Goal:** Increase and strengthen collaborations with other for-profit and non-profit organizations, dental professionals, and public and governmental institutions around the world that identify with HSF’s vision and preventive oral health models.

**We will:**

a. Broaden and deepen relations with partners from for-profit and non-profit fields, dental professionals, public health workers, and public and governmental institutions.

b. Collaborate with academic and public health institutions in the research and development of communal oral disease prevention models.

c. Publish and share research results broadly.

To advance the promotion of oral health by focusing on preventive rather than curative initiatives, evidence-based models need to be developed and shared broadly. Sharing and promoting these models in different sectors and disciplines will ultimately lead to increased global recognition and support of comprehensive and sustainable preventive health approaches for vulnerable communities. It is therefore crucial to enlarge and deepen our relations with stakeholders interested, critical and supportive towards improving the promotion of primary health care where it is most needed around the world.
We work where unmet needs are great. Since its establishment in 2015, the Humble Smile Foundation has initiated and led 8 comprehensive projects in Latin America, Sub Saharan Africa, and South East Asia, and supported over 20 projects around the globe through provision of professional trainings and in-kind donations.

Our current flagship projects are in South Africa and India, two countries with distinct and diverse cultures, habits, and values – yet sharing two similarities: a lack of access to basic oral health care and high levels of child tooth decay. Through our unique oral health projects, Humble Smile Foundation empowers communities to improve their nutritional, oral hygiene and health behaviours.
Lessons learnt from past successes and challenges have guided us in this Strategic Plan and have been used to refine our work and approaches. For example, with over three years experience conducting our Gabriel Smiles Program in India, we have tweaked the program to keep up with the changing needs of the community as reflected in needs assessments and project evaluations. New insights into tobacco usage and prenatal health lead to expansion of our program services by tapping into the social networks and concepts of shared responsibility and community participation within the community at large.

We are planning to keep conducting our projects in various countries in the Americas, Africa, Asia and the Middle East. We have set criteria to target our locations and to define communities in need.

Selection criteria for Humble Smile’s projects:

1. The community has low access to dental services due to remote (symbolically or physically) area or natural disasters
2. Community in need experiences social and economic disadvantages
3. The community’s diet is in transition from traditional to processed foods and beverages, especially regarding sugary foods
4. The community, including children, suffer from oral diseases (high prevalence of child tooth decay - over 70%)
5. Presence of local organisational structure for authorization, access to communal institutions, tools, resources, knowledge in implementing projects
6. Local organisation has multiple collaborations with civil society and governmental institutions
7. The community has communal child institutions, such as schools, orphanages, and/or shelters
8. The community’s environment is relatively safe
9. The community has a healthy attitude towards foreign aid.
By the end of 2021 we have:

1. Implemented a total of at least 11 flagship projects
2. Supported over 30 new communities
3. Helped a total of 150,000 children directly
4. Collaborated with at least 33 civil society organisations
5. Engaged over 200 volunteers
6. Presented at 5 different scientific meetings
7. Changed 10 local health policies
Internal Pathways to Success

We recognize that Humble Smile Foundation needs to focus on 5 key areas in order to deliver our four aims.

**Growth**
During this strategic period, we will seek to grow our team with at least two new staff members. We believe that a larger team will increase our capacity to deliver our results effectively and efficiently.

**Sustainability**
Within the current three-year phase, we will seek various ways to improve the sustainability of the organization. We will particularly concentrate on improving partnerships with corporations, philanthropies, foundations and public funding, and strengthen existing partnerships with our supporters to increase and strengthen the financial health of the organization. Furthermore, the organization will seek innovative ways to increase the amount of individual donations. Additionally, we will develop a communication plan to effectively communicate with our stakeholders and increase our network.

**Collaborations and partnerships**
Over the next three years we will aim to increase and strengthen our collaborations with various partners that share common objectives. We will particularly concentrate on research institutions, partners from the private sector, and other national and international governmental and non-governmental organizations with whom we can exchange knowledge and unite in various ways. These collaborations should ultimately amplify our impact.

**Knowledge and skill building**
Knowledge and skill building among Humble Smile Foundation’s staff is crucial in assuring the delivery of high quality results. The organization will therefore invest in trainings and educational materials and encourage its staff members to continuously develop themselves professionally.

**Governance**
We recognize that improving the staff qualitatively and quantitatively is not enough for our pathway to success. Humble Smile Foundation’s Governing Board consists of experts in oral health and development work from all around the world. The organization will further seek to increase the engagement of its board members to maximize internal support and to further improve the evaluation of the effectiveness of the delivered strategy, including assessments of the organization’s finances.
Assessing Improvement

We are accountable for our work to all of our stakeholders and supporters. We will further strengthen our monitoring and evaluation systems by collaborating with researchers and recognized universities. We respond to feedback about our performance and operations, from all our partners. We will continue conducting assessments to assure funds are used properly and adjust our planning and operations where necessary based on these evaluations, assessments, and feedback.

Help us reach our aims

Support our cause and join our humble path to success. Investing in children’s lives is an investment in our planet, promoting not only health but also sustainable social and economic development whereby every human, young and old, men and women, have the opportunity to enjoy healthy lives with full autonomy. Support us and help humans be healthy.
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