

MindUp: A 21st century model for child growth promotion

Heights and Minds proposes a modern, sustainable and empowering model to reduce chronic malnutrition, improve child development and create equal chances for all children to grow up to their potential.

Heights and Minds envisions establishing a social enterprise model of so called “**MindUps**” in countries with a high incidence of chronic malnutrition among young children. A **MindUp** is integrated into an existing physical structure with access to a digital platform to raise awareness about healthy nutrition and child growth and to actively stimulate child growth during the first 1,000 days of life, starting with pregnancy.



Too many children in poor households in developing countries are born with low birth weights and are chronically malnourished by age two, resulting in impaired brain development. They may never reach their potential and remain in the vicious circle of poverty. No parent wants that to happen and no child should have to experience this. But parents are not always aware their children are chronically malnourished, as it is difficult to recognize. Children look healthy but small and since one third suffers from chronic malnutrition, many are small and it is considered normal.

Monitoring a child’s growth regularly from birth creates awareness, encourages getting the right counselling and information on time, nudges toward improved feeding practices, care and a clean environment, which is all key to preventing malnutrition and helping young brains develop to their full potential.

Heights and Minds proposes providing such monitoring and counselling in the MindUp, as well as facilitating access to healthy locally produced foods and opportunities for income generation.

The MindUp also serves as a meeting point and will be situated in easily accessible venues in underserved peri-urban areas where everyone, but especially pregnant women and young parents, can come to monitor their children’s growth but also to have a good time, empower themselves with new information and share experiences with each other and others through the global network that Heights and Minds is establishing.

The **MindUp** is an inspiring physical space where parents are provided with information about good nutrition, hygiene and child development through games and nudging techniques, such as sampling healthy snacks specially developed to fill important nutrient gaps.

Parents will have access to internet for nutrition information and all materials will be shared electronically. There will be a children's corner with books and toys that stimulate brain development among the very young.

At the **MindUp** parents are encouraged to register their children, measure them and follow their progress, in order to act before growth faltering occurs. At the 1,000 day mark all participating children will receive an album with their growth trajectory and development milestones for keep-sake.

At the MindUp there will be regular cooking demonstrations and classes using local products, sharing of new recipes for nutritious dishes and age appropriate snacks. Mothers will be empowered with knowledge to take charge of their own and their family's development.

Eventually at the MindUp, healthy snacks and drinks will be available, not only for consumption on-site but also for take-away, creating revenue for the MindUp's operational costs and towards financial independence, under a modern and innovative social enterprise model.

Finally, Heights and Minds aims to establish MindUps in cities and countries worldwide, connecting the Mindups through a global network to share experiences and keep up to date on the latest news and knowledge.

Two MindUps are up and running in Dakar, Senegal. We employ a learning by doing approach and document what works, what does not work, share results and use the lessons learned for scaling up. We will keep you posted through our blogs and facebook page.

After our initial operational evaluation of the first two MindUps in Dakar in 2019, we plan is to expand the number of MindUps to other peri-urban areas in Dakar and other cities in Senegal in partnership with local partners and the national authorities. Our long term plan is to expand to other countries in Africa, Asia and Latin America. Initial contacts have been made in Indonesia, Madagascar and Peru. Our goal is to open at least eight more MindUps in Senegal by 2021 and two MindUps in each of two other countries by 2023. We very much welcome help in this endeavor, including partnerships.