At *Sight and Life* we bring together diverse actors in projects that make nutritious foods affordable, accessible and appealing for low-income consumers. In doing this, we are committed to facilitating the development of sustainable business models for foods that deliver measurable nutritional impact. The following introduction to the Sizanani Mzanzi social business documents such a partnership.

**Combating malnutrition in South Africa**

The burden of malnutrition in South Africa is significant. Malnutrition is a major underlying cause of death in 64% of children under five years of age, and one-third of women of reproductive age are anemic (UNICEF 2015). It is estimated that South Africa loses over US$1.1 billion in GDP annually to vitamin and mineral deficiencies (World Bank 2011). This situation is partly attributable to the fact that low-income communities often lack access to the goods and services they need to enjoy healthy and productive lives, and partly to the fact that the reach of humanitarian and community projects is often very limited.

For years, *Sight and Life* has provided humanitarian support in the form of products containing multiple micronutrients to a number of early learning centers and primary schools in South Africa. To make these humanitarian initiatives more sustainable, a microfranchise program known as Sizanani Mzanzi was initiated in 2014 by *Sight and Life* in South Africa.

**Key objectives of this social business**

Sizanani Mzanzi, which means “help each other” in Zulu, is a social business that was set up to bring affordable, nutritious foods to vulnerable South African households. Sizanani Mzanzi creates income-generating opportunities and to build local capacity by involving low-income community members as microfranchisees.

Sizanani Mzanzi seeks to have a positive impact on nutrition, health, environmental resilience and sustainability in South Africa. Specifically, its objectives are to:

1. improve access to quality, affordable, and frequently consumed nutritious foods;
2. increase awareness of the importance of good nutrition;
3. co-create income-generating opportunities and build capacity;
4. improve equality and

5. ensure economic sustainability.

The creation of the MixMe™ trademark
Through this partnership, Sight and Life has provided technical expertise and monitoring capacity to help ensure the quality of the foods sold and their impact on nutrition and health outcomes. Over the years, DSM has contributed to the social business by leveraging its micronutrient knowledge and extensive customer base to facilitate the development and supply of two fortified products: a beverage powder and an instant maize/soy porridge, both presented under the MixMe™ trademark.

From concept to implementation

1) Accessibility and availability
Sizanani Mzanzi initially introduced the instant beverage and porridge products for retail distribution via the microfranchising model. Community-based entrepreneurs from low-income areas were recruited as microfranchisees and equipped with basic training in nutrition and sales techniques to allow them to engage in door-to-door sales. Selling products door to door was an excellent starting point for Sizanani Mzanzi, but the microfranchisee model proved inappropriate for urban areas and in 2018 was replaced by a more effective indirect distribution model consisting of a two-level channel involving a wholesaler and a retailer. The microfranchisee model will introduced into rural communities, to which it is better suited.

2) Convenience, desirability and product properties
In the townships of Ivory Park and Soweto, consumer research revealed that instant porridge and beverages are the most frequently consumed convenience foods. Consequently, the first two MixMe™ products and the product flavors orange and pineapple for beverages; vanilla and original for porridge were chosen in light of these contextual dietary habits and in accordance with consumer preferences.

3) Affordability and price
Consumer research revealed that price is a key purchasing driver. For the price-conscious consumer, Sizanani Mzanzi products were positioned as an investment in the family’s health.

Results
An estimated 150,000 consumers have so far benefited from improved health, nutrition and productivity as a result of Sizanani Mzanzi’s efforts. In the first phase of the project, 45 microfranchisees were recruited and empowered with business and nutrition skills to sell Sizanani Mzanzi products within their communities. As the project continues to develop, we have found that the microfranchisee program is likely to prove most successful in rural communities going forward.

From MixMe™ to Level Up
Based on consumer insights, the original MixMe™ products are being phased out. In their place a new, highly nutritious instant cereal product – called “Level Up” and endorsed by the South African Heart and Stroke Foundation – has recently been launched. Sizanani Mzanzi’s current aim is to have this product stocked in stores that are visited by a high number of people, such as the SPAR group. It is hoped that switching to distribution via established retailers will generate profits which in turn can be used to subsidize the products for rural markets and for the purposes of product promotion.

Further information
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