



World Sailing

Make Them Sailors

Case Study

sport / nature / technology





Introduction

Make Them Sailors is a global 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization dedicated to making sailing accessible for everyone, regardless of background or financial means. We support Inclusive Sailing Schools around the world by providing the resources, guidance, best practices, and visibility they need to thrive. By lightening the burden of fundraising and awareness efforts, we free these schools to focus on creating meaningful change within their communities.

Our mission is to create a lasting impact through a global network of such schools. We accomplish this by offering financial assistance, forging partnerships with sailing brands, and facilitating donations of cash contributions and gently used sailing gear. Through grant acquisition and collaborative initiatives, we ensure that aspiring sailors have access to the equipment, training, and opportunities they need to experience the transformative power of sailing.

Make Them Sailors serves as a vital link between those working tirelessly to teach sailing and the individuals and organizations eager to support their efforts. By connecting passionate educators with committed supporters, we amplify their stories and cultivate a global movement grounded in inclusivity and opportunity.



Aims of the project

Our initial goal in founding 'Make Them Sailors' was to inspire people to change their lives through sailing, creating a positive impact in their communities with what we love doing most. We believe that our sport has an incredible capacity to empower individuals, and we aim to provide this opportunity to everyone by making sailing accessible, especially for disadvantaged youth who lack financial means or exposure to the sport.

Our Goals:

- **Resource Provision:** Provide financial support, materials, human resources, online tools, and industry discounts to Inclusive Sailing Schools.
- **Visibility and Promotion:** Create communication campaigns to showcase the work of associated schools and enhance their visibility.
- **Network Building:** Build a network of Inclusive Sailing Schools that collaborate, share experiences, and access shared resources to boost their impact.

By achieving these goals, Make Them Sailors aims to foster a more diverse and inclusive sailing community that empowers individuals worldwide.



How and why did the project start

Everything began when the founders, Carlien Pels (Dutch, Anthropologist, World Traveler) and Martin Manrique (Argentinean, Engineer, High-Performance Sailing Coach), were cruising around the Caribbean on a sailboat. Martin, who had been coaching the Argentinean Optimist National Sailing Team, decided to join Carlien on this cruising adventure. Together, they purchased an inexpensive sailboat in Curaçao, repaired it, and set sail. While traveling and exploring the Caribbean Islands and their communities, Martin continued his work as a professional sailing coach, training high-level youth sailors in the countries they visited.

One day, while anchored in the remote San Bernardo archipelago in Colombia, an 11-year-old fisherman named Juan Pablo approached them in his dugout canoe—a vessel carved from a tree trunk. Curious about the cruisers passing by, Juan Pablo asked if they could teach him how to sail. He likely had no idea what he was getting into.

The couple spent an entire month refitting a small plastic Optimist boat that had been given to them in Curaçao and was used as their dinghy. Using tree branches, an old Hobie Cat sail they found on a beach, and an old sewing machine, they crafted their first Optimist sail—or something resembling one.



Once the sail was completed and ready for use, Juan Pablo eagerly climbed into the boat. Using his paddle as a rudder, he effortlessly steered up and down the bay. It became clear to Martin and Carlien that Juan Pablo didn't need to learn how to sail—he simply needed a boat.

More students soon followed, along with additional lessons. Their time teaching sailing in remote areas of the Caribbean solidified the idea that would eventually become their nonprofit organization, Make Them Sailors. Martin explained their motivation: "We wanted to give these groups of kids the resources to make a living out of sailing like we did."

Make Them Sailors expanded its impact by leveraging a network of sailors to donate boats, rigging, and sails to schools across the Caribbean, reaching children in countries like Colombia, Honduras, and Mexico. Their efforts gained visibility through videos and stories shared online, inspiring others to embrace inclusion in sailing and take meaningful action within their communities.

This growing exposure helped them connect with like-minded individuals and organizations, including sailing schools back home in Argentina and the Netherlands. As their support base expanded, they fostered a network of inclusive sailing programs that aimed to provide opportunities for underprivileged children while promoting diversity within the sport. Through these collaborations, Make Them Sailors continues to inspire a global movement that combines a passion for sailing with meaningful social change.



Bridging the Gap

A Global Sailing Network for Opportunity and Inclusion

What began as a dream on a small sailboat has grown into a global movement.

Make Them Sailors is now a registered nonprofit in both the **United States (501(c)(3))** and **Europe**, committed to breaking down barriers to sailing. We support a growing network of community-led Inclusive Sailing Schools, helping local educators focus on what matters most: mentoring youth, building confidence, and transforming lives through the water. We currently support over 12 schools across Latin America, the Caribbean, Africa, and Asia, reaching more than 500 young sailors. Through this global network, we:

Amplify the Impact

We promote inclusive sailing by connecting with grassroots programs, projects, and campaigns making a difference. Through communication campaigns, social media, and newsletters, we elevate local stories, celebrate achievements, and expand their reach.

Fundraise for the Network

We raise funds on behalf of the entire network, not just individual schools. By joining forces, we gain access to larger sponsorships, grants, and donor support - increasing visibility and unlocking resources that a single program could not access alone.

Create Life-Changing Opportunities

We organize and fund campaigns that provide:

- Scholarships for travel and cultural exchange experiences (including international regattas)
- Volunteer coaching opportunities with purpose and impact
- Launch assistance for new inclusive sailing initiatives

Distribute Resources

We coordinate global gear drives and deliver donated boats, sails, and essential equipment to schools in need - thanks to generous support from partners like Optiparts, Sail It Forward, IODA's R.O.P.E. program, and others.

Foster Collaboration

We connect our partner schools through shared tools, best practices, and training resources. By learning from each other and supporting one another, they grow stronger together - as part of a global, collaborative ecosystem for inclusive sailing.

How the Network Works

Make Them Sailors is not a sailing school - it's a bridge

We coordinate efforts, build trust, and ensure that support reaches the communities where it's needed most. By connecting local sailing programs with global supporters, we've cultivated a growing ecosystem where resources, knowledge, and opportunities flow - empowering communities and expanding access to the water worldwide.

At the heart of this model, Make Them Sailors brings together **three key groups** in a continuous cycle of collaboration and impact:

1. Inclusive Sailing Schools

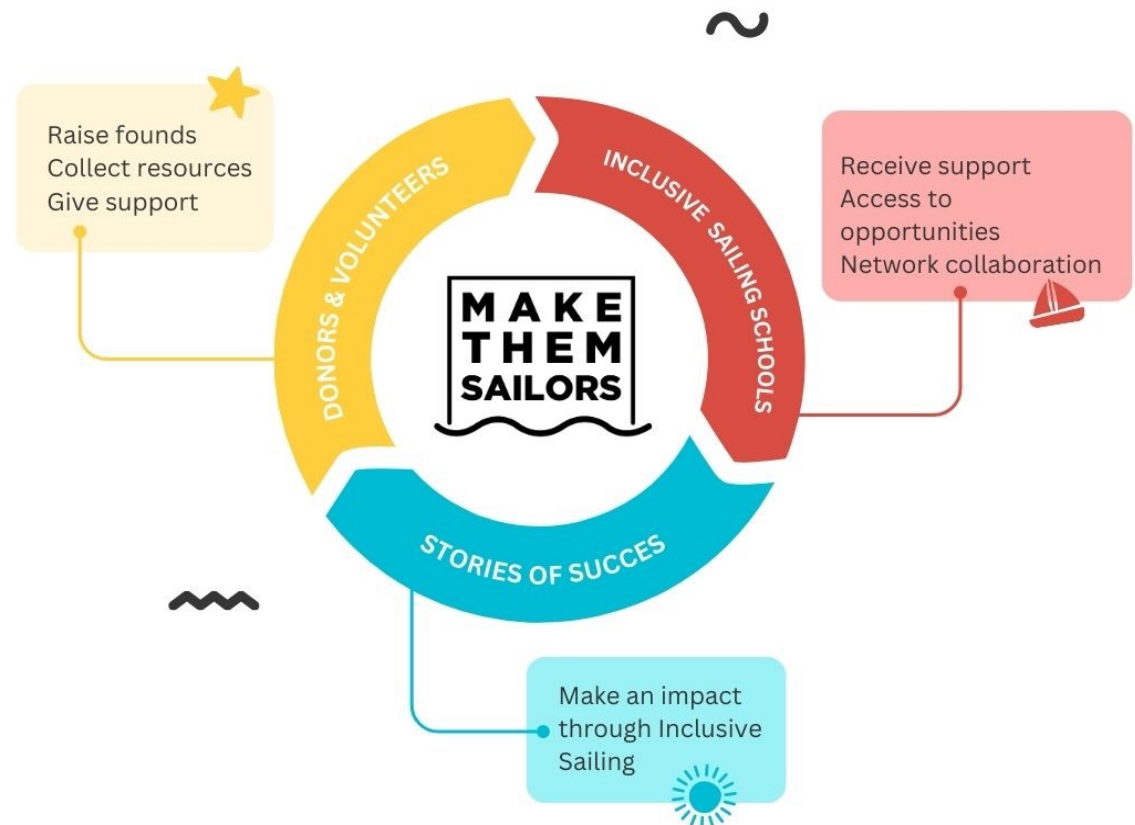
Grassroots programs operating in underserved communities, led by local coaches and educators who are transforming lives through sailing.

2. Donors

Individuals and foundations looking to support youth empowerment, inclusion, and social transformation through sport - and seeking a trusted way to do so.

3. Brands and Organizations

Companies and institutions that align with our mission, offering gear, sponsorships, discounts, and CSR partnerships that strengthen the entire network.



Key successes



We've encouraged sailors to establish their own sailing schools, like **Capitanes de Barrio** in Argentina, which provides not only sailing lessons but also life skills such as English and naval carpentry, fostering a community-driven program.



We have expanded our reach and now include **12 sailing schools** in the network, which benefit from various initiatives and campaigns.



We organize gear drives at major sailing events and collaborate with various partner organizations, such as **Optiparts**, the **R.O.P.E. Program from IODA**, and **Sail It Forward**, to collect and distribute equipment worldwide.



We sponsored sailors from our Inclusive Sailing Centres to participate in prestigious World Sailing events, including the **Optimist World Championships** and **North American Championships**. Additionally, we provided support to enable their participation in clinics across various regions of South America.



We connected more and more like-minded sailors, schools, and coaches who have joined the Network since then, either to give support or to receive support, helping **over 500 sailors** around the world.



Changes and development throughout the project

Make Them Sailors began with a young couple cruising around the Caribbean and teaching sailing to remote communities. They realized the challenge of being in places where action was needed while also gathering support from those willing to help. They wondered how many others were out there trying to create positive change through sailing and how many nearly new sails or boats were sitting unused, waiting for a second life.

The real challenge was connecting these resources to the right places—moving gear to where it was needed most and providing passionate individuals with the tools and support to focus on their mission.

This realization led to the evolution of Make Them Sailors into what it is today: a bridge connecting Inclusive Sailing Schools, brands, organizations, and donors. By fostering these connections, the organization has created a network that empowers Inclusive Sailing programs and ensures that resources are used to make a meaningful impact.

Make Them Sailors operates as a global nonprofit dedicated to making sailing more inclusive and accessible. Its key initiatives include:

- **Certification:** Make Them Sailors certifies Inclusive Sailing Schools worldwide under its MTS standards, ensuring quality and inclusivity in their programs.
- **Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR):** As a U.S.-based foundation, it provides opportunities for companies and major donors to support inclusivity in sailing through CSR initiatives.
- **Partnerships with Sailing Brands:** MTS collaborates with sailing brands, offering them the chance to align with the cause through meaningful partnerships.
- **Global Outreach:** The organization works with international groups to raise awareness of its mission and promote the MTS brand globally.
- **Support for Inclusive Sailing Schools:** These schools receive funding, materials, and global visibility from MTS, enabling them to focus on impacting lives through sailing.

By connecting schools, brands, donors, and organizations, Make Them Sailors creates a network of Inclusive Sailing Schools that empower communities and inspire positive change.



How to get involved

At Make Them Sailors, we believe everyone deserves the chance to experience the transformative power of sailing. By supporting our mission, you're not just contributing to a cause; you're helping to create a global community that fosters diversity, inclusivity, and positive change.

1. JOIN US

If you're part of a sailing school or community program, consider joining our network. Together, we can expand our reach and create more opportunities for young sailors to experience the transformative power of sailing.

2. PROVIDE FINANCIAL SUPPORT

Your financial contributions enable us to provide scholarships, fund sailing programs, and bring support for aspiring sailors all around the world. Every donation helps us break down barriers and make sailing accessible to all.

3. ORGANIZE A GEAR COLLECTION!

Get involved by organizing a gear collection in your community! Gather Gently used sailing equipment boats and you can directly support schools and programs to help kids in need start their journey on the water.

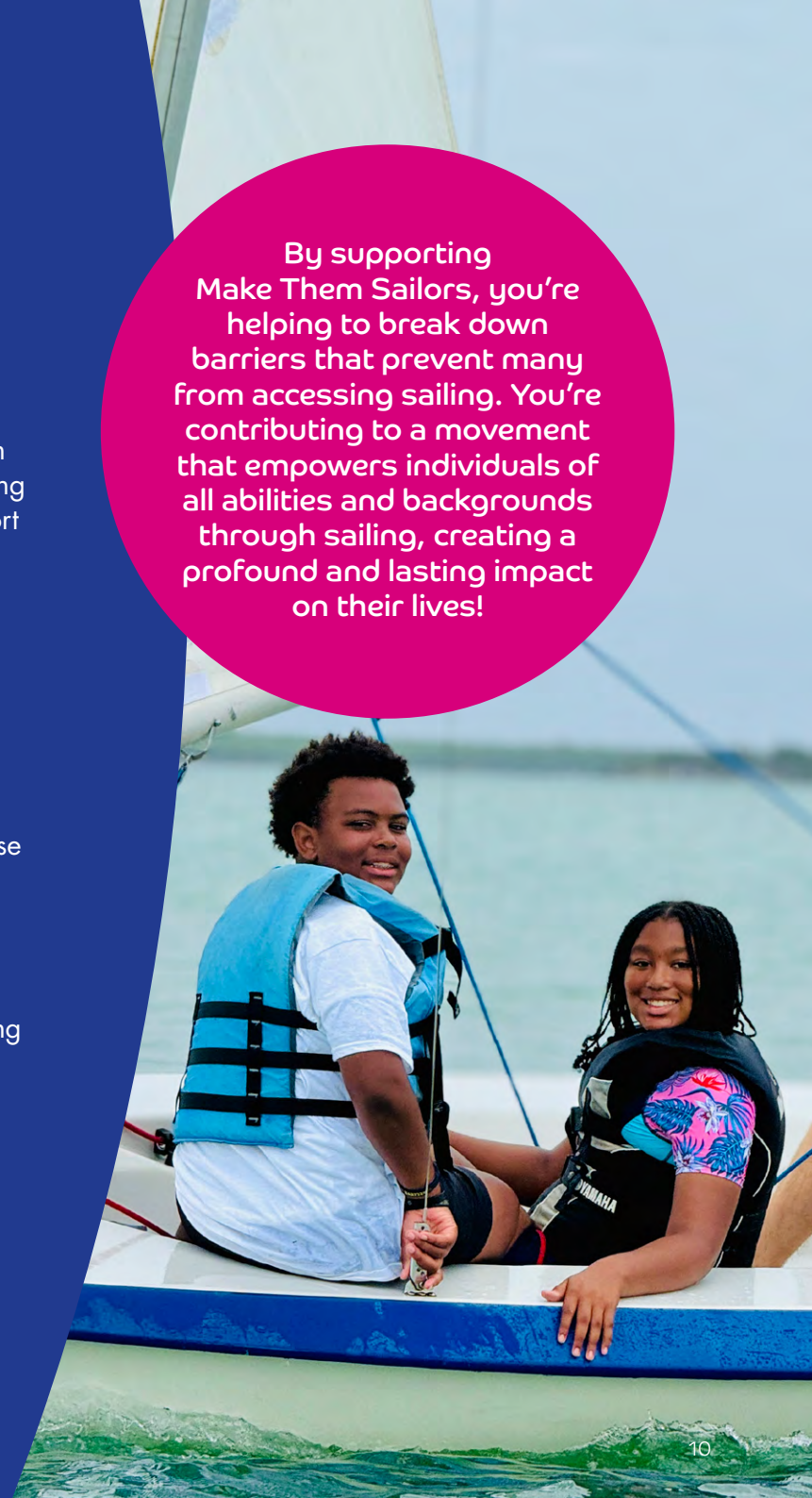
4. FOLLOW & SHARE

Spread the word about Make Them Sailors on social media, with friends, and in your community. Sharing our mission helps us connect with more supporters and reach those who can benefit from our programs.

5. VOLUNTEER YOUR TIME

Whether it's mentoring young sailors, assisting at events, or helping with logistics, your time and expertise are invaluable in fostering the next generation of sailors.

By supporting Make Them Sailors, you're helping to break down barriers that prevent many from accessing sailing. You're contributing to a movement that empowers individuals of all abilities and backgrounds through sailing, creating a profound and lasting impact on their lives!



Our dream

Our dream is to elevate the message of Inclusive Sailing to the global audience by reaching the world's most influential platforms, and inspiring essential financial support so that Inclusive Sailing Schools can focus on creating a far-reaching impact for both our sport and society as a whole.

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