



Content

Welcome	3
Our timeline	4
Celebrating 10 years	6
Our ambassadors	8
Our organisation	9
Meet Jeroen	10
Our lessons	12
Design and safety	14
About our participants	16
About our volunteers	20
Our research	26
International partnership	28
Plans for the future	30
Thanks to our sponsors	31



Welcome

It all started as a light bulb moment whilst I was talking to Stef in 2014, at the Care-farm where I worked. Stef asked me if I could take him out surfing. His question became the purpose of my life. Helping kids, for whom it is not evident to get out in the water by themselves, to build self-confidence through surfing. Thus, creating experiences of success without any kind of judgement.

How little did I know, when we started 10 years ago, of the impact we were going to establish on so many kids, families and volunteers. Throughout the years we discovered, and proved by research, that the effect of our program is promising and far reaching. Volunteers change their jobs because they realize this brings them purpose in life. Parents report that their children strongly benefit from surfing; they see their child's self-confidence and self-esteem building up, and are willing to drive hours for this happiness. Brothers, sisters, uncles, aunts and grandparents come along just to observe the joy these children express whilst being in the water with us.

This was something we couldn't deny and had to act upon. We grew from 1 site to 4, from 12 volunteers to over 400, from 12 surfers to more than 300, and in 2023 gave a total of 680 surfing lessons. We became a contributor to the International Surf Therapy Organisation, and with their help we improved our program. We were fortunate to publish 4 years of research in a scientific article for the American Global Journal of Community and Psychology Practice.

We would not have been able to achieve all of these accomplishments without our passionate volunteers, Sponsors and Funding Partners across the country, on whom we rely to help us change these children's lives.

This Impact Report is a reflection of the journey we have made in the past 10 years. Surfing proved to be so much more than *only* a cool water-sport. It is connecting people of all kinds

to challenge their personal boundaries in the water, both mentally and physically, generating a far-reaching impact.

It is our privilege to work both with, and for, our Surfers. They consistently keep showing us how brave they are, to conquer the waves and to go out there, despite their doubts and fears. They prove that thinking in possibilities is so much stronger than holding yourself back.

Their stories continue to inspire us. They remind everyone at Surf Project how important it is to offer these children the opportunity to develop themselves through surfing, both in the water and in daily life.

Thank you for your trust and support throughout all the years.

Suzanne van den Broek-Dietz



Suzanne van den Broek-Dietz
Founder Surf Project

Our timeline

2014  Children: 8
Volunteers: 16

GOALS

- Pilot Zandvoort

PARTICIPANTS

Location Zandvoort
8 Children
16 Volunteers

2015  Children: 16
Volunteers: 43

GOALS

- Official foundation with 3 board members
- ANBI status
- Central organisation team

PARTICIPANTS

Location Zandvoort
16 Children
43 Volunteers

2016  Children: 32
Volunteers: 75

GOALS

- Collaboration mental health care
- Start 2nd location
- Start research

PARTICIPANTS

Location Zandvoort
24 Children
58 Volunteers

Location Ouddorp
8 Children
17 Volunteers

2017  Children: 63
Volunteers: 120

GOALS

- Research continued
- Start 3rd location
- Recruitment of photographers

PARTICIPANTS

Location Zandvoort
39 Children
78 Volunteers

Location Ouddorp
16 Children
25 Volunteers

Location Camperduin
8 Children
17 Volunteers

2018  Children: 82
Volunteers: 175

GOALS

- Focus on continuity
- Start 4th location
- Joined the ISTO

PARTICIPANTS

Location Zandvoort
40 Children
90 Volunteers

Location Ouddorp
18 Children
38 Volunteers

Location Camperduin
16 Children
28 Volunteers

Location Ter Heijde
8 Children
19 Volunteers

2019  Children: 94
Volunteers: 184

GOALS

- Make the organization future-proof
- Expand research
- Deepen program content

PARTICIPANTS

Central organisation
7 Volunteers

Location Zandvoort
44 Children
100 Volunteers

Location Ouddorp
17 Children
25 Volunteers

Location Camperduin
20 Children
27 Volunteers

Location Ter Heijde
13 Children
25 Volunteers

2021  Children: 109
Volunteers: 222

GOALS

- Get back in the water safely after COVID-19
- Lessons for 19+
- Finding research partners

PARTICIPANTS

Central organisation
8 Volunteers

Location Zandvoort
54 Children
104 Volunteers

Location Ouddorp
19 Children
37 Volunteers

Location Camperduin
18 Children
37 Volunteers

Location Ter Heijde
18 Children
36 Volunteers

2022  Children: 159
Volunteers: 326

GOALS

- Upscale lessons per child
- Follow up research
- Focus on the long term sustainability of the organisation

PARTICIPANTS

Central organisation
8 Volunteers

Location Zandvoort
48 Children
96 Volunteers

Location Ouddorp
36 Children
72 Volunteers

Location Camperduin
24 Children
48 Volunteers

Location Ter Heijde
26 Children
52 Volunteers

Surf Club 19+ (4 locations)
25 Adolescents
50 Volunteers

2023  Participants: 148
Volunteers: 334

GOALS

- Focus on the long term sustainability of the organisation
- Finding structural, financial support

PARTICIPANTS

Central organisation
13 Volunteers

Location Zandvoort
72 Children
161 Volunteers

Location Ouddorp
24 Children
66 Volunteers

Location Camperduin
30 Children
57 Volunteers

Location Ter Heijde
22 Children
37 Volunteers

20
UNFORTUNATELY THE 2020 SEASON
WAS CANCELED DUE TO COVID-19

Celebrating 10 years Surf Project



Our ambassadors



“It’s so cool to offer these children the experience of the sea, waves and surfing. I am super stoked that I can contribute to this.”

Kaspar Hamminga - Prosurfer



“As a surfer, I know how all weight, worries and labels you carry with you disappear in the water. With a son on the autistic spectrum, I feel strongly connected to the mission of Surf Project. I love contributing to this.”

Diggy Dex - Songwriter/Rapper

Our organisation

Our organisation

The Surf Project facilitates surfing lessons at four locations along the Dutch coastline. Our committed board, central team and local teams form the backbone of the organisation. Not only during the surfing season, but year round. Through the engagement of these professionals, Surf Project celebrates 10 years of making impact on young surfers with special needs, their families and a growing number of volunteers.



Local teams

Each Surf Project location is managed by a dedicated team of volunteers. These teams represent the Surf Project locally, ensure the professionalism of the organisation and are a trusted point of contact for surfers, parents and volunteers.

The local teams welcome new volunteers during the yearly volunteers training and prepare the upcoming surfing season in close collaboration with the local surf school. In the run-up to the lessons, they meet all newly registered surfers for an individual intake interview, carefully match volunteers and participants, schedule the surf teams and provide detailed briefings and a profile description of each surfer.

Central team

Throughout the year, the central team manages the overall recruitment and registration of participants and volunteers. By supporting the local teams, fundraising, event- and communication management the central team contributes to the continuity and professionalism of the Surf Project.

Page 24 shows the amount of the annual voluntary time investment.

Core values

Joy
Safety
Professionalism
Confidence
Personal attention

Meet Jeroen



This is Jeroen. Jeroen is full of life. He is very energetic and loves to swim. Jeroen has Down syndrome, a mental disorder and a low intelligence level. He has difficulties expressing himself verbally, and therefore social interaction and making friends are not easy for him. He cannot participate in team sports. Simply because he doesn't understand the rules and other people don't understand his behaviour.



Jeroen, just as every other teenager, struggles with his identity. Starting new things is hard for Jeroen. He doesn't understand complex situations.



Jeroen's behaviour is impulsive. Not because he wants to be bad. Not at all, but he doesn't understand that his behaviour is sometimes inappropriate. It's just his way of communicating.



Jeroen needs an outlet for all his energy



When Jeroen cannot participate he gives up and literally stands on the sidelines.



Jeroen needs help to experience success. He needs help to realize he matters and he is just as important as everybody else in this world.



Surfing at Surf Project is a great experience for Jeroen. It makes him feel special and gives him more self-confidence.

Our lessons

We work with local surf schools and local Surf Project teams. They are fully equipped and know the local circumstances best.

Team spirit & predictability

The children surf in small teams. Each team has a certified surf instructor and each child is individually guided by one of our volunteers. Surf Project makes sure the children have one on one guidance by the same buddy during the first three lessons. Seeing the same familiar face at the beach contributes to the team spirit and feelings of security and confidence.

The children belong to a team indicated by a colour. This helps them grow their social skills. At the same time, they don't have to play together to win. There is no competition but many high fives are given in the water. Everybody is a winner. You surf with your team and you are happy for everybody who glides the waves.



Safety in the waves

The flow of the sea makes you forget everything, and just concentrate on what you are doing. Surfing is known as an extreme sport; outdoor, wild nature and waves that cannot be controlled. So without professional guidance these children cannot participate.

Therefore during our lessons, much attention is paid to structure and predictability. Safety and a positive experience of the participant are always paramount. New participants will initially follow three surf lessons in three consecutive weeks.



Celebrating each step

After the first three lessons we celebrate their courage with a well-deserved medal and a diploma during a grand finale. Children who have participated before can take a total of three to six Surf Club lessons spread over the summer months.

Children often take their whole family to the beach. This works for everybody. Parents, brothers, sisters, uncles, aunts and grandparents, see how much fun this child is having on a surfboard. Seeing them in such a positive, healthy and even cool setting makes them feel proud. This has a great impact on their everyday family lives.

Surf Project would not exist without the help of all our passionate and important volunteers. They are extremely motivated to help and share their own passion with these children. This makes the atmosphere incredibly positive and happy.

What parents say

“ *For once I didn't have to explain his behavior. He just belonged in the water with Surf Project.* ”

“ *I don't exactly know what happened in the water. But I haven't ever seen him so free before. Free from his fears and anxiety, free from the restraints of his autism. When we drove back from the surfing lessons we couldn't stop laughing. For me it was such a big gift.* ”

“ *My child never dared to speak in public. But now, at school she made her own presentation about Surf Project and her new surf skills. This opened a new world for her. A world where she can be herself and where she's not afraid of what people might say about her disability.* ”

“ *It was like there was no disability while taking part in Surf Project.* ”

“ *Before my daughter went surfing with Surf Project I wondered if she was ever able to live independently or if she can live the life she wants to live. But now, after taking part in this project, I see she is dedicated to get there. Maybe it takes her a little bit longer than someone else, but I am confident now that she can do it. This is the biggest gift anyone could give to me.* ”

“ *The Surf Project has contributed enormously to his self-confidence. The enthusiasm of the volunteers is really fantastic, this may help a child even more than success on the board. It is an interplay, the water, the people, the others.* ”

Design and safety

Surf Project pays much attention to the safety and the specific needs of the individual child when developing and executing surf lessons. Our approach is characterized by structure and predictability.

After registration, an intake interview is held with every registered child together with its parents to ensure safe and appropriate guidance. At the beach, the lessons are explained by pictograms and each team wears a colored shirt for clarity during the surfing sessions. In our teams of volunteers, various professionals from health care and sports education are involved and a rescue team is present during the lessons.

All surf instructors are certified and work at connected surf schools. Our volunteers have experience or affinity with the target group and water sports and receive specific training for the Surf Project. All volunteers deliver a Declaration on Behavior (VOG). This will ensure that participation is as safe and positive as possible for the children and their parents. At the Surf Project, the safety and positive experience of the child is paramount.



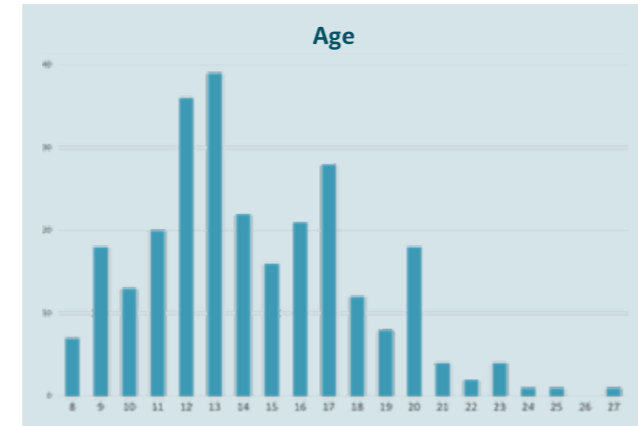
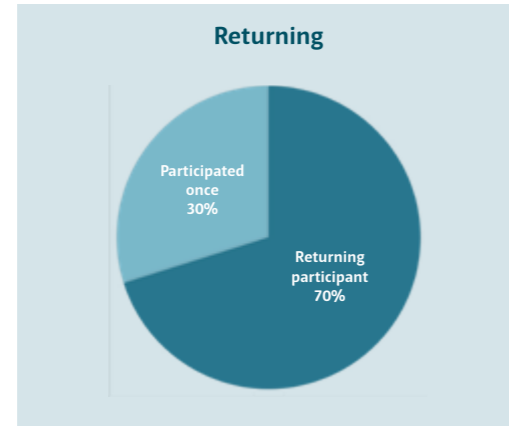
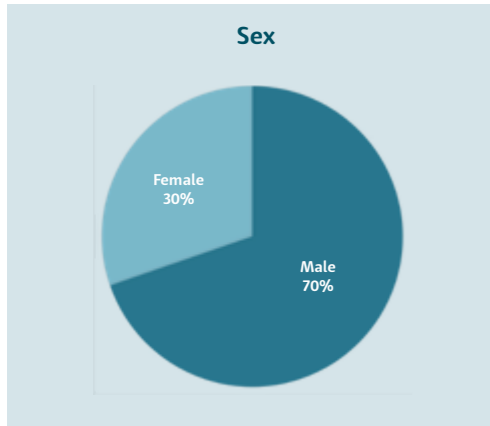
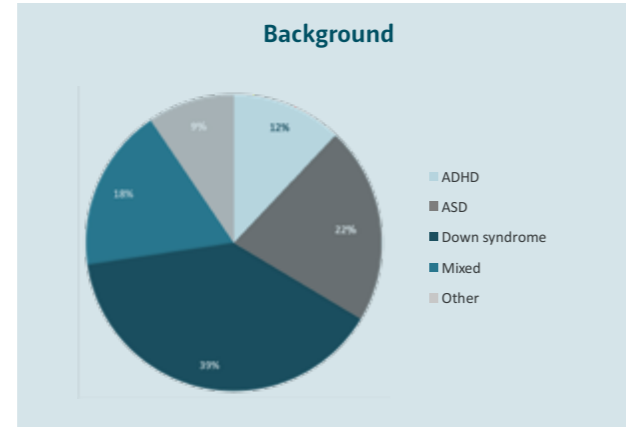
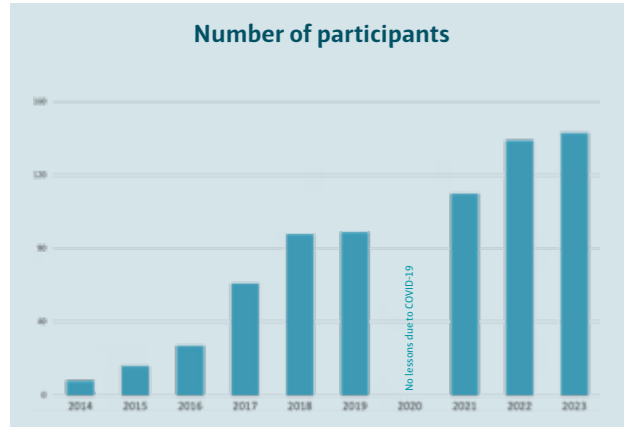
Water safety certificate

We are proud to offer a part of our volunteers the opportunity to obtain the ISA/ILS Water Safety certificate. By doing so, we have an increasing number of people in the water with specific skills regarding safety in (sea) water in addition to the certified surf instructors. In this way, together we can guarantee optimal safety for everyone in the water.



About our participants

Below you will find the data concerning our participants surfing with us in 2023.



Meet Sepp

15 year old Sepp was born with a chromosome disorder. While growing up, he dealt with various challenges like low muscle tone and absences. Sepp has characteristics of autism and ADHD and has no active language. However, he is very communicative and enthusiastic. By using sign language Sepp expresses himself and is very persuasive in making clear what he wants.

When his speech therapist Lisette invited Sepp to try surfing, he was eager to join the Surf Project. Only one important challenge had to be taken: Sepp first had to get his swimming degree. After practicing really hard he succeeded. In August 2022 Sepp was guided into the waves by Lisette. His first lesson was exciting: putting on the wetsuit for the first time, entering the cold and unpredictable sea. But he persevered.

The excitement and tension soon turned into great feelings of joy and pride by celebrating personal victories. Step by step, he improves his surfing and grows, both in the water and in his daily life. Surfing has made Sepp feel cool, more confident and independent.

“Being together with the dedicated volunteers and the other surfers in the sea makes Sepp feel unconditionally accepted. It lifts us up as a family.”



Meet Emily

13 year old Emily loves water and sand. The very first moment she set foot on the beach to surf with her buddy Puck, she didn't want to come out of the water. Emily loves to go fast. Her first time standing on the surfboard gave her a great feeling of pride, smiling from ear to ear.

Emily attends regular primary school where she loves to share her surf photos and videos, surprising her classmates who cheer for her achievement in the waves. Surfing gives Emily a sense of belonging.

Since her first lesson in 2022, Emily returned to the Surf Project and shares a special connection with volunteer Puck, that even reaches beyond the beach. Puck stayed at Emily's home to spent time with her and her family.

According to her parents, surfing is a gift for Emily: the joy of playing in the water, improving her skills on the surfboard and also being challenged to try things on her own, like carrying her board. After every lesson, Emily and her family can't wait to see the photos taken by the voluntary photographers, reflecting Emily's joy and her special connection with Puck.

"Emily and Puck immediately had a very special magic together, which is so beautifully reflected in the photos."



Meet Dailin

When Dailin was little, she often said that she wanted to die. She didn't think she was good enough. Her mother would be better off choosing a different child. Dailin has ADHD, autism and a minor form of intellectual disability.

Since she was thirteen, Dailin's surfed several years at Surf Project. The positive experience in the water, like being able to stand upright on the board, gave her self-confidence that positively influenced her daily life. Tests at school showed that her performance had gone up exponentially, allowing her to skip a whole year. Her mentality changed from 'I'm not good at anything' to 'there's no fault in trying, and I can surf!'

At age 22, Dailin has changed from an anxious girl to a young adult with more confidence and a job. Surfing helped her to learn and grow by 'trial and error'. Since 2022, she has even been part of the Surf Project team as a volunteer, helping other kids. Her mother is convinced that no other therapy would have been able to achieve this transformation in Dailin's life.

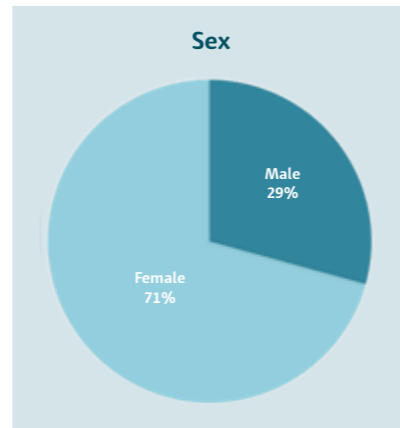
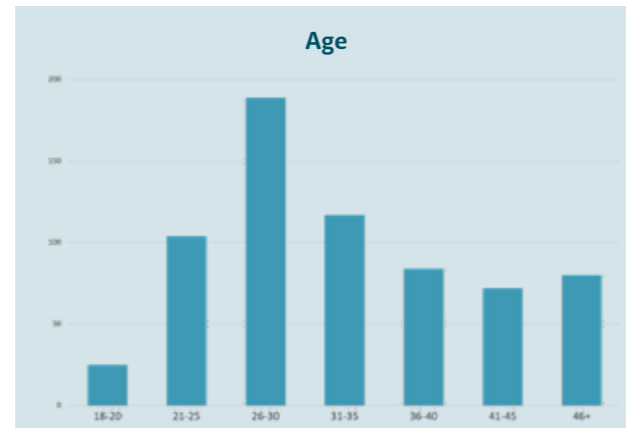
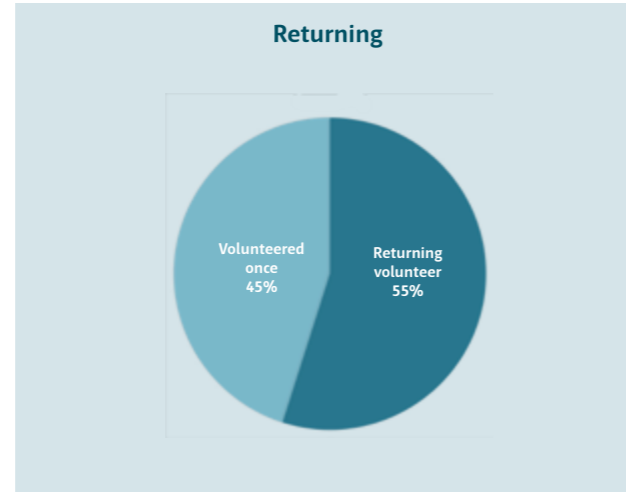
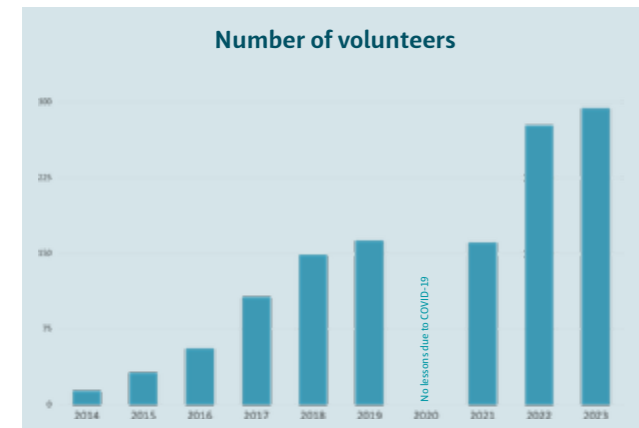
"What I like most about surfing? That it works! When I stand on my board, I get a warm feeling inside."



About our volunteers

Our volunteers are the reason why we exist. They are extremely motivated to help share their passion with the children. This creates an incredibly positive and happy atmosphere.

In a positive and enthusiastic way, our volunteers help the children to gain success in the water and catch some waves. The children surf in a way which suits their capacities: lying down, on their knees or standing up. Our volunteers make sure each child can celebrate their personal successes, moments of excitement en pure joy. They help the surfers by explaining the exercises and help them to remember the (safety)instructions.



Our team of voluntary photographers are crucial in capturing personal victories and the connection among surfers and volunteers. The photos the children receive at the end of the surfing season have proven to be a priceless reminder of their experience in the waves. It is an important tool for children to help them maintain self-confidence throughout the whole year.

A survey among our volunteers shows they join the Surf Project because:

- they want to help others;
- the organisation and its participants fit their interests;
- they feel connected to children with disabilities and/ or surfing;
- they join friends or family who volunteer at the Surf Project.

After they participated, our volunteers say they appreciate the good atmosphere, personal contact with the organisation, the children, the fun at the beach, contact with other volunteers and the gratitude they receive from participants, parents and the organisation. The majority of volunteers (63%) would love to volunteer more with the Surf Project, if possible.

What volunteers say



“*Witnessing a child conquer it's doubts and fears while riding a wave is incredibly rewarding. The best thing about the Surf Project is the interaction between participants and volunteers: high-fives, increased self-confidence, victories captured on camera, proud parents and so much more. There isn't a day at the beach with the Surf Project that goes by without warming the heart. Being able to contribute to this is a great feeling and has an huge positive effect on my own life.*”

- Roel -



“*While care often focuses on solving problems and working towards goals, surfing brings children with disabilities joy and confidence. The sea and the sound of the waves has a calming effect, especially for those who are sensitive to stimuli. I greatly enjoy the effect of the Surf Project on our participants, their parents and all volunteers. It made me decide to work less and spend more time volunteering at the Surf Project.*”

- Merel -



“*As a volunteer, I see children become stronger and more confident in the midst of natural elements. The great sense of humor, enthusiasm and positive energy of the surfers is contagious. Supporting them to grow gives me energy and fulfilment. Because of my experience at the Surf Project, I even quit my job to work as a personal supervisor and guide young people towards a self-reliant future.*”

- Rachelle -



“*The Surf Project is one of the most valuable projects for my own development. The pure freedom and relaxation that appears on the faces of the participants who participate is indescribable. It makes my heart beat faster when a participant is able to let go all his or her worries and purely enjoys that one wave. Being able to be part of such a special moment makes me a happier person too. As a surf instructor and as a person, I always try to share something that will also benefit the participants at home, but after every day at the Surf Project I am the one who goes home full of new insights.*”

- Jeroen -

Annual voluntary time investment & (market)value

Central Team (13 persons)

EXPERTISE

- Communication expert
- Social media expert
- Graphic designer
- Event manager
- Senior researcher
- Lawyer
- Marketing & fundraising expert
- Psychologists
- Accountant/ Financial expert
- HR Specialist

🕒 1942
€ 145.650

Local Teams (17 persons)

EXPERTISE

- Surfschool owners
- Doctors
- Gym teachers
- Pedagogues
- Autism specialists
- Educational professionals
- Healthcare professionals

🕒 2641
€ 198.075

Imagery (39 persons)

EXPERTISE

- Photographers
- Camera operators & video editors

🕒 1090
€ 81.750

Hours of support
and engagement
spent by voluntary
experts:

5673
€ 425.475*

Water Time (265 persons)



Hours of water time with
the children spent by our
voluntary surf buddies:

3573
€ 178.650**



* Based on the 2023 season and an average expertise hourly rate of €75. ** Based on the 2023 season and an average hourly rate of €50.



Our research and publications

Effect of surfing on the participants

Research is very important to the Surf Project. Parents and children tell the most amazing stories about the effect the surfing lessons have on their children. It is important to gather scientific evidence for the effects of surfing, in order to further develop and professionalize the programme and let more children benefit from the surfing lessons.

Publications

In 2020, we published a scientific article about our research that was done between 2016-2019, in collaboration with psychologists and psychiatrists from GGZ Noord-Holland-Noord. Results show that participating in the Surf Project significantly increases the quality of life of children with Down syndrome, autism and/or ADHD. More specifically, positive effects are seen on psychological well-being, social-emotional functioning and school. Effects often seem to transfer to the children's daily life functioning.

We can conclude that surfing in a safe, structured and positive environment is a promising tool to boost the well-being and development of children with developmental difficulties, and could be a valuable addition to the current treatment options for these children in mental health care.

Read the full publication [here](#).



In 2022, we published the article 'At sea everyone is equal' in the journal of the royal association for physical education (Vakblad Koninklijke Vereniging voor Lichamelijke Opvoeding). This article focuses on the positive effects of surfing and the working methods of Surf Project.

In 2022, we published the article 'The Power of Surfing' in The journal for pedagogy, psychiatry and psychology child and adolescent practice (Kind en Adolescent Praktijk). This article makes clear the positive effect of surfing on children with Down syndrome, autism and ADHD. Including the honest and moving story of one of our surfers.

In 2023, we published a column in Balans Magazine based on the case study of one of our surfers. Balans Magazine is a Dutch magazine for parents and for educational and health care professionals.

Future research

While our published results already show clear benefits of surfing on our participants, we have many more questions: how long are these effects sustained over time? Is there a difference in effects between 'first-time surfers' and children who have participated for several years?

We are also interested to gain more insight into the working mechanisms: what aspects of the Surf Project contribute to these positive effects, and how can we further improve the programme? And many more questions remain. We are currently looking for research partners to set up follow-up research to gain more insight into these questions and the effects of surfing.

Are you interested in our research or want to collaborate? Please contact info@surfproject.nl.

What parents say

"At home he was less stressed, took things as they came, was focused but at the same time relaxed. Also, he started talking more, took more initiative in conversations."

"It was super fun and well-organised. A lot of room for the kids to be themselves and be able to succeed. There was a clear structure, and tranquillity."

"A boost for his confidence. He is not a fast learner at school. Surfing made him realize that he can have other talents."

International partnership

Since 2018 Surf Project is a proud member of the International Surf Therapy Organisation (ISTO). ISTO is formed in 2017 in Cape Town, South Africa. We are a group of partner projects, across the globe who are all using the power of surfing to effect positive change in people's lives. ISTO's mantra is "to go fast, go alone, to go far, go together."

Surf Project is committed to working alongside ISTO by doing research and sharing best practice guidelines for others who are just beginning their surf therapy journey. Evidence continues to grow that getting in the sea, having a surf and having fun with friends in the water makes a measurable difference to people's mental health.

For more info go to: <https://intlsurftherapy.org/>



ISTO GOALS

1. Provide access to surf therapy for people who are physically, mentally or socially disadvantaged.
2. Build a research and evidence base to showcase global innovations in surf therapy.
3. Grow the global network of gold standard, high quality surf therapy interventions servicing various vulnerable populations.
4. Mentor upcoming surf therapy programs for inclusion into the ISTO network.
 - a. Help these programs meet the minimum requirements of surf therapy.
 - b. Ensure a high safety standard.
 - c. Monitor outcomes and program evaluations.
5. Highlight the importance of the natural environment and its benefits in therapeutic interventions.
6. Promotion of surf therapy access to landlocked areas using new wave pool technology alongside other innovations.

All people should have safe access to salubrious, wild, biodiverse waters for well-being, healing, and therapy.
— Wallace J. Nichols, Blue Mind, 2014

Pathways to impact

ISTO believes in pioneering surf therapy, and helping new organizations flourish and grow. The following 3 pillars define ISTO:

<p>Pillar 1 UNDERSTAND Increase understanding of surf therapy</p> <p>Conduct shared research projects, publish existing research annually and share on intlsurftherapy.org. Execute an annual Surf Therapy conference to highlight impact and best practice in the sector.</p>	<p>Pillar 2 SHARE Promote excellence in surf therapy</p> <p>Connect leaders of surf therapy organizations worldwide, share knowledge and exchange program tools, evaluation tools and evaluations to help each other improve practice and evidence base.</p>	<p>Pillar 3 ADVOCATE Build awareness of surf therapy</p> <p>Share research and impact data at conferences globally, grow social media accounts and recruit global ambassadors to push awareness of surf therapy globally. Increase inclusion of surf therapy beneficiaries in the growth of surf therapy worldwide.</p>
---	---	--



International Surf Therapy Organization



Plans for the future

Our key objectives for 2024 - 2026 are:

1. Continue professionalisation and focus on the long term sustainability of the organisation.
2. Surf Project aims to have surf therapy integrated in regular health care in the future. In order to do so, extended and objective follow up research is needed. Therefore we are looking for research partners to gain more insight into the effects of surfing.
3. The recruitment of structural sponsors to ensure financial continuity in order to provide more lessons per child.
4. Further develop our involvement and participation in the global network 'International Surf Therapy Organization (ISTO)' in which we share best practices and investigate the effect of surfing on the children.



Thanks to our sponsors

We'd like to thank each one of our sponsors and funding partners across the country.

Surf Project is organized and run mainly by volunteers. Until now, costs are covered by (mostly) onetime donation, funding and sponsoring. Parents pay a small contribution for our surf lessons.

We are proud of everything we have achieved the last ten years. Without the help of our loyal partners we would not have been able to provide our surfing lessons and change these children's lives.

THANK YOU!





www.surfproject.nl | +31(0)6 35 62 63 97 | info@surfproject.nl