



# Systemic Community Approach

A METHODOLOGY OF



RECOGNIZED BY



**Tecnologia Social**

Certification by the Bank  
of Brazil Foundation



**MHIN**

Internationally Recognized  
as a Mental Health Innovation



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**Sidney M. Greenfield,**  
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## Foreword

I accompanied Father Rino's thought process as he developed the Systemic Community Approach and helped with the implementation of it during my visits to Bom Jardim. During our conversations, I made recommendations based on what I had learned over the years about Brazil, its people, and its culture. My recommendations were how I, as an anthropologist and researcher, felt I could contribute.

Father Rino accepted many of my suggestions and, over the years, – although the emphasis of MSMC continues to be psychological, with a focus on the individual – MSMC's efforts to support communities has made Father Rino's work in Bom Jardim one of the

best examples of community development that I have ever seen. Recognizing as I did what an example MSMC was, my former student Bill Calhoun sent several of his American university students to observe, participate, and study MSMC's programs.

Father Rino's activities are helping the residents of Bom Jardim to understand themselves as individuals and to develop strategies for dealing with the cultural shock that many of them are experiencing after having moved from the rural interior of the state (Ceará) to the city, or having been the children of migrants. They gain new skills and knowledge that help them adapt to what to them is a strange and confusing world. In addition to boosting self-esteem, MSMC emphasizes education so that the young members of the community can develop the skills necessary to become productive and contributing members. In addition, Father Rino developed job-training programs to support the local economy. The latest example of this effort is a culinary program in partnership with the Federal University of Ceará; participants learn how to prepare food in healthier ways and gain the skills necessary to obtain employment in one of the growing number of restaurants in the city.

At Columbia University in New York, I co-chair a seminar on Brazil. I organized various sessions for Father Rino to present his work. There, he shared his experiences and achievements with students and researchers who study Brazilian culture. They, in turn, shared their insights based on their own experiences, creating a rich dialogue. In these sessions, and in general, Father Rino is constantly learning and seeking to share what he's doing with others, particularly those who would like to replicate what he's doing in Bom Jardim. The following pages contain a brief history of the project and what can be considered a blueprint for others who wish to integrate into society those who live on its margins, whether domestically or internationally. It is an honor to write this foreword summarizing the accomplishments of an exceptional human being whom I have the pride and honor to consider my friend.

**Prof. Sidney M. Greenfield.**



# Introduction

The Community Mental Health Movement (MSMC) launched in 1996 as part of the journey of the Combonian Missionaries in the Grande Bom Jardim region of the city of Fortaleza, in the Brazilian state of Ceará. Father Rino Bonvini brought together a group of local leaders to organize and offer the first self-esteem support groups.

At the time, MSMC created spaces for listening sessions and therapy for families living in extreme poverty. Socially marginalized, these families lacked basic necessities, had little education or job prospects, and suffered from low self-esteem. Many of them had moved to the Bom Jardim neighborhood from the rural interior of the state or had migrated from other parts of the city. Upon their arrival, they experienced high levels of stress, anxiety, and illness. They faced an intimidating new reality, one where they lacked cultural roots and social ties. As a result, they also lacked hope and motivation to address their problems.

In 1997, in partnership with the Federal University of Ceará (UFC) and under the supervision of Professor and Psychiatrist Dr. Adalberto Barreto (creator of Community Therapy (TC)), MSMC trained the first thirty community therapists, who began receiving and listening to community members at eight locations throughout the Bom Jardim neighborhood.

In 1998, in partnership with the Psychiatric Department of the School of Medicine of UFC, MSMC launched a drug addiction prevention project called “Yes to Life, No to Drugs.” This project remains active today and continues to support at-risk children and teenagers. Professor, psychiatrist, and anthropologist Antonio Mourão Cavalcante was instrumental in launching the partnership behind the project.

Presently, MSMC offers a variety of socio-therapeutic activities that are driven by the Systemic Community Approach (ASC), which welcomes, listens, and provides therapeutic interventions for those in need. By giving participants hope and a sense of purpose, these programs help participants awaken to new possibilities in their own lives. To name just a few examples of the programs offered, MSMC has self-esteem therapy, community therapy, breathing therapy, family constellation, and biodance. All of these programs are recognized by Brazil’s national health system, SUS.

*Father Rino Bonvini,  
Natália Martins and Elizeu de Sousa.*

“MSMC’s work in Fortaleza has proven itself by formalizing its practices and organizing its management, all while a non-profit organization! It’s because of this seriousness and sincerity that the social technology of ASC is so well-recognized and is rooted in the search to provide a quality service for the communities and realities where MSMC is present.”

**Maiso Dias**  
Partner and Director - Dialogus Social  
Responsibility Consulting Firm

“The positive impact of the social technology of ASC is sometimes incalculable because it transforms the lives of those it touches. I congratulate MSMC and its entire team for its excellent work in implementing ASC and contributing to sustainable development.”

**Thays Garcia**  
Executive Director and Consultant - Dialogus  
Social Responsibility Consulting Firm



“MSMC has been crucial to sustainable social communitarian development. The sharing of success, pain, anguish, and worries strengthens community ties, which in turn positively influences the environment so that children, teenagers, and young people can achieve their full potential.”

**Gerson Pacheco**  
National Director - ChildFund Brazil



# Father Rino Bonvini

This handbook lays out a conceptual and practical study of the Systemic Community Approach (ASC). ASC is a multi-impact socio-therapeutic technology that is effective and replicable. ASC was created alongside MSMC's other innovative mental health work.

The epistemological genesis of ASC is at the systemic family level, then applied and adapted to a systemic community level. As a result, emotional and social ties are strengthened, creating community autopoiesis: a community capable of renewing and maintaining itself. That is, the community becomes capable of responding to its own problems and caring for its own members, rather than relying on or being vulnerable to outside influences. ASC is a grassroots approach that empowers communities to offer their residents comprehensive solutions that support the growth of each resident.

ASC favors integrating academic knowledge with common/popular knowledge in actions that are multi- and trans-disciplinary. In these actions, the community is the protagonist and by applying a shared social responsibility model, the community is able to build a proactive citizenry.

ASC is focused on serving the most vulnerable members of society: the poor, the abandoned, and the marginalized. By focusing on this population, ASC strives to influence public policy and practice in the health field as well, so that those policies and practices reflect the needs and recognize the humanity of the most vulnerable. In 2009, ASC was added to the social technology bank of the Bank of Brazil Foundation and in 2018, ASC was recognized as a social innovation in mental health by the Mental Health Innovation Network (MHIN).

MSMC partners with the State University of Ceará (UECE) to offer certification in ASC. ASC has now expanded to other parts of Latin America via partnership with organizations such as the Christian Blind Mission (CBM International) and the Vision Foundation.

MSMC hopes to expand ASC worldwide and is working towards that goal in partnership with ChildFund and ChildFund's social technology "Little House of Culture."

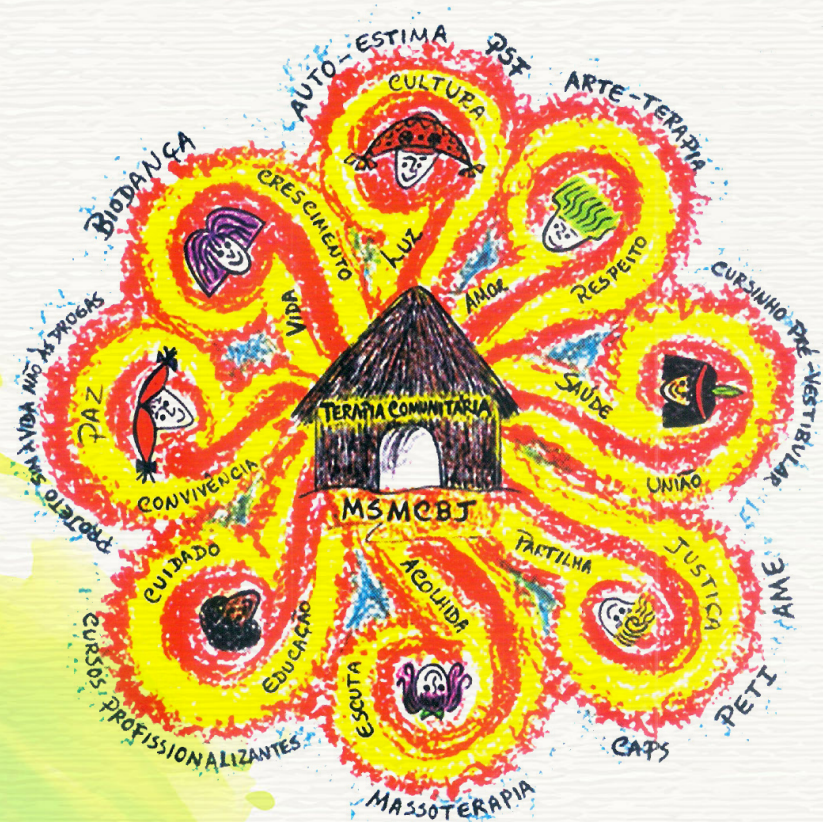


*ASC Creator*  
*Father Rino Bonvini*



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## Mission

To welcome the individual and to promote life by investing in mental health, personal and community development, and respect for each person's bio-psycho-social-spiritual dimensions.

## Values

- Syntropic Ecophilia
- Empathy
- Shared Responsibility
- Sharing
- Solidarity
- Respect for Differences
- Humanization of Mental Health



The Patativa do Assaré Center is built in the Siqueira neighborhood of Fortaleza.

Launch of Dom Franco Masserdotti AME (Art, Music, and Theater) House.

MSMC begins activities at its Wopila formation center in Maracanaú/CE.

MSMC opens its Sustainable Culinary School, in partnership with the Federal University of Ceará.

The Flourish art and fashion studio is launched.

The Federal University of Ceará Living Pharmacy Project produces a Lippia alba supplement in partnership with MSMC.

The Daniel Comboni Center is opened in Marrocos (part of Bom Jardim).

Launch of the Community CAPS (Center for Psychosocial Care) in Bom Jardim, co-managed by MSMC and the city of Fortaleza.

Inauguration of the Father Ezequiel Ramin House of Learning

Inauguration of Community Hut





## Timeline

- 1996** - Welcoming and listening activities launch. First self-esteem support group for women. Preparatory course for university entrance exam launched.
- 1997** - Professor Adalberto Barreto of the Federal University of Ceará trains and certifies the first cohort of community therapists. Eight therapy centers are opened in Grande Bom Jardim.
- 1998** - MSMC receives official non-profit status and creates bylaws. The “Yes to Life Drug Prevention” project in coordination with the Federal University of Ceará and Dr Mourão Cavalcante is launched. Community Hut opens.
- 1999** - Partnership with the Italian Episcopal Conference.
- 2000** - The “Life Asks for a Way Through” video from the Our Floor Institute, featuring MSMC, is used in the National Conference of Brazilian Bishops’ Fraternity Campaign. The Patativa do Assaré (famous Brazilian oral poet of the 20th century) Center is built in the Siqueira neighborhood of Fortaleza.
- 2001** - MSMC organizes actions for the Program to Eradicate Child Labor (PETI). Father Rino receives the Children’s Benefactor Award from the city of Fortaleza.

**2002** - Inauguration of the Father Ezequiel Ramin House of Learning, which offers professional development classes. MSMC begins to welcome participants of the Clóvis Beviláqua Courthouse’s “Alternative Sentences Program.”

**2004** - Partnership launched with RB Distribuidora and the Ethical Management Consulting Firm to offer professional development classes. Launch of Dom Franco Masserdotti AME (Art, Music, and Theater) House.

**2005** - Launch of the Community CAPS (Center for Psychosocial Care) in Bom Jardim, co-managed by MSMC and the city of Fortaleza.

**2006** - MSMC is included in a study by the Oswaldo Cruz Foundation’s Latin American Center for Studies About Violence and Health. MSMC receives an honorable mention in the Brazilian Psychiatric Association’s Social Inclusion Award. The Daniel Comboni Center is opened in Marrocos (part of Bom Jardim).

**2007** - MSMC’s socio-therapeutic activities are adapted to serve indigenous peoples. The Young Apprentice Program begins at MSMC. Father Rino Bonvini receives the “Valuing Life” Award from the National Anti-Drug Bureau (SENAD).

**2008** - The Systemic Community Approach (ASC) is presented in Washington, D.C. (USA) at the Pan-American Health Organization and in Havana, Cuba at the World Forum on Community Mental Health. The Yes to Life project is recognized for its effectiveness in preventing drug dependency and the Acting Self project (self-esteem groups) is recognized as an innovation. Both projects receive honorable mentions from the Mentor International Prevention Awards, presented by the Queen of Sweden. The AME House is designated as a cultural and reading site by the Brazilian Ministry of Culture.

**2009** - The Systemic Community Approach is recognized as an effective and replicable social technology by the Bank of Brazil Foundation for Social Technology. MSMC receives the Urban Kindness Award from the Brazilian Institute of Architects (IAB-CE). MSMC begins offering a federal government digital inclusion program. Begins partnership with the Northeast Citizenship Institute (INEC).



**2010** - MSMC hosts the Brazilian Conference on Cultural Psychiatry in the Pitaguary village of Maracanaú, in the Brazilian state of Ceará. MSMC wins the Ceará Cinema and Video Award from the Ceará Secretary of Culture for the project CINE-CAPS. Father Rino Bonvini receives the Boticário Ferreira medal. He also receives, for the second time, the Children's Benefactor Award from the city of Fortaleza. Father Rino gains the title Planetary Citizen from the Antônio Propício Aguiar Franco College. MSMC begins activities at its Wopila retreat center in Maracanaú.

**2011** - MSMC is recognized by the Legislative Assembly of the State of Ceará and by the Fortaleza City Council for 15 years of service. Father Rino receives the Betinho Civic Engagement Award from the Committee of Organizations Fighting Hunger and Promoting Life (COEP). Jointly managed with the city of Fortaleza, MSMC opens the Therapeutic Residence in Bom Jardim.

**2012** - Father Rino is recognized as a "Friend of the Municipality of Maracanaú" by the city government of Maracanaú for his work with the indigenous Pitaguary people. MSMC gains a spot on the international fundraising website Global Giving. MSMC offers its first course in ASC in Bolivia. Certification in ASC is provided by UECE, the University of Salesiana, and CBM so that Bolivians can expand ASC in their country.

**2013** - Graduate students and professors from Harvard University visit MSMC.

**2014** - Father Rino receives the Transforming Lives Award from the Education Portal Institute for his contribution to the Millennium Development Goal of eradicating extreme poverty and hunger.

**2015** - The European Union and CBM International co-finance the Yes to Life drug prevention program. The Federal University of Ceará Living Pharmacy Project produces a lemon verbena supplement in partnership with MSMC.

**2016** - MSMC opens its Sustainable Culinary School, in partnership with the Federal University of Ceará. MSMC presents ASC at the International Conference on Knowledge for a Planetary Citizenry.

**2017** - MSMC partners with ChildFund Brazil to systematize and disseminate ASC throughout Brazil and the world.

**2018** - The Systemic Community Approach is recognized as an innovation in mental health by the Mental Health Innovation Network, a project of the World Health Organization. The Flourish art and fashion studio is launched. MSMC partners with We are One and the Northeastern Citizenship Institute (INEC) to implement a microfinancing and job creation program. MSMC partners with CBM to expand ASC to Paraguay, Bolivia, and Peru. MSMC partners with INEC to create the Introduction to Robotics and Gaming Laboratory (LabINEC).





## Introduction

For a community struggling on the margins of society, the Systemic Community Approach (ASC) offers dignity, civic engagement, and empowerment. ASC does this by strengthening community identity and building self-esteem.

ASC is rooted in the theories that undergird the Systemic Family Approach, but is then applied and adapted to the community context. Through an autopoietic process, the community strengthens its emotional and social ties so that the community becomes capable of solving its own problems. Because those solutions are designed by the community for the community, long-term healing that results in personal and community-level evolution is possible.

Since 2009, the Bank of Brazil Foundation for Social Technology has certified ASC as a multi-impact socio-therapeutic technology. Its replicability and scalability is based in welcoming, listening, and facilitating human growth and development. This technology can be used by health professionals, teachers, social workers, public and private program managers, and community activists.

The focus of ASC is to help achieve mental health. Mental health means equilibrium between a person's biological, psychological, social, and spiritual dimensions. If that equilibrium is achieved, community members experience a better quality of life and feel empowered. Systematizing ASC can produce instruments and tools that allow the technology, and its accompanying experiences, to be replicated in other geographic and sociopolitical contexts, which will hopefully lead to new public policies in those places.

Poor mental health in the context of extreme poverty and social isolation manifests itself in a variety of diagnoses: anxiety, panic attacks, depression, PTSD, and addiction, among others.

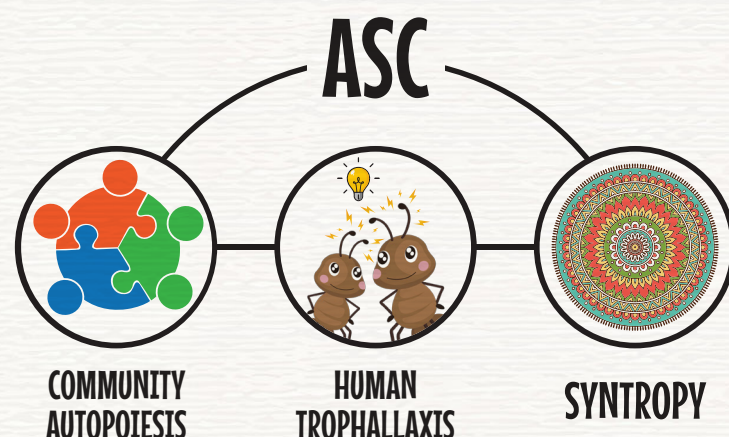
In 2018, the Systemic Community Approach was recognized as an innovation in mental health by the Mental Health Innovation Network, a project of the World Health Organization.





# ASC Implementation Principles

ASC is a multi-impact socio-therapeutic technology that aims to prevent and transform mental and existential suffering. Below are the implementation principles of this social technology and how its components can be systematized:



## COMMUNITY AUTOPOIESIS

Community autopoiesis is an evolutionary process of self-regeneration, self-regulation, and self-organization of the community system. Autopoiesis comes from the Greek “*autós*,” (αὐτός) meaning self, and “*poieses*,” (ποίησις) meaning create, do. The point is that the community takes the lead in its own transformation; solutions come from within, not without. The community participates in its own social and cultural transformation while in its own context. This empowers the community to identify not only where there is disorder and instability, but also what the possible paths for change are. Crisis and chaos are turned into new levels of community organizing. The community shares responsibility in creating solutions and is the protagonist in the process of change.

A variety of integrative and complimentary practices (known as PICs) are used to achieve community autopoiesis, such as: relaxation, meditation, breathing techniques, biodance, family constellation, and community therapy. These techniques promote the self-awareness necessary to create community-level change.

Many of the above-mentioned practices are group exercises. In group exercises, the sharing of knowledge and experiences with one another fosters new habits and stimulates awareness of one’s own worth, which in turn boosts self-esteem. Community members need to feel good about themselves to be able to feel good about their communities and push for community change. Community autopoiesis promotes this personal transformation as an indispensable step towards community change.

When people interact with their environment and experience new relationships and discover new things about themselves and others (the structural linking of the self to the environment), they develop a new consciousness that favors personal and collective

evolution. From there, a new web of relationships is created (the structural linking of self to self) and the people in those relationships feel better connected and more empowered. As a result, they learn how to overcome and transform their problems.

This ASC principle promotes empowerment and autonomy, which extends to the community level and facilitates the emergence of new solutions and paths for transformation

“A system is a web of molecules that interact with each other such that, as a result of those interactions, they produce the same type of web that created them – and in this way, the whole web becomes a single unit

(MATURANA; VARELA, 1984)

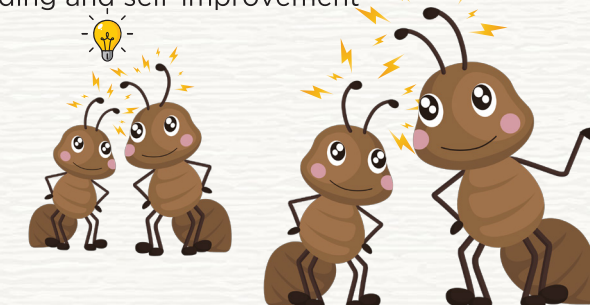
## HUMAN TROPHALLAXIS

Trophallaxis is the communication process among various types of insects, including ants, bees, and termites. This communication phenomenon makes it possible to build an organized community where members have various established functions, all of which serve to promote the survival and evolution of the community. In applying that system to humans, we define human trophallaxis as intrapersonal (with one’s self), interpersonal (with others), and transpersonal (with the metaphysical) communication. This communication is continuous and produces new solutions to personal and community problems.

The trophallatic process results in the emergence of something that appears to be new, but which was actually intrinsically present in the living system, but had grown static and dormant because of community members’ internal and individual crises. The trophallatic process represents the best path to the solutions necessary for the evolution and self-realization of the community system.

When community members communicate with themselves and with each other, they strengthen their affective and social ties. Those strengthened ties, in turn, enable community members to solve problems. The strengthened ties illuminate new paths to solutions that are integrated with the bio-psycho-social-spiritual evolution of each individual and his or her connection with the community.

As a result of the influence of the emerging syntropy (see below) produced by trophallaxis, new ways of living and learning are created. In other words, new knowledge emerges as a result of growing understanding and self-improvement





## SYNTROPY

Syntropy comes from the Greek word “sin” (convergent) and “tropos” (tendency). Syntropy is a natural human predisposition towards self-improvement. This search for balance and harmony promotes human evolution. Through syntropy, living systems converge in support of the goal of self-actualization. This goal clearly distinguishes what is advantageous for life from what is not.

When we push ourselves away from this goal, alarm bells start to go off in the form of depression, anguish, and anxiety, among other symptoms that serve to alert us and get us back on track. The opposite is also true: when we focus on integration and progress, we feel well and healthy.

In all cultures, there are examples of syntropic self-actualization, such as Taoism (eternal search for harmony between yin and yang, the opposites of life). Syntropy emerges from this contraposition of entropy (the degree of disorder and chaos, present in all vital processes) and negentropy (efforts to push back against chaos, to reorder and put things back together to restore harmony).

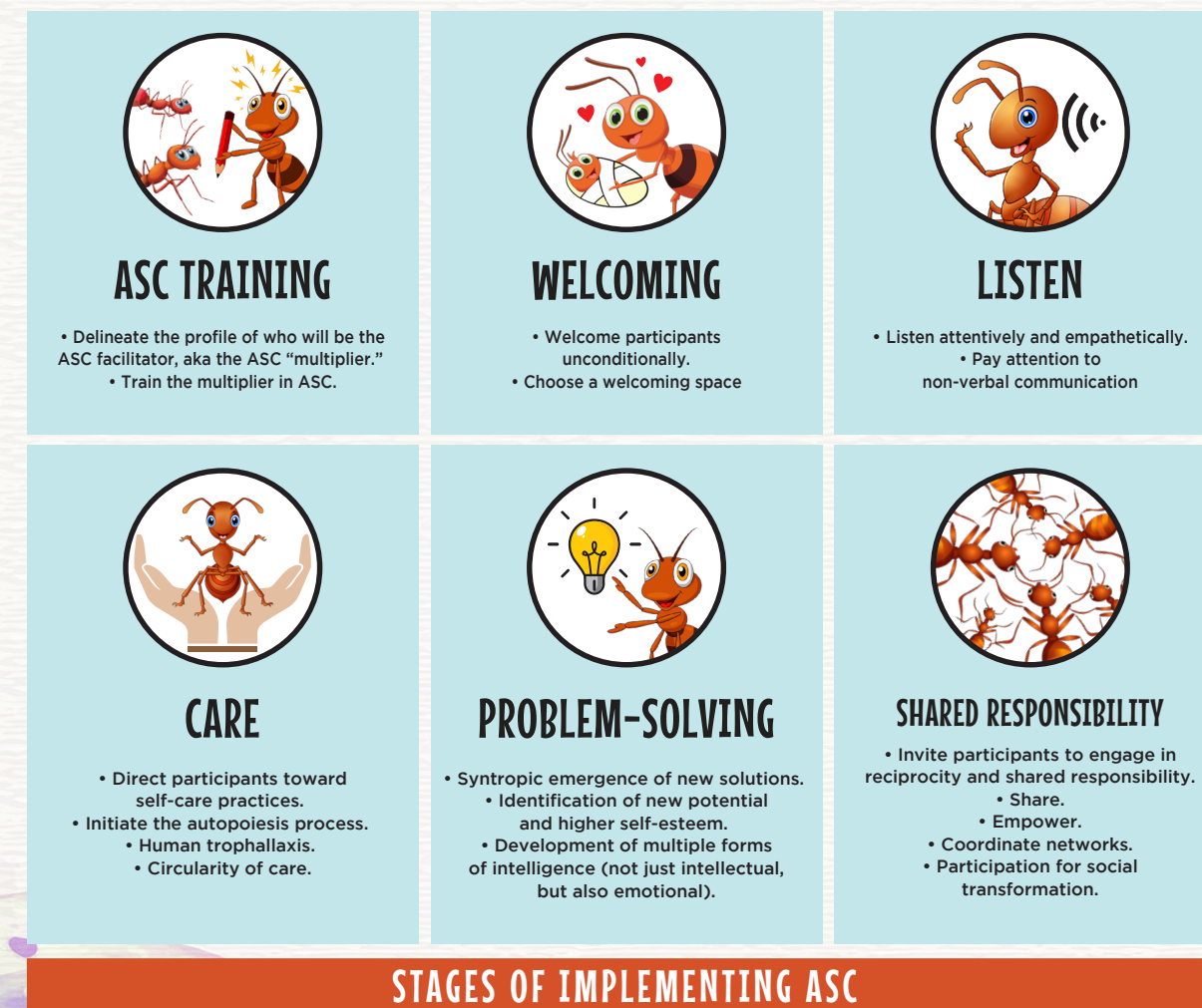
Syntropy emerges from the community structure, which itself was generated by community autopoiesis and human trophallaxis.

The result of syntropy is the emergence of new information that was previously only present at an unconscious level (both individual and collective). This new information reveals new and better paths to solutions and bio-psycho-social-spiritual growth



## Step by Step on How to Implement the Systemic Community Approach

The steps to implementing the Systemic Community Approach social technology involve the previously cited principles, which take concrete form in the various multi-impact social therapies that facilitate the process of transitioning from pain and chaos to growth and evolution.



### STAGES OF IMPLEMENTING ASC

In observing the passages it is important to refer to the principles underlying the ASC.





## ASC TRAINING

This first stage involves training the facilitators, i.e. the people who will guide the process of applying the Systemic Community Approach (ASC). These facilitators are known as “multipliers” because they “multiply” the effect of ASC throughout their communities. It’s important that these multipliers (be they community leaders, facilitators of various groups, health professionals, teachers, community activists, or public/private managers) favor community evolution processes. To do this, participants must understand the previously discussed principles behind ASC.

### DELINEATING THE PROFILE OF THE ASC “MULTIPLIER”

The multiplier will orchestrate the application of ASC to his or her environment. The multiplier should be someone who is capable of understanding the needs of his or her target audience. Therefore, ideally, the multiplier is someone who:

- Knows how to listen to others
- Is understanding
- Is empathetic
- Respects differences
- Is interested in contributing with the target audience
- Is open to change
- Is articulate and flexible

*This delineation is important to having the target audience engage in ASC.*

### HOW TO START TRAINING THE MULTIPLIER IN ASC

The multipliers can start with research to expand their knowledge of ASC. The following is a list of key themes that can be part of their training:

- General Theory about Systems
- Complexity Theory
- Communication Theory
- Psychopathology Elements
- Codependence
- Crisis and resiliency
- Cultural anthropology
- Socio-therapeutic Elements
- Paulo Freire’s Pedagogy of Freedom
- Circularity of care

*The Community Mental Health Movement is a pioneering institution in Brazil that trains multipliers of ASC. The training is 120 hours long and includes the themes outlined above as well as practical tools. The certificate of completion is awarded by the State University of Ceará and it is recognized throughout the entire country of Brazil.*







## WELCOMING

The “welcoming” stage is a moment to empathetically listen to the community. During this stage, the ASC multiplier fosters unconditional welcoming of all people, whether individually or in groups. For example, if working with a group of children, welcoming tools include creative games and educational activities. For adults, ice breakers and experience-sharing.

### UNCONDITIONAL WELCOMING OF PARTICIPANTS

To welcome is to notice and bring to light the best participants have to offer. It is the attention that comes from knowing how to receive with different eyes. You must welcome those who are not able to see their own worth nor their own potential because they are focused on the pain, suffering, exclusion, and lack of opportunity that gives them a poor outlook on life.

To welcome is not just a gentle gesture. It is more than making people comfortable, offering coffee or tea, or offering to help. To welcome is to tell people, “We are in this together.” It means to welcome the best, the possible, and even the impossible to reestablish peace, love, harmony, and above all, health.

When someone who has suffered from psychiatric injury is welcomed with respect and consideration, that person begins a process of recognizing his or her own worth. When a poor or marginalized person who didn’t have access to education and is used to feeling invisible and ignored is finally noticed by someone else, that person has the opportunity to pay attention to him or herself. They are likely to think to themselves, “So I do have worth, I am somebody, somebody sees me.” The welcoming is the first step in beginning the process of autonomy, self-esteem, and empowerment.

ASC welcomes all people from different social classes, professions, students, and volunteers who seek such welcoming. They learn the reciprocity of the welcoming

### A WELCOMING SPACE

Another important aspect in the welcoming process is being deliberate in selecting and taking care of the space in which the welcoming is done. This includes attention to the surrounding nature, including plants, flowers, and animals. A simple and pleasant space creates the sensation that the space promotes health and peace

### IMPORTANT!

*The form of welcoming can be personalized for each target audience.  
THE RESULT OF WELCOMING IS TO BE ON THE PATH TO LISTENING.*

## LISTENING

After the welcoming, it is necessary to proceed with empathetic listening to identify possible problems and solutions.

Listening is the art of seeing, hearing, perceiving, and relating. Listening is a process of observing and mediating communication. With this approach to problems or illnesses, there is no individual responsibility, because when a problem is presented, each person is part of the phenomenon and shares responsibility for the solution.

The type of listening should reflect the needs of the target audience. For MSMC, the reality of the persons who are welcomed at its various welcoming centers has generated a type of listening that captures the depth of the psychiatric and existential pain and suffering of those persons in order to, in turn, reflect on that pain and suffering and then transform the pain and suffering into healing actions.

Welcoming, listening, and self-awareness groups are critical to individual and community transformation and overcoming of social injustice. They create spaces that transform action into knowledge and build a healthier personal and social reality for participants. The new knowledge and understanding produced in the autopoiesis process of ASC stimulates new actions to respond to the demands and the necessities of the people.

Sometimes in group therapy, participants share testimony or reflections that reveal wisdom from those who don’t have a formal education, be they adults or children. Being open to such trans-disciplinary practices allows us to experience something new, unexpected, and often, transformative.

What happens in group therapy is revealing of one of ASC’s characteristics. ASC acts like an interface to translate the various forms of communication (verbal and nonverbal) within a context that values popular wisdom of the marginalized classes. ASC promotes the development and evolution of a common language through welcoming and listening, sharing participants’ knowledge with one another, and relating traditional understanding and systemic practices.

After “diagnosing” the problem through listening, your organization can then move participants towards the various care practices.





### EMPATHETIC LISTENING

Capacity to put yourself in someone else's shoes; feel and perceive what someone else is feeling; understand that we are all one.

### EMPATHY

Empathy comes from the Greek word 'empatéia' ('εμπαιτία') and is composed of 'en' (in) and 'pathos' ('πάθος') feeling, suffering. Actively participate in that which the other person is feeling.

### LISTENING

Listening can be done individually or in groups (community therapy, self-esteem groups, biodance, art therapy, relaxation, family constellation, music therapy, etc.), specific to each audience. The multiplier can create an intake form, to include medical history, for each welcomed person. The multiplier can maintain a set day to conduct intake and listening, for example, every Monday.

**THE RESULT OF LISTENING IS THE PATH TO CARE.**

## CARE

Care is the stage of ASC where participants are directed to various socio-therapeutic activities. It is important to access participants' needs so that the activities are responsive to and tailored to those needs. These activities emphasize self-awareness and allow participants to get in touch with our own subconscious and bring to consciousness emotions that had been suppressed and hidden away but which need to be expressed and redefined. By relieving tension and stress, the prior stage (the listening stage) facilitates the process of self-acceptance in the care stage. Perhaps for the first time in their lives, participants recognize their gifts and talents. Such recognition is necessary to develop healthy self-esteem and to be open to the socio-therapeutic activities offered in the care stage.

In the care stage, participants are able to achieve bio-psycho-social-spiritual equilibrium. In doing so, they are ready for a new path of self-realization that frequently leads them to reach new goals in their work, school, and self-awareness. The care stage is the beginning of the autopoiesis process and the warming up of communication with one's self and with others (human trophallaxis).

Being an ASC therapist means to work with the sacred dimension of each person,

which is the most profound and noble part of the human being. An ASC therapist is aware that in the ASC process, surprising and sometimes incredible transformations and evolutions can happen. This goes for the therapists as well, not just for the patients. We know that to take good care of others requires us to take good care of ourselves.

At MSMC, the experiences of self-awareness provided by ASC produce awareness of the importance of self-care in order to better care for others (i.e. the circularity of care). To care for the caregiver is a way of observing the observer; it is a demonstration of solidarity and a way to share knowledge and skills. The circularity of care promotes coexistence based on recognizing the sacred present in each person. Through ASC, the bio-psycho-social-spiritual dimensions of each person can be revealed, nourished, and strengthened and the diversity of beliefs, values, and experiences of each person are respected.

### A non-exhaustive list of types of care:

#### GROUP ACTIVITIES:

Therapeutic groups: self-esteem therapy, community therapy, breathing therapy, biodance, family constellation, art therapy, music therapy, activities related to maintaining a community garden or other environmental projects, relaxation, and meditation.

#### INDIVIDUAL ACTIVITIES:

- massage therapy
- floral therapy
- medicinal clay therapy
- Reiki
- Access Bars
- aromatherapy
- Shiatsu
- foot soak in hot water
- biomagnetic therapy

**“To care is more than a mere act; it is rather an attitude...It represents an attitude of activity, of concern, of responsibility and of an affective involvement with the other.”**

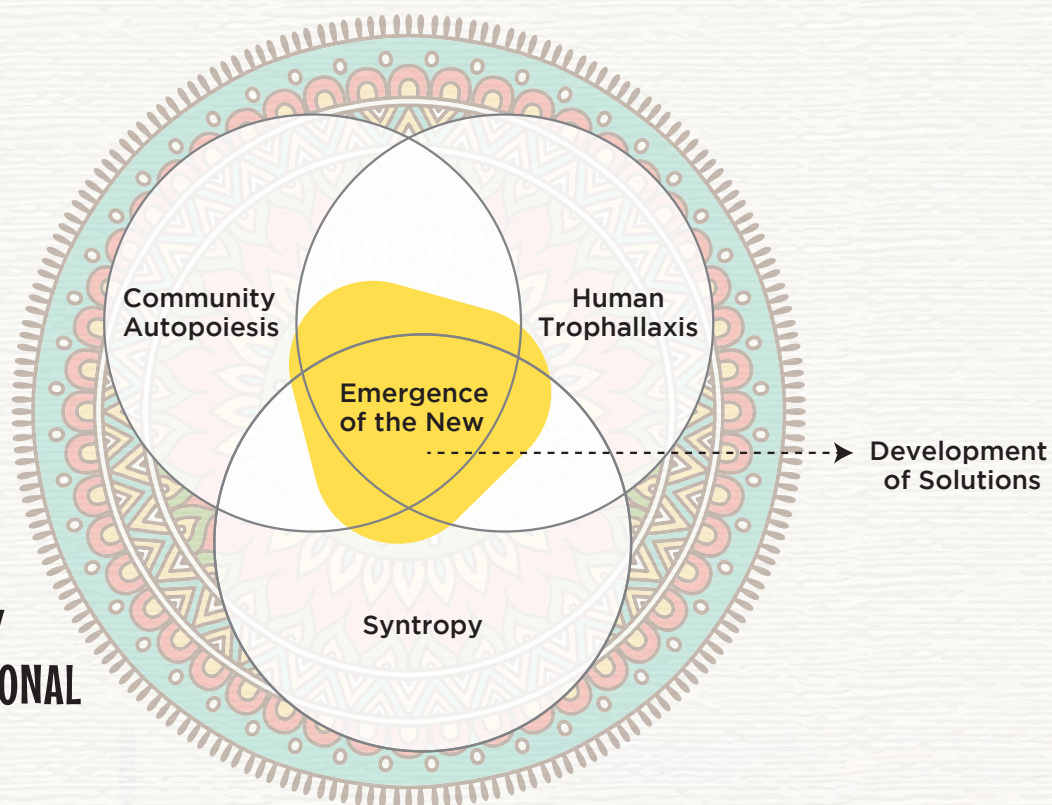
LEONARDO BOFF

Periodically, your organization can organize events that offer these experiences of care and self-awareness to alleviate tension, facilitate dialogue in the presence of misunderstandings, and to enjoy moments of leisure and relaxation.



## DEVELOPING SOLUTIONS

The three principles of ASC (human trophallaxis, autopoiesis, and syntropy) activate a structure for community organization that allows access to information present in individual systems. When these individual systems link up with each other and with the collective system, the ASC principles empower the syntropic emergence of the solutions necessary to resolve crises both personal and community-wide



### COMMUNITY ORGANIZATIONAL FIELD

The Community Organizational Structure is formed by invisible forces that occupy the institutional space and influence the behavior of ASC participants. These invisible forces are influenced, for example, by your organization's mission and values and the beliefs and experiences of the participants in ASC activities.

In the community organizational structure, the organization is a living system.

It is a network of processes that are capable of self-organizing and learning. As a result, growth and change in perspective about self-renewal occurs.

The community organizational structure is influenced by the presence of personal experiences and knowledge acquired to confront and overcome problems. It is capable of generating new solutions as a result of autopoietic influences. This structure generates reorganizing energies, accumulating new learning that feeds back into the evolutionary process of each participant. The orienting force that guides the emergence of the new is syntropy, which is understood as the self-perfection principle present in every living system.

**THE COMMUNITY ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE IS FLESHED OUT THROUGH THE VARIOUS ACTIVITIES OFFERED BY MSMC.**

### IDENTIFICATION OF NEW POTENTIAL AND BOOSTING SELF-ESTEEM

The process of overcoming a crisis that leads a person to seek help from the activities offered through ASC reveals that person's capacity for resilience. That resilience is strengthened through ASC because ASC is so focused on self-awareness. When ASC participants grow in self-awareness, they discover new gifts and talents about themselves, they learn new ways of handling and overcoming problems, and they learn how to live with their self-image and their dreams. All of this in turn provides hope that change and transformation is possible. With that hope, participants develop a healthy level of self-esteem that promotes new experiences of self-realization within their families, in their communities and in society as a whole. Participants become willing to take on new roles and they feel more autonomy and a sense of shared responsibility in their own and in their community's outcomes.

### THE DEVELOPMENT OF MULTIPLE FORMS OF INTELLIGENCE

What differentiates ASC is the development of intrapersonal intelligence through self-awareness practices. Developing intrapersonal intelligence also promotes the development of a deeper and more conscientious interpersonal intelligence. Various forms of intelligence including spatial, kinesthetic, musical, theatrical, and naturalist are stimulated and strengthened through various therapeutic practices and contact with nature. These various forms of intelligence strengthen awareness of one's own worth and belonging to the world. When people feel that they belong, they are more willing to contribute to their communities. These newly engaged community members now



bring their diverse perspectives into the community organizational structure to identify new solutions to individual and community problems. This community autopoiesis makes it possible not only to identify those solutions, but to also identify next steps in implementing that solution.

Community autopoiesis can be thought of as a new culture that is born out of the need of the individual or the community to find solutions to problems. With ASC, the protagonist of this new culture is the person/community that realizes the importance of the various forms of wisdom present among community members and that, instead of excluding them, finds ways of adding them up, discovering a synergy between them that serves as a source of individual or community revitalization.



## SHARED RESPONSIBILITY

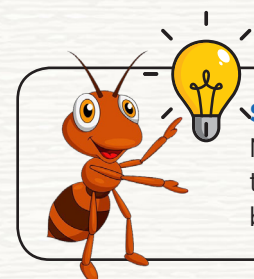
Life is characterized by an ebb and flow that is to give and receive. Breathing, the beating of the heart, the tides, and all phenomena that are vital or natural are characterized by this dynamic. Handouts and paternalism make people used to only receiving, generating dependency and a lack of shared responsibility.

By focusing on self-awareness, community autopoiesis develops a new autonomy for community members that makes them aware that they are both part of the problem as well as the solution. This awareness gives participants the strength to go back to the ASC development process but this time not as a recipient, but instead as someone who has knowledge to offer and who can contribute to the growth of others who are going through ASC for the first time.

Reciprocity generates awareness that we all need help and that the more we give, the more we receive. This awareness helps participants move away from seeing themselves as people who just receive and are incapable of helping others. That

disempowered sense of self is similar to the “ugly duckling syndrome,” where the person feels inferior (victim) and that he or she is the target of every type of persecution (the persecutor). In the “ugly duckling syndrome,” the person believes that the solution to his or her problems can only come from someone superior (the rescuer). ASC restructures this Karpman drama triangle (victim, persecutor, and rescuer) into an integrated circle characterized by shared responsibility. Shared responsibility helps participants be aware of the good, the beautiful, and the truth that exists within themselves as well as in others.

This restructuring empowers participants to feel a sense of shared responsibility in the process of social transformation that is necessary to work on the causes that lead to exclusion and the lack of opportunities for a dignified life and quality for all. Community autopoiesis awakens the desire to participate and collaborate in groups and networks that contribute to achieving this process of social transformation



### SHARED RESPONSIBILITY

Making a person aware of the feeling of belonging to the service of care, to the space in which he is welcomed, to the community to which he belongs, because belonging leads to shared responsibility in the act of caring.

## IMPORTANT INFORMATION ABOUT THE APPLICATION OF ASC

### TIME COMMITMENT TO APPLY ASC

It depends on the:

- **identified problem: is it individual or collective?**
- **social context**
- **people involved (the profile of the participants)**
- **goals outlined to solve the identified problem**
- **available resources**



### VARIABLES TO CONSIDER WHEN APPLYING ASC

- the problem confronted by the person, group, or organization
- the socioeconomic, organizational, and territorial reality of the participants
- Ideological forces (beliefs, political affiliations)
- Human resources (people involved to implement ASC)
- Threats (self-sabotage, conflicts of interest, skepticism)



*ASC is not limited to this methodology of implementation. It can be adapted and added to new processes with the objective of fitting to the local reality so that it's effective.*

Directed towards public officials, professionals, social movements, leaders, and community activists, as they can all be agents of social transformation



## Frequently Asked Questions



### WHAT IS A SOCIAL TECHNOLOGY?

According to the Bank of Brazil Foundation, social technologies encompass replicable products, techniques, and methodologies that are developed through interaction with the community and that represent effective social transformation solutions.

### WHAT IS A MULTI-IMPACT, SOCIO-THERAPEUTIC TECHNOLOGY?

It's a technology that deepens various techniques, therapeutic approaches, and social services to welcome, care, and accompany the different situations of people who need bio-psycho-social-spiritual attention.

### IN WHAT CONTEXTS IS IT POSSIBLE TO APPLY THE SYSTEMIC COMMUNITY APPROACH?

Any context that is open to the dynamics and experiences of community evolution and the self-awareness process.

### WHAT ARE THE POSSIBLE DIFFICULTIES IN APPLYING THE SYSTEMIC COMMUNITY APPROACH?

The resistance to change of paradigms, prejudice, ideologies, and fundamentalist spirituality. Some communities, businesses, and groups don't support a systemic that champions shared responsibility. Such environments complicate the implementation of ASC.

### HOW TO INCLUDE PARTNERS IN IMPLEMENTING THE SYSTEMIC COMMUNITY APPROACH?

Securing funding with local partners, recruiting volunteers, fostering partnerships with universities, participating in events and conferences that spread the word about ASC and give visibility to work done.

### WHAT ARE THE PRINCIPLE BENEFITS OF IMPLEMENTING THE SYSTEMIC COMMUNITY APPROACH?

- Self-awareness
- Self-acceptance
- Self-esteem
- Self-realization
- Contribute to social transformation, favoring bio-psycho-social-spiritual evolution.

Offers participants the chance to overcome the traditional paradigm of the dominant culture and thereby creates new forms of being, acting, thinking, and feeling. By empowering community members from within, ASC empowers community members to undertake and own new strategies for living together and discover new proposals for the achievement of their dreams.



## METRICS

It's possible to map and monitor some metrics regarding impact and follow-up of implementing the Systemic Community Approach:

### IMPACT METRICS

**Community Autopoiesis** – transformation of a weakened reality, guided by an integrated solution to the expressed problems.

Number of people who achieve autopoiesis – **personal evolution resulting in a healthy level** of self-esteem and empowerment in order to solve existential and community problems.

**Number of people who achieve bio-psycho-social-spiritual equilibrium** – achieve and maintain holistic health.

**Number of people who declare that they have maintained elevated levels of Gross National Happiness\*** – examples being healthy in all forms including mental, a friendly relationship with nature, educational progress, cultural participation, a dignified standard of living, positive use of time and contribution to the vitality of one's community.

(\*) *Adaptation of the index developed by Butan and studied by the Getúlio Vargas Foundation.*

### METRICS FOR FOLLOW-UP

**Understanding demand for ASC** – Number and description of the problems ASC is called upon to help find solutions to.

**Goals to be achieved** – Description of goals and activities to achieve them.

**Training in ASC** – Number of people trained in ASC and summary documents of implementing ASC to resolve personal or group/institutional questions.

**Welcoming, listening, and care** – Number of people welcomed, listened to, and taken care of in their existential condition.

**Welcoming spaces** – Number and conditions of these spaces

**Completion rate** - % of people that stick with the welcoming process until the end of the care process.

**Solutions development** - % of developed solutions that were developed by those who stayed until the end of the autopoietic process.

**Shared responsibility** - % of participants welcomed by ASC demonstrating shared responsibility for problems and solutions.

**Progress** – Number of people with increased self-esteem, demonstrating feeling empowered and capable of measuring this condition by percentage. Compare their condition in the welcoming stage to their situation now to their outlook on their future.

## ATTACHMENTS

### CERTIFICATE

**Banco do Brasil 2009 Social Technology Foundation Award**









## LOCATIONS/INSTITUTIONS WITH MULTIPLIERS TRAINED IN THE SYSTEMIC COMMUNITY APPROACH METHODOLOGY

### 2009

The first ASC group was trained in Fortaleza.

### 2011

Socio-therapeutic action done in Paraíba for the Oscar Romero Human Rights Center (CEDHOR).

### 2012

First training in ASC in Bolivia through a partnership with CBM International in partnership with the Salesiana de La Paz University (Bolivia) and State University of Ceará (Brazil).

Various trainings in Fortaleza by the Municipal Government of Fortaleza.

### 2013

Second training in Bolivia.

### 2014

Community therapy class in Juazeiro do Norte, Crato and Barbalha (Brazil) in partnership with ChildFund.

Training in Fortaleza for Cáritas.

Training in Fortaleza for the Geosolos Consulting Projects and Services.

### 2015

Training in Sobral for the “Pacific Ceará” program of the state government of Ceará.

Training in Maracanaú for the Secretary of Social Assistance.

Training in Fortaleza for the Geosolos Consulting Projects and Services.

Training in Fortaleza for Ascajan – Association of Trash Collectors of Jangurussu;

Training for the City Hall of Fortaleza;

Training in Maracanaú – Project Yes to Life, co-financed by the European Union and CBM International.

Training in Fortaleza for Cáritas.

Third training in Bolivia.

### 2016

Training in Cruz (Ceará, Brazil) for the municipal Secretariat of Health

Training in Maracanaú for the Secretariat of Social Assistance

Training in Ecuador for CBM.

Training in Fortaleza for SESC as part of the Taking Care of the Worker Project

### 2017

Training in Cruz (Ceará, Brazil) for the municipal Secretariat of Health.

### 2018

Socio-therapeutic action done in Paraíba for the Oscar Romero Human Rights Center (CEDHOR) for the Legal Project team.

Socio-therapeutic action in São Luís do Maranhão for the Carmen Bascarán Center for the Defense of Life and Human Rights.

Trainings in Asuncion, Paraguay; La Paz, Bolivia; and Lima, Peru. Done in partnership with CBM International and the Vision Foundation.

## SCIENTIFIC STUDIES ABOUT ASC – ARTICLES AND DISSERTATIONS

[www.msmc.org.br](http://www.msmc.org.br)

## MSMC VIDEO CHANNEL

Youtube: canal msmc

## SOCIAL MEDIA

Instagram: msmc\_bj

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