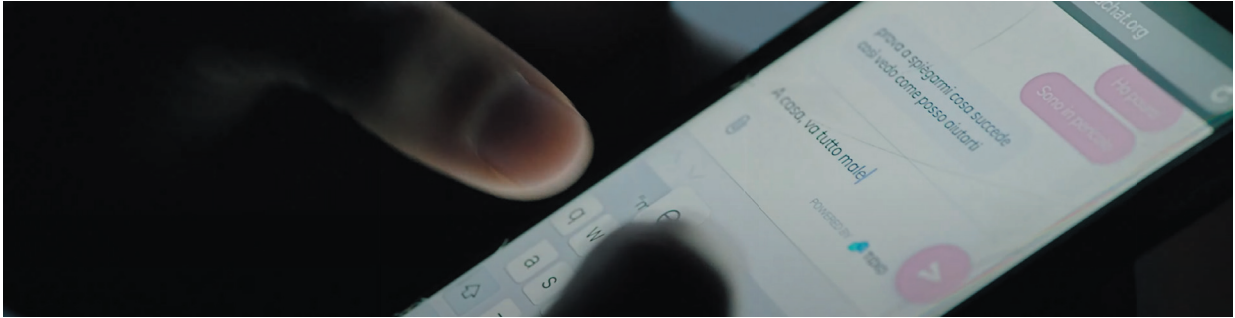


Mama Chat



About Mama Chat

Mama Chat is a confidential online chat and counselling service for vulnerable women founded by Margherita Fioruzzi and her husband Marco Menconi in 2017.

Margherita had been working with vulnerable women in the suburbs of Milan when she noticed that many of them found it difficult to get to a physical location to seek support. She discussed the problem with her husband, who is a digital consultant, and together they came up with the idea of a confidential online chat service. Mama Chat was born.

Demand for the service was high right from the beginning and it wasn't long before Margherita and Marco saw the need to add an online counselling service to provide more in-depth support to those who needed it.

They also wanted to make it easier for vulnerable women to find Mama Chat by increasing their visibility in search. They applied to the Google.org Impact Challenge for Safety for funding to help them develop relevant content.

"We wanted to create lots and lots of features about the sort of problems Mama Chat's users experience," says Margherita, "Things like domestic abuse, sexual violence and mental health, so they can discover it, get some good advice and know they can come to us for help if they need it."

In 2019, a second psychological service on Mama Chat's website was born, which delivers psychotherapy sessions online. Previous to this, Italy had been behind on innovation in the mental health industry. The organisation promoted the creation of online consent forms and worked together with Institutions in order to create the first guidelines for psychologists that wanted to work with their patients online. Mama Chat's team was eager to offer the chance for the population to access highly qualitative mental health professionals at an affordable rate of only 26 euros per session. Following this, in 2022, the "video-therapy" service of Mama Chat is amongst the leading services of psychotherapy online in Italy. Both services have been crucial during the pandemic and are on a continuous growth track because of the immense psychological needs of the population (men and women and teens) and thanks to its online nature, making it easily consulted during lockdowns and these years of pandemic.

The impact of Google.org funding

When the Covid-19 pandemic struck in early 2020, Mama Chat had to urgently reprioritise. With Italy's first lockdown came a surge in demand as more and more people sought help for issues ranging

from anxiety and isolation to being trapped at home in an abusive relationship.

“We saw our numbers increase hugely,” says Margherita, “We were handling five times the volume of chats from the same time last year. Our users and sessions were both up by more than 70% from July 2020.”

“We didn’t have time to focus on content. We needed to be online actually doing the work of helping people.

Instead of delivering the Impact Challenge grant in instalments as originally planned, Google.org immediately made 100% of

Mama Chat’s grant available, which enabled the service to rapidly upscale to connect with more people.

“We brought four new members onto the team, which means we now have three full-time people on chat operations, and that also allowed us to increase our hours online from 930 AM to 730 PM. It freed me up to manage our response, and so now we can engage more psychologists and volunteers, who are absolutely essential for our work. Our team of volunteers has grown from 15 to 22. It’s been amazing.”

But Mama Chat still has much more to do.

“We’re looking at a second pandemic after Covid, which is a pandemic of mental health,” says Margherita.

“Going back to normality is going to be very difficult for many people. That’s why it was so incredible when we received a second grant, this time from Google employees whose donations were matched by the company.”



we are sharing stories on engaging with hate speech and that can be very devastating for young people. [...] so we support them with mentors.

“This means we can focus on content again to promote awareness of all these issues, putting out more material and showing people the signals they need to look out for, and make them more able to reach out to us.”

About Google.org

Google.org, Google’s philanthropy, supports nonprofits that address humanitarian issues and apply scalable, data-driven innovation to solving the world’s biggest challenges. We accelerate their progress by connecting them with a unique blend of support that includes funding, products, and technical expertise from Google volunteers.

We engage with these believers-turned-doers who make a significant impact on the communities they represent, and whose work has the potential to produce meaningful change. We want a world that works for everyone—and we believe technology and innovation can move the needle.



Key insights

Mama Chat saw a surge in activity during Italy’s first Covid-19 pandemic lockdown, with sessions up by more than 70%.

Their focus moved to the online counselling service and the grant enabled four team members to be hired and online service hours to increase.

A second Google.org grant means that they can now put more of their efforts into creating content that promotes awareness of the issues and offers advice.