

Management assistance to post-war and post-earthquake trauma relief projects in Afghanistan and Haiti. The 2011 ESMT - IPSO volunteering experience

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ESMT MBA Class of 2011

ESMT is committed to developing responsible leaders for a world in transition. As a part of that commitment, ESMT sponsored a consulting project with a NGO (IPSO). Four students elected to consult with IPSO (an international NGO working to relieve trauma in war or disaster-affected areas). Funding for the project was secured by a combination of private donations, contributions from GESELLSCHAFT DER FREUNDE UND FÖRDERER DER ESMT and sponsored charity events conducted by ESMT staff.

The project had three main components: one in Afghanistan, one in the NGO head office (Konstanz) and one in Haiti. While the whole team worked together for the Head Office component, John took the Afghan challenge to improve IPSO's organizational response to post-war trauma relief. Julia, Michael and Costina took the challenge of coming up with a management plan to tackle post-earthquake trauma relief in Haiti. This project enabled the students to participate in an original and highly challenging learning experience. Not only did they apply the MBA Program concepts, they expanded their horizons beyond the typical bottom-line concerns. What they experienced throughout this project will stay with them for the rest of their lives.

The project gave them an incentive to extensively research and discover how NGOs function, as well as contemplate challenges of humanitarian relief work. In Konstanz, they worked with IPSO to explore future development directions for the NGO, with a particular focus on sustainability. They had an enriching team experience and enjoyed the beautiful Konstanz setting.

IpsO gemeinnützige Gesellschaft mbH International Psychosocial Organisation

IpsO is a humanitarian organisation committed to support organisations in developing and implementing psychosocial care as a crosscutting issue. IpsO develops good ideas and helps to put them into reality. IpsO offers supervision and coaching for people working in the field of mental health.

Afghanistan: The main focus of IpsO's projects in Afghanistan is to support the Mental Health Department of the Ministry of Public Health in rolling out the National Mental Health Strategy. The MBA students were expected to analyze processes, procedures, outcomes and the organizational structure and make recommendations for improvement to the Executive Director.

Haiti: The focus is socio-cultural and psycho-social support for the earthquake affected population; The ESMT team was expected to analyze and develop together with IpsO the organization's entry strategy in Haiti.

<http://www.ipsocontext.org/>

¹ John Antony is Indian, Michael Brazys and Julia Millard are Americans, Costina Barbu is Romanian.



Michael Brazys, Julia Millard, Costina Barbu , John Antony and Inge Missmahl

In Afghanistan, John worked with the local IPSO team to improve organizational efficiency according to client specifications. His work there earned the respect and appreciation of the Afghanistan team. Moreover, this was a powerful personal growth experience, exposing him to a different culture and a country undergoing challenging transformations.

In Haiti, Julia, Costina and Michael had their first developing country experience. The three of them worked on developing a network of partners to support the earthquake trauma relief centers and producing customer-specific management tools. They enjoyed working on a meaningful project in a direct on-site experience. They met local partners and had valuable insights regarding Haiti life and culture. Also, they worked with Caritas to gain insights into the challenges of an international NGO, particularly organizational structure and culture and donor management. Beyond the project deliverables, they were amazed to discover the people and their strong faith and optimism despite extreme living conditions, disease and corruption.

With this opportunity, they were able to participate in one of the most challenging learning experiences of their lives. They are proud to have provided value to IPSO and be a small part of something so big. More importantly, they are now different people. The experience touched them on so many levels and opened their eyes to challenges they had not foreseen, but also to solutions they had not considered.

Background on IPSO

From dancer to humanitarian by way of analytical psychology, Inge Missmahl's unusual life trajectory led her to Kabul in 2004, where she saw that more than 60 percent of the population was suffering from depressive symptoms and traumatic experiences -hardly surprising in a country that had lived with ongoing violence, poverty, and insecurity for 30 years.

In response, Missmahl founded the psychosocial Project Kabul for Caritas Germany, a project that trained Afghan men and women to offer psychosocial counseling in 15 centers throughout the city. The Afghan project has offered free treatment to 12,000 clients from 2005-2007, helping to restore selfdetermination and well-being while breaking down ingrained gender barriers and social stigma of mental illness. Psychosocial counseling is now integrated in the Afghan health system thanks to Missmahl's efforts and three years work in the Afghan Ministry of Public Health (on behalf of the European Union as Technical Advisor for Mental Health for the Afghan government).

In 2008, Missmahl founded the International Psychosocial Organisation (IPSO), a GmbH which offers specialized services to either big humanitarian organizations or develops and implements their own projects. IpsO consists of a network of experts dedicated to developing and implementing psychosocial programs in various contexts.

Further details on Inge Missmahl and her work can be found here (on TED and Euronews)

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Jc2F3-nawnl>