



Annual Report

2021



Contents

Editorial.....	3
Projects 2021.....	6
Germany.....	6
Afghanistan.....	14
Iraq.....	18
About us.....	20



Editorial

The year 2021 was very challenging for us in two respects: First, due to increased COVID-19 restrictions and lockdown, we had to close our Psychosocial Center Kabul and our Care Centers in Germany for a few weeks and all group training programs had to be suspended. Ipso trainers had no other option than to focus on conducting individual counseling sessions online and used the time to revise the training and adjust it to the target group's new needs. Second, with the withdrawal of international troops and the Taliban's return to power on August 15, the year marked a turning point for IPSO's involvement in Afghanistan.

IPSO has been implementing projects in Afghanistan between 2013 and 2021 that focused on psychosocial peacebuilding by strengthening individuals and communities. And this was also achieved by increasing chances of success for returnees, IDPs and vulnerable members of host communities to start a business or integrate into the labor market.

IPSO's so-called 'Cultural Container Project' aimed at strengthening civil society in Afghanistan by promoting individual psychosocial skills as the basis for social integration and participation. The containers acted as safe spaces for members of local communities where they could exchange views on socio-cultural issues of great relevance for peaceful coexistence. Since the peaceful 1960s and 1970s, Afghan society had not only been destabilized by armed conflicts, but also by social conflicts that were caused by external cultural influences during the past twenty years. They ranged from conditions attached to international development cooperation to social standards and lifestyles transported through social media or propagated by films etc. These influences caused generational conflicts and catapulted parts of a traditional society into the modern age within a few decades, and they had no possibility of following an independent development path.

The political upheaval put an abrupt end to this development with significant implications for our work – not only because parts of our work no longer corresponded to the political goals and strategies, but also because the funding authorities and institutions suspended their comprehensive support in the sphere of development cooperation and stabilization. For IPSO, there was little scope to implement an exit strategy for ongoing projects that would have served the interests of local staff, of beneficiaries, and of IpsO as an organization dedicated to psychosocial peacebuilding in Afghanistan.

Among the projects we had to abandon was one that since 2017 provided mental health services in women's shelters and family centers in 18 Afghan provinces. The aim of the project was to psychologically stabilize women and children who were seeking protection after experiencing abuse, neglect and violence from their families and their social environments. Safe reintegration through mediation in family conflicts was often the only way to secure their long-term future. Educational work covering issues such as violence against women and girls, psychosocial stressors, and possible coping strategies to be used within the survivors' social environments played an important role in this context.

Despite these difficult conditions we made every effort to maintain the services of our Psychosocial Center Kabul and to continue to promote negotiations towards peaceful coexistence across ethnic affiliations and colliding social values. We are seeking follow-on funding for our projects that will enable us to continue promoting the integration of MHPSS services with a salutogenetic approach in peacebuilding and refining and further expanding our approach to psychosocial peacebuilding in Afghanistan.

In Germany, with the introduction of our mobile app IPSO Care (for Android and iOS) which was made possible by Peloton's funding initiative and the establishment of IPSO Care points in the federal states of North Rhine-Westphalia, Saxony, Baden-Württemberg, and Bavaria in cooperation with and funded by Malteser Werke, we were able to significantly scale our Value Based Counseling offer. The establishment of our IPSO Care Center in Berlin, the expansion of

our IPSO Care Center in Thuringia, and the capacity building for psychosocial counseling for Mecklenburg-Vorpommern in cooperation with Malteser Werke in Rostock contributed among others to strengthen our involvement in Germany.

The fact that we were able to maintain and even expand our services in the second year overshadowed by the COVID-19 crisis makes us grateful. We would like to extend our heartfelt thanks to everyone who accompanied and supported us on these difficult paths for their trust, confidence, and encouragement and, in particular, to our IPSO staff for their tireless commitment.

Inge Missmahl and Maryam Gardisi

Project list 2021

Germany

Cooperation between IPSO gGmbH & Malteser Werke gGmbH to establish a psychosocial care infrastructure in Mecklenburg- Vorpommern

Implemented in: Mecklenburg-Vorpommern

Duration: 2018–2021

Donor: Malteser Werke

Description: IPSO, in cooperation with Malteser Werke has been training sixteen people with a migration or refugee background who have had previous training in education, psychology or social work in Value Based Counseling since February 2019. Ten graduates from the one-year full-time training course (three-months intensive training and nine-months supervised practice) in Rostock were then employed as psychosocial counselors at Malteser Werke where they still receive professional support from IPSO. They also support refugees in asylum centers throughout Mecklenburg-Vorpommern.

A psychosocial counseling center modelled on our IPSO Care Center in Thüringen was established in Rostock at the same time. The project significantly improves psychosocial care for refugees and contributes to successfully integrating migrants in two ways: Firstly, and with regard to those seeking support, they are supported by people with similar cultural background in their own mother tongue who are migrants themselves and have sometimes also experienced flight, which immediately creates trust and has an integrating effect. Secondly, with regard to the counselors, they can involve their skills particularly well in this newly created working environment and are therefore qualified for the German labor market, which are the best integration conditions.

An external evaluation was carried out by Syspons as part of this joint project.

Beneficiaries: One group of beneficiaries are the 16 trained VBC counselors and especially those 10 that subsequently were employed in Malteser facilities. The other group includes those they supported: During the practical part of their one-year full-time training, they were already counseling more than 500 people in more than sixteen languages. More than 2,100 consultation sessions about mental health were also held in the refugee shelters.



Face-to-face empowerment – Establishing a psychosocial counseling center for and with people with a flight/migration history in Berlin

Implemented in: Berlin

Duration: 01.05.2018 – 30.04.2021

Donor: SKala Initiative

Description: The project enabled us to establish our IPSO Care Center in Berlin as an open and friendly place that provides psychosocial support for migrants and refugees. Nationwide awareness of IPSO Care as an online counseling platform simultaneously increased in Germany. At the institutional level the project sought to bring about a paradigm shift in mental health care and to realize long-term integration of psychosocial counseling into the standard care provided by the health insurance funds.

The project included: 1) establishing our IPSO Care Center; 2) introducing native language counseling services (both in person and online) by IPSO-certified counselors; 3) implementing a system for guiding, supervising, skill developing and training our counselors (train-the-trainers); 4) developing and implementing quality standards; and 5) establishing a partner network and effective publicity communication measures to reach out to the target groups. The sustainable success of the project can be seen on the one hand in the steadily increasing number of online counseling sessions and on the other hand in the high demand for our advanced training courses as a psychosocial counselor using our Value Based Counseling method (VBC). This allows us to select only highly qualified applicants, especially psychologists.

Another success has been our ability to adapt quickly to changing needs. We have been able to respond appropriately to all new developments involving immigration here in our city thanks to the linguistic diversity of our trained counselors. During this three-year project, we have been able to establish strong long-term cooperation with the providers of asylum accommodation as well as with migrants' self-help organizations as well as other organizations that continue to support us. The recognition of our work and our Berlin Corona hotline as a system-relevant service shows how necessary our work was during the pandemic.

Beneficiaries: Thanks to this new IPSO Care center, IPSO's counseling services were made accessible to everyone in Berlin and the surrounding areas and in their mother tongues. At the same time, nationwide awareness of IPSO Care as an online counseling platform increased in Germany. After just two years, the steadily increasing number of online counseling sessions will have reached a value of 600 sessions per month.

Psychosocial skills for refugees living in LAF shelters

Implemented in: Berlin

Duration: 01.01.2018 – 31.12.2023

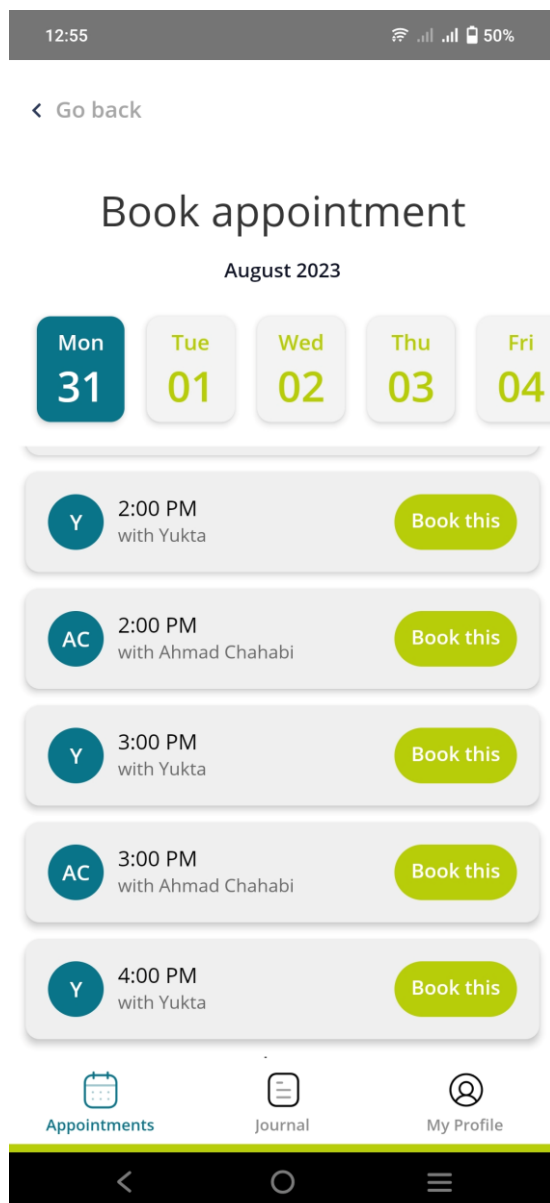
Donor: Berlin State Office for Refugee Affairs (LAF)

Description: The project is an important and effective addition to the work of the counselors at the IPSO Care Center in Berlin. It gives people who, for various reasons, cannot visit our care center in person, access to confidential, culturally sensitive counseling in their mother tongue. In addition to face-to-face counseling, IPSO also provides online counseling

through our confidential www.ipso-care.com platform as well as our IPSO Care App in more than 20 languages.

Beneficiaries:

The project was implemented in 10 shelters in 2021. 962 persons participated in the awareness raising sessions, 238 in the group sessions and 1506 in the individual sessions, a total of 1744 persons, 768 men and 976 women, of which 327 attended the sessions in accommodation, 749 in our IPSO Care Center Berlin, and 580 via our online platform. The sessions were conducted in the following 10 languages: Arabic, Turkish, Kurdish, Farsi, Dari, the West African languages Maninka, Susu and Fula, Somali and French.



Mental health and psychosocial well-being for all through a professional and accessible digital platform

Implemented in: Germany

Duration: 2021–2022

Donor: Peloton

Description: This project aimed to support disadvantaged and vulnerable groups, especially migrants and refugees, through low-threshold access to VBC and providing individual counseling as well as group sessions. We established a multicultural team of highly professional counselors qualified in our VBC method who used their mother tongues especially for this. Our counseling service was scaled up many times and was made even more low-threshold through us developing and providing our IPSO Care app as well as translating our online services into other languages.

Our IPSO Care app was programmed in 12 languages: Arabic, English, Farsi, French, German, Greek, Hindi, Italian, Pashto, Russian, Somali and Tigrinya. It also includes video chat and journal functions. Our service can reach the target groups directly through establishing cooperation with migrant organizations and shelters – 7 in Berlin and 12 in other regions belonging to Malteser Werke – our main cooperation partner. Before the Russian war of aggression in Ukraine, our target groups were mainly people from Afghanistan, Iran, Iraq and Syria and other neglected groups from India, Italy, Pakistan, Portugal, and Turkey and since May 2022, mainly Ukrainians who fled to Berlin from the war.

Beneficiaries: The project reached 1,578 people through online counseling for a total of 5,234 sessions; 1,030 people also participated in face-to-face consultations and 312 people participated in group discussions that included 145 Ukrainians and 146 people who fled from the Taliban in Afghanistan during autumn 2021.



Psychosocial online counseling for refugees in Malteser shelters in North Rhine-Westphalia, Saxony, Baden-Württemberg, and Bavaria

Implemented in:	North Rhine-Westphalia, Saxony, Baden-Württemberg, and Bavaria
Duration:	January 2021 – December 2023
Donor:	Malteser Werke, with partial funding from the Porticus Foundation and the NRW Social Welfare Foundation
Description:	<p>In cooperation with Malteser Werke, IPSO has been providing care points for psychosocial counseling in Malteser shelters in North Rhine-Westphalia since January 2021 through a specially developed sub-domain of ipso-care.com. The service aims to improve the mental health of the particularly vulnerable groups of refugees living in them and to provide them with low-threshold access to mother-tongue, culturally sensitive support at face-to-face level – even during the COVID-19 pandemic, when the conditions for providing traditional psychosocial support services were extremely restricted. Counseling is provided by psychosocial counselors trained by IPSO in VBC and available in more than 17 languages, with a focus on high-demand languages such as Arabic and Dari/Farsi.</p> <p>The object of our low-threshold psychosocial interventions is to find coping strategies together with the residents that enable them to better</p>

deal with their often varied and stressful experiences and to quickly put them back in a position to be able to reshape their lives through self-efficacy.

Protected rooms with the necessary technical equipment that uses a special sub-domain – internet points as care points – were set up in the state shelters for this purpose to guarantee confidentiality for the hours of video consultations. Social workers from Malteser Werke support the refugees in using the platform on-site, e.g. when setting up a user account or booking appointments.

The service was introduced as a pilot project in the Malteser Werke state shelters in NRW. The cooperation project was extended by two more years at the end of 2021 due to the positive results and feedback from everyone involved. A national rollout also started at the beginning of 2022: Ten new shelters – three in Chemnitz alone and one each in Karlsruhe, Eggenstein, Garmisch-Partenkirchen, Schneeberg, Lorch, Ellwangen and Bad Schwalbach – were included in the project.

The project was externally evaluated by Syspons GmbH.

Beneficiaries: 2,555 appointments have been booked and over 1,400 refugees have been able to benefit from the online psychosocial service in 2.5 years.



Developing a sustainable VBC infrastructure for providing psychosocial care to refugees and people with a migration background in Hamburg

Implemented in:	Hamburg
Duration:	01.10.2016 – 30.04.2021
Donor:	Dr Michael Otto Stiftung, Hamburg
Description:	<p>The aim of this work is to develop sustainable skills and structures by introducing low-threshold psychosocial support for refugees and people with a migration background in Hamburg, which will complement the psychosocial centers: low-threshold psychosocial support as an aid for self-help, which has an impact at individual, community, and societal levels.</p> <p>A temporary IPSO Care Center was also set up and put into operation in the Free and Hanseatic City of Hamburg from May 2018 to April 2021. The counselors' work was carried out in close cooperation with all actors working in the psychosocial care environment in Hamburg. Various group models were also provided, including community guides and peace ambassadors for resolving any conflicts within the communities.</p> <p>Work at the IPSO Care Center in Hamburg was completed in April 2021. However, the service continued with two counselors working in the Arabic and Dari/Farsi languages as well as through access to our IPSO online counselling platform, which provides counseling in 16 other languages from the premises attached to the Falkenried Clinic.</p>
Beneficiaries:	Work in the center and online was provided continuously with an average of 180–190 consultations per month, even during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Psychosocial counseling and support for refugees/people with experience of flight and migration in Thuringen

Implemented in	Thuringen
Duration:	01.03.2016 to date
Donor:	Funded by the Free State of Thuringen: Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs, Health, Women and Family
Description:	The project which had started in 2016 to 2017 with the advanced training of 30 refugees living in Thuringen to become psychosocial counselors had a favourable impact even under the very unfavourable conditions of the COVID-19 crisis during the years 2020 and 2021 when

the utility and necessity of the psychosocial care infrastructure and especially of the online counseling environments (via www.ipso-care.com) have been demonstrated. IPSO care points have been established in numerous districts and independent cities in order to make the counseling services known throughout Thuringen.

The sustainable success of the project is justified by the following success factors: 1) The project is known throughout Thuringen and its profile continues to grow through our care points. 2) Approx. 2,000 psychosocial talks are held in the relevant mother tongue each year. Psychoeducational group work is also provided. 3) Our VBC counseling services are available both in person and online. This means easier access, especially for people from rural regions with poor connections and services, which often makes it possible for them to take advantage of our services. 21 languages are now available through the connection to our Germany-wide consulting network. 4) Our psychosocial counselors are closely connected to their communities and do constant awareness work in them as well as distributing information material in several languages. 5) Public sector funding has been continuous for the entire duration of the project.

Beneficiaries: 2,000 psychosocial counseling sessions are conducted in the relevant mother tongue each year. They are supplemented by support sessions or psychoeducational group work.

Afghanistan



Reintegration of returnees into the socio-economic environment of Afghanistan

Implemented in:	Afghanistan
Duration:	31.12.2020 – 31.11.2021, de facto suspended at the behest of the donor immediately after the Taliban assumed power on August 15, 2021
Donor:	Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ), Programme 'Migration for Development' (PME) funded by the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development
Description:	<p>The project "Reintegration of Returnees into the Socio-Economic Environment of Afghanistan" aimed to increase chances of success for returnees, IDPs and vulnerable members of host communities to start a business or integrate into the labor market through personal development and life-skill training. A service package of five module-training group sessions and three individual coaching sessions were designed to improve the soft skills of returnees such as communication skills, social and emotional intelligence, decision-making, goal setting, resource management, and facilitation of dialogues across ethnic identities, hierarchies or generations, conflict resolution skills and coping strategies. The project cooperated with MSME development projects and other initiatives and reached out directly to refugee, IDP and host communities to ensure fair access to its services.</p> <p>The project conducted 141 awareness raising sessions to recruit beneficiaries. It reached 1339 people including 729 returnees and 610 IDPs. Outreach included sessions in refugee camps and local communities and the distribution of brochures. A package of five skill-based modules plus an extra women-focused module enabled beneficiaries to rediscover their resources, capacities, and strengths, improve them, and to learn how to invest in themselves and develop confidence and capacity in dealing with ongoing daily stressors and job demands. In the trainings, the beneficiaries learnt new soft skills by practicing them in small groups. Three individual coaching meetings provided to each beneficiary explored the beneficiaries' work interests, resources, and capacities, and if relevant, addressed reintegration problems in detail in a safe atmosphere.</p> <p>GIZ suspended project implementation in response to the return of the Taliban to power, which exacerbated the situation of local project staff substantially. They were not only faced with the prospect of being persecuted for their allegiance with international organizations but had lost their income over night. For Ipso, there was no room to implement an exit strategy for this project that would have served the interests of local staff, of beneficiaries, and of Ipso as an organization that was in the process of preparing for project implementation under a Taliban-dominated government.</p>

The project was highly relevant because it addressed a problem not only of returnees but also of IDPs and host communities which has since been exacerbated by the return of the Taliban to power. MSME development projects providing business development services, business start-up services and/or job placements tended to concentrate on vocational training, financial literacy, business plans and micro-finance. To make full use of these resources, beneficiaries required a level of perceived self-efficacy and social skills that tends to be insufficiently fostered in traditional Afghan society dominated by social hierarchies.



Psychosocial Care and e-Care Center for Afghanistan

Implemented in: Kabul

Duration: 2021–2022

Donor: German Federal Foreign Office

Description: The project contributed to the stabilization of Afghan society, including IDPs and returnees, through the MHPSS services of a Psychosocial Center in Kabul. The Center provided face-to-face and online psychosocial counseling to Afghans across the country regardless of gender, age, ethnicity, and economic situation. The program closely cooperated with the project 'Strengthening of Psychosocial Competence and Resilience' also funded by the German Foreign Office on two activities. A program tailored to returnees from Europe qualified selected returnees to use their experience abroad to strengthen Afghan civil society. A training program improved the psychosocial competence of schoolteachers, for their own benefit and that of their pupils.

Beneficiaries: The project provided almost 40.000 individual counseling sessions as well as awareness raising sessions to more than 43.000 participants. In cooperation with the project below, 20 returnees were trained as psychosocial community workers and 561 teachers received further education improving their psychosocial competence.



Strengthening of Psychosocial Competence and Resilience

Implemented in:	Badakhshan, Balkh, Bamiyan, Herat, Jawzjan, Kabul, Kandahar, Kapisa, Laghman, Nangarhar, Faryab, Kunduz, Nuristan, Parwan, Takhar, and Wardak
Duration:	2021–2022
Donor:	German Federal Foreign Office
Description:	<p>Since 2013, IPSO has been implementing projects in Afghanistan that focus on psychosocial peacebuilding. They are informally called ‘Container Projects’ – their name is derived from the brightly painted shipping containers that are used as mobile sociocultural centers after being converted appropriately. The aim of these projects is to strengthen civil society in Afghanistan by promoting individual psychosocial skills as the basis for social integration and participation. Ipsos teams operating from containers in sixteen Afghan provinces offered safe spaces and suitable formats for negotiating personal, family, and societal values. Volunteers acting as changemakers were empowered to multiply some of the container activities in their communities. The program closely cooperated with the project above – ‘Psychosocial Care and e-Care Center for Afghanistan’, also funded by the German Foreign Office – on two activities. A program tailored to returnees from Europe qualified selected returnees to use their experience abroad to strengthen Afghan civil society. A training program improved the psychosocial competence of schoolteachers for their own benefit and that of their pupils.</p>
Beneficiaries:	<p>Moderated sociocultural dialogues had more than 27.000 participants and sociocultural events more than 15.000. Awareness raising sessions attracted more than 50.000 participants. Almost 10.000 individual counseling sessions were facilitated. More than 1.500 individuals volunteered to support project activities and more than 351 individuals were trained as community care givers. In cooperation with the project above, 20 returnees were trained as psychosocial community workers and 561 teachers received further education improving their psychosocial competence.</p>

Implemented in: North-West Iraq

Duration: 2021–2023

Donor: Caritas Germany – Caritas international with support from the Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development

Description: Significant reconstruction and rehabilitation efforts have been made in Iraq since the end of huge-scale military operations against ISIL in 2017 – roads have been restored, local markets reopened, public water and electricity restarted, and housing, health facilities and schools rebuilt. Approximately 4.9 million previously displaced Iraqis had returned to their home districts (UNOCHA, 2022). The UN reported that in the beginning of 2022 the psychosocial distress among both children and adults affected by conflict more than doubled over the past year, with notable impact on out-of-camp IDPs and returnees.

That is why both The Federal Government of Iraq and the Kurdistan Regional Government, as well as international and national NGOs put a lot of effort into strengthening MHPSS (Mental Health and Psycho-Social Support) activities – especially in areas with many IDPs and returnees, both inside IDP camps and in the local communities where IDPs and returnees were residing. Caritas Iraq is one of the major national organisations active in support to vulnerable population, including MHPSS support. In 2021, IPSO could start its MHPSS capacity building support to Caritas Iraq MHPSS staff, in cooperation with Caritas Germany with support of the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development, BMZ.

The focus of the project was the sustainable skill and structural development to effectively improve psychosocial care in Kurdistan. IPSO VBC training was the first training of this length and intensity held in Iraq, where previous training for MHPSS measure had enabled Caritas Iraq to expand its existing strong commitment to MHPSS. It also allowed Caritas Iraq to implement the full MHPSS pyramid in its projects. For many people living there, it provided the opportunity to receive rapid and low-threshold psychosocial support without having to use the already overburdened public health system. This made a significant contribution to the national strategic skill and structural development target for non-specialist mental health staff.

Beneficiaries: One group of beneficiaries were the Caritas Iraq staff members who were trained as Value Based Counselors and received a training hitherto unknown in Iraq which opened up new perspectives for them in their professional practice as well as the Caritas Iraq staff members who received a ToT. The other huge and constantly growing group are all those who profit or will profit from the new sustainable low-threshold counseling and support group services of Caritas Iraq.

About us

IPSO – International Psychosocial Organisation – is a humanitarian not-for-profit organization specializing in Mental Health and Psychosocial Support Services (MHPSS) and in sociocultural dialogue to promote peace and social cohesion. IPSO's Psychosocial Counselors are trained in Value Based Counseling (VBC), a short-term psychodynamic intervention designed to offer empathetic and non-judgmental support in a symmetrical working relationship. The service is available in more than 20 languages in face-to-face sessions as well as on our secure video platform ipso-care.com and our mobile app IPSO Care (for Android and iOS).

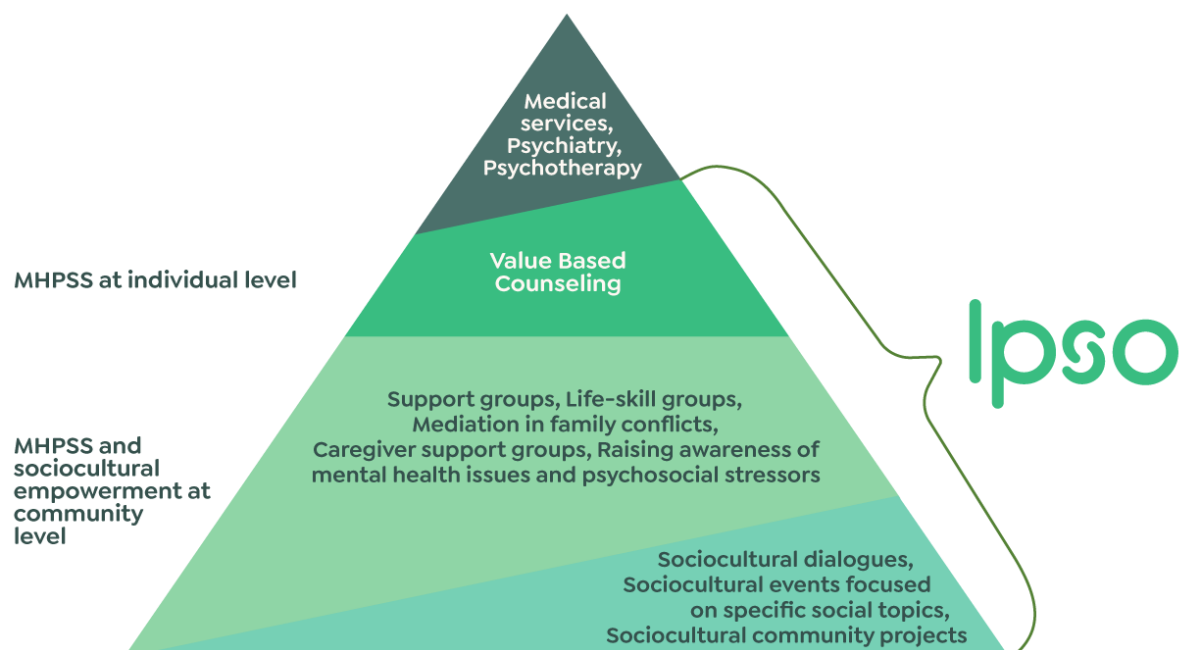
In Afghanistan, our counseling is available nationwide. In Germany, we train migrants as psychosocial counselors for fellow migrants and operate IPSO Care Centers in Berlin, Erfurt, and Hamburg. In other countries, we support people with the help of partner organizations on the ground. As an organization specialized in Mental Health and Psychosocial Support Services

at individual and community levels, we develop and implement projects for other organizations, provide support for capacity building especially in terms of competence development, design locally adapted monitoring and evaluation systems (M&E), and offer coaching and mentoring services for expatriate staff of international aid organizations. Our sociocultural container project empowers young people to take personal social responsibility for the benefit of their communities.

Our **vision** is a world where we are responsive to each other, willing to take responsibility for ourselves and our social environment in a conscious act that enables us to be open to the world at large: creative – curious – empathetic.

Our **mission** is to enable people across the world to respond effectively to the complex social, economic and political challenges they face on the basis of mutual understanding.





INDIVIDUAL LEVEL

Value Based Counseling

- Counseling face-to-face or online
- Training of Psychosocial Counselors, trainers and master-trainers

COMMUNITY LEVEL

Psychosocial support

- Support groups
- Life-skill groups
- Mediation in family conflicts
- Caregiver support groups
- Raising awareness of mental health issues and psychosocial stressors

SOCIOCULTURAL EMPOWERMENT AT THE COMMUNITY LEVEL

Field work improving psychosocial competence, participation, and inclusion:

- Sociocultural dialogues
- Cultural events focused on specific social topics
- Sociocultural community projects

IPSO'S SERVICES ARE PROVIDED TO GOVERNMENTS, DONORS AND IMPLEMENTING ORGANIZATIONS

- Integration of Value Based Counseling into health care services
- Design and implementation of humanitarian projects
- Psychosocial services contracted by humanitarian organizations
- Research improving best practices.

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