lpso

Annual Report 2022



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Editorial

For IPSO, the year 2022 is, one the one hand, marked by a significant restriction of options for action in Afghanistan as a result of the Taliban's return to power on August 15, 2021, and on the other hand, an increased need for action in Germany not only, but especially because of the Russian war of aggression in Ukraine and the arrival of Ukrainian refugees in Germany. The number of refugees in Germany grew significantly in 2022 and in addition to the many refugees from Ukraine, there were also many asylum seekers, especially from Syria, Afghanistan, Turkey and Iraq.

Thanks to the support of Malteser Werke, we were able to rapidly react specifically to the new requirements. Already on May 1st, we started advanced training for Ukrainian psychologists. Their subsequent employment for providing psychosocial support to Ukrainians through individual counseling was a next step on this path. They worked online from the care points in the asylum shelters of Malteser Werke and in large arrival centers in Berlin and in the IPSO Care Center Berlin.

A few weeks after the start of the Russian war in Ukraine we also launched RAZOM – United at IPSO, a project aiming at providing Support for Supporters, open to everyone in Germany who supported people with flight and migration experiences, irrespective of their nationality. It recognized the fact that many full-time and voluntary people had now reached their limits by supporting refugees and needed support themselves.

On the other hand, the new refugee movement confronted shelters with new challenges in many respects. For refugees living in shelters who were already very stressed by two years of pandemic the events and images of the Russian war in Ukraine began to re-traumatize them again. At the same time, with the arrival of Ukrainian refugees, the impression of 'first-class' and 'second-class' refugees intensified. The task for us here was to defuse the potential for conflict through individual Value Based Counseling, support groups and awareness-raising and mediation work.

In 2019, IPSO had conducted a study to explore the relationship between public violence and family violence among Kabul residents. The findings revealed a significant positive correlation between experiences of public violence and family violence and clearly demonstrated the necessity to contribute towards breaking cycles of violence by empowering vulnerable people to take responsibility for their lives, families, and environment through mental health care. Our 'Gentle Project' which IPSO started in October 2022 in LAF shelters with the support of the Berlin State Office for Refugee Affairs laid the foundation for a violence prevention project in 2023 which created the environment needed for dealing with the taboo of domestic violence, its causes and prevention possibilities and for a better handling of conflict by the participants. It also provided new ideas about the possibilities and services of refugee accommodation.

Despite challenging working conditions for NGOs in Afghanistan, our Afghan colleagues completed two large projects implemented in 16 provinces, which were funded by the German Federal Foreign Office. In Iraq we conducted IPSO VBC training for sustainable skill and structural development at Caritas Iraq to effectively improve psychosocial care in Kurdistan and made a significant contribution to the national strategic skill and structural development

target for non-specialist mental health staff. IPSO VBC training was the first training of this length and intensity held in Iraq. In North-East Syria, we trained MHPSS professionals of 9 NGOs as Value Based Counselors.

As a humanitarian organization providing Mental Health and Psychosocial Support (MHPSS) services as a cross-cutting issue, IPSO forms part of the humanitarian-development-peace nexus (HDN). Psychosocial Peacebuilding has an important role in this nexus and is based on the theory of change that in the aftermath of armed conflict dividing communities, individuals can become agents of change in support of a bottom-up approach to peacebuilding. In 2022, we continued our efforts to promote a salutogenic approach to mental health by reaching out to the peacebuilding sector with a position paper on a recent UNDP guidance note on the integration of MHPSS into peacebuilding. Our aim has been to encourage peacebuilders to define the gap that MHPSS interventions are meant to fill within their own conceptual frameworks of peace and conflict instead of adopting a western pathogenic approach to mental health. IPSO's work is based on the theory of change that human potential for selfdevelopment cannot only be used to facilitate self-healing, but that it can also play an important role in a bottom-up peacebuilding process which involves change at the internal level – personal beliefs and attitudes – and at the interpersonal level – practices and behaviors within interpersonal relationships. In 2023, we will continue to promote psychosocial peacebuilding as an important contribution to the nexus.

We would like to express our deepest gratitude to all the people, institutions and organizations who have worked with us during this year for their outstanding commitment, trust and confidence, support and encouragement. Together we managed to find answers to the challenges of this year, make our psychosocial counseling accessible to new target groups and tackle very difficult topics.

Inge Missmahl and Maryam Gardisi

Project list 2022

Germany

Psychosocial skills for refugees living in LAF shelters

Implemented in:	Berlin
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Duration: 01.01.2022 – 31.12.2022

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

For large parts of the project target group – people living in shelters who were already very stressed by two years of pandemic – the events and images of the Russian war of aggression in Ukraine began to retraumatize them again. At the same time, with the arrival of Ukrainian refugees, the impression of 'first-class and second-class refugees' intensified. The new refugee movement confronted the shelters with new challenges in many respects. This is where the project has had beneficial effects: It defused the potential for conflict through individual Value Based Counseling, support groups and awareness-raising and mediation work. Thanks to a Ukrainian/Russian-speaking team financed by Malteser Werke, we were able to react specifically to the new requirements. Peer counseling groups for LGBTQI+ in the LAF accommodation of the Gay Counseling Agency were also piloted.

Beneficiaries: The project was implemented in 11 shelters in 2022. 1899 individual counseling sessions were conducted, 413 of them in accommodation, 504 in our IPSO Care Center in Berlin-Schöneberg, and 853 online, in the following 11 languages: Arabic, Dari, Farsi, Kurmanci, Turkish, and in the West African languages Pular, Sousou and Maninka as well as French, English and Russian. In addition, from May 1, 2022, 129 Ukrainians received psychosocial counseling in individual counseling sessions. The

program for groups included awareness and support groups and Peace Embassador training. It reached a total of 1,016 people in the shelters and 92 Ukrainians. 38 residents of the accommodations were trained as peace ambassadors in order to be able to volunteer as mediators on site. 13 participants regularly took part in the LGBTQI+ workshops.



S4S – SUPPORT FOR SUPPORTERS

RAZOM. Psychosocial support for full-time and voluntary supporters helping refugees – Focused on Ukraine

Implemented in: Germany

Duration: 01.04.2022 – 31.03.2023

Donor: Theodor Springmann Stiftung

Description: The Russian war of aggression in Ukraine that began on February 24, 2022, triggered an impressive wave of solidarity and support in Germany. The need for support could hardly have been met without the huge commitment made by people working professionally or voluntarily to meet the needs and concerns of these people here in Germany, often going far beyond their own limits. As a humanitarian organization that

has developed the Value Based Counseling (VBC) method, an innovative form of support for people with flight and migration experiences who are counseled by people with similar experiences, we are especially sensitized to the challenges and stresses faced by the counselors who support those with flight and migration experiences. They have our support through Razom (Ukrainian for "together") – United at IPSO, which we launched a few weeks after the start of the Russian war of aggression.

The support services included online counseling, support and exchange groups, supervision, online seminars and crash courses in self-care, etc. They were open to everyone in Germany who supported people with flight and migration experiences, irrespective of their nationality. The project provided personal psychosocial counseling with a self-care perspective. Our online support and exchange groups created an environment where staff from organizations that supported other people could exchange ideas about the good and difficult aspects of their work and find good solutions to challenges together as well as experiencing relief and gaining strength. We also offered support teams the opportunity to receive group counseling or supervision from us. This gave them the chance to analyse their own work processes, communication channels and forms of communication as well as any structural challenges and to identify room to manoeuvre to implement changes. Our online seminars and crash courses in self-care, etc. dealt with the following issues: self-care for helpers, trauma-sensitive work with people who have experienced flight, intercultural understanding and communication.

Beneficiaries: In the first stage of the project, we trained and advised more than 600 people from eight organizations that supported people with flight and migration experiences.



Gentle Project – Support groups for men and women in LAF shelters against domestic violence

- Implemented in: Berlin
- Duration: 01.09.2022 31.12.2023

Donor: Berlin State Office for Refugee Affairs (LAF)

The pilot project, which started in October 2022 in LAF shelters with the support of the Berlin State Office for Refugee Affairs, laid the foundation for a violence prevention project in 2023 which provided new ideas about the possibilities and services of refugee accommodation. It created the environment needed for dealing with the taboo topic of domestic violence, its causes and prevention possibilities and for a better handling of conflict and stressful situations by the participants and better self-awareness and communication skills.

Counselors trained in IPSO's VBC method provided men and women seeking support with the opportunity to learn about domestic and external violence in their own language – i.e. especially Arabic, Dari and Farsi – and to identify the causes of latent and manifest violence in a culturally sensitive way based on their own values. In group discussions that were complemented by individual discussions as needed, they learnt how to deal with value conflicts they had experienced, and to recognize and create scope for action in order to tackle it and bring about changes. The issues and content were based on the needs of the participants. They ranged from violent experiences or traumatic experiences in their home countries and when fleeing to identity crises triggered by value conflicts in the new country, culture shock, social isolation and experiencing discrimination in Germany.

The group sessions were aimed at promoting self-reflection and selfquestioning, personal positioning and self-development, critical examination of apparent self-evident facts and – last but not least – empathy and an effort to achieve a common understanding. Through a variety of formats – including role-playing to change their perspective – a dynamic environment was created that encouraged learning and generated new insights about themselves and others or their own and other living environments.

The pilot project included the recruitment of the participants, the production of information material for the participants, the development of a curriculum for the support groups, further training of the project team, and an agreement on how to cooperate with the social workers.

The key success factors of the project were already evident in the pilot phase in the first few months: 1) the creation of a protected environment and an atmosphere of unconditional appreciation that inspires confidence and is the prerequisite for the possibility of selfobservation and openness, the perception and articulation of one's own feelings, needs, thoughts and wishes; 2) a non-judgmental exchange and change of perspective; 3) identifying opportunities for self-development as well as encouraging the participants; 4) information about the legal situation of people subjected to violence in Germany as well as information about appropriate support measures.

Beneficiaries: The pilot project comprised an eight-part intensive program for men with potential for violence with 33 participants (27 Dari-speaking and 6 Arabic-speaking), a program for men and women with 8 Germanspeaking participants with African background and a program for women with 3 groups and 37 participants (34 Dari-speaking and 3 Arabic- speaking).

VBC training and employing Ukrainian psychologists to provide psychosocial support to refugees in Germany

Implemented in: Germany

Duration: 2022–2024

Donor: Malteser Werke

Description: This project is to be understood against the background of the Russian war of aggression in Ukraine. From the start of the Russian attack on Ukraine on February 24, 2022, to May 4, 2022, the Federal Police counted more than 400,000 Ukrainian refugees in Germany. The number from the Federal Office for Migration and Refugees is based on the central register of foreigners and is significantly higher at over 600,000 refugees. According to the study, the results of a systematic survey by the Federal Ministry of the Interior and Community, which was carried out at the end of March, allow conclusions to be drawn about the most important needs of refugees in Germany. 84% of those questioned were women, the majority of whom had traveled with children. Of those surveyed, 14% stayed in Berlin and 28% in other major cities with more than half a million inhabitants. 65% of the refugees found shelter privately, while 7% said they lived in collective accommodation, camps, or gymnasiums, mostly in Munich. More than half of those surveyed rated psychological help as an important or very important support service, with women giving the issue more weight than men.

> With reference to international studies which assume that 30 percent of the refugees need psychosocial care, the nationwide working group of the psychosocial centers for refugees and victims of torture (BAfF) called for financial support from the federal, state and local governments for the psychological care of refugees at the beginning of March. The German Association of Psychotherapists (DPtV) and ProAsyl have also pointed out a lack of care options.

> The project focuses on the advanced training of experienced Ukrainian psychologists in VBC and their subsequent employment (10 full-time positions) for providing psychosocial support to Ukrainians through individual counseling. The certified counselors work online from the care points in the asylum shelters and in Berlin as well as in large arrival centers such as Tegel Airport with around 3,000–4,000 refugees or the hangars at Columbia Damm with 1,000 places as well as in our IPSO Care Center Berlin.

We also provide support groups in the premises belonging to other aid organizations in Berlin, Baden- Württemberg, Bavaria, and Hamburg as part of this project. In regular workshops held with staff members from Malteser Werke nationwide, there has been lively exchanges involving questions that arise in dealing with and counseling psychologically stressed people – people from Ukraine as well as those from different regions in the world.

This project has the following objectives: 1) to strengthen the resilience and self-efficacy of Ukrainian refugees; 2) to help Ukrainians affected by the Russian war of aggression to re-establish themselves quickly by providing training and subsequent employment; and 3) to develop skills amongst Ukrainians that they can use to develop the capacity of the Ukrainian health system after the war ends.

A five-person Malteser team (regional coordinators) is providing support for this project to successfully implement and spread psychosocial support as wide as possible.

Beneficiaries: In the project preparation phase from May 1st, 2022, to December 31st, 2022, the focus was on the preparation and implementation of advanced training in VBC. The first group of beneficiaries are the 16 psychologists from Ukraine and Russia who were trained as VBC counselors. Another group of beneficiaries are the 50 people who received face-to-face counseling for the first time in the period from June 1st to December 31st. There were 1744 online counseling sessions and 105 group sessions attended by 614 people.

Afghanistan



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: The project contributed to the stabilization of Afghan society by promoting tolerance and by empowering beneficiaries to manage the rapid social change to which Afghans have been exposed for decades. Ipso 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.

Beneficiaries: 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.

Psychosocial support to returnees, IDPs, and host communities at Sheikh Mesri and Daman in Nangarhar Province

- Implemented in: Nangahar Province
- Duration: 2022
- Donor: UNHCR
- Description: The project improved the psychosocial wellbeing of returnees, IDPs, and the host population in Nangarhar province through improved local access to focused non-specialised support and to family and community support in group settings in the informal settlements of Sheikh Mesri and Daman. The project met the urgent need for MHPSS services in Afghanistan by following WHO recommendations for scaling up psychological interventions for people in communities affected by adversity. These consisted of face-to-face individual psychosocial counseling, support groups and life-skill groups in the informal settlements of Sheikh Mesri and Daman.

De-Sule-Hujra/Hujra-e-Sulh. Sociocultural dialogues towards peace and reconciliation

Implemented in: Khost, Kunar, Kunduz, Paktia, Parwan

Duration: 2022–2023

- Donor: European Commission
- Description: The project pilots a peacebuilding approach which consists of the three steps: 1) Acknowledging the past; 2) Contextualizing the present; and 3) Shaping the future. The aim of the approach is to facilitate social change peacefully negotiated by individual male and female members of selected local communities in Afghanistan who receive psychosocial support to overcome individual and collective traumata and are empowered to promote peace and reconciliation through psychosocial competence. A strategy for secondary pilots as part of an overall scalingup strategy will be available for reference in 2023.
- Beneficiaries: In the first twelve months of project implementation, more than 800 reconciliation dialogues were set up, more than 9,000 men and 3,500 women directly benefitted from EU-supported actions that specifically aim to support civilian post-conflict peacebuilding and/or conflict prevention, and almost 2,000 men and more than 1,700 women received individual or group counseling.



Psychosocial resilience and capacity building in North-West Iraq

Implemented in:	North-West Iraq
Duration:	2021–2023
Donor:	Caritas Germany – Caritas international with support from the Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ)
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. As of June 2022, of the six million people displaced during the ISIL crisis over 81 per cent have returned, while 1.2 million Iraqis internally displaced since 2014 are still displaced, including 180,000 persons hosted in 26 camps (25 in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq and one in Ninewa Governorate) (UNOCHA, 2023).
	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 strenthening 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

organisations active in support to vulnerable population, including MHPSS support. In 2022, IPSO could continue and expand its MHPSS capacity building support to Caritas Iraq MHPSS staff and to Dohuk Directorate of Health psychologists, in cooperation with Caritas Germany with support of the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development, BMZ.

12 weeks Value Based Counseling training was given to 18 Caritas Iraq MHPSS staff members from North-West Iraq (including their technical supervisors) and 2 psychologists of the Dohuk Directorate of Health. This training was given in 6 blocks of two weeks each: 3 times on-site in Dohuk and 3 times on-line. In 2023, the trainees continued the training

Iraq

with the practical part. Furthermore, supervisory support was given to 18 Caritas Iraq MHPSS staff members who in 2021 received a Training of Trainers (ToT) which enabled them to train and supervise volunteer Community Care Givers (CCGs), i.e. volunteer facilitators of local MHPSS self-help groups, in order to establish sustainable low-threshold support groups. 28 active CCGs worked with 34 self-help groups with a total of over 300 participants, who met monthly or bi-weekly.

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 direct beneficiaries were the 18 Caritas Iraq staff members together with the two psychologists from the Kurdish regional government 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 18 Caritas Iraq staff members who received a supervisory support for supervising volunteer CCGs. The other huge and constantly growing group of indirect beneficiaries are all those who benefit from the work of these multipliers: first, people who receive the new sustainable low-threshold counseling and support group services of Caritas Iraq, second, people who participate in the local MHPSS self-help groups facilitated by the volunteer CCGs and supervised by Caritas Irak, and third, all those who take advantage from current and future Dohuk Government Health Directorate decision-making that, in future, will promote mental health issues more effectively.

Syria

Psychosocial resilience and capacity building in North-East Syria

t Syria

Duration: 2022

Donor: GIZ

Description: In North-East Syria (NES), after the defeat of ISIL in March 2019, over 2 million of the 3 million population remained in need of humanitarian aid, including over 655,000 internally displaced persons (IDPs) (ACAPS, 2023). Five formal camps hosted over 88,000 IDPs and refugees. In addition, informal camps and settlements hosted around 120,000 individuals (WHO, 2022). Mental health needs in NES were huge and the health and social services inadequate. Several international and national NGOs provided services to internally displaced persons in informal IDP settlements, in IDP camps and to other vulnerable population groups including basic mental health and psycho-social support (MHPSS).

> IPSO, through a service contract from GIZ, upgraded the counseling skills of 20 MHPSS professionals of 9 NGOs in North-East Syria through an online training in its method Value Based Counseling of a duration of 12 weekly training units.

Beneficiaries: One group of beneficiaries were the 20 MHPSS professionals of 9 NGOs in North-East Syria who were trained as Value Based Counselors and received a training hitherto unknown in Syria which opened up new perspectives for them in their professional practice. The other huge and constantly growing group are all those who benefit from the new lowthreshold support of these NGOs.

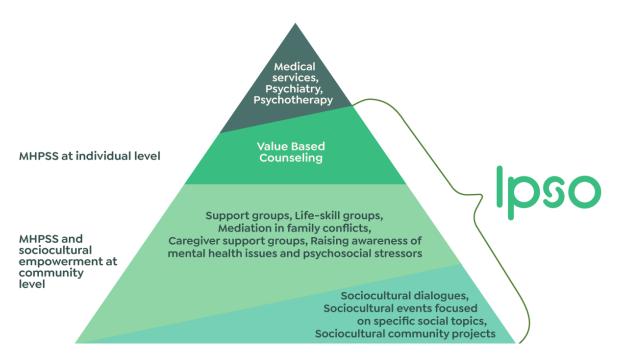
About us

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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POSTAL ADDRESS: Münsterplatz 13, D-78462 Konstanz, Germany

CONTACT: +49 (0)30 21945830 info@ipsocontext.org www.ipsocontext.org

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