



# Annual Report

## 2020



# Contents

- Editorial.....3**
- Interview.....5**
- Projects 2020.....7**
  - Germany.....7
  - Switzerland.....16
  - Afghanistan.....17
  - Jordan.....26
- About us.....28**

## Editorial

With the global spread of the COVID-19 pandemic, the year was a drastic turning point for public, economic, and social life and for humanitarian work, in particular. COVID-19 created an extremely challenging working environment, especially in the field of humanitarian work, which required great effort, great flexibility as well as courage and willingness to imagine and break new ground, from everyone involved – those seeking support as well as those giving support, the employees of refugee shelters and their operators and cooperation partners, the political decisionmakers, the donors etc. Our task of strengthening the resilience of vulnerable people now also had to be applied with regard to our own employees and the organization. The fact that we were able to set new milestones despite these adverse circumstances and that our work and our Berlin Corona hotline was considered and recognized as a system-relevant service gives us confidence for the future.

Our experience this year has shown: 1) The psychosocial counseling setting can – to a large extent and under certain conditions – be transferred to the digital space. The digital space allows not only to overcome distances, but also to open up new dimensions: Better than in the everyday environment a symmetrical working relationship can be established with both sides having almost equal rights. We have therefore been working with an online counseling platform – originally set up for Afghanistan – since 2013 which enabled us to continue operating and expanding at the outbreak of the pandemic. 2) Online counseling is subject to the condition that there is a safe space in which it can take place – a requirement that is unlikely to be met by the target group, which generally has little privacy. That is why appropriate online counseling infrastructures, i.e. hybrid spaces, had to be created. 3) Structured collaboration with cooperation partners is crucial to reach the target group despite limited access. This also requires to a certain extent the training of their social workers in order to enable them to identify, address, inform and introduce the target group which is not always possible, but promises great added value and synergies and lightens the burden of health care and social systems/social work. The establishment of Ipso Care Points providing access to our online counseling platform in the Malteser Werke in Germany, is a good example of this. Another is our project of psychosocial support for Syrian refugees in Jordan, where we collaborated with INTERSOS, a humanitarian organization on the front-line of emergencies, which facilitated access to our online counseling for the target groups.

In terms of our engagement in Afghanistan, 2020 is proving to be a year full of opportunities. Our work dealt with violence, its causes, connections and consequences as well as the resulting task for society as a whole to shape a peaceful future. It was driven by three questions: 1) How do more than forty years of armed conflict affect families and individuals and how does the continued violence in the public sphere affect Afghan society? 2) How can young Afghans shape and develop the society in which they live in a way that allows them to see a future for themselves in their own country rather than abroad? 3) And how can returnees use their international experiences for the peaceful development of their communities and as a way of reintegration into Afghan society?

Funded by the German Federal Foreign Office support to peace mediation, crisis prevention, stabilization and post-conflict peacebuilding, we conducted a violence study that examined the impact of armed violence in the public sphere on family interactions and carried out a pilot project which aimed to empower returnees from Europe to strengthen civil society as

psychosocial community workers in Afghanistan and promote a multi-ethnic culture of cooperation. In both projects, attention has been paid to the psychological and psychosocial effects of violence on individuals, communities and civil society at large and of turmoil created by outside cultural influences forcing a society steeped in tradition to adapt to a modern world within a few decades. In cooperation with all stakeholders, we managed to provide women shelters and Family Centers in 16 Afghan provinces with psychosocial services what, a year later, might seem to be beyond reach.

It is with great gratitude that we look back on our work in 2020. We would like to extend our special thanks to our partners for their close, reliable and trusting cooperation and collaboration. We express our deep gratitude to the funding organizations, institutions and authorities who supported us and made our work possible. Our sincere thanks go to all our staff for their great commitment as well as their tireless and excellent work.

Inge Missmahl and Maryam Gardisi

## **On the challenges of 2020. An Interview with Maryam Gardisi, IPSO Managing Director**

Conducted by Andrea Bärnreuther, 11.09.2023

Andrea Bärnreuther: The year 2020, when the COVID-19 pandemic arrived in Germany and Afghanistan, posed unprecedented challenges, especially in the areas of health, social work, humanitarian aid and education. What were the biggest challenges for IPSO? How were you able to tackle them and what did the organization learn from this experience?

Maryam Gardisi: During the very challenging period when many people were extremely worried, our first focus was on the well-being of our counselors. Their well-being was a priority as they needed to be able to help other people. Working from home – ‘Home office’ – was already common practice for us before the pandemic. We immediately took steps to maintain a sense of closeness with our employees and at the same time control of the situation: For example, we held Zoom meetings on a daily basis to gain some kind of ‘control’ over an ‘uncontrollable’ situation during this time of uncertainty. These meetings also served to support each other and to find out who needs support, when, where and for what.

In 2020, many digital resources were already in place, including access to our existing clients to inform them about online consultation options and health policy. Back in 2013, IPSO had – originally for Afghanistan – developed a professional online platform to reach people who otherwise, for various reasons, would not have been able to take advantage of our counseling offer. Thus, switching from face-to-face counseling to online counseling was not that difficult for us; it certainly didn't represent a paradigm shift for us.

This gave us time and capacity to think together about how we could effectively contribute to helping people outside in this uncertain situation. We quickly opened our minds to creative solutions and had the opportunity to find innovative ways to support people.

In fact, we learned a lot during this time, and precisely because we paid more attention than ever before to the specific forms of implementation of our activities and the challenges in reaching our target groups. We observed closely how our cooperation partners and the refugee accommodation facilities and communities were dealing with the situation, exchanged ideas with them and learned from them.

Andrea Bärnreuther: Psychosocial counseling is a holistic method. What features can be transferred to the digital space and when does digital counseling need to be supplemented by face-to-face encounters in order to be effective?

Maryam Gardisi: Transferring psychosocial counseling to the digital space offers numerous advantages, especially in such a situation, but can also create its own challenges. It is crucial to create low-threshold information channels that provide people with clear instruction how to access help. In our communities we shared YouTube tutorials about this issue. We were aware that we also had to increase communities' confidence in using these services. To this end, we shared plenty of information, testimonials and photos in social media networks and group chats etc. Peer-to-peer recommendation for online counseling has proven to be most effective to that end and to strengthening digital literacy. It is quite interesting, building trust has often been easier in the digital space because people can end the conversation with one

click. With this option, the psychological barrier to an open face-to-face conversation can be overcome or at least reduced.

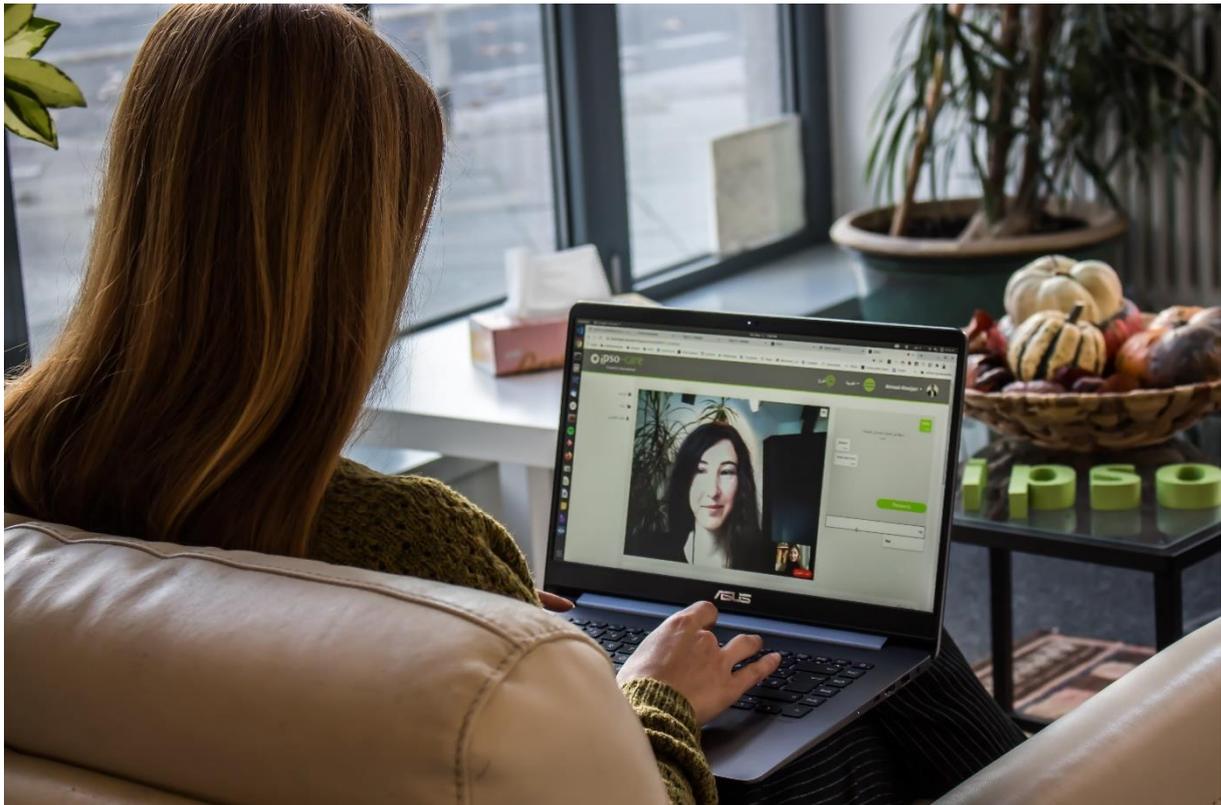
Nevertheless, the analogue space remains relevant, especially in acute stress situations. For those who do not have access to the Internet, access to face-to-face counseling would have been urgently needed. However, due to pandemic restrictions, this was not always possible and here we had to look for ways to find appropriate cooperation partners.

Andrea Bärnreuther: This means that if access to target groups is very difficult, as was the case in the years 2020 and 2021 which were overshadowed by COVID-19, then cooperation partners who have this access play a larger role and more attention is drawn to the added value of cooperation. What has proven to be the key to generating synergy effects in 2020/2021? Has IPSO gained new partners for medium or even longer-term collaboration over these years and perhaps also new ideas for new forms of collaboration?

Maryam Gardisi: A good example of a very fruitful cooperation with donors and a success story is Peloton's request at the end of 2020 what the US company could do for us in this situation. This approach was extremely pragmatic for our social organization. It allowed us to communicate our needs clearly and directly and to propose a meaningful project. IPSO responded to Peloton's funding initiative by proposing the development of a user-friendly mobile app for funding: An app that would have been tailored to the specific needs of refugees, who often have older cell phones which are not compatible with our traditional web interface. And in fact, with Peloton's financial support the app was developed within a short period of time and launched in early 2021. The app includes features such as daily journaling or messages that encourage the owner to reflect on personal values. And that wasn't the only donor who asked us: "What do you need?" With the support of Zalando, we were able to develop an e-learning platform for the training of counselors, in which all teaching materials are available in three languages, and which enabled us to offer our advanced training courses online. As a humanitarian organization, we are very grateful for this generosity!

Close collaboration with other NGOs was also crucial to ensure target group-specific and low-threshold support. We have particularly intensively expanded our partnership with Malteser Werke. They quickly set up so-called 'care points' in their accommodation facilities which were equipped with laptops so that every resident could access online counseling. We developed special subdomains that could easily be used by social workers on site who introduced their residents in the online counseling service.

In the Berlin LAF (State Office for Refugee Affairs) accommodation, after the contact restrictions were relaxed, we obtained special permission to talk to people on site. In some cases, we gave clients access to our Ipsos Care Center, where they could connect to our counselors who worked from home. This was particularly helpful for those who did not have internet access or privacy in their accommodation.



## Project list 2020

### Germany

#### **Establishing a psychosocial care infrastructure in Mecklenburg-Vorpommern – A cooperative project between IPSO and Malteser Werke**

Implemented in: Mecklenburg-Vorpommern

Duration: 2018–2021

Donor: Malteser Werke

Description: IPSO, in collaboration 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 also contributes to successfully integrating migrants in two ways: Firstly and with regard to those seeking support, they are supported by people with similar cultural and experience horizons in their own mother tongue, which immediately creates trust and has an integrating effect. Secondly, with regard to the counselors who are migrants themselves and have sometimes also experienced flight, 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 the other 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.



**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 – originally 30.09.2020/30.04.2021

Donor: SKala Initiative

Description: Building a counseling center in times of the COVID-19 pandemic is, above all, a learning experience to gain resilience. The project enabled us to establish our IPSO Care Center in Berlin as an open and welcoming place that provides psychosocial support for migrants and refugees and raises nationwide awareness of IPSO Care as an online counseling platform. 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 SKala initiative enabled us to extend the project by seven months due to the pandemic in order to achieve or even exceed all set milestones, which would not have been possible in the original time frame given the necessary replanning due to the pandemic. Even during these adverse circumstances, the center has proven its function as a safe space, which is also confirmed by its preferred use by the target group.

A big success has been our ability to adapt quickly to changing needs. We have been able to respond appropriately to all new developments involving immigration in Berlin thanks to the linguistic diversity of our trained counselors. We succeeded in establishing strong long-term cooperation with the providers of asylum accommodation as well as with migrants' self-help organizations and other organizations that all continue to support us. The recognition of our work and our Berlin Corona hotline as a system-relevant service shows how necessary, relevant, and indispensable 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.

Due to the pandemic, the number of counseling sessions varied at times between 300-500. The target number of 500 was nevertheless exceeded at the end of the term. After just two years, the steadily increasing number of online counseling sessions had reached a value of 600 sessions per month.

In total, we conducted 55 support groups during the project period. 504 people participated in our support groups, 286 men and 218 women, the proportion of women was 43 %. Participation was very constant and regular, which speaks for a high level of satisfaction with the offers.

At the end of 2020, the Malteser Werke in NRW set the course for a project for psychosocial online counseling by our Berlin counselors in ten accommodations in different cities in NRW. This was the beginning of the scaling of our counseling offer by Malteser Werke.



### **Further training as a psychosocial counselor for people with a refugee/migration background at the Ipsos Care Center Berlin**

Implemented in: Berlin

Duration: 01.11.2019 – 30.10.2020

Donor: Theodor Springmann Stiftung

Description: The project pursued the increase in quality of the work of the Ipsos Care Center through the further training of people with specialist expertise, especially in the field of psychology, and language skills, in particular Arabic, Dari/Farsi and Kurdish for medium-term psychosocial care of people in the languages mentioned, which are in high demand, and their integration in organizational tasks such as management, public relations and project development.

Beneficiaries: One group of beneficiaries are the 12 Psychosocial Counselors, most of whom found employment at IPSO after the certified further training and opened up new fields of activity by taking on organizational task. Another group is the constantly increasing number of people who thus receive low-threshold, native-language psychosocial counseling in Berlin and via our IPSO online platform – and since 2021 also via the IPSO Care App. And finally, it also served to set up the Ipsos Care Center according to high quality standards and to establish cooperation with migrant organizations and other institutions with which we gain access to the target group.

## **Psychosocial counseling for people with a flight/migration history in Farsi and Dari at the IPSO Care Center Berlin**

Implemented in: Berlin

Duration: 01.07.2019 – 30.06.2020 / 01.07.2020 – 30.06.2021

Donor: Theodor Springmann Stiftung Heidelberg

Description: In 2020, the number of people immigrated to Germany from Afghanistan was around 260,000, of whom around 12,500 live in Berlin, according to the LAF. In 2019, a total of 8,131 Iranians applied for asylum in the Federal Republic of Germany, 341 of them in Berlin.

The project offered Farsi and Dari-speaking people low-threshold psychosocial counseling in their mother tongue.

Beneficiaries: From July 2019 to June 2020, a total of 194 people aged 18-50 received online counseling in around 600 individual sessions, 37 percent of whom were women. 18 percent of the sessions took place online via the Ipsos Care platform.



### **Psychosocial Counseling by and for refugees living in Berlin LAF shelters**

Implemented in: Berlin

Duration: 01.01.2020 – 31.12.2020

Donor: Berlin State Office for Refugee Affairs (LAF)

Description: Increasing the number of languages available and increasing the proportion of women in the team were the most important and effective measures to better adapt the project to the needs of the target group this year. Despite the adverse circumstances of the COVID-19 pandemic, which made access to the target group more difficult, the project was able to successfully implement the primary goal – psychosocial support for refugees in Berlin – thanks to the use of the digital video counseling platform IPSO-CARE, which we had already established in the year 2013.

As of January 2020, 12 counseling languages were offered: Arabic, Kurdish/Kurmanci, Turkish, Dari/Farsi, Somali, English, French, Pular, Malinka, Sousou. These languages were available on site and online. Our online platform covered the additional need for psychosocial counseling in the languages Amharic, Tigrinya and Pashto, which were served from the Ipsos Care Center Hamburg.

Increasing the proportion of female counselors to 44 percent corresponded to our goal of counseling people seeking support in a

culturally and gender-sensitive manner, that is, with the greatest possible correspondence between the counselor and the person being supported in terms of culture and gender.

Despite major restrictions, we were able to offer outreach counseling in six partner accommodations over the year. The activities on site fluctuated in accordance with the political pandemic regulations and their implementation on site. The very difficult outreach counseling work was largely made possible by the social workers on site, for which we are very grateful to them and the accommodation management.

Beneficiaries: The project was implemented in 6 shelters in 2020.

### **Psychosocial counseling and support for people with a migration background in Hamburg. Continuation of the Care Center in the Free and Hanseatic City of Hamburg**

Implemented in: Hamburg

Duration: 01.05.2019 – 30.04.2021

Donor: Dr Michael Otto Stiftung, Hamburg

Description: After further training for refugees and people with migration experience to become psychosocial counselors in VBC and setting up an IPSO Care Center in Hamburg, project phase III (May 2019 - April 2020) was about consolidating the new infrastructure and profiling the counseling approach. In project phase IV (May 2020 - April 2021), the aim was to strengthen the Center's network in Hamburg's psychosocial care landscape and to find new cooperation partners for collaboration, e.g. the Karin und Walter Blüchert Gedächtnisstiftung, which was extremely challenging due to the pandemic. The same applies to outreach work. During the summer months of 2020, attempts were made to resume outreach work in refugee accommodation. However, these had to be canceled again after Corona outbreaks in the respective accommodations due to the high health risk.

The challenges also affected the implementation of planned projects, such as the project "Intracultural psychosocial support for mentally stressed young people with a history of flight and migration in the phase of training and internship placement", which was originally planned to be carried out in close cooperation with the Altona education provider B&B e.V. (Employment & Education). The planned cooperation with the job centers, initiated by the cooperation partner "Jobcenter Harburg," to install internet points to support psychologically stressed job seekers with a refugee and migrant background also had to be postponed.

In order to enable people who did not have the technical capabilities or the necessary privacy to receive confidential psychosocial counseling, an internet point was set up in the center where other languages were also available via the counseling platform.

**Beneficiaries:** 817 individual consultations took place in the reporting period. Of these, 568 consultations took place online and 249 consultations took place in person at the Ipso Care Center. Furthermore, community guide groups were set up for the Arabic and Dari/Farsi-speaking communities.

### **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 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 COVID19 crisis when the utility and necessity of the psychosocial care infrastructure and especially of the online counseling environments (via [www.ipso-care.com](http://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.

## **Switzerland**

### **IPSO PAXION cooperation project**

Implemented in: Aargau, Switzerland

Duration: August 2020 – May 1, 2021

Donor: Theodor Springmann Stiftung Heidelberg

Description: This project set the course for a larger cooperation project between IPSO and PAXION – the ComPaxion pilot project in Aargau and Zug, Switzerland: Psychosocial counseling from refugees for refugees. 76 VBC sessions were held for 28 people, predominantly in Dari/Farsi and Arabic, as well as Somali, Turkish, Urdu and English.

Beneficiaries: On the one hand, the project benefited the 28 people who received psychosocial counseling in their native language. On the other hand, PAXION received an impetus for a new project and field of activity and IPSO received a new cooperation partner with access to the target group in Switzerland.

## Afghanistan



### **Afghan violence study: The impact of armed violence in the public sphere on family interactions in Afghanistan**

Funded by the German Federal Foreign Office support to peace mediation, crisis prevention, stabilization and post-conflict peacebuilding

Implemented in: Afghanistan

Duration: 2020

Donor: German Federal Foreign Office

Description: Today, Afghan has an estimated population of about 38 million of which only a small minority is old enough to have experienced a peaceful country in the 1960s and 1970s. The study examined the impact of forty years of armed violence and the continued exposure to it on the fabric of Afghan society. While the war in Afghanistan in 2019, according to the Armed Conflict Location & Event Data Project (ACLED), “remained the deadliest in the world for the second consecutive year, followed by Yemen and Syria,” Afghanistan was ranked as the second worst performer on the “Women, Peace and Security Index” 2019/2020.

Our study that we conducted in cooperation with the Institute of Mental Health, Department of Psychiatry, Faculty of Medicine at the University of British Columbia, Vancouver, Canada, with 299 participants, aged 18 to 60 years, shows an unequivocal correlation between domestic and public violence, whereby the factors age, marital status, education, and family income also played a role (s. <https://doi.org/10.1057/s41599-023-02013-1>; <https://link.springer.com/content/pdf/10.1057/s41599-023-02013-1.pdf>). Statistically, married women experienced a higher level of domestic violence than unmarried women, a university degree and a middle income compared favorably against low level of education or low income.

The significant correlation between levels of intimate partner violence and domestic violence against children and levels of armed conflict is all the more important as in Afghanistan families are the last stronghold in a dysfunctional society in which family relationships and family solidarity are essential for survival. It must therefore be a priority of our Value Based Counseling to create scope for rebuilding relationships in families and communities and in Afghan society.

**Beneficiaries:** The immediate beneficiaries of this study are the 299 participants who gained awareness of the connections between domestic and armed violence in the public sphere from which they can draw constructive conclusions for their own lives. In addition, all those who will benefit from the study's findings and the measures suggested by it will benefit indirectly from the study.

### **Psychosocial Care and e-Care Center for Afghanistan**

**Implemented in:** Kabul

**Duration:** 2016-2022

**Donor:** German Federal Foreign Office

**Description:** The project aimed at contributing 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 'Development of psychosocial skills, encouragement of social participation and support to inclusion in Afghan society' 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 and highlighted the role returnees can play in the promotion of peace and social cohesion in Afghanistan.

**Beneficiaries:** The project provided tens of thousands individual counseling sessions as well as awareness raising sessions. In cooperation with the project below, 19 young men who had returned from Europe to Afghanistan were trained as psychosocial community workers – in a three-months intensive course followed by nine-months of practical training.



### **Development of psychosocial skills, encouragement of social participation and support to inclusion in Afghanistan**

**Implemented in:** Badakhshan, Balkh, Bamyán, Herat, Jawzjan, Kabul, Kandahar, Kapisa, Laghman, Nangarhar

**Duration:** 2019-2020

**Donor:** German Federal Foreign Office

**Description:** Decades of armed conflict and exposure to Pakistani, Iranian, Indian, Russian and Western culture have had a deep impact on Afghan society. To stabilize, the country does not only require good governance and a prospering economy but also social peace. The effects of globalization require families and local communities to reconcile modern influences with traditional values and to renegotiate social roles and responsibilities. Teams operating from containers as their base supported this process in local communities across ten provinces in Afghanistan.

The activities included a Volunteer Program and a Young Leader Program, sociocultural community projects, sociocultural dialogues and events focused on specific social topics, support groups, and awareness-raising activities of mental health issues and psychosocial stressors and online Value Based Counseling. In cooperation with the project above,

19 young men who had returned from Europe to Afghanistan, were trained as Psychosocial Community Workers – in a three-months intensive course followed by nine-months of practical training.

During the Covid pandemic when the implementation of our project was complicated by the need for social distancing, we were given scope to explore and expand digital formats such as our online counseling and to develop new formats for group interaction and responded to the need to educate the population about the impact of the pandemic on mental health. Despite a challenging work environment, we succeeded in reaching out to many people, facilitating discussions, giving psychosocial support, and encouraging young people to influence their cultural and social environment.

**Beneficiaries:** 133,282 direct beneficiaries took advantage from the project during the two-year period, 2,200 socio-cultural dialogues were carried out in 10 provinces, in which 60,485 people took part. 7,840 people took part in the volunteer program, 40% of them women. 1,035 young leaders were trained, 50% women, who wanted to get involved for the community and peaceful coexistence. Of the 19 young men who had returned from Europe to Afghanistan and were trained as Psychosocial Community Workers, 12 were able to get a job in the project and 5 in the Psychosocial Care Center in Kabul. 17,069 people took part in support groups and 33,810 in educational events.

By focusing the program on recruiting and training multipliers, the number of indirect beneficiaries is many times higher.



### **Professional psychosocial care in shelter facilities**

**Implemented in:** Badakhshan, Badghis, Balkh, Bamyan, Farah, Faryab, Ghor, Herat, Jawzjan, Kabul, Kapisa, Kunduz, Nangahar, Nimroz, Parwan, Sar-e-pol, Khost and Ghazni

**Duration:** 2017-2021

**Donor:** The Colombo Plan for Cooperative Economic and Social Development in Asia and the Pacific with support from U.S. Department of State's Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs (INL)

**Description:** While legislative bases and structures to eradicate violence against women were created in the second decade of this century in Afghanistan, the reality of women's and girl's lives was determined largely by the on-going high level of stress in Afghan society. Women and girls in Afghanistan continued to face persistent discrimination, violence, street harassment, forced and child marriage, severe restrictions on working and studying outside the home, and limited access to justice. According to a Global Rights study, 87 per cent of women in Afghanistan experienced physical, sexual or psychological

violence during their lifetime, with 62 per cent experiencing multiple forms.

Since January 2017, 55 professional female and male Psychosocial Counselors trained by Ipso provided counseling and mediation services at the Ministry of Women's Affairs (MoWA), three provincial departments of the ministry, 19 Women Protection Centers (WPCs), 18 Family Guidance Centers (FGCs) and 3 Transitional Houses (TH) in 18 Afghan provinces in cooperation with MoWA and the main implementing NGOs running shelter facilities within Afghanistan to improve the psychosocial wellbeing of sheltered women, girls and their families. In order to achieve its goals, the project included all actors and stakeholders involved: 1) the Psychosocial Counselors; 2) Staff members working in shelter facilities (WPC, FGCs, TH, et al.); 3) Government officials (MOWA, Public Health, schools, universities, etc.); and 4) NGOs running shelter facilities.

On a policy level, the project refers directly to the targets and objectives of the National Action Plan for the Women of Afghanistan. Activities included face-to-face Value Based Counseling, support groups for staff members, mediation in family conflicts, raising awareness of mental health issues and psychosocial stressors.

The female counselors assisted the direct beneficiaries at the Women Protection Centers (WPC) and Transitional Houses (TH) in coping with their experiences and current life-circumstances, improving the interaction within the families and exploring ways to reunite families. The male counselors, who were placed in the Family Guidance Centers (FGC), counseled family members of the sheltered women and mediated between the women and male family members. Through the proposed action, the quality of care for women, girls and children seeking refuge in shelter facilities and the perspectives for a safe reintegration or independent future of the women and children with(out) their families and in communities could be significantly improved. Building local capacity on the human resource level (PSCs, shelter facility staff) improved the quality of psychological and social care as well as psychoeducation.

**Beneficiaries:** First, the project improved psychological health of women, girls and families through the provision of psychosocial services at WPCs and FGCs and/or partner health organizations and reached out to survivors and those at risk of experiencing gender-based violence and/ or trafficking in persons (TiP) as well as their families and the target communities. In the first two years, the Psychosocial counselors counseled more than 10,000 direct beneficiaries, conducted mediation sessions with more than 7,200 family members and held awareness-raising sessions with over 17,000 authority and community members within 18 provinces of Afghanistan. About 90% of the direct

beneficiaries reported an improvement in their psychosocial well-being, showing the success of the counseling approach.

Second, it improved the capability of the Psychosocial Counselors through advanced training in child counseling and psychosocial support for staff members.

Third, it improved the capacity and psychosocial wellbeing of staff running WPCs/FGCs and/or partner health organizations.

Fourth, staff running WPCs/FGCs, local authorities/institutions and communities were sensitized and gained awareness of and deeper insights into the causes and context of violence against women.

### ***Kolba-e Ma. Social Hubs for Afghan Returnees in Kabul and Nangarhar Provinces***

Implemented in: Kabul and Jalalabad, Nangarhar Province

Duration: 2018-2020

Donor: GIZ

Description: The Afghan society has experienced large-scale population movements inside and outside the country for several decades. The project is focused on supporting the reintegration of returnees which is a big challenge for both, returnees as well as host communities, not only in social-cultural terms but also into local job-markets in Kabul and Nangarhar. The Social Hub opened in Kabul and Jalalabad in April 2018 as a base for services to visitors who were interested in their offers and for outreach into refugee and host communities. They were designed to foster social cohesion through socializing activities, mutual exchange and learning, as well as facilitating access to education, the job market and entrepreneurship. Until August 2020, they offered structured activities including life skills trainings and awareness raising activities that provided safe spaces which met the particular needs of returnees and enabled them to re-connect with family, rebuild positive social support networks and participate in community and livelihood or income generating initiatives and also sensitized stakeholders. In the final months of the project, activities needed to adapt to the Covid-19 pandemic in increased online activities by both hubs.

Beneficiaries: From April 2018 to March 2020, the hubs had more than 22,000 participants including almost 8,500 returnees, more than 9,000 female participants including almost 3,000 returnees. The life-streamed programs had an audience of 1,300 and 2,200 participants.



### **Psychosocial support for IDPs and returnees in Kabul, Nangarhar and Balkh**

Implemented in: Kabul, Nangarhar and Balkh Provinces

Duration: 2018-2020

Donor: Caritas Deutschland – Caritas international, with support from GIZ

Description: Statistics from the International Organization for Migration show that between 2012 and 2019 more than 3 million Afghans returned to Afghanistan from neighbouring and other foreign countries. More than 4 million people were displaced internally during the same period. Many of them lived in and are still living in makeshift camps that are notorious for their cramped living conditions and lack of privacy.

Afghanistan is a culturally diverse country where the people usually build support networks within family groups or ethnicities. Enormous potential for social conflict still exists when families with different traditions and values are forced, as is often the case in these makeshift shelters, to share facilities and compete for precarious sources of income. This potential needs to be counteracted through psychosocial support at individual and community levels.

The objective of the project was to promote and support the integration of returnees and internally displaced persons (IDPs) in camps in Kabul, Nangarhar and Balkh into host communities through psychosocial support. This was achieved by building up their psychosocial

competence. To this end, the project provided individual psychosocial counseling and at community level, facilitated support/self-help groups and life-skill groups as well as education on mental health issues and psychosocial stressors.

Jordan



## **Psychosocial support for refugees in Jordan through online counseling by Syrian counselors based in Germany**

Implemented in: Amman, Al-Karak, Irbid

Duration: 2018–2020

Donor: Kamynu Trust

Partner: INTERSOS

**Description:** The project provided low-threshold psycho-social support to Syrians in Jordan suffering from the consequences of war. Since the war broke out in 2011, more than 5 million Syrians out of a total population of 18.5 million had fled to neighboring countries. In Jordan, a large proportion of refugees of the Syrian civil war live(d) under extremely difficult conditions in refugee camps and urban settlements. Poverty, irregular income, fragile family structures and other factors are a tremendous psychological burden for many of them. In order to reach out to people who had experienced gender-based violence, inclusive of men and boys, and persons who identify themselves as LGBTIQ+, and to support them we worked with INTERSOS. Our cooperation partner INTERSOS set up access points for our counseling service at three locations in Amman, Al-Karak and Irbid and managed their use. The service has been open to all adults and adolescents (16 years or older) in the Syrian community and in the host community, regardless of their gender, ethnicity, religion or other affiliations.

**Beneficiaries:** The project had between 100 and 120 direct beneficiaries and an impact on their families, adding a further 500 indirect beneficiaries. At the same time, it supported the work of INTERSOS and relieved social work.

## About us

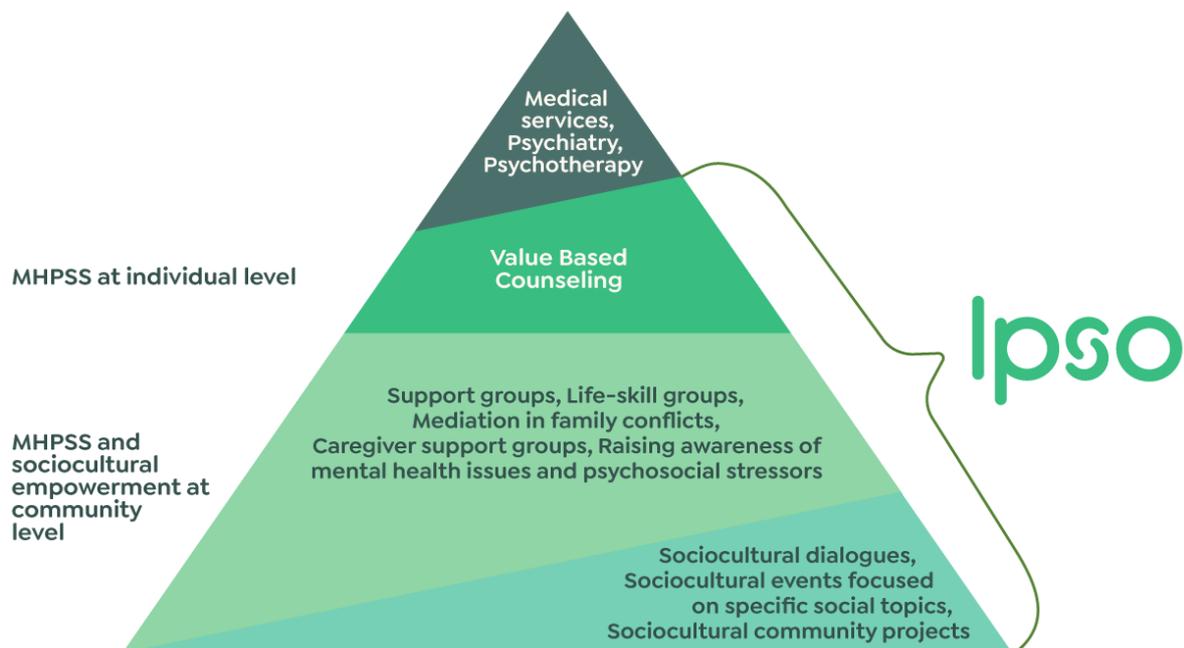
IPSO – International Psychosocial Organisation – is a humanitarian not-for-profit organization specializing in Mental Health and Psychosocial Support Services (MHPSS) and in sociocultural dialogue to promote peace and social cohesion. IPSO’s Counselors are trained in Value Based Counseling (VBC), a short-term psychodynamic intervention de-signed 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 <https://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.

© 2023

Ipsos gemeinnützige GmbH  
International Psychosocial Organisation  
Inge Missmahl and Maryam Gardisi

Editing: Dr. Andrea Bärnreuther

Trade register local court Freiburg i.Br. HRB 702 197 on 20.03.2008

POSTAL ADDRESS:

Münsterplatz 13, D-78462 Konstanz, Germany

CONTACT:

+49 (0)30 21945830

[info@ipsocontext.org](mailto:info@ipsocontext.org)

[www.ipsocontext.org](http://www.ipsocontext.org)

DONATIONS ACCOUNT:

IBAN: DE67 6904 0045 0270 1100 05

BIC: COBADEFFXXX

Commerzbank