

International Course at the Diaconal College

What is the outcome of participating?

Compiled by Lisbeth Pedersen, course director, the 22nd of April 2015

References from partner organizations and students

About the course

The International Course is a 3 month's course in church-based development work for church and church-based organizations' local partners in developing countries. The course focuses on diakonia, rights-based development work, project leadership (LFA), organizational development, value-based leadership and communication. The teaching is based on the diaconal value that all humans are unique and valuable because they are created in the image of God and therefore have the right to be treated with dignity and respect.

More information can be found in our evaluation report done the 10th of April 2015 on the basis of online surveys with students from 2011-13 and their local leaders - and at our homepage:

<http://www.diakonhojskolen.dk/uddannelser/the-international-course/>

References from 4 Danish Partner Organizations

Reference from Thore Eklund, Mission Africa, in 2011

New ideas & increased understanding

"We had two students at the International Course in 2010 and besides their increased competence in project preparation and organization development, we have gained a better mutual cultural understanding and communication. At the course they achieved an understanding of Danish culture, which makes it easier to understand each other and we have now less misunderstandings.

Another advantage is renewal and further development. To arrive in a different context and be inspired by how other organizations operate, has created fertile ground for further development and stimulated many discussions among our partners in Cameroon.

One of our students, Ezai, is working at the headquarter; and his colleagues confirm that he returned with many new ideas and new inspiration. He continuously comes up with proposals on how the working procedures at the office can be improved. Mission Africa will definitely use this training opportunity in the future and bring more students from our partners in Africa."

Reference from Birgit Ziedoy, DanChurchAid, in 2012

Important education of local partners

"We find that the students, our local partners are sending, are more open and better equipped for cooperation when they get home. They improve their technical skills, expand their social and cultural understanding, and become better at explaining both their own organization and skeptical authorities, why faith-based organizations should engage in justice, development and reforms for the benefit of the poorest in society.

Partnership with local partners is important if we are to achieve our goals. It is therefore important that students learn to plan and manage a project and at the same time have the opportunity to reflect on why they are involved in the work and upon which values their work is based.

Through membership of the ACT Alliance - a partnership between church development organizations around the world - we have helped our Dutch sister organization ICCO & KerkinActie to have attendees at several courses."

Reference from Ellen Skov Birk, Danmission, in 2013

Strengthened both professionally and personally

"In February 2013 I had the opportunity to meet Kaw Mai, who was Danmission student at International Course in 2012. Smiling and hospitable she greeted me at her workplace, Judson Research Center, which is part of the Ecumenical Myanmar Institute of Theology. She was just in the middle of planning and leading a dialogue meeting for Interfaith Harmony Week between a Buddhist, a Hindu, a Christian and a Muslim.

Kaw Mai showed friendly authority and energy and expressed that her time in Denmark had strengthened her both professionally and personally. She was full of ideas; some of them concerned interfaith cooperation and she wanted to get reserved Christians more involved in the reconstruction of Myanmar together with their Buddhist fellow-countrymen. From her stay at the Diaconal college, she emphasized especially the eye-opening experience it had been to attend participatory teaching and see respect and equality between teacher and students.

She has received many tools to be analytical and more enterprising, but also critical of ways of organizing at home. In addition, she was quite captivated by Aarhus, the city of smiles, where she experienced safety, kindness and trust, and she would like to strengthen the friendly ties between Myanmar and Denmark."

Reference from Sara Fischer Dirksen, Viva - Impact Denmark, in 2014 **Important relationships were built**

"In the fall of 2013 Karline Urbina and María Luna, leaders of Viva Nicaragua and Honduras, participated in the International Course at the Diaconal college. Their stay was of great importance for the partnership with Viva - Impact Denmark as well as the relationship between the two organizations, which are located in neighboring countries in Central American.

Viva Nicaragua is a new partner for Viva - Impact Denmark, and the course was of great importance for a good start on the partnership. Head of Viva Nicaragua, Karline Urbina, got the opportunity to meet our board, staff, volunteers and other supporters - and was able to give lectures in Denmark. This meant that she got a thorough insight of Viva-Impact Denmark as an organization and the base of support of Viva-Impact Denmark got a sense of ownership concerning the partnership.

At the course of the Diaconal college the students gained an understanding of the Civil Society funds of Danida. This gave our new partner a thorough understanding of the guidelines and principles for the partner projects of Danida and they were therefore well prepared when we started applying for Danida-funded projects together. It was also valuable that our two Central American organizations got to know each other well at the course. Because of this the two organizations now regularly exchange experiences, for example when they visit each other, in order to reinforce their efforts for disadvantaged children and young people."

References from 3 students, who did the course in 2013

Reference from Julien Nsengiyumva, the Baptist Church in Burundi **Servant leadership and Diakonia**

Leadership is a key responsibility for the development of others and the success of an organization. I learned that a true leader is the one, who serve others first and is a model, who motivates others and helps them to grow. This is somehow different for us African leaders; we feel that we are not to serve, but to be served. Here I have gained a new understanding of Diakonia, it differs from social work by having its own motivation, the love of Christ. We serve not only out of compassion, but for the love of Christ, who loved and redeemed us. Now it is our duty to love and serve others.

Reference from María Luna Laínez, Viva in Honduras **Knowledge and experience is passed on**

Despite many years of experience in diaconal work, I have learned a lot professionally. I have strengthened my knowledge and incorporated new tools for my work. I have been inspired by passionate and experienced professionals working with people with special needs. As coordinator of network organizations I will have the opportunity to transmit experiences and knowledge to the leaders and recipients of our aid. This will certainly affect the quality of services we provide for vulnerable children and young people.

Reference from Aida Saraibekovna, DanChurchAid partner in Kyrgyzstan **New knowledge about human rights**

Personally the International Course has given me new knowledge about organizations helping people in need. Working in the human rights field, the explanation of human rights from the perspective of Christian values was really interesting. Returning home I will share the acquired knowledge with colleagues and partners and try as much as possible to implement new ways of working with people and fundraising.