

The PMI Educational Foundation champions the application of project management knowledge and skills for educational and social good. Its humanitarian initiative, *A Better Prepared Response in Future Times of Need*, involves collaboration with disaster-relief organizations.

PMIEF Works With International Consortium Initiative Promotes Project Management Among NGOs

Since the devastating Indian Ocean tsunami of 2004, a group of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) has come together on an initiative to improve their project management capabilities.

Several members of LINGOs (Learning for International Development, a consortium of over 30 humanitarian relief, development and environmental organizations) came together with the PMI Educational Foundation (PMIEF) in May 2007 to create the NGO Project Management Initiative.

The participating organizations were aware of PMI because of the Institute's financial contribution to tsunami relief efforts and because of its creation

of *The PMI Project Management Methodology for Post-Disaster Reconstruction*, so they sought PMI's assistance.

The early contributing members to the NGO Project Management Initiative were Care, Mercy Corps, Oxfam, Plan International, Catholic Relief Services, World Vision and LINGOs, as well as the PMIEF and PMI volunteers.

The goal of this initiative is to "increase the effectiveness, efficiency and impact of international NGOs by sharing/developing/improving templates, tools and capacity-building resources in project management." At its initial meeting, the group decided to work together to "contextualize" a curriculum for the humanitarian sector application area. This effort will enable project team members to field-test that curriculum in both face-to-face and online formats and to prepare for the PMI Certified Associate in Project Management

Fifteen NGO project managers participated in the 18-hour online course. This pilot included participants from Tibet, Vietnam, Afghanistan, Indonesia, Burkina Faso, Moldova, Cameroon, Tanzania, Sri Lanka and the United Kingdom. Using virtual classroom technology, humanitarian project managers were able to share challenges and experiences with colleagues around the world and learn foundational skills that may have been missing.

What Makes NGO Projects Unique?

What exactly does an NGO development project look like? What makes it different from private-sector projects? The answer is they may be very similar or dramatically different. It all depends on the type of development project.

In the case of post-tsunami recovery, many of the projects were designed to create temporary solutions to solve immediate relief needs, such as building a temporary bridge where a permanent one had been destroyed in the flood.

While the longer-term rebuilding projects such as replacing houses, mosques and community centers might appear to be standard construction projects, there are at least two major differences in typical NGO projects. First, most development projects begin before there is funding. Second, most development projects have a very complex set of stakeholders who are almost all external to the organization managing the project.

For example, in most of the rebuilding projects in Banda Aceh, Indonesia, the primary stakeholders were the communities, religious organizations, political organizations, the government, donor organizations, contractors and the aid organizations themselves. In addition to the primary focus around the rebuilding, issues such as gender, religion and politics were also addressed. Complexity is a given in development project stakeholder analysis.

Immediate Benefits

The initiative has already begun to pay off. "I have already gotten to apply the things I just learned in the class. This is helping me in this difficult project," said Jesse Catre from Catholic Relief Services in the Philippines, in a letter to class instructor Chris Cattaway, PMP.

Lucy (Luciana) Sitanggang and Bora Siregar from World Vision in Indonesia are in the process of bringing the lessons learned in the course to others working on projects in Indonesia for World Vision.

"The challenge is to share what we have learned with others that were not able to take the course," they said. "We hope that the course will be run again soon so others can take part."

"We are looking forward to being able to take advantage of the trainings," said Florindo Michael Bell. "There are very limited resources for Wahyu [Ramadan] and me and our teams to improve our project management knowledge. The books I have seen don't seem to relate to what we are doing here in Aceh. Sign me up for the next course!"

The two project managers and their teams worked on literally hundreds of post-tsunami projects.

In the coming months, this NGO initiative, with the support of PMIEF and PMI volunteers, will be revising the contextualized curriculum, conducting another face-to-face seminar (most likely in Kampala, Uganda), conducting four or five additional online courses, and launching a community of practice for humanitarian project managers.

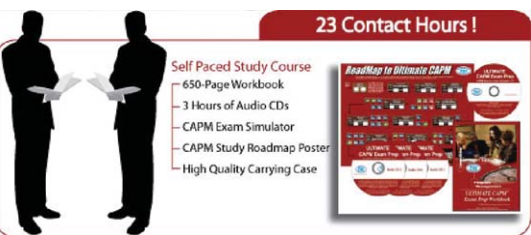
"This is a very exciting time," says John Cropper, head of management accountability for Oxfam GB. "This initiative has the potential to have a dramatic impact on our work in the field."

—Eric Berg, Executive Director, LINGOs

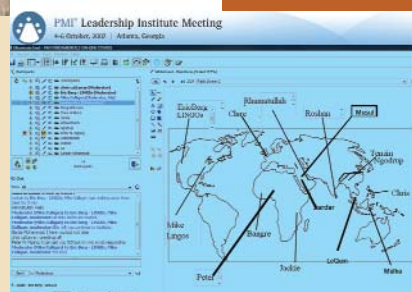
This Mercy Corps project built a temporary bridge to replace infrastructure destroyed by the tsunami.



Florindo Michael Bell and Wahyu Ramadan of Mercy Corps were two of the NGO project managers who took part in the NGO Project Management Initiative.



Course materials for "Fundamentals of Project Management for NGOs" included CAPM preparatory materials from True Solutions, and "Basics of PM" from International Institute of Learning.



The pilot of the 18-hour "Fundamentals of Project Management for NGOs" online course attracted participants from 10 countries.

(CAPM®) professional credential examination if they wish.

PMI Volunteers Played Key Roles

PMI members Caren Conner and Kay Fleischer, PMP, have been working on the initiative since its inception. They were joined by other PMI member-volunteers Deborah Salimi, PMP; Trista Claxon, PMP; and Wanda Curlee, PMP, PgMP. All were experienced members of the earlier post-disaster reconstruction methodology effort.

Together, these volunteers provided critical "staff work" for the initiative. They edited, researched, critiqued and advised the curriculum creators as the initiative moved toward the pilot phase.

The Philippines was selected as the location for the first onsite session, and in September 2007, 23 humanitarian project managers came together to learn "Fundamentals of Project Management for NGOs." The PMI Manila, Philippines Chapter and Ateneo University assisted in this effort, and PMIEF was the sponsor.

In addition to providing funding for the Philippines pilot training session, PMIEF also provided resources to enable curriculum development and the delivery of a similar course in an online environment. Two PMI Registered Education Providers, True Solutions and International Institute of Learning, were involved with the initiative along with several individual PMI members.



Twenty-three humanitarian project managers comprised the first graduating class of "Fundamentals of Project Management for NGOs."



A Mercy Corps project manager meets with a community to gather information for the project to rebuild a mosque which was destroyed in the tsunami.

