

A Commencement Address Delivered by Mr. Wilfred A. Abia, CEO for IHAF at the End-of-Internship Course Graduation Ceremony of the 6th & 7th (Summer) Batches of the 3-months free PMLIP Organized and Sponsored by the IHAF at IHAF's Headquarters Secretariat, Yaounde, Cameroon, on September 03, 2011

*The Chairman,
All Protocols Duly Respected,
The Chief of Biyem Assi Quarter,
Members of Board of Directors of IHAF,
Dear Graduating Batches,
Distinguished Guest,
Ladies and Gentlemen,*

On behalf of the internship organizing committee and the BODs of the IHAF, I joyfully welcome you to this 4th End-of- internship course graduation ceremony pitting participants of the 6th & 7th Batches as well as carried over 5th Batch participants. I also bring you salutes from the other national and abroad branches of the IHAF.

I will not take time talking about the organization, giving that we are available to talk about it any time at your convenience, in addition to summaries about IHAF in our PMLIP Newsletter Volume 1. Issue No. 1 captioned “*BeyondProjectTheories*”, and also have it on the World Wide Web at www.ihafcam.org

As such, I will focus my talk on the internship training course only:

As you already know, we offer a FREE of charge 3 months practical Internship course on Project Management and Leadership (PMLIP) to youths and people from organisations involved in the tough and creative works in community. It has 3 entries per year (Jan, May and Sept) and a summer entry (July – August). It is a way of maximizing the outcome of our services and achieving our objectives.

What are IHAF's aptitudes in Project Management? - Our Competence in the domain

Distinguished Guest,

Our strengths in the area of project planning and management for development and on project leadership and team building stems from the following:

- *Presence of 5 experienced and qualified resource persons trained at PAID-WA under sponsorship of the GIDD-COMSEC, London in collaboration with Commonwealth Department, MINREX and PAID-WA, 2008 & 2009*
- *Presence of 1 experienced facilitator trained at the Entrepreneurship Development Institute of India, sponsorship by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs India and the Commonwealth Secretariat, 2009*
- *7 experienced facilitators recognized by the Commonwealth Foundation Marlborough House London which sponsored our recent training workshop on PPPMD I & 2 for West Africa Region during which we trained 60 youth NGO/civil society leaders from Cameroon, Ghana & Nigeria.*
- *Resources from our partners such as the World Association of NGOs, Hesperian Foundation, Commonwealth Foundation London, etc cannot be over emphasized.*

Just to mention a few and so as not to forget the fact that your criticisms are also our strengths.

Why do we offer the internship? - Objectives of the internship

Ladies & Gentlemen,

Through this internship, IHAF seek to equip groups of prospective & or NGO/civil society leaders, *but not limited to*, who are able to make things happen in their communities.

Specifically, the main themes of the internship course on project management and leadership are:

1. **Learning to think strategically:** *i.e., learning how organizations/individuals negotiate different interests, build support, develop power, work with people from diverse backgrounds, and interact with other institutions*
2. **Developing effective managerial & leadership skills:** *i.e., gathering skills on how project leaders develop confidence and capacity in others to work together (team members & society); to plan, implement and monitor & evaluate projects in the interest of the community; and to have a concrete impact on a wide range of concerns.*

How does IHAF achieve these aims? – Our distinguished strategies.

To achieve these goals off course could not be immediate. Our 3 step strategies are as follows:

Step 1:

Our practical internship course gives the participants 3-4 weeks orientation and interactive forums during which facilitators and participants freely share experiences: formally and informally, and crown it with an internship dinner. *At the end of this 1st step, the participants are well grounded on Project Planning and Management: Principles and Concepts! The next step is logically to practice the principles and concepts!*

Step 2:

Thereafter, within the next 1-2 weeks, the participants in collaboration with their mentors are given opportunity to initiate, design, formulate and plan a short duration project (maximum 2 months) of their choice for partial or full sponsorship by the Foundation (IHAF). This gives participants better inside of the plenary discussions and informal interactions on proper project planning and management for development (PPPMD). *At the end of this second step, participants have put the acquired project management: principles and concepts, in practice on the bench. That means each participant has plan his/her work. Logically, the next step is to work the plan.*

Step 3:

Finally, the participants implement their works on the field for a period of 8-9 weeks while monitoring and evaluating the outcome whether it is as planned. At same time, their supervisors give them technical support amongst others while secretly assessing performance of the participants and report to the management. Weekly reports about the work and presentations as seminars by participants are encouraged. At the end of the 9 week, each participant (then as trial project managers - TPM) write-up internship/project report and formally defend the report before a jury made up of mentors and course facilitators. Thereafter, each participant makes necessary corrections and submit 3 copies to the

management. Finally, 1 signed copy of the report and a certificate of internship is handed each successful participant during a graduation ceremony as such.

At this juncture, we believe, the then participants, and now graduates, must have widen their horizons in the area of project planning and management for development as well as leadership and team building skills in project management. Dear guest and prospective employers, their experiences are dependable!

Dear graduates, we have given you all the knowledge and exposure it takes to be experts. Notwithstanding, you are not necessarily experts. To be an undisputed expert, you need to look for wisdom all by yourselves. Sorry, we can give you or anyone else wisdom in this domain. The least we can do is to advice you on how to find wisdom. Take our million dollar advice and secret to seek wisdom: **Continuous Volunteering and Networking on project works to gather progressive project management CV as testimonial of your profound experiences and competences!** *As wisdom cannot be priced, this advice worth at least a ream of paper from each of you to keep the internship program running, ha..ha..ha..!!!, graduates do you agree & promise?*

Are people interested in the internship? - Statistics:

Our dear guest,

We started the internship in January 2010 and have received a total of 56 applications as at July 2011. A total of 38 out of the 56 were recruited. We have succeeded to train and graduate a total of 32 out of the 38 interns recruited. Detail statistics is al follows:

End-of-course Graduation 1: July 2010 – 4 graduates

All 2 in 1st batch (March 2010); all 2 in 2nd batch (June 2010);

End-of-course Graduation 2: Dec, 2010– 9 graduates

All 4 in 3rd batch (Sept 2010); 5 out of 6 in the 4th batch (Dec 2010);

End-of-course Graduation 3: April, 2011 – 9 graduates

6 out of 12 in the 5th batch (April 2011) & 3 more to graduate today

End-of-course Graduation 4: Sept 2011 – 10 graduates (which is today!):

All 7 in the 6th batch (Aug 2011) & 3 out of 5 in the 7th batch (Sept 2011), which is today! – Could they stand-up, please!

The million dollars question is: Would there be an eighth (8th) batch?

Between July 2011 and August 2011, we have received 11 applications, making a total of 67 applications received from inception. Eight (8) out the eleven applicants were retained. Therefore, currently we have 8 new recruits (interns) ready to move forward with the course in Sept 5th, 2011. *Could they all please, rise! – Thank you, wishing you a good time with us for the next three months! Begin networking with the graduates! Your graduation is fixed for December 17th, 2011, may you work hard enough to be graduated then, good luck.*

It is worth mentioning that we train these young and energetic Cameroonians at no cost. In addition, we support them with training materials and grant them free access to our resources.

To be honest with you, we are unable to train all those who submit applications because of inadequate resources. With your presence here today, we hope one day, this will no longer be an excuse.

Therefore, it is normal with us to raise funds to carry out our projects. We dedicate our efforts and services rendered participants to the less privilege. As such we made a fervent appeal to and through them to you, to support the organization in any way possible, that is, if they appreciate the training, to fulfill its burning desire to cater for the less privilege including orphans and other minority groups. It is our duty to raise their hopes! And give one child: opportunity to life! opportunity to education! opportunity to medical services!...and you can name the rest. Just contact us, whenever, however, to make a contribution towards these undue living situations of many out there! *"...although, a drop cannot make an ocean, drops combine to form one"* – *W. A. Abia, **No gift (in kind, material and or cash) is small!***

The participants chose to carry out yet another project when they ought to be graduating. I am talking about the fundraising project which is an integral aspect of their end-of-internship graduation ceremony.

What a great idea! What a great determination to aspire in the domain of project planning, management and leadership! With our close studying of you guys, we are delighted to refer to your batches as the ***"Proud Motivators"***

Distinguished guest, ladies and gents, please do excuse us for any shortcoming in the course of the ceremony. With your criticisms and or advice we would do better in future, it is our dream; please do make it come true! By so doing, you would have written your name in our list of friends.

Our membership is open and you are welcomed to join us now!

Our dear volunteer staff and facilitators, God will surely reward you! For your unflinching services to mankind!

Our dear graduates, Congratulations!!!

Our dear guest, I wish you all a very pleasing stay with us.

God bless you,

God bless PMLIP/IHAF,

God bless our Partners/Sponsors,

God bless Cameroon

Thank you for your kind attention!!!

*Sincerely, **Wilfred A. Abia**, Internship Coordinator, CEO & Board Chair (IHAF). Y'de Sept 3rd 2011.*