

LexMundi Pro Bono Foundation

Lex Mundi Pro Bono Foundation News - August 2014

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Measuring Lex Mundi's Global Pro Bono Impact

Since the [Lex Mundi Pro Bono Foundation](#) (Foundation) launched in 2006, lawyers from 92 Lex Mundi member firms in 57 countries and 35 U.S. states have provided critical pro bono legal services on more than 940 separate legal projects for more than 440 of the world's leading social entrepreneurs. However, these numbers only begin to capture the collective impact that Lex Mundi member firms are having on the global social entrepreneurship movement.

In order to tell the powerful impact story of the Lex Mundi network, the Foundation has been surveying all member firms to capture examples of the great pro bono work that each firm and its lawyers are doing in their communities. So far, firms have responded enthusiastically. Below are just two examples of the incredible impact that Lex Mundi member firms are having on social entrepreneurs, and on the lives of countless people in the communities that they are working to improve.

Has your firm participated in the survey yet? If not, please contact [Carrie Siegrist](#) to share your firm's impact and to be featured in our 2014 Impact Report.

On behalf of the Foundation, thank you for your support of our work. We look forward to continuing to working with each of you to help social entrepreneurs improve lives and communities around the world.

Chloe Holderness, Managing Director
Dave Roll, Founder and Associate Director
Carrie Siegrist, Senior Program Officer
Kevin Frisch, Legal Fellow

Match Profile: Luz del Futuro "Future Light Cooperative" / Alvarado y Asociados (Nicaragua)



Bluefields is one of the most impoverished regions of Nicaragua, the second poorest country in the Western Hemisphere. Of the 50,000 residents of Bluefields, 90% live on less than \$2.00 a day causing many women and children to forage through municipal dumpsites for food, clothes, and scrap metal. Bluefields produces 22 tons of garbage daily, more than half of which is unsalvageable and ends up in roadside dumps, sewers, and the ocean. While there is no shortage of trash in the region, one woman from Bluefields explains that the area's poorest populace is reliant on small trash deposits

from wealthier districts where people are more likely to throw away clothes, meat, vegetables, and scrap metal. The situation is also exacerbated by local men who take the most valuable items for themselves, furthering the burden for women and children trash-pickers.

Luz del Futuro, “Future Light Cooperative,” was an initiative supported by Libby McDonald of the Community Innovators Lab at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology. The Cooperative’s pilot program targeted 26 female waste collectors and over 200 children who work alongside their mothers to take part in developing a school system that works to increase knowledge and understanding about energy use, waste production, and water practice in the community. Luz del Futuro operates near a dumpsite in Bluefields and employs the group to recycle waste materials, which provides safer and more stable incomes for these women and children. The program is designed to transform tangible experiences, such as the process of building a school and recycling, into learning paradigms that will engage and empower women and children to implement their ideas and improve the waste-pickers community. This hands-on approach, founded on real experiences, offers a revolutionary educational method that has been producing material impact for the over 200 women and children participating to date.

[Alvarado y Asociados](#), Lex Mundi’s member firm for Nicaragua, was connected to Luz del Futuro by the Lex Mundi Pro Bono Foundation. The firm provided critical pro bono assistance to Libby by sharing how to form the Cooperative. Founding the cooperative was imperative so that the women and children were able to be legally recognized to do their important work. Alvarado y Asociados provided the necessary local legal information to allow the cooperative to form, which ultimately enabled this critical initiative to come to life in the impoverished municipality of Bluefields. After providing the initial assistance to Luz del Futuro in 2012, Alvarado’s timely and critical pro bono assistance was instrumental in the formation of two additional site launches as Luz scaled.

Impact: Through the work of the Foundation and Alvarado y Asociados, the lives of hundreds of women in children are being transformed and improved.

Match Profile: Career Moves / CHSH (Austria)



In Austria, roughly 8% of the total population is deemed to have a severe disability. Of that number, 13% live in poverty, a figure more than double the national percentage. The Austrian welfare system places individuals with disabilities in distinct school systems and specialized workplaces which are normally subsidized and separated from the conventional labor market. While the system was designed to assist those with disabilities, there is an inherent stigma within the classification process, causing many people with handicaps to remain unemployed despite efforts to avoid such stigmatization.

Gregor Demblin, an innovative social entrepreneur, felt this stigmatization first hand after a severe diving accident left him paralyzed and permanently confined to a wheelchair. In 2009, Demblin launched Career Moves, Europe’s first online job platform to provide an easy and effective way for people with disabilities to assimilate into conventional labor markets. Career Moves serves as an online job platform that simultaneously incorporates the needs of disabled workers, creating a centralized and inclusive portal for all Austrian job seekers.

[CHSH](#), Lex Mundi’s member firm for Austria, has been assisting Demblin on a pro bono basis since the earliest stages of Career Moves. CHSH has provided Demblin with legal support on a host of different issues which established the company’s strong legal framework and allowed for valuable partnerships with banks, large international private companies, and other employers.

Dr. Benedikt Spiegelfeld, a Senior Partner at CHSH, stated that the firm’s work with Demblin has fostered a deep understanding among his colleagues of the daily problems and difficulties people with disabilities face, particularly when unemployed. As Dr. Spiegelfeld describes, CHSH’s work with Demblin and similar pro bono

initiatives have allowed young associates to gain unparalleled impactful experience: “Working with people who fall outside ‘normal society’ is the most meaningful and important method from which our young associates can learn. These types of clients are much more dependent on the work that we do than our normal clientele. It is extremely decisive whether you achieve your goals for these clients because our work enables them to live or to live better. Beyond the legal experience, our young associates are touched by the faith and situation in which people are able to endure.”

Today, Career Moves offers over 4,000 jobs for people with disabilities and has established employment partnerships with major companies such as McDonald’s, Ikea, and Starbucks. Each year, Career Moves advises up to 1,000 companies on integration strategies for people with handicaps. Recently, Demblin’s team worked with McDonald’s Austria on an HR plan that aims to offer 300 jobs for persons with disabilities within the next two years. In addition to their advisory role, Career Moves partners with several organizations that conduct trainings and workshops on how to include handicapped people in the workplace. The Austrian Ministry of Social Affairs has also become a key collaborator and funder of Career Moves, broadening their scope and gravity of impact as well as enabling similar programs to emerge.

Demblin was elected to the Ashoka fellowship for social entrepreneurs in 2013 and received the 1st European Award for Social Entrepreneurship and Disability given by the European Network for Corporate Social Responsibility and Disability in conjunction with the European Commission. A recent partnership with the Austrian Unemployment Agency and other popular career portals is projected to significantly increase the number of job opportunities for people with disabilities.

Career Moves’s innovative model has been so successful that they are looking at expansion opportunities and intend to create similar platforms and support systems in other European countries, particularly focusing on opening offices in Ireland and Germany within the next five years.

Impact: Through the pro bono work of CHSH, thousands of people with disabilities are finding job opportunities and eliminating stigmas.