

January 31st, 2015

Irving K. Barber British Columbia Scholarship Society

c/o The Victoria Foundation

#109 – 645 Fort St.

Victoria, BC V8W 1G2

Mr Hugh Gordon,

I am writing you today to thank you for the trust invested in me by the Irving K. Barber British Columbia Scholarship Society by awarding me with the Premier International Scholarship and to outline briefly the impact this support had on the work of IOM in Nepal and therefor on my experience and my career goals.

I joined the Disaster Risk Reduction Team in IOM Nepal in June 2014 just in time to launch a new project that aims to make the 83 open spaces in the valley, which were identified by IOM for the delivery of humanitarian aid in response to an earthquake, more accessible for communities that live in the Kathmandu Valley. As I started to get a better understanding of the urgency of the situation, I realized that most of disaster preparedness education focuses on things like “Drop, Cover, and Hold” or to prepare a “Go-Bag”. As important as these measures are to prepare for disaster, the main question that presented itself to me was “Drop, Cover, and Hold And then WHAT”? Today I am proud to say that we have made a significant step forward to present the population in the Kathmandu Valley with a tangible way to cope with a post-disaster situation by communicating the location of designated emergency response sites. My contribution, among others, was to design an interactive webpage in which I placed emphasize on finding SAM after an earthquake. SAM stands for “Shelter, Aid, Medical help”. These so called Evac-Sites, which were strategically selected from the 83 open spaces, are particularly relevant to the general public.

The website can be found at <http://ktmevacsites.com/>

Besides working on the webpage design, I was able to support the team by creating two short animation videos, designed multiple posters and brochures, conducted presentations to community members and political leaders, and coordinated a public information campaign.

My contribution to the work of IOM in Nepal was well beyond only the disaster risk reduction project, but also involved developing new project ideas that contribute to ongoing peacebuilding efforts such as ensuring service delivery to conflict victims and strengthening women's roles in land right negotiations which are at the heart of the decade long conflict in Nepal. Working with the leading organization in the field of migration gave me also a unique insight into migration dynamics that are invaluable considering my goal of working for CIC. This placement was inspiring me to think larger, more globally, and recognize that migration is a trademark of our time that needs to be holistically addressed both by sending countries as well as host countries. Both types of countries, as well as the migrant, can benefit if migration is viewed as something worth facilitating rather than something negative that needs to be prevented.

Finally, and most importantly, these last six months, enabled in part by your generous contribution, had a profound impact on my four children who came with me to Nepal. These children have seen with their own eyes now how other people live, worship, work, and cope with challenges. They realize now that the way we live in Canada is by no means the only way of doing life and that people around the globe, despite different cultures, religions, and language are having the same basic needs as we have. This trip laid the foundation for them to live with an open mindset and global awareness that cannot be instilled in a classroom. Their horizon got expanded and along with my own experience became global citizens without even knowing it.

I am proud to say that at the end of my placement I was offered a contract to continue to work with IOM. While I chose to decline the offer due to logistic reasons, I sincerely hope that this overseas experience will continue to shape my work in Canada and beyond. Thank you for your support and trust.

Sincerely,

Franz Meier