

# Diplôme d'Études Supérieures en Leadership Humanitaire (DESLH) Impact Study

## IN BRIEF



The [Diplôme d'Études Supérieures en Leadership Humanitaire \(DESLH\)](#) is an intensive and challenging postgraduate humanitarian leadership development course. Delivered in French and aimed at humanitarians working in West and Central Africa, the course is accredited by Deakin University, taught by the Centre for Humanitarian Leadership and leads to the award of a Graduate Certificate of Humanitarian Leadership.

Globally, there are few—if any—university-accredited graduate certificates for humanitarian leaders offered in French. The DESLH is therefore a rare and potentially unique opportunity for humanitarians in West and Central Africa to engage in a French-speaking university-level course designed to recognise and strengthen local capacity and impact for humanitarian action.

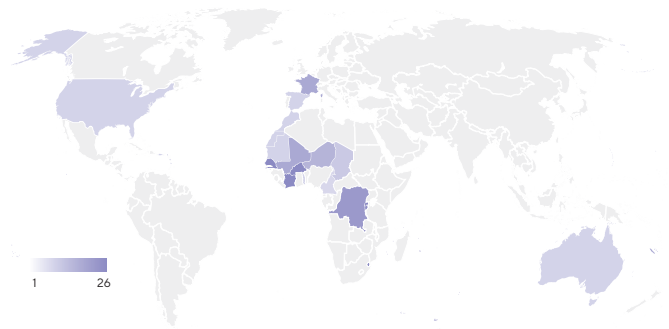
The DESLH Impact Study investigated the first six cohorts of the DESLH through a series of research questions designed to test the program's theory of change—to contribute to more coordinated, evidence-based, and effective humanitarian responses—and presented evidence-based recommendations for improving the course.

*This is what we found.*

### Our alumni

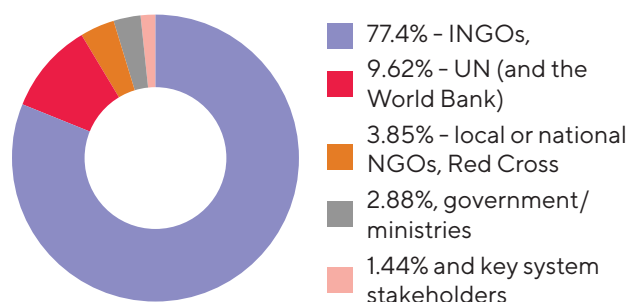
There have been 208 graduates over six cohorts from 2018 to 2023, from 27 countries—and 89% of DESLH graduates are from the Global South.

### DESLH Alumni nationalities



### DESLH Alumni employers

DESLH alumni are employed predominantly by INGOs. The countries they work in include those in northwest and northeast Africa, the Middle East, Haiti, Madagascar, Afghanistan, Switzerland, and Italy, highlighting the global mobility and reach of the DESLH graduate network.



## Emerging leaders

DESLH alumni are emerging leaders in their fields, demonstrating impressive gains in their knowledge of core humanitarian skills and subjects, humanitarian ethics, principles and values, localisation, history of humanitarian aid, humanitarian system actors, and humanitarian strategy and operational leadership.

Beyond the course, DESLH graduates report sharing their knowledge and skills with colleagues and professional networks through role modelling new leadership behaviours, organising workshops, and passing on knowledge of key resources within their teams and organisations. Many DESLH graduates have created new roles within their organisations dedicated to engaging with local and national organisations; organising localisation workshops with colleagues and professional networks; and increasing the number of local organisations with which they engage.

92%



**of graduates demonstrated improvements in their humanitarian leadership behaviours across at least four aspects of humanitarian leadership by the end of the course.**

89%



**of graduates demonstrated improvements in their humanitarian leadership knowledge.**

## Leaders for today, and tomorrow

As a francophone, university-accredited course for humanitarian leaders, *the DESLH is making a unique and tangible contribution to localisation and humanitarian leadership in West and Central Africa.*

The DESLH is providing an effective form of leadership development which combines intensive learning experiences with highly individualised coaching and critical reflection to support participants through a leadership development journey that continues well after the course ends. The flow-on effect of this experience on the humanitarian system is amplified through graduates' role modelling new leadership behaviours, leading new initiatives to support localisation, sharing

key resources with colleagues, and progressing through the humanitarian system.

As a leadership development course, however, the DESLH makes the greatest impact through the quality of learning experiences it provides students. For this net impact to continue, *the DESLH needs to secure funding to provide future cohorts.*

## What's next?

To further improve the course design and delivery and increase the impacts of the DESLH's outcomes, this study recommends some key actions, including:

- Engaging more directly with local and national NGOs in West and Central Africa to increase applications to the DESLH from these organisations to improve inclusion and diversity, and especially encourage enrolment from women and local NGO staff.
- Prioritising inclusion and diversity in all aspects of the course design and delivery—including guest speakers, mentors, coaches, and faculty—to provide a more representative faculty that better represents the diversity of the international humanitarian system and to ensure DESLH students benefit from a diversity of experience, expertise, and backgrounds.
- Implementing standardised pre- and post-course Knowledge, Attitudes, and Practices (KAP) surveys to enable comparison of key outcomes at the individual and cohort level.
- Investing in a longitudinal impact study to investigate medium to long-term outcomes of the DESLH in terms of graduates' behaviours and career progression, and course impact on the humanitarian response.



## Diplôme d'Études Supérieures en Leadership Humanitaire – Our Impact

208



graduates over six cohorts from 2018 to 2023, from 27 countries.

89%



of these DESLH graduates are from the Global South.



95%

rated the DESLH as either satisfactory or highly satisfactory.

92%



of graduates demonstrated improvements in their humanitarian leadership behaviours across at least four aspects of humanitarian leadership by the end of the course.

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89%



of graduates demonstrated improvements in their humanitarian leadership knowledge.

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