

IÉSEG Launches Program for Women Affected by Violence

By BizEd Staff

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Empowering Women to Build New Lives through Business

THREE PARTNER ORGANIZATIONS based in Paris, France, have created a training program designed to empower women who have experienced violence. Last September, IÉSEG School of Management, ESCP Europe Business School, and the nonprofit Led by Her launched the Led By Her Entrepreneurship Program, which offers customized training to women who have overcome violence or faced marginalization because of religion, gender, or trauma.

According to United Nations data, more than one-third of women around the world will experience violence, which can adversely affect their physical, emotional, social, and financial well-being for years to come, says Janice Byrne, professor at IÉSEG and academic director of the program. Entrepreneurial training, she says, "can help women who have experienced violence develop a sense of financial security and self-confidence." By supporting their economic empowerment, business schools can have a tremendous impact on their lives.

The inaugural group of 25 participants began attending training modules in September. They meet two to three days a month, completing two three-hour modules each day. They also attend conferences and other activities, access materials online, and work with dedicated mentors whom they see once a month. The women will continue attending workshops until June. The goal is for each participant to develop and launch her own business by the end of the program.

The women were recommended to the program by local support groups in Paris connected by the Led By Her network, and each was selected via an application and interview process. "Organizations working with victims are delighted to have a 'next step' where they can direct women who are ready to rebuild their lives and create a positive future for themselves," explains Andrew Miller, press officer for IÉSEG.

"The partners were looking for women who were determined to start their own businesses or social ventures." He emphasizes that this initiative is an example of how business schools can partner with charities and local authorities to make a difference in their communities.

Volunteers, who include IÉSEG and ESCP faculty and external facilitators, are providing the training in finance, marketing and communication, negotiation, management, and business planning. Public and private partners—including insurance company AXA and cosmetic company LUSH—are providing financial, technical, and material resources to the initiative.

This activity reflects the mission of Led By Her, which is to give women in France the freedom and ability to build the lives they desire, says Chiara Chondi, the organization's founder. She notes that each woman's new business will be "a powerful source of inspiration for other women, by showing them what is possible starting from where they are today."

Learn more about the Led By Her organization at www.ledbyher.org.

