

Mental Health and Psychosocial Support

Frequently overlooked and often neglected, mental health conditions pose a major public health challenge.

International Medical Corps is one of the few global emergency response organizations with the capacity to address the immediate and lasting mental health and psychosocial support (MHPSS) needs of those

struck by disaster, and to help people with preexisting mental health conditions. We are an acknowledged leader in responding to MHPSS needs in emergencies, known for the quality of our needs assessments, training programs and services. We are committed to building sustainable local capacity and providing comprehensive, integrated, community-based mental health services and psychosocial support activities that promote the resilience and overall well-being of crisis-affected communities.



As a leader in the field of global MHPSS, we contribute to and work in line with national and global guidelines for improving the mental health and well-being of affected populations. We strengthen national health systems by training general healthcare staff as well as specialized providers—including psychologists, social workers and psychiatrists—on mental health.

Our integrated programming approach increases the availability of accessible, non-stigmatizing, culturally acceptable and high-quality mental health services. Our psychosocial activities teach life skills, offer recreational outlets and build social support networks while empowering affected populations, including children and youth. International Medical Corps helps people affected by mental health conditions connect with their families, contribute to their communities and advocate for their rights.

We integrate MHPSS into our other work, including health, gender-based violence, child protection, physical rehabilitation and nutrition. We have also developed globally recognized guidance for the integration of mental health into healthcare settings in humanitarian contexts, and offer an [online toolkit](#) with a compendium of resources.

We also are a respected global leader in incorporating MHPSS into emergency response. Our activities include conducting rapid MHPSS needs assessments, training frontline workers in psychological first aid and other core topics, and establishing

and co-chairing MHPSS Technical Working Groups. In new and acute emergencies, we support the development of an MHPSS response by conducting rapid needs assessments that inform humanitarian actors of the situation on the ground, the MHPSS needs of affected populations, the most prevalent stressors and coping mechanisms, the availability of services, gaps, and cultural and contextual information relevant to delivering MHPSS services. International Medical Corps guides the response by establishing and supporting MHPSS coordination in partnership with local and international stakeholders and service providers.

THE GLOBAL MHPSS CHALLENGE

Mental health conditions, including chronic and severe disorders, are one of the great invisible burdens in all societies, accounting for four of the 10 leading causes of disability worldwide. Populations affected by conflict and crisis not only face stressful experiences—including violence and loss—but also often have to adapt to the challenges of new environments, such as transitional and camp facilities. Distressing experiences and fragmented or insufficient services can lead to unaddressed mental health and psychosocial issues, affecting the welfare of individuals and families. According to the World Health Organization, the percentage of people experiencing common mental health conditions in emergencies can double to 22%, while those with pre-existing and severe mental health conditions remain especially vulnerable—yet often have no access to care.

GLOBAL PROJECTS

International Medical Corps is involved in several key global MHPSS projects:

- ▶ In collaboration with WHO, we co-lead an annual global capacity-building initiative in mental health integration, using the mhGAP-Humanitarian Intervention Guide and accompanying operations manual, as well as International Medical Corps' Mental Health Integration Toolkit.
- ▶ We participate in global coordination initiatives, such as the Interagency Standing Committee MHPSS Reference Group and related thematic groups. International Medical Corps has co-chaired a group and guidance note on addressing suicide in humanitarian settings, and participates in groups on addressing substance use, engaging men and boys, and fostering community-based MHPSS.
- ▶ We developed online [Principles of Psychological First Aid training](#) to provide first responders with an overview on how to humanely and effectively support those affected by crisis and adversity.



NATIONAL MENTAL HEALTH SYSTEM STRENGTHENING: LEBANON

International Medical Corps has been a leader in MHPSS programming in Lebanon since 2006. We helped support the creation and launch of the National Mental Health Programme within the Ministry of Public Health and continue to support its initiatives. We adapted a collaboratively developed model of integrating MHPSS services into primary healthcare within the Lebanese context—including system strengthening, capacity building, and monitoring and evaluation—that ensures high-quality standards of care and post-emergency financing. With our support, this model is being scaled up for nationwide expansion, providing a clear roadmap toward the nationwide integration of MHPSS services into primary healthcare facilities.

ADDRESSING THE MENTAL HEALTH TREATMENT GAP: CENTRAL AFRICAN REPUBLIC (CAR)

There is a shortage of mental health staff in CAR, which has gone through more than 40 years of conflict, and where MHPSS problems are widespread. To address some of these needs, International Medical Corps' MHPSS team has rolled out strategic Mental Health Gap Action Programme (mhGAP) Humanitarian Intervention Guide training and supervision, equipping primary healthcare providers with the competencies and confidence to assess, manage and follow up with people who have mental health conditions and disorders. We have supported these services by increasing access to scalable psychological interventions, including Problem Management Plus (PM+), an evidence-based intervention for depression, anxiety and stress, delivered by trained and supervised lay counselors. We are committed to cultural and contextual adaptation to promote community buy-in and support.

COORDINATION AND COLLABORATION: UKRAINE

Since the Russian invasion of Ukraine in February 2022, many international and national actors prioritized the pressing mental health needs that were being reported as a result of the widescale violence and terrifying experience of occupation. This led to hundreds of agencies attending the national-level MHPSS Technical Working Group (TWG), which previously was attended regularly only by a small handful of actors. The large number of organizations implementing, or planning to implement, MHPSS activities across Ukraine required significant coordination of efforts to avoid duplication of services and to ensure that identified needs were being met. International Medical Corps and WHO continue to co-chair the National MHPSS TWG and have been working to ensure that all MHPSS assessment data is shared, services are mapped and training efforts are collaborative and inclusive. Further, to address the wide array of needs, which vary depending on geographic implementation, International Medical Corps also co-chairs regional sub-MHPSS TWGs in Lviv and Odesa oblasts. This coordination ensures alignment between international and national agencies, as well as a close relationship with key national stakeholders, including relevant ministries and the First Lady's Office of Ukraine.



INNOVATION AND OPERATIONAL RESEARCH

We created a global case study, based on an evaluation of our programs in Central African Republic, Iraq, Libya, South Sudan and Venezuela, to strengthen and expand guidance for remote MHPSS programming. We also were recently part of an innovative five-year research project STRENGTHS to measure the impact of Group Problem Management Plus, a scalable psychological intervention adapted for Syrian refugees.

In Jordan, we developed RELAX, a mobile application to improve mental health literacy and increase access to MHPSS services via educational materials, a map showing MHPSS service locations and a link to the MHPSS hotline.

At the global level, we are working with a globally renowned family therapist to develop a family systems-based psychosocial support intervention to promote family well-being and positive coping.



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A pre-eminent first responder since 1984, International Medical Corps delivers emergency medical and related services to those affected by conflict, disaster and disease, no matter where they are, no matter what the conditions. We also train people in their communities, providing them with the skills they need to recover, chart their own path to self-reliance and become effective first responders themselves.

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