

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 conflict, disaster and disease, 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, and supervision programs and services. We are committed to building sustainable local capacity and to 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 integrating MHPSS services and by training general healthcare staff and specialized providers—including psychologists, social workers and psychiatrists—on mental health.

Our comprehensive 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 building the capacity of 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 health, child protection, physical rehabilitation and nutrition programming, as well as our services related to violence against women and girls. 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 leading

coordination efforts by establishing and co-chairing MHPSS Technical Working Groups. In new and acute emergencies, we help develop MHPSS responses by generating needs assessments that inform humanitarian actors about the situation on the ground while examining the MHPSS needs of affected populations, the most prevalent stressors and coping mechanisms, gaps in services, the availability of services, and cultural and contextual information relevant to delivering effective MHPSS services. International Medical Corps guides responses 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, 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-led an annual global capacity-building initiative for seven years focusing on 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. We participate in the Child and Family Thematic Group, as well as groups on addressing substance use in humanitarian settings (piloting new training materials in Somalia and South Sudan), mapping and assessment, 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.



EFFECTIVE EMERGENCY RESPONSE: GAZA

International Medical Corps is providing MHPSS services in our field hospitals, helping to save lives and mitigate the consequences of the ongoing war. Despite the complex and hazardous work environment, the MHPSS team continues to help vulnerable people. To achieve this, MHPSS services have been integrated into all service-delivery points.

The MHPSS team—which includes psychologists, psychiatrists, psychosocial workers and volunteers—offers lifesaving individual and group psychosocial support, counseling and psychoeducation for adults and children. The team also has provided significant training to local NGOs on Self-Help Plus, which helps humanitarian workers take care of themselves in difficult situations, and has taught recovery techniques to promote children's well-being and resilience.

We are tackling challenges, such as the scarcity of psychotropic medications, by partnering with several community-based organizations that have taken on the responsibility of collecting residual psychotropic medication from destroyed and abandoned primary healthcare facilities and hospitals. We also are creating a referral map to strengthen the referral pathway among actors, ensuring that we can continue to provide services. The Gaza team coordinates with international organizations while actively participating in the MHPSS Technical Working Group (TWG) and supporting MHPSS needs assessments to study the effect of the war on children.



NATIONAL MENTAL HEALTH SYSTEM STRENGTHENING: MALI

International Medical Corps plays a leading role in MHPSS in Mali. At an institutional level, we provide crucial financial and technical support to the Ministry of Health for the development of the National Strategic Plan 2025–2029. Our interventions are aligned with government priorities, particularly the integration of mental health care into general health services.

In addition to promoting this integration at the primary healthcare level, International Medical Corps has contributed to the establishment of psychiatric care units in four secondary health districts, enhancing local treatment capacity. At the tertiary level, we have supported the psychiatry department at Point G by providing health infrastructure, medical equipment and IT resources, ensuring a coherent and complementary approach, and guaranteeing effective and integrated care across all levels of the health pyramid.

COORDINATION AND COLLABORATION: UKRAINE

Since the Russian full-scale invasion of Ukraine in February 2022, international and national organizations have prioritized addressing the pressing mental health needs that have resulted from the widescale violence and terrifying experience of occupation. This led hundreds of agencies to attend the national-level MHPSS 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 requires significant coordination of efforts to avoid duplication of services and to ensure that identified needs are being met.

International Medical Corps and the World Health Organization (WHO) continue to co-chair the TWG, which is now the largest such working group globally. International Medical Corps and WHO have worked to ensure that all MHPSS assessment data is shared, services are mapped and training efforts are collaborative and inclusive. To address the wide array of needs, which vary depending on geographic implementation, International Medical Corps also co-chaired regional sub-MHPSS TWGs in the south and west of Ukraine. This coordination ensures alignment between international and national agencies, as well as a close relationship with key national stakeholders, including relevant ministries and the All-Ukrainian Mental Health Program “How are you?”—an initiative of First Lady Olena Zelenska.



INNOVATION AND OPERATIONAL RESEARCH

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

At the global level, we worked with a globally renowned family therapist to develop a family systems-based psychosocial support intervention to promote family well-being and positive coping. In addition, we collaborated with a child psychiatrist to develop International Medical Corps' guidelines on providing MHPSS services for children. Most recently, we developed a training package on loss and grief, which we rolled out in Ethiopia.



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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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