

Mental Health and Psychosocial Support

Overview

During a crisis response, mental health and psychosocial support (MHPSS) aims to promote, protect and support the well-being of crisis-affected populations, with activities aimed at reducing psychosocial vulnerabilities, promoting community resilience and ownership, and supporting aid that takes into account psychosocial and cultural diversity issues.



Key Points

- IOM's Mental Health and Psychosocial Support (MHPSS) interventions aim to promote, protect and support the well-being of crisis-affected populations.
- Activities are aimed at reducing psychosocial vulnerabilities, promoting community resilience and ownership, and supporting aid that takes into account psychosocial and cultural diversity issues. MHPSS activities can take the form of components within CCCM, Health, Protection and Migrants Assistance programs as well as dedicated MHPSS programmes.
- A typical MHPSS Emergency program in IOM includes: - Assessment and mapping - Direct support and referral - Capacity building - Support to IASC coordination on the matter

Key Considerations

Staffing and Roster: If you want to initiate an emergency mental health and psychosocial support program in a mission with no prior MHPSS expertise, please contact the Mental Health, Psychosocial Response and Intercultural Communication Section

(contactpss@iom.int) to put you in contact with IOM staff and external professionals with the required expertise.

If you hired a new MHPSS manager, please refer them to the [Mental Health and Psychosocial Response section](#) and the [Manual on Community-Based Mental Health and Psychosocial Support in Emergencies and Displacement](#).

Relevance to IOM's Emergency Operations

As an integrated component of IOM's overall humanitarian response, particularly in natural disasters where IOM is Camp Coordination and Camp Management (CCCM) Cluster lead, MHPSS activities can take the form of components within CCCM, Health, Protection and Migrants Assistance programmes as well as dedicated MHPSS programmes.

MHPSS is recognized by the Migration Crisis Operational Framework (MCOF) as one of the 15 sectors of assistance to address before, during and after crises. As such, MHPSS assistance is frequently part of larger multi-sectoral assistance delivered by IOM. Coordination within IOM with other sectors of assistance is critical.



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Coordination

IOM is an active member of the Reference Group on Mental Health and Psychosocial Support in Emergency Settings, an IASC associated entity, and it is co-chairing field-based groups in several emergencies. Globally, IOM co-chairs the thematic working groups on Community-Based MHPSS, MHPSS for Men & Boys, as well as the working group on MHPSS & Peacebuilding. Whenever possible, IOM can initiate a MHPSS Working Group at the country level and act as a chair or co-chair, promoting adherence to the IASC guidelines and mainstreaming of MHPSS.

Since 2001, IOM has provided direct mental health and psychosocial support and capacity-building in more than 72 countries worldwide. Some notable examples include the support given to Rohingya migrants displaced in Cox's Bazar in 2017, support to migrants in transit areas and returnees in Iraq since 2014, support to IDPs in Nigeria and South Sudan since 2013, as well as a comprehensive approach to support IDPs and refugees in Ukraine and neighboring countries since 2022.

Operations

During emergencies, IOM may carry out different MHPSS interventions, covered in the [IOM Manual on Community-Based Mental Health and Psychosocial Support in Emergencies and Displacement](#).

All activities are developed taking into account key elements of programming. Including engaging with communities, assessment, mapping, monitoring and evaluation. For additional information see the [Manual on Community-Based Mental Health and Psychosocial Support in Emergencies and Displacement](#) and the section on references and tools below.

Capacity-Building and Technical Supervision: IOM works to strengthen the capacity of its own offices, governments, professionals and partner agencies providing MHPSS services in emergencies, while ensuring adherence to quality standards. This is achieved at a global level through the development of tools and manuals and global training activities such as the IOM Summer School in Psychosocial Interventions in Migration, Emergency and Displacement, in cooperation with the Scuola Superiore Sant'Anna in Pisa. At the field level, capacity building activities include trainings in Psychological First Aid (PFA) and Supportive Communication for all humanitarian workers, trainings in MHPSS considerations for CCCM actors, trainings in intervention models for MHPSS professionals acting at the community, focused and specialized levels. Trainings are organized in collaboration with the IOM International expert network, and range from trainings in conflict mediation to trainings in transcultural psychiatric models. As part of preparedness efforts, IOM organizes, often consolidating emergency training, Executive Masters programmes in different facets of MHPSS provision which take place over the weekends for professionals active in the response. See for example [this video](#) on the Masters in Psychosocial Support and Dialogue organized in Lebanon in 2014. For more information, see the [Mental Health, Psychosocial Response and Intercultural Communication page](#) on the [IOM Migration Health website](#).

Direct Support: In line with the IASC Guidelines on MHPSS in Emergency Settings, IOM directly implements MHPSS activities to address the needs of crisis affected populations. Services include the quick deployment of multi-disciplinary psychosocial mobile teams (PMTs) able to provide multi-layered psychosocial support and the mainstreaming of MHPSS. In early recovery, the work of the teams can be consolidated in recreational, counselling, community and/or resource centers, as in Lebanon and Iraq. IOM follows a community-based approach to organize socio-relational and cultural activities, creative and art-based activities, rituals and celebrations, sport and play, non-formal education and informal learning activities as well as counselling and community-based support for people with severe mental disorders. IOM integrates MHPSS in conflict transformation and mediation, livelihood support, and protection.

Coordination: IOM is an active member of the Global Reference Group on MHPSS in Emergency Settings, an IASC associated entity, and actively participates in the field based MHPSS technical coordination groups. On a global level, IOM is co-chairing the Thematic Working Groups on Community-based MHPSS, MHPSS for Men & Boys, and MHPSS & Peacebuilding. It is also co-chairing the field based technical groups in several occasions (Ukraine (Eastern oblasts), Venezuela, Mozambique, Tigray/Ethiopia, Northeast Nigeria, among others). IOM regularly participates in inter-agency assessments and mapping exercises.

Lessons Learned / Best Practice

IOM is a key partner in the provision of MHPSS services in northeast Nigeria, supporting the State Ministry of Health (SMoH) as co-chair of the MHPSS sub-WG and providing direct psychosocial support and services to the affected population in Borno, Adamawa and Yobe States. IOM has established a multi-tiered psychosocial program and has been operating both in MHPSS centers and through multidisciplinary psychosocial mobile teams mainly based in camps. The mobility of these teams - composed of Community Mobilizers, a Social Worker, Lay Counselor, Teacher and Community Resource person - has promoted continuity and quality of care in a truly challenging and unstable environment. For instance, a team of 110 members working in twelve PMTs has provided more than 200,000 services in northeast Nigeria in 2021 and 2022. In addition, the training provided to the members of the mobile team has created preparedness in the country and has contributed to strengthening the capacity of both the host and the displaced communities to deal with future emergencies.

Links

- [Mental Health, Psychosocial Response and Intercultural Communication](#)
- [IOM Manual on Community-Based Mental Health and Psychosocial Support in Emergencies and Displacement](#)
- [IASC Guidelines on Mental Health and Psychosocial Support in Emergency Settings](#)

- [IASC Mental Health and Psychosocial Support in Emergency Settings: What Should Camp Coordinators and Camp Management Actors Know?](#)
- [IOM Tools for Psychosocial Needs Assessment in Emergency Displacement, Early Recovery and Return](#)

Media



[Syria: Executive Professional Masters in Psychosocial Support and Dialogue](#)



[PSS Mobile Teams- Nigeria](#)



[IOM Training in Psychosocial Support, dialogue and social cohesion in Lebanon](#)



[IOM Burundi psychosocial](#)



[Lebanon: Letter from a Refugee](#)



[IOM Manual on Community-Based MHPSS in Emergencies and Displacement – Chapter 1](#)



[Manuel de l'OIM sur les SMSPS dans les situations d'urgence et de déplacement: Chapitre 1](#)



[IOM Manual on Community-Based MHPSS in Emergencies and Displacement – Chapters 5 through 7](#)



[Manuel de l'OIM sur les SMSPS dans les situations d'urgence et de déplacement – Chapitres 5 à 7](#)

Other Entries in this Topic

- [Guidance Documents and Tools for Mental Health and Psychosocial Support](#)

Contacts

For additional support and guidance on mental health and psychosocial assistance in emergencies, contact Guglielmo Schinina: gscchinina@iom.int or the Mental Health, Psychosocial Response and Intercultural Communication Section-Global: contactpps@iom.int.

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