



## Mental Health & Psychosocial



Mental illness is one of the great invisible burdens on all societies, accounting for 4 of the 10 leading causes of disability worldwide. In emergencies, the problem is greater still, as the percentage of the population suffering common mental disorders doubles, while those with pre-existing and severe mental health problems remain especially vulnerable and often have no access to care.

The impact of mental health on many of the world's nations, coupled with an alarming shortfall in accessible treatment options, led International Medical Corps to make sustainable, accessible mental health care a cornerstone of our relief and development programming. Today, we are one of the few international emergency response organizations with the capacity to address both the immediate psychosocial needs of communities struck by disaster and help those with pre-existing mental health disorders.



## MENTAL HEALTH: A CORNERSTONE OF OUR WORK

International Medical Corps works with internally displaced, refugee and host populations affected by disasters or armed conflict. These populations are likely to have faced past stressful experiences, such as violence and loss. They also have to adapt to the challenges of new environments, such as transitional and camp facilities, where access to even basic needs is often difficult. Distressing experiences and fragmented or insufficient services can lead to unaddressed mental health, psychosocial and protection issues, impacting the welfare and functionality of individuals and families. Affected populations have multiple and complex needs and require a comprehensive mental health and case management approach that identifies, supports and protects those who are vulnerable while promoting stability and recovery.

International Medical Corps is experienced in responding to mental health and psychosocial needs in the context of humanitarian crises, strengthening mental health systems and informing national policies in the longer-term development context. International Medical Corps is currently working in some 30 countries and specifically implementing Mental Health and Psychosocial Programs in 13 countries.

The social stigma of mental health problems, coupled with the pressure of more visible, urgent public health care needs, means that we invariably begin our work in an environment with little — if any — existing capacity. International Medical Corps' strategy for the delivery of mental health care is to establish community based mental health and psychosocial services, which aside from being cost effective, is an accessible, non-stigmatizing way to provide local populations with assistance for mental disorders without overtly singling out those who require subsequent treatment. A key aspect of our strategy is to train locals to recognize and treat the signs of mental disorders as part of mainstream, community level care and to work at the grassroots level to change attitudes towards the people with mental health disorders.

## ADVOCATING FOR THE INCLUSION OF MENTAL HEALTH IN HUMANITARIAN AND DEVELOPMENT CONTEXTS

Recognizing the importance of including mental health and psychosocial support in relief and development programs, International Medical Corps engages in mental health advocacy with national governments and global actors. When working with local communities, International Medical Corps promotes the rights of people with mental disorders, helps fight stigma, and facilitates participation and mutual support for those affected.

**THERE IS ONLY ONE  
PSYCHIATRIST PER EVERY  
TWO MILLION PEOPLE IN  
DEVELOPING COUNTRIES.**



**14% OF THE GLOBAL DISEASE  
BURDEN IS ATTRIBUTED TO  
MENTAL ILLNESS.**







## PROMOTING AND CONTRIBUTING TO BEST PRACTICES AND GUIDELINES

International Medical Corps is committed to following up-to-date best practices and internationally accepted guidelines such as the Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC) Guidelines on Mental Health and Psychosocial Support (MHPSS) in Emergency Settings, to which International Medical Corps has contributed. International Medical Corps has contributed to other numerous international tools and documents such as: Sphere; the World Health Organization (WHO) mhGAP guidelines for the integration of mental health into general health care; International Classification of Diseases and Related Health Problems (ICD-11) mental health classifications; the WHO/UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) MHPSS assessment toolkit; and the WHO Psychological First Aid (PFA) Guide for Field Workers, which International Medical Corps uses to develop PFA trainings as an integral part of International Medical Corps' emergency response to conflict and crises.

## TAKING THE LEAD ON MHPSS MAPPING, ASSESSMENT AND COORDINATION

International Medical Corps frequently facilitates coordination and information-sharing efforts among various agencies, both local and international. In both emergency and development contexts, International Medical Corps produces high quality MHPSS assessments to guide programming and share with other organizations and stakeholders. International Medical Corps co-leads MHPSS coordination groups in three countries alongside WHO and UNHCR. In Jordan and Libya, International Medical Corps has piloted and disseminated the WHO MHPSS 4W (“who is doing what where when”) mapping tool. In Libya, Jordan and Ethiopia, International Medical Corps also completed comprehensive MHPSS assessments of current capacities and needs, which have been cited as examples in the WHO/UNHCR Assessment Toolkit.



## INNOVATIVE PROGRAMS FOR CHILDREN, YOUTH AND THEIR CAREGIVERS

International Medical Corps' Early Child Development (ECD) programming is integrated within existing structures, such as nutrition programs, primary health care and community centers. ECD focuses on improving parent-child interactions and increasing parents' knowledge about the child's developmental milestones and emotional and cognitive needs. International Medical Corps' projects for children and youth are not only recreational, but also aim to build key life skills, involve families and community leaders, strengthen social support networks and make important contributions to community- building.



## INTEGRATING MENTAL HEALTH INTO PRIMARY HEALTH CARE

International Medical Corps uses a comprehensive approach to mental health and primary health care integration, including working with national governments, adapting global WHO mhGAP training materials to local contexts, providing both theoretical and practical training, supporting institutional changes and capacity-building efforts, and evaluating results to inform policy, practice and scale-up. International Medical Corps' mental health–primary health care integration programs have been implemented in over 10 countries worldwide.

## SETTING-UP MODEL COMMUNITY MENTAL HEALTH AND PSYCHOSOCIAL SUPPORT SERVICES

International Medical Corps has extensive experience in training and building the capacity of various professionals, such as social workers and psychologists, in order to provide more specialized services at the community level. In the Middle East, International Medical Corps has trained case managers to work as part of the primary health care system and within multi-disciplinary teams to ensure a continuum of effective services.

## CONTRIBUTING TO THE EVIDENCE BASE OF MHPSS PROGRAMMING AND GUIDELINES

Research and comprehensive evaluation components are integrated into several International Medical Corps programs. Especially in the field of MHPSS, it is important to not only show outputs but also outcomes (e.g. the impact of programs and services on psychosocial well-being and mental health). Such research and evaluation initiatives frequently benefit from our academic partnerships, such as those with John's Hopkins University and others.



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