

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 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.



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 crises 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.

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 (GBV) 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 have launched an [online toolkit](#) on the Mental Health Innovation Network website.

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, International Medical Corps supports development of the overall 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, the availability of services, and any other 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.





GLOBAL PROJECTS

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

- ▶ We lead a global capacity-building initiative in mental health integration, using the WHO-UNHCR mhGAP-Humanitarian Intervention Guide and accompanying operations manual, and International Medical Corps' Mental Health Integration Toolkit.
- ▶ We are developing online training on principles of psychological first aid, to provide first responders with an overview on how to prepare for a response, listen supportively and link individuals and families to various support services. The training also explains and emphasizes the importance of promoting responder well-being.

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 (MoPH) and continue to support its initiatives. We adapted a collaboratively developed model of integrating MHPSS services into primary healthcare to 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 adapted by the MoPH 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) 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 pay special attention to cultural and contextual adaptation to promote community buy-in and support.

COORDINATION AND COLLABORATION: LIBYA

Libya has experienced years of protracted crisis, leading to ongoing MHPSS needs in a complex operating environment. The humanitarian MHPSS response has been fragmented for a long time, complicating the ability of actors to coordinate across agencies, even within the same sector. Consequently, the country's MHPSS Technical Working Group was barely functional, with ongoing gaps at the coordination level, leading to a duplication of activities and possible deterioration in the quality of interventions. To address this gap, International Medical Corps led the way in establishing a position fully dedicated to co-chairing the group—bringing together key actors and stakeholders to cultivate a stronger, more harmonized response, and to join efforts to develop tools for providing a high-quality response. The coordination group has since flourished, ensuring a more optimal humanitarian MHPSS response.





INNOVATION AND OPERATIONAL RESEARCH

We have created a global case study, based on an evaluation of our programs in Iraq, Libya, South Sudan, Central African Republic and Venezuela, to strengthen and expand guidance for adapting MHPSS services for remote and tele-service. We also are part of STRENGTHS, an innovative five-year research project to measure the impact of WHO's Problem Management Plus (PM+), a scalable psychological intervention adapted for Syrian refugees.



www.InternationalMedicalCorps.org

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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