



Mental Health and Psychosocial Support (MHPSS) activities for conflict-displaced communities in Konso, Ethiopia. © IOM 2022/Hiyas Bagabaldo

Overview

Any form of migration implies a redefinition of individual, family, group and collective identities, roles and value systems, which can put the individuals, the families and the communities involved under stress. The conditions under which migration takes place are dictated by policies and laws and underlying political, economic and social structures, which determine migrants' integrated well-being, mental health and human development.

An inclusive and human rights-based approach that guarantees the availability and accessibility of psychosocial support and mental health care for all migrants, irrespective of their status, and their host communities can contribute to positive social, economic and cultural outcomes for migrants, their families, communities, as well as the societies they leave behind and those they join.

The pursuit of the most attainable standards of health and psychological well-being of migrants and displaced populations is enshrined in the 2018 Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration and Global Compact on Refugees. The Sustainable Development Goals, from the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, call for universal mental health care and psychosocial support that leave no one behind, including migrants and refugees.

IOM contributes to the promotion of good mental health and psychosocial well-being of migrants and host communities, through its programmes and activities aimed at accompanying the re-definition of social, professional, family and interpersonal roles. Mental health and psychosocial support (MHPSS) is integrated in IOM programmes, throughout all phases of the migration process, following three guiding principles:

- Flexibility - Programmes are adapted to specific target populations, cultures and situations.
- Community-based approaches - Programmes are designed and implemented with an aim to strengthen existing networks and services, valuing the agency of all communities involved, and focusing on re-establishing social support networks, which are the most important mediator of individual and collective psychosocial wellbeing
- Mainstreaming - Psychosocial considerations and MHPSS services are embedded in educational, cultural, social, economic, humanitarian, law enforcement and health settings.

Whom it is for

IOM MHPSS activities serve those migrating in a voluntary way and those forced to move –IDPs, asylum seekers and refugees, victims of trafficking, other vulnerable migrants, returnees, former combatants, crisis-affected populations – and their origin and host communities.

IOM promotes global, regional and national MHPSS capacity-building activities for mental health professionals, social workers, educators, protection actors, health personnel, counsellors, cultural mediators and interpreters, applied artists, activists, humanitarians, migration and law enforcement officials.

2022 Facts and figures



MHPSS activities implemented in more than 83 countries



1,5 million migrants, displaced and conflict-affected individuals reached with MHPSS services



16,000 professionals, frontliners and civil society actors trained in various aspects of MHPSS and population mobility



IOM organizes awareness sessions and art-based psychosocial activities in Tripoli community schools, Libya. © IOM 2023

Global Technical Support

IOM's Global Mental Health, Psychosocial Response and Intercultural Communication Unit provides:

- Technical oversight to IOM's MHPSS programmes;
- Analysis of research on the MHPSS needs of migrants, global mapping of services and resources;
- Knowledge dissemination and advocacy initiatives, including conferences, webinars and publications;
- Organization of capacity-building projects such as Summer schools, Master programmes and trainings on different facets of MHPSS and human mobility;
- Development of guidelines and manuals for MHPSS integration in humanitarian and migration management contexts for a wider community of practice;
- Global coordination with IASC, Member States, communities of practice;
- Policy formulation and advocacy.
- Maintenance of an international network of MHPSS and population mobility experts.

Academic courses for professionals

IOM and the Scuola Superiore Sant'Anna in Pisa organize every year the IOM Summer School "Psychosocial Interventions in Migration, Emergency and Displacement" for IOM staff and external participants. More than 320 participants successfully completed the programme in its eleven editions.

IOM also developed with the Colegio de la Frontera del Norte (COLEF), a specialization course on "MHPSS with migrants in Latin America". On its first edition in 2022, a total of 40 participants from 15 different countries, successfully finalized the course and received academic accreditation.

In Maiduguri, Nigeria, IOM partner since 2021 with the Centre for Peace, Diplomatic and Development Studies of the University of Maiduguri to deliver a Professional Master's Degree Programme in Psychosocial Counselling and Conflict Transformation.

Recent tools and publications

- Reintegration counselling: a psychosocial approach (2020)
- Manual on Community-Based MHPSS in Emergencies and Displacement (second edition) (2021), available in English, French, Spanish, Romanian, Russian, Slovak and Ukrainian.
- Mental Health and Psychosocial Support for Resettled Refugees (2021)
- CONECTA Abordajes de apoyo psicológico remoto para migrantes de difícil acceso (2022)



Painting murals on the Multi-purpose Community Hall's gates in Malkohi village, Nigeria. © IOM 2021/Natalie Oren

COMMUNITY-BASED MHPSS

IOM's engagement in MHPSS in humanitarian responses stems from the IOM Migration Crisis Operational Framework (MCOF) (2021), which includes psychosocial support as one of the 15 sectors of assistance of IOM's intervention in humanitarian and migration crises, and the Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC) Guidelines on MHPSS in Emergency Settings (2007). Special considerations for migrants are included in the Mental Health and Psychosocial Support Minimum Service Package (2022).

EMERGENCIES

- Deployment, training and supervision of multidisciplinary Psychosocial Mobile Teams;
- Establishment of temporary Psychosocial Support hubs in camps and host communities;
- Sociorelational and cultural activities, such as creative and art-based activities, rituals and celebrations, sport and play, non-formal education and informal learning activities;
- Counselling, support groups and training in counselling methods;
- Referral mechanisms for those with severe mental disorders, interpretation, cultural mediation, and national mental health system strengthening;
- Integration of MHPSS in the framework of protection to vulnerable conflict-affected individuals.



A music team at the Rohingya Cultural Memory Centre in Cox's Bazar refugee camp, Bangladesh. © IOM 2022



IOM's emotional support hotline was expanded to help more people in need of psychological support, as part of Ukraine response. © IOM 2022/ Alisa Kyrpychova



Family days with games for children and consultations for parents in Ukraine. © IOM 2023

Case study: MHPSS in the Ukraine response

Since the outbreak of war in Ukraine in February 2022, IOM has reinforced its MHPSS response in the country by scaling-up its mobile MHPSS capacity and establishing a toll-free hotline providing emotional support. In parallel, IOM missions in neighboring countries like Poland, Slovakia, Czech Republic, Moldova, Hungary and Romania, which previously were not running MHPSS programmes, started establishing Psychosocial Mobile Teams, setting up MHPSS activities, and providing training to health professionals, government partners, and civil society actors, among others.

In 2022, IOM reached 31,227 individuals in Ukraine and 47,462 individuals in neighboring countries with socio-relational activities, counselling services and problem-based support groups and support to dignified access and human rights-oriented specialized mental health care. In Ukraine, IOM is also advising the Ministry of Veterans Affairs and supporting with the establishment of community-based MHPSS services for veterans, their families and communities of return.

TRANSITION AND RECOVERY

- Start-up of recreational and counselling centres for families in post-emergency and return settings;
- Strengthening and implementation of community-based supports aiming at mending social fabrics and promoting social cohesion;
- Integration of MHPSS into prevention of violent extremism and community violence reduction programmes
- MHPSS for former combatants, their dependents and communities they are returning to;
- Integration of MHPSS in conflict transformation and mediation;
- Integration of MHPSS into livelihood and developmental programmes.



IOM supported the return of formerly internally displaced persons in Kobe, a village in El Fasher, North Darfur. © IOM 2021/Muse Mohammed



A refugee preparing Iraqi bread on the heights of Sinjar, Iraq. © IOM 2022

Case study: MHPSS and livelihood integration in Iraq

Conflict-affected persons can face daily stressors that make their livelihood pursuit challenging. Integrated MHPSS can help address and manage daily work-related psychosocial stressors at work, building and strengthening coping mechanisms and essential livelihood-related life and soft skills to apply at work and in other settings. Therefore, to address MHPSS, livelihoods, social cohesion and peacebuilding needs, IOM Iraq developed an approach that integrates MHPSS and livelihood support programming to strengthen emotional well-being, increase the success of livelihood opportunities, and bolster social cohesion and peacebuilding within communities of displacement and return.

In total 1,875 (998 women, 877 men) people were reached through integrated interventions. 2,032 MHPSS awareness sessions, 5,425 peer-support group sessions and 129 individual counselling sessions were conducted, and 156 staff received training. The participants assessed the interventions positively, indicating that these improved their self-esteem and confidence, created social support networks, improved their ability to adapt to changing situations and think more positively about work and life.

Case Study: MHPSS for former combatants and communities of return in Nigeria

IOM in Nigeria has been implementing peacebuilding and reconciliation projects under the government-led DDR programme following the Operation Safe Corridor in 2016. IOM supports the reintegration of former low-risk Boko Haram associates into their communities, social cohesion and reconciliation processes, and prevents and addresses the impact of violent extremism.

IOM supports the government with rehabilitation efforts and provides MHPSS in the Reintegration Centre in Maiduguri as well as the Rehabilitation Centre in Gombe. Social cohesion and reconciliation is fostered through the support of community platforms and the training of social workers providing psychosocial support, and capacity building for imams providing religious counselling.



IOM staff speaks to community leaders selected to assist the integration of IDPs and former non-state armed combatants within the community of Malkohi Village in Adamawa state, Nigeria. © IOM 2021

MIGRANT'S ASSISTANCE AND PROTECTION

- MHPSS for trafficked persons, stranded migrants, migrants in detention, unaccompanied and separated children, survivors of gender-based violence, migrants assisted to return to their country of origin and other returnees, and other migrants in need of protection;
- Cultural mediation training and mainstreaming;
- Individual, community, and structural technical assistance in mainstreaming MHPSS in reintegration assistance for returning migrants;
- Assistance during travel for migrants with mental health conditions;
- Assessing the mental health needs of prospective resettled refugees and other migrants and ensuring referrals for specialist services and treatment prior to departure in coordination with national and international partners.



MHPSS counselling sessions provided during Ukraine response, Hungary. © IOM 2022

Case Study: Supporting the return and reintegration of migrants in West and Central Africa through MHPSS

In West and Central Africa, IOM works in a number of countries such as Niger, the Gambia, Mali and Nigeria that are departure, transit and/or arrival countries for passing migrants. IOM provides MHPSS services such Psychological First Aid, peer supports and counselling, recreational activities, psychoeducation and referral to specialized mental health care to migrants at all stages of the migration journey. One MHPSS tool that has been developed in the region is the 'K par Cas' card game that is used to improve psychosocial wellbeing of migrants. It is composed of images that allow migrants to talk about their stories in individual or collective sessions. Furthermore, the regional office in Dakar developed a peer-to-peer awareness-raising campaign that empowers young people to make informed decisions about migration, the 'Migrants as messengers' approach, which mainstreams MHPSS into its action.

HEALTH SECTOR

- Capacity-building of service providers in mental health and population mobility;
- Actions promoting migrants' access to mental health services;
- Integration of mental health care for migrants in primary care settings;
- Capacity-building and policy actions for mainstreaming interpretation, mediation, outreach to diverse populations and cultural diversity awareness in mental health services.



IOM mobile teams provide primary health and MHPSS services to Venezuelans indigenous people and host communities in Brazil's remote areas. © IOM 2023/Gema Cortés

Case Study: MHPSS integration in health facilities in Cox's Bazar, Bangladesh

Forcibly displaced women and girls face heightened sexual and reproductive health (SRH) concerns, including an increased risk of mortality, unwanted pregnancy, child marriage. In Bangladesh, MHPSS teams conduct regular individual and group counselling sessions and community-based support activities for the migrant Rohingya population in Cox's Bazar. More than half of the beneficiaries of these activities are girls and women of reproductive age. While conducting these activities some of them were noted to be having different types of mental health and psychosocial challenges, and physical complications related to their SRH.

Considering these issues, to ensure comprehensive reproductive health care and MHPSS services for the community, the MHPSS team has initiated and implemented several activities. These include a dedicated 'Adolescent Hour' where adolescent participants can access information about SRH and have a safe space to share their feelings with the experts of SRH and MHPSS, menstrual hygiene and self-care sessions at the community level, and adolescent support groups. A referral mechanism has also been set up between SRH and MHPSS services. SRH and MHPSS teams jointly conducted several capacity-building activities for health workers on basic emotional support, PFA, stress management, and communication skills, to name a few. The purpose of these capacity-building initiatives is to improve knowledge and skills in the identification and referral of MHPSS beneficiaries and provide the first line of emotional support.

Participation in the Global Mental Health summit

Aiming to promote policies conducive of migrants' access to mental health-care services, IOM has participated to the last three Global Mental Health Summits. At the "Mind the Mind" event hosted in Amsterdam in 2021 by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Netherlands, IOM co-chaired a breakout session on addressing gender-based violence, calling for policies that leave no male migrant behind.

At the "Mind our Rights, now" event hosted by the French Ministries of Health and Foreign Affairs in Paris in 2021, IOM co-chaired the thematic session on addressing inequalities for vulnerable groups amid a health crisis, promoting best practices to protect the mental health of refugees in urban settings, mobile populations, refugees in camps and economic migrants with psychiatric disorders.

During the 2022 edition hosted by the Italian Ministry of Health in Rome in October 2022, IOM co-facilitated a thematic session on mental health of people on the move, with speakers from IOM Mali. The following recommendations were issued:

- A) Ensuring to all migrants access to primary, secondary and tertiary levels of mental health care, irrespective of legal status.
- B) Mainstreaming mental health care in primary health care and within emergency response.
- C) Offering services and promote policies that open mental health care services to diversity and diversity competence.
- D) Mainstreaming mental health and psychosocial support in all systems relevant to migrants' access and outreach such as education, law enforcement and social care.

PARTNERSHIPS AND COOPERATION

- Inter-agency collaborations in the domain of MHPSS: the World Health Organization, the UN Office of the High Commissioner for Refugees, the UN Children's Fund and the International Federation of the Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies
- Humanitarian: IOM is an active member of the IASC-associated Reference Group on MHPSS,
 - a) At the global level, IOM co-chairs the working groups on community-based MHPSS, on MHPSS and Peacebuilding, on MHPSS, and livelihoods and cash-based interventions and on MHPSS for men and boys;
 - b) It has co-chaired MHPSS groups in Bangladesh (Cox's Bazar), Burkina Faso, Burundi, the Central African Republic, Chad, Colombia, Haiti, Iraq, Lebanon, Libya, Mozambique, Myanmar, Nepal, Nigeria, South Sudan, Ethiopia (Tigray), Türkiye, Venezuela, and others.
- Academia and research: IOM has established partnerships with the University of Essex, Hunter College, the Social Sciences University of Ankara, Scuola Superiore Sant'Anna, the University of Dakka, the Lebanese University, the University of Maiduguri, and others.
- Migration Health Research Portal: IOM MHPSS contributes to this open-access global repository as an key hub for policy makers, researchers, media and other relevant actors interested in driving migration and health actions.
- Professional associations: IOM has established partnerships with the World Psychiatric Association, the Royal College of Psychiatry, and others.



Volleyball at IOM's Mental Health and Psychosocial Support Centre in the Malakal Protection of Civilians Site, South Sudan. © IOM 2022



Iftar organized by IOM and the Hatay Metropolitan Municipality, Türkiye. © IOM 2023/Begüm Basaran

For additional information on IOM MHPSS:

Visit IOM website - <https://www.iom.int/mental-health-psychosocial-response-and-intercultural-communication>

Contact Mental Health, Psychosocial Response and Intercultural Communication-Global Section - contactpps@iom.int.