Mental health & Psychosocial Support (MHPSS)

Why it matters

Good mental health is not just an absence of problems, it means having the capacity to live a full and creative life and the flexibility to deal with life’s inevitable challenges.

- Mental, neurological or substance abuse disorders are some of the top contributors to Disability Adjusted Life Years worldwide.
- Humanitarian crises have direct impacts on mental health. The WHO estimates that the percentage of persons concerned by mental health problems may almost double in emergency contexts.
- Some people develop new mental health problems after an emergency. Others experience psychological distress. Those with pre-existing mental health problems often need more help than before.
- Worldwide, 1 in 4 people experience a mental health problem during her/his life.
- Mental health problems represent 13% of the global disease burden.
- Depression is the most common mental health problem among women, and may be more persistent in women than men.
- The lifetime prevalence rate for alcohol dependence, another common mental health problem, is more than twice as high in men than women.
- Gender stereotypes regarding proneness to emotional problems in women and alcohol problems in men appear to reinforce social stigma and constrain help seeking along stereotypical lines.
- 76% to 85% of persons living with mental health problems living in low- and middle-income countries cannot access adequate services.
- Women are more likely to seek help for mental health problems.

Where we work

Since 1982, Humanity & Inclusion has worked in more than 30 countries to respond to the mental health and psychosocial needs of people facing humanitarian crises and/or living in precarious contexts.

200+ mobile and resident mental health staff
What we do

We follow the intervention pyramid for mental health and psychosocial support as defined by the Inter-Agency Standing Committee Guidelines on Mental Health and Psychosocial Support in Emergencies (IASC 2007).

Our Community based MHPSS interventions aim to:

- Support the development and implementation of MHPSS public policies and strategies that are respectful of human rights principles
- Develop promotion & prevention programs that address the social determinants of mental health
- Support initiatives providing MHPSS care services in the community to reduce the coverage gap & improve quality of care services
- Encourage advocacy initiatives and participation of people with lived experiences in all decision making processes
- Create opportunities to learn of what strategies improve psychological well-being of persons with lived experiences
- Encourage initiatives to foster strengthening social fabric, solidarity mechanisms among all key actors of a community

Moreover, when integrated into other sectors, our interventions also aim to:

- Address the specific psychosocial consequences of vulnerabilities such as physical and/or functional impairment, health status, and poverty
- Ensure capacity building of involved actors to optimize the quality of the service provided and make sure that health, social, education policies take into consideration needs of people with lived experiences
- Increase collaboration and coordination among actors to reduce mental health risk factors

Our vision

Our teams promote optimal mental health and foster social participation in line with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the UN Convention on the rights of person with disabilities, whose vision includes a world where “physical, mental and social well-being are assured”. HI has a holistic vision of mental health that takes into account its social, psychological and medical aspects, with a special focus on:

- a social vision of mental health disorders that encompass symptoms to consider the ability of the person to face adversity and enjoy life;
- the importance of community-based rehabilitation, to ensure that vulnerable people can maximize their physical and mental capabilities, access the available services, and actively contribute to the life of their community;
- the importance of empowerment, by placing the person at the center of the care system—and their choices.

For more information, we welcome you to contact

Dr Alessandra Aresu, Inclusive Health Policy Lead, a.aresu@hi.org
Maximilien Zimmermann, MHPSS Specialist, m.zimmermann@hi.org