Mental Health and Psychosocial Support Emergency Preparedness and Response: Key concepts and guidance

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Why is preparing for and responding to MHPSS needs in emergencies important?
What is Mental Health and Psychosocial Support?

Composite term (MHPSS):

Any type of local or outside support that aims to:
- protect or promote psychosocial wellbeing and/or
- prevent or treat mental disorders.

What is the impact of humanitarian emergencies on mental health?

- **Risk factors** for mental health conditions: Stressful events and difficulties
- **Most people** will experience psychological distress (normal and usually improves over time)

Globally, **one in five** (22.1%) people living in areas affected by conflict is estimated to have a mental health condition.  

For **children**, adverse conditions in emergencies can disrupt cognitive, emotional, social and physical development, with enduring consequences for their future.

1 Source: https://www.thelancet.com/journals/lancet/article/PIIS0140-6736(19)30934-1/fulltext
Why is responding to MHPSS needs important in emergencies?

Needs are high:

• Higher **prevalence and need** in humanitarian settings
• People with severe mental conditions are **at risk**
• Mental health is critical for **coping with and recovering** from humanitarian emergencies

Yet, resources are low:

• Typically **low national/local capacities** of mental health systems and human resources
• MHPSS often not considered/under-funded in **humanitarian response**
What needs to be done to address MHPSS needs?
Who should respond to MHPSS needs?

- MHPSS is relevant **across sectors** and stakeholders
- Different sectors/clusters/AoRs have a role to play in addressing MHPSS
How should we respond to MHPSS needs?

- Promote **human rights and equity**
- Do **no harm**
- Uphold **Accountability** to Affected Populations
- Build on **available resources**
- Develop **integrated** support systems
- Adopt a **life course** and **gender responsive** approach
How to integrate MHPSS with preparedness?

- Build Better Before **AND** Build Back Better
- WHO: Development of ‘R.E.A.D.Y.’ MHPSS preparedness and risk reduction training package

**Mental Health Action Plan 2013-2030: Global Target on Mental Health and Psychosocial Support Preparedness**

**Global Target 3.3:** 80% of countries will have a system in place for mental health and psychosocial preparedness for emergencies/disasters by **2030**.

**Indicator 3.3:** Existence of a system in place for mental health and psychosocial preparedness for emergencies/disasters.

The baseline in 2020: 54 countries, 28% of WHO Member States
Increased interest and engagement among member states

Historic milestone: The resolution on "Strengthening mental health and psychosocial support (MHPSS) before, during and after armed conflicts, natural and human-caused disasters and health and other emergencies" has been officially adopted at the WHA on 29th May 2024.
What are key guidelines and resources for MHPSS preparedness and response?
Key MHPSS guidelines and tools
-22,000+ enrollments representing all Grade 3 and Grade 2 emergencies including WHO, UN, iNGOs and Government responders

- 4 languages- 11 translations planned by UN network
- Soon moving to WHO Academy platform
Questions and Discussion