



Mental Health and Psychosocial Support (MHPSS)

Advisory Services

The challenge

A large number of partner countries within international cooperation are affected by fragility. According to the latest figures from the World Health Organization (WHO), some 25 per cent of individuals in conflict-affected regions suffer from mental illness. Of these persons, 80 per cent live in low-income countries. Particularly vulnerable population groups, such as women, children and people with disabilities, are at higher risk of experiencing psychosocial stress as a result of poor access to resources, multiple discrimination and a lack of social networks.

These circumstances have been reinforced by the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic.

The consequences of psychological stress often have a detrimental effect on social cohesion, economic development and stability within societies and can pose a threat to life and livelihoods.

In addition to lacking financial resources and institutional structures, many partner countries face, above all, a shortage of specialists and are unable to guarantee the provision of services.

Our approach

In the light of forced displacements from crisis-affected regions, mental health and psychosocial support (MHPSS) has become even more relevant in the context of the political objectives of German development cooperation. Grounding its work in value-based development policy, GIZ employs multi-sectoral, capacity-building and skills-development approaches to improve the mental health and psychosocial well-being of individuals and communities. In collaboration with state, private sector and civil society organisations, we pursue the objective of (re)activating and consolidating existing resources at individual and societal

level. The Guiding Framework for Mental Health and Psychosocial Support (MHPSS) in Development Cooperation (2018) and the United Nations Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC)'s Guidelines on Mental Health and Psychosocial Support in Emergency Settings serve as key guiding documents for GIZ. The implementation is carried out along the IASC intervention pyramid, with activities ranging from basic services, family and community strengthening measures, to psychosocial support and clinical interventions.

Projects with an MHPSS focus help improve the provision of services in the area of prevention, treatment and rehabilitation for mental illness and psychosocial stress. In the context of forced displacement, migration and conflict, low-threshold offerings often also play a key role at community level, alongside specialised services.

Self-care and staff-care strategies have become a key component of implementation in order to maintain individual well-being and a professional attitude among MHPSS specialists.

Additionally, given the situation in fragile contexts, projects without an MHPSS focus are taking increasing account of psychosocial aspects in the planning, implementation and evaluation processes.

GIZ ensures that the initiatives are carried out in a conflict-, context- and gender-sensitive manner, thereby minimising unintended negative impacts.

Our services

- » **Policy and strategy development:** Providing advice on developing national MHPSS strategies, policies and legislative reforms, stakeholder dialogue and stakeholder management
- » **Providing structural support to institutions and helping them network** through psychosocial and therapeutic services and advice, including intervention



and supervision (macro, meso, micro levels)

- » **Developing and disseminating training materials and curricula**, incorporating culturally-sensitive approaches
- » **Developing the skills** of specialists and facilitators in the areas of psychosocial support, supervision, crisis intervention/psychological first aid and a range of therapeutic approaches, including trauma treatment
- » **(Re-)building meeting and information points and basic infrastructure** for families, communities, women, young people, etc.
- » **Establishing referral structures** based on the IASC intervention pyramid
- » **Creating staff-care strategies for professionals**

In all topic areas, we work to promote the introduction of **digital solutions**, taking into account context- and conflict-sensitive criteria.

The benefits

GIZ has long-standing MHPSS experience in low-income countries, especially in fragile contexts, at all four levels of the IASC intervention pyramid.

- » GIZ draws on its comprehensive country knowledge and experience as a basis for designing MHPSS initiatives for specific target groups. This involves promoting participation and self-advocacy on the part of target groups and partner organisations and improving access to MHPSS services for particularly disadvantaged groups. In doing so, GIZ works in coherence and in cooperation with the international donor community and encourages the expansion of multi-stakeholder partnerships in the interests of holistic MHPSS services. Ensuring that the relevant services are an integral part of health provision contributes to securing Universal Health Coverage (UHC). Individuals who feel safe and are healthy and stable have better

access to their resources and play more of an active role in social life and within society as a whole. This creates prospects for sustainable and peaceful development in the partner countries of international cooperation.

An example from the field

Jordan has taken in about one million Syrian refugees since the beginning of the Syrian crisis. The Jordanian Government has set itself the goal of improving the mental health and psychosocial well-being of Syrian refugees and members of Jordanian host communities. However, the health system and community-based organisations are barely able to meet the high demand for professional services. As part of the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ)'s Special Initiative on Displacement, GIZ has been working with hospital and university partnerships since 2017 to assist Jordan's Ministry of Health in improving psychosocial support services. This work includes:

- » Launching initiatives to raise awareness of MHPSS (dialogue events)
- » Strengthening youth groups to encourage psychosocial well-being
- » Providing training in MHPSS for professionals working in health centres and promoting staff-care and self-care measures
- » Strengthening academic training and practical courses in the area of MHPSS

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