

Incorporating MHPSS into CfW programs

What is MHPSS?

The term *Mental Health and Psychosocial Support* combines psychological (thoughts, feelings, behaviors) and social (significant others, life circumstances, culture) aspects and aims to:

- preserve and improve people's psychosocial wellbeing
- promote stability and reduce stress
- restore dignity, a sense of justice, control, and autonomy
- strengthen and rebuild constructive relationships
- mobilise personal and social resources
- support the establishment of new goals and life plans

Why do we need MHPSS in development cooperation?

- In a context of ongoing instability, conflict, violence, and insecurity, people are subjected to substantial or even traumatic stress
- Psychosocial stressors have an impact on the behavior, thoughts, attitudes, motivations, and feelings of a person
- This can include increased aggressiveness, nervousness, a need to withdraw, and poorer physical health
- Working for and with people on improving their living conditions means designing and implementing projects according to the needs, resources and limitations of beneficiaries and staff

MHPSS Intervention	MHPSS Approach
= New or additional activity to specifically address the psychosocial wellbeing of a target group	= Modifying the way the development work is done

Why MHPSS in CfW?

CfW and the psychosocial wellbeing of the people involved are interlinked and therefore influence each other in a bidirectional manner:

1. Vulnerabilities of beneficiaries (e.g. grief, loss, poverty, discrimination) can impact their psychosocial wellbeing (fear, aggressivity, despair) and social behaviour (withdrawal, lack of sleep, problems concentrating) and thus result in **reduced productivity, quality of life, daily functioning**
2. A (perceived) loss of status and prestige due to simple tasks, and job insecurity due to limited contracts can cause feelings of loss of control, (learned) helplessness, and negative self-assessment which **increase the risk for psychosocial burdens, and illnesses**
3. High turnover of staff due to employment cycles and contracts in partner NGO, can lead to a reduction in productivity, performance, commitment and satisfaction and thus to **reduced (positive) impact**



Awareness can be created through the incorporation of MHPSS:

1. Psychosocial burdens and problematic behaviour can be addressed through sensitization of staff, MHPSS referral pathways to enable **improved relationships and wellbeing**
2. Feelings of loss of control, (learned) helplessness, negative self-assessment can be addressed through safety, transparent, regular communication, predictability, feedback mechanisms, helplines, and post-employment services and thus lead to **improved self-efficacy and trust**
3. Reduction in productivity, performance, commitment and satisfaction can be addressed through integration of **staff care**, and the development of capacities

