



IOM UKRAINE MENTAL HEALTH AND PSYCHOSOCIAL SUPPORT ACTIVITIES OVERVIEW

SUPPORTING MENTAL HEALTH AND COMMUNITY WELL-BEING

1 JULY – 31 DECEMBER 2023

FOREWORD



Alessia Schiavon
IOM Chief of Mission in Ukraine

As we step into 2024, I reflect on the past year with a profound sense of admiration for the resilience and empathy demonstrated by the Ukrainian communities in the face of ongoing war and displacement. This period has been a testament to the human spirit's capacity to rebuild and heal, even amidst the most daunting challenges. The effects of the war in Ukraine on mental health and well-being are often hidden yet devastating — affecting individuals, families and entire communities.

This report encapsulates IOM's dedicated efforts to deliver high-quality MHPSS services across Ukraine from July to December 2023. Our strategy integrates immediate assistance with long-term resilience and recovery plans, underpinned by a deep understanding of the complexities of the human psyche under duress. We offer an insight into our comprehensive and proactive approach, designed to not only offer immediate assistance but to lay a foundation for sustained resilience and recovery.

Our initiatives, ranging from community-based interventions to focused support services and capacity strengthening, are a testament to our commitment to holistic care. The collaborations forged with local authorities, international partners and civil society organizations, have been pivotal in enhancing the effectiveness and reach of our efforts.

The narratives within this report go beyond programmatic achievements; they are stories of human resilience, collective empathy and a shared dedication to healing. They are about bridging the gap between despair and hope, isolation and community, and trauma and recovery.

I express my profound gratitude to the Ukrainian Government, donors, our partners for their unwavering dedication, expertise and compassion, and above all our committed IOM team. This work, vital to the well-being of so many people, would not be possible without such collective efforts.

As you delve into this report, I invite you to not only comprehend the depth and breadth of IOM's MHPSS activities in Ukraine but also to reflect on the underlying belief that drives our mission: every individual's inherent dignity and the transformative power of collective action in fostering positive, lasting change.

A handwritten signature in black ink, consisting of several large, overlapping loops and a long horizontal stroke at the end, positioned to the right of the main text.

INTRODUCTION

The scale and complexity of the war in Ukraine has demanded a multidimensional humanitarian response. Present in the country since 1996, at the start of the full-scale invasion IOM promptly initiated comprehensive assistance to internally displaced persons (IDPs) and war-affected individuals across Ukraine, reaching over 5.8 million people with critical support since February 2022.¹

In the second half of 2023, Ukraine continued to navigate a landscape marked by significant challenges and transformations. Data from November 2023 indicates that the level of displacement within and from Ukraine remains high, with 3.5 million displaced internally and 6.3 million seeking refuge in neighbouring countries.² This large-scale displacement has uprooted lives and created profound psychosocial and mental health challenges across communities. In response, IOM has intensified its MHPSS activities to restore a sense of safety, foster self-efficacy and community solidarity and equip communities with tools to navigate current and future stressors. At the same time, IOM is looking toward the future, supporting Ukraine in rebuilding its communities.

Building upon the foundational work outlined in our report covering the first half of 2023, this report delves into the major events and success stories that have defined

IOM's MHPSS programme from July to December 2023. The efforts and successes described in this report would not have been possible without strong cooperation with and support from key Government of Ukraine partners, including the Office of the First Lady, the Ministry of Veteran's Affairs and the Mental Health Coordination Centre under the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine. Moreover, the commitment and support from local and regional authorities, along with the exemplary work of implementing partners like the Public Organization of Artists 'Pectoral', Charitable Foundation 'Slavic Heart', Welfare Workshop, the Centre for Civic Initiatives – The Intellect of Sumy Region, UK-Med, MED OK and Medical Teams International were crucial in achieving these outcomes.

Implemented through different levels of the Inter-Agency Standing Committee's (IASC) MHPSS intervention pyramid,³ IOM delivers a range of MHPSS activities that support IDPs, returnees, host communities and more to regain a sense of safety and human security, increase self and community efficacy, encourage the reactivation of social networks and develop tools for affected communities to deal with the past and cultivate hope for the future.



Figure 1. Women in Odesa participate in a yoga activity in October 2023. The activity brought together local community members with people displaced from eastern Ukraine © IOM

¹ IOM Ukraine Operational Presence Map, October 2023, <https://shorturl.at/egh10>

² IOM Ukraine Displacement Tracking Matrix, January 2024. <https://dtm.iom.int/ukraine>; <https://shorturl.at/pwBGM>

³ For more, please see <https://interagencystandingcommittee.org/mental-health-and-psychosocial-support-emergency-settings>

KEY PILLARS OF THE IOM MHPSS PROGRAMME

- 1. Enhancing Access to Direct Service Provision:** IOM adopts a comprehensive approach to address the war's effects on individual and community well-being. To develop and mend social networks, IOM activities include community events, art, sports, informal education and vocational activities, fostering trust and well-being across individual, family and community levels. Furthermore, IOM's integrated MHPSS and Livelihood Integration programming addresses work-related stress and equips individuals with the skills and support needed to thrive in the workforce, enhancing work environments and community resilience. Finally, psychiatric consultations and clinical psychological counselling are provided to people with pre-existing and/or emerging forms of severe stress, behavioural and relational problems or moderate to severe mental health disorders. Both focused and specialized support services are provided in person and through the IOM MHPSS Emotional Support Hotline in Ukrainian, Russian, English and Arabic languages to callers throughout Ukraine and in Czechia, Hungary, Lithuania, Moldova, Slovakia, Poland, Romania, and the United Kingdom.⁴
- 2. Capacity-strengthening for Local Services Providers (individual MHPSS practitioners and civil society organizations):** Reinforcing the broader mental health support framework, IOM provides critical training for MHPSS field workers, volunteers, government entities, local and international non-governmental organization (I/NGO) staff and other MHPSS professionals focused on emergency-related psychosocial support skills.
- 3. Awareness Raising on MHPSS and Basic Services:** IOM places a dedicated focus on reducing mental health stigma and removing barriers to service access, ensuring availability for all, including hard-to-reach, remote, displaced, returning, veteran and war-affected individuals.
- 4. Advocacy, Policy and Coordination:** IOM shapes and promotes policies and programming that support mental health needs in Ukraine. This effort includes coordinating to prevent service duplication, aligning with the Ukrainian government's strategies and the All-Ukrainian Mental Health Programme.⁵ IOM's role extends to co-chairing key groups like the Task Team for MHPSS for Veterans and the MHPSS sub-working groups for East of Ukraine (Zaporizka, Poltavaska, Kharkivska and Lvivska oblasts) as well as Vinnytska oblast, underlining its commitment to both policy influence and effective mental health service delivery.

IOM's programmes in Ukraine are tailored to the unique context at the national and local levels. By focusing on rebuilding social networks and respecting the autonomy of all communities involved, these initiatives play a pivotal role in enhancing the psychosocial well-being of individuals and communities.

IOM's model for MHPSS is recognized as a reference for best practices in community based MHPSS in the Ukraine's strategic response plan, "Ukrainian Prioritized Multisectoral Mental Health and Psychosocial Support Actions During and After the War: Operational Roadmap." All services are conducted according to the IOM Manual on Community-Based Mental Health and Psychosocial Support in Emergencies and Displacement, adhering to the 'do no harm' principle of the Sphere project and standards, the WHO's definition of mental health and the IASC Guidelines on MHPSS in Emergency Settings.

⁴ Accessible in Ukrainian, Russian, English or Arabic languages to callers from Ukraine (+380 0800 211 444); Czechia +420 800 050 770; Hungary (+36 80 984 544, Monday-Saturday); Lithuania (+370 800 00 474); Moldova (+373 080 000 001); Poland (+48 22 104 32 38, +48 800 088 091); Slovakia (+421 800 601 078); Romania (+40 31 631 5736) and the United Kingdom (+44 808 164 8668). Operating hours are listed on IOM Ukraine's website: <https://ukraine.iom.int/iom-emotional-support-hotline>.

⁵ Support for the development and implementation of the All-Ukrainian Mental Health Programme is provided by the Coordination Centre for Mental Health of the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine with the expert partnership and support of the World Health Organization. The decision-making platform is the Interagency Coordination Council of the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine.

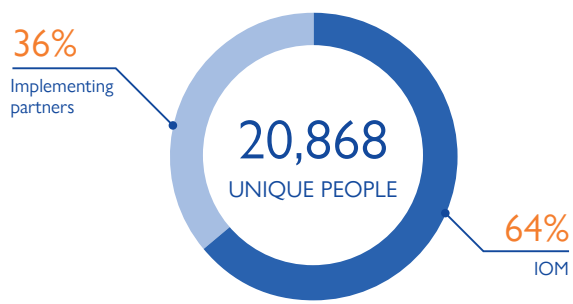
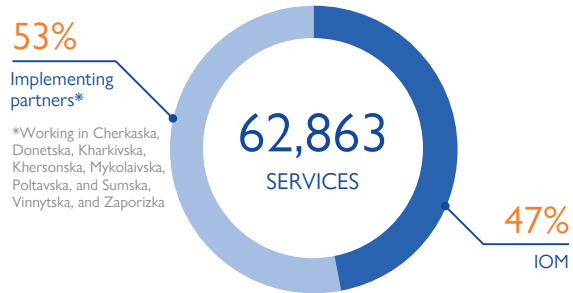
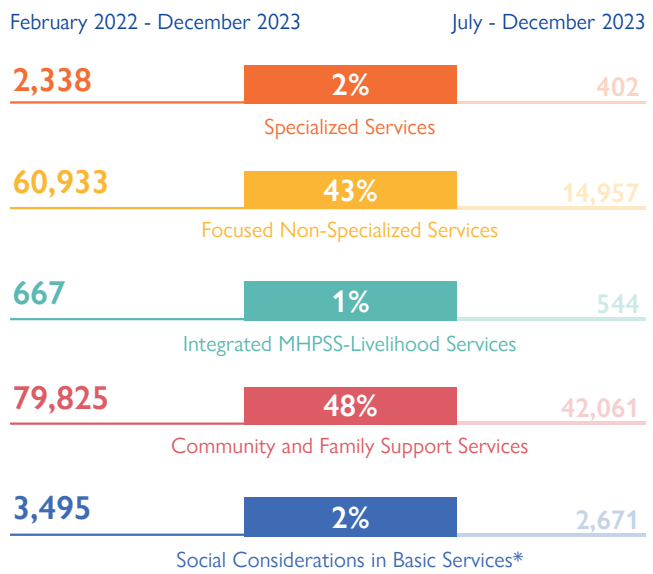
DATA AND FIGURES

Between 24 February 2022 and 31 December 2023, following the onset of the full-scale invasion, IOM and its implementing partners successfully provided a total of 152,791 MHPSS services to over 58,000 individuals. In the second half of 2023 alone, 62,863 MHPSS services to over 20,000 people ⁶ living in 19 oblasts and 49 raions.⁷

152,791 SERVICES PROVIDED TO 58,894 UNIQUE PEOPLE BETWEEN FEBRUARY 2022 AND DECEMBER 2023

62,863 SERVICES DELIVERED TO 20,868 PEOPLE BETWEEN JULY AND DECEMBER 2023

5,553 Feb 2022 - Dec 2023 4% Capacity building 2,228 July - Dec 2023



Percentage denotes proportion of services delivered between February 2022 and December 2023.

IOM implements a range of activities in Ukraine through all four levels of the IASC MHPSS intervention pyramid.

TOTAL SERVICES DELIVERED - JULY TO DECEMBER 2023



⁶ IOM categorizes an interaction with an individual who engages in activities or service provision as a "service." A "beneficiary" is identified as an individual who interacts with IOM for the first time. For instance, if an individual calls the IOM hotline (counted as one service), is subsequently referred to a counseling service (this referral is considered another service), and later participates in a consultation (a third service), this individual is recognized as a single beneficiary who has availed three distinct services. IOM counts the individual as a beneficiary at the first IOM service they engage with.

⁷ This includes: Umanskyi raion in **Cherkaska oblast**; Chernihivskyi raion in **Chernihivska oblast**; Chernivetskyi, Dnistrovskyi, and Vyzhnytskyi raions in **Chernivetska oblast**; Dniprovskyi, Kamianskyi, Kryvorizkyi, Novomoskovskyi, and Synelnykivskyi raions in **Dnipropetrovska oblast**; Bakhmutskyi and Kramatorskyi raions in **Donetska oblast**; Ivano-Frankivskyi raion in **Ivano-Frankivska oblast**; Iziumskyi and Kharkivskyi raions in **Kharkivska oblast**; Khersonskyi raion in **Khersonska oblast**; Khmelnytskyi raion in **Khmelnytska oblast**; the city of **Kyiv**; Bilotserkivskyi, Buchanskyi, Fastivskyi, and Vyshhorodskyi raions in **Kyivska oblast**; Chervonohradskyi, Drohobyttskyi, Lvivskyi, Strytskyi, and Zolochivskyi raions in **Lvivska oblast**; Mykolaivskyi raion in **Mykolaivska oblast**; Bolhradskyi, Odeskyi and Rozdilnianskyi raions in **Odeska oblast**; Kremenchutskyi, Myrhorodskyi, and Poltavskyi raions in **Poltavska oblast**; Sumskyi, Romnyskyi, Shosttskyi, Okhtyrskyi, Konotopskyi, and Lebedynskyi in **Sumska oblast**; Haisynskyi, Vinnytskyi, and Zhmerynskyi raions in **Vinnytska oblast**; Berehivskyi, Khustskyi, Mukachivskyi, Tiachivskyi, and Uzhhorodskyi raions in **Zakarpatska oblast**; and Zaporizkyi raion in **Zaporizka oblast**.



INCREASING AWARENESS OF AND ACCESS TO MHPSS AND ESSENTIAL SERVICES

IOM Ukraine’s MHPSS team supports beneficiaries’ access to mental health and basic services through awareness raising, advocacy, referrals and coordination with other international and local organizations and governmental authorities. Supporting beneficiaries in accessing MHPSS and additional support services in this way relieves pressure on the second, third, and fourth layers of the IASC intervention pyramid. This effort has been pivotal in promoting mental health and well-being among those affected by the war.

In coordination with local communities and authorities, in addition to other international and local organizations, IOM identifies the needs of the target population, involves local communities in the development of services and informs them about updated service availability through campaigns and events, which are often included within community and family support activities. These awareness-raising initiatives are a critical component of IOM’s commitment to supporting the most vulnerable communities, ensuring they have the knowledge and resources to access services vital to their recovery and resilience.

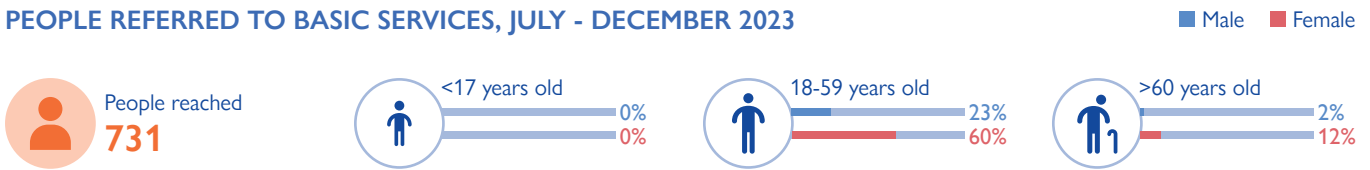
DIRECT AWARENESS SERVICES DELIVERED BETWEEN JULY AND DECEMBER 2023

■ Male ■ Female



Moreover, IOM coordinates with local partners and through the IOM MHPSS Emotional Support Hotline to refer beneficiaries to appropriate service providers and advocate for their needs when and where services are available. IOM’s MHPSS team also coordinates referrals to other IOM programmes such as livelihoods, protection, shelter, non-food items, legal assistance, health and more whenever appropriate.

PEOPLE REFERRED TO BASIC SERVICES, JULY - DECEMBER 2023



In addition to those reached directly through activities, IOM campaigns are specifically designed to enhance community and society-level understanding of MHPSS services. These campaigns, several of which are described in detail below, have reached tens of millions of people across Ukraine in 2023 alone. With each initiative, IOM aims to educate communities about the availability, importance and methods of accessing MHPSS services, which are crucial for addressing the psychological and social impacts of displacement and war. By reaching out to people in everyday settings like schools and public transportation, posters, billboards and digital campaigns like these play a critical role in normalizing conversations about mental health and encouraging individuals to seek support.

MORE THAN 31,103,277 PEOPLE REACHED THROUGH AWARENESS RAISING CAMPAIGNS BETWEEN JULY AND DECEMBER 2023



This is in addition to the 10 million people reached in the first half of 2023 (over 41 million for the entire year)



Figure 2. IOM worked with influencers including ONUKA in a wide-reaching awareness campaign that engaged over 31,000,000 people. © IOM

In an effort to significantly enhance mental health awareness across Ukraine, IOM expanded its outreach by collaborating with 10 influencers, including the distinguished Ukrainian singer Nataliia Zhyzhchenko from the band ONUKA, as part of the influential campaign “Твої почуття теж важливі” (“Your feelings matter too”).⁸ This campaign, which utilized billboards and digital platforms, aimed to promote positive coping strategies, amplify awareness about mental health concerns and provide information

on available support services, including IOM’s MHPSS Emotional Support Hotline. The engagement of celebrities like ONUKA enabled the campaign to effectively reach and resonate with over 300,000 individuals directly and many more indirectly. This strategic partnership played a pivotal role in spreading vital mental health messages across Ukraine, underscoring the importance of mental well-being and the availability of essential support services.

⁸ For more, please see: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fVfxonSWE0E&ab_channel=IOMmissionUkraine



Figure 3. IOM supported the design and publication of more than 175,000 posters, billboards, stationary items and digital advertisements that were placed and distributed in metro cars, trains and stations, schools, shops and public spaces across Ukraine. These advertisements serve as powerful tools for mental health advocacy. © IOM

IOM’s close engagement with Ukraine’s First Lady’s All-Ukrainian Mental Health Programme and the Mental Health Coordination Centre under the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine has proved to be particularly impactful. As part of this coordination, IOM supported the design and publication of more than 175,000 posters, billboards, stationary items and digital advertisements that were placed and distributed in metro cars, trains and stations, schools, shops and public spaces across Ukraine. These advertisements serve as powerful tools for mental health advocacy. They provide vital information about mental health resources and support services under the All-Ukrainian Mental Health Program

The programme is orchestrated under the coordination of the Ukrainian Ministry of Health, with IOM and WHO contributing as expert partners. The non-governmental organization Bezbariernist (Barrier-Free) functions as the executive operational partner. The campaign’s digital presence spans various social media platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, Telegram and Viber and includes resources like a psychosocial first-aid kit in PDF format, as well as a compendium of online and offline support resources. Among these resources is the IOM MHPSS Emotional Support Hotline, which provides callers with immediate assistance.

Additionally, IOM has been and continues to support the First Lady’s All-Ukrainian Mental Health Programme. The programme’s campaign, *Ти як? (Ty Yak?)*/ How are you?⁹ aims to foster a culture of mental health awareness within Ukrainian society and to assist individuals in coping with stress and trauma resulting from war. The campaign encourages people to take proactive steps in understanding and managing their mental health, offering self-help and support strategies. It leverages the influence of ambassadors, including notable figures from the entertainment sector, business leaders and thought leaders, to disseminate the programme’s messages, engage with the public, provide educational activities and promote self-care techniques. These ambassadors also play a crucial role in urging the public to be mindful of their mental health and to seek assistance when necessary.



Figure 4. IOM took part in the Coordination Council on Mental Health in early December 2023, convened by the Prime Minister and the First Lady of Ukraine © IOM

⁹ For more information, please see here: <https://www.howareu.com>

Finally, IOM participated in several high-profile events to enhance donor engagement and emphasize the significance of incorporating MHPSS across sectors. A notable event was the First Ladies and Gentlemen Summit, led by Ukraine’s First Lady Olena Zelenska, which centred on the theme “Mental Health: Resilience and Fragility of the Future”. The summit featured First Ladies and Gentlemen from over 25 nations and the United States Secretary of State, signifying a collective commitment to mental health initiatives as a critical response to the crisis caused by the war. In her opening remarks, First Lady Olena Zelenska stressed the imperative of safeguarding the mental health of youth to ensure a prosperous future for Ukraine: “We are also talking about our future — the children, whose mental health we must take care of today for a great and successful tomorrow.”



Figure 5. First Lady Olena Zelenska speaking at the Third Summit of First Ladies and Gentlemen in Kyiv on 6 September 2023 © IOM

IOM’s Guglielmo Schinina, Global Head of Mental Health, Psychosocial Response and Intercultural Communication, spoke at the event and provided insights into the diverse MHPSS needs and resources for displaced populations, presenting research indicating that approximately half of the Ukrainian adolescents aged between 13 to 15 have experienced emotional distress due to the war. Schinina proposed measures for supporting the mental health of young individuals and their families, underscoring the need for secure, just and community-focused mental health services to support war-affected communities.

“When we talk about psychological help for displaced people, we always focus on suffering. But there is also resilience – the human ability to overcome challenges. Sharing positive experiences inspires others.”

Guglielmo Schinina,
IOM’s Global Head of Mental Health, Psychosocial Response and Intercultural Communication, visited Ukraine in September

Concluding the year, IOM took part in the Coordination Council on Mental Health in early December 2023, convened by the Prime Minister and the First Lady of Ukraine. The council served as a platform for IOM to present its contributions to mental health promotion since the 24 February 2022 Russian Federation’s full-scale invasion of Ukraine and to deliberate on strategies to extend support throughout Ukraine. During

the meeting, the Prime Minister reaffirmed the government’s commitment to integrate mental health considerations into all state-related policies. The First Lady emphasized the goal of making psychological services accessible to every Ukrainian citizen, “We want psychological services to reach every Ukrainian, no matter how far away they live from big cities,” said First Lady of Ukraine Olena Zelenska.

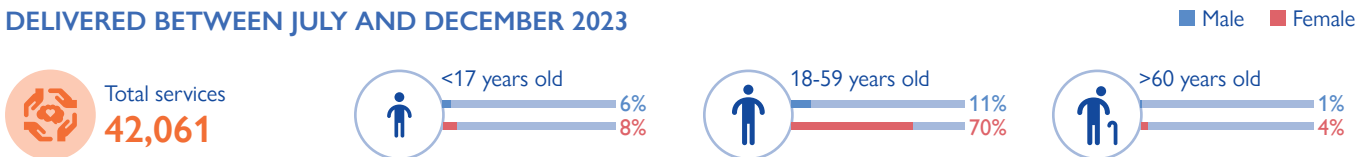


Figure 6. Senior Programme Coordinator-MHPSS Dr. Hatem Marzouk, IOM Ukraine Chief of Mission Alessia Schiavon, IOM Global Head of Mental Health, Psychosocial Response and Intercultural Communication Guglielmo Schinina, and IOM MHPSS National Officer Oleksii Berdnyk represented IOM at the Third Summit of First Ladies and Gentlemen in Kyiv © IOM

IOM'S COMMUNITY-BASED APPROACH TO RECOVERY

As the war in Ukraine persisted through 2023, IOM expanded community and family support activities to address the ongoing and complex challenges communities face across Ukraine. IOM teams provided comprehensive support to address a range of psychosocial stressors, including anxiety, loss and grief, rupture of social networks and uncertainty about the future through a blend of community engagement, awareness-raising and culturally sensitive interventions at the community and family levels.

COMMUNITY AND FAMILY SUPPORT AND AWARENESS SERVICES DELIVERED BETWEEN JULY AND DECEMBER 2023



Key activities during this period included art events designed to foster psychosocial healing, events for children to promote resilience and joy, integration and community support activities for displaced individuals and more. These initiatives played a crucial role in building trust, strengthening social connectedness and improving overall well-being among those impacted by the war. Reaching over 6,000 more people between July and December 2023 than in the six months prior, the second half of 2023 marked a period of significant growth in IOM's efforts to heal, unite and empower communities facing the harsh realities of war and displacement.

The success of these programmes is rooted in close collaboration with local authorities, ensuring effective outreach and efficient resource allocation. To ensure its programmes remain responsive and effective, IOM regularly engages in feedback sessions with both local authorities and beneficiaries, allowing for ongoing refinement and adaptation of its community based MHPSS interventions.

In Western Ukraine, IOM's initiatives exemplified the organization's commitment to community engagement and support. In Chernivetska, both displaced people and host community members came together to create an art mural in a Youth Residence Hub that IOM renovated. This mural became a canvas for participants from varied backgrounds to convey their ideas of how the notions of identity and belonging may be influenced in times of crisis.¹⁰ Through this creative process, individuals shared their stories and perspectives, painting experiences that reflected the diverse nature of their community. This initiative, which received a recognition award from the mayor, highlighted IOM's role in bridging communities and supporting inclusive spaces for dialogue and expression, reinforcing the sense of belonging and identity. Art-based workshops and activities like this offer a space for self-discovery and healing, providing participants with an avenue to create something beautiful and a medium to understand themselves better, emphasizing the power of communication and positive emotions, especially when working in groups.



Figure 7. IOM helped renovate Chernivtsi's youth integration hub "Youth Residence" and supported in the development and painting of a community mural. Fostering collaboration between displaced & host community youth, IOM facilitated engaging workshops on identity and belonging to develop the mural. © IOM

¹⁰ Please see a short video here: https://www.linkedin.com/posts/international-organization-for-migration-iom-ukraine_the-transformative-and-psychosocially-healing-activity-7111315146664210433-gBiC?utm_source=share&utm_medium=member_ios



Figure 8. Community members and IOM staff collaborated in designing and painting the mural in the community centre in Chernivtsi's youth integration hub "Youth Residence". © IOM



Figure 9. Olesia and her daughter Veronika-Maria, participants in IOM-organized hiking trips in Zakarpatska oblast, exemplify the positive impact of outdoor and recreational activities. After relocating to Zakarpatska oblast from eastern Ukraine after a series of shells exploded near their home, they found solace and new connections through these excursions. Olesia shared, "These outings helped us start creating a new life away from home." IOM implements similar activities across various regions, successfully connecting displaced families with their host communities. These activities not only foster community bonds but also promote understanding and support among participants, aiding in their healing and integration process. © IOM

Similarly, in Western Ukraine and areas where it is safe to hold outdoor events, IOM organizes outdoor activities like hiking trips, mushroom picking outings and other recreational activities which help participants reconnect with nature, recharge and find inner strength. Such activities foster community bonds and resilience among the displaced individuals and act as important gateways for participants to access focus and specialized services. Activities are often organized with an additional psychosocial component to ensure maximized benefit.

IOM's support for the LGBTQ+ community in Lviv represents a crucial aspect of its broader commitment to inclusivity and support for all members of society, especially those facing discrimination. Through tailored initiatives like individual consultations, creative workshops and social events, IOM offers safe spaces where LGBTQ+ individuals can freely express themselves and find support. These activities seek to address immediate psychosocial needs while contributing to broader goals: promoting acceptance, reducing stigma and advocating for the rights of marginalized groups.

Similarly, IOM's MHPSS initiatives in Mykolaivska, Khersonska and Odeska oblasts showcased a profound commitment to nurturing community resilience and individual empowerment in the face of ongoing war and displacement.



Figure 10. "I just got lost in the beauty of nature. I finally managed to recharge my batteries and ground myself," says Yana, displaced from Kramatorsk, describing the mushroom outings in Zakarpattia. © IOM

In November and December 2023, IOM worked closely with its local implementing partner Welfare Workshop to expand the availability of community and family support activities in Mykolaivska and Khersonska oblasts. This key initiative involved the training of 22 local volunteers, including health and social workers, to become community focal points able to implement art- and culture-oriented MHPSS activities. These newly trained facilitators conducted over a dozen activities in November and December, engaging more than 313 people. These activities focused on fostering awareness among participants of their social and cultural connections, the therapeutic value of expressing emotions through art, and the empowerment derived from a sense of belonging and sharing experiences. Moving forward, the trained facilitators will be able to replicate these activities

within their communities, extending the reach and enduring impact of IOM's projects. Such initiatives are particularly crucial in remote and war-affected areas near the frontline, where access to support and resources is often limited. The success of these programmes highlights the importance of community-based approaches in addressing the complex needs of those affected by war.

In December 2023, the community of Rozdilna in Odeska oblast experienced a unique convergence of art and history through IOM's Theatre Day, which invited over 250 residents to engage in a form of group stress relieving storytelling. Participants, including those displaced by the war and local community members, collaboratively created and performed narratives that reflected their recent experiences and histories. This Theatre Day served as a medium for communal healing, allowing individuals to process and express their experiences of war, loss and resilience. It was a day where shared stories became a tool for catharsis, helping to weave a collective sense of identity and belonging. An IOM psychologist is always available in such events to ensure proper consideration of any potential overwhelming emotions during performances. The event was a testament to the power of community-based psychosocial support, demonstrating how creative expression can be a vital component in fostering community resilience and aiding the emotional recovery of individuals in war-affected areas.

Similarly, in Vinnytska oblast, the Ladyzhyn Fair of Opportunities marked another significant achievement in community engagement. Centred around art-based MHPSS activities, 23 art and culture-based workshops provided a much-needed platform for more than 450 participants to channel their experiences of war and displacement into creative expression. These activities' success highlights the therapeutic efficacy of art in addressing mental health challenges.



Figure 11. IOM held a kick-off conference in October 2023, marking the beginning of programme expansion in Kherson and Mykolaiv in coordination with implementing partner Welfare Workshop, aiming to assist those affected by the war through individual consultations and group activities. © IOM



Figure 12. A group of children participate in an activity for displaced families organized by IOM in Odesa, Ukraine. Photos: IOM/Stanslav Kalach © IOM

In Ukraine's Eastern oblasts, hromadas outside of the regional capitals, particularly those closer to the frontline, face elevated need yet have limited access to MHPSS services. IOM is dedicated to expanding its outreach to these harder-to-reach locales through its own community-led programmes, as well as by collaborating with local organizations like Charitable Foundation 'Slavic Heart' in Kharkivska and Donetsk oblasts and Public Organization of Artists 'Pectoral' in Poltavska and Kharkivska oblasts.

IOM's MHPSS awareness raising and cultural and recreational activities such as holiday celebrations, yoga, football, and group socializing activities form a critical component of its programming. These classes offer a holistic approach to combating psychosocial distress, aligning physical health with community engagement and mental well-being.

IOM's Advent Calendar Creation activity in Horishni Plavni and Kotelva in Poltavska serves as an example: in a series of four sessions throughout December, IOM brought community members together to create their own unique advent calendars while participating in a group discussion on the importance of self-care. This type of activity encourages participants to engage in meaningful actions at home and in their personal lives, while building a sense of community and care.

In Dnipro city, city tours offer a unique opportunity to explore and connect with their community, providing a sense of belonging to those who have been displaced, reducing feelings

of isolation and aiding a sense of normalcy and familiarity. These tours also encourage social interaction among displaced people and host community members, promoting the formation of new friendships and support networks.

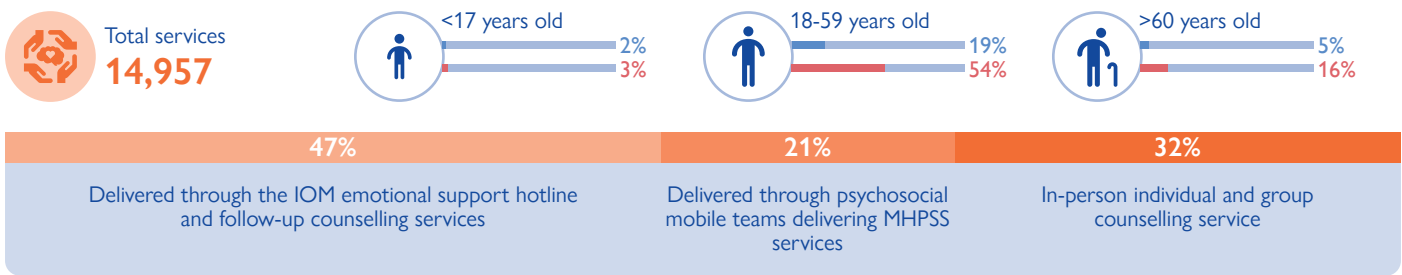
The essence of IOM's partnerships with local organizations lies in the principle of localization – a strategy that emphasizes the importance of local knowledge, expertise, and resources in addressing specific regional needs. By leveraging the strengths of local implementing partners and volunteer groups, IOM can ensure that its MHPSS services are not only more accessible but also culturally and contextually relevant. Throughout activity implementation, IOM provides essential oversight and coaching to partners, fostering a mutual growth environment. This collaborative approach not only ensures quality and sustainability but also empowers partners to effectively adapt to community needs, guaranteeing long-term service effectiveness. This approach is particularly crucial in areas where the complexities of the conflict and its psychological impact are deeply intertwined with the local social fabric.

The highlighted work and partnerships showcase the essence of community healing, resilience and connection central to the MHPSS programme's mission throughout Ukraine. By working closely with local partners, IOM delivers adaptive and comprehensive support directly to communities affected by war. IOM and its partners' continued work is not only a response to the immediate need but also a commitment to building a more hopeful and resilient future.

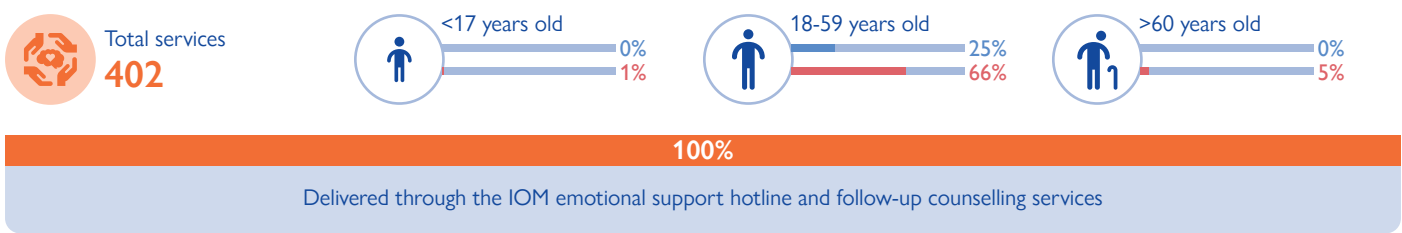
PROVIDING TARGETED CARE THROUGH FOCUSED AND SPECIALIZED SUPPORT SERVICES

In the second half of 2023, in the wake of some of the most harrowing incidents in Ukraine since February 2022, IOM's focused support services, available in person through mobile and area-based teams and remotely through IOM MHPSS Emotional Support Hotline, have been a lifeline for many.¹¹

FOCUSED SUPPORT SERVICES DELIVERED BETWEEN JULY AND DECEMBER 2023



SPECIALIZED MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES DELIVERED BETWEEN JULY AND DECEMBER 2023



On 6 July 2023, Lviv experienced a large-scale attack on civilian infrastructure there since the start of the full-scale invasion. IOM's response was immediate: psychologists and social workers established a psychological first aid point in the courtyard of the most damaged homes, offering counselling services and providing an oasis of calm amid chaos. IOM replicated this response across its field offices in the final days of 2023, when Ukraine faced one of the largest country-wide missile and drone attacks since the initial days of the full-scale invasion. This rapid response ability is paramount considering the vital role psychosocial support is in times of crisis, offering an immediate sense of stability for those impacted by the attack.

“By fortifying the resilience of people in Ukraine today, we pave the way for a brighter, more secure tomorrow. The recovery of Ukraine and its long-term development will only be possible when invisible and internal wounds of the war are healed.”

Ugochi Daniels
IOM Deputy Director General

In November 2023, 23 Ukrainians displaced and relocated from Gaza found refuge in a collective centre in Odesa. Here, IOM provided them with much-needed MHPSS support. The individual and group support sessions facilitated by IOM were crucial in helping these families, already burdened by the traumas of war, adapt to their new environment. These interventions offered not just psychological relief but also a sense of community and belonging.

¹¹ IOM's mobile clinics work in partnership with its implementing partners UK Med, MED OK and Medical Teams International.

Central to IOM's approach throughout these interventions was the employment of the Problem Management Plus (PM+) methodology. This evidence-based approach was specifically designed to provide psychological help to adults suffering distress in communities exposed to adversity. It follows a problem-solving approach, beneficial for individuals dealing with depression, anxiety and stress,

improving overall mental health and psychosocial well-being. Additionally, for cases requiring more intensive care, IOM facilitates referrals for psychiatric consultations and clinical psychological counselling, addressing pre-existing or emerging severe stress, behavioural problems, or moderate to severe mental disorders exacerbated by the conflict.

HOTLINE CALLS



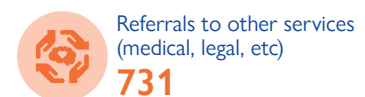
PSYCHOLOGICAL CONSULTATIONS



PSYCHIATRIC CONSULTATIONS



REFERRALS MADE



The IOM MHPSS Emotional Support Hotline, offering services in Ukrainian, Russian, English and Arabic languages, has continued to be a crucial lifeline, connecting affected individuals across Ukraine and in countries like Czechia, Hungary, Lithuania, Moldova, Slovakia, Poland, Romania and the United Kingdom with vital counselling services. Following initial consultations, callers can be referred to receive more focused psychological or psychiatric care, tailored to their specific needs. The hotline continues to offer immediate emotional support and provides

a sense of safety, comfort and emotional stabilization for callers. Hotline operators also link callers to necessary information, practical assistance and social support, alongside redirections to other forms of assistance such as health, protection, shelter, or legal matters.

IOM's approach to deliver focused and specialized services underscores IOM's commitment to addressing the complex mental health needs arising from the war in Ukraine.

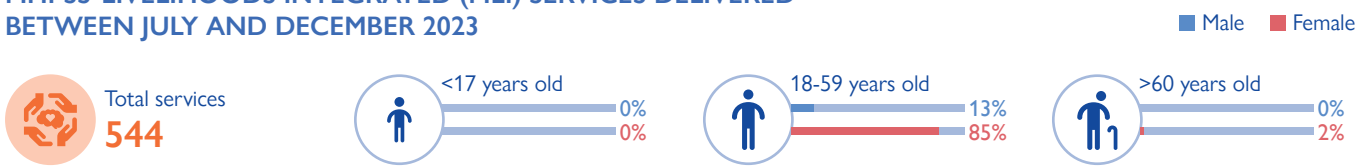
IOM'S MHPSS AND LIVELIHOOD INTEGRATION APPROACH

In the second half of 2023, IOM expanded MHPSS services for livelihood service recipients to address the multifaceted challenges that war-affected people face, especially those who are engaging in new professions or are looking for new work.

Building on IOM's MHPSS and Livelihood Integration (MLI) approach initiated in Ukraine in June 2023, IOM expanded its activities to fuse mental health support more comprehensively with livelihood programmes.

This initiative, aimed in its initial stages at communities in Kyivska and Poltavska oblasts, includes awareness sessions, peer-support groups, and individual counselling paired with livelihoods support. This promotes overall well-being while enhancing coping mechanisms, as well as life and soft skills necessary for managing work-related psychosocial stressors. IOM's MLI programmes support self-discovery and promote adaptation and flexibility in new professions and roles, empowering war-affected individuals to move forward despite daily challenges.

MHPSS-LIVELIHOODS INTEGRATED (MLI) SERVICES DELIVERED BETWEEN JULY AND DECEMBER 2023



As of January 2024, IOM engaged 337 people in Kyivska and Poltavska oblasts and launched community consultations with 15 community members in Dnipropetrovska oblast to inform upcoming MLI programming in the region. IOM also trained 20 of its staff on the MLI approach and manual to be prepared to implement MLI services across Ukraine.

One key activity in late 2023 included collaboration with the City Centre of Employment in Kyiv, where the IOM MHPSS team conducted 13 online and in-person sessions for over 139 employment centre staff and clients, improving their ability to handle work-related challenges and foster

supportive work environments. These sessions covered crucial topics such as coping with stress, resilience building, time management, addressing workplace harassment, positive thinking, problem-solving and communication skills. This collaboration exemplifies how targeted support can enhance workplace capabilities and cultivate a more supportive work environment.

Feedback from participants of these sessions underlines their effectiveness, with reports of heightened self-esteem, confidence, the creation of supportive social networks and an improved ability to adapt to changing circumstances.



Figure 13. Svitlana, a recipient of livelihood support participating in an integrated MHPSS session. © IOM



Figure 14. IOM released the Ukrainian-version of its innovative MLI manual in November 2023 © IOM

In November 2023, IOM Ukraine celebrated a significant milestone with the launch of the Ukrainian version of the IOM MHPSS and Livelihood Integration manual in Kyiv.¹² This event marked a crucial step toward expanding projects that integrate mental health and livelihood activities. The launch brought together MHPSS actors and partners for peer review and discussion, reflecting the collaborative effort behind this achievement. The manual itself is instrumental in promoting combined MHPSS and livelihood services, crucial for fostering positive outcomes in emotional well-being and employment success.

Looking ahead to 2024, IOM is committed to expanding its work in MHPSS and livelihood integration, to support as many people in new professions or those looking for work as possible. As discussed in further depth in the next section, IOM is also committed to offering integrated MHPSS support for veterans seeking to reintegrate into the workforce. While MLI services are relevant in humanitarian contexts, they are equally integral and relevant in the contexts of recovery as MHPSS and livelihood needs persist.



Figure 15. The Ukrainian version of the MLI manual is launched with the MHPSS community in Kyiv © IOM

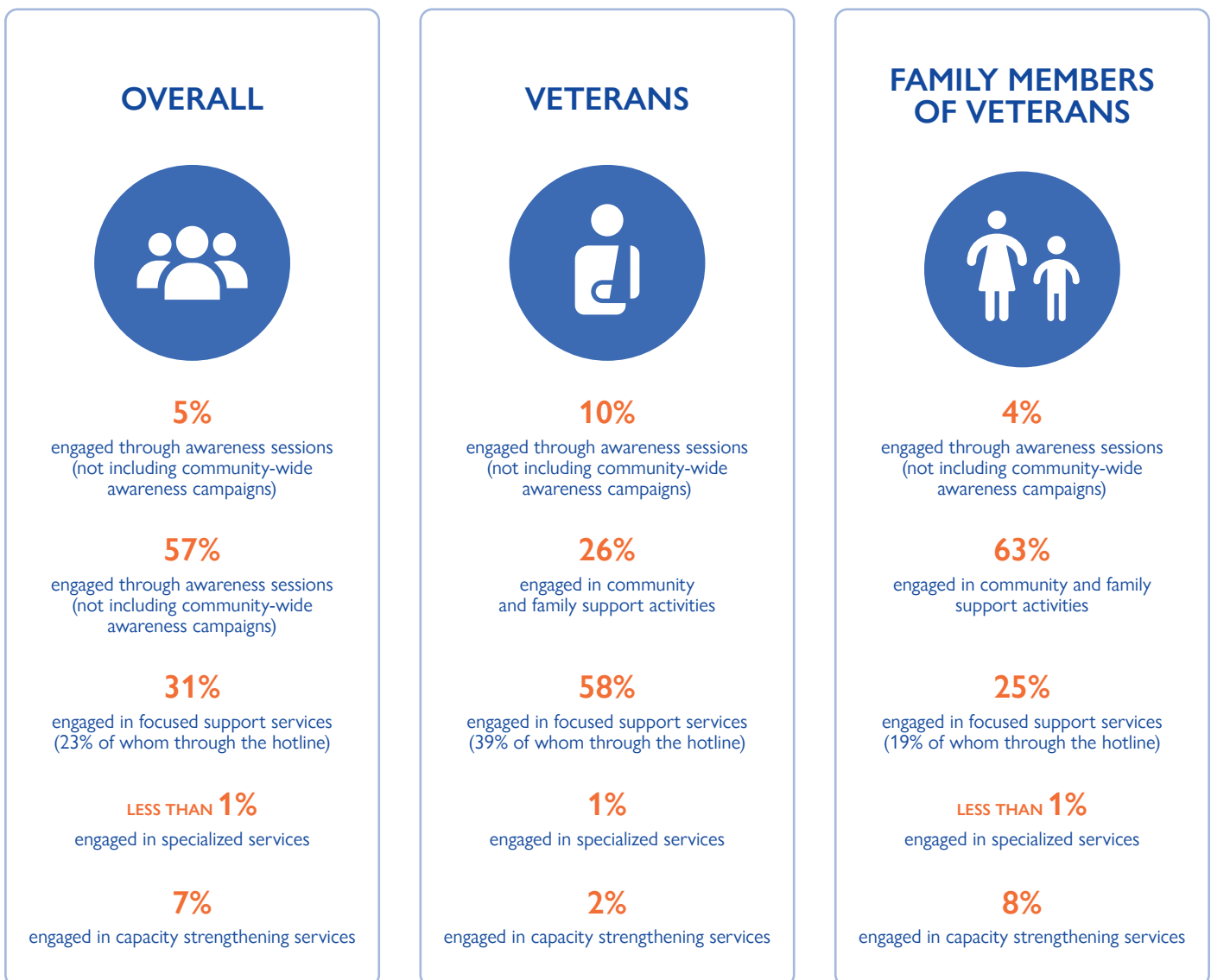
¹² IOM MHPSS and Livelihood Integration (MLI) manual - Ukrainian Version, November 2023: <https://ukraine.iom.int/sites/g/files/tmzbd11861/files/documents/2023-11/mli-ukrainian-digital-version.pdf>

IOM'S COMPREHENSIVE APPROACH TO ADVANCING VETERAN SUPPORT IN UKRAINE

IOM significantly increased its efforts in 2023 to support veterans and their families in Ukraine, who face unique challenges in transitioning from military service to civilian life. Many veterans, particularly men, struggle with the battlefield's lasting impacts, exacerbated by inadequate support, strained government resources and a stigma surrounding mental health, in part due to the scarcity of male MHPSS workers across Ukraine. IOM is working closely with Government of Ukraine counterparts, civil

society and humanitarian partners to support veterans and their families, whose needs are urgent, complex and multifaceted.

Over the course of 2023, IOM provided a range of awareness, community and family and focused support activities that are similar to those described in previous sections of this report, though they are specifically tailored to the needs of veterans and their family members.



For example, one MHPSS project in Vinnytska oblast includes horse-riding activities for veterans and their families, with integrated psychosocial elements. These activities aim to increase participants' capacity to cope with the emotional and physical impact of their military service, to restore supportive mechanisms inside the family and to reinforce positive dialogue between partners and parents and children. IOM is working closely with practitioners

specialized in veteran support and reintegration while designing and facilitating all activities aimed at veteran groups. Moreover, IOM leads a comprehensive capacity strengthening programme to support the provision of holistic MHPSS efforts in the years to come, while also supporting veteran assistance centers with equipment and know-how to allow for the broader provision of MHPSS services.

In the second half of 2023, IOM implemented a series of transformative events aimed at supporting the reintegration of Ukrainian veterans and their families.

These initiatives offered a ray of hope and healing to many. Oksana and her husband Andrii, a veteran, attended one event with a hopeful vision. "I anticipate a return to a time of life without fear and anxiety," she expressed, encapsulating the aspirations of many families like hers.

The journey for Andrii, like many former soldiers, was fraught with challenges upon returning from the frontline. He, and others in his situation, often found themselves wrestling with destructive emotions, leading to a withdrawal that strained family relationships.

This challenging reality prompted their participation in IOM's four-day event in Lviv, where ten families from different parts of Ukraine gathered. The family gathering, one of several in a programme to support veterans and their families, was designed as a safe and nurturing environment. Under the guidance of trainers Christina Obluchinska-Shabazova and Dr. Joshua Kreimeyer, participants engage in therapeutic activities, discussions and games that aim to help veterans and their families adapt to civilian life.

Olha, a widow of a Ukrainian soldier, shared a similar sentiment about the impact of these programmes. "After my husband's loss, starting psychotherapy was the best choice for me and my son," she reflected. Olha's experience highlights the broader impact of IOM's art therapy sessions, part of the retreat and IOM's broader service offerings to veterans and their families. These sessions provide crucial support for mental well-being, helping families like Olha's to process grief and embark on a path to healing.



Figure 16. Olha and her son participate in an arts-based activity organised by IOM © IOM

The success of IOM's activities for veteran and their families underscores the importance of such initiatives in fostering hope and recovery. They not only provide veterans and their families with the tools to rebuild their lives but also embody a commitment to a future where they can thrive without the shadow of fear and anxiety.

CO-LEADERSHIP OF THE TASK TEAM ON MHPSS FOR VETERANS

On 26 June 2023, IOM facilitated an information session in Kyiv, pivotal in the establishment of a task team dedicated to the mental health of veterans. The subsequent establishment of the Task Team on Mental Health and Psychosocial Support for Veterans marked a significant development for the broader MHPSS Technical Working Group in Ukraine. IOM and the Centre for Coordination of Mental Health of the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine co-lead the task team, under the national MHPSS Technical Working Group. The sub-committee addresses the present and increasing demand for MHPSS services among veterans and, as important, it serves as a body to coordinate the growing number of organizations engaged in providing such support.

Since its formation, the Task Team has convened twice, once in Kyiv in September and once in Odesa in November 2023. These meetings brought together stakeholders including local actors, government officials, donors and humanitarian partners to establish a comprehensive and unified approach to address veterans' MHPSS needs at national, regional and community levels. Complementing



Figure 17. The conference concluded with a reaffirmation of IOM's commitment to veterans' mental health and psychosocial needs. Dr. Hatem Marzouk and Mr. Nicholas Wilfred Wood, representing IOM, underscored the ongoing efforts and collaboration needed to make a tangible impact in veterans' lives. © IOM

IOM's existing programming directed at veterans, the Task Team plays a crucial role in facilitating collaboration among service providers, supporting the streamlining of assessments and data collection, assisting with the development and facilitation of and providing information about capacity-strengthening opportunities for people dedicated to supporting veterans and war-affected communities.

Finally, from 4 and 5 December 2023, IOM, in partnership with the Coordination Centre for Mental Health of the Cabinet of Ministers and the Ministry of Veterans Affairs, held a two-day conference focused on planning and coordinating MHPSS service provision for veterans in Ukraine. Titled "Fostering Resilience Together: Integrating Protection, Inclusion, Awareness-raising, and Localization in Community-based MHPSS Approach," the gathering marked a crucial step in addressing the comprehensive needs of veterans affected by recent conflicts. The conference's agenda was broad and inclusive, covering topics from disability inclusion to the integration of MHPSS with livelihood support.

Experts at the conference discussed the importance of large-scale awareness-raising campaigns and the vital role of local service providers in delivering effective mental health care. Highlighting the event was the presentation of a local NGO's firsthand experience in providing MHPSS to veterans. This session, along with the discussion of a survey on the social integration challenges veterans and their families face, painted a detailed picture of the current landscape. A key focus of the conference was veterans' mental well-being; insights from Ukrainian governmental advisers provided a window into the complexities and nuances of policy development in this area. This event signified a major advancement in strengthening the support system for Ukraine's veterans, emphasizing the need for collaborative, effective and inclusive strategies.

The conference also included presentations and discussions on various aspects of MHPSS, including protection, disability inclusion, and the integration of MHPSS with livelihood support. Experts explored key topics like large-scale awareness raising campaigns and the importance of supporting local service providers.

CAPACITY STRENGTHENING FOR PRACTITIONERS SUPPORTING VETERANS AND THEIR FAMILIES

Building upon IOM's foundational efforts in early 2023 to enhance veterans' access to mental health services, IOM works closely with the Government of Ukraine to develop and execute training programmes to bolster support networks for mental health professionals and veterans. These initiatives, which began concertedly in mid-2023, mark a critical expansion of IOM's approach to veteran care, fostering a sustainable support system for the veteran community.

Expertly led by IOM specialists and Dr. Joshua Kreimeyer, a practitioner with extensive experience working with the United States Department of Veterans Affairs, IOM's methodology melds global best practices in veterans' reintegration with Ukrainian mental health expertise. Programme topics include return rituals, trauma-informed work, anger management, family involvement and strategies to prevent domestic and gender-based violence and to address the severe psychosocial consequences of combatant experiences. This training series is unique in its approach: it not only addresses traditional therapeutic methods but also emphasizes the importance of veteran leaders in mental health care, recognizing that many veterans are more comfortable receiving care from peers who have similar experiences.

By the end of 2023, IOM has trained over 219 Ukrainian psychologists and veterans, with plans in place to train an additional 140 participants in the first months of 2024. These training sessions are vital in addressing the growing need for mental health support among veterans in Ukraine, ensuring that professionals are well-equipped to handle the complex challenges this community faces.

Through direct service provision, the co-leadership of the Task Team on MHPSS for Veterans and IOM's steadfast engagement in capacity-building related to MHPSS services for veterans, IOM significantly contributes to improving access to mental health support for veterans and their family members and enhancing veterans' community reintegration experiences. With expanded programming planned for 2024, these efforts mark a pivotal progression in supporting positive community reintegration of Ukraine's veterans, laying a foundation for their sustained well-being and active societal participation.



Figure 18. Denys, a veteran, joined more than 20 people in a training on providing psychosocial support to veterans. © IOM

“My comrades rescued me on the battlefield, giving me a second chance at life. Always fascinated by psychology, it is now my mission.”



Shares a Ukrainian veteran **Denys**. Joined by 20+ participants, he attended IOM training for veterans on providing psychosocial support to other demobilized soldiers like him

“Many veterans don't come to traditional mental health rooms. It is much easier for them to access mental care if we have veteran leaders with their own story of recovery.”



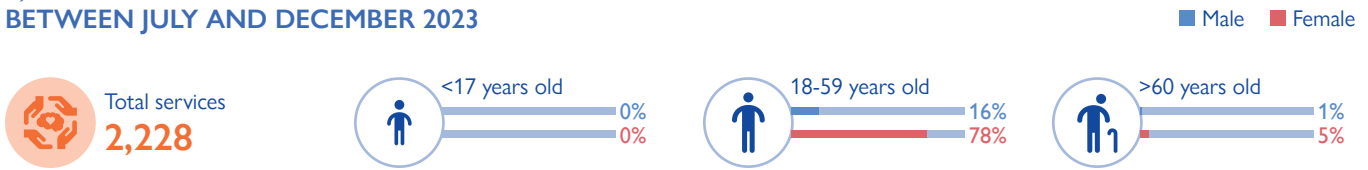
Dr Joshua Kreimeyer, keynote speaker at an IOM event promoting MHPSS support for veterans in Vinnytska in August 2023

IOM'S STRATEGIC TRAINING AND CAPACITY STRENGTHENING INITIATIVES

As the war persists and the needs of those affected by the war grow, IOM is escalating its efforts to develop sustainable and resilient structures for long-term MHPSS support in Ukraine. This commitment is tailored to meet the multifaceted and dynamic needs within the country, with a particular emphasis on enhancing the skills of professionals who are continuously adapting their

practices in the face of war challenges. IOM's initiatives are extensive, encompassing health-care workers, government partners, veterans and professionals who support veterans, humanitarian organizations, educators and individuals working with children and youth, as well as others engaged in supporting those impacted by the war.

2,228 PEOPLE ENGAGED IN TRAININGS AND CAPACITY STRENGTHENING SERVICES BETWEEN JULY AND DECEMBER 2023



In parallel, IOM focuses on empowering psychologists and educators who support displaced and war-impacted children and families. In the second half of 2023, over 979 professionals participated in IOM's training sessions focused on psychological first aid (PFA) and stress management. The objective of training like these is to establish a network of first responders adept at identifying and helping children experiencing psychological distress, integrating mental health support into educational environments.

These efforts are further supplemented by IOM's contributions to the Ти як? (Ty Yak?) / How are you? campaign, through which IOM provides training programmes for partners within the Ministries of Health, Education, and Youth and Sports, as well as social workers, partner United Nations agencies and NGO staff. Many of these training participants work closely with population groups in vulnerable situations, such as people with disabilities, children, youth and displaced people, which is why their ability to provide basic psychosocial assistance like PFA is crucial. Between July and December 2023, IOM trained over 1,100 professionals in these vital competencies.¹³



Figure 19. "Staying calm is vital for children to feel more comfortable during an air raid alert," says Anastasiia from Bakhmut, who now is a kindergarten teacher in Vinnytska oblast. Anastasiia took part in an IOM training on psychological first aid and stress management. © IOM

¹¹ IOM's contributions have been recognized publicly several times, including by Bezbariarnist and the Ministry of Health and the Ministry of Youth and Sports.



Figure 20. Daily interactions with the struggles of others can put social workers & local admin staff under a lot of stress. In coordination with the Norwegian Refugee Council, IOM organized a stress-management and psychological assistance training in Mykolaivska oblast. © IOM



Figure 21. Medical professionals take part in a session on preventing professional burnout in Mykolaivska. Photo: IOM/Stanslav Kalach © IOM



Figure 22. Two IOM psychologists, Yana and Yevhen lead a session on burnout prevention for medical professionals in Mykolaiv, Ukraine. © IOM

IOM's medical mobile teams have been established to reach remote settlements and provide support to the medical staff who remain there. Psychologists are an integral part of these teams, as the need for psychological assistance is growing due to the war. This applies to both patients and medical staff.

Yana explains the diverse range of services IOM provides: "Our approach includes both individual counseling and group sessions. The format adapts to the audience; for children, we offer catch-up classes, while for adults, we provide tailored trainings based on specific requests. These requests often relate to issues like panic fears or problems with aggression, which can significantly disrupt normal life and work."

She further elaborates on their experiences in the town of Snihurivka, Mykolaiv region, highlighting the unique challenges faced by medical professionals there: "In Snihurivka, our work involved supporting doctors who had been under occupation. The experience of the occupation, coupled with the stress of constant explosions, profoundly affected their emotional well-being. Now, these doctors are treating patients who, despite primarily requiring physical treatment, also need someone to talk to, addressing the psychological aspects of their experiences." This statement underscores the complexity of needs in war-affected areas, where psychological support is crucial even in professions traditionally focused on physical health.



Figure 23. 24 psychologists, social workers and teachers from communities across Sumska oblast participate in a training of trainers initiative run by IOM and the Centre for Civic Initiatives - Intellect of Sumy Region © IOM

Furthermore, IOM's initiatives include crucial support for medical staff, focusing on mitigating the risk of burnout and offering individual mental health consultations to patients in medical facilities who lack regular access to psychological support. This key aspect of IOM's work plays a significant role in alleviating the pressures faced by local healthcare professionals. Especially in regions where there is a shortage of psychologists trained to deal with war-induced mental trauma, it is common for patients to turn to medical doctors in other fields for help. IOM's intervention helps manage the increasing demand for mental health services and allows healthcare professionals to concentrate more effectively on their primary medical duties. This approach is pivotal in ensuring that healthcare systems in affected areas remain functional and responsive to the diverse needs arising from the war.

In December 2023, IOM's reach began to expand with the start of its collaboration with its newest implementing partner, the Centre for Civic Initiatives - Intellect of Sumy Region. Together, IOM and the Centre for Civic Initiatives initiated a training programme for 24 psychologists, social workers and youth workers from six different hromadas in Sumska oblast. Covering fundamental MHPSS skills like PFA and stress management and self-care, these trainings represent the first steps for these professionals to educate over 900 of their own community members and peers on the same skills. Such training-of-trainer programmes are pivotal to increasing MHPSS support services in areas like Sumska, where they are relatively scarce and inaccessible, promoting a broad and more effective response to the ongoing crisis.

Ongoing cooperation between IOM Ukraine, partner IOM missions and international academic partners has been vital in providing training opportunities to mental health professionals. The ability to hold trainings abroad has been particularly valuable, enabling Ukrainian mental health professionals to collaborate with and learn from international experts who are unable to travel to Ukraine. These sessions offer a safe space for exchange and learning, as well as a much-needed respite from the war for the Ukrainian participants.

A key example of this collaboration is the partnership between IOM Ukraine and IOM Lithuania, which has been a cornerstone in enhancing mental health support for professionals in Ukraine. In July 2023, IOM held a two-day workshop in Vilnius for over 240 Ukrainian mental health professionals. This aimed to help them adjust their practices to the evolving needs of their clients amidst the war, with a focus on counselling methods for people experiencing traumatic loss and grief. Marking the third such training in Lithuania since February 2022, this session highlighted the importance of psychologists in direct counselling and their collaboration with other sectors, like art and media, to assist individuals in processing their losses and finding new meanings in their experiences.

These workshops were designed to equip mental health professionals with the skills to confront the unique challenges of the war, such as addressing the impact on children who are deeply affected by conflict-related issues. This capacity-building initiative served as a critical platform for peer-to-peer learning and discussion, allowing professionals to share insights and refine their approaches based on shared experiences. The collaborative nature of these trainings is essential for understanding observed patterns in practice, especially as the demand for mental health services in Ukraine has surged.



Figure 24. Ukrainian mental health practitioners take part in a training in Vilnius in July 2023 © IOM

“More than 500 days have passed since the start of the Russian Federation’s full-scale war on Ukraine. Ukrainians have lost their family members and friends, and many people have gone missing. To bear this pain, people need emotional support and assistance from professionals who know how to help a person through such grief.”



Eitvydas Bingelis
Head of IOM Lithuania

“If we don’t find or create meaning in our lives, fragments of frightening unspeakable experience may pop up at unlikely times. But, if we create a story, it helps us piece these fragments together. Then, loss and grief become slightly more bearable.”



Mantas Jersovas
psychologist at IOM Lithuania who coordinated the training

“In the consultation room, we fight for people’s resilience and we must win. There is no recipe or magic word to heal their grief and take away the pain. However, we can learn to process pain, to think not only about what one has lost but also what remains after loss...In the last year, I haven’t seen one child in my consultation room who didn’t initiate a game related to war – tanks, shelters, or weapons. Many people suffer from sleepless nights, constant worry, responsibility, and anxiety about the future...This war has made us also more resilient, stronger, more conscious. It is difficult for each one of us, but we are now united more than ever.”



Professor **Olha Savychenko** is based at the Department of Social and Applied Psychology in Ukraine’s Zhytomyr Region. Over the past 18 months, she has had to adapt the way she works to better meet the changing needs of clients who are now living with the distress of war. Olha was one of 50 Ukrainian mental health professionals who took part in a two-day workshop in Lithuania

IOM Ukraine’s concerted efforts in enhancing MHPSS capabilities across Ukraine reflect a deep commitment to ensuring that Ukrainian mental health professions are thoroughly prepared to offer care to those in need. These capacity development initiatives are fundamental in addressing Ukraine’s mental health requirements and in improving the sustainability and availability of high-quality services.

EXPANDING PARTNERSHIPS FOR ENHANCED MHPSS SERVICES IN UKRAINE

As we look into 2024 and beyond, IOM is dedicated to maintaining and enhancing its coordination with a diverse range of partners, spanning international and local contexts and humanitarian and development spheres. This commitment to multi-sectoral collaboration is fundamental to creating more impactful and wider-reaching initiatives in 2024. As the war and recovery efforts persist, IOM is ready to work with its partners across all levels – global, national, oblast and local – to adapt its services to meet evolving needs.

Key partners include:

- **National and Local Authorities:** IOM works closely with governmental bodies including the Ministries of Health, Veterans Affairs and Youth, as well as local and regional authorities, to for a cohesive and unified approach to service provision.
- **Inter-agency and International NGO Collaborations:** Partnerships with United Nations agencies, including WHO, the United Nations Office of the High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), the United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF), the International Federation of the Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFCR) and INGOs like NRC, the Danish Refugee Council and the International Rescue Committee are central to IOM’s response.
- **Humanitarian Coordination:** As an active member of the IASC-associated Reference Group on MHPSS, a position which significantly informs and shapes programming in Ukraine. Moreover, IOM co-chairs the MHPSS sub-working group in the Eastern oblasts (Dnipro Hub: Zaporizka, Poltavaska, Kharkivska and Dnipropetrovska oblasts) and Vinnytska oblast coordination hubs, promoting coordinated strategies and information sharing among national and international partners. At the global level, IOM co-chairs the working groups on community-based MHPSS; on MHPSS and Peacebuilding; on MHPSS, livelihoods and cash-based interventions; and on MHPSS for men and boys.
- **Recovery and Durable Solutions:** As humanitarian needs persist, IOM is launching long-term recovery and durable solutions initiatives, integrating innovative MHPSS approaches in all sectors to ensure sustained access to mental health services.
- **Civil Society and Volunteer Groups:** Collaborations with organizations like Public Organization of Artists ‘Pectoral’, Charitable Foundation ‘Slavic Heart’, Welfare Workshop, the Centre for Civic Initiatives - The Intellect of Sumy Region and Legko Space, the co-leader of the Vinnytska MHPSS technical working group, enable IOM to deliver MHPSS activities in hard-to-reach areas, ensuring cultural relevance and community trust.
- **Migration Health Research Portal:** IOM’s contribution to this global repository highlights the links between migration, health and policy, facilitating information exchange with policymakers, researchers and other stakeholders.

These partnerships enable IOM to provide comprehensive and culturally sensitive MHPSS services in Ukraine, leveraging local insights, building community trust and fostering long-term resilience and recovery



FOR MORE INFORMATION ABOUT THE IOM UKRAINE MHPSS PROGRAMME,
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