MENTAL HEALTH AND PSYCHOSOCIAL SUPPORT PROGRAMME IN UKRAINE:
ACTIVITIES OVERVIEW
FEBRUARY–SEPTEMBER 2022
10 October is World Mental Health Day. In Ukraine, this year, this day is marked seven months of the war that has affected millions of Ukrainians and led to a multitude of stressors and challenges that are often difficult to cope with. The active hostilities have forced more than six million into displacement within Ukraine and more than seven million abroad, broken apart families, and disrupted daily life across the country; the war has a profound effect on the mental health of many affected. Since the beginning of the invasion, International Organization for Migration (IOM) recognized that mental health during this emergency response cannot be considered an accessory or be an afterthought.

Experiencing a disruption of social networks, lack of community support, distressful personal events, discrimination, harsh living conditions during displacement, loss of property, and uncertainty about the future are common stressors that have a negative impact among people affected by the war. IOM has engaged people across Ukraine in a range of different activities to promote mental health and well-being.

The IOM Mental Health and Psychosocial Support (MHPSS) programme aims to improve the psychological and social well-being and strengthen the overall resilience of individuals affected by the war. IOM implements a range of MHPSS activities that support people in Ukraine, including internally displaced persons (IDPs), returnees, third-country nationals and host communities, to regain a sense of safety and human security, increase self and community efficacy, encourage the creation or reactivation of social networks, and develop tools for affected communities to deal with the past and ongoing stressors.

All IOM MHPSS services are carried out in a manner consistent with the ‘do no harm’ principle outlined in the Sphere project, WHO’s definition of mental health, and the IASC Guidelines on Mental Health and Psychosocial Support Services in Emergency Settings, so all beneficiaries receive comprehensive services adjusted to their needs.

IN UKRAINE, IOM MHPSS ACTIVITIES HAVE DIRECTLY REACHED

- **11,972** people
- **16,145** services

between 24 February 2022 and 10 October 2022.

This includes programming through three main categories:

- individual consultations provided by specialists through the IOM Emotional Support MHPSS Hotline and the mobile clinics run by IOM and its implementing partners,
- capacity-building activities,
- community-based psychosocial activities.
Individual consultations

IOM has reached

10,991 people through specialized and focused support services, including

9,127 people through psychologists at the mobile clinics

1,864 people through the IOM MHPSS hotline.

IOM provides services based on the needs elicited in assessing beneficiaries.

Focused, non-specialized support interventions promote resilience and positive coping mechanisms and are offered to recently displaced families in distress. These interventions help to reduce stress symptoms and promote a healthy recovery following a highly distressful event. Specialized services include psychiatric consultations and clinical psychological counselling for people with pre-existing and/or emerging forms of severe stress, behavioural and relational problems or moderate to severe mental disorders exacerbated by the war.

At the first interaction with IOM hotline, operators provide beneficiaries with initial consultations and psychological first aid (PFA) if needed. The psychologists may also refer the caller to a psychologist or psychiatrist for additional support and consultations. If other assistance is required, such as related to legal or protection matters, the psychologist can refer the beneficiary to another IOM service or to an external service provider.

In addition, individuals can receive specialized assistance in the format of a short or medium-term psychological or psychotherapeutic support sessions. Most beneficiaries request support related to one or more of the following:

- Difficulties with adaptation
- Anxiety or fear of the future
- Experiencing loss or grief

Following this consultation, the caller may be referred onward to receive formal psychiatric and psychological care following a curated treatment plan. This approach also helps participants develop a sense of safety and comfort along with emotional stabilization and supports them through providing the necessary information and practical assistance in linking them with social support and other services.

Finally, another tool used by IOM’s MHPSS team is Problem Management Plus (PM+). This evidence-based programme was developed to facilitate individual psychological help for adults impaired by distress in communities exposed to adversity. This intervention follows a problem-solving approach and can help people with depression, anxiety, and stress, and improve aspects of their overall mental health and psychosocial well-being.

Capacity-building activities

IOM reached over

531 people through capacity-building activities

IOM recognizes the need for capacity building for MHPSS field workers, stakeholders, volunteers, government entities, NGOs, community leaders, and professionals who are rapidly changing their practices to adapt to the war. To address these needs, IOM organizes trainings for mental health professionals and community stakeholders on topics ranging from PFA, basic helping skills in MHPSS, stress management, self-care and burnout prevention. Several trainings were organized in collaboration with Ukraine’s First Lady’s initiative on Mental Health and Psychosocial Support.

In Lviv that hosted thousands of IDPs over the last seven months, IOM organized a one-day MHPSS training, with modules on PFA, stress management in humanitarian crisis settings, and more for 26 young people volunteering in collective centres set up at Lviv.
Polytechnic University and dealing with the psychological distress. These volunteers provide round-the-clock support to more than 250 displaced people living in gymnasiums at the university, which have been used to host displaced people. Most of the volunteers are from among the displaced community or local students, who combine volunteering with university studies.

IOM also develops capacities of mental health practitioners working with war-affected people on the ground. In September, IOM supported 145 Ukrainian specialists to join the international Rethinking Mental Health Care conference in Vilnius, Lithuania, focusing on enhancing accessible and acceptable mental health care. For selected participants from Ukraine – health and mental health professionals, social workers, researchers, and practitioners from civil society organizations and psychiatric institutions – five thematic workshops on providing psychological support for people during the wartime were organized prior to the conference. Experts from comparative contexts, including Georgia, shared with Ukrainian colleagues their best practices in psychosocial response to disasters, evidence-based trauma therapy, as well as transfer from trauma to resilience and prevention of professional burnout.

**Evidence-based approach, advanced knowledge and experience of other countries from the region in emergency mental health are crucial to enhance community-based approaches to mental health and psychosocial support to strengthen the participants’ ability to provide direct support to Ukrainians needing urgent help because of the war”, explained Hatem Marzouk, the IOM Ukraine MHPSS Coordinator.**

Community-based activities In July 2022, IOM reached 450 displaced children and their parents in Lviv Region to foster a sense of community and belonging. IOM and the Lviv City Council coordinated to provide the families with ten trips around famous “Golden Horseshoe” route in Lviv Region. In Ukraine, as the war and displacement cause major disruption of social networks. IOM’s MHPSS teams work to strengthen, establish, or re-establish them. Communal celebrations, communication on positive coping strategies, informal educational activities, livelihood activities, art-based and sports-based activities, and recreational activities, aim at improving the welfare of people of concern, building trust, and strengthening asocial cohesion in communities. This programming is expanding across Ukraine over the rest of 2022 and into 2023.
IOM MHPSS activities in Ukraine have directly reached 11,972 people.

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<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Number</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>People reached through psychologists working at IOM mobile clinics</td>
<td>9,127</td>
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<tr>
<td>People reached through the IOM MHPSS hotline</td>
<td>1,864</td>
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<tr>
<td>People engaged in trainings conducted by IOM, including psychological first aid and more</td>
<td>360</td>
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<tr>
<td>Children and parents engaged in community activities in Lviv Region</td>
<td>450</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ukrainian mental health professionals supported to participate in training workshops by regional specialists in Lithuania</td>
<td>145</td>
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<tr>
<td>Volunteers trained on basic helping skills in MHPSS</td>
<td>26</td>
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For more information about IOM’s MHPSS programme in Ukraine, please contact Hatem Marzouk: hmarzouk@iom.int

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From the People of Japan

Ukraine Humanitarian Fund

USA for IOM