



Addressing Mental Health and Psychosocial Needs

(Workshop 7)

Outline

Key highlight

This workshop aims to address the mental health and psychosocial needs that arise as a consequence of armed conflicts, natural disasters and other emergencies, including as a result of migration. The people we work with are often exposed to extremely distressing experiences such as loss of loved ones, loss of home and property, loss of livelihood, loss of dignity, sexual and gender-based violence, war atrocities, or torture. Where do mental health and psychosocial needs stand on the list of priorities in our humanitarian work?

Background information on the topic

Armed conflicts, natural disasters and other emergencies, including migration, give rise to great mental health and psychosocial needs among millions of men, women, boys and girls around the world. The humanitarian impact is extensive, not only affecting the individuals directly but also whole communities, populations and societies, as well as our volunteers and staff working in the field.

While mental health and psychosocial needs are currently increasing, they are still not a priority in the humanitarian field. To improve humanitarian responses to mental health and psychosocial needs resulting from armed conflicts, natural disasters and other emergencies, including as a result of migration, a greater commitment is needed to ensure coherence and collaboration within the Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement.

National Societies began implementing mental health and psychosocial support (MHPSS) activities in the late 1980's, mainly as part of their domestic activities. Today, more than half of all National Societies worldwide implement mental health and psychosocial support activities – either as stand-alone programmes or integrated into health, disaster preparedness, protection and other core activities. 39 National Societies provided mental health and psychosocial support in contexts of armed conflicts, civil unrest or during acts of violence in 2016. Responding to these needs, the International Committee of the Red Cross has expanded and diversified its MHPSS programmes, which are now a core component of its health strategy. In 2016, 85 National Societies conducted mental health and psychosocial support training for staff and volunteers, such as psychosocial support in emergencies, caring for volunteers, psychosocial support for youth in post-conflict situations and psychosocial support for people separated from family members. While the components of the Movement have expressed their commitment to the mental health and psychosocial needs of affected

populations on several occasions, there is no coherent Movement approach to this issue and no policy that applies to the entire Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement.

While recognising the need to strengthen the coherence and collaboration between the components of the Movement in addressing the mental health and psychosocial support needs that arise as a consequence of armed conflicts, natural disasters and other emergencies, including as a result of migration, this workshop will also discuss how to improve this dimension of our work. The workshop will contribute to deepening the discussions on the margin of the resolution on this topic proposed for adoption at the Council of Delegates ([agenda item 10 of the Council of Delegates Agenda](#)).

Objectives of the workshop

1) to recognize the need to strengthen coherence and collaboration within the Movement in addressing mental health and psychosocial needs that arise as a consequence of armed conflicts, natural disasters and other emergencies, including as a result of migration.

2) to make recommendations on how to address the gaps identified in the Movement's approach, and the drafting of a Movement-wide policy framework for addressing mental health and psychosocial needs that arise as a consequence of armed conflicts, natural disasters and other emergencies, including as a result of migration, for the 2019 Council of Delegates and the 33rd International Conference.

3) to identify champion National Societies in the light of the ongoing consultations within the Movement and with the States, with a view to the 2019 Council of Delegates and the 33rd IC.

Reference to official working documents and previous Council of Delegates, International Conference resolutions, etc.

[Addressing psychological effects of armed conflicts and violence – side event during the 32nd International Conference of the RCRC](#)

[Resolution 5: The safety and security of humanitarian volunteers of the 32IC \(32IC/15/R5\)](#)

[IFRC Policy "Psychological Support Policy" – 2003](#)

[IFRC Strategy 2020](#)

[International Committee of Red Cross \(ICRC\) Strategy 2015-2018](#)