

Strengthening National Capacity for Mental Health and Psychosocial Support During the War: WHO support to Ukraine in 2022

Prior to the war

Since 2015, WHO has been supporting Ukraine in response to the emergency, followed by support of mental health policy development. These efforts were further reinforced by introducing innovative mental health service models in primary and specialist settings in Ukraine, and building international partnerships for mental health, as a part of the **WHO Special Initiative for Mental Health and the pan-European Mental Health Coalition of the WHO European Region**. WHO also supported response to COVID-19 and its impact on mental health of the population.

Key principles of WHO support

In its assistance to Ukraine in response to the military invasion of the Russian Federation in February 2022, WHO aims at strengthening national and local capacity in MHPSS, basing emergency response on existing structures, resources and innovations introduced in reforms in past years. WHO also advocates for the emergency response and recovery efforts in the area of MHPSS in Ukraine to be aligned with the best international standards and planned in a way that further strengthens the Ukraine's mental health system.

In the settings where national resources are stretched, WHO and partners have been filling critical gaps in MHPSS services and supply through the coordinated inter-sectoral effort.

Key areas of support:

1. Technical support



The Government of Ukraine expressed its commitment to prioritize MHPSS in emergency response and recovery and established a **thematic intersectoral coordination council** under the prime minister of Ukraine, followed by launch of **the National Mental Health and Psychosocial Support Programme** in May 2022 under auspices of the First Lady of Ukraine Olena Zelenska.

Being the main technical partner for the national programme, WHO supported the development of the **Operational Roadmap**



«**Ukrainian Prioritized Multisectoral Mental Health and Psychosocial Support Actions During and After the War**» which was endorsed at the second meeting of the intersectoral coordination council in December 2022. The roadmap is a **consensus of all stakeholders regarding priority actions in the field of mental health and psychosocial support in Ukraine, in different sectors** such as health, social work, education, as well as for different population groups (veterans and their families, internally displaced persons, people with disabilities, people who have

experienced gender-based violence, people affected by landmines and other groups).

Informed by the overall goal of MHPSS assistance in Ukraine - to reduce suffering and improve the mental health and psychosocial well-being of the affected population, the Roadmap aims to collect and provide a consolidated view for the



envisioned MHPSS priorities, which is informed by local context and vision of the Government of Ukraine, national and international partners, best available evidence, and resources available, to all MHPSS stakeholders already engaged or joining emergency response and recovery efforts in Ukraine.



As a follow-up to the meeting of Her Majesty Queen Mathilde of the Belgians and First Lady of Ukraine Olena Zelenska, and as a part of the pan-European Mental Health Coalition launched by WHO Regional Director for Europe Dr Hans Henri P. Kluge, WHO supported Ukraine in establishing new networks with Belgian partners and the first study visit of Ukrainian delegation to Belgium to learn about the structure, governance and policies that enabled Belgium's mental health reform and to gather experiences that will benefit the process of mental health service transformation in Ukraine.



2. Coordination and technical support for partners



WHO co-chairs the **MHPSS TWG Ukraine** together with International Medical Corps (IMC). The MHPSS TWG has been operating since 2015, to address the needs of the population affected by the conflict in Donetsk and Luhansk oblasts and, since 2021, – the COVID-19 pandemic. Since 24 February 2022, the toll on the mental health and psychosocial wellbeing of the population has attracted **more than 220 new organizations, professional groups, and volunteers**, in addition to 50 partners who have been operational in Ukraine since 2014.

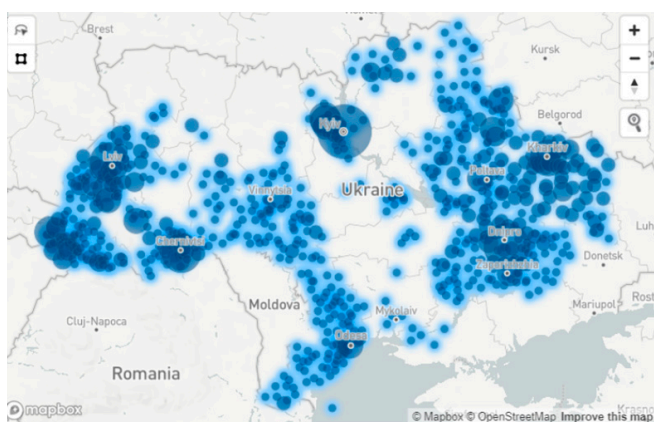


Figure 1. MHPSS services in Ukraine (as of November 2022)

The massive need, the scattered capacities to respond, and new partners arriving, called for continued and extended coordination effort.

During April – November 2022, five regional level sub-groups have been established under the umbrella of the MHPSS TWG Ukraine, to strengthen MHPSS response and coordination at a local level in Lvivska oblast (chaired by IMC and “Mental Health for Ukraine” project), Chernivetska oblast (Medicos del Mundo), Zakarpatska oblast (NGO “Proliska”), South oblasts (covering Odeska and Mykolaivska) (chaired by IMC), and East oblast Hub (chaired by IOM and WHO).

Informed by the overall goal of MHPSS assistance in Ukraine - to reduce suffering and improve the mental health and psychosocial well-being of the affected population, the MHPSS TWG Ukraine aims at facilitating coordination of effective humanitarian assistance and promote good practices. To facilitate coordination and enable referrals between different services and providers, the group does “4Ws”¹ mapping in cooperation with Health and Protection clusters (Figure 1).

The MHPSS TWG Ukraine coordinates its efforts with Health, Education and Protection clusters, GBV and Child Protection sub-clusters and other technical working groups (Figure 2). At a regional level, the group cooperates with the MHPSS TWG of Poland, Hungary, Slovakia, Moldova, Czech Republic, Romania and Lithuania and is guided by the global IASC MHPSS Reference Group.

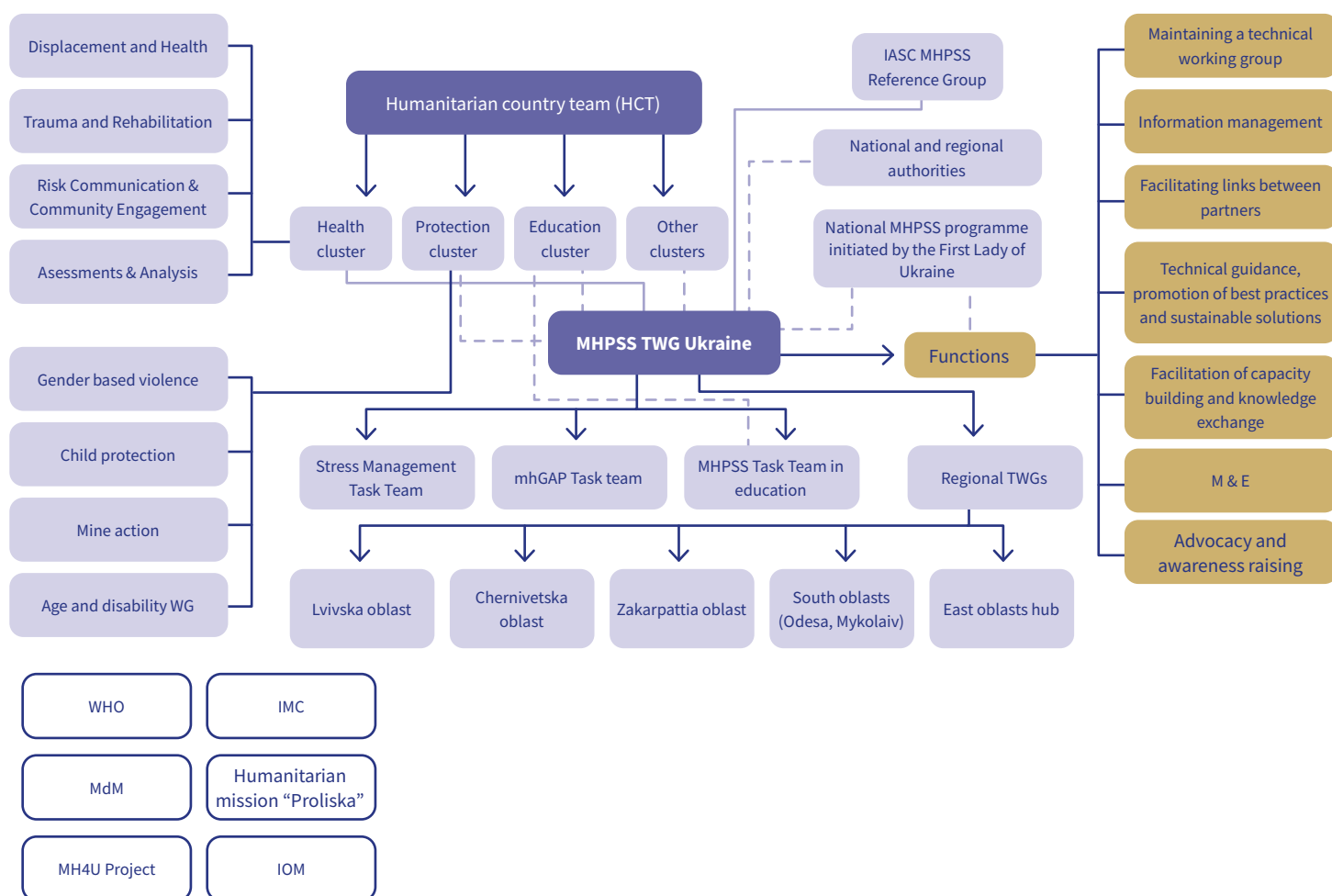


Figure 2. How the MHPSS TWG Ukraine sits within the overall humanitarian response structure, with links and functions

1. Who is Doing What, Where and When

3. Strengthening services

WHO continues strengthening mental health services provided in primary health care and specialist settings to address increased needs of the population and people with pre-existing severe mental disorders in particular.

A) Management of common mental health conditions in primary health care



In Ukraine, the WHO Mental Health Gap Action Programme (mhGAP) has been implemented by WHO and partners to support healthcare reform, since 2019. WHO provides overall coordination, training and technical guidance to all humanitarian and development partners engaged in the mhGAP initiative in Ukraine.

mhGAP tools and design of mhGAP implementation in Ukraine are informed by the needs of the population affected by the conflict in eastern Ukraine (2014-2022) and the war that began on February 24, 2022, and includes modules of stress-related

mental health conditions (Acute stress, Grief and Post-traumatic Stress Disorder).

Based on the mhGAP initiative in Ukraine, **the MOH and NHSU launched a new service package on provision of mental health services in primary health care as a part of the State Programme of Medical Guarantees.** The new service package started in November 2022 and was introduced as complementary to the existing package of services provided in primary health care and planned to be reimbursed from the global healthcare budget.



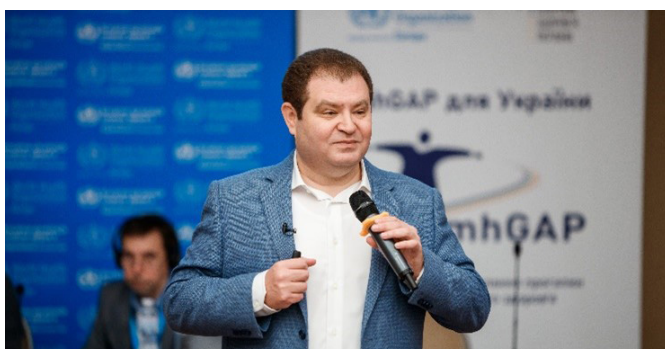
On November 7, 2022, WHO and the Ministry of Health of Ukraine signed **a memorandum of cooperation to mobilize efforts of partners and contribute to building of capacity of primary health care workers in the**

management of common mental health conditions, using mhGAP tools, in response to the needs caused by the Russian Federation military invasion of Ukraine.



As of November 2022, **16 partners have joined WHO's mhGAP initiative in Ukraine:** Mental Health for Ukraine (MH4U) project, Medicos del Mundo (MDM), Doctors Without Borders (MSF), International Medical Corps (IMC), HOPE project, USAID

Public Health System Recovery and Resilience Activity (PACT) project, UNICEF, World Bank, HealthRight International and Ukrainian Foundation for Public Health, Save the Children, Medair, Family Health International (FHI 360), NGO «Proliska», Academy of Family Medicine of Ukraine, Deloitte project.



88 new trainers were trained in mhGAP by WHO with the support of IMC in November and December 2022, in addition to those 56 trainers trained in past years. Overall, in Ukraine, more than 700 primary healthcare workers have been trained in mhGAP (5-days training followed by minimum 6 supervision sessions over a 6 month period) by WHO and partners since 2019. In 2021, WHO trained **66 healthcare workers of the penitentiary service of**

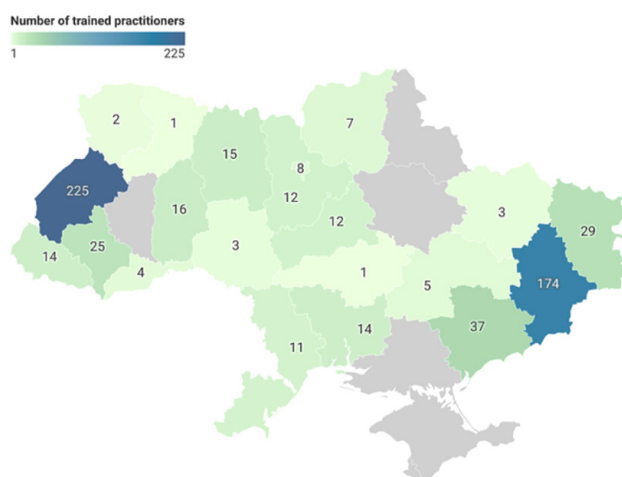
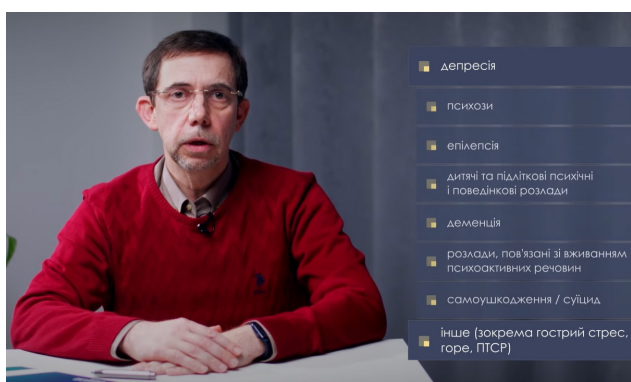
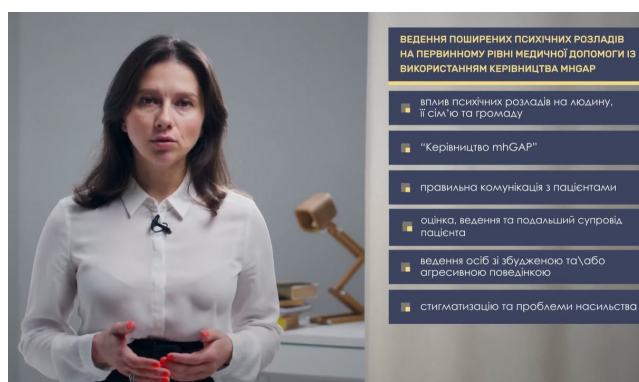
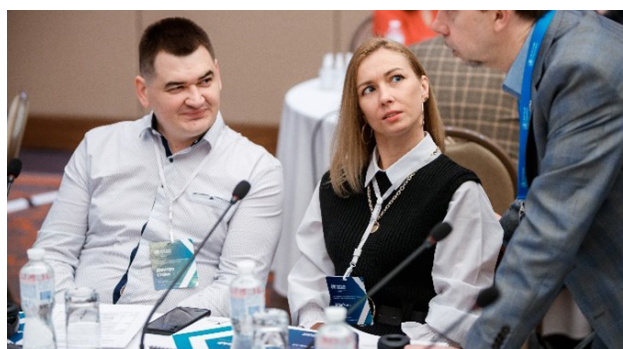


Figure 3. Distribution of PHC workers trained in mhGAP by oblast (as of September 2022).

In total, 5,000 workers (10%) of primary healthcare staff in Ukraine are planned to be offered face-to-face mhGAP training and supervision by WHO and partners by the end of 2023. The on-line self-paced course on management of mental health conditions in primary health care based on mhGAP protocols has been available for all primary healthcare staff in Ukraine (app. 50,000 workers) since December 2022. From those PHC workers, who completed self-paced course, up to 10,000 will be offered on-line supervision since March 2023 for mastering their skills.

Ukraine in mhGAP. mhGAP program was introduced in four universities, in graduate and post-graduate programmes.

In order to quickly increase accessibility of training for primary health care workers during the war, and provide care to the population, apart from face-to-face trainings, the Ministry of Health of Ukraine, the National Health Service of Ukraine, WHO and partners initiated the development **of an online self-paced course on management of mental health conditions in primary health care settings in Ukraine**. The course is based on the materials of mhGAP training.



B) Community Mental Health Teams



Community Mental Health Teams (CMHTs) is an innovative community-based service model, which was introduced in Ukraine as a result of a series of successive WHO pilot projects. **The initial design of the model was aimed at addressing needs of the population affected by the conflict**, including IDPs, and started in 2016 with four teams in Donetsk, Dnipropetrovsk, Sumy and Odessa oblasts. During 2015-2021 WHO, in partnership with MOH, NHSU, national and international experts and staff of psychiatric services of Ukraine, developed and tested the CMHTs service model that fits the Ukrainian

context. A team consists of psychiatrist, psychologist, social worker and nurse and **provides recovery-oriented care supporting people with severe mental health conditions living fulfilling lives in the community**. Based on global evidence, the team serves as an innovative and an **alternative to hospital-based treatment model, showing high levels of satisfaction of the service users and the staff**. Since 2016, 17 teams hosted by psychiatric services operated across Ukraine with technical and financial support of WHO and provided more than 8,000 visits to more than 1,000 people with severe mental health conditions. Experience of these teams formed a basis for development of standard operation procedures of CMHTs in Ukraine compiled by WHO.



In June 2021, **the MOH introduced CMHTs as a national service model** and included it into the State Programme of Medical Guarantees. Since June 2021, 61 CMHTs have been set and reimbursed by NHSU in 23 oblasts of Ukraine, followed by 87 CMHTs in 24 oblasts in 2022.



Since February 2022, CMHTs continued to support their patients as well as newly arrived IDPs with mental health conditions, despite shortage of fuel, electricity and basic supply in mental health services, limited access to some communities, hostilities and missile attacks, limited budgets, and staff relocation. Hospitals hosting CMHTs turned out to be better prepared for supporting their clients during the war due to their mobility, innovation and multidisciplinary nature. While sticking to their core functions, the teams shifted to remote support modalities in insecure areas or reached their patients in community by car when public transport

was stopped, supported their clients in obtaining medications (sometimes delivered them to a patient), provided emotional support and helped managing stress. The team members were well prepared for task sharing to ensure service continuity and replaced functions of each other, particularly when some team members relocated or left the country. Several teams (including two supported by WHO) however stopped their operations in the territories illegally annexed by the Russian Federation.





Since February 2022, WHO continued to provide technical support 21 CMHTs trained earlier, and, since September 2022, extended its support to five more teams from Dnipropetrovska, Sumska, Rivnenska, Poltavaska oblasts and Kyiv city. Addressing further increased needs in the war context and national budget limitations, WHO supported a launch of an additional four teams in Dnipropetrovska, Sumska, Vinnytska and Zakarpatska oblasts, covering the costs of their operations.

The teams receive trainings and continuous supervision (on a weekly, bi-weekly and monthly basis) from WHO on clinical and organizational aspects, as well as on the concept of recovery and human rights of people with mental health disorders. Stress management intervention and management of stress-related mental health conditions (e.g. PTSD) were introduced in the training programme in February 2022.

Availability of a car is essential for CMHTs to be operational and reach their patients in community. As a part of emergency response WHO procured five electric vehicles to CMHTs mostly operating in rural and hard-to-reach areas, as well as Dnipro city which hosted many IDPs from eastern part of Ukraine and where national capacity is stretched.

Overall, 30 CMHTs supported by WHO provided more than 23,000 consultations to **more than 1,400 people with severe mental health disorders during February – December 2022.**



Figure 4. Community Mental Health Teams supported by WHO in Ukraine during 2020-2022

4. Psychological interventions

What is SH+?

Intervention
Self-Help Plus (SH+)¹

- Brief guided self-help psychological intervention
- Based on Acceptance and Commitment Therapy
- Developed by WHO

Intervention Components

- A pre-recorded psychoeducational audio course delivered by facilitators in a group setting
- An illustrated self-help book

Intervention Delivery

- Delivered over 5 weeks in 2-hour group sessions
- 10 to 30 people per group
- Sessions facilitated by **briefly trained, non-specialists** (no previous mental health training or work experience)

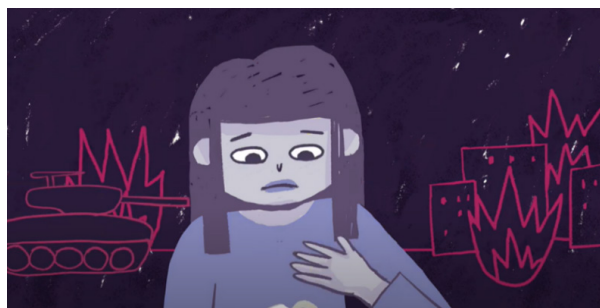
Doing What Matters in Times of Stress: An Illustrated Guide

To help people in Ukraine to overcome challenging times of the war, WHO, in partnership with the project office for implementation of the National Mental Health and Psychosocial Support Programme, launched **an initiative aimed at promoting self-help strategies among the population of Ukraine.**

The initiative includes:

- a communication campaign to promote a culture of self-care and encourage common usage of stress management strategies by the adult population of Ukraine;
- large-scale cascade trainings to build capacity of service providers of the key sectors engaged in emergency response to deliver guided self-help psychological interventions, and
- the introduction of digital solutions to make self-help tools more accessible.

WHO`s “Doing what matters in times of stress” and Self-Help Plus (SH+) course, as well as adapted to the context of Ukraine IASC tool “Basic Skills of Self-Care and Support to Others” (original IASC tool is “Basic Psychosocial Skills for COVID Responders”) - are key tools used in the initiative so far. WHO`s Problem Management Plus (PM+) intervention aimed at mastering skills of problem management by the populations experiencing adversities is also planned for roll out by WHO and partners as a next step, linking also with other psychological interventions (e.g. CETA).



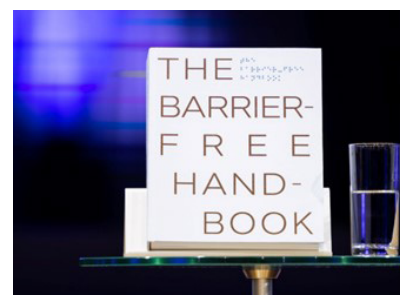
As discussed during the **strategic workshop on scalable psychological interventions in Ukraine** facilitated by WHO (Kyiv, July 2022), a combination of psychological interventions requiring lower or higher resource intensity can be provided as a system of “stepped care”, where a person may use guided self-help or other interventions provided by non-specialist workers and is “stepped up” to receive more specialized support if and when required.

As part of a **communication campaign** launched in cooperation with the project office for implementation of the National MHPSS Programme, WHO supported preparation of a series of educational videos on stress for the general population: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0sRuxaIBMI&list=PLwL4PW8_YrfLVSK3sTBECiLVqXR70nLr&index=3



The IASC tool, “Basic Psychosocial Skills for COVID Responders,” was adapted to the context of war in Ukraine and was released in Ukraine as “Базові навички турботи про себе та інших” (Basic Skills of Self-Care and Support to Others).

With support of WHO, the Barrier-Free Handbook, which is a product of the flagship “Barrier-Free” initiative launched in Ukraine earlier, was complemented by a new chapter on the basics of communication with people who experience stress and adversities in the situation of war in Ukraine, based on the “Базові навички турботи про себе та інших” (Basic Skills of Self-Care and Support to Others): The Barrier-free handbook — Без бар’єрів (bf.in.ua)



To enable **large-scale cascade trainings** in Self-Help Plus, WHO translated the SH+ technical package (both manuals for facilitators and trainers, and supporting materials) to the Ukrainian language and started to build the capacity of trainers.

During June – December 2022, WHO trained 248 trainers in SH+ all over Ukraine. The contextualized for Ukraine training programme for trainers envisions 4-days training, followed by four supervision sessions for four months period. Trained trainers started to train SH+ facilitators, who will then be helping adults experiencing adversities to learn how to manage their stress.

The front-line sectors and services were prioritized for roll out of SH+ intervention and capacity building. In partnership with the Ministry of Social Policy of Ukraine, WHO launched SH+ for social sector aiming to cascade stress management trainings through social services all over Ukraine and make the SH+ intervention accessible for the vulnerable groups within the population receiving social services in Ukraine. 75 trainers from oblast level social services (2-3 representatives from each oblast of Ukraine) were trained in SH+ and started to train SH+ facilitators in local social services, under supervision and overall guidance of WHO.

The Research Design & Methodology	
Study design	RCT (2 arm parallel group RCT – intervention delivery from September 2018 to March 2020)
Population (selection criteria)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Refugee or asylum seeker (Turkey - Under temporary protection according to Law on Foreigners and International Protection) Psychological distress (GHQ-12 ≥ 3) No mental disorder diagnosis (MINI), acute medical condition contradicting participation, imminent suicide risk, or impaired capacity Dari-, Urdu-, Arabic-, or English-speaking
Intervention	Self-Help Plus (SH+)
Comparison	Enhanced Care as Usual
Outcomes	<p>Primary outcome</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Post-intervention & 6-months follow up (primary timepoint) Presence of mental health disorder (MINI) <p>Secondary outcomes</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Post-intervention & 6-months follow up Psychological distress (GHQ-12), PTSD symptoms (PCL-5), depressive symptoms (PHQ-9), personally identified psychological problems (PSYCHLOPS), functional impairment (WHODAS-2), and well-being (WHO-5) 6-months follow up Quality of life (EQ-5D) and daily and environmental stressors (PMLD)

Following the launch of SH+ in social sector, WHO trained representatives of more than 25 NGOs engaged in the humanitarian response in Ukraine, staff of the Ukrainian railway service, health, education, energy, IT sector, and other services and sectors.

Roll out of SH+ by front-line workers contributes also to their own wellbeing as they are mastering

stress management skills and self-care strategies as learning the intervention.

To mobilize partners` efforts and ensure synergy in roll out of psychological interventions, particularly SH+ and PM+, WHO launched a thematic working group under the umbrella of the National MHPSS TWG and in partnership with MDM. The group aimed at providing a platform for all interested organizations and providers for planning, exchange insights and progress of implementation and acquire technical support. WHO is providing technical guidance to the group and ensures bridging partners` efforts and those undertaken by the national authorities and actors.

A series of **digital solutions** were supported by WHO to make self-help tools more accessible.



The browser application «Doing what matters in Times of Stress» in Ukrainian language was released by the WHO in July 2022.



In cooperation with the project office for implementation of the National MHPSS Programme, WHO supported the “Better Me” application team in introducing a new section «Doing what matters in Times of Stress» to the application, to be available for the Ukrainian population experiencing stress.

5. Promotion of human rights of people with mental disorders and rights-based services

WHO is preparing for a launch of its flagship **QualityRights initiative** in Ukraine. QualityRights is aimed at promoting the human rights of people living with psychosocial, intellectual and cognitive disabilities and based on the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD). The technical package of the QualityRights initiative, which comprises a set of tools for assessment and transformation of mental health services, capacity building for mental health staff and other stakeholders, and e-training on basics of human rights and mental health, was translated to Ukrainian. The Commissioner of the President of Ukraine on the “Barrier Free Environment” took part in the QualityRight training for emergency settings conducted by WHO (November 2022, France). The QualityRights package, along with the **WHO Guidance on community** mental health services, will further inform deinstitutionalization efforts and development of community-based mental health services in Ukraine envisioned by the national mental health policy.



6. Filling in critical gaps in MHPSS provision



In the situations where national resources are stretched, WHO has been filling critical gaps in MHPSS services and supply to address urgent and essential needs of vulnerable groups within the population.

WHO has transferred 38 units of professional kitchen equipment to psychiatric hospitals providing care to people with mental disorders in Mykolaivska, Dnipropetrovska, Chernihivska, Sumska, Zaporizhska and Odeska oblasts. As reported by the hospitals, many patients with severe mental disorders and disabilities lost the connection with their families and supporting networks before the war, and since February 2022 even more stayed without any support

as their relatives fled the country. Moreover, these hospitals hosted the patients who were relocated from the territories severely affected by the ongoing hostilities. Therefore, the hospitals continue sheltering this vulnerable group of people providing accommodation, food, heating, psychotropic medicines and covering other basic needs.

While addressing basic needs of people with severe mental disorders amidst the emergency, WHO continues to support deinstitutionalization effort and development of alternative to the institutions, community-based mental health services, such as CMHTs. Five electric vehicles procured by WHO in December 2022 will help CMHTs to reach their clients in rural and hard-to-reach communities. Apart from transport, WHO provided support for setting up CMHTs' office spaces where persons with mental disorders can be treated with respect and dignity and their confidentiality is protected.

To complement its efforts in supporting psychiatric services, WHO is planning to link this work with the upcoming QualityRights initiative.



7. Bringing in new tools for MHPSS in emergencies

WHO in partnership with MDM introduced the **MHPSS Minimum Service Package** (MHPSS MSP) in Ukraine. The MHPSS MSP outlines a set of minimum activities of the highest priority in meeting the immediate critical needs of emergency-affected populations, based on existing guidelines, available evidence and expert consensus. MHPSS MSP provides an intersectoral costed package to operationalize these guidelines and standards. The MHPSS MSP is aimed for better-coordinated and more predictable and equitable responses that make effective use of limited resources and thus improve the scale and quality of programming.

WHO translated the **IASC Common Monitoring and Evaluation Framework for Mental Health and Psychosocial Support in Emergency Settings: With means of verification (Version 2.0)** into the Ukrainian language. This document provides guidance on the assessment, research, design, implementation and monitoring and evaluation of mental health and psychosocial support (MHPSS) programmes in emergency settings. Although designed specifically for emergency contexts (including protracted crises), the framework may also be applicable for the transition phases from emergency to development (including disaster risk reduction initiatives).

A Framework for Mental Health and Psychosocial Support in Radiological and Nuclear Emergencies was also translated into Ukrainian. Lessons learned from past radiological and nuclear accidents have

demonstrated that the mental health and psychosocial consequences can outweigh the direct physical health impacts of radiation exposure. It is intended for officials and specialists involved in radiation emergency planning and risk management as well as MHPSS experts working in health emergencies.

Financial support

USAID's Bureau for Humanitarian Assistance, Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation (Norad), Swiss Confederation, Federal Republic of Germany, European Neighbourhood Policy and Enlargement Negotiations (DG NEAR), and the Netherlands provided financial support for the WHO's MHPSS Programme in Ukraine in 2022.

Way Forward

In 2023, WHO plans to continue and scale up its support to Ukraine through overall technical support to the project office implementing the National Mental Health and Psychosocial Support Programme and the MOH as its key coordinating agency; facilitation of efficient and coordinated humanitarian response by partners of the MHPSS Technical Working Group, informed by the developed Operational Roadmap "Ukrainian Prioritized Multisectoral Mental Health and Psychosocial Support Actions During and After the War"; scaling up mhGAP learning opportunities for all primary healthcare workers in Ukraine; further development of the CMHTs service model linking with other innovative services and interventions in the community; rolling out scalable psychological interventions in relevant sectors, following a stepped care approach; introducing the QualityRights initiative for promotion of human rights of people living with psychosocial, intellectual and cognitive disabilities and rights-based services; filling critical gaps in MHPSS services and supply to address urgent and essential needs of vulnerable groups within the population where the national resources are stretched.