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# Mental Health and Psychosocial Support Emergency Preparedness and Response: Key concepts and guidance

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Why is preparing for and responding to MHPSS needs in emergencies important?

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# What is Mental Health and Psychosocial Support?

## Composite term (MHPSS):

Any type of local or outside support that aims to:

- protect or promote psychosocial wellbeing and/or
- prevent or treat mental disorders.

(IASC 2007. Guidelines on MHPSS in Emergency Settings)



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# What is the impact of humanitarian emergencies on mental health?

- **Risk factors** for mental health conditions: Stressful events and difficulties
- **Most people** will experience psychological distress (normal and usually improves over time)



Globally, one in five (22.1%) people living in areas affected by conflict is estimated to have a mental health condition.<sup>1</sup>



For children, adverse conditions in emergencies can disrupt cognitive, emotional, social and physical development, with enduring consequences for their future.

# Why is responding to MHPSS needs important in emergencies?

## Needs are high:

- Higher **prevalence and need** in humanitarian settings
- People with severe mental conditions are **at risk**
- Mental health is critical for **coping with and recovering** from humanitarian emergencies

## Yet, resources are low:

- Typically **low national/local capacities** of mental health systems and human resources
- MHPSS often not considered/under-funded in **humanitarian response**

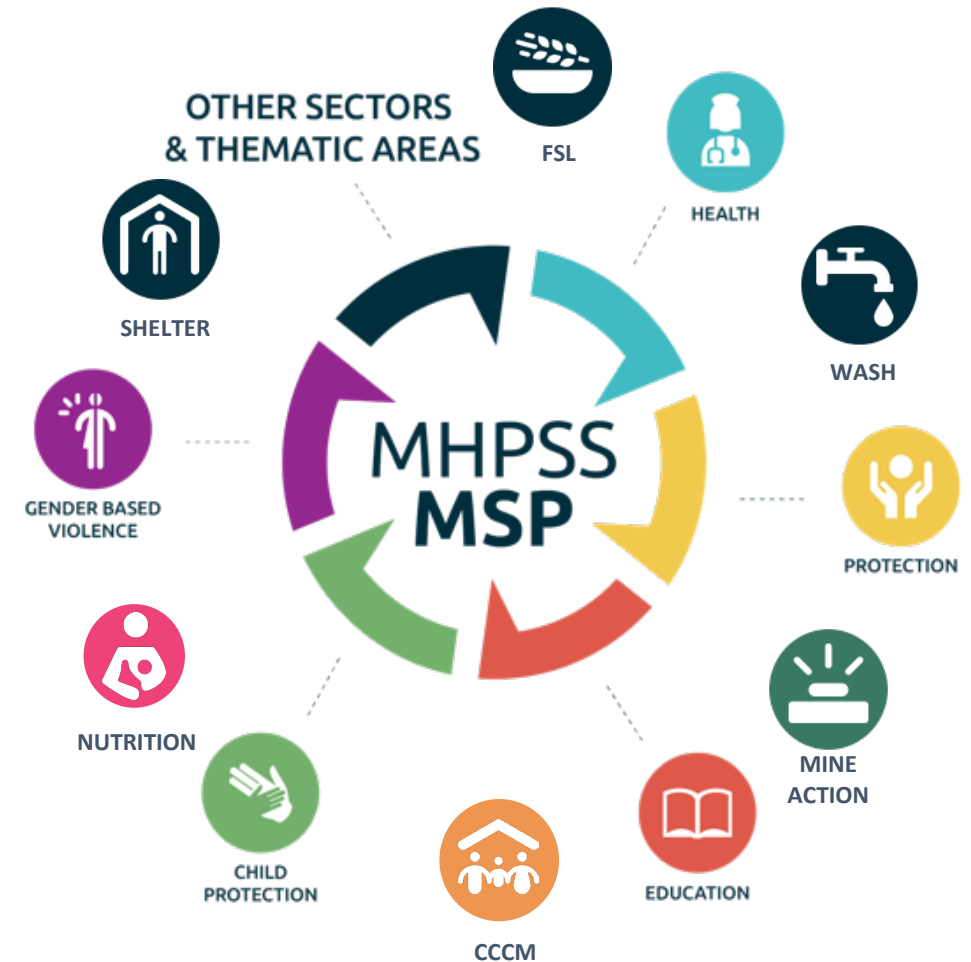
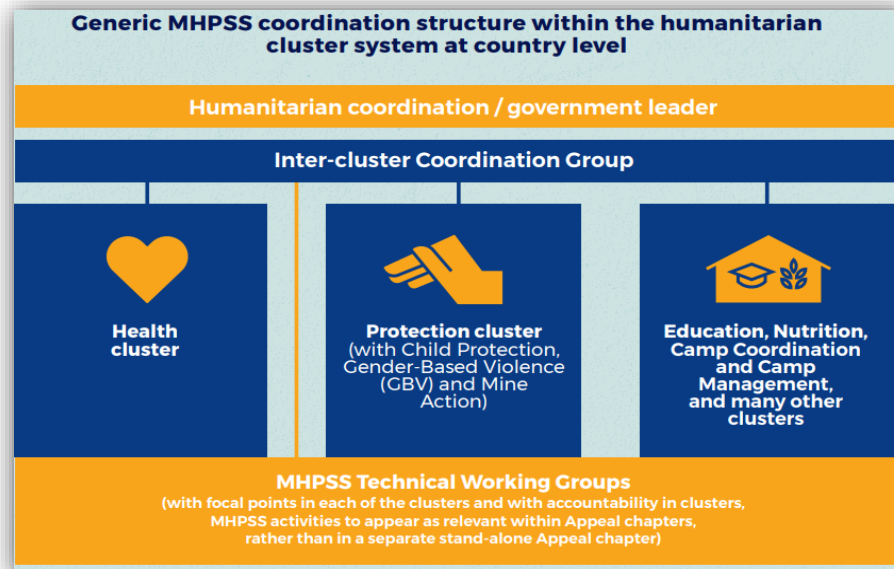
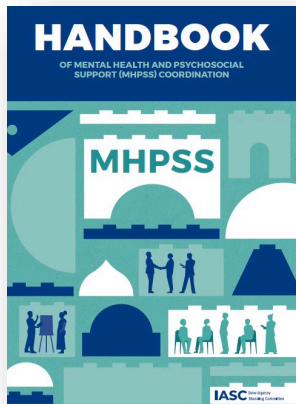


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What needs to be done to address MHPSS needs?

# Who should respond to MHPSS needs?

- MHPSS is relevant **across sectors** and stakeholders
- Different sectors/clusters/AoRs have a role to play in addressing MHPSS



# How should we respond to MHPSS needs?

- Promote **human rights and equity**
- Do **no harm**
- Uphold **Accountability** to Affected Populations
- Build on **available resources**
- Develop **integrated** support systems
- Adopt a **life course** and **gender responsive** approach



## Examples:

Mental health care by mental health specialists (psychiatric nurses, psychologists, psychiatrists, etc).

Basic mental health care by primary health care doctors. Basic emotional and practical support by community workers

Activating social networks. Supportive child-friendly spaces. Communal traditional supports

Advocacy for basic services that are safe, socially appropriate and protect dignity

Specialised services

Focused (person-to-person) non-specialised supports

Strengthening community and family supports

Social considerations in basic services and security



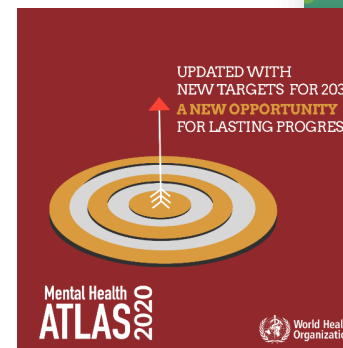
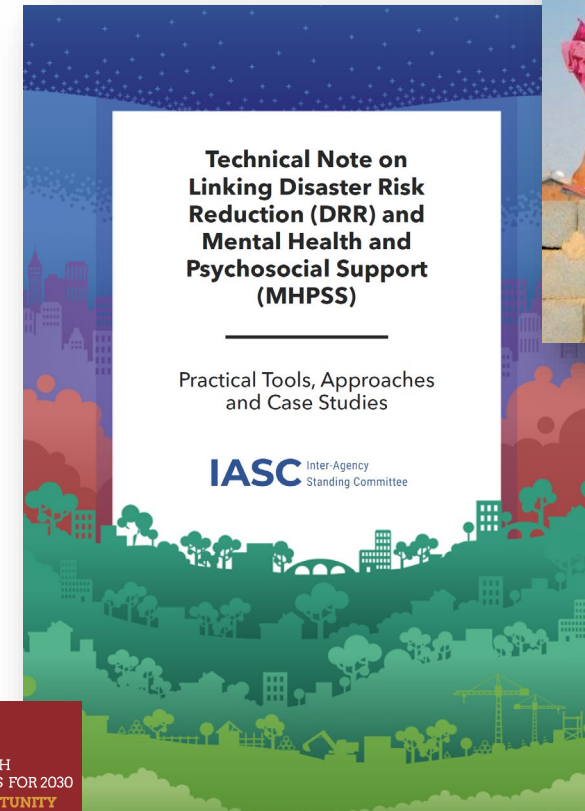
# How to integrate MHPSS with preparedness?

- Build Better Before **AND** Build Back Better
- WHO: Development of 'R.E.A.D.Y.' MHPSS preparedness and risk reduction training package

## Mental Health Action Plan 2013-2030: Global Target on Mental Health and Psychosocial Support Preparedness

**Global Target 3.3:** 80% of countries will have a system in place for mental health and psychosocial preparedness for emergencies/disasters by **2030**.

**Indicator 3.3:** Existence of a system in place for mental health and psychosocial preparedness for emergencies/disasters.



**The baseline in 2020:**  
**54 countries, 28% of WHO Member States**



**Increased interest and engagement among member states**

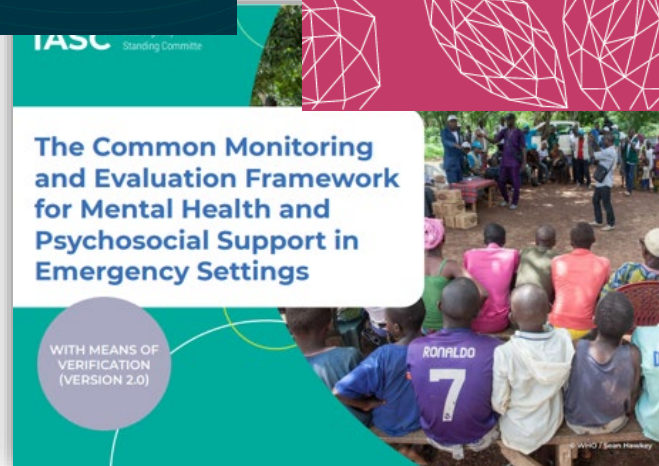
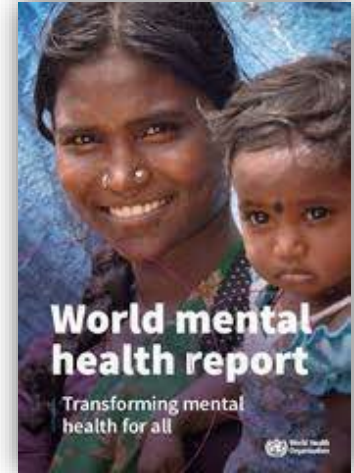
**Historic milestone: The resolution on "Strengthening mental health and psychosocial support (MHPSS) before, during and after armed conflicts, natural and human-caused disasters and health and other emergencies" has been officially adopted at the WHA on 29<sup>th</sup> May 2024**

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What are key guidelines and resources for  
MHPSS preparedness and response?



# Key MHPSS guidelines and tools

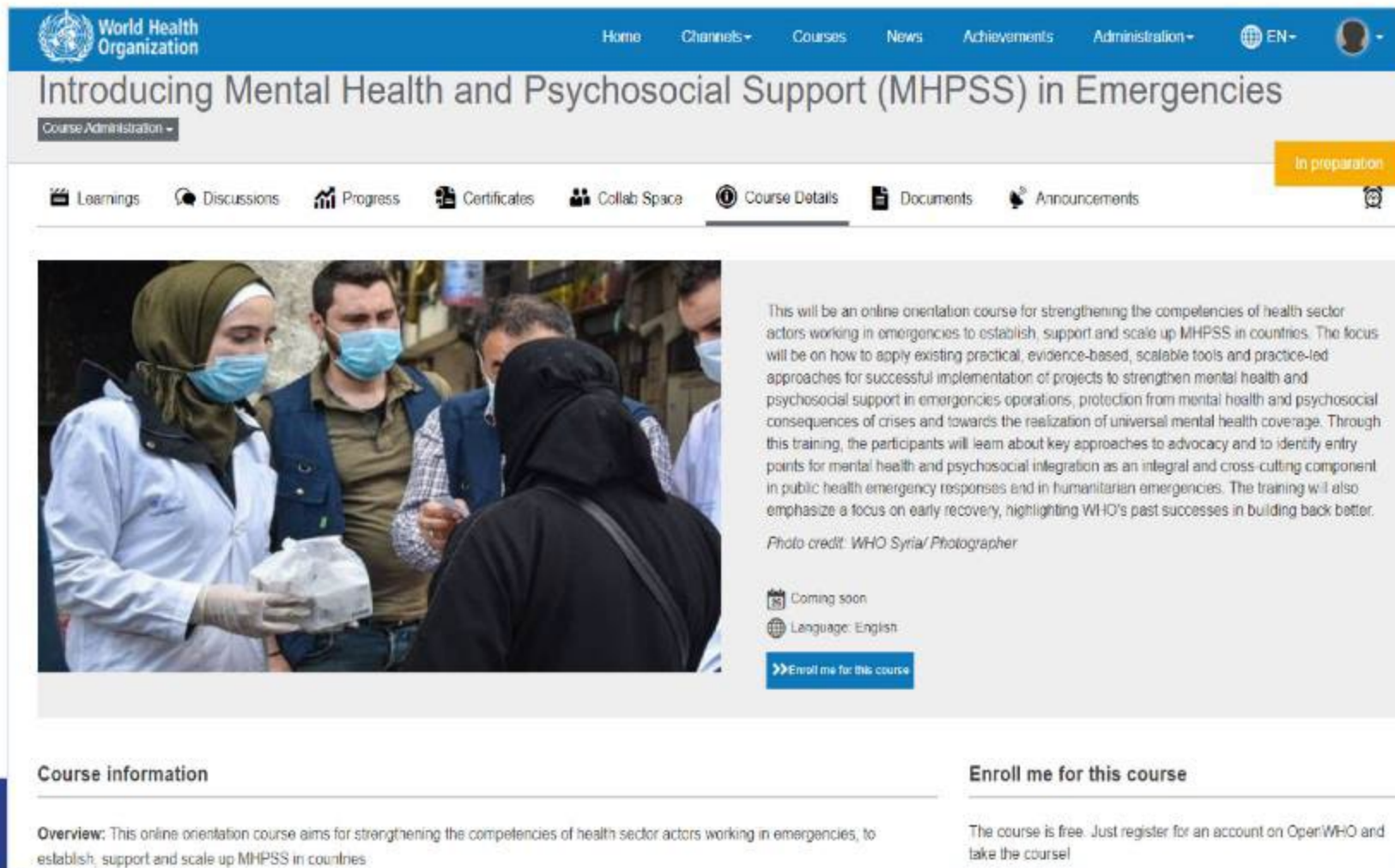




# WHE OPENWHO Training Platform: An online course for WHE Staff on MHPSS

-22,000+ enrollments representing all Grade 3 and Grade 2 emergencies including WHO, UN, INGOs and Government responders

- 4 languages- 11 translations planned by UN network
- Soon moving to WHO Academy platform



The screenshot shows the course page on the OpenWHO platform. At the top, the WHO logo and navigation menu are visible. The course title is 'Introducing Mental Health and Psychosocial Support (MHPSS) in Emergencies'. Below the title, there is a navigation bar with icons for Learnings, Discussions, Progress, Certificates, Collab Space, Course Details (which is highlighted), Documents, and Announcements. A yellow 'In preparation' badge is in the top right corner. The main content area features a photograph of healthcare workers in white coats and masks interacting with people in a community setting. To the right of the photo, there is a text block describing the course's purpose: 'This will be an online orientation course for strengthening the competencies of health sector actors working in emergencies to establish, support and scale up MHPSS in countries. The focus will be on how to apply existing practical, evidence-based, scalable tools and practice-led approaches for successful implementation of projects to strengthen mental health and psychosocial support in emergencies operations, protection from mental health and psychosocial consequences of crises and towards the realization of universal mental health coverage. Through this training, the participants will learn about key approaches to advocacy and to identify entry points for mental health and psychosocial integration as an integral and cross-cutting component in public health emergency responses and in humanitarian emergencies. The training will also emphasize a focus on early recovery, highlighting WHO's past successes in building back better.' Below the text, there is a 'Coming soon' status, 'Language: English', and a blue button that says '>>Enroll me for this course'. At the bottom, there are two sections: 'Course information' with an 'Overview' paragraph, and 'Enroll me for this course' with a note that the course is free and requires registration on OpenWHO.

World Health Organization


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## Introducing Mental Health and Psychosocial Support (MHPSS) in Emergencies

Course Administration

In preparation

Learnings Discussions Progress Certificates Collab Space Course Details Documents Announcements



This will be an online orientation course for strengthening the competencies of health sector actors working in emergencies to establish, support and scale up MHPSS in countries. The focus will be on how to apply existing practical, evidence-based, scalable tools and practice-led approaches for successful implementation of projects to strengthen mental health and psychosocial support in emergencies operations, protection from mental health and psychosocial consequences of crises and towards the realization of universal mental health coverage. Through this training, the participants will learn about key approaches to advocacy and to identify entry points for mental health and psychosocial integration as an integral and cross-cutting component in public health emergency responses and in humanitarian emergencies. The training will also emphasize a focus on early recovery, highlighting WHO's past successes in building back better.

Photo credit: WHO Syria/ Photographer

Coming soon

Language: English

>>Enroll me for this course

### Course information

**Overview:** This online orientation course aims for strengthening the competencies of health sector actors working in emergencies, to establish, support and scale up MHPSS in countries

### Enroll me for this course

The course is free. Just register for an account on OpenWHO and take the course!

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# Questions and Discussion