Facts about psychosocial support

More than 1 in 5 people living in settings affected by conflict have a mental health condition.

Globally, there is less than 1 mental health professional for every 10,000 people.

Suicide claims the lives of close to 800,000 people every year or 1 person every 40 seconds.

Every $1 spent on treatment for common mental health disorders brings a return of $4 in improved health and productivity.

Countries spend on average only 2% of their health budgets on mental health.

In low- and middle-income countries more than 75% of those with mental health, neurological and substance use disorders receive no treatment for their condition at all.

Sources: World Health Organization, United Nations.
POLICY PRINCIPLES

U.S. policies on psychosocial support should...

1 Establish a designated account.

Currently, mental health and psychosocial support (MHPSS) programs are spread out through various foreign assistance accounts in the U.S. federal budget. The lack of a designated account adversely affects relief, development, and peacebuilding efforts. Congress should create a dedicated "Title III" foreign assistance account for MHPSS programs in the State, Foreign Operations, and Related Programs budget, administered by the U.S. Agency for International Development and the U.S. State Department.

2 Increase foreign assistance.

U.S. foreign assistance for MHPSS should be increased, particularly funding directed to local projects for capacity building, resilience, and community trust-building. Every dollar spent on treatment for common mental health disorders returns four dollars in improved health and productivity. International development assistance for mental health has never exceeded 1% of all health-related development assistance.

3 Adapt to local contexts.

U.S.-funded MHPSS programing must be context-sensitive, proactive, and flexible, incorporating local knowledge about cultural and traditional sources of resilience. Programs should build the infrastructure for specialized mental health services, community-based resiliency, sustainability and local ownership while strengthening accompaniment and mutual learning in partnership with local organizations.

4 Support memorialization projects.

To prevent mental and psychological breakdown in traumatized communities, funding mechanisms must also incorporate memorialization projects which show respect, honor and remembrance for victims, supporting recovery from grief and pain and breaking the cycle of violence.

Learn more

STAR (Strategies for Trauma Awareness and Resilience) training
emu.edu/cjp/star/toolkit

MCC Intersections: Community approaches to trauma
mcc.org/stories/intersections