

BELOVED COMMUNITY

THE MHPSS COLLABORATIVE

Progress Report 2018-2020



**THE MHPSS
COLLABORATIVE**
FOR CHILDREN & FAMILIES IN ADVERSITY


MESSAGE

FROM OUR DIRECTOR

Mental health and psychosocial support (“MHPSS”) sometimes comes across as a technical and confusing concept, but in our current times I often think of Martin Luther King’s hopeful description of the ‘Beloved Community’. King envisioned the Beloved Community as a society based on justice, equal opportunity, and most importantly love of one’s fellow human beings. It is a vision of a society that does not tolerate human suffering because international standards of human decency will not allow it. It is inclusive, it is about sisterhood and brotherhood and the way we are each other’s keepers in care, support and kindness. It speaks to how we uplift each other.

This is the most fitting description of MHPSS I could ever find. MHPSS approaches are all about creating the Beloved Community. We know that children and youth impacted by humanitarian emergencies confront horrors that expose them to violence, deprivation, and abuse. Over time and without adequate support, these stressors can have lifelong impacts on their health and wellbeing - including stunted development, hormonal and immune problems - and can severely impact their ability to grow, learn, have healthy relationships, and develop to their full potential.

Here at the MHPSS Collaborative we work with the brightest youth leaders, children and families with lived experience, service providers, researchers and policy makers to develop responses that nurture children and adolescents into adulthood, that support caregivers, families, and communities to heal. Together we work to strengthen delivery of quality interventions to where



children learn, play and get their needs met: in schools, health centers, family life, and community and public spaces to (re-)create and sustain the Beloved Community in settings of conflict, violence and deprivation.

There is a reason we chose to be called “The Collaborative” – it is our namesake invitation to join our Beloved Community, to interweave our efforts, talents and investments to create a better world for children and families affected by crisis. To remind us daily that this is only possible if we do this together, in community and with love.

This report showcases the many ways in which the MHPSS Collaborative works to facilitate that Beloved Community, anticipating and responding to emerging challenges in the field of mental health and psychosocial support for children and families in fragile settings.

With gratitude for joining us in this important work,



Leslie Snider
Director
MHPSS Collaborative



OUR MISSION

The MHPSS Collaborative was born out of a need to link knowledge, research and practice to better respond to emerging challenges across the field of mental health and psychosocial support (MHPSS) for children and families in emergency and fragile settings. Together with local to global stakeholders, we are a global platform for research, innovation and advocacy to ensure advancements in MHPSS are prioritized and integrated throughout humanitarian response.



HOW WE WORK



CONVENE

We build strong networks across levels, sectors, and geographies. We bring together key stakeholders including youth leaders, children and families with lived experience, local civil society, humanitarian actors, international bodies and governments, academics, policy makers, and educational, creative arts and recreational organizations.



DEVELOP AND SHARE KNOWLEDGE

Together, we develop and share innovative programs, resources, and research in MHPSS in fragile and humanitarian settings. We respond to urgent needs for child and family resources and help set standards for improving MHPSS in emergency settings.



ADVOCATE

Our findings inform advocacy work to ensure advancements in MHPSS are prioritized and integrated throughout humanitarian responses, and we work to ensure donors and decision makers hear the voices of children, youth and families.

THE STATE OF MHPSS

The MHPSS field has well over a decade of integration within the humanitarian response system with a growing base of evidence, standards and best practice. However, with increasing recognition of its fundamental importance to recovery and stability of emergency-affected populations, the field gained unprecedented attention in 2018 and 2019 among experts like donors, researchers, practitioners, and policy makers. The arrival of the Covid-19 pandemic in 2020 saw the entire global community gain an acute understanding of the importance of MHPSS and the need for child and family support. As children and families faced uncertainty, threats to livelihood, school closures, and sickness and loss of loved ones, mental health and illness became part of the global discourse.

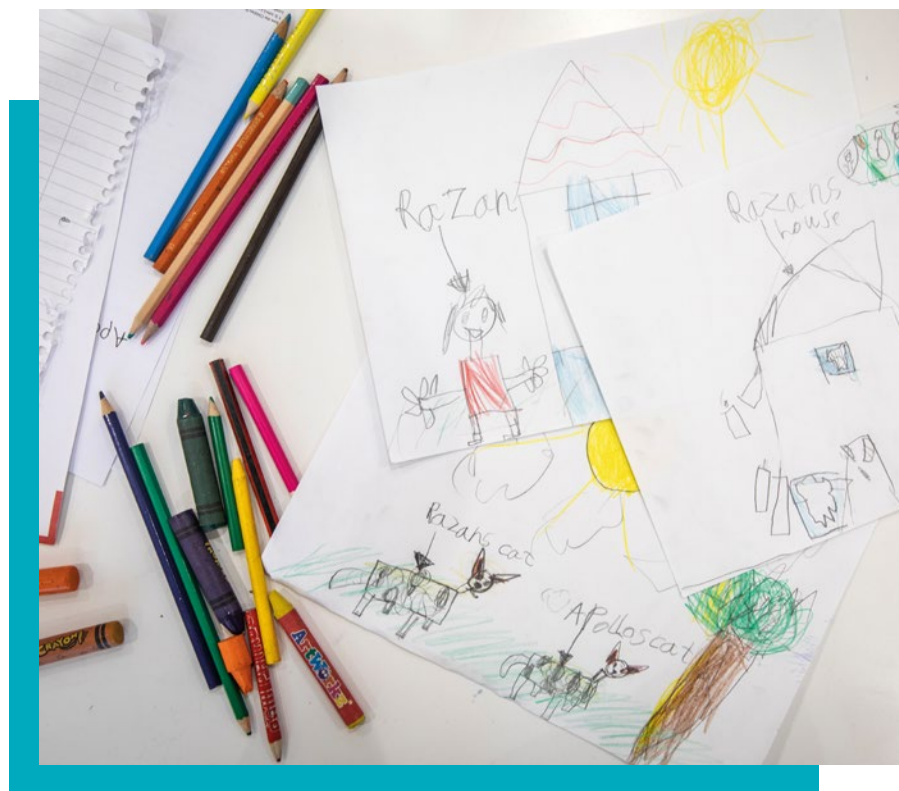
In May, UN Secretary General Antonio Guterres released a statement alongside the UN policy brief “COVID-19 And The Need for Action On Mental Health” in which he highlighted decades of neglect and underinvestment in addressing people’s mental health needs which have been exposed by the COVID-19 pandemic, and called for ambitious commitments from countries in the way they treat psychological illness.



As we recover from the pandemic, we must shift more mental health services to the community, and make sure mental health is included in universal health coverage. The United Nations is strongly committed to creating a world in which everyone, everywhere, has someone to turn to for psychological support. I urge governments, civil society, health authorities and others to come together urgently to address the mental health dimension of this pandemic. And I call on governments in particular to announce ambitious commitments on mental health.”

UN SECRETARY GENERAL, ANTONIO GUTERRES

The moment for increased investment in MHPSS and psychosocial support is ripe, but there is much to do before all of the world's most vulnerable children and families have access to quality services for their protection and wellbeing. The Collaborative will remain at the forefront, together with our beloved global community, in advocating for the proper resourcing of this essential component of emergency response, and particular attention to child, youth and family MHPSS to secure peace and prosperity for future generations.



A desk review by the MHPSS Collaborative and Save the Children Denmark and Save the Children revealed that on average only 0.14% of the total share of Official Development Assistance (ODA) grants between 2015-2017 were invested in child and family MHPSS.

5 EMERGING CHALLENGES

to the mental health and psychosocial support of children and families in emergency and fragile settings

1 COVID-19

The global pandemic has had a significant impact on the wellbeing of children and families everywhere, and especially in crisis settings. Those already coping with the stress of displacement and loss have now faced Interruptions to humanitarian assistance, lack of access to basic hygiene materials, closures of schools and child friendly spaces, uncertainty, and loss of livelihoods. Coupled with the fear of infection, sickness and death, these pressures take a toll on the mental health of children and their caregivers who are already living under stressful conditions.

During the pandemic, the MHPSS Collaborative has supported the IASC Reference Group for MHPSS in Emergencies¹, the Child Protection Area of Responsibility, Save the Children, and the Inter-agency Network for Education in Emergencies (INEE) with technical advice and the development of practical resources for humanitarian actors, participation in global webinars disseminating information on mental health and Covid-19, and advocacy for the prioritization of MHPSS in Covid-19 responses.

We have created or contributed to:

- 12 practical resources for MHPSS responses during the pandemic
- 7 webinars and 2 trainings
- 3 campaigns advocating for the prioritization of child and family mental health initiatives during the pandemic
- 1 learning platform for humanitarian responders

¹The Interagency Standing Committee (IASC) Reference Group for Mental Health and Psychosocial Support in Emergencies is part of the IASC structure of UN and non-governmental agencies that coordinate all humanitarian response.

SPOTLIGHT

My Hero is You, How Kids can Fight COVID-19! is a storybook that aims to help children understand how they can protect themselves, their families and friends from coronavirus, and how to manage difficult emotions when confronted with a new and rapidly changing reality. As co-chair of the child and family subgroup within the IASC MHPSS Reference Group, the Collaborative was a core contributor to the development and dissemination of the book, together with WHO, UNICEF and others. The process of development included input collected from parents, caregivers, teachers and children in 104 countries. Since its publication the book has been translated to 120 languages, has been made into an animated film, and is IASC's most popular resource of all time!



My Hero is You offers a way for children and parents to think together about the questions the pandemic raises.

2 MHPSS FOR CHILDREN AND FAMILIES ON THE MOVE

Migration and displacement are not new issues in the humanitarian field, but the challenge and opportunity of providing MHPSS services to those on the move has recently come to the forefront as record numbers of people are forced from their homes. 70.8 million people, more than half of whom are under the age of 18, are forcibly displaced today due to persecution, conflict, violence, or human rights violations according to UNHCR (2019)².

MHPSS offers lifesaving opportunities to address the psychological and social impacts of being forced to flee one's home under such conditions. However, whereas significant numbers of children, youth and families are "on the move", existing MHPSS services are typically specific to a certain location - or, if mobile, rarely are able to follow the person as they cross country borders. We are working toward finding innovative and durable solutions to "seamless" access of MHPSS along migration routes.



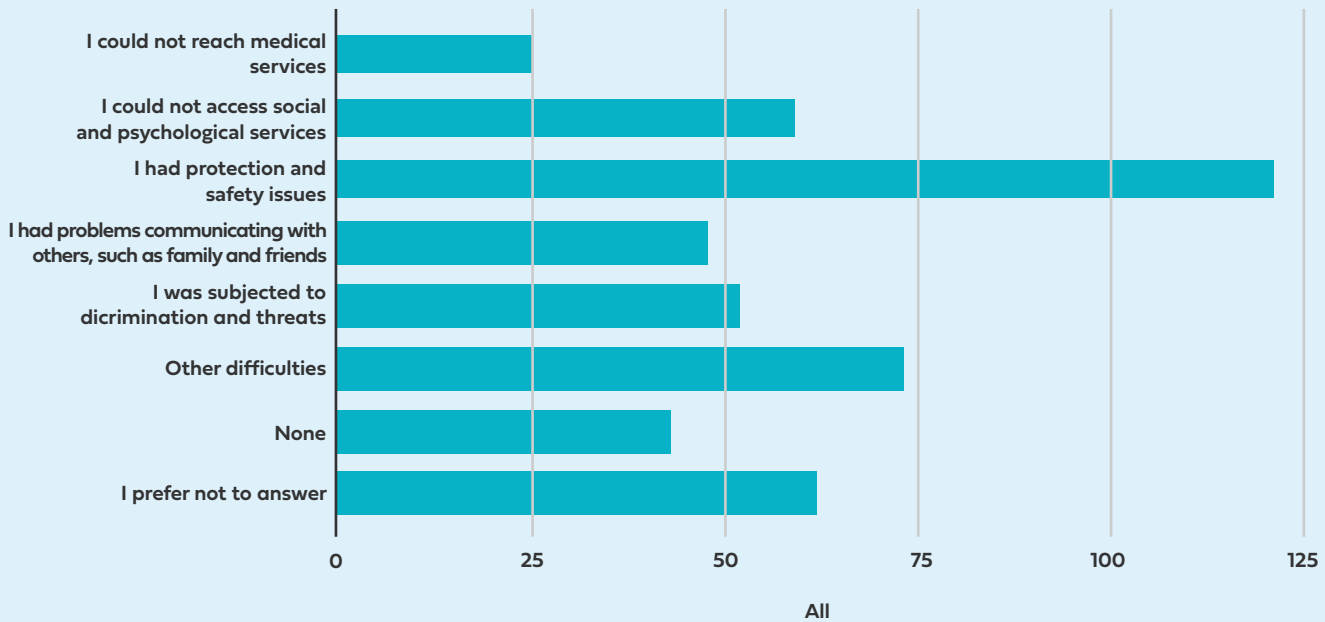
² Worldwide displacement tops 70 million, UN Refugee Chief urges greater solidarity in response. [CLICK HERE](#)

SPOTLIGHT

SEAMLESS MHPSS CROSS-BORDER CARE

We are engaged in an innovation process to develop a continuum of MHPSS care for youth along migration routes together with Save the Children Netherlands, the IFRC Reference Centre for Psychosocial Support, Kings College London, social enterprise Upinion, MHPSS.net, and DSIL Global, with funding from the Dutch Relief Alliance. A central part of the innovation focuses on the community’s input. Through an innovative online platform developed by Upinion, we are able to engage with youth and their caregivers while they are on the move. So far, 1400 youth and caregivers have shared with us their experiences and priorities for support.

DIFFICULTIES DURING MIGRATION



RESULTS FROM A SURVEY TAKEN BY YOUTH VIA THE UPINION APP

In the current phase of the project we are also engaging directly with youth via online workshops, to co-design activities and identify potential solutions. The workshops were planned to have taken place face-to-face in Turkey but in light of the Covid-19 pandemic they are now taking place online, allowing us to involve even more youth.

3 INTEGRATING MHPSS FULLY INTO EDUCATION IN EMERGENCIES AND EARLY CHILDHOOD DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMMING

Children and adolescents exposed to violence and conflict need nurturing and healing learning environments to recover, learn, and reach their full potential. Education has long been a focus in emergency contexts, but the opportunity to strengthen education in emergencies (EiE) and early childhood development (ECD) programming through MHPSS activities and interventions, and likewise to reinforce mental health through education, is a more recent area of focus for the humanitarian sector.

The Collaborative is using its inter-agency and evidence-driven approach to create links between actors within country-based education clusters and international EiE working groups. These local to global networks work together to exchange technical input and guidance, support local capacity, develop practical resources, research their effectiveness, and set standards for integrating MHPSS throughout EiE and ECD programming. We also facilitate links between clusters and across development and humanitarian programming to support the integration of MHPSS into education and livelihood skills programs in humanitarian settings in innovative ways to ensure healthy development, wellbeing and holistic learning outcomes of children, youth and their caregivers.

We are engaged in various research initiatives including an investigation of the link between MHPSS-integrated EiE and ECD and wellbeing outcomes in humanitarian settings.

SPOTLIGHT

BUILDING MHPSS CAPACITY IN UGANDA AND SOUTH SUDANESE SCHOOLS

With support from the Education Cannot Wait Fund (ECW), the MHPSS Collaborative served as technical advisor to the Education Consortium in Uganda and the Education Cluster and Task Team in South Sudan to strengthen their capacities to include tailored and contextualized MHPSS services in their education responses.

The Collaborative supported them on all technical aspects of MHPSS, including convening local actors and implementing partners to draft and design education response plans based on the perceived MHPSS needs for children, teachers and families. We have also supported the development of a call for proposals and selection process of implementing partners, and convened workshops and meetings with key partners.

Funding from Danida made it possible for the Collaborative to extend support as Covid-19 emerged. In March 2020, the Collaborative and the Education Consortium convened an online workshop for the MHPSS and Education implementing partners in Uganda to prepare an MHPSS-inclusive response to the Covid-19 crisis. We also worked with partners in Uganda to develop an Education Consortium-wide MHPSS monitoring and evaluation matrix and developed means of verification for teachers and caregivers to assess MHPSS knowledge and skills. We continue to serve the Education Consortium in Uganda and the Education Cluster and Task Team in South Sudan for ongoing technical support.

Children attending education programs in Kyaka II Refugee Settlement in western Uganda



4 CLIMATE CHANGE

Climate change is an increasing source of stress for many youth and a driving force behind many fragile circumstances that children and families face. Rising sea levels, extreme weather events, limited natural resources, and droughts threaten livelihoods, compound food insecurity, stoke conflict between communities, and can force people to flee their homes. As climate change shapes their wellbeing and future, the MHPSS Collaborative works with young people to advocate for the prioritization of climate change on the global humanitarian agenda. This is the newest theme in our project portfolio which we are actively developing together with a researcher from Johns Hopkins University who has joined our team.

CLIMATE CHANGE

SPOTLIGHT



Yande is a child's rights and climate activist from Zambia


In August 2019, we attended the REPSSI Youth Forum in Windhoek, Namibia alongside more than 50 young people from 13 countries in East and Southern Africa. The MHPSS Collaborative and REPSSI co-facilitated a Psychosocial Forum where youth discussed the impacts of climate change on their lives. We created a video about the event to lift youth's voices on this important topic.



5 SUICIDE PREVENTION


High rates of suicide among youth is an alarming trend often under-reported in humanitarian settings. Localized prevention and response mechanisms to this serious risk for children and youth are often non-existent. Together with Save the Children, we co-authored a Suicide Prevention and Response Protocol and training material. We contribute to the development of prevention and protocols in organizations around the globe through our work with the IASC Suicide Prevention sub-group, while also conveying local information about suicide to the global level.

SUICIDE PREVENTION

SPOTLIGHT

 **The MHPSS Collabora...** · 16/09/2019 ▾
It's Week 2 of our [#SuicideAwarenessMonth](#)
[#Suicide](#) in [#HumanitarianSettings](#) is a reality! Extremely important to be addressed and integrated in [#MHPSS](#) programmes.
Take a look at what is known already from around the world.
Help us ask for more data
[#5Weeks5Messages](#)

Suicide in Humanitarian Contexts  
have been greatly **unreported** but it's a **growing issue** requiring **urgent action**
SOME GLOBAL DATA

Iraq's Yazidis  **IOM**, raised the alarm about **suicides in the community** back in **2011**, when **women** made up more than half of the deaths.

In honor of World Suicide Prevention Day and World Mental Health Day 2019, we created a social media campaign relaying local information from humanitarian settings, to the global community. The campaign resulted in more than 14,000 impressions on Twitter.

ADVOCATING FOR THE PRIORITIZATION AND UPTAKE OF ADVANCEMENTS IN MHPSS

The Collaborative works to ensure donors and decision makers hear the voices of children, youth and families, and that they prioritize local and global policies and funding to ensure access to MHPSS for the most vulnerable in emergency settings. We have been honored to engage in key advocacy events and movements with the global MHPSS community and our champions within governments, the UN and civil society, and to bring the experience of children, youth and families and practitioners with lived experience to local and global advocacy efforts. We have been proud to work together with UNICEF, Save the Children, War Child Holland, and the Dutch, German, Danish and UK governments and civil societies, and United for Global Mental Health's Blue Print Group to move forward specific actions to bring quality child, youth and family MHPSS to scale.

A series of key recommendations for strengthening the quality and scale of child and family MHPSS have been developed by the global MHPSS community over the period of 2018-2020. The Collaborative has played a key role during this period as panelists in events, co-chairing working groups and convening key actors and youth advocates. We continue to carry forward the torch on this crucial issue using the platform of Save the Children Denmark's 75th Anniversary celebration to advocate to key donors and policy makers for strengthening the mental health and wellbeing of children and families in fragile and humanitarian settings.



2018 UK Wilton Park Dialogue (DFID and Save the Children):
Healing the Invisible Wounds of War



2018 Berlin Conference (UNICEF and BMZ):
Rebuilding Lives- Addressing Needs, Scaling-up and Increasing
Long-term Structural MHPSS Interventions in Protracted and
Post-Conflict Settings



2018 First global Ministerial Mental Health Summit hosted by UK
government: represented UK Civil Society and UNICEF in DFID
roundtable for MHPSS



2019 Dutch Ministerial Mental Health Summit: together with UNICEF,
War Child and civil society, developed recommendations for child and
family MHPSS and was panelist and small group co-lead for children
on the move



2020 Save the Children Denmark's 75th Anniversary Event: convened
50 youth and adult champions for progress update on recommendations
and new actions for child and family MHPSS

We belong to the core advocacy squad of the Moving Minds Alliance, ensuring critical attention to the importance of early child development to give all children an optimal start in life and prevent later mental disorders. We also work to lift attention to youth MHPSS, livelihoods, and opportunities by serving on the think tank of the Olympic Refugee Foundation. We have championed innovative MHPSS and sports programming together with the Arsenal Foundation and Save the Children UK at the World Economic Forum 2020 in Davos, and are supporting the Dutch government in the 2020 Youth at Heart conference with youth advocates.

PARTNERSHIPS

We are hosted and funded by

The MHPSS Collaborative is hosted by Save the Children Denmark. We are grateful to Danida for providing the seed funding for our core activities and existence. Danida is Denmark's development cooperation, an area of activity under the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Denmark.



Red Barnet



**MINISTRY OF
FOREIGN AFFAIRS
OF DENMARK**
Danida

We are proud to work with

Working in partnership is one of our core values. We are proud to have partnerships with these outstanding entities, working together to solve critical issues for child and family mental health and psychosocial wellbeing.



The **LEGO** Foundation



GET IN TOUCH

Contact us

Would you like to join our dialogue, share experiences and help us to uplift MHPSS for children, youth and families in humanitarian settings? Looking for resources or technical advice for your own work in one of our focus areas? Please reach out to us:

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