International Medical Corps

Development of a Toolkit for Implementing Mental Health Programs as Part of the Health System in Humanitarian Settings

WHY IS AN INTEGRATED APPROACH TO MENTAL HEALTH CARE IMPORTANT?

Mental health problems are an important public health concern, affecting one in four people during their lifetime and the main cause of disability worldwide. Populations in humanitarian contexts are especially at risk for mental health conditions due to their exposure to violence, loss of homes, livelihoods, and loved ones, instability of community or social support systems and damaged health infrastructure. Those with pre-existing and chronic mental issues are especially vulnerable in such contexts and need access to care. Despite the high need, the availability of appropriate and integrated mental health services remains a critical gap in low and middle income countries. Most people in humanitarian settings do not receive treatment and there are not enough specialists such as psychologists and psychiatrists. A key strategy for closing this treatment gap is integrating mental health care with general health which is more sustainable, less stigmatizing and more accessible through reaching larger segments of the population (IASC, 2007).

"International Medical Corps has been implementing programs integrating mental health into general health care for more than ten years in over 15 countries including Jordan, Syria, Gaza, Iraq, Turkey, Lebanon, Philippines, Indonesia, Sri Lanka, Afghanistan, Pakistan, Nepal, Sierra Leone, Liberia, and Haiti."

HOW DO WE INTEGRATE MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES INTO GENERAL HEALTH CARE?

Integration of mental health into primary health care (PHC) and community services involves: An assessment of the context and resources, engagement of relevant national and local stakeholders, and ongoing training, support and supervision of healthcare staff and paraprofessionals to provide mental healthcare and psychosocial support.

WHY DO WE NEED A TOOLKIT?

Global guidelines, tools and resources to design and implement integrated mental health services have been developed by the World Health Organization (WHO) and other partners and agencies. However, staff at organizations who are designing, supporting or implementing integrated mental health programs, are often unaware that these tools exist or do not know how to use them. Having a toolkit with clear steps and links to needed resources can result in better planned and more comprehensive and effective programs.

"There is a need to increase understanding of integrated mental health program steps, components, resources and tools among implementation partners, donors and governments."

WHAT WILL THE TOOLKIT LOOK LIKE?

International Medical Corps will build on its experiences in mental health and capacity building and engage various different stakeholders to design a toolkit with easy to follow steps and associated resources for mental health PHC integration in humanitarian settings.

➔ The Toolkit will inform users about key components of integrated mental health programs and provide guidance on how to set up such programs in humanitarian settings, in different contexts including urban and camp settings.

"The toolkit will clearly outline the steps for implementing integrated mental health programs in humanitarian settings and will provide valuable guidance for better resource allocation, program design, implementation and evaluation."

[1] International Medical Corps, Mental Health Integration into General Health Care: A Step-Wise Approach, 2016

WHO WILL BE INVOLVED IN THE DEVELOPMENT AND DISSEMINATION OF THE TOOLKIT?

International Medical Corps will engage national, regional and global level stakeholders by creating an Advisory Group, which includes the WHO and the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), and other key actors.

Through mechanisms such as the IASC MHPSS Reference Group and the Global Health Cluster, key humanitarian actors and consultation groups will be engaged to ensure that the toolkit receives input, is reviewed, shared and widely disseminated.

For More Information, Please Contact:

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WHAT ARE THE STEPS INVOLVED IN DEVELOPING THE TOOLKIT?

1. Review of currently available mental health tools, resources, materials and guidelines as well as existing toolkits from other technical program areas
2. Mapping of organizations currently implementing or planning to implement mental health PHC integration programs
3. Development of mental health toolkit framework and associated tools, resources and materials with input from the Advisory Group
4. Development of draft mental health toolkit content and design
5. Review and Feedback on draft mental health toolkit by key humanitarian actors
6. Consultation meeting with target organizations
7. Pilot-testing of the mental health toolkit
8. Finalizing the mental health toolkit
9. Launching, sharing and dissemination of the mental health toolkit

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