

MoM- North MHPSS TF-First Meeting

Date	Wednesday 14 July 2015	Venue	RESTART Center
Time	10:00-11:15	Minutes prepared by	Farah Kerdy
Organizations attending	Caritas Migrant, Handicap International, Médecins Sans Frontières, Ministry of Public Health, RESTART Center, Save the Children, UNHCR, UNICEF and UNRWA.		

Agenda

1. **Summary on the MHPSS TF rationale and main objective**
2. **Brief presentation by the participating organizations of their work and challenges**
3. **Revision of the TORs of the TF**
4. **Discussion of how the task force can be helpful to all**

Discussion	Action / Decision / Suggestion
<p align="center">1. Summary on the MHPSS TF rationale and main objective</p>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ The MHPSS TF includes organizations working on the Syrian crisis response in Lebanon with the aim of harmonizing and mainstreaming MHPSS in all sectors and improving access to care; both key objectives in the Mental Health and Substance Use Strategy for Lebanon 2015-2020 that was launched in May 2015 (soft copy will be shared with all). ➤ The North MHPSS TF will be the body working on achieving these objectives in the North. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Commitment of all NGOs is called upon because the TF joins everyone with an aim that is common to all. We all need to have a long-term vision and build together a strong MH system in Lebanon.
<p align="center">2. Brief presentation by the participating organizations of their work and challenges faced</p>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Handicap International is providing services at both center and household levels. HI provides psychosocial support for people with disabilities. <u>Challenges:</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - No capacity to receive additional cases. - Patients are skipping their appointments due to checkpoints' related concerns. ➤ Save the Children is providing non-specialized direct support and psychosocial services (including child friendly spaces). <u>Challenges:</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Patients' limited movement due to checkpoints' concerns. - Lack of awareness on mental health; it is actually difficult to convince patients to receive mental health services or to take their consent for referrals. 	

- **Caritas** is providing mental health services (Individual, group and family therapy), speech therapy as well as psychomotor therapy. An average of 10 sessions is provided to each beneficiary. Services are provided to all refugees and migrants until December 2015.

Challenges:

- 10 sessions are not enough for a successful completion of the treatment.

- **UNICEF** is providing child and family therapy as well as child protection case management (women and girls).

Challenges:

- People are not trained on Mental health and they do confuse between case management and therapy.

- **UNRWA** is providing protection, medical, psychosocial and psychiatric services to Palestinians.

Challenges:

- Lack of meetings with concerned NGOs and INGOs to discuss services and collaboration opportunities. UNRWA is expecting to solve this problem through the MHPSS TF monthly meetings. UNRWA is also interested in linking focal points in its organization with focal persons in the TF.

- **MSF** is running two medical programs: acute and chronic. Family planning awareness and services are also provided. No mental health program; psychological counseling is available but severe cases are referred to specialized mental health centers.

Challenges:

- Limited financial resources.
- Coordination with concerned personnel to refer high risk cases only.
- Checkpoints concerns

- **UNHCR** has two mental health implementing partners: RESTART Center (T5 region) and the IMC (Akkar region). IMC is providing psychotherapy and psychiatric services. Patients with stabilized conditions are referred to the PHCs and provided with drugs available within the YMCA list.

Challenges:

- Limited availability and variety of drugs under the YMCA list.
- Limited access due to checkpoints concerns.
- Limited funding and financial resources.

- The Mental Health and Substance Use Strategy for Lebanon 2015-2020 aims, in relation to human resources, at developing and implementing with all relevant actors capacity-building plans for specialized, non-specialized and non-health staff on mental health and psychosocial support.

- Two special meetings of the MHPSS TF will be held at the end of August 2015:

- Children with special needs are excluded from assistance.
- Mistreatment practices at hospitals (especially psychiatric hospitals).

➤ **RESTART Center** is providing mental health services to victims of torture, prisoners as well as Syrian refugees. Mental health services include psychotherapy, psychiatric and neurological services, and psychotropic drugs. RESTART is providing trainings to four hospitals in the North on the management of psychiatric and epileptic emergencies. Trainings to PHCs will also be conducted to nurses and doctors on follow-up of patients with stabilized psychiatric and epileptic conditions.

Challenges:

- Limited financial resources.
- RESTART has limited its services to high risk cases only.
- PHCs and hospitals in the North are not prepared to receive patients with mental illness. Ill-treatment practices and confidentiality concerns are witnessed. Nurses and doctors are not aware of their professions' code of ethics and are facing huge and serious challenges in terms of legal prosecution and dual loyalty dilemmas.
- The mental health manual on mental health national strategy should focus on prisoners and victims of torture. Coordination with concerned parties should have been conducted in prior to the development of the manual to discuss gaps and needed actions.
- No mental health strategy is developed in places of detention.

➤ The **MoPH** is currently working on developing two sub-strategies under the framework of the Mental Health and Substance Use Strategy for Lebanon 2015-2020:

1) **A Substance Use Prevention, Treatment and Rehabilitation Strategy for Lebanon:** a national consultation meeting was held with all relevant actors on the ground to identify challenges and set priorities to be addressed in the strategy. Based on the latter, the first draft of the strategy is being finalized before it is reviewed for feedback by all relevant actors.

- 1) One meeting on psychotropic medications aiming at harmonizing the list of medications prescribed and dispensed.
- 2) A second meeting on the building of the referral system aiming at discussing key points and needs that must be taken into consideration in the process of developing the referral system.

➤ Key objectives of the Mental Health and Substance Use Strategy for Lebanon 2015-2020 are to:

- 1) Monitor regularly mental health facilities to ensure protection of human, child and women's rights of persons with mental disorders using quality and rights standards in line with international treaties, conventions signed/ratified by the Government of Lebanon (target achievement year:2017)
- 2) Develop a code of ethics for mental health/substance use service providers (target achievement year: 2016)

2) **A Mental Health and Substance Use Strategy for prisons and detention centers:** the MoPH has conducted field visits to prisons and detention centers and has started meeting with all relevant actors on the ground to analyze the situation and identify the key priorities that need to be addressed in preparation for the development of the first draft of this strategy.

3. Revision of the TORs of the TF

➤ The MHPSS TF draft TOR was reviewed.

➤ Discussions around the TOR:

What are the financial resources of the TF?

The TF does not have any fixed financial resources. Organizations in the TF can work together on drafting proposals to be submitted to funding agencies.

Is there a possibility to link with universities to ensure an evidence-based approach (research with universities)?

The MoPH is working towards establishing a national research committee for mental health. A first meeting was held with universities to discuss the TOR of this committee. The committee will advise on priority areas of the national agenda for mental health evidence-based research in Lebanon focusing on service development and outcomes; and on research partnership models between academic, mental health sector, and government and non-government agencies providing services impacting on mental health and on facilitating these partnerships.

The TOR seems too theoretical and not practical enough.

The TOR specifies the roles and functions that the MHPSS TF is to take on. In order to specify practically the activities of the TF to fulfill these roles, an action plan of the TF will be annually developed and revised mid-year. That of 2015 has already been developed and revised in July 2015 and will be presented in the next North MHPSS TF meeting.

➤ **The draft TOR will be shared with all for their review.**

4. Discussion of how the task force can be helpful to all

- The MHPSS TF will give all MHPSS actors the opportunity:
 - To be informed and stay updated on available services/activities/events/projects/research etc. in the region.
 - To speak about the needs and activities to be organized
 - To discuss and identify together possible solutions to challenges faced and exchange best practices.
 - To have technical discussions and develop common understanding on various matters.
- One of the key objectives of the Mental Health and Substance Use Strategy for Lebanon 2015-2020 is the establishment of a referral system linking all levels of care.
- This objective is a key action point in the MHPSS TF action plan for 2015. A project proposal to build the referral system was recently accepted for funding by the Spanish Corporation and the MHPSS TF will be actively participating in the building of this system.

- **All are kindly asked to share the contacts of NGOs they know of that have MHPSS activities in the North.**
- **Each organization will have the opportunity during every meeting to provide a 10-15 minutes presentation on their programs/particular project or activity/studies, etc. (to share experience, take feedback of the taskforce...).**
- **RESTART Center will be providing a short presentation on the lessons learned from Trainings to PHCs and Hospitals during the next meeting.**

Next meeting: Wednesday September 2nd, 2015 at 11:30 am at Restart Center Conference Room (2), Tripoli