POLAND
MENTAL HEALTH AND PSYCHOSOCIAL SUPPORT WORKING GROUP NEWSLETTER
SUMMER 2024

Dear Poland MHPSS Technical Working Group Members!

We hope you will enjoy the summer edition of our newsletter.

UPDATES FROM POLAND

On July 1, 2024, an amendment to the law on assistance to Ukrainian citizens in connection with the armed conflict in Ukraine came into force. Under this amendment, refugees will be able to change their residency status in Poland from temporary protection to a more favorable temporary stay. The amendment to the assistance law also stipulates the discontinuation of the one-time payment of 300 PLN for accommodation and the 40 PLN allowance for accommodation and food in private homes. The payment of the "800 plus" benefit and the "Good Start" benefit will be linked to compulsory education.

Thanks to the great involvement of humanitarian actors, the amendment also includes a provision once again allowing Ukrainian psychologists to provide psychological services to Ukrainian citizens residing in the territory of the Republic of Poland without the need for diploma recognition from July 1, 2024, to September 30, 2025.

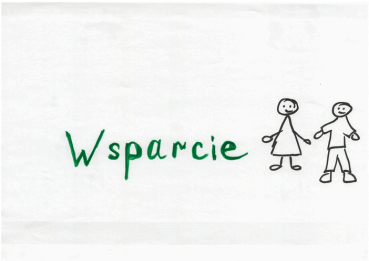
We invite you to explore the Tip Sheet on Nostrification of Ukrainian Psychologists prepared by UNHCR Poland, which contains a detailed description of the challenges associated with the process of nostrification, as well as a precise, step-by-step explanation of the nostrification procedure. You can access the document HERE.

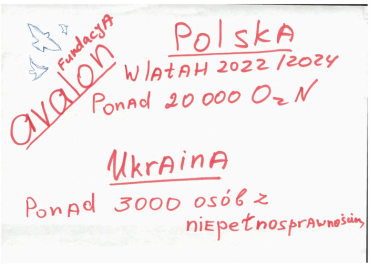
MHPSS & HEALTH IN PERSON MEETING

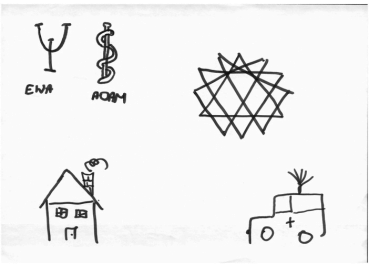
On May 9 and 10, another meeting of the Technical Working Group on Mental Health and Psychosocial Support, along with the Health Sector, took place, attended by 50 participants from 27 organizations. The meeting featured workshops on resource mobilization and fundraising, a session on diploma recognition with representatives from NAWA, SWPS, and UKSW, discussions on upcoming legislative changes, current activities, and a session on preparing an action plan for emergency situations, the results of which can be found on the MHPSS TWG drive.

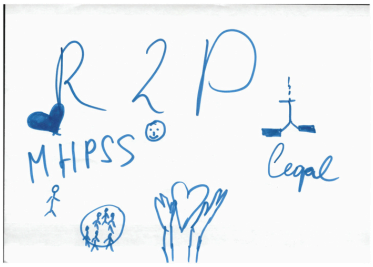
The meeting also provided an opportunity to exchange experiences, share best practices, deepen networking, and explore Warsaw together ;)

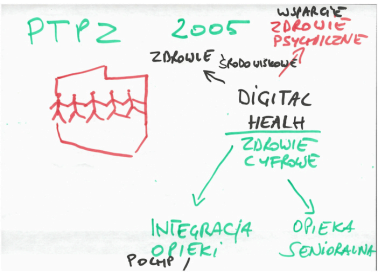
We sincerely thank you for your active participation and invite you to future meetings!

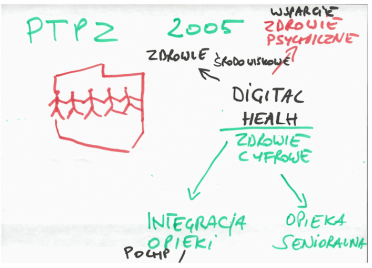


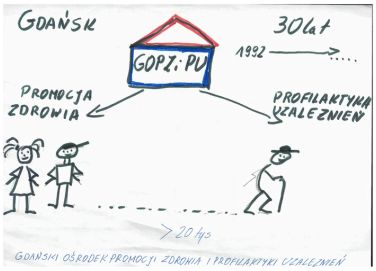




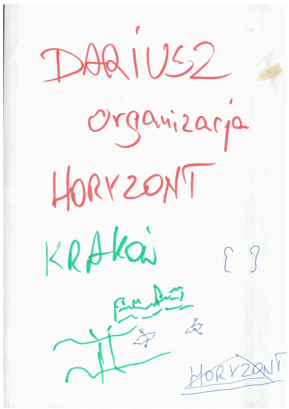


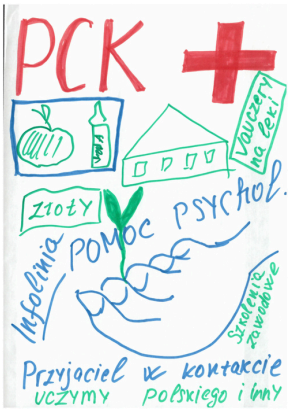


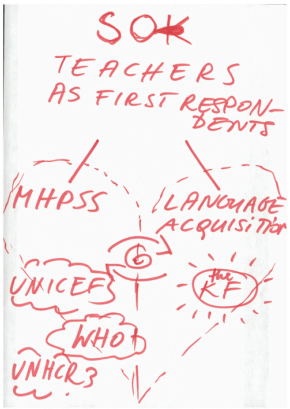


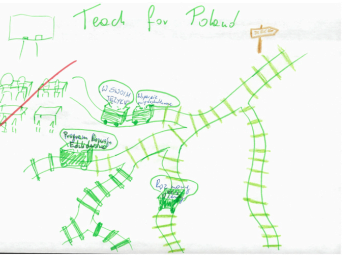


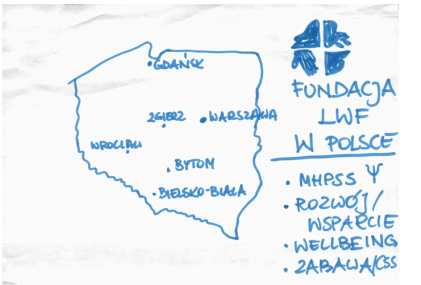
During the meeting, there was also space to creatively present one's organization to the other participants, resulting in a unique humanitarian collage ;-)

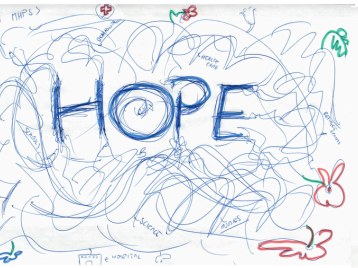


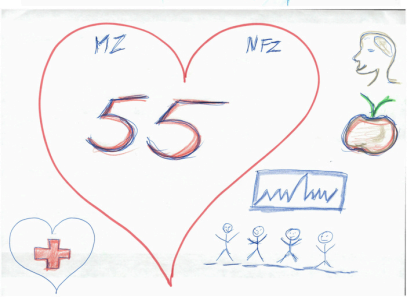












NATIONAL MENTAL HEALTH FORUM

On June 6-7, 2024, the National Mental Health Forum "Together for Mental Health: Towards a Comprehensive Intersectoral Roadmap for National Mental Health and Well-being" took place in Warsaw, organized by the Ministry of Health with support from the WHO. The forum aimed to summarize the experiences from the transformation of the mental health system in Poland to date and outline future actions in the form of a "roadmap."

The event was attended by national leaders in the fields of health and mental health, key stakeholders from other government sectors, local authorities, experts, professionals, support groups, and individuals with lived experience along with their caregivers. Together, they discussed and reached a consensus on the development and implementation of a comprehensive intersectoral roadmap for national mental health, which will enable the realization of the National Mental Health Program for 2023-2030.

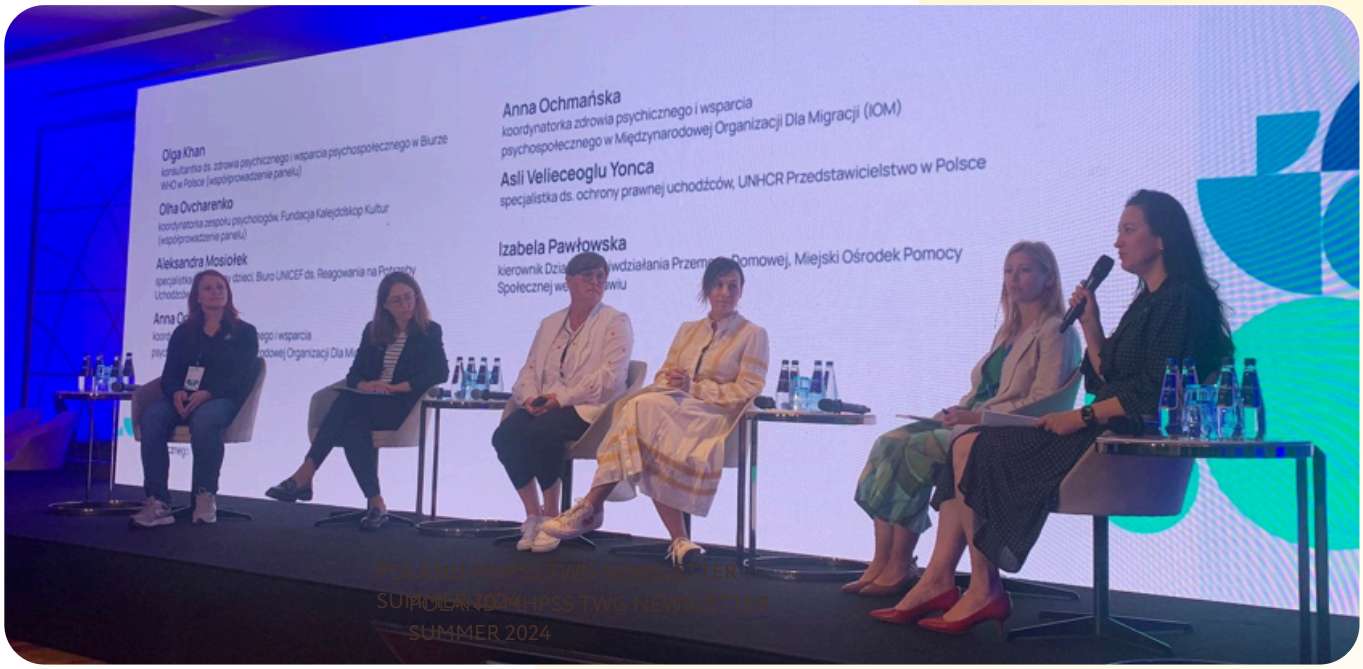
During the panel "Two Years of Crisis Response: From Experiences Gained in a Prolonged Crisis Situation to Development," which included representatives from non-governmental organizations (Kaleidoscope of Cultures), local aid institutions (MOPS Wrocław), WHO, UNHCR, IOM, and UNICEF, it was agreed that in the area of MHPSS for refugees and migrants, the following goals are crucial:

- Increasing access to MHPSS services for children, focusing on a comprehensive approach that includes prevention, promotion, specialized services, and ongoing support.

- Strengthening the system by integrating MHPSS services for refugees, vulnerable groups, and host communities, supporting social cohesion and the integration of refugees into society.

- Enhancing and increasing intersectoral cooperation within the government and between the government and civil society, ensuring a smooth transition of MHPSS services from crisis response to government-led operations.

The next step will be to prepare a comprehensive intersectoral "roadmap," which will include key priorities, specific actions, timelines, required resources, division of responsibilities, and monitoring mechanisms to ensure effective implementation. The document is expected to be ready by autumn.



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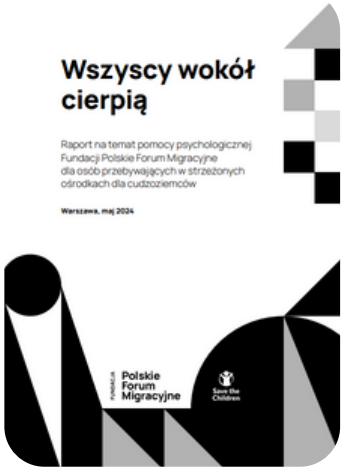
NEW REPORTS

The intersectoral report "Navigating Health and Well-Being Challenges for Refugees from Ukraine," published in May, provides many interesting insights and appropriately acknowledges the increased efforts in the area of social inclusion of refugees from Ukraine, including the integration of Ukrainian health professionals. The report is available HERE.



The report "Everyone Around is Suffering" by the Polish Migration Forum, supported by Save the Children Poland, is the first report in Poland summarizing the experiences of non-governmental organizations in providing psychological assistance to individuals in such centers. The publication is based on the opinions of lawyers specializing in migration law and psychologists working with foreigners in reception centers. It also includes the stories of migrants with detention experiences, collected through interviews. The report is available at HERE .

The report on the impact of new social identities and associated resources on trauma trajectories among war refugees from Ukraine. The study, conducted at the University of Limerick by M. Skrodzka, G. McMahon, S. M. Griffin, and O. T. Muldoon, not only analyzes the relationship between refugees' identification with a new society and levels of post-traumatic stress and post-traumatic growth but also provides practical insights for conducting interventions targeted at refugees in their new host countries. The content of the article can be found HERE.

The report "Beyond School: An Analysis of Systemic Barriers for Ukrainian Adolescents Residing in Poland," was prepared by CARE, IRC, and Save the Children.
In addition to challenges related to organizational and financial issues, the report addresses topics concerning the mental health of children, adolescents, and their caregivers, which either contribute to or hinder their exclusion from the Polish education system. The report can be reviewed HERE.

NEW PARTNERS

In recent months, new organizations have joined the MHPSS TWG: AHF Poland, the Polish Center for Torture Survivors, and Inscience with the Science Kids project. We warmly welcome the new members and invite everyone to read more about their work

AHF POLAND

AHF Poland is part of the AIDS Healthcare Foundation, the world's largest HIV/AIDS nonprofit, which provides treatment and advocacy regardless of the ability to pay to 2 million patients in 47 countries. In Poland, we primarily work with migrant and refugee communities, offering rapid, free, and confidential HIV self-testing, linkage to care, psychosocial support for people living with HIV, and sexual and reproductive health education and advocacy. We operate in Polish, English, Ukrainian, and Russian.

We are currently running a self-testing program and we send out free HIV self-testing kits to clients all over Poland. To order a test, please send a message to +48 793 258 415 on WhatsApp or Telegram.

AHF Poland, https://darmowytestnaHIV.pl
Facebook: Facebook.com/AHFPoland
Instagram: www.instagram.com/ahfpoland

AHF POLAND

POLISH CENTER FOR TORTURE SURVIVORS

We are a group of experts creating a comprehensive support network for people who experienced torture and sexual violence during war and are looking for help in Poland.

We assume that only trauma-oriented work and an interdisciplinary approach (psychological, medical, legal and social support) can truly and safely change the fate of injured people. This type of help has the potential to counteract the long-term consequences of complex trauma and minimize epigenetic changes.

Our website is www.pcts.org.pl.

Our Foundation is currently implementing the project "Designing and Offering Meaningful Help to the Survivors of Wartime Rape and Torture on the Territory of Poland". The project is financed by the MARIO grant.

The aim of the project is to create a path for survivors (those direct as well as those who experienced torture and war rape in 2014 and later) to obtain the legal and psychological assistance they need, create a database and network of trained organizations, produce posters and brochures in Polish and English and Ukrainian to provide help to survivors and to let them know there are places they can turn to.

We are therefore reaching to your organization to let us know whether you take care of survivors in your practice.

If so, we would like to offer your specialists training from psychological and legal aspects, and after the trainings you would appear in our websites database so that survivors could find you.

Please inform us of your interest in collaboration by August 17, 2024.
For details regarding our collaboration, please contact: pcts@pcts.org.pl and afterwartrauma@gmail.com.

INSCIENCE SCIENCE KIDS

Inscience is a Ukrainian non-governmental organization led by women. Since 2018, it has been promoting science and evidence-based medicine, increasing their value to society, business, and the state through popular science projects.

One of the programs currently run by Inscience is the Science Kids initiative. This is a STEAM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Art, Mathematics) program that provides Ukrainian children and youth with access to high-quality informal education while enhancing the capacity of public schools and educational institutions to develop STEAM programs and improve education quality. Since June 2022, over 12,000 children have participated in the program, initially in an online format and now also in an offline format in Ukraine (Kharkiv, Odessa, Mykolaiv) and two European cities (Prague and Warsaw).

A key component of the program is focusing on improving the psycho-emotional well-being of children. To achieve this, the team conducts thematic psychological exercises, art therapy sessions, or activities aimed at raising children's awareness about mental health at each event.

Learn more about the project HERE.

Polina Limina, Science Kids Project Manager: polina.limina@inscience.io

Anna Orekhova, Co-founder and Partner at INSCIENCE: anna.orekhova@inscience.io

UPCOMING EVENTS

Webinar:

Mental Health Support for Displaced People, Migrants and Refugees:
15 Nov 2024, 10:00 - 13:40 CET
Zoom registration link: HERE.

Join us on November 15, 2024, from 10:00 to 13:40 CET for an insightful discussion on the implementation of digital mental health tools tailored for displaced people across Europe. This webinar, organized by the Estonian-Swedish Mental Health and Suicidology Institute (ERSI) as part of the Mental Health Support for Ukrainian Refugees MESUR Project, will explore how tools like FightDepression can bridge the gap in mental health services for refugees and migrants.

Key highlights include:

- Experiences from healthcare professionals integrating iFightDepression.
- Practical tips for adapting digital tools for diverse communities.
- Strategies to overcome barriers in implementing digital mental health interventions.

Please note that this webinar will be recorded. By participating, you consent to the use of the recording for project-related purposes.

To arrange free training and begin iFightDepression integration in your MHPSS work, please email Dr. Piotr Toczyski: ptoczyski@aps.edu.pl

RESOURCES

DATA AND INFORMATION

- Poland MHPSS TWG Google Drive – all resources and tools, meeting protocols, reports, and calls for proposals
- General information on access to medications in Poland (including psychotropics) in Polish and Ukrainian.
- A two-pager 'Essential Concepts and Best Practices for Mental Health and Psychosocial Support (MHPSS) Ukrainian Refugee Response' in English and Polish.
- UNHCR Operational Data Portal – updated information about refugee situation in Poland
- Poland MHPSS TWG resources at UNHCR Operational Data Portal.
- UNHCR Poland Tip Sheet on Nostrification of Ukrainian Psychologists.

TRAININGS

- WHO online course on MHPSS in Emergencies in English, Polish and Ukrainian.
- 9 Steps for a Teenager in Times of War: Course for Parents - a guide on adolescent psychology that discusses key behavioral and emotional aspects of a child's functioning, considering their importance in supporting and helping the child in the face of wartime challenges. The course is available in Ukrainian HERE.

ASSESSMENTS

- Multi-sectoral needs assessment (MSNA) 2023 - overall summary and Protection Sector findings including MHPSS.

KEY MHPSS RESOURCES IN EMERGENCIES (POLISH/UKRANIAN)

- IASC Basic Psychosocial Support Skills: A guide for COVID-19 Responders (Polish) (Ukrainian)
- WHO Psychological first aid: guide for field workers (Polish) (Ukrainian)
- IASC MHPSS Guidelines (Polish) (Ukrainian)
- IASC Advocacy Package (Polish) (Ukrainian)
- IASC Reference Group Mental Health and Psychosocial Support Assessment Guide (Polish) (Ukrainian)
- The MHPSS Minimum Service Package - an intersectoral package of activities to be implemented in all humanitarian emergencies, developed by WHO and UNICEF, in collaboration with UNHCR and UNFPA. (in English for now, soon available in Polish)
- Checklist for field use of IASC Guidelines on Mental Health and Psychosocial Support in Emergency Settings in Polish
- IASC Referral Guidance Note for MHPSS (Polish) (Ukrainian)
- Response Learning Hub MHPSS – inter-agency Capacity Building Task Force website with upcoming trainings in English
- Manual on Community-Based Mental Health and Psychosocial Support (MHPSS) in Emergencies and Displacement (Polish)

MHPSS SERVICE MAPPING

- An overview of MHPSS service providers among health care providers (on the maps) found on the website pacjent.gov.pl: A list of children and adolescents mental health care providers
- A map with mental psychologicznego dla Ukraińców
- MapuICEF Ukraine in collaboration with the Ukrainian Ministry of Health and others
- Community mental health centers established within the frames of the pilot project of Mental health Reform in Poland
- MHPSS Hotlines with details
- Referral pathway for GBV referral Pathway for 2023 (Ukrainian)

WEBINARS AND PRESENTATIONS

- MHPSS TWG Presentation for Poland Ministry of Health's Orientation Session on Mental Health Care System in Poland
- International Medial Corps presentation 'MHPSS Rapid Situation Analysis in Poland for Ukrainian Refugee Response'
- WHO's Psychological First Aid Slides in Polish
- Presentation slides "Mental Health and Psychosocial Support in context of humanitarian emergencies: What Should Humanitarian Actors Should Know?" by WHO
- Community Mental Health Centers: The Role in Providing Access to Mental Health Services for Displaced Population from Ukraine – a presentation by Dr Anna Depukat, Director of National Office for the Pilot of the National Mental Health Program
- Essential Concepts and Terminology for Mental Health and Psychosocial Support (MHPSS) - Ukrainian Refugee Response
- World Suicide Prevention Day presentation about Global Best Practices and Polish legislation

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES ON MHPSS

- Guidance note on how to support volunteer team (in Polish)

THANK YOU !

The next MHPSS TWG meeting will take place on Friday, September 13th, at 9:00 AM. Hope to see you there!

Link to participate in the meeting will be sent to all members of the MHPSS TWG. If you are not a member of the group and would like to join, please fill out the registration form available HERE.

If you would like to add your activities or news to the newsletter, share your feedback, comments, or suggestions, please contact us at: mhpsstwg.poland@gmail.com.