**MHPSS TWG 04.04.2025 Meeting minutes**

**Date**: 04 April 2025

**Chaired by:** Joanna Głażewska WHO

**Minutes taken by:** Paulina Brożyniak UNHCR

**Participants**: Teofana Cepoi (Plan International), Marta Chojnacka (PAH), Aleksandra Kaplon (UNHCR), Liliia Oleshko (Plan International), Aleksandra Alicja Mosiołek (UNICEF), Shoira Ruzybaeva (UNHCR), Małgorzata Suraj (UNHCR), Piotr Toczyski (ASP), Magdalena Woźniak (UNICEF), Iryna Vasilyeva (The Helsinki Foundation for Human Rights).

1. **Welcome and introduction by the chairs**

WHO welcomed all participants and explained the current situation regarding funding related to MHPSS and its readiness to continue meetings within TWG to better embed MHPSS in public health policies. UNHCR informed about the funding cuts and inability to co-chair the MHPSS TWG group. However, UNHCR highlighted the need to continue the work of TWG and ensured its eagerness to support temporarily in upcoming months. UNHCR also informed about the search mechanism to find an external MHPSS specialist who could temporarily support with MHPSS coordination. Drawing on examples from other countries, UNHCR noted that MHPSS TWGs are often co-led by the Ministry of Health and WHO, with UNHCR providing secretarial support. Considering the current context in Poland and recognizing the limited capacity of the MoH at this time due to competing priorities, in the longer term, the group may consider identifying an alternative co-lead—such as another UN agency or NGO with broad operational coverage—while UNHCR would be pleased to transition to a secretarial role and continue supporting the group by hosting physical meetings and facilitating coordination.

2. **Housekeeping updates: the review of the membership and members' needs rapid assessment (survey 2024/2025)**

WHO presented an online survey on partners needs and priorities in 2025. The survey was done from December 2024 to January 2025 and 39 responses were received. Question regarding languages preferences showed that participants are divided between having meetings in Polish, English and Ukrainian however the majority indicated Polish. It is then possible that future meetings would be in Polish but it will be further discussed. Participants choose to meet monthly or bimonthly. As the results the TWG meeting would be possible every 6-7 weeks. The meeting would take place online to avoid travel costs for those outside Warsaw. However, UNHCR proposed to host meeting in UNHCR Country Office for those based in Warsaw. The question in workplan priorities for 2025 showed that participants are interested in capacity-building sessions and advocacy for MHPSS on national and regional level. This point is crucial regarding the current changing situation in humanitarian field and funding cut to for MHPSS project. It has been emphasized that the workshops on specific themes such as: preventing violent behaviors among refugees, communications with children and adolescent, symptoms of different mental conditions with ways to treat them as well as cultural aspects while providing MHPSS services. These workshops would improve skills of psychologist working with patients from different cultural background. More details can be found in the presentation attached.

3. **Presentation of findings from the research of PLAN International - Invisible Wounds: Navigating Mental Health Challenges and Support for Ukrainian Adolescent Boys and Young Men research**

PLAN International presented findings from the research on mental health challenges and support for Ukrainian adolescent boys and young men. The research was conducted across Ukraine, Poland, Romania, and Moldova. The primary focus of this study is to highlight structural and cultural barriers and gender dynamics in accessing mental health support. By acknowledging the influence of gender norms on mental health access, this research contributes to the adjustment and development of MHPSS programs that are adapted to needs of adolescent boys and young men. The study tackles the question on the masculine role model for adolescent boys from Ukraine, fractured friendship, coping mechanisms among Ukrainians boys as well as bullying at school. It also focuses on identity conflicts and stigma remaining among young men fleeing war in Ukraine. The research shows that in Poland Ukrainian adolescent struggle to build close relationships and feel isolated from Polish society which results in low esteem of Ukrainian adolescent. Teachers in Poland reported that student from Ukraine struggles with their sense of identity and are emotionally nub. Ukrainian students are described as "caught between the responsibilities of adulthood and the developmental stage of late adolescence". To cope with their emotions, Ukrainian young men spend their free time in digital spaces and represent avoidance behaviors such as substance use. As of barriers in accessing mental health specialists, the participants highlighted limited availability of specialists and the inability to find services in Ukrainian or Russian especially in smaller towns. At the end if the study, there are some recommendations such as expanding teletherapy, mobile mental health units, and peer support networks, developing p targeted mental health interventions addressing war-related trauma, grief, and survivor's guilt as well as creating a mental health literacy campaign tailored to young men. More details can be found in the results attached.

4. **Tour de table – all participants' introduction**

As it was a first meeting of TWG this year, every participant had a chance to present its work and organization.

5. **Next steps: upcoming ToR review, next meetings**

WHO informed participants that they would be informed about the next TWG meeting.

**Materials:**

1. Presentation - MHPSS Technical Working Group – analysis of Partner Survey
2. PLAN International - Invisible Wounds: Navigating Mental Health Challenges and Support for Ukrainian Adolescent Boys and Young Men research. The full report is available in English and the abridged version is in English and Ukrainian, REPORT: Invisible Wounds: Navigating Mental Health Challenges and Support for Ukrainian Adolescent Boys and Young Men