



## **Strengthening Mental Health and Psychosocial Support (MHPSS) Services in Afghanistan**

**Improving the mental health and psychosocial wellbeing of people in need.**

### **Country**

Afghanistan

### **Population**

All 34 provinces of Afghanistan

### **Duration**

Dec 2022 - Dec 2025

### **Donors**

European Union

### **Background**

The consequences of the long war, unrest and political changes in Afghanistan have manifested through varying social, economic, health, and environmental forms. Afghanistan has one of the worst health indicators in the world, and mental health disorders are alarmingly high, exacerbated by suffering from conflict, poverty, and personal losses. In 2018, the “National Mental health Survey and Assessment of Mental Health Services” indicated 66.34 percent of Afghans personally experienced at least one traumatic event in their lifetime. Women and children are particularly vulnerable to mental health issues. The same report indicated that 11.5 percent of children are impaired in their daily lives due to mental health issues.

Despite the dire mental health needs in communities, access to MHPSS services provided by the public health system is low. Lack of mental health knowledge and resources within the public health system and restrictions to accessing public health services have created a mental health treatment gap. Services particularly for remote communities are lacking with limited specific services for women and children.

## Objectives

The project will address the gaps in services within the public health system for mental health care to fulfil the following outcomes:

1. Increased availability of specialised MHPSS personnel including Health Social Counsellors (HSCs), clinical and managerial staff within public health facilities;
2. Enhanced access to MHPSS services for people living in remote communities in Kabul, Balkh, Hirat and Nagarhar provinces, through community health workers and within schools.

## Project Activities

*Training and expanding the Health Social Counsellor (HSC) training programme.*

- More than 400 Comprehensive Health Centres in Afghanistan will be staffed with one HSC. Through the preceding EU-funded HSC training project, 190 certified PSCs completed education to HSCs using the HealthNet TPO one-year intensive curriculum. An additional, 150 certified PSCs in public health facilities will complete this higher education to adequately respond to the emerging mental health needs of the population.
- Strengthen the role of HSCs at district and sub-district levels in coordinating with PM+ and SMHP components for referral and supervision support.

*MHPSS training for medical staff within public health facilities*

- The provision of short-term training courses to 400 medical doctors (MDs) from CHCs (one in each) on essential mental health, based on the WHO-approved mhGAP training curriculum.

- Training 12 psychiatrists in Regional Hospitals in mhGAP and Child Psychiatry to provide services to children referred by the School Mental Health Programme (SMHP).

*Community-based MHPSS services: Problem Management Plus*

- For the first time in Afghanistan, HealthNet TPO will utilise the important role that community health workers (CHWs) play within the hearts of communities, as the first line of response to detect, refer and provide social support for people living with mental health and psychosocial issues. HealthNet TPO will carry out MHPSS training for CHWs in the concepts of Problem Management Plus (PM+) to create an environment conducive to community-based support to people undergoing stressful life conditions.

*School mental health programme (SMHP)*

- School mental health is an unmet target area of the National Strategy for Mental Health 2019-2023, which will seemingly have a significant impact on enhancing child and adolescent mental wellbeing and educational attainment. The WHO recommends a phased rollout of the SMHP in countries with a higher prevalence of mental health conditions and adverse life conditions for children. HealthNet TPO will be implementing this in schools for the first time in Afghanistan

## With support from



**Funded by  
the European Union**

## HealthNet TPO

is an international non-profit organisation that supports communities in fragile and conflict affected settings to regain control and maintain their own health and wellbeing. We believe that everyone has the inner strength to (re)build a better future for themselves and those around them.

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