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Annex B

Terms of Reference

Provision of Group and Individual mental health and psychosocial support to refugees and asylum seekers.

Background:

Since the escalation of the conflict in Ukraine in February 2022, over three million refugees from Ukraine have entered Bulgaria and as of August 2024, the Government of Bulgaria has granted Temporary Protection to more than 192,000 refugees fleeing Ukraine, of whom the majority are women and children. As of mid-August 2024, an estimated 62,000 Ukrainian refugees remain within the country. UNHCR in Bulgaria, together with partners and through the Inter-Agency response, is assisting the Government response to the humanitarian needs of the refugees.

Additionally, Bulgaria as an external EU border, plays a strategic role in refugee protection within Europe. In 2022, Bulgaria's State Agency for Refugees (SAR) registered over 20,000 asylum seekers, most from Syria and Afghanistan. In 2023, there have been more than 22,500 asylum applications which are higher numbers for the same period. Amid an increase in arrivals of Afghan and Syrian asylum seekers since 2023, UNHCR supports Bulgaria's Government to ensure policies and legislation are in line with international and EU standards, and promotes a comprehensive refugee response, grounded in a multi-stakeholder, whole-of-society approach.

UNHCR advocates and supports national authorities to include refugees, irrespective of legal status, stateless persons and asylum seekers in the national policies, strategies, programmes, and funding proposals, with the aim of facilitating their inclusion and contributions into social protection systems. Since the onset of the Ukrainian crisis, WHO, UNHCR and other partners have actively provided support to the Ministry of Health to address the health needs of refugees, migrants and asylum seekers as well as that of the Bulgarian population.

In March 2023 the World Health Organization (WHO) and a Joint Review Mission composed of UNHCR and various organizations published the "Report on Refugee health: Assessment of the Bulgarian health system within the context of the crisis in Ukraine"¹. In its findings related to mental health and psychosocial support services (MHPSS), the report indicated:

"MHPSS services for refugees, migrants and asylum seekers: Mental health challenges remain a great concern among the refugee and migrant

¹ Available at [Report on refugee health: assessment of the Bulgarian health system's needs within the context of the crisis in Ukraine \(who.int\)](https://www.who.int/publications/m/item/report-on-refugee-health-assessment-of-the-bulgarian-health-systems-needs-within-the-context-of-the-crisis-in-ukraine).



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populations in Bulgaria. The JRT at the time of the mission found that no systematic assessment had been carried out to evaluate the prevalence of mental illness among refugees, migrants and asylum seekers. The WHO estimate of the global prevalence of mental disorders (depression, anxiety, post-traumatic stress disorder, bipolar disorder and schizophrenia) is 22.1% at any point in time in conflict-affected populations (29).

According to WHO estimates, more than 11 000 Ukrainian refugees currently recorded in Bulgaria will likely experience symptoms of mental illness. In Bulgaria, specialized mental health services are available, including 12 state psychiatric hospitals, 12 mental health centres and 21 psychiatric clinics and wards at multidisciplinary hospitals, which have a total capacity of about 4000 beds across the country (30). There are also 22 child psychiatrists in Bulgaria and three inpatient wards for children (in Plovdiv, Sofia and Varna), with a total of 29 beds. There are some outpatient facilities for children in Rousse and Sofia. Outpatient services are run by the state psychiatric hospitals, mental health centres and university psychiatric clinics (31). For those speaking English or Ukrainian, contact information for psychologists and neurologists active across the country are listed online in a Government website (32).

Access to these specialized services appears to be challenging, if not impossible, for refugees and migrants, particularly for those who do not speak English, Russian or Ukrainian, due to significant barriers related to limited information and awareness about the availability and nature of the services, difficulty in accessing GPs and other linguistic, cultural and economic barriers. In general, cultural mediation capacity – including both language and cultural aspects in reception, triage and care – seemed to be unavailable across the services visited. The NHIF [National Health Insurance Fund] partially covers psychiatric services, but not services provided by psychologists. Only 40% of psychotropic drugs are covered under the NHIF scheme and the essential psychotropic drug list is not cross-checked with the Ukrainian list, which, therefore, forces refugees, migrants and asylum seekers to rely heavily on emergency health care centres and facilities, which are more accessible and free of charge. The capacity of health operators to timely identify signs and symptoms of mental, neurological and substance abuse disorders within these centres is to be further assessed.”

During the MSNA 2023², about one-third of refugees from Ukraine reported that they or their family members are experiencing psychological or emotional difficulties and believe they need psychosocial support. The main barriers to accessing psychological care are a lack of information on where to find help and language difficulties. The data further shows that households with children under 18 are more likely to receive psychological assistance.

² Multi-Sector Need Assessment Report. 2023. <https://data.unhcr.org/en/documents/details/107029>

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However, nearly 46% of Ukrainian refugees feel that even though there is someone with a psycho-emotional issue in their family, no special support is necessary.

This do highlight the needs on raising awareness on self-care among the refugee community, because in the past they would mostly rely on their peer community but in current situation the peer support has abolished and had led to self-isolation of most of the refugee and asylum-seeking people residing in Bulgaria.

Overall objective of the Assignment:

The overall objective of the assignment is to support the mental health and psychosocial well-being of individuals and communities affected by displacement, through the provision of community-based mental health and psychosocial support services, including evidence-based focused and specialized services.

Specific Tasks:

Informed by the IASC³ MHPSS Minimum Service⁴ Package the services and deliverables under this request will support in the provision of individual and group-based support and psychological interventions to ensure that refugees and asylum seekers have access to improved mental health and psychosocial well-being.

As part of specialized group-based psychosocial support for adults and children, the intervention will include **the facilitation of group psychosocial support sessions**. These sessions will focus on providing group psychological interventions by either specialists and/or trained non-specialists.

The program will also involve the identification, selection, and **capacity-building of community volunteers and representatives** among refugees and asylum seekers, equipping them with skills in Psychosocial First Aid (PFA), and basic psychosocial support.

Peer support groups will also be established to create safe spaces where participants can share their experiences, coping strategies, and psychosocial challenges. These groups will serve as the foundation for forming sustainable peer support networks, enhancing community resilience and self-reliance.

For **individualized support**, the intervention will provide **individual counseling** using evidence-based approaches, as well as targeted clinical services on a case-by-case basis, addressing symptoms associated with both common and severe mental health

³ Inter-Agency Standing Committee

⁴ Mental Health and Psychosocial Support MINIMUM SERVICE PACKAGE
<https://interagencystandingcommittee.org/sites/default/files/migrated/2023-01/IASC%20MHPSS%20Minimum%20Service%20Package.pdf>

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conditions, ensuring comprehensive care through assessment, evidence-based interventions, and ongoing support.

Expected Deliverables:

The deliverables of the assignments should be as outlined here.

LOT 01: Structured Group Psychosocial Support for Adults

1. Structured psychosocial group counseling sessions:

- Conduct group structured psychological counseling sessions for refugees and asylum seekers of various ages, genders, and in languages spoken by refugees (Arabic, Ukrainian, Russian, and Farsi)⁵. These sessions will be held in reception centers, community centers, and collective accommodation sites located in and around Sofia, Burgas, Varna, Haskovo, Plovdiv, and Nova Zagora. The group sessions will be designed to foster peer connection and support, allowing participants to share experiences and provide emotional support within a community of individuals facing similar challenges. The approaches used for group counseling will be evidence based, and use scalable interventions, such as [Problem Management Plus](#)⁶, Group Interpersonal Therapy, or other short term, evidence informed and structured interventions, with at average time of 90 minutes per session. Monthly schedule, including the number of sessions per location, will be decided together with UNHCR.

2. Mental Health Awareness Events:

- Organize and conduct mental health and well-being awareness events and activities among different age and gender groups at the reception centers and community centers, focused on psychoeducation and self-help for groups of average number of 8 people per session. Average length of an event in this category is estimated for costing purposes as 90 minutes.
- Develop/select and translate necessary materials including but not limited to education, information and communication materials for the selected activities. The translation should be provided in all languages of the target group.

⁵ In case if the specialized staff does not speak the language, the supplier has to provide trained interpreters.

⁶ [Problem management plus \(PM+\): individual psychological help for adults impaired by distress in communities exposed to adversity \(who.int\)](#)

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3. Volunteer Training:

Develop and deliver comprehensive training programs for selected volunteers of groups of up to 20 volunteers in each location, focusing on enhancing their capacity to support their peers using basic psychosocial skills. One programme consists of 18 hours of sessions. The volunteers will be selected together with UNHCR and its partners. The selection process should be inclusive, considering the diverse backgrounds of the participants. Volunteers will be trained in basic psychosocial skills and Psychological First Aid (PFA), as per MSP guidelines.

- Create and implement supervision protocols to ensure ongoing support and quality assurance for peer support group activities throughout the implementation program and provide supervision sessions. In cooperation with UNHCR and partners, facilitate **links and referrals** to any needed services and support for children and caregivers, such as mental health services, health, protection, and education services.

4. Support Group Establishment:

- Establish gender- and age-specific support groups at each targeted location, integrating the trained volunteers into these groups as peer support leaders.
- Develop guidelines and frameworks to transition these support groups into sustainable peer support groups. These documents should include the design and delivery of structured group psychosocial support sessions, detailing expected staff caseloads and the use of evidence-based, scalable psychological interventions such as Problem Management Plus (PM+), Group Interpersonal Therapy (IPT-G), or other appropriate interventions. The plan should consider cultural and contextual factors relevant to the refugee and asylum-seeker populations.
- The supplier is also expected to provide a comprehensive plan for monitoring and evaluating the impact of the psychosocial support activities. This plan should include pre- and post-session assessments, regular participant feedback collection, and qualitative methods to assess the effectiveness of the group counseling sessions and peer support groups. Data collected should be used to make informed adjustments to the program and ensure it meets the evolving needs of the target population.

LOT 02: Structured Group Psychosocial Support for Children and Youth

1. Mental Health Awareness Events:

- The supplier is expected to conduct an initial needs assessment with children, youth, parents, and caregivers to assess specific psychosocial needs and concerns. These assessments should inform the design of



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training sessions and group activities, ensuring that they address the most relevant issues faced by the target groups.

Organize and conduct mental health awareness events and activities in schools, reception and registration centers, social care facilities, and collective accommodation sites in Sofia, Burgas, Varna, Haskovo, Plovdiv, and Nova Zagora. **Monthly schedule, including the number of sessions per location, will be decided together with UNHCR.**

The supplier in cooperation with UNHCR will agree on the plan for organizing and conducting mental health awareness events and psychoeducation activities for children and youth, aligned with minimum standards and principles of MHPSS. These events should take place in schools, reception centers, social care facilities, and collective accommodation sites, and focus on raising awareness, reducing stigma, and promoting mental health and psychosocial well-being among children and youth.

2. Provide group activities for children's mental health and psychosocial well-being:

- Provide structured group counseling services aimed at offering emotional support and guidance to children and youth including unaccompanied children. These sessions will serve as a platform for participants to share their experiences and coping strategies within a safe and supportive environment. Monthly schedule, including the number of sessions per location, will be decided together with UNHCR.

3. Workshops and Training Sessions:

- Develop a training curriculum covering topics such as stress management, resilience building, and emotional regulation. Create culturally sensitive training materials, including manuals, presentations, and practical exercises. Design and deliver workshops and training sessions for teachers, social care workers, and other caregivers, including on child friendly PFA (Psychological First Aid), ensuring that these sessions are accessible to all intended participants and are conducted by specialists with expertise in child and youth mental health.
- Design and deliver workshops and training sessions for teachers, social workers, and other caregivers. These sessions will cover topics such as stress management, resilience building, and emotional regulation. These trainings to be provided by specialist on the mentioned topics. These sessions should be guided by evidence-based approaches, and should focus on emotional support, experience sharing, and coping strategy development. Engage participants through interactive methods like storytelling, role-playing, and games. Each workshop is estimated to last total of 6 hours. Monthly schedule, including the number of sessions per location, will be decided together with UNHCR.



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The supplier is expected to propose detailed schedule and plan for the events in schools, reception centers, and other relevant facilities. The plan will be agreed with UNHCR. It shall include plans for involving mental health professionals, educators, and community leaders at appropriate stages to facilitate these group sessions. Ensure that these sessions provide a platform for emotional support, experience sharing, and the development of coping strategies through open discussions, storytelling, and role-playing techniques.

The supplier must incorporate culturally and contextually appropriate practices and materials into all activities. The training venue, travel, interpretation and other logistical arrangements will be included in the cost.

LOT 03: Individualized Mental Health Support

1. Focused Psychosocial Support:

- Provide tailored psychosocial support services to individuals, addressing specific emotional, psychological, and social challenges on a one-on-one basis, ensuring personalized care and attention. The cost is estimated on the basis of per session.
- Conduct thorough assessments and deliver evidence-based interventions to address the unique needs of individuals, including ongoing follow-up and support to promote sustained mental well-being.

Deliver specialized clinical mental health services tailored to individual needs, focusing on both common and severe mental health conditions. These services should include comprehensive assessment, treatment, and follow-up care, provided by specialists such as psychiatrists, licensed clinical psychologists, psychiatric nurses, or clinical social workers. Interventions may involve psychotherapy (e.g., Cognitive Behavioral Therapy, Interpersonal Therapy), psychotropic medication management, and referrals for additional specialized care when necessary.

The service provider is also expected to identify mental health conditions, build therapeutic relationships, and offer targeted support to caregivers and families based on identified needs and referrals from UNHCR and its partners. All services should be delivered in a culturally sensitive and accessible manner, adhering to best practices in mental health care.

Location of service provision:

In coordination with UNHCR and its partners, locations will be the sites of six Registration and Reception centers operated by the State Agency for Refugees (SAR), partner NGO sites, COMPASS Protection and Inclusion Centers located in six different cities, two immigration centers, and/or on site of the service provider.

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Minimum Requirements and Qualifications of Service Provider:

Lot 01: Structured Group Psychosocial Support for Adults

- Minimum 3 years of experience in working with diverse populations, and/or persons with specific needs, through community engagement, outreach or support programs. Experience working with refugees and asylum seekers is an advantage. (Please provide company profile including references (titles/organization/year of implementation) of successfully conducted projects/activities as relevant)
- Minimum 2 years of experience in providing basic mental health support services, including Psychological First Aid (PFA) or peer support, and familiarity with common health issues within refugee communities and corresponding intervention strategies. (Please provide company profile including references (titles/organization/year of implementation) of successfully conducted project/activities as relevant)
- Minimum 2 years of experience in facilitating group discussions or support groups, with a focus on managing group dynamics and fostering a supportive environment for participants. (Please provide company profile including references of successfully conducted project/activities as relevant)
- At least 2 years' experience in delivering training or educational workshops, particularly on mental health topics, with the ability to develop and adapt training materials to meet the needs of different audiences. (Please provide company profile including references of successfully conducted project/activities as relevant)
- The project team should have relevant educational backgrounds in Psychology, Social Work, Counseling, or related fields, with completed training in PFA, MHPSS, scalable interventions, or professional development in related areas. (Minimum 3 CVs of team members should be submitted for evaluation purposes).

In addition, the following are considered as an asset.

- Access to regular supervision and support from mental health professionals to ensure the quality and effectiveness of the provided psychosocial support.
- Commitment to adhering to ethical guidelines and standards in providing mental health support, including maintaining confidentiality and obtaining informed consent.



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Lot 02: Structured Group Psychosocial Support for children and youth

- Minimum 3 years of experience working with children and youth, especially in educational or community settings, with a focus on supporting their mental health and well-being.
- Minimum 2 years of experience providing basic mental health support, such as Psychological First Aid (PFA) or peer support, and familiarity with common mental health issues affecting children and youth, along with appropriate intervention strategies.
- Minimum 2 years of experience in facilitating group discussions or support groups for children and youth, with the ability to manage group dynamics and create a safe, supportive environment.
- At least 2 years experience, in delivering training or educational workshops on mental health topics, with the ability to develop and adapt training materials for different age groups and developmental stages.
- The project team should have relevant educational backgrounds in Psychology, Social Work, Counseling, or related fields, with completed training in PFA or professional development in related areas.

In addition, it is considered as an asset to have the following:

- Access to regular supervision and support from mental health professionals to ensure the quality and effectiveness of psychosocial support services provided to children and youth.
- Commitment to adhering to ethical guidelines and standards in providing mental health support to children and youth, including maintaining confidentiality and obtaining informed consent.

Lot 03: Individualized mental health support.

- The service provider must have accreditation and a minimum of 2 years of relevant experience in providing specialized mental health and psychosocial support (MHPSS) services in similar contexts, particularly with refugees and asylum seekers.
- Minimum 2 years of experience in technical capacity of data collection methods relevant to individualized mental health interventions
- Minimum 2 years' experience in delivery of specialized clinical services, including comprehensive assessment, psychotherapeutic interventions (e.g., Cognitive Behavioral



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Therapy, Interpersonal Therapy), psychotropic medication management, and follow-up care. Services should address both common and severe mental health conditions and be delivered by qualified specialists such as psychiatrists, licensed clinical psychologists, psychiatric nurses, or clinical social workers.

- Team members: Please provide 2 CVs of team members with expertise in providing individual psychotherapy, certified and specialized in clinical services, including comprehensive assessment, psychotherapeutic interventions
- Interpreters: Please provide CVs of trained interpreters in the following languages: Ukrainian, Russian, Arabic to work in MHPSS contexts.

In addition, it is considered as an asset to have the following:

- Relevant experience working with humanitarian organizations, especially in emergencies or refugee issues, is considered an asset.

In order to apply please submit the following documents:

Lot 1:

1. Please provide brief outline of the methodology/approach to be used for implementation of the tasks as per Lot 1. (Maximum 2 pages)
2. Company profile including references (titles/organization/year of implementation) of successfully conducted projects/activities as relevant. Please see above the minimum requirements as per Lot 1. The company profile should provide details in order to support the evaluation of the Lot as per Annex D, the technical requirements.
3. CVs of minimum 3 team members with relevant educational backgrounds and experience in Psychology, Social Work, Counseling, or related fields, with completed training in PFA, MHPSS, scalable interventions, or professional development in related areas.

Lot 2:

1. Please provide brief outline of the methodology/approach to be used for implementation of the tasks as per Lot 2. (Maximum 2 pages)
2. Company profile including references (titles/organization/year of implementation) of successfully conducted projects/activities as relevant. Please see above the minimum requirements as per Lot 2. The company profile should provide details in order to support the evaluation of the Lot as per Annex D, the technical requirements.
3. CVs of minimum 3 team members with relevant educational backgrounds and experience in Psychology, Social Work, Counseling, or related fields, with completed



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training in PFA, MHPSS, scalable interventions, or professional development in related areas.

Lot 3:

1. The service provider must have accreditation for conducting specialized mental health and psychosocial support.
2. Company profile including references (titles/organization/year of implementation) of successfully conducted projects/activities as relevant. Please see above the minimum requirements as per Lot 3. The company profile should provide details in order to support the evaluation of the Lot as per Annex D, the technical requirements.
3. Please provide 2 CVs of team members with expertise in providing individual psychotherapy, certified and specialized in clinical services, including comprehensive assessment, psychotherapeutic interventions.
4. Interpreters: Please provide CVs of trained interpreters in the following languages: Ukrainian, Russian, Arabic to work in MHPSS contexts.

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