

UNHCR RFP: 158
for the establishment of Frame Agreement(s) for the provision of psychosocial services to UNHCR personnel

Annex A. Terms of Reference

The Psychosocial Wellbeing Section (PWS) of the Staff Health and Wellbeing Service (SHWS), Division of Human Resources (DHR) is seeking to identify a reliable external mental health provider to complement the in-house offer of psychosocial services to UNHCR personnel working primarily in hardship locations but not only. The psychosocial services particularly targeted by these TORs are:

- 1) Psychological preparation for personnel assigned to hardship duty stations;
- 2) end of assignment debriefing for personnel upon the completion of assignments in hardship duty stations;
- 3) “Helping helpers” – provision of supportive sessions to staff of the Staff Health and Wellbeing Service;
- 4) short term counselling for all personnel upon request.

I The scope of service

UNHCR, the UN Refugee Agency, is a global organization dedicated to saving lives, protecting rights and building a better future for refugees, forcibly displaced communities and stateless people. Its workforce counts around 20000 people working in over 135 countries and in over 550 duty stations. A significant proportion of UNHCR duty stations is classified as hardship locations reflecting the challenging living and working conditions. A portion of hardship duty stations is classified as high-risk duty stations indicating a significant security risk. Particularly in those locations, UNHCR personnel is exposed to a range of psychological hazards such as exposure to life threatening situations, isolation, traumatic experiences of the population of concern – to mention just a few. The result is often a high physical and emotional stress which potentially leads to disruption of wellbeing and psychological disorders.

Amongst the measures to mitigate these risks, the PWS put in place the following services:

- 1) ***Psychological preparation (PP) for personnel assigned to work in hardship locations and emergency operations*** – introduced in 2012, this is an individual one-on-one confidential conversation with a psychologist prior to departure to a hardship assignment. This service can be done in one session or in two sessions (prior and immediately after arrival). It is currently offered to personnel assigned to/or deployed on longer mission to hardship duty stations. In addition, it is mandatory for personnel assigned to or deployed on a longer mission to high-risk duty stations. This service is offered both internally by the Staff Counsellors and externally by the external service provider and the choice is made by the personnel concerned. In 2023 there were about 400 PP sessions in a year, about 12% of those held by the external service provider.
- 2) ***End of assignment debriefing (EAD)*** for personnel completing their assignment in hardship locations and emergency operations – this is a confidential individual one-on-one session at the end of their assignment or mission with a psychologist. It focuses on the assessment of

the psychological impact of the assignment on the personnel concerned, identifying the points of growth and organizing an aftercare if needed. This service is currently offered to personnel assigned to/or deployed on longer mission to hardship duty stations. In addition, it is mandatory for personnel assigned to or deployed on a longer mission to high-risk duty stations. This service is offered both internally by the Staff Counsellors and externally by external service provider and the choice is made by the personnel concerned. In 2023, there were about 400 EAD sessions in a year, about 13% of those facilitated by the external service provider.

- 3) **Helping helpers**, a support service to the personnel of the Staff Health and Wellbeing Service (SHWS) was introduced in 2020 in the context of the COVID pandemic. The members of the Staff Health and Wellbeing Service include Staff Counsellors (mental health professionals), Medical Officers, Nurses, admin support staff. The research has shown that there is an increased risk for burnout and vicarious trauma in these professions and UNHCR made a decision to make support service available to the personnel of the SHWS. The SHWS counts about 50 eligible members for this service and it allows for up to 6 sessions a year. This service with the external service provider is optional for the SHWS personnel as they can choose their supervisor independently from UNHCR arrangements. In 2023, this service was not sought for. The estimated annual requirement for these services is 10-20 sessions.
- 4) **Access to external mental services for all personnel** – introduced in 2020 to ensure that all personnel had a quick access to mental health support when needed. Up to two sessions paid for by UNHCR are offered to any UNHCR personnel based on their self-referral. More paid sessions can be authorized by the Chief of the Psychosocial Wellbeing when justified. In 2023 about 50 members of the personnel availed of the access to this service.

II Description of the activity

1) *Psychological Preparation*

Psychological preparation (PP) is a process of tuning person's inner resources to the coming situation. A psychologically prepared person expects certain challenges, has an idea of the potential psychological impact of such challenges on their wellbeing and mental health, knows their own reactions to such challenges and is familiar with their own inner resources and where and how to seek support when needed. In the context of assignments to hardship locations, these challenges include:

- Working under continuous pressure
- Lack of privacy
- Working and living in the contexts of security threats and/or exposure to human suffering
- Separation from family and social networks
- Lack of conditions that favor a healthy lifestyle
- Vicarious exposure to traumatic content

While some aspects of the PP can be standardized and used for all newly recruited persons to hardship locations, the preparation process has to take into account individual differences at all levels: personality, diversity, past personal and professional experiences, individual coping skills and cultural background including values and norms. The Staff Counsellor should create the optimum conditions

for the session so that the client can relate with an ease and consider the session as an opportunity for an open discussion and a personal reflection about their readiness for the coming hardship assignment.

The PP is facilitated remotely through one session prior to departure for an assignment/mission and another session in about a month following the reassignment. The duration of these sessions is approximately 60 min for the first session and 60 min for the second session.

2) End of Assignment Debriefing

The end of assignment debriefing (EAD) is a facilitated reflection on the completed assignment with emphasis on the personal growth, psychological impact and lessons learnt for the client. It supports the client in constructively reviewing the experience, facilitates the closure of that experience and assists with the transition towards the next steps.

The average length of such a session is between 90 to 120 minutes to ensure that sufficient time is allocated for this reflection. The session could be conducted in person whenever possible, or through telephone or video conference.

3) Psychological assessment and client satisfaction survey

The external service provider is required to be able to offer a simple **mental health screening tool** prior to both PP and EAD sessions. The completion of the survey on the client's part is not mandatory. The purpose of this exercise is to inform the conversation and educate the client on the aspects of their mental health based on their results. The external service provider must not keep or collect this data for any other purpose. Collection of other personal/psychological data is NOT permissible without a prior approval from the client and Chief PWS.

Both services are evaluated by the client through the **client satisfaction survey**. This data is collected centrally by UNHCR. The engaged mental health service provider (internally or externally) shares a link to the survey with the client after the second session of the psychological preparation and/or after the end of assignment debriefing. The feedback is monitored by the Chief, PWS. The external service provider will receive the feedback on the annual basis or more frequently if necessary.

4) Helping helpers

The professional standards for the Staff Counsellors are required to have 12 sessions a year. The medical officers, nurses and admin support staff do not have such requirement but are offered the same amount of support hours. The external mental health provider will have a list of the eligible Service members to ensure what service the client is contacting them for.

The sessions are expected to have a duration of 60 min each. The content of the session(s) may be linked to the impact of the case work on the service member, discussing ethical dilemmas in relation to the case, emotional support, self-reflection, cultural competence and self-care routines and mechanisms. The content of the sessions is confidential. The involvement of the supervisor is an option, with the consent of the service member. The purpose of the involvement of the supervisor would be to provide some input regarding the focus of the supervisory sessions as well as on the progress/performance.

The persons providing the supervision have to be licensed clinical psychologists or mental health professionals in their countries of practice.

5) *Access to mental health support for all*

All UNHCR personnel can access the external service provider for individual counselling without a referral. This stop-gap measure was put in place to assure that UNHCR personnel has a timely access to mental health support when the internal resources may be overwhelmed. The sessions are expected to have a duration of 50-60 min each. The first two sessions are paid for by UNHCR. Under special circumstances, the Chief of Psychosocial Wellbeing Section can issue an advanced authorization for more sessions for the client.

Access to this stop-gap measure is mostly based on self-referral or referral by the UNHCR Staff Counsellor. The proof of association with UNHCR is the unhcr.org email address. The purpose of these two sessions is to make a quick assessment, provide self-help guidance and organise a referral if needed. When the client's situation is more complex, referrals are not available and the client would benefit from extra sessions, additional sessions may be approved by the Chief, PWS. The external service provider must seek authorization in advance of additional sessions with minimum justification (how would extra hours make a difference and what is the plan going forward).

The content of these sessions remains confidential. In case of the risk of harm to life, the external service provider must inform the Chief, PWS timely do discuss the safety plan and the follow up intervention.

III Contracting the services

The responsibility of informing the UNHCR personnel about these services remains with the Psychosocial Wellbeing Section. This information is available on UNHCR wellbeing platform, UNHCR Intranet site, it is mainstreamed in different training events and learning tools and it is integrated in the HR processes when relevant. More specifically, clients eligible for either PP or EAD are informed timely by the Psychosocial Wellbeing Section. Once the client confirms the choice of using the services with either:

- a UNHCR Staff Counsellor, or
- an external service provider,

further correspondence between the client and the selected counsellor is left to them.

Clients wishing to access the services in the Helping Helpers and Access to MH Services for All categories, access such services directly.

III Duties of the external service provider

1. Upon the contact by the staff member who wishes to receive this service externally:
 - Set up the session time preferably within 48 hours following the contact by the client or the Psychosocial Wellbeing Section.
 - Send a link for psychological screening (if accepted by the client) prior to the session
 - Facilitate the session.

- Send the link to the on-line client satisfaction survey following the completion of the service (PP or EAD).

The second session of the psychological preparation is to be scheduled and followed up on directly by the external service provider.

2. Facilitate further referral as necessary.
3. Provide monthly report to the Psychosocial Wellbeing Section on conducted services with the names of the clients, services provided and the date of the provided services. The content is not reported.
4. Provide monthly invoice with the specification of the type and number of services provided so that payment could be processed.
5. Consult the Chief, Psychosocial Wellbeing Section to ensure the best use of the services and internal support needed.

The external mental health provider is encouraged to provide observations and suggestions on how to further improve the services.

The external service provider is expected to respect the code of ethics relevant to their license or affiliated professional association. That includes the principle of confidentiality. UNHCR will not request from the external service provider to disclose the content of any of the sessions unless there is a threat to self-harm or harm.

The service provider shall be responsible for ensuring compliance with all applicable data protection and data security laws, regulations, and requirements, including but not limited to the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) in the European Union. This includes implementing appropriate technical and organizational measures to protect personal data processed, ensuring confidentiality, integrity, and availability of such data. Service Provider shall be responsible for contractually requiring and causing any subcontractor or other third party service provider engaged in connection with the Services to implement and comply with data security protections.

The Supplier must maintain adequate data security and protection measures, consistent with industry standards and technologies best practices to protect UNHCR Data from unauthorized disclosure or acquisition by an unauthorized person. The data security and protection measures shall take into consideration Annex F UNHCR Special Data Protection Conditions.

The mental health professionals of the external service provider are expected to be able to work with clients of different cultures, nationalities, religions, gender, sexual orientation and or disability. They are expected to create psychologically safe context for the UNHCR workforce so that they can take the maximum benefit from the services.

High level of service orientation is the key for uptake of these services. The external service provider should also have capacity and interest to gather the information about the operational and physical environment that might be useful to the clients.

The estimated requirement for the whole duration of the planned Frame Agreement is provided below:

Psychosocial Services	Unit	Estimated requirement for the 1st year/sessions	Estimated requirement for the 2nd year/sessions	Estimated requirement for the 3rd year /sessions	Estimated requirement for the 4th year/sessions	Estimated requirement for the 5th year/sessions
1.1. Prior to departure to	60 min.	50	60	70	70	70

mission	session					
1.2. After 1 month from arrival at the duty station (60 min)	60 min. session	50	60	70	70	70
2. End of Assignment debriefing (90-120 min)	90-120 min. session	50	60	70	70	70
3. Helping helpers (60 min.)	60 min. session	10	10	10	10	10
4. Access to mental health support for all (60 min)	60 min. session	90	100	110	150	200
Total number of sessions for each year		250	290	330	370	420

Please note that figures have been stated in order to enable bidders to have an indication of the projected requirements. It does not represent a commitment that UNHCR will purchase a minimum quantity of services. Quantities may vary and will depend on the actual requirements and funds available regulated by issuance of individual Purchase Orders against the Frame Agreement.

V Language capacity

The external service provider has to have the capacity to facilitate sessions minimum in English, and French. The capacity to run sessions in Spanish, Arabic and other UN languages is an asset.

VI Key performance indicators (KPIs)

UNHCR will monitor the performance of the service provider based on the following criteria in the Frame Agreement phase. The Psychosocial Wellbeing Section will collect the following data:

- Adherence to Contract terms and conditions
- Agile Management (e.g.: initiative, regular reflection, learning and adaptation, collaborative working)
- Appointment management (e.g. response time to the request, reporting on missed appointments)
- Clinical and other error management (e.g. timely reporting of clinical errors and/or administrative mistakes with constructive resolution proposals.)
- Client service satisfaction (survey)
- Invoicing (e.g.: invoices on time, free of errors)
- Price (e.g.: price in accordance with the contract)

VI. Sustainability considerations.



UNHCR is committed to make a positive contribution to the environment and society whilst also meeting its organizational needs when purchasing goods and services.

In line with this commitment, UNHCR seeks to engage suppliers who share our dedication to environmental stewardship and social responsibility. Suppliers are encouraged to demonstrate their sustainable practices and initiatives in their proposals. UNHCR values transparency and encourages suppliers to provide relevant documentation supporting their sustainable efforts, including but not limited to certifications, policies, reports and case studies. By prioritizing collaboration with suppliers who embody these principles, UNHCR aims to not only meet its operational needs efficiently but also contribute positively to global sustainability goals.

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