

Project name: Increasing Knowledge and Partnerships on Mental Health and Psychosocial Support for Helpers in Pandemics and Conflicts

Project acronym: Who Cares

Project duration:

01-01-2023-31-12-2024

Summary of the project:

The ongoing COVID-19 pandemic is expected to remain a challenge globally and psychosocial long-term effects are still evident more than 2 years after the initial outbreak. This reveals the need for strengthened capacities in MHPSS activities. Additionally, armed conflicts such as the conflict in Nagorno-Karabakh in Armenia that escalated in the midst of the pandemic in September 2020 as well as the ongoing conflict in Ukraine that escalated in February 2022 have posed new challenges in disaster response on authorities and organisations. Maintaining mental health and providing psychosocial support for the disaster affected population as well as for disaster responders is seen as being increasingly important. The Who Cares project proposal is dedicated to ensure that humanitarian response is (a) based on a comprehensive, contextualized diagnosis (assessment, monitoring and evaluation) of needs, vulnerabilities and capacities (b) allows for advanced research programs that are guided by needs derived from direct interaction with practice and (c) ensures that MHPSS interventions are efficient and evidence-based by making use of up-to-date research results. The main beneficiaries of this project are practitioner organisations and helpers directly involved in crisis response in Armenia, Georgia and Ukraine. This proposal outlines a 2- year project plan including (1) Research and Analysis on needs, gaps and challenges among helpers in current conflict and pandemic situations (2) Implementation of best practices via online training tools and multiplier trainings (3) Network activities on local and regional level and (4) visibility activities and advocacy for MHPSS for helpers in crisis response through an innovative online-media-library.

1. Project participants:

1. **'the coordinator': UNIVERSITAET INNSBRUCK (UIBK),**
2. OSTERREICHISCHES ROTES KREUZ (AutRC),
3. ARMENIAN RED CROSS SOCIETY (ARCS),
4. GEORGIA RED CROSS SOCIETY (GRCS),
5. ILIA STATE UNIVERSITY (ILIAUNI),
6. IVANE JAVAKHISHVILI TBILISI STATE UNIVERSITY (TSU),
7. TARAS SHEVCHENKO NATIONAL UNIVERSITY OF KYIV (TSNUK)

2. Funding Organization:

EUROPEAN COMMISSION. Directorate-General for European Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations (ECHO). **Project 101101719 — Who Cares, University of Innsbruck**

TSU role and contribution to the project:

Collection and analyses of literature and international best practices review on MHPSS with a special focus on: a. new forms of support/intervention adapted to armed conflicts; b. new forms of training adapted to conflict situations; c. long term support required due to the extended and unusual long duration of the crisis and practices that arise from cascading effects of pandemic and conflict situations; d. best practice examples that cater the specific need of affiliated and spontaneous, unaffiliated volunteers

3. Academics involved in the project:

Marine Chitashvili, TSU professor of psychology, oversees research activities, project manager at TSU, email: marine.chitashvili@tsu.ge;

Mariam Panjikidze, TSU, assistant professor, senior researcher, email: mariam.panjikidze@tsu.ge;

Ketevan Mosashvili, TSU, assistant professor, junior researcher, email: ketevan.mosashvili@tsu.ge;