

## **The effect of mental health and psychosocial support on presence and quality of social safety nets**

Headline finding: Mental health and psychosocial support (MHPSS) interventions improved access to and acceptability of services and social support

Geographical distribution: Sub-Saharan Africa and Lebanon

**Effect:** Positive (no effect size reported)

Confidence in cell findings: Medium confidence

### **Short summary**

MHPSS interventions helped people recover from trauma and build strong community support systems through therapy, psychoeducation, and social safety nets. Evidence from three studies finds that the interventions increase acceptability and access to support services, as well as social support.

### **Long summary**

#### *The intervention*

MHPSS interventions encompassed a range of activities designed to address mental health challenges and build social support systems. These include group therapy and counselling sessions that provide structured opportunities for individuals to process trauma and develop coping strategies. Psychoeducation initiatives raised awareness about mental health issues and available services, reducing stigma and encouraging individuals to seek help. Community support networks were established or strengthened through peer groups, cultural practices, and other informal mechanisms to create robust safety nets. The included studies in this summary report on interventions which provided care, support and protection to assist women who have experienced sexual violence, with two combining community mobilisation to increase awareness of S&GBV.

#### *How the intervention is expected to work*

MHPSS interventions worked at both individual and community levels to strengthen social safety nets. On an individual level, therapeutic support helped people be aware and access services. At the community level interventions can increase acceptability and removal of stigma for these services.

#### *The evidence base*

The cell consists of one systematic review which includes studies conducted in low- and middle-income countries affected by conflict and humanitarian crises. The review includes three studies of relevance to this cell: two from the same setting (the Dabaab camp in Kenya

for Somalian refugees), and one of Syrian refugees in Lebanon. The review is a narrative synthesis with no effect sizes reported.

*The review evidence*

All three studies report an increase in service availability and acceptability. The study of Syrian refugees also reports an increase in women's experiences of social support and connectedness. One of the Kenyan studies states that use of peer refugee community workers improved acceptability of case management services.

*Confidence assessment:* The review is rated high confidence. The cell is rated medium confidence as it relies on narrative synthesis.

*Source:* Spangaro(2021)

Spangaro J, Adogu C, Ranmuthugala G, Powell Davies G, Steinacker L, Zwi A. What evidence exists for initiatives to reduce risk and incidence of sexual violence in armed conflict and other humanitarian crises? A systematic review. PLoS One. 2013 May 15;8(5):e62600. doi: 10.1371/journal.pone.0062600. PMID: 23690945; PMCID: PMC3655168.