

## **2022 COPENHAGEN DECLARATION ON MENTAL HEALTH AND PSYCHOSOCIAL SUPPORT IN FRAGILE AND HUMANITARIAN SETTINGS**

As Nordic actors, we are committed to respecting human rights, including the right to the highest attainable standard of health, as set out in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights of 1948, including mental health. We share the values of gender equality, sustainability, social welfare and trust in inclusive societies, and strive to reflect these values in our engagement in humanitarian and fragile settings.

***Underlining the complementary work of Nordic governments, civil society, academia, UN agencies, youth organisations, the private sector and institutional donors across the Nordic countries and as presented at the conference “A Human Right Left Behind: Nordic Conference on Mental Health and Psychosocial Support (MHPSS) in Fragile and Humanitarian Settings” held in Copenhagen, Denmark on the 29<sup>th</sup> and 30<sup>th</sup> of August 2022, together we:***

- *express* our deep concern for the extensive unmet mental health and psychosocial needs of people affected by armed conflicts, violence, disasters, displacement and other sudden and protracted crises;
- *highlight* that mental health and psychosocial needs and vulnerabilities increase extensively as a result of these situations and may resurface or be exacerbated by pre-existing conditions; and *acknowledge* that prolonged exposure to stress and adversity without adequate support has shown to increase the risk of mental disorders, chronic health conditions, socialisation and behavioural issues, cognitive or physical development issues, substance-related disorders, learning and earning potential;
- *acknowledge* that pandemics like COVID-19 exacerbate needs and underscore the necessity of MHPSS in preparation for and in response to public health crises and other emergencies; and recognise the mental health consequences linked to climate change and extreme weather events;
- *recognise* that people of all ages and gender identities living in fragile and humanitarian settings are directly exposed to violence, including sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV), loss and other distressing circumstances and suffer indirect effects, such as the disruption of access to services, protection and support systems that individuals, families, communities and societies depend on, which are further exacerbated by structural inequality, poverty, oppression and discrimination;
- *recognise* that mental health and psychosocial wellbeing is life-saving and critical to the survival, recovery and daily functioning of people affected by armed conflicts, disasters and other emergencies, their enjoyment of human rights and fundamental freedoms and their access to protection and assistance;
- *recognise* that MHPSS is important to prevent distress from developing into more severe conditions and that children, including the youngest, adolescents and youth face particular risks during childhood and later in adulthood if their mental health and psychosocial needs are not met and protected during early childhood and across the life span;
- *underscore* the urgent need to increase efforts across the humanitarian-development-peace nexus to respond by means of prevention, promotion, protection and care and to address long needs and social cohesion; and *emphasize* that most people with access to basic and effective family- and community-level support services and resources demonstrate resilience during the most extreme crises and adversity.

***Building further on existing commitments, together we:***

- *recall* amongst others, the right to the highest attainable standard of health as part of the [Universal Declaration of Human Rights of 1948](#), the [Convention on the Rights of the Child](#), the [Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities](#), the [World Health Organisation’s Mental Health Action Plan 2013-2030](#), the [Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action](#) and the [Conference of Population and Development Programme of Action](#); and *highlight* that mental health promotion is closely linked to the [2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development](#), cutting across the majority of Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) and is a specific target (3.4) of [SDG3: Ensure Healthy lives and promote well-being for all, at all ages](#).
- *recall* the [Constitution of the World Health Organisation](#), which defines health as “a state of complete physical, mental and social wellbeing and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity”; and further recognises that the enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of health is one of the fundamental rights of every human being without distinction of race, religion, political belief and economic or social condition;

## Preamble

- recall key UN Resolutions, such as “Strengthening the coordination of emergency humanitarian assistance of the United Nations” (document [A/75/L.44](#)), emphasising mental health and psychosocial services as part of health care and sexual and reproductive health and rights; “International cooperation on humanitarian assistance in the field of natural disasters, from relief to development” (document [A/75/L.11](#)), which emphasises the need for recovery schemes to provide for MHPSS, “Safety and security of humanitarian personnel and protection of United Nations personnel” (document [A/75/L.42](#)) on mental health and other services for staff of UN and other humanitarian actors; and the recent [Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change Sixth Assessment Report](#) predicting increasing mental health risks with rising temperatures and climate change;
- recall the [33<sup>rd</sup> Red Cross and Red Crescent International Conference Resolution](#) committing States and the Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement to prioritise actions that address the mental health and psychosocial needs of people affected by armed conflicts, disasters and other emergencies from 2019;
- recall the [2018 Global Ministerial Mental Health Summit](#) in London and the [Global Declaration on Achieving Equality for Mental Health in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century](#), underlining the right of everyone to enjoy the highest standard of physical and mental health, including in humanitarian settings; the 2019 Global Ministerial Mental Health Summit in Amsterdam and the [Global Declaration “Mind the Mind Now”](#) agreeing to integrate and seek opportunities to scale-up MHPSS in humanitarian response, and the need for evidence and innovation to accelerate response at all levels; and the [2021 Global Ministerial Mental Health Summit](#) in Paris and outcomes on mobilising the global community to accelerate progress on rights in mental health and quality care systems.
- recall the [2020 Copenhagen Action Plan for Child, Youth and Family MHPSS](#), cementing the importance of integrated and community-based approaches and achieving this through the meaningful engagement and participation of young people in MHPSS processes.

### ***Through this Declaration, we commit ourselves, and ask our partners to join us to:***

- 1) Prioritise integration of MHPSS across all sectors and stages of humanitarian response, preparedness, recovery, development and sustaining peace to address mental health and psychosocial needs, including prevention and protection, starting from pregnancy and early childhood and continuing throughout the life course, focusing on evidence-based, sustainable and best practices in quality delivery;
- 2) Increase multi-year investments, strengthen the resilience of national- and community-level health and social systems in fragile and humanitarian settings, and scale innovative, contextually relevant, age- and gender-sensitive and evidence-based interventions to ensure the mental health and psychosocial needs of all people, especially those most at-risk of discrimination or marginalisation, are always met;
- 3) Exchange and collaborate with stakeholders across different levels and sectors in the Nordic region and engage children, including the youngest, adolescents, youth and caregivers affected by crises to innovate and strengthen joint strategies according to the capacities and needs of local actors and communities, in line with internationally agreed-upon guidelines, that endeavour to transfer leadership to local actors;
- 4) Champion a holistic and rights-based approach that promotes non-discrimination, equality, solidarity and seeks to advance the SDG-agenda, drawing on shared Nordic values and institutions such as universal health coverage, social safety nets and whole-of-society solutions through multi-stakeholder partnerships and strong cooperation with local actors, especially women- and girls-led organisations;
- 5) Welcome the recommendations and priorities for action co-created by delegates at the conference and catalogued in the 2022-2030 Nordic Road Map for MHPSS in Fragile and Humanitarian Settings and aspire to implement these.