

INFORMATION & COMMUNICATION DIRECTORATE

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Towards Developing an African Union Guideline on Mental Health and Psychosocial Support to Persons in Conflict, Emergency and Post-Conflict Situations

The African Union (AU) is organizing a workshop on developing an AU guideline for addressing the mental health and psychosocial support needs of persons in conflict, emergency, and post-conflict situations from 23 to 25 April 2024 in Monrovia, Liberia. The workshop will bring together experts and practitioners in peace and security, health, human rights, humanitarian aid workers, migration experts, civil society organizations and representatives from communities working on mental health and well-being.

The participants will review an initial draft developed in 2023 to incorporate best practices for protecting and promoting mental health and psychosocial well-being in conflict, emergencies, and post-conflict contexts. They will also exchange views on strategies to ensure effective responses in AU and UN programmes addressing mental health and psychosocial support (MHPSS) at the continental, regional, and national levels. Participants will equally examine ways of improving MHPSS mainstreaming in the AU's work, showcase examples of meaningful community participation and empowerment, and design and promote approaches and methodologies for more impactful investments, joint planning, implementation, monitoring, and evaluation in promoting MHPSS across the African continent in line with Agenda 2030, Agenda 2063, the revised AU PCRD Policy and AU Peace and Security Council decisions.

This process is premised on the assertion that including mental health and psychosocial support in the post-crisis and stabilisation response for conflict-affected countries can lead to greater peacebuilding outcomes and sustainable impacts at the community and national levels and improve affected people's and communities' resilience and agency. It is also informed by growing evidence that to achieve peaceful coexistence in communities affected by conflicts and during emergencies, people's mental health problems, negative coping strategies, lack of trust at the community level, and disrupted social relationships need to be addressed. Moreover, a holistic MHPSS approach that is community-based and culturally grounded is required to ensure the meaningful participation of individuals and communities in developing effective mental health programmes for children, youth, women, internally displaced persons (IDPs), and refugees. This requires that all stakeholders, from national to local authorities and humanitarian and development actors, work with vulnerable communities to identify and design the approaches and strategies to enable them to become self-sufficient and resilient while exercising their rights fully and without discrimination.

Representatives from the AU Political Affairs, Peace and Security (PAPS) Department, the Africa Centres for Disease Control and Prevention (Africa CDC), the AU Health, Humanitarian Affairs and Social Development (HHS) Department, the United Nations High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR), the United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund (UNICEF), the World Food Programme (WFP), the World Health Organization (WHO), the International Organization for Migration (IOM), the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent

Societies (IFRC), Doctors Without Borders/Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF) and Save the Children International will actively engage in these discussions.

For more information, please contact:

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