

GLOBAL REFUGEE FORUM 2023

Multistakeholder Pledge on Fostering Mental Health and Psychosocial Well-being

Goal

The multistakeholder pledge envisages to **systematically integrate mental health and psychosocial support (MHPSS)** in humanitarian, development, and peace-building programmes, to foster access to quality services and support for all refugees and host communities in at least **15 refugee-hosting countries**, enabled by financial, material and technical support.

Background

Good mental health enables people to cope with the stresses of life, to realize their abilities, to learn and work well, and to contribute to their communities. Addressing the mental health and psychosocial needs of refugees is important because these needs are elevated while access to services and supports is often restricted. Experiences of adversity, loss, and disruptive events in countries of origin, during travel, and upon arrival in receiving communities may increase MHPSS needs among refugees. Needs may also be elevated because of current life circumstances, loss of supportive social networks, marginalisation, discrimination, and limited options for work and livelihood. Over the years, a wealth of experience has been developed in host countries, by governments, local authorities, international and national non-governmental organisations (NGOs), refugee-led organisations and the private sector to strengthen access of refugees to MHPSS.

MHPSS is a multi-sectoral issue that requires the active involvement of, and coordination between, various sectors, including health, social services and social protection, education, among others. Interventions are interrelated at multiple layers, ranging from the community level (strengthening the agency of refugees, helping people to help each other, fostering social cohesion between nationals and refugees) to specialist services (that need to be made accessible, affordable, appropriate, and available for refugees).

The World Health Organization (WHO) and UNHCR are convening the [Group of Friends of Health for Refugees and Host Communities](#). The Group comprises States, refugees, private sector partners, NGOs, academia and international organisations to work jointly towards the health- and MHPSS-related objectives of the GRF. The Group has developed two multistakeholder pledges: [inclusion into strengthened national health systems](#) is led by the Kingdom of Morocco, The Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria, Johns Hopkins University, UNICEF, and Gavi (the Vaccine Alliance), while systematic inclusion of [mental health and psychosocial support \(MHPSS\)](#) across the nexus is led by ECHO, the Governments of Germany and the Netherlands and Amal Alliance. The following section focuses on key outcomes of the Multistakeholder Pledge on Fostering Mental Health and Psychosocial Well-being as well as other related pledges at the Global Refugee Forum 2023.

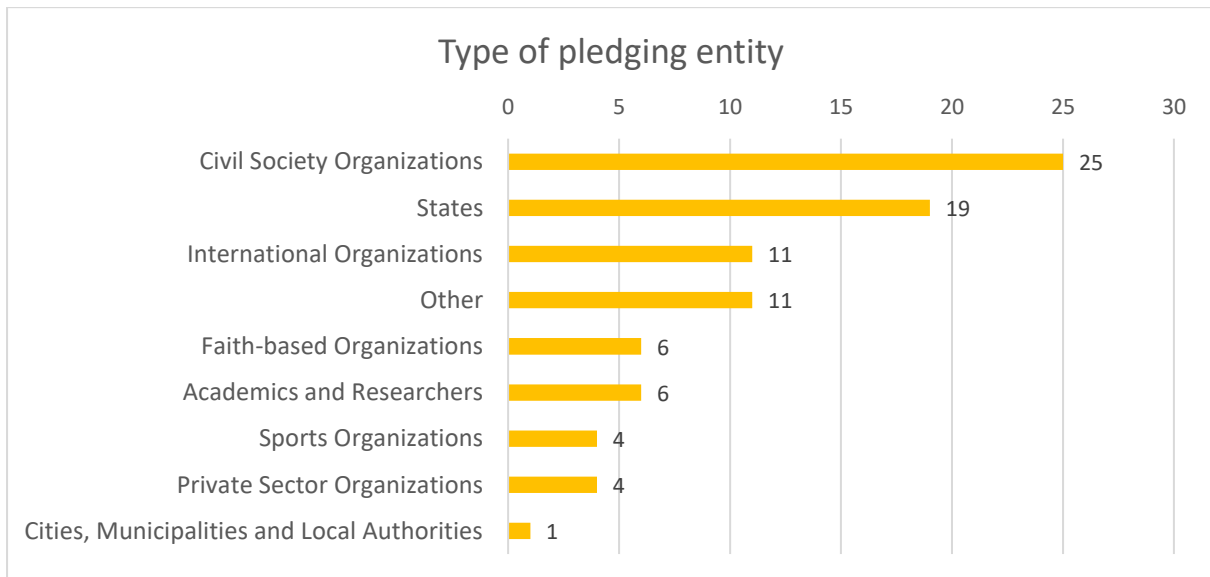
Key statistics¹

Since the affirmation of the GCR in 2018, individuals, private businesses, organisations and governments have made 96 pledges² to advance the health inclusion and mental health of refugees and host communities and work towards universal health coverage. Working towards the GRF 2023, an additional 235 pledges were made by multistakeholder partners on health inclusion and mental

¹ As of 27.03.2024

² Until 30 June 2023

health and psychosocial support. Of those, **113 pledges** were submitted related to mental health and psychosocial support, of which **95** are currently directly linked to the multistakeholder pledge. Altogether, **88 entities** from across the world pledge their support, aiming to reach more than **13 million people**³. The largest number of pledges were submitted by civil society organizations (28) and States (26), including **8** low- and middle-income refugee-hosting countries. Eleven international organisations submitted **15** pledges, including **3** pledges from UN country teams (Afghanistan, Kenya, and Venezuela).



The multistakeholder pledge benefits from commitments made from across the world to foster mental health and psychosocial well-being in the humanitarian, development, and peace-building nexus. The largest number of pledges were received from Europe (37). Pledges target all regions, including global pledges with organisation-wide commitments to foster access to quality MHPSS services.

	Pledges FROM	Pledges TO
Americas	26	18
Asia & the Pacific	12	12
Eastern Horn of Africa & the Great Lakes (EHAGL)	2	7
Europe	37	19
Global ⁴	27	47
Middle East & North Africa (MENA)	5	5
Southern Africa	1	1
West and Central Africa (WCA)	3	4

Pledge analysis

Submitted pledges are categorized into **three broad pledge thematic areas**:

Law and Policy:

These pledges aim to create enabling environments in States for the sustainable inclusion of refugees, other forcibly displaced and stateless people into multi-sectoral systems, policies and programmes around mental health and psychosocial well-being, enabling access to services at par with host

³ Refugees and host communities

⁴ Global pledges may also refer to those that have yet to determine a country focus or cover multiple regions.

communities. This includes pledges to change national legislative frameworks around health, education, protection from gender-based violence (GBV), social welfare, and community development (e.g. Governments of Brazil, Chile, Estonia, Germany, and Moldova), and inclusion in national emergency management services with a special focus on mental health and psychosocial support services (e.g. Government of Algeria, Kenya, and Nigeria). Other pledges (e.g. Moving Minds Alliance) focus on supporting host countries' policies, services, and systems in relation to Early Childhood Development (ECD).

Programmatic support:

Complementary to policy pledges, programmatic pledges enable the sustainable inclusion in mental health systems and social protection schemes by incorporating MHPSS services into sectors such as health, protection, and education. For example, a joint global policy and technical support pledge on MHPSS was spearheaded by the Governments of the Netherlands, Germany, and the European Commission, joined by the Government of Japan, Amal Alliance, Artolution, Catholic Relief Services (CRS), HIAS, the International Organization for Migration (IOM), International Medical Corps (IMC), Jesuit Refugee Service (JRS), the Program on Forced Migration and Health at Mailman School of Public Health of Columbia University, Save the Children, UNICEF, the United Nations Office for Drugs and Crime (UNODC), and the World Health Organization (WHO). This initiative aims to raise awareness among donors, policymakers and other stakeholders on the importance of delivering quality MHPSS services to displaced populations globally, in line with the [2023 United Nations General Assembly Political Declaration on Universal Health Coverage](#) and the [2023 United Nations General Assembly Resolution on Mental Health and Psychosocial Support](#). Specifically, the joint pledge emphasises the enhancement of MHPSS approaches, capacity, participation, and partnerships across the across the Humanitarian-Development-Peace nexus.

Donor countries (e.g. Austria, Canada, Malta, Switzerland, and the United States of America), and international organisations (e.g. UN country teams in Afghanistan, Kenya, and Venezuela) commit to ensuring, strengthening, and scaling-up the provision of psychosocial activities and programmes, including counselling, for survivors of sexual and gender-based violence and other forms of abuse among refugees.

An additional number of pledges from civil society organisations (e.g. BRAC, International Rescue Committee (IRC), Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC), Welcome Japan, and Quinta Ola) aim to bolster the delivery of safe, inclusive, and equitable mental health and psychosocial support services. This encompasses clinical mental health management, referral services, community outreach, and awareness building among refugees and host communities. Other civil society organisations (e.g. Right To Play International, Education Above All Foundation) and sports organisations (Olympic Refugee Foundation, and the National Olympic and Sports Committees in Bulgaria, Slovakia, and Moldova) recognise the imperative of promoting MHPSS and socio-emotional learning (SEL) as an enabler to education outcomes. They highlight the synergy between education, physical activity, and sport in fostering cognitive development and improving mental health and psychosocial well-being.

Faith-based organisations (e.g. Adventist Development and Relief Agency, Anglican Communion, Arigatou International, Jesuit Refugee Service, Refuge Egypt, Scalabrini International Migration Network, and World Vision International) pledge to provide their expertise and facilitate the development of faith-sensitive MHPSS resources and training for faith leaders and mental health practitioners. Private sector partners (e.g. LEGO Foundation, Grundfos Foundation, Novo Nordisk Foundation, and Porticus) pledge more than 20 million USD⁵ to advance the holistic outcomes and the

⁵ Contributions are linked to more than one multistakeholder pledge.

mental health and psychosocial well-being of displaced populations across different stages of conflict, be it acute, protracted, or recovery phases.

Many pledges are closely linked to other multistakeholder pledges such as [National Health System Inclusion](#), [Economic Inclusion and Social Protection](#), [Climate Resilient Sustainable Human Settlements for Refugees and their Hosting Communities](#), [Child Rights](#), [Securing Sustainable Futures - Towards a Shared Responsibility to Uphold the Right to Education and Include Refugee Children in National Education Systems](#), [Gender Equality and Protection from Gender-Based Violence](#), [Sport for Inclusion and Protection](#), [Accelerate and Better Leverage Humanitarian-Development-Peace Nexus Approaches in Forced Displacement Settings](#), as well as regional pledges such as [Expanded Resilience, Enhanced Solutions for Rohingya Refugees](#), and are reflective of the multisectoral needs and the focus on comprehensive solutions.

Data and evidence:

More data and evidence are needed to promote effective evidence-based approaches related to mental health and psychosocial well-being for refugees and the communities that host them. Pledges include undertaking analysis of data on health outcomes and health care services to better understand health status of refugees and humanitarian entrants (e.g. Australia). Moreover, educational institutions (e.g. Queen Margaret University) commit to plan a multi-country research initiative to examine the associations between faith-belief and practice, and symptoms of mental health disorders, global psychological distress and culturally-shaped well-being outcomes. Additionally, Columbia University's Mailman School of Public health commits to develop evidence-based approaches to humanitarian response exploring the connections between sport and health within populations affected by displacement, through the development of trainings, scholarships and employment opportunities to refugees.

Matching

The **Government of Denmark** together with the **LEGO Foundation**, **Novo Nordisk Foundation** and **Grundfos Foundation** has formed an alliance to support the efforts of the Government of Ethiopia to promote MHPSS + SEL to enable education outcomes for refugee, displaced and host community children and youth in the Benishangul Gumuz region.

Recap and next steps:

During the GRF, the multistakeholder pledges on National Health System Inclusion and Fostering Mental Health and Psychosocial Support were announced jointly on the first day by Dr. Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, Director-General of the World Health Organization, and Ms. Louange Koffi, refugee nurse and youth advocate. Additionally, a high-level event "Achieving Health and Wellbeing For All", which included a specific panel on MHPSS, was held with high-level panellists from governments, refugees, international organisations, civil society and private sector.

Going forward, the Group of Friends of Health for Refugees and Host Communities intends to sustain the positive momentum demonstrated at the GRF and will continue to provide support and technical assistance to advance pledge implementation. The Group will capitalise on global and regional events and multilateral processes to advance systematic integration of mental health and psychosocial support (MHPSS) in humanitarian, development, and peace-building programmes, to foster access to quality services and support for all refugees and host communities.

Calendar of events

Group of Friends Health coordination meeting	March 2024
World Health Assembly	May 2024
Group of Friends Health coordination meeting	October 2024
Stocktaking event	Q 1 2025
World Health Assembly	May 2025
Group of Friends Health quarterly coordination meeting	Q 1-4 2025
High-Level Officials Meeting	December 2025

*If you are interested to find out more about the multistakeholder pledge, please contact **Peter Ventevogel** (ventevog@unhcr.org) and **Claudia Marotta** (marottac@who.int)*

Pledging entities (including those not linked to the multistakeholder pledges, but relevant to the multistakeholder pledges health and/or MHPSS)

Algeria	Education Above All Foundation	Scalabrini International
Australia	Fatemeh Ashrafi	Migration Network
Austria	Global Initiative to Support	World Vision International
Belize	Parents	Alliance for Child Protection in
Brazil	Good Neighbors Japan	Humanitarian Action
Canada	HAMI Association for Protection	Calgary Refugee Health
Chile	of Refugee Women and Children	Program
Denmark	Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society	Canadian Refugee Health
Estonia	(HIAS)	Network
Germany	Inter-Agency Network for	National Newcomer
Japan	Education in Emergencies	Navigation Network
Kenya	International Medical Corps	Peterborough Newcomer
Malta	(IMC)	Health Clinic
Moldova	International Rescue Committee	Qatar Red Crescent Society
Netherlands	(IRC)	Refugee Health Resettlement
Nigeria	Jesuit Refugee Service (JRS)	Clinic – London
Romania	Jordan River Foundation	InterCommunity Health
Switzerland	Moving Minds Alliance	REACH Clinic Saskatoon
United States of America	Norwegian Refugee Council	Grundfos Foundation
Municipality of Brasov,	(NRC)	LEGO Foundation
Romania	Quinta Ola	Novo Nordisk Foundation
UNCT Afghanistan	Right To Play International	Porticus
UNCT Kenya	RUN Hong Kong	Bulgarian National Olympic
UNCT Venezuela	Save the Children International	Committee
International Organization for	Scalabrini Centre Cape Town	Olympic Refuge Foundation –
Migration (IOM)	War Child	International Olympic
United Nations Children’s	Welcome Japan	Committee
Fund (UNICEF)	Columbia University Mailman	Slovak Olympic and Sports
United Nations Office on	School of Public Health	Committee
Drugs and Crime (UNODC)	Jefferson Center for Refugee	Moldavian Olympic and Sports
World Health Organization	and Immigrant Health	Committee
(WHO)	Queen Margaret University	
Council of Europe	Sergio Vieira de Mello Chairs	
European Union	Society of North American	
Amal Alliance	Refugee Healthcare Providers	
Arigatou International	Anglican Communion	
Artolution	Adventist Development and	
Bangladesh Rural	Relief Agency	
Advancement Committee	Refuge Egypt	
(BRAC)	ECD in Emergencies Working	
Catholic Relief Services (CRS)	Group Colombia	