



GUIDANCE NOTE

Integrating Mental Health and Psychosocial Support into Peacebuilding



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Acronyms and abbreviations

CAAFAG	Children Associated with Armed Forces and Armed Groups
CBO	Community-based organization
CSO	Civil society organization
FBO	Faith-based organization
IDP	Internally displaced person
LGBTIQ+	Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans, Intersex and Queer
MEL	Monitoring, evaluation and learning
MHPSS	Mental health and psychosocial support
PFA	Psychological first aid
PTSD	Post-traumatic stress disorder
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
WHO	World Health Organization

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Introduction

Violent conflict and structural violence negatively impact individuals and societies around the world. Having lost family members and friends, homes, livelihoods, hope for a better future and a sense of personal safety, many people feel bereaved and disenfranchised and risk losing their sense of meaning and purpose.

Even after a conflict has ended, societal tensions can continue to exist in the form of direct and indirect violence. Relationships amongst citizens and between citizens and the state may have been compromised. Peacebuilding processes aim to rebuild these relationships, reduce the risk of lapsing or relapsing into conflict by strengthening national capacities for conflict management, and lay the foundations for sustainable peace and development.

For most people, experiencing disruptive events does not automatically lead to experiences of trauma or to mental health problems. For most people, psychological distress is a normal reaction to an abnormal situation and adverse mental health problems are a temporary response to very difficult circumstances. However, for a small group the symptoms can become chronic if they are not addressed. The intense suffering caused by violent conflict can negatively impact mental health and psychosocial well-being. The World Health Organization (WHO) estimates that 22.1 percent of people living in conflict-affected areas show some level of depression, anxiety, post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) or bipolar disorder.¹ The effect of violent conflict on social cohesion depends on the nature, duration and type of conflict. While adversity in its many forms can build unity and strengthen social bonds when groups unite against a common threat, violent conflict tends to have a harmful

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