

# Strategy Overview



Humanitarian relief of emergencies to natural and man-made disasters inherently involves exposure to distressing events and human suffering, heavy workload and extended hours, sudden changes in social supports, and security risks. Affected persons who are exposed to distressing events during emergency response can experience a range of psychological effects that can have both immediate and long-term consequences. Local humanitarian staff and volunteers bear the burden of often being personally affected by the crisis, while simultaneously working to serve affected communities. International staff also face unique stressors such as the logistical, emotional, and cultural challenges of being called into a new country, far from their support networks, for a sudden shift in work assignment.

As a part of the duty of care for humanitarian organizations, ADRA International is committed to supporting the resilience, mental health, psychosocial wellbeing, and security of its emergency response teams. This Strategy for Mental Health and Psychosocial Support (MHPSS) for Emergency Response Workers deployed by ADRA International is an approach to enhancing its organizational capacities to prevent and protect mental health and wellbeing of its humanitarian personnel. While under the supervision of ADRA International for their deployment, these staff are seconded from their home office and are eligible to access the benefits outlined in this strategy. The strategy outlines specific staff care and resilience protocols and processes that prevent mental health stressors, reduce shame around mental suffering, protect and promote psychosocial wellbeing while responding to an emergency, and mitigate the effects of mental distress in workers who have witnessed or engaged in a critical incident.

Investing in staff care and resilience protects and stewards the strengths and abilities of ADRA International's personnel and reflects the commitment of ADRA International to foster a workforce that thrives while meeting the needs of vulnerable populations globally. In addition to fulfilling a moral and ethical obligation to holistically care for its workforce, humanitarian workers who are psychologically supported are also more likely to be productive, engaged and loyal.



**The MHPSS Strategy for ADRA International's deployed staff spans across the emergency response timeline, including:**

#### **Pre-Deployment:**

##### ***Select and Prepare***

- Staff training on approaches to prevent and mitigate stress related to emergency response
- Supervisor training on psychological first aid and other mental support protocols
- Pre-deployment informational self-assessment on the suitability and readiness to detect, respond to and cope with the anticipated stresses of the assignment
- Pre-deployment briefing on anticipated activities, roles, and safety information
- Resilience orientation with MHPSS focal point
- Development of personalized self-care plan
- Provision of MHPSS resources via a personalized online dashboard
- Free, confidential pre-deployment counseling with professional therapists and counselors with expertise in humanitarian work

#### **During Deployment:**

##### ***Monitor and Support***

- Baseline assessments for burnout, compassion fatigue, and secondary trauma
- Regular monitoring of the responses of staff to stresses of the emergency
- Provision of resources to help staff manage stresses during the response work
- Ongoing check-ins and facilitation of peer support
- Delivery of critical incident and traumatic stress support for unusual and unexpected sources of severe stress
- Free, confidential deployment counseling with professional therapists and counselors with expertise in humanitarian work

#### **Post-Deployment:**

##### ***Debrief and Process***

- Post-deployment assessments for burnout, compassion fatigue, and secondary trauma
- Practical and emotional debriefing and re-entry support for staff at the end of an assignment
- Free, confidential deployment counseling with professional therapists and counselors with expertise in humanitarian work
- Referral for psychological care as needed for individuals adversely impacted by exposure to severe stress or trauma

**To learn more about ADRA International's MHPSS Strategy for Emergency Response Workers, please contact Weanne Estrada-Magbanua at [weanne.estrada@adra.org](mailto:weanne.estrada@adra.org).**