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# Reference Centre for Psychosocial Support Annual Report 2012

 International Federation  
of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies

30/04/2013

This report covers the  
period 01/01/2012 to  
31/12/2012.



Pakistan. Photo: IFRC Pakistan

## Context

In 2012 the world did not experience the major natural disasters of previous years. Instead, man-made disasters dominated the global agenda. Especially the 'Arab Spring' continued to receive a lot of political and media attention. In Syria the armed conflict turned into a regular civil war and thousands of people are now killed every month. Millions have been forced to flee their homes and either cross the border into neighbouring Jordan, Turkey, Lebanon or Iraq, or resettle in another part of the country. Yemen and Libya also continue to experience clashes between different parties and tensions are high in both countries. In Mali an alliance between Tuareg nationalists and Al-Qaeda in the Maghreb (AQIM) seized control of the Northern provinces by overthrowing the Malian government. The uprising escalated into an armed conflict leaving the local population with extreme security issues. The conflict in Mali is exacerbated by a large famine in the Sahel, affecting the entire region and increasing hardship for already struggling communities.

The social implications of the continuing global financial crisis, such as growing unemployment and related poverty, are proving to make the young population, especially in Southern Europe, increasingly vulnerable. The potential psychosocial effects caused by the financial crisis could be loss of hope, apathy and subsequent feelings of worthlessness; increase in violence and drug or alcohol abuse.

Reports suggest that up to 120 million EU citizens could be living below the European poverty line<sup>1</sup>. The ICRC has warned that Europe might experience increased political instability and perhaps popular uprisings because of the hardened living conditions.

## Progress towards outcomes

The IFRC Reference Centre for Psychosocial Support (PS Centre) serves to promote and enable psychosocial wellbeing of beneficiaries, humanitarian staff, and volunteers, thereby contributing to

<sup>1</sup> European Poverty line is defined as less than 60% of median income.

the realization of the main aims of the IFRC Strategy 2020. This is achieved through four strategic approaches laid out in the PS Centre 2011-2015 Strategic Operational Plan:

- Technical and Operational Support
- Capacity building of National Societies and competence development of staff and volunteers
- Knowledge Generation and Knowledge sharing
- Humanitarian Diplomacy and Communication

This annual report evaluates progress towards outcomes by examining key indicators under each 2015 strategic approach and describing progress towards these.

### Strategic Approach 1: Technical and Operational Support

**Indicator 1.1** *Improved quality and timely interventions in disaster response, recovery and health, social- and risk reduction programmes as well as post- and protracted conflicts*

Technical, operational, monitoring & evaluation (M&E), and programme development support has been provided to the National Societies of Afghanistan, Belarus, Cambodia, Canada, Denmark, Ethiopia, Haiti, Hong Kong, Iceland, Indonesia, Japan, Kenya, Libya, Nigeria, Norway, Pakistan, Tanzania and Uganda, as well as all IFRC zone offices. The areas of support have included Psychosocial Support (PSS) input to programmes on Urban Risk Reduction, Women in Prison, Children's resilience as well as PSS stand-alone programmes, briefing and debriefing of PSS delegates, and technical assistance to job interviews with delegates.

Upon request input was provided to a Disaster Relief Emergency Fund (DREF) application after a plane crash in Nigeria. This resulted in an assessment mission conducted by two PS Centre roster members from Uganda and Kenya respectively. The roster members also assisted in debriefings and training as well as in establishing a framework for a subsequent PSS programme.

During 2012, the PS Centre has participated in regional network meetings in Europe, East Asia, and the Americas. The meetings in East Asia and the Americas established Red Cross Red Crescent PSS networks in these regions. The PS Centre was able to give technical advice and train the participants in PSS, introduce materials and technical resources, supporting the set-up of a good platform for future collaboration. The PS Centre will maintain frequent contact with the networks and share updates on the latest developments in the regions.



Nigeria. Photo: Benoit Matsha-Carpentier/IFRC

The PS Centre contributed to the two-year evaluation of the psychosocial response to the earthquake in Haiti. The Head of Centre participated in the evaluation meeting and gave inputs to the plan for further PSS programming in Haiti. On-going communication and consultations are taking place following the meeting. Lessons learned from the two first years are shared through the different communication channels of the PS Centre.

An e-learning tool on PSS and Restoring Family Links (RFL) has been developed in collaboration with the ICRC. The objective of the e-learning tool is to better prepare delegates and improve the collaboration between PSS and RFL delegates. The e-learning tool has separate tracks for RFL and PSS delegates and will be available on both IFRC and ICRC e-learning platforms.

**Indicator 1.2** Programmes and interventions are designed based on quality international standards and global guidelines (IASC MHPSS Guidelines 2007, Sphere 2010 Guidelines, ERU and other PS Centre guidelines etc.)

The PS Centre works in close cooperation with the Inter-Agency Standing Committee on Mental Health and Psychosocial Support (IASC MHPSS) to both learn from and influence what is considered as recognised, international standards for Mental Health and PSS programmes. In 2012, the PS Centre provided input to the new IASC MHPSS guidelines for camp management and psychosocial support, contributed to the development of the web-platform for Mental Health and Psychosocial Support, and provided technical support and input to the 2012 UN Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) Disaster Report.

The PS Centre has contributed with PSS technical input to different IFRC publications, such as the Step-by-Step Manual on shelter assistance entitled 'Assisting host families', the "Stay Safe Volunteers" guide, and an IFRC leaflet on Migration and Psychosocial Support.

#### Analysis and conclusion on progress towards Strategic Objective 1

The PS Centre has received very positive feedback on its responses to requests for support from National Societies. It can be concluded that the technical and operational support provided is seen as both relevant and timely. The establishment of regional PSS networks has improved the potential for National Societies to stay updated and involved, and provides the PS Centre with an opportunity to deliver even more targeted support.



Pakistan. Photo: IFRC Pakistan

The needs of National Societies and the Movement change constantly. To monitor development and trends within both development and disasters response, the PS Centre remains in close contact with zones, regions, and National Societies, as well as the IFRC Secretariat. Partnerships with external organisations continues to be a priority as these create forums where the PS Centre can both learn from and influence existing and new policies and guidelines.

The PS Centre expects that in the coming years, slow onset disasters and urban settings will be two of the areas where development of appropriate PSS tools for National Societies will be needed. Appropriate tools would address psychosocial needs in relation to:

- Financial crisis;
- Aging populations;
- Non-communicable diseases;
- Pan- and Epidemics;
- Sexual and Gender-based violence.

## Strategic Approach 2: Capacity building of National Societies and competence development of staff and volunteers

### *Indicator 2.1 7 Zonal/Regional Master trainings have been conducted*

Two regional Trainings of Trainers on Community-Based Psychosocial Support have been organized:

- In Cameroon, with participants from 11 National Societies from Sahel, Central and West Africa regions, as well as the regional IFRC delegation. As a result of the training, the IFRC regional delegation has substantially improved its capacity to support National Societies in their PSS interventions and national trainings. Follow-up support from the PS Centre has been provided to the National Societies of Burkina Faso, Congo, Democratic Republic of Congo and Senegal.

- In Panama, with health and PSS focal points from 16 National Societies in the Americas zone. Following the training several National Societies expressed their interest in further integrating PSS into their programmes and responses to requests for additional trainings and technical support are now on-going.



Panama. Photo: Louise Kryger/PS Centre

21 participants from the Movement – roster members and PSS staff – took part in a master training at the PS Centre in Copenhagen. As all participants are experienced trainers, the training focused equally on PSS content and PSS facilitation skills, as improved facilitation skills has been requested from the field. The training also introduced the new manuals on Children's Resilience and Caring for Volunteers, which were very well received. The PS Centre wishes to expand the PS Centre roster of experts globally and strengthen our ability to support regional trainings and PSS related tasks with trained, local resources. The training fitted very well into this ambition, which is demonstrated by the fact that shortly after the training, one participant felt competent to accept being deployed to Nigeria to lead a PSS assessment team.

The Portuguese Red Cross invited the PS Centre to conduct a one week Training of Trainers for 25 psychologist and social workers working or volunteering for Portuguese RC. The participants took advantage of the training to set up a national Red Cross network for PSS.

Through this network they continue to share knowledge of best practices and are also developing a baseline of current PSS activities and available human resources. They aim to use this as a platform to integrate PSS more broadly in the work of the Portuguese Red Cross.

The PS Centre has also facilitated a number of smaller training activities. These include;

- PSS training at the Danish Red Cross Youth Leadership Academy;
- Training for ICRC Restoring Family Links delegates in Geneva;
- PSS training for our partner organisation International Council of Sport Science and Physical Education (ICSPE) in Germany;
- Lectures at the University of Copenhagen master programme on International Health.

Based on the PS Centre's training kit and other materials, several National Societies, regional, and zone offices have organized PSS trainings with assistance or advice from the PS Centre.

**Indicator 2.2 ERU Health and ERU psychosocial support training undertaken as requested**

A PSS/Community Health Module field training for Emergency Response Unit (ERU) delegates from Norwegian, Australian and Canadian Red Cross was hosted by the Zimbabwe Red Cross. The PS Centre supported the field training throughout the process from planning through facilitation to evaluation.

The Finnish Red Cross organized a PSS ERU training supported and facilitated by a PS Centre roster member.

The Japanese Red Cross Society organized a Basic Health Care ERU training which included two days of PSS facilitated by one of the PS Centre roster members.

The PS Centre has revised the ERU PSS delegate manual. The revised manual provides the PSS delegate with practical guidance when deployed. The need for an extensive monitoring and evaluation tool, as well as a simple and more practical oriented M&E tool for PSS in Emergencies have been identified. The new M&E tools will be part of the standard deployment package for delegates going to the field.

The PS Centre participated in the annual health ERU Technical Working group meeting in Geneva. In November, the annual PSS ERU partnership meeting was held in Copenhagen for National Societies involved or interested in the PSS ERU.

**Indicator 2.3 Guidelines, tools and training material are produced, translated and disseminated to National Societies and IFRC global health team**

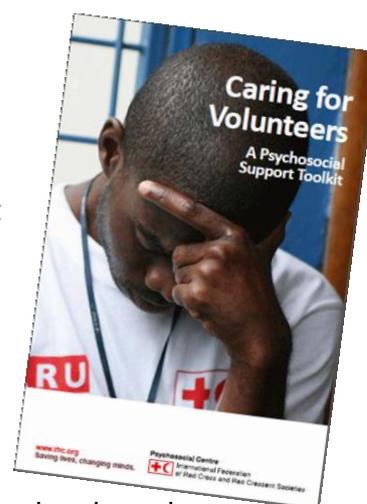
The PS Centre is instrumental in developing PSS material where gaps have been identified. Existing and new material is being translated into several languages including more Federation languages. Technical support has been provided to National societies that wished to translate the publications.

The PS Centre has produced the following tool kits in 2012:

- 'Caring for Volunteers, a Psychosocial Support Toolkit'. The tool kit is translated into French, Spanish, Arabic, and Russian. 'Caring for Volunteers' has received very positive feedback and judging by the large number orders, the toolkit will fill a gap for many National Societies. Additional prints have produced in order to meet the demand.

- 'Lay Counselling; trainer's manual' will enable Red Cross/Red Crescent societies and other organizations to train volunteers without a mental health background in providing immediate support to affected people in disaster situations. The Lay Counselling trainer's manual is thus very relevant for a huge number of National Societies where the local volunteers are often the first disaster responders. Part of the work has been included in materials developed in Europe Zone. The PS Centre will advocate for the inclusion of PSS Lay Counselling in training of Volunteers in disaster preparedness programmes. This tool has been developed in partnership with the Danish Cancer Society, University of Innsbruck, and War Trauma Foundation of the Netherlands.

- 'Children's Resilience Programme, resource kit' (CRP). The resource kit comprises of four manuals, educational cards and an activity bank, and has been developed in close cooperation with



Save the Children. The CRP is a flexible tool that can be implemented in- and out of schools. The CRP material is available in both English and French.



During 2012, the PS Centre started the development of the following tool kits:

- 'Life Skills handbook', provides psychosocial competencies and interpersonal skills to help people make informed decisions, solve problems, communicate effectively, and otherwise cope with and manage their lives in a healthy and productive manner. The handbook will be completed by mid-2013, and will be available in English and French.
- 'Sports and Physical Activities in Psychosocial Interventions' training manual (SPAPSI) was initiated in mid-2012 as a partnership between the PS Centre and International Council of Sport Science and Physical Education, Swiss Academy for Development and Technische Universität München. The manual is expected to be finished by the end of 2013.

All new material and training tools are disseminated during PSS trainings. Specialized training courses on one or more of the tool kits are offered as part of the PS Centre training plan and can be requested by National Societies.

All developed material is available in both electronic and hard copies. It is also available for download on [www.ifrc.org/psychosocial](http://www.ifrc.org/psychosocial).

### **Analysis and conclusion on progress towards Strategic Objective 2**

The PS Centre has, since the adoption of the current strategic operational plan, co-hosted and facilitated regional training of trainers in three zones – and has plans for regional Training of Trainers (ToTs) in two more zones in 2013. However, there are significant gaps in terms of trained staff and volunteers. Awareness and knowledge of the importance of psychosocial wellbeing and support is still lacking. As ToTs are carried out in the language most appropriate for participants, there are many regions where ToTs are requested in languages other than English. The PS Centre offers different levels of trainings; basic introduction training of PSS, ToTs in Community-Based PSS or more specialized introduction to new tools and materials (Lay Counselling, Children's Resilience or Life Skills). Regional trainings will therefore remain a central focus point for the PS Centre in the years to come.

An added value of the regional trainings is that many National Societies become aware of the importance of psychosocial support as part of their response system. The PS Centre is experiencing

an increase in the number of requests for additional follow up trainings or technical support to establishment of programmes. The development of more specialized manuals means that the PS Centre is increasingly able to comply with these requests by providing more in depth support to not only emergency response or disaster preparedness programmes, but also to development programmes. The manuals enable National Societies to respond better and in a timelier manner to psychosocial needs.

Regular PSS ERU trainings have ensured that there is a solid unit of qualified people ready to be deployed in a number of National Societies. The current level of qualification is deemed sufficient for now, but it needs to be maintained through annual refresher courses and regular inclusion of new ERU members. The PS Centre would like to support a more flexible use of the PSS ERU component, using components of the PSS ERU material as part of broader PSS in Emergencies missions.

### Strategic Approach 3: Knowledge Generation and Knowledge Sharing

**Indicator 3.1** *Knowledge is systematically identified, compiled and analysed and best practices catalogued*

Currently, efforts are invested in building a database of PSS focal persons in all National Societies, following up on all trained trainers and in obtaining knowledge, tools and information. The PS Centre has strengthened the systematic compilation of knowledge from National Societies, gathering information on PSS activities and interventions through surveys.

To this end, compiling of information for development of a catalogue, which will provide an overview of relevant PSS programs and training materials, has been initiated, with the aim of sharing best practices globally.

The PS Centre has updated and upgraded the roster of PSS experts and trainers. This has been done in order to better respond to training requests as well as to harmonize trainings and expectations. Roster members are now on the same level, and agreements about short term deployments and missions have been made with the National Societies employing the roster members.

An internal process on improving knowledge management has been started, following the increasingly difficult information management over the previous years. The first step has been to assess filing systems and archiving procedures. The process begun late in 2012 and will continue into 2013 with the implementation of a new archiving and file management system linked to the PS Centre's website.



Master training in Copenhagen. Photo: Ferdinand Garoff

The strengthening of knowledge management procedures will help the PS Centre maintain institutional memory and improve its sustainability, share knowledge on the website and strengthen PSS capacity and long-term collaboration with National Societies and the rest of the Red Cross Red Crescent movement.

**Indicator 3.2** *A baseline has been conducted of existing psychosocial support programmes world-wide*

In partnership with the IFRC Tsunami Unit in Kuala Lumpur a ‘Strengthening Psychosocial Programming’ project was initiated in the spring of 2012. One of the initial steps in the project has been to conduct a baseline study of existing psychosocial programmes among National Societies. Data is currently being analysed, and the results will feed into the development of a PSS best practice catalogue of programmes and activities which will be developed in 2013, to complement the existing handbook on PSS programming. Once this is available, the PS Centre will be better able to guide and assist National Societies in selecting the appropriate response for its needs.

**Analysis and conclusion on progress towards Strategic Objective 3**

The PS Centre has in the past year invested substantial human resources in improving knowledge management and data handling systems. This area is crucial in order to assist National Societies and for the IFRC to respond in an effective and timely manner and to advocate for the importance of PSS. The PS Centre is exploring opportunities for mobilizing resources and engaging in partnerships to strengthen knowledge generation and management. Still, knowledge generation is one of the priority areas of the PS Centre that remains to be funded.

In conclusion, knowledge management is key in order to be successfully in advocating for increased focus on PSS needs both inside the movement and with external partners.

**Strategic Approach 4: Humanitarian Diplomacy and Communication**

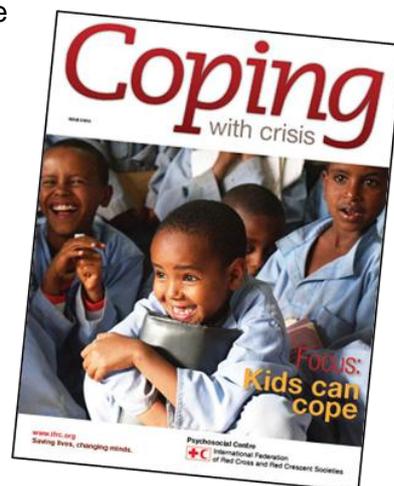
**Indicator 4.1** *Increased visibility to psychosocial support programmes and the work of the PS Centre in the Movement and among external audiences*

The PS Centre has published two issues of *Coping with Crisis*; the PS Centre’s regular magazine in 2012. The first issue came out in May, as a special edition on volunteers, introducing the new *Caring for Volunteers* manual. The second issue focused on how children cope in different situations such as disasters, conflicts, abuse, or living in families with HIV. The *Coping with Crisis* magazine is published in all Federation languages.

The PS Centre has established a platform for increased cooperation with the ICRC. The Centre has trained ICRC Restoring Family Links delegates in psychosocial support with a particular emphasis on PSS in relation to Restoring Family Links.

The groundwork for a new web-site has been finalized, and it is now ready for launching.

Subscriptions to the PS Centre’s newsletter continue to increase, with the total number of subscribers now being close to 2000.



**Analysis and conclusion on progress towards Strategic Objective 4**

The Centre has been able to increase its visibility within and outside the Movement. In addition to sharing magazines, newsletters, updating the PS Facebook site and website regularly, the PS Centre is advocating for its work through being visible and vocal in meetings, networks, conferences, etc. inside and outside the Movement. Likewise, visibility is ensured through a generally high level of activity; trainings, development and introduction of new training material and establishment and development of partnerships.

Partnerships, such as the one with ICRC, are fundamental to increasing knowledge and visibility of PSS programmes. The PS Centre will therefore continue to establish partnerships within the Movement as well as relevant external stakeholders, such as Save the Children, WHO, UNICEF, War Trauma Foundation and relevant universities and research institutions.

## Financial situation

The PS Centre continues to be increasingly dependent on project-based funding, mainly from the European Commission. Currently, the PS Centre manages 3 projects under the EC Lifelong Learning programme, one of which were accepted by the EC in 2012 – PID – Psychosocial Interventions for People affected by Disabilities, which started late 2012.

The PS Centre has been accepted by the European Commission for a large project under the FP7 programme called OPSIC – Operationalizing Psychosocial Support in Crisis, which will feed into the PS Centre knowledge bank. The project involves 11 partners, with the PS Centre as the project coordinator. The project will kick off in February 2013. Following the success of OPSIC, the PS Centre was invited to join two other consortia for new projects, one being a large Demonstration Project under the FP7 programme on Crisis Management.

The PS Centre has not been able to obtain sufficient, flexible funding for core activities in 2012. Both funding for knowledge management, capacity development, and staff/administration has proven increasingly challenging to achieve. It is becoming more challenging to attract financial support from historic key partners of the PS Centre within the Movement, as well as attracting new Red Cross Red Crescent financial partners. With a mandate to service 188 National Societies, the PS Centre's capacity remains limited and there is a constant need to prioritize resources when responding to requests from National Societies.

The lack of flexible funds for core activities means that the PS Centre relies more and more on project funding, mainly from the European Commission. The successful resource mobilization effort with the EC has meant that the PS Centre has been able to strengthen sustainability on key positions. However, the human resources go into the projects, while core activities still lack funds. This means that the PS Centre has limited resources to focus and support the more traditional work of the PS Centre; the direct support to the Movement and its National Societies.

The PS Centre started 2012 with a budget of CHF 1.222.996, which was based on the draft work plan for the year. The budget was revised in the middle of the year:

The revised budget of the PS Centre in 2012 was: CHF 1.193.165

The total expenditure of 2012 amounts to: CHF 1.207.746

This represents an expenditure of 101%. The reason for the over expenditure vis-à-vis the budget is a slight increase in capacity development efforts, which was covered by funds transferred from 2011.

A detailed financial statement for 2012 is attached to this narrative report.

## Our partners

The main and most important partners of the PS Centre remain to be the 188 National Societies, which we are mandated to enable and support. The PS Centre is a part of the Global Health team in Geneva and works closely with the IFRC Health Department, which also includes zone offices and regional delegations. The PS Centre maintains strong partnerships with the Danish, Norwegian, Finnish, Icelandic, Canadian, and Japanese Red Cross Societies, who are the main contributors to the PS Centre core budget. Staying within the Movement, the partnership with the ICRC is becoming stronger, both in terms of collaboration and joint project.



Pakistan. Photo: Ea Suzanne Akasha/DRC

The PS Centre is the guarantee for the further development and refinement of best practice PSS material and support within the Red Cross Red Crescent movement. To be able to continue to be driving the agenda on PSS in the humanitarian world, continued support from Red Cross Red Crescent partners is needed.

The PS Centre continues to work with the IASC MHPSS, supports its Secretariat, and sits on the board of the Mental Health and Psychosocial Support Network.

Finally, the PS Centre partners with a number of civil society organisations, universities, research institutions, and commercial companies – mainly on projects funded by the European Commission.

## Summary and looking ahead

In conclusion, the PS Centre is experiencing an ever increasing number of requests for support from National Societies and the IFRC; both operational support in relation to emergencies and more programmatic support, input, and capacity development. This reflects an improved awareness of the need for psychosocial interventions in National Society programmes, but might also reflect the improved visibility of the PS Centre. Therefore, it is increasingly important to maintain the focus on core support to National Societies and to the Movement as the primary function of the IFRC Psychosocial Centre. Consequently, more efforts need to go into obtaining other sources of funding of the PS Centre's activities.

Demands have increased for PS Centre publications such as the training manuals and different guidelines. The PS Centre will continue to plan for capacity and organisational development activities primarily through training, raise awareness and advocate towards National Society staff and volunteers. The PS Centre is however also cautious that it should always be able to provide ad hoc operational and technical inputs and the PS Centre should be prepared to respond to any disaster.

The PS Centre has laid the foundation for systematizing existing knowledge and streamlining procedures in 2012. This work will continue in 2013, while also assessing how to strengthen efforts on evaluation, knowledge gathering, and documentation of programme effects and impact. This effort will lay the ground for a strengthened Humanitarian Diplomacy effort, which will build on solid data from the field as well as from the latest academic research.

The PS Centre will continue to issue the *Coping with Crisis* magazine, as well as distributing electronic newsletters. The new website is currently just about to be launched and will provide easier access to information and training material online. The use of other social media such as Facebook has been reinforced, as this creates more visibility and reaches a large number of users.

Finally, 2013 marks the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the PS Centre, established back in 1993 in Copenhagen.

**How we work**

The IFRC's work is guided by Strategy 2020 which puts forward three strategic aims:

1. Save lives, protect livelihoods, and strengthen recovery from disaster and crises.
2. Enable healthy and safe living.
3. Promote social inclusion and a culture of nonviolence and peace.

Find out more on [www.ifrc.org](http://www.ifrc.org)

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