



# Introduction



## Who is this step-by-step guide for?

A number of awareness-raising and information initiatives were carried out by the Digital MHPSS Working Group to provide **MHPSS practitioners** in the RCRC Movement with an accessible basis for informed decision-making, to inspire with good examples and to offer practical support. Network learning and the sharing of resources and methodologies supports and sustains more accountable, effective and valuable digital solutions and reduces the need to repeat lessons learned. The best ideas are never created alone. In a fast-changing world, it takes teamwork and diversity to break new ground, adopt new and innovative ways of thinking and arrive at truly meaningful, sustained solutions to problems in this environment.

This step-by-step guide is one of these outcomes. It provides practice-oriented hints to MHPSS practitioners for an accessible approach to the realization of digital MHPSS initiatives within the RCRC Movement.

It is part of the [Focus Area on Digital MHPSS](#) that delves into the structural requirements for the implementation of digital services, identifies potential benefits and possible risks of digital MHPSS in humanitarian contexts and showcases good practice examples from within and outside the RCRC Movement:

- For facts and learning material that provide a comprehensible initiation to the topic, an overview of the current state of knowledge and of the advantages and challenges with digital solutions, go to [Learn about digital MHPSS](#),
- For interesting scientific articles and reports, go to [Dive Deeper](#),
- For good practice examples of Digital MHPSS services within (and beyond) the Movement, go to [Get inspired](#),
- For queries and networking opportunities within digital MHPSS, go to: [Share and connect](#).



## How will this section help you?

### This introduction:

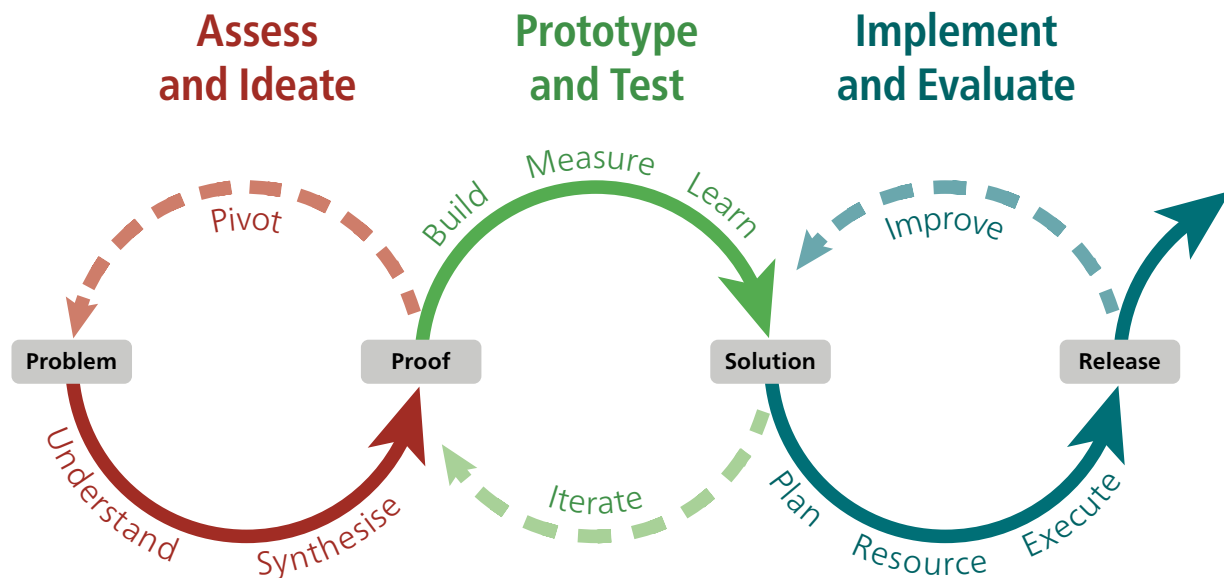
- helps you understand the aim and the content of the step-by-step guide
- introduces the Sui SRK app, a low-threshold, digital service with psychosocial and psychological support for refugees in Switzerland, used as a case study throughout this step-by-step guide

Welcome to the Digital MHPSS step-by-step guide! To facilitate the development of digital MHPSS services for the different components of the RCRC Movement, a process is needed on how to develop a solution that works for both users and providers. This includes identifying a need or problem, making an inventory of existing services and identifying potential partners, followed by various production steps including a series of reviews of the functionality of the digital service prior to the implementation. This modular step-by-step guide intends to offer a useful process from start to finish, by pointing out important considerations for planning, implementing and evaluating digital MHPSS services in humanitarian contexts.

The step-by-step guide places a particular focus on the specifics of the digital service provision, placing the people you are designing for at the heart of the process. This type of community-led, networked-centred, co-creation approach makes user feedback and mutual learning at each phase routine in order to better develop and deliver digital MHPSS services, even when faced with tight budgets and deadlines. Active participation is also crucial for later ownership and acceptance of the solution.

The aim of this guide is to provide you with an overview of the whole process and facilitate collaboration. In digital development, an agile, flexible approach (create, test, monitor/validate with experts/practitioners and future users, adapt/improve and share again in small sprints) is preferred. With an iterative process in small steps, co-developing content and tech, you proceed with increased flexibility, various points of view, continuous improvement, and better control over potential risks and needs.

- **In an initial assessment and ideation phase**, you will explore and gain an in-depth understanding of your problem, target group(s) and their needs, and spark your ideas for solutions.
- **In the prototype and test phase**, you will move from problem definition to bringing together the right people with the necessary skills, defining the desired change and then to prototyping and gaining feedback, testing, validating your ideas, and iterating where needed.
- **In the implementation and evaluation phase**, you will plan for success, build, deliver and scale your digital MHPSS service. It is here that you get an understanding of whether your solution generates the changes you want to see in a real-world setting.



This step-by-step guide was created by and for the Red Cross and Red Crescent network. It reflects the consolidated learnings from pain points and successes in building human-centred digital technologies of the 49 Digital MHPSS Working Group members from 21 National Societies in 4 regions as well as from the IFRC and the ICRC. The efforts to use information and communication technology (ICT) effectively and responsibly in the humanitarian response to mental health and psychosocial needs was the guiding light. At the centre of this was always the principle of doing no harm.

This step-by-step guide makes no claim to completeness or absolute validity. Its aim is to facilitate mutual learning and build on existing experiences, insights, frameworks and resources, as recommended by MHPSS experts from the RCRC Movement in the 2022 LSE report<sup>1</sup>, in order to not reinvent the wheel in a context in which resources are scarce. With this intention, the guide shows a possible way of keeping the costs for software development - and thus

the main obstacle for many National Societies - very low by building on the existing open-source framework *DIRECT* (for more information see [factsheet](#) or [video](#)), provided by the Swiss Red Cross and the Freie Universität Berlin. As a community-based software project, *DIRECT* provides a sustainable platform that is versatile enough to be adapted to all kinds of needs and to host a wide range of different MHPSS programs.

Alongside the learnings from National Societies participating in the Digital MHPSS Working Group, the step-by-step guide also provides a selection of helpful resources and techniques for each phase, which can be drawn on when required. Finally, each phase contains a small case study from the Swiss Red Cross, showcasing practical insights from the development and implementation of Sui, an app offering psychosocial support for refugees.



## Case study: The Sui SRK app

Despite a fundamentally sound healthcare system, there is a significant gap in the mental health care of refugees in Switzerland. A variety of structural and individual barriers hinder the use of psychological treatment services. In view of the increasing numbers of displaced persons and the current qualitative and quantitative gap in care for this target group, it became clear that conventional approaches to psychological care will not be able to provide an adequate solution for the majority of those affected in the near future.

The Swiss Red Cross intends to help reduce this mental health care gap for refugees in Switzerland with a service that allows **more people affected** to be reached **earlier**.

In presenting the Sui SRK app as a case study, we aim to share and be transparent about our digital journey and learning process, including what went as planned, what did not, and the reasons why.



## Helpful Resources

<sup>1</sup>Neidhardt, C., Palacios Mateo, S., Schmidt-Gödelitz, F. & Tsang, L. (2022). Digital Mental Health and Psychosocial Support (MHPSS): Challenges and Best Practices. The London School of Economics and Political Science (LSE).