

## Mind the Past to Build the Future: Integrating MHPSS in Peace Building

### *Contribution of the Netherlands to the 2020 UN Peace Building Architecture Review*



The Netherlands focuses its contribution to the PBA Review on the importance of enhanced integration of mental health and psychosocial support (MHPSS) in Peace Building analyses, programming and Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning. Strengthening the connection between the Peace Building and MHPSS fields is of crucial importance in order to avoid cycles of conflict, to counter disintegration and to increase the effectiveness of Peace Building efforts. A better integration of these fields fits well into the UNSG's efforts towards conflict prevention, operational coherence, cross-pillar cooperation, a people-centered approach and common efforts on the Humanitarian/Development/Peace-nexus within the UN and together with its partners. It also contributes to the implementation of the SDG-agenda (including SDGs 3 and 16).

Research and experience on the ground show the importance of addressing mental health and psychosocial needs in order to lay a foundation for achieving sustainable peace through Peace Building efforts. The value added of integration of MHPSS into Peace Building efforts is in principle recognized by many practitioners, both in the field of MHPSS as well as of Peace Building. MHPSS is a vital component for reconstructing the social fabric of a society. Interesting *best practices* exist (including by the UN Peace Building Fund) of transitional justice processes integrating MHPSS. Scientists and practitioners from different professional communities have undertaken initiatives to test fully integrated approaches, aggregate data and gather evidence, compare experience and develop instruments. However, mental health and psychosocial aspects and needs at individual and community level are not yet **structurally and explicitly** factored into Peace Building initiatives supported or undertaken by the international community (including the UN system). The effectiveness of Peace Building efforts and their impact on people and communities could benefit greatly from more structural and explicit attention for MHPSS. Moreover, integrating MHPSS in Peace Building will enable enhanced protection and promotion of mental health and wellbeing of peacebuilding staff.

The current Peace Building Architecture Review is an opportunity to substantially increase impact of Peace Building efforts which we cannot afford to miss.

#### ***NL Consultations for the PBA Review***

The Netherlands convened two consultations in the context of the PBA Review. In the first (1 April), the issue of integrating MHPSS into Peace Building received broad and avid support from both academic experts and practitioners in the fields of mental health and psychosocial support, transitional justice, community level Peace Building and reconciliation, youth & children, humanitarian aid, and conflict prevention. This support was echoed by a broad, cross-regional range of UN Member States (among which fragile and conflict affected countries) in the second consultation (29 April), which drew together over 30 UNMS representatives, including the AU, EU and g7+. Chair's Summaries of both consultations

have been reviewed by participants and are attached as part of the Dutch contribution to the PBA Review (annexes 1 and 2 below). A paper drafted specifically for this purpose by CIC-NYU served as a basis for discussion in both consultations (also attached).

### ***Further efforts of the Peace Building Architecture***

To enhance the integration of MHPSS in Peace Building, the consultations showed that further efforts by the UN, in cooperation with relevant partners, are needed in the following areas:

1. **Building the case:** conducting increased research and exchange of lessons learned from the field regarding the need and possibilities of strengthened MHPSS integration in Peace Building.
2. **Building the toolshed:** developing practical ways in which mental health and psychosocial support can be integrated in broader interventions to build and sustain peace.
3. **Building the framework:** formulation and endorsement of overarching normative guidance for MHPSS integration in Peace Building.
4. **Building (connections with) the capacity needed:** making better use of existing expertise, experience and capacity to strengthen the MHPSS – Peace Building connection, and exploring strategies to scale up proven working modalities and best practices.

In order to advance these issues, the Netherlands will continue to convene experts to develop further recommendations. These recommendations will be shared at a later stage of the PBA Review process and in other relevant fora. The active participation by the UN (including PBSO) in the different meetings until now has been vital. The Netherlands looks forward to continuing our cooperation with the UN and other partners in order to strengthen the integration of MHPSS in Peace Building, making it a common best practice both at HQ level and in the field.

### ***Commitment in UNSG Report on Peacebuilding and Sustaining Peace***

A firm commitment to the integration of MHPSS in Peace Building in the UNSG's Report, as well as in the UN PBA resolutions, would constitute an important basis for continued work in this regard. As such, on the basis of the above multi-stakeholder and multi-Member State consultations, it is proposed that a finding is included in the 2020 UNSG Report on Peacebuilding and Sustaining Peace that:

*"An Integrated Approach to Peace Building must include Mental Health and Psychosocial Support. UN Peace Building Actors (and others) should develop ways to structurally include Mental Health and Psychosocial factors and needs in Peace Building efforts from the outset, making use of psychosocial expertise within and outside of the UN".*

## Annex 1:

### **Mind the past to build the future: Systematic attention for Mental Health and Psychosocial Support in Peace Building efforts**

Expert level Consultation on MHPSS and Peace Building

01/04/2020

Chair's Summary

- On 1<sup>st</sup> of April, the Netherlands convened an expert level consultation with the aim of contributing to the 2020 Peace Building Architecture Review. The theme of the consultation was: *Mind the Past to Build the Future* on structural integration of psychosocial aspects in Peace Building efforts from the outset. For the consultation, a paper drafted by CIC-NYU had been circulated as a basis for the discussion. The session was moderated by Ms. Megan Price Price from the Knowledge Platform Security & Rule of Law. The group included experts from the Peace Building, MHPSS and transitional justice sectors, and members were affiliated to the UN, civil society as well as academic institutions.
- Participants subscribed to the relevance of Mental Health and Psycho-Social Support (MHPSS) in Peace Building settings as a way to, inter alia, address collective trauma, strengthen resilience and social coherence and foster reconciliation on both the individual and the community level, therewith contributing to creating the conditions for sustaining peace.
- Participants acknowledged the relevance of MHPSS across different phases of the peace-conflict continuum. Many voiced particular support for the potential of MHPSS as a tool for preventing (repetition of) conflict as well as mitigating a downward spiral of social disintegration. Members noted in that regard the interlinkages with the humanitarian and development domains.
- It was acknowledged that psychosocial factors and support in the context of Peace Building have not received sufficient consideration in terms of research, policy and practice. To that effect, participants emphasized the need to better understand and gather evidence for whether and how MHPSS can contribute to successful Peace Building outcomes, and underlined the importance of advancing further research and discussion on the MHPSS/PB nexus. Some members also mentioned it would be relevant to have better data on the scale at which mental as well as psychosocial needs exist and to what extent the inclusion of MHPSS in Peace Building will benefit specific populations. Such information can help to raise more awareness of the issue.
- Participants expressed in this regard the need for recognition and understanding of existing MHPSS approaches in Peace Building contexts at country-level, from which important lessons can be drawn. Ensuring involvement and taking along the experiences of practitioners can add to the limited existing body of evidence, and could strengthen

the basis for advocacy on the need to have MHPSS feature (more) structurally as a relevant consideration in Peace Building efforts.

- To that effect, participants recognized the need to assess and promote ways in which psychosocial factors and support can be better integrated in UN Peace Building efforts, and identified the Review of the UN Peace Building Architecture as an appropriate (though not exclusive) process to advance this.
- Participants acknowledged that sector overriding normative guidance is lacking on psychosocial factors and psychosocial support as well as on its meaning for all sectors in which the UN has a role to play, including development, climate, peace and security. A normative UN-wide framework is seen as an important avenue in this regard. Such normative guidance would help ensuring that Common Country Assessments, Cooperation Frameworks and other relevant UN policy documents become sensitive to psychosocial aspects and more MHPSS-inclusive.
- There was some due caution voiced around MHPSS supporting rather than subsuming the efforts of Peace Building. Peace builders should not become MHPSS experts themselves. Rather, they should have sufficient understanding of and sensitivity to how psychosocial analysis and integration could strengthen their programming, and of the potential benefits of cooperation with relevant (expert) partners. The IASC MHPSS Reference Group was mentioned as an important body, especially when looking at the humanitarian sector, but through its expertise and experience also valuable beyond that. To carry its voice and experience into other sectors, overall normative guidance is needed.
- The IASC MHPSS Reference Group includes a nascent thematic working group on the relation between Peace Building and MHPSS. Involving members both of the MHPSS reference group as well as of this thematic working group in the current initiative may provide a useful entry point to build from. The co-chair of this thematic working group was also one of the participating experts, which will help to create a dynamic exchange of information.
- It was noted that the current initiative should make use of experiences in the humanitarian domain, which offers an existing body of MHPSS policy guidance tailored to emergency response. Also experts in the field can greatly contribute to the current process.
- In the field quite some initiatives are ongoing with MHPSS as an element in sustaining peace. The question was raised how the UN (PBA)-system could become a catalyst of (innovation and) psychosocial service provision by others, aggregating evidence and experience from the field and enabling the scaling of psychosocial support by qualified organizations and actors.
- At the same time, some participants noted the existing lack of awareness, resources, capacity and expertise beyond the humanitarian domain or particular initiatives in the

field. These limitations would need to be addressed in order to be able to structurally integrate the MHPSS approach in UN Peace Building.

- It would also be important to recognize and better understand definitional and conceptual challenges that can be fundamental, between the sectors but also within the sectors. Similar to the way in which Peace Building should be seen as an approach rather than a set of activities, MHPSS is best understood in terms of how it relates to resilience at the individual and community level as well as to reconstruction of the social fabric at the community level. It should also be understood in terms of how it consists of a broad range and hierarchy of approaches, far beyond only medical interventions and purely at the individual level. Also the question what is meant by integration should be further explored.
- In relation to this, a specific aspect mentioned was the often implicitly differing understanding of what constitutes mental health and psychosocial (non-) wellbeing. Different understanding is partly defined by cultural differences, but across cultures also, among others, by varying forms of stigma. Stigma was mentioned as playing a role also at the level of politicians, policy-makers, diplomats and people working in the professional communities addressed by the current initiative.
- Participants also recognized that the UN's role would need to be supportive of the efforts of other relevant actors (e.g. as catalyst, coordinator or enabler of scaling up), especially the local level, and can never be seen in isolation from these. In that regard, participants noted that efforts to promote understanding and practice of MHPSS in Peace Building cannot be defined exclusively with reference to the UN system, and merit discussions that are not limited to just the role of the UN.
- Participants acknowledged the distinctive impacts of (a culture of) violence and conflict on women as well as on youth, stressing the relevance of gender- as well as generational-sensitive approaches to MHPSS in Peace Building. Some participants pointed out that emphasizing the unique role for MHPSS in addressing the needs of youth could prove an important entry point for raising awareness.
- Participants highlighted the relevance of stigmatization as it relates to MHPSS interventions in Peace Building, and in that regard stressed the importance of an approach that helps overcome existing stigma's that may rest on MHPSS-needs. At the same time, participants stressed that careful formulation and analysis is of utmost importance to prevent that MHPSS interventions as part of Peace Building approaches cause further stigmatization themselves.
- Several members of the group indicated willingness to further explore or promote this issue, both as a member of working groups to elaborate recommendations, and individually through their own profession.

**List of participants Expert level consultation 01/04/2020:**

Name	Institution
BUBENZER, Friederike	Senior Project Leader <i>Towards an integrated approach. Mental health and psychosocial support and peacebuilding</i> Institute of Justice and Reconciliation   South Africa
DAKKAK, Henia, MPH	Head of Policy and Liaison Unit Humanitarian Office   UNFPA NY
RIGGLE, Sharon	Chief of Staff, Office of the Special Representative of the UNSG for children and armed conflict
MANGEN, Patrick Onyango	(soon leaving as) Country Director TPO Uganda (to join) Regional Psychosocial Support Initiative   South Africa
HAMBER, Brandon	Professor, John Hume and Thomas P. O'Neill Chair in Peace International Conflict Research Institute Ulster University Transitional Justice Institute Board member Impunity Watch
DE GREIFF, Pablo	Senior Fellow and Director - Transitional Justice Program Center for Human Rights and Global Justice   School of Law New York University  Rapporteur, UN HRC Experts' Group on Prevention (2019-2020), former UN Special Rapporteur for the promotion of truth, justice, reparation and guarantees of non-recurrence (2012-2018).
SIMPSON, Graeme	Director Interpeace USA Interpeace
SAEEDI, Nika NORDENTOFT, Gitte	Crisis Bureau UNDP
TASALA, Sanna	Programme Manager

	UNDP-DPPA Joint Programme on Building National Capacities for Conflict Prevention and Sustaining Peace
KHAN, Fatima	WHO Office at the United Nations   New York
BRINKMAN, Henk Jan	Chief, Peacebuilding Strategy and Partnerships Branch Peacebuilding Support Office   Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs   UN
ARTHUR, Paige	Deputy Director, Centre on International Cooperation New York University
MONNIER, Celine	Programme Officer, Centre on International Cooperation New York University
BEKKERS, Paul VAN DER WAALS, Renet BAKELS, Lisa WIERDA, Marieke TREURNIET, Ruben ZINKEN, Jorg	Netherlands Ministry of Foreign Affairs  Special Envoy MHPSS Coordinator MHPSS Senior Policy Officer - Peacebuilding Coordinator Transitional Justice NL Permanent Mission New York NL Permanent Mission New York
PRICE, Meghan KUITERT, Christian	Head of Office KPSRL

## Annex 2:

### Mind the past to build the future:

#### Systematic attention for Mental Health and Psychosocial Support in Peace Building efforts

UN Member State Consultation on MHPSS and Peace Building

29/04/2020

Chair's Summary

- On 29 April 2020, the Netherlands convened an expert level consultation amongst NY-based UN member states representatives and a number of institutional and CSO representatives. The theme of the consultation was: *Mind the Past to Build the Future* on systematic attention for psychosocial aspects and integration of Mental Health and Psychosocial Support (MHPSS) in Peace Building efforts. For the consultation, a paper drafted by CIC-NYU had been circulated as a basis for the discussion.
- The session was moderated by Ms. Megan Price from the Knowledge Platform Security & Rule of Law, and included introductory remarks from Mr. Henk Jan Brinkman from UN PBSO, about the process of the 2020 Peace Building Architecture Review, Ms. Sarah Harrison, co-chair of the Inter Agency Standing Committee reference group on MHPSS, about existing guidelines, structures and expertise on MHPSS in humanitarian settings and on core principles for providing MHPSS, Prof. Brandon Hamber from Ulster University on the value MHPSS can add in Peace Building settings, and Ms. Paige Arthur from the NYU Center on International Cooperation (review paper distributed). The contributions from the formal speakers on the agenda were followed by an interactive discussion with interventions from member states, the secretariat of the g7+ (a configuration of 20 conflict affected countries) and the International Center for Transitional Justice.
- Participants welcomed the opportunity to discuss MHPSS in Peace Building and recognized that this is an area of action that has not received sufficient consideration thus far. Participants expressed the importance of the inclusion of this subject as part of the *Peace Building Architecture Review*.
- Participants noted the importance of further building the base of evidence and developing an enhanced, cross sectoral understanding of the ways in which MHPSS is linked to addressing root causes of conflict and, as such, can contribute to Peace Building objectives and practice. Participants recognized that sharing of lived experience, knowledge and best practices is instrumental in arriving at a more deep-seated understanding of the potential of MHPSS as part of Peace Building interventions.
- Participants recognized the important role that MHPSS can play in Peace Building settings in a variety of ways, both on the individual as well as the communal level, including through recognition of harm, memorialization, reducing of stigma, addressing trauma and psychological disorders, preventing (resurgence of) violent conflict and wider forms of (interpersonal and domestic) violence, and promoting trust (between

people and communities, between societies and institutions), as well as rehabilitation, reconciliation, resilience and social cohesion.

- A number of member states attested to the relevance of MHPSS for Peace Building and sustaining peace in their own country based on national experiences. MHPSS in this regard was identified as both an end in itself as well as a means to lasting peace.
- Several participants underlined that any Peace Building effort needs to be context-specific and no one-size-fits-all approach to MHPSS in Peace Building can be effective. Peace Building and MHPSS-interventions should be tailor-made and based on the ownership of local and national actors and authorities. In order to ensure deep understanding of the specific context and the specific interventions needed, analysis through a psychosocial lens is very important.
- Participants identified interlinkages between MHPSS and Peace Building. These interlinkages should be strengthened. Also, the humanitarian and sustainable development domains should not be seen in isolation.
- Several participants identified the Peace Building Commission as an appropriate forum to integrate considerations on MHPSS in discussions on Peace Building. Similarly, the Group of Friends on MHPSS was mentioned as a configuration that could benefit from discussions on the nexus between MHPSS and Peace Building. Some participants referred to a lack of knowledge and capacity on how to mainstream MHPSS into Peace Building efforts, not only at an institutional global level but also at grassroots level.
- Some participants emphasized the importance of an increase in available funding for MHPSS related activities in Peace Building settings.
- Some participants noted that discussions on MHPSS in Peace Building settings are to have a place in efforts to use the COVID19 crisis to “build back better” .

**List of participants UN Member State Consultation 29/04/2020:**

<b>Member States / intergovt organizations</b>	<b>Non-state organizations</b>
African Union	ARQ International
Belgium	Center on International Cooperation
Burkina Faso	GPPAC
Canada	Inter-Agency Standing Committee Reference Group on MHPSS in Emergency Settings
Cote d'Ivoire	International Center on Transitional Justice
Colombia	Knowledge Platform on Security and Rule of Law
Costa Rica	PBSO
Cyprus	United for Global Mental Health
Denmark	WHO
European Union	
Finland	
G7+	
Germany	
Guinea	
Haiti	
Honduras	
Hungary	
Iraq	
Japan	
Liberia	
Malta	
Mexico	
Norway	
New-Zealand	
Philippines	
Poland	
Portugal	
Qatar	
Sierra Leone	
Slovenia	
Sweden	
Switzerland	
Timor-Leste	
Turkey	
UK	