

## **Draft Terms of Reference for a Consultant to Support strengthening Mental Health and Psychosocial Support(MHPSS) in AFRO**

### **Organisational Context**

The Noncommunicable Diseases Unit provides policy guidance and technical assistance to Member States; develops, implements and monitors multisectoral, integrated, evidence-based, and people-centered policies, strategies and plans; and strengthens the capacity of national-health systems to deliver high-quality, integrated Noncommunicable Diseases (NCD), Mental and Neurologic Disorders services (MNS) at Primary Health Care and all levels of care for Universal Health Care (UHC). These include early diagnosis, screening and treatment of NCDs and their risk factors; rehabilitation and disability services; promoting and tracking cross-cutting, end-to-end delivery to achieve impact; and support to the building and maintenance of national and regional information systems for NCDs and mental health, neurology, and alcohol and other substance use.

### **Objectives of the Program and of the Immediate Unit**

The overall objective of The Noncommunicable Diseases (NCDs) programme in the WHO Regional Office for Africa is to provide leadership and vision in supporting Member States in the African region to reduce population exposure to key risk factors for NCDs; to reduce morbidity and mortality due to NCDs and mental disorders and improve the overall health status of the African population. The programme focuses on the five major NCDs, namely, cardiovascular diseases, Diabetes, Cancer, Chronic respiratory diseases, and mental disorders, as well as others such as Sickle Cell Disease, within the context of Primary health care. In addition, it also deals with Substance Use, Eye, Ear and Oral Health, and Rehabilitation.

### **COVID-19 in the African Region**

The COVID-19 pandemic was announced as a global emergency on 30<sup>th</sup> January 2020. The first case in the Africa Region was recorded in Algeria on 25<sup>th</sup> February 2020. The pandemic quickly spread to other countries, reached the first peak in mid July 2020 and a second peak mid-January 2021 and many countries are now going through a third and more severe 3<sup>rd</sup> peak. COVID-19 has affected all 47 countries of the Region. Updates for 2<sup>nd</sup> July 2021 report cumulative confirmed cases were 4,052,615 with 96,384 deaths.

Measures to mitigate the spread of COVID-19 include lockdown, social isolation, quarantine, wearing of face masks, prohibiting large gatherings, such as religious meetings. Some of these measures, as well as the fear of contracting the illness, have led to mental health and psychosocial (MHPSS) impacts for the general population. For the responders who are working under a lot of stress, there is the added stress of fearing to contract the illness and infecting their loved ones. It is now over one year with front line health workers working under continuously stressful conditions. In the Africa Region, for each of the 96,384 deaths, there are family and friends who are grieving, as well as the impact on the household if the person who died was the breadwinner. Among the over 4 million people who survive COVID-19, 10 to 35% will have symptoms of "Long COVID", which can include mental and neurological symptoms.

The 148<sup>th</sup> Session of the Executive Board of WHO, held on 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> January 2021, unanimously endorsed the draft decision to "Promote mental health preparedness and response for health emergencies". The decision noted that "*the COVID-19 pandemic had major direct and indirect ramifications on the mental health and psychosocial health of all people, in particular health and care workers, frontline workers, those in vulnerable situations who have been disproportionately affected by the COVID-19 pandemic as well as those with pre-existing mental health conditions*"<sup>1</sup>. Member States were urged to "*develop and strengthen....the timely and quality provision of the whole range of comprehensive and integrated mental health services and psychosocial supports...*".

In order to mitigate the MHPSS impacts, MHPSS Interagency Technical Working Groups (TWGs) were established as part of the response. These are a collaboration of UN, iNGOS, civil society and Government

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<sup>1</sup> EB148/CONF./5

sectors, often led by WHO in partnership with the Ministry of Health. For those countries where WHO may not be a Co-Lead, it is still relied on to provide technical guidance.

### **Purpose of the Post**

Considering that all the African Region countries are responding to the COVID-19 pandemic, while at the same time ensuring the continuity of essential health care services, including NCD and Mental Health services; considering that a good number of the countries had never had to respond to an Emergency and may not have the skills and experience of coordinating an MHPSS TWG; considering that many countries do not have a designated NPO Mental Health; and in order to provide support to countries as outlined in EB148; it was considered necessary to recruit a COVID-19 MHPSS Officer to support/strengthen the coordination and technical response aspects of the Interagency MHPSS Technical Working Groups.

### **Description of duties and responsibilities**

Under the Guidance of the NCD Coordinator and the direct supervision of the MSA Regional Advisor, the incumbent will be expected to perform the following duties:

- Organise one African Region MHPSS Coordination Meeting in August 2021
- Provide technical support to countries aimed at strengthening the coordination of the MHPSS response supporting the coordination functions of the Interagency MHPSS TWGs.
- Set up the Interagency MHPSS TWGs in at least 2 countries that may not have set them up, with particular emphasis on strengthening collaboration with other UN, iNGOS, civil society and Government sectors
- Support Interagency MHPSS TWGs to carry out Situation analyses in selected affected countries
- Provide technical support and guidance in the delivery of Basic Psychosocial skills for response workers, especially for 3-5 selected countries.
- Provide support to regular monitoring of the MHPSS activities and provide regular updates in the Africa Region Situation Updates.

### **Deliverables:**

- Monthly Activity Reports
- African Region MHPSS Coordination Meeting organized and report finalized
- Interagency MHPSS TWGs established in at least 2 countries

### **Required Education and Skills**

- Education:
  - Essential: A post graduate qualification in Psychiatry or in Clinical Psychology
  - Desirable: A post graduate training in public health
- Experience
  - Required: At least 3 years' experience managing an Emergency response (Conflict, EVD, Earthquakes and Floods etc)
  - Desirable: Experience managing a Ministry of Health Mental Health Program in a Low-income country.

### **Use of language skills**

Excellent knowledge of or French and a working knowledge of English.

### **Other Skills (e.g. IT):**

Good knowledge of internet-based learning, research and networking and ability to work in word-processing, software for presentations (e.g. Power Point), use of the internet. Good technical documents writing skills.

**Duration:** 3 Months. The expert will be working from his/her home country