

Mid-Year report



Reference Centre for Psychosocial Support

28/07/2011

This report covers the period 01/01/2011 to 30/06/2011.



Syrian children receiving psychosocial support in Turkey.
Photo by Erdem Cöplen / Turkish Red Crescent Society.

In brief

Programme purpose:

The Reference Centre for Psychosocial Support (PS Centre) serves to promote and enable psychosocial wellbeing of beneficiaries, humanitarian staff and volunteers, thereby contributing to the realization of the main aims of the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies' Strategy 2020.

The PS Centre seeks to achieve this through its four strategic objectives:

- 1. Technical and operational support**
- 2. Capacity building of National Societies and competence development of staff and volunteers**
- 3. Knowledge generation and knowledge sharing**
- 4. Humanitarian Diplomacy and Communications**

Progress update:

The triple disaster in Japan and the civil unrest in the Middle East and Northern Africa dominated the first half of 2011.

The 9.0 Rs earthquake in Japan on March 11, the fourth largest ever recorded, resulted in an up to 30 meters high tsunami reaching as far as five kilometres inland. Whereas houses were built to withstand even violent earthquakes, there was little protection against the tsunami sweeping across large areas of the north-eastern coastal areas devastating homes, boats, infrastructure and

industries such as the Fukushima nuclear power plant.

For weeks the fear of an imminent technological/nuclear disaster aggravated the shock and uncertainty caused by the earthquake and the tsunami.

The civil unrest in a number of countries in North Africa and the Middle East also presented a challenge for many National Societies. As these conflicts do not fall under IHL but are defined as "other situations of violence", there is no clear mandate for the Movement on how to respond, although the principles of humanity, neutrality and impartiality naturally still apply.

National Societies in the region, assisted by the Movement's partners, responded well to the civil unrests and refugee influxes. Most societies in affected and neighbouring countries provided psychosocial support whereas the need to prepare more staff and volunteers in this field was highlighted in other countries.

Other National Societies have also actively provided large scale psychosocial support, such as New Zealand RC after the three earthquakes in Christchurch/Canterbury.

The PS Centre has been involved in numerous trainings and seminars as well as provided technical support to operations and documents. Additionally, the PS Centre has been invited to present and discuss how to incorporate PS in future regional strategies.

Work has progressed on all of the major projects and toolkits the PS Centre is involved in, such as the PS component of the ERU, the school-based project on psychosocial interventions, life-skills, lay-counselling and volunteers in emergencies.

Financial update:

The original core budget of CHF 915.173 (DKK 5.451.673) was approved by the Steering Committee on 25 May 2011.

However, the budget had to be revised in July due to a reduction in the expected 2011 contribution.

The revised core budget for 2011 is CHF 781.878 (DKK 4.592.264).

For the reporting period, total expenditures were CHF 298.798 (DKK 1.754.952)), equivalent to 38 % consumption.

The 2010 Annual Financial Statement for the PS Centre was approved and signed in June 2011.

[See the Annual Financial Report for further details \(will be forwarded upon request to Pia Tingsted Blum - piblu@rodekors.dk\).](#)

Context

Fear of a nuclear disaster added to the shock, bewilderment and uncertainty after the earthquake and tsunami hit Japan in March. This meant that psychosocial support was identified as one of the most pressing needs for the survivors. Therefore, the Japanese Red Cross Society deployed 2,500 nurses and doctors already trained in psychosocial support to assist in the affected areas.

At the time of the earthquake some staff and volunteers from JRCS were deployed in Christchurch, New Zealand, assisting after the earthquake there in February (which also affected Japanese students and their relatives). The team rushed back to Japan to provide psychosocial support after the tsunami. However, the two National Societies have kept in close contact, resulting in increased cooperation and are now collecting and compiling lessons learned, which can be useful for the entire movement.

In New Zealand, the earthquake led to the establishment of a psychosocial expert advisory group, made-up of experienced academics who reflect on strategy and signpost relevant evidence-informed research findings to be shared with the Ministries and local Councils. Findings are also shared with grass-root groups operating in the field.

The idea was to be available, flexible and provide evidence-informed material to all who needed input, and the advisory group contributed to both strategy, training and monitoring materials.

Civil unrest in many countries in the Middle-East also presented new challenges for National Societies and the Movement. These “other situations of violence”, not falling under the threshold of IHL, did not provide a clear mandate for the involvement of the Red Cross Red Crescent. However, across the region both National and sister Societies stepped up to the challenge and provided relief and support to demonstrators, migrants, refugees and some combatants, using the principles of the movement as guidelines in often difficult and tense political environments.

Whereas psychosocial support is a core activity for some of the societies in the region, the unrest highlighted that more needs to be done in terms of training and preparation in a number of countries.

The PS Centre followed both the above situations closely, providing advice and technical support, including recruitment of a delegate assessing psychosocial support needs in Tunisia and writing a report, which will lead to a Plan of Action for future work.

The Centre also compiled “Guidelines for Nuclear Disasters” which was shared with JRCS as well as other technical support and advice. Shortly before the triple disaster, the PS Centre had been present at the BHC ERU delegate training in Japan.

Progress towards outcomes

A. Technical and operational support

Achievements

Apart from the above mentioned technical support and advice, the PS Centre has continued to update the ERU PSS component, especially the delegate training and delegate manual. The ERU PSS component was presented during the European Congress of Traumatic Stress, the Finnish RC psychology group and discussed during the so-called “Stockholm-group” meeting for health advisors.

There is a growing interest in the ERU PS component with five National Societies organising trainings in second half of 2011 and with the possibility of including a PS component in other ERUs.

The PS Centre has employed a technical advisor for the ERUs to further develop the component.

Technical support has also been provided to PS delegates in among other Pakistan and Haiti, and input has been given to IFRC Recovery Guidelines, a programme proposal on PS in Tunisia-Libya, a PS project in Afghanistan and strategy discussions for Health and DM coordinators (DanCross) at regional meeting in Malawi.

At the initiative of ICRC a meeting was held to discuss how to include PS in training of staff and volunteers working with Restoring Family Links and how to establish closer connections with ERUs and RFL units during disasters.

Constraints or Challenges

With a mandate to service 186 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.

B. Capacity building of National Societies and competence development of staff and volunteers

Achievements

The global distribution of the Handbook and the Training Kit in English continued in 2011, and the Handbook was reprinted in 2000 new copies to meet demands. These tools are also available on-line on www.ifrc.org/psychosocial. The feedback received indicates that the materials are considered useful by National Societies and increasingly used to build staff competences.

The Spanish version became ready, translated and approved, but funding needs to be sought for printing them.

A variation of training materials and IECs published by the PS Centre has been translated into different languages such as Chinese, Urdu, Sindhi and Mongolian.

Additionally, many external organisations as well as academics have requested the training materials to use for their own trainings.

The development of new training materials and toolkits progressed well during first half of 2011. The school-based material for psychosocial interventions for children and their surroundings was drafted and parts of the extensive material were pilot tested in Somalia and Haiti by cooperating partner Save the Children. More pilot testing will take place in Haiti, Israel and Pakistan before the material is finalised and rolled out.

A scoping study on life-skills programmes in National Societies was completed by external consultant but with strong inputs from the PS Centre. The study with its recommendations will now create the platform for the next phase of developing guidelines for National Societies.

The project on lay counselling – in cooperation with War Trauma Foundation (NL), Danish Cancer Society and University of Innsbruck has finalised its study of numerous organisations engaging and training lay-people in counselling. The reports and analysis from the study will form the basis of a generic lay-counselling training manual to be prepared in second half of 2011 and thereafter pilot tested.

The second phase of the Volunteers in Emergencies project has begun. Close contacts are being kept with colleagues in Geneva and Kuala Lumpur to ensure that new generic guidelines for PS training and support to volunteers in emergencies will complement other materials being developed during the International Year of the Volunteers.

Training coordinator has assisted with ToT training in Pakistan and participated in seminars and workshops with National Societies of Japan and Finland as well as taken part in the preparation of three ERU PS component workshops in second half of 2011.

Constraints or Challenges

The school-based material has become very comprehensive. As a consequence the project faces a challenge in getting the core deliverables completed in time. Furthermore, additional funding to cover the extensions to the envisaged material as well as production of the material in Spanish and Arabic remain unidentified.

The printing and global distribution of the hard copies of the Practitioners Handbook and Training kit remain a financial challenge for the PS Centre.

C. Knowledge generation and knowledge sharing

Achievements

The PS Centre participated in a number of seminars, meetings and trainings to present different element of the IFRC psychosocial work.

Among them the ENPS board meeting to prepare for the annual forum, the ICRC organised meeting on Children Affected by Armed Conflicts, the European Congress on Traumatic stress, the Finnish Red Cross Evacuation Hospital training and the BHC ERU delegate training in Japan.

The Centre continued to play an active role in the IASC MHPSS and in the development of the MHPSS Network.

Partnerships and cooperation with research institutions also continued in 2011.

A substantive body of evidence-based knowledge needs to be build up to back recommendations and advocacy for psychosocial interventions, while approaches need to be tested against comparable standardized quality indicators. Psychosocial interventions must be subjected to a scientific process for determining best practices, which are evidence-informed, transferable and provide practical and efficient solutions.

The PS Centre will therefore actively engage in knowledge development, generation and sharing to ensure that the Red Cross Red Crescent stays on the frontline of developments in the psychosocial field, and that the PS Centre is a leading player for the Movement globally.

Constraints or Challenges

Funding for knowledge generation and knowledge management is not forthcoming. This prevents the PS Centre from fulfilling its ambitions and to conduct proper baseline surveys of activities in all National Societies. Some exchange of lessons learned does take place, but with a better system and survey, more could be achieved.

D. Humanitarian Diplomacy and Communications

Achievements

During the first half of 2011, the PS Centre has continued to publish its quarterly magazine *Coping with Crisis*, the e-newsletters and update news stories and material on the website. The number of subscribers and number of hits continues to increase, and it was decided to print CwC 2/2011 and distribute it to zonal and regional offices as well as selected National Societies, institutions and other.

The main short film about the Federations' PS work, "*Rebuilding Hope*", was reprinted in a four-language version.

A reprint was also done of the film "*Shattered Souls*" from Pakistan, available in Urdu, English and Danish.

The short-film "*A Story from Gaza*" highlighting the type of psychosocial support provided by the Palestinian Red Crescent to the population in Gaza was finalised and distributed.

All of the PS Centre's publications and media material are made available on our website and updates are given in electronic newsletters, on Facebook and on websites such as ReliefWeb and AlertNet.

Constraints or Challenges

Exploiting the full potential of new social media is not possible with the present resources.

Working in partnership

The most important partners of the PS Centre are the National Societies, and the Centre continues to respond to requests for support from a large number in the Middle East, Europe, South America, Asia and Africa. The PS Centre has strong partnerships with the Nordic National Societies – the Danish, Norwegian, Swedish, Finnish and Icelandic Red Cross – as well as with the Japanese, French, American and Canadian Red Cross.

Contacts with ICRC have been reinforced with the Centre being invited to a seminar on Children Affected by Armed Conflicts and with initial discussions about cooperation around RFL and psychosocial support.

Efforts are on-going to further strengthen these partnerships and to expand the number to promote a better geographical balance.

The PS Centre also has standing partnership with leading universities and research centres around the world including with Copenhagen University, University of Nottingham, University of South Dakota, University of Innsbruck and the Robert Gordon University in Aberdeen.

The PS Centre seeks to expand its partnerships with civil society organisations and NGOs in order to share knowledge and in many instances to cooperate about developing tools and materials. The centre has a leading role in the IASC on PSS and is on the board of the MHPSS Network sharing materials and guidelines through the joint website.

Additionally the PS Centre works with Save the Children Denmark, the International Council for Sports, Science and Physical Education (ICSSPE), Human Rights Info and REPSSI, a regional initiative focusing on psychosocial support to vulnerable children affected by HIV/AIDS in Southern Africa, The War Trauma foundation, UNICEF, Danish Cancer Society and University of Innsbruck.

Contributing to longer-term impact

With increasing recognition of – and interest in – psychosocial support as a Movement activity, the PS Centre will play a central role in providing generic material to be used globally.

New guidelines, toolkits and materials will help fulfil this purpose.

At this point within the Red Cross Red Crescent, there is little systematic gathering and dissemination of evidence-informed or evidence-based knowledge on psychosocial interventions. Such information and knowledge is critical for learning and for identifying best practices of high quality psychosocial programming. In other words, they are critical for doing better.

The PS Centre will therefore actively engage in knowledge development, -generation and -sharing to ensure that the Red Cross Red Crescent stays on the frontline of developments in the psychosocial field, and that the PS Centre is a leading player for the Movement globally.

These visions and intentions – together with all other plans – are detailed in the Strategic Operational Framework 2011-2015, which is aligned with Strategy 2020 and expected to be finalized and approved during the next Advisory Group meeting in October.

Looking ahead

Work will continue on all projects and toolkits. Among them the school-based materials on children in conflict and disasters, life skills, volunteers in emergencies, restoring family links and lay counselling.

The PS component of the ERU will be further developed and promoted, and a PS component will be conceptualized for the Wat-San ERU.

The PS Centre will continue to support ERU trainings, in the second half of 2011 during two workshops for five National Societies.

One advisor has been recruited to further develop the ERU and assist with the trainings. She will take up her position in August.

A global roll-out plan for training the coming few years will be finalised in second half of 2011. A training advisor, staff-on-loan, will take up her position to implement the plan.

Capacity-building of National Societies continues to be an important focus of the PS Centre work plan. Requests for technical and training support have increased, and the PS Centre will continue to provide support when requested as well as to be proactive in offering our services.

Lessons learned from PS in recent major disasters and conflicts will be collected and shared, just as further development of possible M&E tools will be explored.

The PS Centre Roster group continues to be a valuable asset with group-member taking on workshops, lectures and missions around the world.

A new five-year Strategic Operational Framework for the PS Centre will be approved in second half of 2011. A process of consultation with stakeholders has taken place during the first half of the year.

Communication and advocacy will continue mainly through Coping with Crisis and the website, which will be revised during second half of 2011.

Resource mobilisation and financial management will continue to take up considerable time and human resources of the Centre. The Centre is actively attempting to diversify its base of income.

How we work

All Federation assistance seeks to adhere to the [Code of Conduct for the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement and Non-Governmental Organizations \(NGO's\) in Disaster Relief](#) and is committed to the [Humanitarian Charter and Minimum Standards in Disaster Response \(Sphere\)](#) in delivering assistance to the most vulnerable.

<p>The International Federation's vision is to: Inspire, encourage, facilitate and promote at all times all forms of humanitarian activities by National Societies, with a view to preventing and alleviating human suffering, and thereby contributing to the maintenance and promotion of human dignity and peace in the world.</p>	<p>The International Federation's work is guided by Strategy 2020 which puts forward three strategic aims:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">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 non-violence and peace.
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Contact information

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