



Mental health

Scale up of mhGAP across a disaster-affected region in the Philippines

Disasters and conflicts lead to increased rates of diverse mental disorders. As a result many people have difficulty functioning in their daily lives, which can have a severe impact on their communities and families, especially when those affected are the breadwinners or carers of children. Disaster response for mental health problems is increasingly made available but is often chaotic, with many agencies offering different forms of support for the same problems.



mhGAP Training in Leyte, Philippines 2014

Courtesy of International Medical Corps

As part of the emergency response to Typhoon Hayan, which struck the Philippines in late 2013, the national department of health, WHO, the International Medical Corps, Save the Children and Médecins Sans Frontières collaborated in the Eastern Visayas (Region VIII), which are the areas most affected by the disaster.

For more than one year, and in one of the most extensive scale ups of mhGAP to date, the organizations used the same mhGAP curriculum to train health personnel, who were not mental health specialists, at the community level and in general health-care settings.

The training increased the capacity of national health staff and local communities to identify and manage priority mental health conditions using WHO mhGAP guidelines, and helped them to promote psychosocial well-being in affected communities. At least one staff

member was trained in 155 of the region's 159 rural health units (98%) and in 29 of the region's 32 district and provincial hospitals (91%). The programme also ensured that all doctors trained under the project had access to psychotropic medicines.

Four million people now have access to mental health care in the most affected disaster areas, giving new hope to millions of families. The mental health services offered in the Eastern Visayas are considered a model for other regions of this disaster-prone country.

WHO Mental Health Gap Action Programme (mhGAP)

[Mental health in emergencies](#)