

Terms of Reference

MHPSS Deployee – P2 – Gambella

MISSION LOCATION

UNHCR Gambella Sub-Office, Ethiopia

DURATION

3 months with possible extension

OPERATIONAL CONTEXT

The deployee will be part of the Protection Unit, working across all sectors, including Health, Child Protection-Education, Community-Based Protection-SGBV-PSEA, and integrated into the Gambella operation, which includes one Sub-Office, one Field Office, and one Field Unit.

Gambella currently hosts over **380,000 refugees**, mainly from South Sudan (and largely from the Nuer and Anuak ethnicity). Escalating ethno-political tensions in South Sudan have caused some 164,000 people to seek refuge in neighbouring countries, including an 35,000 in Ethiopia (See [South Sudan Situation: CORE 08 Sep 2025](#)). The suspension of Riek Machar, an ethnic Nuer, as First Vice President of South Sudan on 11 September is likely to fuel further conflict and displacement, with over **50,000 new arrivals** to be expected in South Sudan. The local health system is overwhelmed and unable to cope with the needs of tens of thousands of new arrivals.

There is an urgent need for coordinated MHPSS services. The population is highly vulnerable, with **86% women and children** and **25% youth (15–24 years old)**, facing risks such as Unaccompanied and Separated Minors, neglect, domestic violence, child labour, school dropouts, and pervasive effects of sexual and gender-based violence. Contributing factors to psychosocial distress and mental health conditions include past exposure to conflict-related violence, restrictive encampment policies, conservative socio-cultural norms, and structural drivers like insecurity, gender inequality, limited education opportunities, food shortages, and unsafe access to energy. These conditions have led to severe psychosocial distress and trauma, particularly among women, children, and survivors of violence, highlighting the urgent need to strengthen MHPSS.

The **MHPSS deployee** is a member of a multidisciplinary team, ensuring that MHPSS activities are well coordinated and contribute to reducing suffering and improving well-being. MHPSS is not a separate sector but integrated into health, education, nutrition, protection, child protection, and GBV responses.

The incumbent provides technical and strategic guidance to the government, UN agencies and NGO partners, supports coordination and resource mobilization, catalysis engagement of actors, and oversees MHPSS strategies within inter-agency contexts. They also apply a humanitarian-development nexus approach and advance global strategies.

AIM OF THE MISSION

The aim is to integrate MHPSS into the Gambella refugee emergency response by strengthening coordination among actors, building their capacity, and ensuring MHPSS is integrated across health, protection, and other humanitarian sectors from the outset.

MISSION OBJECTIVES

- To conduct an MHPSS needs assessment in Gambella, including mapping available resources and community capacities.
- To establish an MHPSS coordination mechanism (such as an MHPSS Technical Working Group - TWG) and link this with the National MHSPS Technical Working Group in Addis.
- To actively participate in existing coordination forums to advocate for MHPSS integration within sectors.
- To provide capacity-building for personnel of UN agencies, governments, NGOs and community structures to strengthen MHPSS delivery.
- To support the integration of MHPSS into Gambella's programming across relevant sectors.

RESPONSIBILITIES

Under the supervision of the protection officer in Gambela, the incumbent will be technically supervised by the Associate MHPSS officer in the country office, and will do the following:

- Conduct rapid MHPSS needs assessments and map available services and community resources.
- Establish or engage in MHPSS coordination with health, protection, child protection, GBV, and education actors.
- Ensure services uphold dignity, safety, and psychosocial well-being.
- Provide Psychological First Aid (PFA), suicide prevention and response and train frontline staff/volunteers to deliver it.
- Develop and share referral pathways for mental health, protection, GBV, and child protection services.
- Initiate capacity-building for non-specialists, health staff, and community workers on MHPSS basics.
- Advocate for sufficient MHPSS resources and integration across sectors with leadership and donors.
- Prepare for transition from emergency to recovery phase, ensuring sustainable MHPSS services.

PROFILE

Experience

- Experience in MHPSS responses in humanitarian contexts
- Experience working in conflict/humanitarian contexts
- Experience in large-scale, complex humanitarian emergencies.

Essential requirements

- Bachelor's degree in Psychiatry, Clinical Psychology, Counselling Psychology, or a related field, with at least 8 years of relevant experience; a master's degree is an added advantage.
- Strong theoretical and practical knowledge of the IASC Guidelines for Mental Health and Psychosocial Support in Emergency Settings, with preference for candidates familiar with the IASC Minimum Service Package (MSP) for MHPSS.
- Demonstrated familiarity with Refugee Operations and the Refugee Coordination Model, as well as with humanitarian appeals, humanitarian response plans, and common humanitarian funding mechanisms.
- Proven experience in training and implementing MHPSS tools, including Psychological First Aid (PFA), 4Ws mapping, and preferably mhGAP-HIG. Experience with scalable psychological interventions is an asset.
- Experience in coordination and conducting MHPSS assessments in emergency contexts.
- Previous professional experience working in Ethiopia and/or South Sudan, with specific knowledge of refugee operations involving South Sudanese populations.
- Good understanding of integration of MHPSS in health, Protection and other sectors, with knowledge of training the MHPSS Minimum Service Package.

Personal Characteristics.

- Ability to work in physically and emotionally challenging contexts to adapt to rapidly changing situations.
- Strong networking capacities for building constructive relationships with all humanitarian actors and national counterparts.
- Willingness to serve in a capacity-building role, fostering the capacities of actors on the ground.
- Ability to work independently and in collaboration with the Public Health and Protection teams.