

Terms of Reference

MHPSS Deployee – P2 – Gambella Operation

MISSION LOCATION

UNHCR Gambella Sub-Office, Ethiopia - Nyinyenyang

DURATION

3 months with possible extension

OPERATIONAL CONTEXT

The recent escalation of conflict in Gambella has significantly worsened an already fragile humanitarian situation, affecting both host communities and the large refugee population in the region. Heightened insecurity has compounded the challenges faced by long-term refugees and new arrivals fleeing violence from South Sudan. Continued tensions and sporadic violence have disrupted access to essential services, restricted humanitarian movements, and left many vulnerable individuals with limited access to protection, health, and mental health and psychosocial support (MHPSS) services. As a result, refugees and host communities are increasingly exposed to heightened protection risks, severe psychological distress, social isolation, and, in some cases, suicidal ideation and self-harm.

The Gambella operation currently hosts more than **445,000 refugees**, primarily from South Sudan, while continued instability across the border has led to a steady influx of new arrivals seeking safety. Escalating conflict in South Sudan continues to drive displacement into Ethiopia, placing additional strain on already overstretched services and resources. The local health and protection systems are struggling to meet the growing needs of the affected population, particularly in remote locations such as Nyinyenyang and other refugee-hosting areas where access constraints remain a significant challenge.

The population is highly vulnerable, with women and children comprising the vast majority of those affected. Many face multiple protection risks, including family separation, neglect, gender-based violence, child labour, school dropout, and exposure to conflict-related trauma. Prolonged displacement, insecurity, limited livelihood opportunities, food insecurity, and inadequate access to basic services continue to exacerbate mental health concerns and psychosocial distress among refugees and host communities alike.

The MHPSS Deployee will be embedded within the Protection Unit and work across sectors, including Health, Child Protection and Education, Community-Based Protection, GBV, and PSEA, as part of the broader Gambella operation comprising one Sub-Office, and one Field Unit. As a member of a multidisciplinary team, the deployee will support the integration of Mental Health and Psychosocial Support (MHPSS) across humanitarian interventions, ensuring that affected populations receive coordinated, comprehensive, and context-appropriate support.

The Deployee will provide technical support and strategic guidance to a wide range of government counterparts, UN agencies, Refugee Led Organizations/Associations, and NGO partners; strengthen coordination mechanisms; support resource mobilization efforts; and promote the integration of MHPSS within health, education, nutrition, protection, child protection, and GBV programming. Through an inter-agency and humanitarian-development-peacebuilding approach, the deployee will contribute to reducing suffering, strengthening resilience, and improving the well-being of refugees, new arrivals, and vulnerable host communities affected by the ongoing crisis in Gambella.

AIM OF THE MISSION:

The objective of this deployment is to strengthen emergency preparedness and response capacity in Gambella by integrating Mental Health and Psychosocial Support (MHPSS) across refugee and host community programming.

MISSION OBJECTIVES

1. Strengthen MHPSS coordination and governance by establishing and reinforcing regional coordination mechanisms, while ensuring alignment between the Gambella MHPSS Technical Working Group and national coordination structures.
2. Enhance emergency preparedness and response capacity through the integration of MHPSS, protection, and inclusion principles across health, education, child protection, GBV, and community-based protection interventions.
3. Build the technical and operational capacity of governments, NGOs, Community-led groups and others to deliver coordinated, quality, and sustainable MHPSS services for refugees, new arrivals, and host communities.
4. Advance an inclusion-focused humanitarian-development-peacebuilding approach that promotes equitable access to services, strengthens local systems, and supports resilience, recovery, and social cohesion/ peaceful cohabitation.

RESPONSIBILITIES

Under the direct supervision of the Senior Protection Officer in Gambella, and technical supervision of the Associate MHPSS officer in the country office, the deployee will do the following:

- Strengthen and/or participate in MHPSS coordination mechanisms with health, protection, child protection, GBV, education, and community-based actors.
- Finalize and disseminate a rapid MHPSS assessment report and map available services, service gaps, and community resources.
- Lead MHPSS capacity-building initiatives for non-specialized service providers, health personnel, teachers, protection staff, and community workers on core MHPSS concepts and interventions.
- Support strengthening community structures and local capacities, in using MHPSS approaches that promote resilience, social cohesion, peaceful cohabitation of refugees, returnees, new arrivals, and host communities.
- Support MHPSS integration to preparedness and outbreak responses such as for cholera, as needed.
- Integrate humanitarian, development, and nexus-oriented approaches into MHPSS programming to strengthen local systems and ensure continuity of care beyond the emergency phase.
- Advocate for adequate MHPSS resources, funding, staffing, and integration across sectors with operational leadership, government stakeholders, donors, and partners.
- Support evidence-based planning, monitoring, reporting, and resource mobilization efforts related to MHPSS interventions.
- Prepare and support the transition from emergency response to recovery and longer-term programming, ensuring sustainable, locally owned, and inclusive MHPSS services
- Support the documentation of how emergency MHPSS deployments can galvanize the broader humanitarian response, catalyze resource mobilization, and contribute to the development of sustainable MHPSS services within government-led health systems and community-led work.

Through these efforts, the position will contribute to reducing suffering, improving protection outcomes, strengthening resilience and recovery, and ensuring that vulnerable refugees, new arrivals, and host communities in Gambella have access to coordinated, quality, and sustainable MHPSS services.

PROFILE

Experience

- Experience in MHPSS responses in humanitarian contexts, conflict, in large scale complex 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.
- Demonstrated expertise in the IASC Guidelines on MHPSS in Emergency Settings, including practical application in humanitarian contexts; familiarity with the IASC MHPSS Minimum Service Package (MSP) is highly desirable.
- Proven experience in MHPSS coordination, capacity strengthening, and technical support within refugee and emergency operations, including collaboration with government counterparts, UN agencies, and humanitarian partners.
- Sound knowledge of refugee protection frameworks, the Refugee Coordination Model (RCM), humanitarian response planning processes, appeals, and humanitarian financing mechanisms.
- Extensive experience in the implementation and facilitation of key MHPSS approaches and tools, including Psychological First Aid (PFA), MHPSS service mapping and 4Ws, and preferably the WHO mhGAP Humanitarian Intervention Guide (mhGAP-HIG). Experience with scalable psychological interventions is an added advantage.
- Demonstrated experience conducting MHPSS needs assessments, situation analyses, and technical reporting, and utilizing assessment findings to inform programme design, advocacy, and resource mobilization in emergency settings.
- Preferable: Experience in strengthening MHPSS emergency preparedness and response for epidemics of disease outbreaks.
- Strong understanding of the integration of MHPSS across health, protection, child protection, GBV, education, and community-based programming, including experience delivering training on the MHPSS Minimum Service Package and related inter-agency guidance.
- Previous experience working in Ethiopia and/or South Sudan, with a strong understanding of the operational, cultural, and protection context of refugee responses involving South Sudanese populations.
- Proven ability to support multi-sectoral, inclusive, and both government and ministries.

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 in UNHCR and partners.