

THE PSYCHOSOCIAL SUPPORT PROGRAMME OF THE OFFICE FOR REPARATIONS - SRI LANKA

What is Mental Health and Psychosocial Support (MHPSS)?

Mental health is a state of mental well-being that enables people to cope with the stresses of life, realize their abilities, learn well and work well, and contribute to their community. The term 'psychosocial' refers to the dynamic relationship between the psychological and social dimensions of an individual's life. These two dimensions influence one another and are very closely linked. a) Psychological dimension: internal, emotional, and thought processes, feelings, and reactions b) Social dimension: relationships, family and community networks, social values, and cultural practices.

It is important to note the fundamental interrelation of bio-psychological (emotions, feelings, thoughts, behaviours, memories, stress and stress reactions), socioeconomic/socio-relational (interactions and interdependence between the individual and communities e.g., access to livelihood resources, quality of relationships) and cultural factors (elements that members of a society use to signify their world and relate to one another) in responding to the needs of 'aggrieved persons'. Just as "psychological" and "social" processes in human beings are interrelated and interdependent, most of our needs are also interrelated. When one important need is met (or not), this can affect all other aspects of life. Psychosocial support is the process of facilitating resilience within individuals, families, and communities by addressing both their psychological and social needs.

Victims of conflict are likely to experience emotional and psychological distress as a result of being exposed to conflict and violence, and therefore professional assistance aimed at protecting and promoting the psychosocial wellbeing of survivors of violence, is vital.

Introduction

The Office for Reparations has implemented a psychosocial support programme as one of its flagship interventions to respond to the needs of aggrieved persons (i.e. persons who have suffered due to manmade conflicts have occurred in Sri Lanka). The objective of the program is to provide individually catered victim-centric support to aggrieved persons and their families to rebuild and restore their lives.

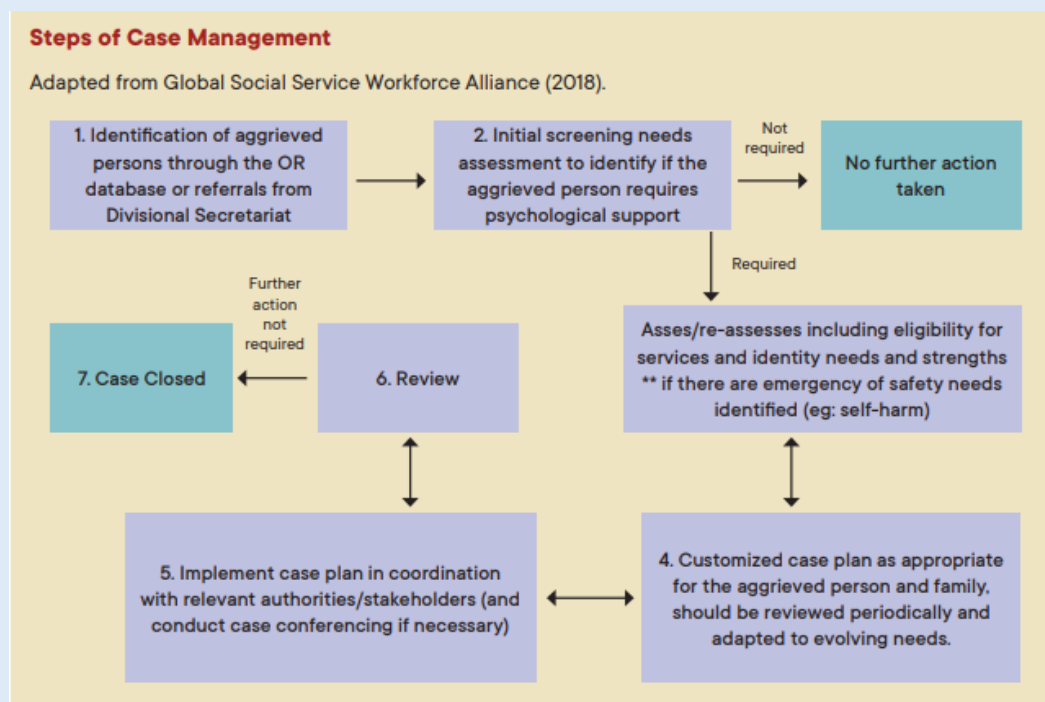
The term 'psychosocial' refers to the dynamic relationship between the psychological and social dimensions of an individual's life. Global research has demonstrated that victim/survivors of conflict are likely to experience psychological and emotional distress as a result of being exposed to, and experiencing conflict and violence. Individually catered programs aimed at protecting the psychological wellbeing of aggrieved persons, and reconnecting them to their families and the community (thus assuring their social wellbeing) have proven successful. The psychosocial support program of the OR was developed in reflection of this need.

The programme seeks to identify and support the psychological and social needs through connecting them to resources available within the community. The Case Managers will not offer psychological support but will refer those who are identified as needing such support to available Government services.

Key Features of the Psychosocial Support Programme – Case Management Approach

- Case Managers: Case Managers selected from the OR and the Divisional Secretariats are trained in delivering psychosocial support to ‘aggrieved persons’ using the **Manual for Training of Case Managers Delivering Psychosocial Support**.
- The Case Managers follow a disciplined process of a Case Management Approach to meet the needs of the individual and family (see figure 1: Flow Chart of Case Management Process). This approach provides individual support to the beneficiary by providing emotional support through effective communication, active listening and empathy. This enables the beneficiary to express their emotions and discuss their evolving needs, whilst identifying the resources available within them, in their family and the community. This approach aims at promoting quality, cost-effective outcomes and empowerment beneficiaries and their families.
- The process is as follows:

Figure 1: Flow Chart of the Case Management Process



1. Cases of aggrieved persons are identified from among: i) Death of loved ones, (ii) Families of Missing Persons, (iii) Injured persons, (iv) Persons who suffered the loss/damage of property and (v) Persons who lost their employment as a result of circumstances defined in the Office for Reparations ACT No 34 of 2018.

This approach prioritizes households headed by women, families with young children and with low income, families of the disappeared persons and persons with disabilities and their families from the OR database and through referrals from Divisional Secretariat. Each individual or family will be allocated a Case Manager.

2. The Case Managers will thereafter conduct a Needs Assessment through a specialized needs assessment, to assess the needs of the aggrieved persons who request to be included in the programme.
 3. Consequent to an initial screening/ needs assessment to identify the psychological, social, economic and administrative needs of aggrieved persons, the Case Managers will design and customize a case plan in collaboration with the aggrieved person/family in an appropriate manner. The case plan will highlight the needs identified, reviewed periodically and adapted to evolving needs.
 4. Case Managers will take the necessary steps to provide emotional support and assist the identified needs through referrals to State and Non-State Organizations with specialized services.
 5. Case Managers will implement the case plan in coordination with relevant authorities/ stakeholders. Aggrieved persons will be referred to resources and/or services that provide socio-economic, administrative, psychological and medical support services based on the level of need. They will work with divisional level stakeholders to advocate on behalf of the aggrieved persons and families to maximize their assistance and conduct Case Conferencing where necessary.
 6. Case Managers will follow up with the aggrieved persons and other professionals to whom they may have been referred, to monitor progress and document comprehensive case notes on client progress.
 7. Case Managers will review the Case Plan to identify if amendments are necessary. Needs and circumstances may change over time and the Case Plan needs to be kept flexible to capture real time evolving needs. The period during which a case file of an aggrieved person will be actively managed, can vary depending on the complexity of the issues faced by the aggrieved person and/or family, and can range from months to years.
- The psychosocial support programme is designed for those above age eighteen (18) and therefore all children age seventeen (17) and below will be referred to other specialized service providers if necessary.