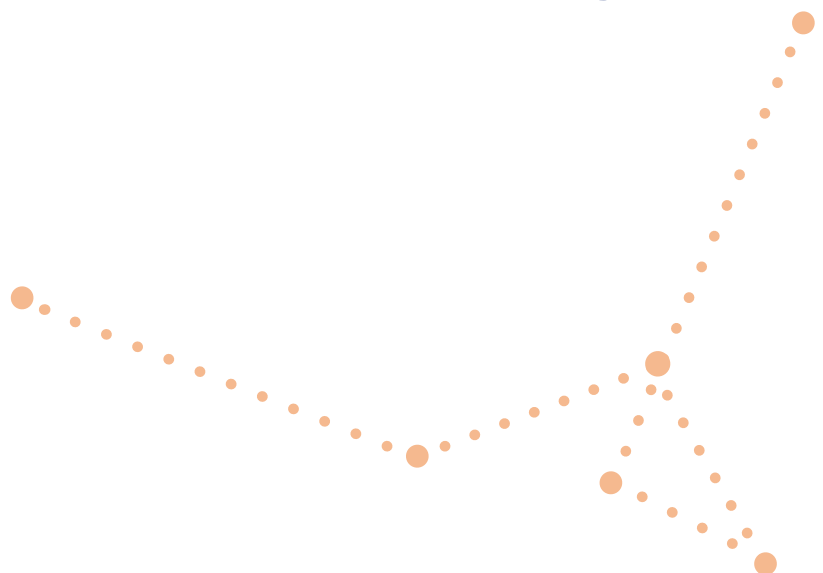




**Report of preparatory work in the field of
MHPSS, Digitalisation and Innovation
for the 2nd Nordic conference on MHPSS in
Fragile and Humanitarian Settings**



INTRODUCTION

Mental health and psychosocial well-being are life-saving for children, youth, their families and their communities, and are essential to the peace and prosperity of societies. Mental health and psychosocial support (MHPSS) refer to all multilevel interventions and continuity of care that aim to protect or promote psychosocial well-being and/or treat or prevent mental disorders. MHPSS also encompasses the establishment of coordination mechanisms that integrate MHPSS into cross-sectoral programs and approaches and strengthen the MHPSS capacity of humanitarian staff. Promoting mental health and psychosocial well-being is a target of Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 3: Good health and well-being for all at all ages. Ensuring equitable and sustainable access to quality MHPSS for children and families is challenging in contexts affected by conflict, disasters, violence, and other crises. Joint strategies and collaborative action between multilevel MHPSS stakeholders in nations that share a common vision are imperative to achieve lasting improvements for even the most marginalised.

In August 2022, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Denmark, Danish Red Cross and War Child co-hosted the conference “A Human Right Left Behind: Nordic Conference on MHPSS in Fragile and Humanitarian Settings” in Copenhagen. This conference responded to the need to inspire and align MHPSS strategies, approaches, and activities at a country and regional level to achieve short- and long-term impact. Experts in MHPSS-related policy, funding, advocacy, research, and practice, along with ministry focal points, came together in the Nordic region to represent their organisation or institution. During the conference, the “Nordic Road Map on MHPSS in fragile and Humanitarian settings” was endorsed to inspire and inform joint decisions and actions from 2022 to 2030.

In March 2024, the second Nordic Conference on MHPSS in Fragile and Humanitarian Settings will take place in Malmö, Sweden. The conference is co-hosted by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Sweden. The conference will focus on four topics and link them to the seven cross-cutting thematic areas identified in the Nordic Road Map. The four topics are as follows:

- MHPSS and gender
- MHPSS and innovation and digitalisation
- MHPSS and climate change
- Inclusion of MHPSS in healthcare

Preparatory workshops were held for the second Nordic conference on MHPSS in Fragile and Humanitarian Settings. On the 9th of November 2023, the MHPSS Network within the Swedish Institute for Global Health Transformation together with Linköping University, War Child Sweden and other stakeholders held a workshop to discuss matters related to innovation and digitalisation.

LINKÖPING CONFERENCE:

On the 9th of November 2023, a preparatory conference was held at Linköping University on innovation and digitalisation linked to MHPSS. 20 actors were present on site from Linköping University, War Child Sweden, Psykologpartners, the Network for Global Mental Health, UNICEF Office of Innovation, the Swedish Red Cross, the Red Cross Treatment Centre for War Injured and Tortured, MHPSS Collaborative, Peppy Agency, Karolinska Institutet, the Centre for Psychiatric Research. 2 actors participated online, one from the Swedish Government Offices and one from the Public Health Agency of Norway.

Digitalisation and innovation have been identified as one of the key topics to develop from the Copenhagen conference. The following three objectives were identified before the preparatory conference to develop the thematic track for the 2nd Nordic conference in Malmö in terms of contributing to the development of innovation and digitalisation with regard to Nordic cooperation.

- Bring together a broad network of actors to explore how digital tools can be used to meet the needs of MHPSS in crises and difficult circumstances.
- Map what work exists, and which actors are working on it to increase collaboration between actors.
- Prepare for the Malmö Conference by creating a timeline for how innovation and digitalisation should be included in the Road Map with a focus on results up until 2030.

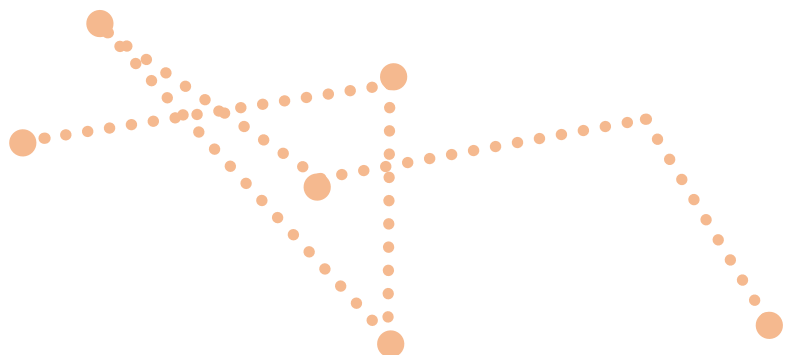


DISCUSSION:

At the conference, various factors were discussed. Digitalisation, in this context, refers to leveraging technology, such as online platforms and digital tools, to deliver mental health services. It was seen as a means to overcome stigma, reach remote areas, minimise costs, and improve flexibility in service delivery. Innovation, as discussed at the conference, involves the development and implementation of novel approaches, methods, and collaborations to address mental health challenges. This includes utilising technology, engaging multi-sectoral collaborations, and fostering systemic change to improve mental health outcomes for refugees globally. The emphasis was on a holistic, forward-thinking approach that integrates various sectors and stakeholders in addressing foundational challenges and increasing access to mental health care.

Challenges of working with MHPSS services included late-seeking support, stigma, low health literacy, and insufficient specialised treatment facilities with long waiting lists. Various speakers presented the importance of early, low-threshold interventions, with a recognition that digitalisation could play a crucial role in overcoming barriers, such as stigma, reaching remote areas, minimising costs, and enhancing flexibility. Digital MHPSS approaches and interventions that consider context, nuance, stage of displacement, and factors such as inclusion, gender, equity, uptake, and safety could help extend MHPSS programming to more adolescents. The benefits such as cost of scaling and potential reach deserve to be further explored and carefully considered against the limited research and scenarios where it can have a limited or harmful impact.

The overall consensus at the pre-conference meeting in Linköping was on a systemic approach to mental health service design and implementation. The importance of bridging health, education, social welfare, and protection systems, along with a focus on engaging communities and stakeholders. Innovations in services, along with a call for collaboration among various actors in the innovation ecosystem, were seen as essential to addressing foundational challenges and increasing access to mental health care for refugees globally.



DIGITALISATION, INNOVATION AND MHPSS

AT THE MALMÖ CONFERENCE

The focus for this thematic track covers two areas of importance: the roles of innovation and scaling in MHPSS, and digital solutions and data in solutions. Digital mental health solutions and innovative services have proven to be effective methods and knowledge for MHPSS interventions. In fragile and humanitarian settings, communities can face challenges to access health services, including mental health services. In these settings, digital solutions and innovation are key enablers for driving transformational change and allowing for solutions that are adapted to the tough reality of on-site interventions.

The primary objective of the thematic track Digital Solutions and Innovation is to inspire and share knowledge regarding MHPSS in digitalisation, innovation, and the role of data. It further aims to find possible recommendations in working with digitalisation and innovation to realise the Copenhagen Declaration and Roadmap. The track seeks to create a platform for participants to contribute insights and recommendations to inform both implementation, and advocacy efforts.

Format: The track will be composed of a plenary session and two breakout group sessions. The plenary session aims to engage conference participants in high-level discussions on the importance and challenges of digitalisation and innovation. The two breakout groups will provide platforms for participants to explore innovation in MHPSS, and digital interventions, and the role of data in both.

Ways forward, suggested action

A mapping of in which way the Nordic countries have engaged in the nexus between digital opportunities and innovation in the field of MHPSS in Fragile and Humanitarian Settings should be considered.

The presence of the UNICEF Office of Innovation in the Nordic region is an opportunity and an asset that should be explored further. A follow up seminar on how to further enhance the cooperation between the different Nordic actors may be one way forward. It is suggested that such a seminar should take place before the end of 2024.

The know-how and key interest of the private sector in the Nordic region in exploring business opportunities in the field of mental well-being may be a good ground for cross-sectoral cooperation. There are a number of events in the near future where this could be further discussed, such as upcoming UN-related events (WHO etc).