

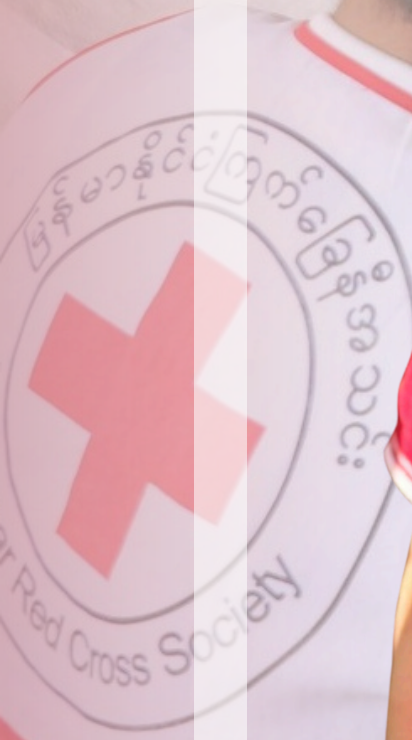


Asia Pacific Mental Health and  
Psychosocial Support  
Collaborative

Asia Pacific MHPSS Collaborative

**IMPACT REPORT**

**2025**





*“That’s why the Collaborative matters so much. It doesn’t just strengthen our National Societies—it strengthens people. It brings us together, helps us support one another, and reminds us that in this work, none of us are alone.”*

## Our MHPSS Focal Persons, Our Champions

I’ve been with Myanmar Red Cross Society for almost two years now, supporting MHPSS work across different contexts and communities. Looking back, I can honestly say the beginning wasn’t easy. Stepping into this role felt overwhelming at times —especially during moments like the Myanmar earthquake response. Being there in the middle of so much loss and uncertainty, listening to people’s stories, and supporting volunteers who were also carrying their own emotional weight —it changed me. It made the work feel even more personal and meaningful.

As the MHPSS Focal Person, I now work closely with staff, volunteers, and partners to weave MHPSS into different programs. Over time, I’ve gained confidence, but more importantly, I’ve gained a deeper sense of purpose. Every conversation, every debrief, every moment of support reminds me why MHPSS is not just a technical area —it’s about people, dignity, and healing.

What truly helped me grow, especially during those early, uncertain months, was the Collaborative. The learning opportunities, the peer exchanges, the honest conversations—they didn’t just build my skills; they built my confidence. And what’s striking is that my experience isn’t unique.

Many MHPSS focal persons across other National Societies have shared similar stories —feeling unsure at first, learning through real challenges, and finding strength in connection with others who understand the work.

*Ms. Ya Min Khaing*  
MHPSS Focal Person  
**Myanmar Red Cross Society**

# Executive Summary



*Impact is most meaningful when it is seen, felt, and sustained at the community level.*

This year marks the fifth year of the Collaborative, a milestone reflecting its evolution into a trusted platform for coordination, learning, and collective accountability within the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement.

The 2025 IMPACT report provides an overview of key accomplishments while showcasing 14 National Societies whose experiences illustrate the value of collaboration grounded in local ownership and adaptability.

## **01** MHPSS Framework Developments of National Societies (Page 4)

Red Cross and Red Crescent National Societies of Myanmar, Bangladesh and Nepal have taken actionable steps to transform mental health and psychosocial support from activities into sustained systems. Through nationally led MHPSS frameworks—strengthened by regional collaboration—both National Societies are embedding mental wellbeing at the heart of humanitarian action.

## **02** Strengthening MHPSS Preparedness and Response (Page 8)

When disasters and conflict strike, readiness can save time—and protect dignity. Across the Philippines and Thailand, sustained support from the Asia Pacific MHPSS Collaborative has helped National Societies turn training into action. From preparedness built over years, to frameworks activated the moment earthquakes hit, and cross-department collaboration in conflict response, this story shows how investment in mental health and psychosocial support strengthens humanitarian response when it matters most.

## **03** Developing MHPSS Surge Delegate Rosters in Asia Pacific (Page 12)

National Societies across Asia Pacific are strengthening Mental Health and Psychosocial Support (MHPSS) surge capacity through well-prepared delegate rosters. From Australia's rigorous recruitment and deployment of psychologists, to Japan's structured training pathways and Hong Kong's practice-based learning through shadow missions, these efforts—supported by the Asia Pacific MHPSS Collaborative—are building a regional network of MHPSS professionals ready to respond when communities need them most.

## 04 MHPSS in Emergencies (Page 15)

Afghanistan continues to face severe mental health and psychosocial needs stemming from decades of conflict, displacement, and recurrent disasters, with women, children, and people with disabilities most affected. Recent mass returns and repeated earthquakes have further heightened the urgency for comprehensive MHPSS support. Across the region, sudden-onset urban emergencies also demonstrate the critical role of National Societies. The recent Wang Fuk Court fire in Hong Kong—one of the city’s most significant urban disasters—prompted a rapid Hong Kong Red Cross Branch MHPSS response.

## 06 Psychological First Aid for All: PFA Integration to First Aid (Page 24)

During emergencies, care is not only about treating injuries—it is also about how people are met in moments of fear and distress. From Lao PDR to the Pacific Islands, Red Cross National Societies are rethinking first response by integrating Psychological First Aid into everyday First Aid practice. This growing movement, supported by the Asia Pacific MHPSS Collaborative, is changing how volunteers show up for communities when it matters most.

## 05 Making MHPSS Sustainable: Commercialization of MHPSS Training Programs (Page 20)

In Malaysia and Singapore, the Red Cross is exploring how the commercialisation of MHPSS training, particularly Psychological First Aid, can strengthen long-term capacity and service quality. From Malaysia’s early steps in offering paid PFA trainings to Singapore’s established psychosocial academy model, this story shows how National Societies are transforming training into a sustainable pillar of humanitarian response.

As the Collaborative enters its next phase, the impact of its first five years is clear: shared vision, collective learning, and national leadership amplify MHPSS outcomes. The stories in this report reflect not an endpoint, but a strong foundation for deeper, more inclusive, and more sustainable humanitarian impact.

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# The Leadership

The leadership ensured the Collaborative’s sustainability by aligning it with regional MHPSS priorities, securing essential resources, and maintaining coordinated oversight to support long-term implementation.



**Alexander Metheou**

Regional Director,  
IFRC Asia Pacific Regional Office

A great deal of my time is spent bearing witness to crises. There is no shortage of them across Asia Pacific. Some happen suddenly, such as the earthquake in Myanmar or the fires in Hong Kong. And some occur gradually, such as hunger in Afghanistan or insecurity in the camps of Cox’s Bazaar. In all cases, the most striking feature is the trauma in people’s eyes. A trauma that tells of the loss of certainty, of safety, and of trust.

You can’t respond to such trauma with physical items or interventions alone, important as they are. The wounds are less tangible. They can only be addressed with attention, compassion, patience, and empathy. Precisely the skills that the Asia Pacific MHPSS Collaborative aims to teach the staff and volunteers of the Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies in the region, as they are often the very first to respond when crises strike, or as crises endure.

Mental health and psychosocial support is finally taking its rightful place as a critical component of humanitarian action, but it is still new to many of us and still overcoming reservations and navigating cultural barriers.

We are all deeply grateful to the MHPSS Collaborative and the Hong Kong Branch of the Red Cross Society of China for leading the way, and for reminding us that the key to good humanitarian action is not in what you give to a person, but rather it is in seeing a person in all his or her dignity, whatever the circumstances a crisis has forced upon them.

I am truly encouraged by the significant development of MHPSS in our region. The increasing number of trained individuals ready to provide immediate and professional services during emergencies reflects our collective commitment to mental well-being. More National Societies have recognized the importance of MHPSS, integrating it into their emergency operations and establishing dedicated service teams through comprehensive training.

The recent mega fire in Hong Kong, which occurred in November 2025, underscored the critical need for MHPSS support for both affected individuals and frontline responders, including firefighters, paramedics, social workers, and journalists. This experience served as a powerful reminder of the impact of psychological support during crises. The emotional impact on everyone involved, especially during such a tragic event, showed how important it is to have trained professionals ready to help those in need.



**Bonnie So**

Chief Executive Officer/  
Secretary General,  
Hong Kong Red Cross (Branch  
of Red Cross Society of China)

Furthermore, the collaborative efforts across the region have demonstrated the power of solidarity in addressing mental health challenges. The Indonesia Red Cross Society and the Philippines Red Cross Society deserve our heartfelt gratitude for their invaluable contributions to providing MHPSS to the family members of the domestic helpers tragically lost in the fire.

Thank you to everyone who has played a role in the growth of the AP MHPSS Collaborative over the past 5 years. Together, we can continue to enhance our services, ensuring that mental health support is accessible to those in need. I look forward to your continued support in this vital humanitarian service, as we strive to foster resilience and healing in our communities.



**Sarrah Harrison**

Director,  
Red Cross Red Crescent  
Movement MHPSS Hub

The AP MHPSS Collaborative has been an impressive five-year partnership between the Hong Kong Red Cross Branch, the IFRC Asia-Pacific office and the RCRC Movement MHPSS Hub (MHPSS Hub).

This innovative partnership harnesses the global technical expertise of the MHPSS Hub and formally connects it to the Hong Kong Red Cross Branch that delivers support regionally to other National Societies along with the IFRC. We are very proud of this regional and decentralised approach and the bridging of global to regional to national.

Furthermore, the Collaborative helps deliver on the MHPSS Hub's 2026 – 2030 strategy to bring our services and accompaniment in relation to MHPSS closer to National Societies through a regional presence.

The focus of the Collaborative has naturally adapted and responded to needs from National Societies over the years, with a focus on MHPSS frameworks and strategies, building a regional MHPSS surge response roster, peer-exchanges to support National Societies facing conflict and protracted crises including MHPSS within Emergency Appeals, along with capacity strengthening in national emergency response and psychological first aid.

We look forward to continuing the partnership in the years to come and continue to invest in advocating for the importance of MHPSS services within National Societies' auxiliary roles”

## Acknowledgements

The Collaborative extends its heartfelt appreciation to all those who made this Impact Report possible.

We express our deep gratitude to the Tripartite Committee—the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC), the Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement MHPSS Hub, and the Hong Kong Red Cross Branch—for their steadfast leadership, strategic guidance, and unwavering commitment to advancing Mental Health and Psychosocial Support (MHPSS) across the region. Their collective vision continues to anchor and empower the Collaborative's mission.

We also sincerely thank the National Societies, whose staff and volunteers demonstrate extraordinary dedication in delivering MHPSS services to people and communities facing hardship, crisis, and recovery. Their courage and compassion are reflected in every achievement captured in this report.

Most importantly, we extend our deepest respect and admiration to the MHPSS Focal Persons across the network. They are the true champions of this work—advocating tirelessly, integrating MHPSS into diverse programs, and ensuring that mental health and psychosocial well-being remain central to humanitarian action. Their passion, commitment, and everyday acts of service are not only essential to the Movement, but also the very inspiration and driving force behind the Collaborative. It is their leadership at the community and national levels that continually motivates and shapes our efforts.

To each individual and partner who contributed to this journey—thank you. The impact presented in these pages is a shared achievement, made possible by your dedication, collaboration, and belief in the importance of MHPSS for all.



MHPSS  
INTERNATIONAL  
MOVEMENT  
HUB



## Demonstrating Impact: Looking back the Five-year Journey of the Asia Pacific MHPSS Collaborative

### *Strengthening Regional Mental Health and Psychosocial Support*

When the Asia Pacific MHPSS Collaborative was formally established in 2021, it was not the beginning of a story—it was a turning point. The Collaborative emerged from years of commitment to strengthening mental health and psychosocial support across one of the world's most disasterprone regions, bringing together the Hong Kong Red Cross (HKRC), the IFRC Regional Office for Asia Pacific (APRO), the Red Cross Red Crescent Movement MHPSS Hub (formerly the IFRC Reference Centre for Psychosocial Support) in a shared regional mission: delivering coordinated technical expertise, building capacity, and strengthening emergency MHPSS response.

### *Origins and Development*

The foundations of the Collaborative were planted in 2016 when HKRC seconded a Clinical Psychologist to the PS Centre as a Technical Advisor to support regional MHPSS efforts. At the time, this role was instrumental in developing psychological support guidance, delivering core trainings, and responding to emerging crises across Asia Pacific. These early contributions demonstrated the effectiveness of embedding MHPSS technical capacity within the region and laid the groundwork for a future coordinated mechanism.

By 2021, HKRC, APRO, and the PS Centre formalized their collaboration, resulting in the creation of the Asia Pacific MHPSS Collaborative. The appointment of the first Regional MHPSS Coordinator—hosted by HKRC—marked an important expansion in technical capacity, enabling more structured, timely, and efficient support to National Societies. The Collaborative's work has since been shaped by four primary areas of focus: providing technical support during emergencies, strengthening the competencies of staff and volunteers, promoting knowledge exchange throughout the region, and advocating for the sustained prioritization and resourcing of mental health and psychosocial wellbeing in humanitarian action.

### *Regional Achievements and Milestones*

Despite having a small core team consisting only of the Collaborative Lead and the Regional MHPSS Coordinator, the Collaborative supported 38 countries in Asia Pacific between 2021 and 2025. Since its establishment in 2021, the Asia Pacific MHPSS Collaborative has made significant progress in strengthening mental health and psychosocial support across the region, responding to **1,660 requests, delivering 61 trainings that equipped 1,079 people, and carrying out 32 advocacy initiatives that collectively reached over 505,702 individuals, with an additional 30,146,044 people engaged through social media.**

This support has contributed to significant milestones in numerous National Societies. Many conducted their first Psychological First Aid trainings, initiated their first emergency MHPSS responses, facilitated their first peer-learning exchanges, and developed or endorsed their first MHPSS policies and frameworks. These achievements reflect a growing regional commitment to establishing sustainable, community-rooted MHPSS systems that extend beyond immediate emergency response.





## Championing MHPSS in the Region: A Commitment and Financial Investment

Over the past five years, the Collaborative has demonstrated what sustained investment and shared commitment can achieve. With each passing year, it has grown stronger—not by chance, but because of the consistent energy, trust, and support provided by its partners.

Financial contributions have enabled continuity and innovation. Partners have supported key events that foster learning and collaboration. Many have stepped forward as advocates, championing regional MHPSS priorities and helping elevate mental health on decision-making agendas where it has too often been sidelined. This collective momentum sends a clear message: MHPSS matters, and it deserves long-term investment.

Equally significant is the leadership shown across the Movement. Leaders from IFRC and National Societies have reinforced this direction—by endorsing MHPSS, promoting it within strategic frameworks, and standing alongside practitioners and communities alike. Their engagement has helped normalize mental health as a shared responsibility, not a niche concern.

As we look ahead, sustained and increased investment in MHPSS is not simply an expression of goodwill—it is a strategic choice that defines the kind of humanitarian system we are building: one that places dignity, wellbeing, and human connection at its core.

### Donors and Partners List 2021-2025

#### Donors

- Hong Kong Red Cross (Branch of the Red Cross Society of China)
- IFRC Asia Pacific Regional and East Asia Country Cluster Delegation
- Japanese Red Cross Society
- Macau Red Cross Society (Branch of the Red Cross Society of China)
- Philippine Red Cross
- Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement MHPSS Hub
- Thai Red Cross Society

#### Partners in regional trainings and conferences

- Australian Red Cross
- Danish Red Cross in Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Nepal, and Myanmar
- Mongolian Red Cross
- PIROPS French Red Cross
- Singapore Red Cross
- Thai Red Cross Society



Asia Pacific Mental Health and Psychosocial Support Collaborative

## Overview of the Asia Pacific MHPSS Collaborative's Accomplishments and Milestones in 2025

In 2025, the Collaborative significantly strengthened national and regional Mental Health and Psychosocial Support (MHPSS) capacity across the IFRC network through sustained technical leadership, emergency support, and strategic partnerships. Throughout the year, the Collaborative responded to **578** formal requests from National Societies and IFRC offices, underscoring its role as a trusted technical resource and coordination platform for MHPSS.

### Assistance in Emergencies

**29** Emergency operations contributing to both preparedness and response

**127** Technical reviews of emergency-related documents

**130** Direct technical advice to National Societies

### Knowledge Management and Information Sharing

**04** AP MHPSS Network Meetings **4,589** People reached directly with MHPSS Key Messages

**12** AP MHPSS Collaborative Monthly Newsletters published

**10** MHPSS Technical Tools Developed or Contextualized

### MHPSS Capacity-building

**12** MHPSS Trainings organized or supported

**244** Staff and Volunteers attended the MHPSS Trainings

**206** Direct technical support to National Societies in non-emergency contexts

### Humanitarian Diplomacy and Resource Mobilization

**79** Engagements with NS, supporting their advocacy and coordination **04** Regional Conferences and Forums supported

**135** Participants reached with MHPSS advocacies **05** External Organizations engaged

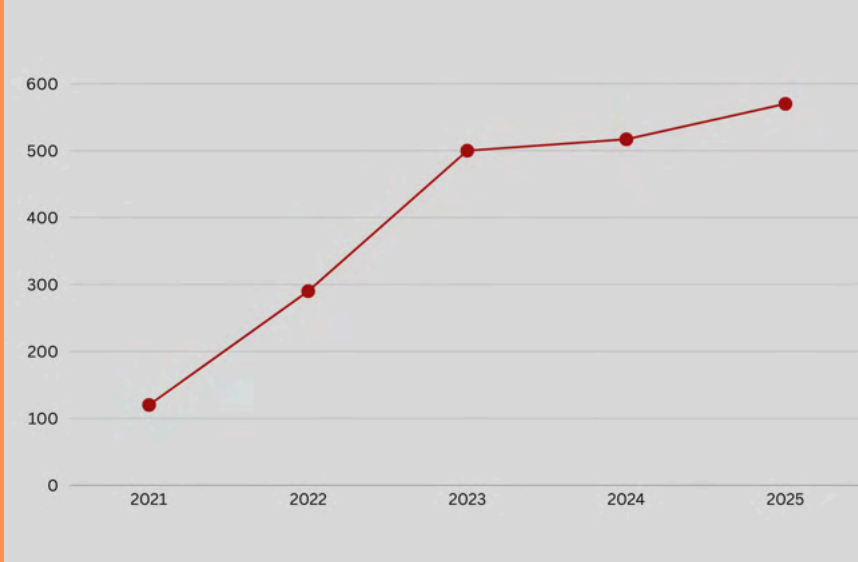
**06** MHPSS Project Proposals developed and submitted **18** Promotional videos developed and published

**41,041** People reached in social media



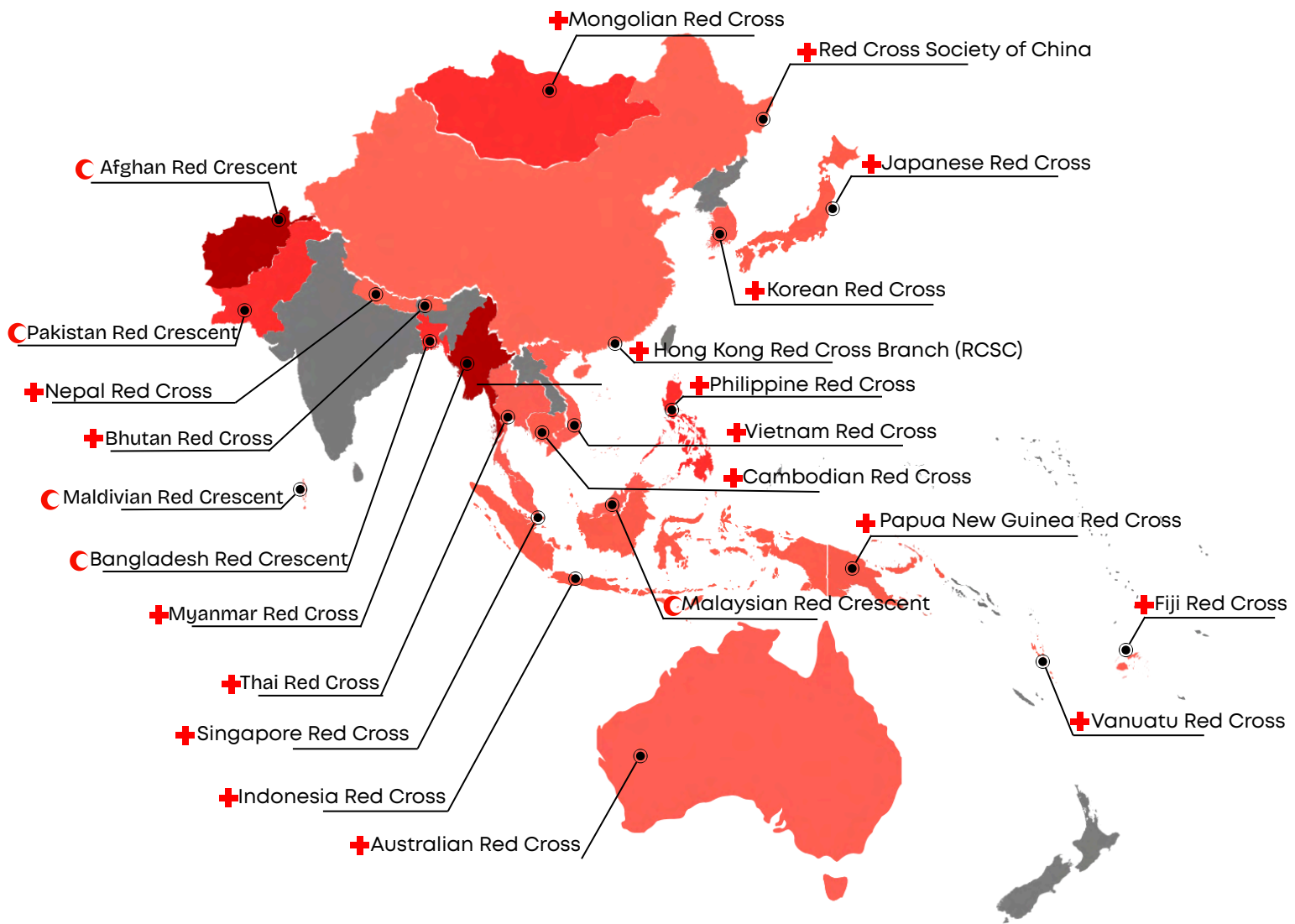
# Overview of Technical Requests Supported by the Asia Pacific MHPSS Collaborative (2021–2025)

Each year, the MHPSS technical needs have remained significant, and the Collaborative has consistently provided the support required to meet them.



## Technical Requests of Asia Pacific National Societies Supported by the Collaborative in 2026

- National Societies with Most Technical Support Provided**
- National Societies with Moderate Technical Support Provided**
- National Societies with Least Technical Support Provided**
- National Societies did not Request**





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Having a framework makes our work easier for everyone. It helps our management, staff, and volunteers clearly see what we are trying to do and where we want to go together.

Md. Saidul Islam, MHPSS Focal Person  
Bangladesh Red Crescent Society



“

When the earthquake happened, we didn't need to ask what to do. Our MHPSS Framework was already there. We opened it, followed it, and started the response. From the first days of the earthquake response, we were not alone. The Collaborative provided technical support immediately and helped us as the situation evolved.

Ya Min Khaing, MHPSS Focal Person  
Myanmar Red Cross Society



“

The MHPSS Framework is one of the most important documents of the Nepal Red Cross Society. It guides our MHPSS activities.

Tika Raj Paudyal, MHPSS Focal Person  
Nepal Red Cross Society



## MHPSS Framework Developments of National Societies

Across Asia Pacific, National Societies are increasingly recognizing mental health and psychosocial support (MHPSS) as essential to effective humanitarian action. In Myanmar, Bangladesh and Nepal, this shift has led to a major milestone: the development of dedicated MHPSS Frameworks—guiding documents that help move MHPSS from simple activities to a coherent, strategic, and scalable approach. Both journeys were nationally led, shaped by emergencies, and strengthened through Movement and regional collaboration with the Danish Red Cross and Asia Pacific MHPSS Collaborative.

### A Framework Ready When the Earthquake Hit Myanmar Red Cross Society

For the Myanmar Red Cross Society (MRCS), one of the most significant outcomes of support from the Danish Red Cross was the development of a national MHPSS Framework, created with additional technical support from the Asia Pacific MHPSS Collaborative.

This framework was not developed as a theoretical reference. It was designed to be operational and immediately deployable, providing clear guidance on roles, coordination structures, response phases, and recovery pathways for MHPSS in emergencies.

When a major earthquake struck Myanmar, the value of this preparation became immediately clear. MRCS did not need to design an MHPSS approach from scratch. The framework was already in place and readily available, allowing MHPSS services to be activated from the onset of the disaster and integrated into the broader emergency response.

The Collaborative's impact extended well beyond the existence of the framework itself. From the earliest days of the earthquake response, MRCS received immediate technical support to help refine interventions, address emerging challenges, and ensure alignment with global MHPSS standards.



This support was further strengthened through the deployment of an MHPSS Coordinator surge, reinforcing coordination and technical oversight during a demanding operational period.

Crucially, the Collaborative also ensured that technical support continued beyond the acute phase of the emergency, accompanying MRCS through recovery and longer-term system strengthening. MRCS later shared its experience during regional MHPSS network meetings, contributing practical lessons to other National Societies facing large-scale emergencies.

## Turning Experience into Direction

# Bangladesh Red Crescent Society



Since 2017, BDRCS has been implementing MHPSS activities especially in Cox's Bazar as a result of the influx of People from Rakhine (PFR) state in Myanmar. With increased capacity and experience of staff and volunteers, MHPSS interventions have been gradually and systematically expanded to the national Headquarters and other districts of the country through a mainstreamed approach. However, these efforts were carried out without a single guiding document to unify direction or strengthen internal advocacy. By mid-2022, it became experienced that MHPSS was still often neglected and impacted by stigma, including within organizational settings. This highlighted the need for a comprehensive framework to move MHPSS beyond fragmented activities and to guide long-term planning and mainstreaming within the organization.

To develop the framework, BDRCS relied on a Technical MHPSS Working Group and the team brought together multiple departments including health, disaster response, youth and volunteers, disaster risk management, and support units to inputs on the framework. While involving multiple units helped build broad ownership, it created coordination hurdles, including inconsistent meeting attendance and competing institutional priorities. The framework was eventually finalized after approximately one year of effort.

One strategic advantage: BDRCS already had MHPSS reflected in its Strategic Plan (2021–2025), a step strengthened during COVID-19 as the importance of MHPSS became more visible. This laid the groundwork for the framework and helped elevate MHPSS internally as a serious organisational priority.

What changed after the framework? A major shift was the formal inclusion of MHPSS in emergency response structures. MHPSS was integrated into disaster response teams—particularly through Mobile Medical Teams—moving beyond ad hoc activities into more systematic deployment.



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What began in 2018 as a response to the Rohingya crisis has become a central service provided by Bangladesh Red Crescent Society. Nearly eight years later, MHPSS services continue to provide invaluable support to people in the camps. This has transformed the National Society itself, with MHPSS now integrated into BDRCS's emergency response frameworks.

David Fogden, Country Cluster Manager  
Danish Red Cross in Bangladesh and Nepal

## From Emergency Response to National Society's Guidance

# Nepal Red Cross Society

In Nepal, MHPSS roots go back many years. NRCS described early psychosocial work linked to supporting families affected by conflict and missing family cases, followed by a major expansion during the 2015 earthquake, when psychosocial support became a more visible emergency response priority and continued in the years after.

Over time, this operational experience, combined with support from Movement partners such as Danish Red Cross, Hong Kong Red Cross, Canadian Red Cross, and Asia Pacific MHPSS Collaborative,



led NRCS to develop its own MHPSS Framework—described as one of the National Society's most important guiding documents for MHPSS programming. The framework is used to steer activities and support structured coordination not only internally, but also with national partners.

A key development linked to the framework has been stronger engagement with government systems. NRCS described collaborating with government counterparts (including Ministry of Health structures) through joint trainings, awareness events, and coordination around mental health priorities—using the framework as evidence of organisational readiness and commitment.

NRCS also highlighted internal institutional progress, including the establishment of an MHPSS unit at headquarters, and an ambition to strengthen focal point capacity across provinces and districts—showing how a framework can enable not just programming choices, but organisational structures.



“ In the wake of the Jajarkot earthquake in 2023, DRCs collaboration with the Nepal Red Cross Society (NRCS) and the MHPSS Collaborative was born out of urgent need. It has evolved from emergency technical support into a long-term strategic effort. By moving from that response to the development of a MHPSS framework, NRCS is now not only mainstreaming mental health into preparedness and response but also shaping Nepal's national approach alongside the government.

David Fogden, Country Cluster Manager  
Danish Red Cross in Bangladesh and Nepal

## Regional collaboration: turning capacity building into national impact

Across the region, collaboration ensured that MHPSS frameworks were not only developed but operational when emergencies occurred. In Myanmar, Bangladesh, and Nepal, regional support helped National Societies translate training and technical guidance into real system-level impact.

In Myanmar, the Asia Pacific MHPSS Collaborative ensured the MHPSS Response and Recovery Framework was in place and actively used when the earthquake struck, supported by early technical assistance, MHPSS Coordinator surge, and continued guidance into recovery.

In Bangladesh, Collaborative-supported training—covering Psychological First Aid, Training of Trainers, and MHPSS in Emergencies—strengthened staff and volunteer readiness and enabled the integration of MHPSS into disaster response structures. In Nepal, technical guidance and training pathways supported government-facing work, including training of health workers and community-level actors.



What began in training rooms became meaningful support in evacuation centers. The Thai Red Cross Society demonstrated how learning, practice, and compassion converge in crisis response.

Pichamon Waiprom  
and Itsaraporn Palasak  
MHPSS Focal Persons  
Thai Red Cross Society



In the Philippines, emergencies come again and again. The trainings since 2023 helped us prepare before the disaster—not while it is already happening.

When operations start, we already know our roles. During these trainings, we don't just listen. We practise as if we are already responding. That's why, when a typhoon or earthquake hits, we can act immediately.

Andrea Tancioco, MHPSS Focal Person  
Philippine Red Cross





## Strengthening MHPSS Preparedness and Response

When emergencies strike, the ability to respond effectively depends not only on goodwill, but on systems that are already in place. Across the Asia Pacific region, sustained investment by the Asia Pacific Mental Health and Psychosocial Support (MHPSS) Collaborative has helped National Red Cross societies move beyond isolated training events toward preparedness-driven, coordinated, and scalable MHPSS responses.

In the Philippines and Thailand, this support translated into faster response times, clearer coordination, and stronger protection for people's mental health during crises.

## Preparedness Through Repeated Training and Practice

### Philippine Red Cross

Since 2023, the Asia Pacific MHPSS Collaborative has worked closely with the Philippine Red Cross (PRC) to strengthen its readiness for emergencies through sustained training support rather than one-off interventions. The focus has been clear and strategic, with consistent emphasis on MHPSS in Emergencies and the establishment and management of Child-Friendly Spaces.

Through a series of structured trainings, PRC staff and volunteers strengthened their ability to provide Psychological First Aid in emergency settings, set up safe and supportive spaces for children affected by disasters, and integrate MHPSS activities into emergency response operations at chapter and branch levels. This approach recognized the Philippine context of recurring typhoons, earthquakes, and climate-related disasters, and placed preparedness at the center of humanitarian action.

Each training cycle refreshed existing knowledge, introduced updated practices, and expanded the pool of trained responders. This ensured continuity of capacity despite staff and volunteer turnover and allowed PRC to maintain readiness across multiple emergencies over time.



The Collaborative's role extended beyond training delivery. Through ongoing technical accompaniment, it supported PRC in refining training content, contextualizing tools, and drawing on regional experiences to strengthen implementation. As a result, PRC has been able to respond more quickly and confidently during disasters, with MHPSS and Child-Friendly Space activities embedded into standard response mechanisms rather than treated as optional add-ons.

## When Training and Operations Work Hand in Hand **Thai Red Cross Society**



In Thailand, the strength of the Thai Red Cross Society (TRCS) MHPSS response lies in institutional collaboration. Two departments worked closely together, each playing a distinct but complementary role. The First Aid and Health Care Training Center focused on developing MHPSS materials, contextualizing tools, and conducting structured training for staff and volunteers, while the Relief and Community Health Bureau ensured that this capacity was translated into operational MHPSS response during emergencies.

Since 2023, both departments have benefited from training and technical support facilitated by the Asia Pacific MHPSS Collaborative. Knowledge gained through these trainings was deliberately cascaded to

provincial and local levels, building a shared understanding of MHPSS principles across departments and strengthening institutional coherence.

This collaboration proved critical during the tensions at the Thailand - Cambodia border in 2025, which displaced families and generated significant psychosocial distress. Drawing on capacities developed through training, the Relief and Community Health Bureau rapidly activated MHPSS teams to respond in evacuation centres. At the same time, the foundation built by the First Aid and Health Care Training Department ensured consistency in approaches, quality of services, and adherence to agreed MHPSS standards.

TRCS teams established safe spaces, delivered Psychological First Aid, and tailored support for children, adults, and older persons affected by the crisis. The response demonstrated how strong institutional coordination and preparedness can transform training investments into effective, timely humanitarian action.



Across the Philippines and Thailand, the lesson is unmistakable: preparedness matters. It saves time when every minute counts, protects dignity amid crisis, and raises the quality of response when systems are under strain. The Asia Pacific MHPSS Collaborative's impact is not found in one-off interventions, but in what exists before disaster strikes—systems strengthened through sustained training, technical accompaniment, surge support, and regional peer learning.

By showing up early and staying alongside National Societies, the Collaborative has helped ensure readiness is built, not rushed. When crises hit, MHPSS responses are not improvised or delayed; they are immediate, coordinated, and grounded in care—because the foundations were laid long before the emergency began.



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All the trainings I attended from the Collaborative gave me a lot of inspiration, motivation, and very specific skills. Seeing MHPSS in practice and talking about it in depth made me feel very well prepared.

Iris Trapman, MHPSS Delegate  
Australian Red Cross



“

The training helped me better understand protection needs in humanitarian settings and how to advocate for them within and beyond MHPSS.

Rebecca Dale, MHPSS Delegate  
Australian Red Cross



“

The Collaborative provides technical support not only for training, but before, during, and after deployment.

Kyoko Miyamoto, MHPSS Delegate  
Japanese Red Cross



## Developing MHPSS Surge Delegate Rosters in Asia Pacific

As humanitarian crises become more complex and protracted, National Societies across Asia Pacific are investing in one critical asset: people. Building and sustaining Mental Health and Psychosocial Support (MHPSS) delegate rosters ensures that skilled professionals are ready to deploy, support National Societies, and strengthen emergency responses when they are most needed.

The experiences of the Australian Red Cross, Japanese Red Cross Society, and Hong Kong Red Cross Branch of the Red Cross Society of China demonstrate how deliberate planning, rigorous standards, and regional collaboration can transform MHPSS capacity from training into sustained deployment readiness.

## Reinvigorating the MHPSS Delegate Profile with Rigor and Purpose

### Australian Red Cross

In 2022, the Australian Red Cross (ARC) deliberately revitalised the Mental Health and Psychosocial Support (MHPSS) profile within its Delegate Register to strengthen its capacity for IFRC Surge deployments in the Asia Pacific, while responding to ICRC's increasing global demand for experienced MHPSS professionals.

ARC prioritised quality and readiness over rapid growth. The MHPSS profile was rigorously reviewed in collaboration with the Asia Pacific MHPSS Collaborative and ICRC technical counterparts to ensure strong competency and operational alignment. Professional accountability was central: all ARC MHPSS delegates are required to maintain annual Australian Health Practitioner Regulation Agency (AHPRA) registration, anchoring deployments in robust clinical standards and ethics.

Recruitment aligned with Movement standards, assessing candidates against technical, behavioural, and operational competencies consistent with the IFRC Core Competency Framework and ICRC MHPSS requirements. Interviews were strengthened with MHPSS-specific technical questions and conducted jointly by ARC and the Collaborative, embedding regional and global perspectives into selection.



Collaboration continued beyond recruitment. Delegates entered the register with individualized development plans co-designed with the IFRC AP MHPSS Coordinator, supported by further ICRC technical interviews to ensure operational readiness.

This approach has delivered tangible results. ARC now has four psychologists on its international MHPSS delegate register, three ERU-trained. One has deployed multiple times with ICRC, including to Gaza and Ukraine, while another now facilitates ERU MHPSS trainings—demonstrating how intentional design, professional rigour, and close collaboration translate recruitment into sustained surge capacity.

For Australian delegates, regional training from the Collaborative has played a defining role in preparing them for the realities of humanitarian deployment.

## Structured MHPSS Training to Develop Deployable Expertise

### Japanese Red Cross Society



The Japanese Red Cross Society has one of the most structured and long-running approaches to MHPSS capacity development in the region. Since 2016, JRCS has delivered regular MHPSS and psychosocial support trainings, gradually building a broad base of trained staff and a smaller, specialised MHPSS delegate roster eligible for deployment

While more than 200 staff have cumulatively participated in MHPSS-related learning over the years, entry into the delegate roster follows a clear capacity-building pyramid, with multiple levels of progression and increasingly advanced training requirements, alongside the need for field experience. Currently, a core group of highly trained and experienced MHPSS delegates positioned at the upper levels of this structure is actively contributing in the field and playing a leading role in advancing JRCS's MHPSS capacity development—reflecting a focus on quality, readiness, and accountability.

The Asia Pacific MHPSS Collaborative has supported this system at critical points: facilitating regional MHPSS in Emergency trainings, advising on curriculum, and providing technical accompaniment before, during, and after deployments. This includes briefing and mentoring junior delegates ahead of their first international missions and maintaining technical linkages throughout deployments.

This continuity has helped JRCS ensure that deployments are not isolated learning events, but part of a longer professional development pathway for MHPSS delegates.

## Beyond Training - Learning Through Practice

### Hong Kong Red Cross Branch of Red Cross Society of China

While Hong Kong Red Cross Branch does not yet formalize its MHPSS delegate pool through a standalone roster document, it actively maintains a pool of trained MHPSS practitioners who are progressively prepared for deployment through layered technical training and real-world exposure.

In collaboration with the Asia Pacific MHPSS Collaborative, HKRC emphasises capacity building beyond the classroom. This includes involving aspiring delegates in shadow deployments, working side-by-side with the MHPSS Coordinator of the Collaborative in contexts such as Nepal. These experiences allow practitioners to translate training into practice, observe coordination dynamics, and build confidence in complex humanitarian environments.

This approach recognises that technical competence in MHPSS requires more than knowledge—it requires exposure, mentorship, and reflective learning.



“

Shadow missions allow learning to continue beyond training—and prepare practitioners for real response environments.

Prednison Morales, MHPSS Regional Coordinator  
IFRC Asia Pacific Region

As emergencies grow more complex and protracted, the region's capacity to deploy qualified MHPSS professionals will remain essential. The experiences of Australia, Japan, and Hong Kong show that strong rosters are built over time—through training, exposure, mentorship, and regional solidarity.



“

For ARCS addressing MHPSS needs is not optional, it is a critical part of humanitarian response. We integrated MHPSS in health, livelihood, and emergency response to ensure that communities and individuals in need receive comprehensive and dignified support.

Dr Masiullah Masih, MHPSS Focal Person  
Afghan Red Crescent Society



## Mental Health and Psychosocial Support in Emergencies

Mental health and psychosocial support (MHPSS) is a vital part of humanitarian response. It helps protect the wellbeing and resilience of people facing crises. Whether a crisis grows slowly over many years or happens suddenly, the psychological impact can be overwhelming—bringing stress, fear, grief, and the loss of social connections.

In long-running emergencies like Afghanistan, decades of conflict, displacement, economic hardship, and frequent natural hazards have created ongoing distress. Women, children, and people with disabilities are often the most affected and have the least access to help. In these situations, MHPSS meets people’s immediate emotional needs while also supporting long-term recovery. It helps individuals regain coping skills and strengthens their sense of safety and dignity—both of which are worn down by prolonged instability.

Sudden urban emergencies show another side of mental health and psychosocial needs. The Wang Fuk Court fire in Hong Kong—one of the city’s worst high-rise fires—caused deaths, displacement, and deep emotional trauma. Fast MHPSS action, including psychological first aid and continued emotional support, helped stabilize survivors, reconnect families, and reduce the risk of long-term psychological harm. Urban disasters can break apart communities within hours, but timely and accessible MHPSS helps people cope, reconnect, and begin rebuilding.

Across both long-term and sudden crises, MHPSS is a lifeline—protecting mental wellbeing when it is most vulnerable and supporting recovery long after the immediate danger has passed.

## MHPSS in a Protracted Crisis in Afghanistan

Afghanistan continues to face one of the world’s most complex and protracted humanitarian crises. Each year, communities endure floods, earthquakes, displacement, deepening poverty, and the lasting consequences of decades of conflict. These recurring shocks have created layers of distress, where individuals often face multiple stressors at the same time—loss of livelihoods, separation from family members, bereavement, and limited access to health and MHPSS. The impact on people’s well-being has been profound.





For the Afghan Red Crescent Society (ARCS), addressing mental health and psychosocial needs is not an optional addition to humanitarian action—it is an essential part of protecting dignity, safety, and resilience. Recognizing the scale of psychological distress in the country, ARCS has integrated MHPSS within its emergency response, health programs, and livelihood services to ensure that communities receive holistic, dignified, and meaningful support.

Across Afghanistan, many people continue various mental health and psychosocial concerns, while access to trained mental health professionals remains extremely limited, particularly in rural areas.

To address these gaps, ARCS—together with the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC), the Danish Red Cross (DRC), and the MHPSS Collaborative—has strengthened a wide range of community-based services, from psychological first aid to longer-term psychosocial care.

## Shared Leadership and Long-term Collaboration



Under the shared leadership of IFRC and the Danish Red Cross, ARCS has received sustained support to advance its MHPSS services. The Danish Red Cross and the MHPSS Collaborative have been working closely together for several years, jointly designing and delivering trainings that build the capacity of ARCS teams across the country. This long-standing collaboration has included conducting Psychological First Aid trainings, enhancing ARCS' ability to deliver PFA training themselves, and strengthening approaches for Caring for Staff and Volunteers. The Collaborative's technical expertise, combined with the Danish Red Cross's operational leadership, has created a strong foundation for high-quality and context-appropriate capacity building within ARCS.

A key area of this partnership has been support to the ARCS Marastoon Social Support Centres and Mental Health Rehabilitation Centres. These institutions provide essential care for individuals experiencing acute psychosocial distress, mental health conditions and different types of disabilities including those with no family support. Through joint efforts, the centres have strengthened their ability to provide rehabilitation, counseling, and safe, structured support for some of Afghanistan's most vulnerable groups.

## Toward a Comprehensive MHPSS Framework for ARCS

Building on these foundations, the Danish Red Cross and the MHPSS Collaborative are now supporting ARCS in planning the development of a comprehensive MHPSS Framework. This framework will guide the National Society in structuring and scaling its MHPSS programme across emergency, recovery, and long-term care settings. It is expected to define strategic priorities, clarify roles and coordination mechanisms, outline core services across the MHPSS continuum, and establish standards for quality, safeguarding, and inclusion. This work will be aligned with IFRC Movement guidance and IASC best practices.

## Holistic Support for Communities Across Afghanistan

Across the country, ARCS volunteers and MHPSS teams continue to play a vital role in providing integrated support—from emergency response and psychological first aid to livelihood assistance for vulnerable women and specialized mental health services. Their work strengthens community resilience, supports people in distress, and promotes long-term recovery and social cohesion.

Through the collective efforts of ARCS, IFRC, the Danish Red Cross, and the MHPSS Collaborative, Afghanistan’s MHPSS system is being strengthened to meet the needs of communities living through prolonged hardship—ensuring that mental well-being remains at the heart of humanitarian response and long-term recovery.



## Leading MHPSS in Urban Disasters Through Multi-Layered and Cross-Border Collaboration

### Hong Kong Red Cross Branch of Red Cross Society of China

As host of the Asia Pacific MHPSS Collaborative, the Hong Kong Red Cross (HKRC) not only coordinates and offers technical guidance to the region but also actively demonstrates what principled and effective mental health and psychosocial support (MHPSS) looks like in practice. This leadership became especially clear during one of Hong Kong’s most serious recent urban emergencies—the fire at Wang Fuk Court in Tai Po.

The disaster struck a densely populated estate, resulting in 168 deaths and the displacement of more than 1,900 households. Urban emergencies of this scale create a cascade of MHPSS needs: sudden displacement, loss of social support, interruption of daily routines, trauma, grief, and uncertainty about the future. These impacts were also acute among the community’s migrant domestic workers, over 230 of whom lived in the affected estate.



From the very first day, HKRC initiated a wide-ranging MHPSS operation grounded in the layered model of care and delivered across multiple parts of the city. HKRC volunteers and staff provided emotional support at mortuaries, hospitals, fire stations, and ambulance depots, staying beside families and survivors during some of their most painful and uncertain moments.

This presence continued throughout the entire difficult journey—body identification process, funerals, community relief activities, mobile medical clinic, and cash distribution events—ensuring MHPSS remained core and integrated into all emergency response.



To further expand access, the HKRC Psychological Support Hotline transitioned into a 24-hour service which last for 2 months, offering Cantonese, Mandarin, English, Bahasa Indonesia and Filipino language options, enabling affected callers to speak and share in their mother tongues. Through these combined efforts, HKRC reached over 3,700 people, illustrating how an urban National Society can rapidly mobilize across multiple levels of psychological and emotional support.



Because there were some deceased and injured migrant domestic workers, HKRC embraced a culturally attuned approach. Key psychoeducation materials were translated into Bahasa Indonesia and Filipino, and shared widely through migrant community networks. Indonesian and Filipino volunteers—including mental health professionals living in Hong Kong—were mobilized so that survivors could speak with people who understood their cultural context, fears, and coping styles.

HKRC also coordinated with the Philippine Red Cross and Palang Merah Indonesia (PMI), ensuring that bereaved families in home countries received timely mental health and psychosocial support and cash assistance, via our global Red Cross Red Crescent Movement. This cross-border collaboration showed that urban disasters often affect transnational communities—and humanitarian responsibility must follow them across borders.



As recovery efforts progressed, HKRC launched a major new initiative: the Mobile MHPSS Support Station. Introduced in February 2026, the mobile vehicle brought psychosocial care directly to transitional housing areas and affected neighbourhoods in the truck-transformed-counseling room. Professional staff and volunteers offered psycho-education on stress and coping, and provided individual counselling through on-board psychologists and social workers. The mobile unit ensured that even those who could not travel still had access to compassionate, professional support.

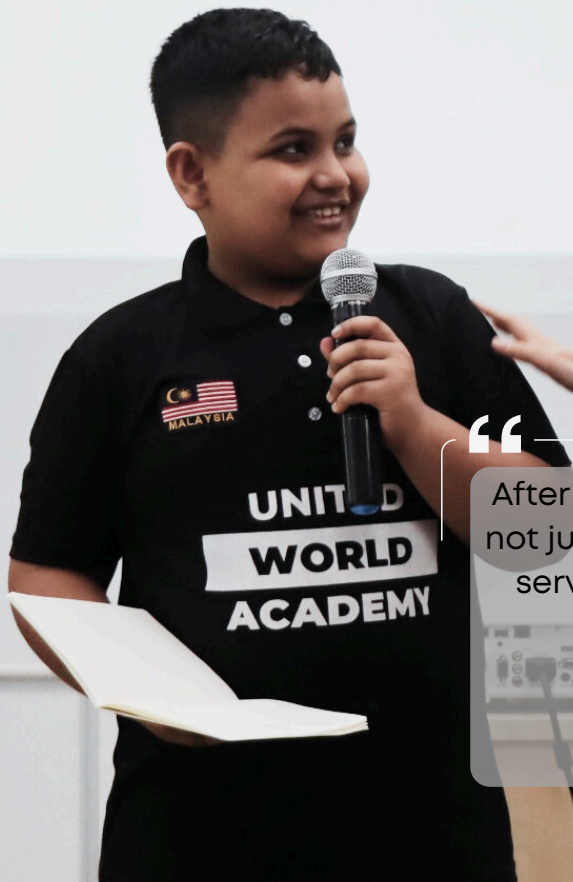


The team also ensured that support reached people of all ages and physical abilities. Some survivors—especially older adults and people with chronic illnesses, were too weak or unable to leave their homes. For them, HKRC psychologists and trained volunteers took MHPSS “to the doorstep,” conducting home visits to provide counselling, check-ins, and psychological first aid. These visits ensured that no one was left behind, and that care reached even the most isolated individuals during their time of greatest need.

Through its response to the Wang Fuk Court fire, HKRC showed what it means to place mental wellbeing at the heart of humanitarian action. The operation became a living example of the principles the Asia Pacific MHPSS Collaborative promotes: inclusiveness, cultural sensitivity, and timely, integrated mental health and psychosocial support.

Whether inside mortuaries, at community centres, through a 24-hour hotline, or via a mobile truck travelling into affected districts, HKRC demonstrated that MHPSS is not an optional add-on—it is fundamental to restoring dignity and humanity in the aftermath of disaster. The lessons from this response now help shape guidance across the region, inspiring other National Societies to strengthen their own MHPSS systems—one community, one crisis, and one person at a time.

WHAT HELPS YOU  
FEEL BETTER?



“

After the Training of Trainers, we started to see PFA not just as something we deliver internally, but as a service that communities and institutions value and are willing to pay for.

Noorulhuda Ismail, MHPSS Focal Person  
Malaysian Red Crescent Society



“

We are deeply appreciative of the strong support from the Collaborative. The shared expertise, peer learning, and spirit of solidarity have strengthened our work and reaffirmed the value of collective action in advancing quality psychosocial support across the region.

Durga Naidu, MHPSS Focal Person  
Singapore Red Cross



## Making MHPSS Sustainable: Commercialization of MHPSS Training

For many National Societies, delivering Mental Health and Psychosocial Support (MHPSS) is a core humanitarian responsibility. Ensuring that these services are sustainable over time, however, remains a persistent challenge across the Movement. In Southeast Asia, this question is being approached from two complementary angles: through the emerging efforts of the Malaysian Red Crescent to commercialize Psychological First Aid (PFA) training, and through the longer-established experience of the Singapore Red Cross, whose Academy has integrated MHPSS into a professional, revenue-generating humanitarian education model.

In Malaysia, the decision to explore the commercialization of selected MHPSS trainings reflects a growing recognition that quality psychosocial support cannot rely on short-term funding alone. Inspired in part by regional peer learning and technical exchange with Singapore Red Cross, Malaysian Red Crescent has framed commercialization not as a departure from humanitarian values, but as a means to reinvest in people, systems, and community-based psychosocial services.

### From Training of Trainers to Public PFA Courses

#### Malaysian Red Crescent Society

Malaysian Red Crescent's progress towards commercialized PFA training was built on a foundation of capacity strengthening. Following a PFA Training of Trainers held in late 2023 by the Singapore Red Cross and series of regional training organized by the Asia Pacific MHPSS Collaborative since 2021, MHPSS staff and facilitators gained increased confidence in both content delivery and training management. This experience encouraged the organisation to move beyond internal capacity-building for staff and volunteers and begin offering structured PFA trainings to external audiences.

In 2025, Malaysian Red Crescent delivered its first public, fee-based PFA trainings. These sessions, conducted in July and December, represented an important milestone in the organization's resource mobilization efforts. While enrolment was initially slow due to limited marketing capacity and a small pool of available facilitators, the initiative demonstrated that there is public interest in accessible, Red Cross-led psychosocial training.



Alongside public courses, Malaysian Red Crescent also expanded its MHPSS reach through institutional partnerships. Psychosocial trainings delivered to immigration officers were among the organization's earliest examples of paid MHPSS services. These sessions complemented existing first aid and migration-related trainings and responded directly to the needs of frontline personnel working under high stress conditions.

Feedback from participants was strongly positive, reinforcing the relevance and applicability of Psychological First Aid skills in professional contexts. These early successes further strengthened the case for integrating MHPSS commercialization within the organization's strategic framework.



## Learning from Singapore Red Cross' Experience

Singapore Red Cross has emerged as an important regional reference point for sustainable MHPSS training. Through the Singapore Red Cross Academy, psychosocial trainings have long been offered as part of a structured and professionalized humanitarian education system in Singapore. Courses such as Psychological First Aid and Advanced Psychological First Aid are delivered to the public, corporates, and institutions, demonstrating how MHPSS can be both accessible and financially viable.

In addition to its national work, Singapore Red Cross has contributed significantly to regional capacity building. In 2023, it hosted and supported the participation of MHPSS focal points from National Societies across the region in a PFA Training of Trainers. It has also provided peer support to Malaysian Red Crescent, particularly in strengthening facilitation skills and improving training delivery practices.

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“Sustainable MHPSS is built through systems that invest in quality, people, and long-term learning.”

Durga Naidu, MHPSS Focal Person  
Singapore Red Cross



Although still in its early stages, Malaysian Red Crescent's commercialization of PFA training has already produced tangible results. MHPSS has become more visible as a professional service, new entry points with institutions and corporate partners have emerged, and internal discussions around sustainability have gained momentum. This progress has been shaped not only by local experimentation, but also by exposure to regional practice—particularly the experience of the Singapore Red Cross, whose Academy has long demonstrated how structured, market-responsive MHPSS training can strengthen both reach and organisational resilience.

At the same time, the Malaysian experience has highlighted areas for improvement. Limited marketing capacity affected participant recruitment, while reliance on a small number of facilitators constrained growth. These challenges mirror lessons already addressed within the Singapore Red Cross Academy model, where dedicated training infrastructure, a broader facilitator pool, and diversified course offerings support scalability. There is also increasing demand among Malaysian volunteers and frontline responders for more advanced, trauma-informed MHPSS content, reinforcing the importance of clear learning pathways and strengthened referral mechanisms—areas where continued regional learning and peer support remain essential.

## The Role of the Asia Pacific MHPSS Collaborative



The Collaborative played a critical role in strengthening MHPSS systems in both Malaysia and Singapore, demonstrating how regional platforms can support capacity building across differing levels of organisational maturity.

For the Malaysian Red Crescent, the Collaborative provided consistent technical backing through regular network meetings, structured knowledge exchange, and access to shared training resources. Core modules such as Psychological First Aid, Caring for Volunteers, and Child Friendly Spaces were adapted and contextualised to the Malaysian setting, enabling the organisation to deliver trainings that were both globally aligned and locally relevant.

At the same time, the Collaborative also supported capacity development within the Singapore Red Cross Academy. Engagement through the Collaborative contributed to strengthening the competencies of the Academy's professional trainers, particularly in refining facilitation skills and incorporating new training approaches. This included exposure to emerging methodologies such as Psychological First Aid in Groups and Child Friendly Spaces in Emergencies, which enhanced the Academy's ability to respond to diverse learning needs while maintaining high professional standards.



Beyond technical content, the Collaborative created a space for collective reflection on sustainability. Through peer learning and dialogue, National Societies at different stages of development were able to exchange experiences on how to balance service delivery, quality assurance, and resource mobilisation. For Malaysian Red Crescent, Singapore's experience offered a practical benchmark for what a mature, structured MHPSS training model can look like. For Singapore Red Cross, engagement in the Collaborative reinforced continuous improvement, ensuring that even established training systems evolve in line with emerging practices and regional priorities.



“ Integrating PFA into First Aid helps ensure that every volunteer can offer humane, respectful support from the very first contact with affected people.

Soulany Chansy, MHPSS Focal Person  
Lao Red Cross



“ This manual is a handy, accessible guide for trained volunteers, offering clear steps, reminders, and referrals to support them—and our staff—when responding in challenging situations.

Salote Maramaraciriciri MHPSS Focal Person  
Fiji Red Cross Society



## Psychological First Aid for All: PFA Integration to First Aid

When people rush to help in an emergency, it is often a first aider who arrives first. Increasingly, those first responders are also becoming a source of psychological support, offering calm presence, practical help, and human connection in moments of distress.

Across Lao PDR and the Pacific, Red Cross Societies are working to ensure that Psychological First Aid (PFA) is no longer a stand-alone skill, but a core part of First Aid, embedded in everyday preparedness and emergency response. With technical accompaniment from the Asia Pacific MHPSS Collaborative, this shift is already changing how communities experience care in times of crisis.

### Integrating PFA into First Aid Training Programs

#### Lao Red Cross

In Lao People’s Democratic Republic, the Lao Red Cross (LRC) has taken a deliberate step to integrate Psychological First Aid into its First Aid training curriculum. This integration started in 2023 which reflects a growing recognition that First Aid volunteers are often the first—and sometimes the only—humanitarian actors present during emergencies, placing them in a critical position to provide immediate psychosocial support.



Rather than establishing a separate psychosocial training pathway, LRC focused on embedding PFA principles directly within existing First Aid modules. This ensured that all First Aid trainees, not only those specializing in mental health and psychosocial support, could develop foundational skills in calming distressed individuals, listening with empathy, and offering practical, dignity-based support during emergencies.

Importantly, embedding PFA within routine First Aid training cycles has created a sustainable pathway for scale. By using existing training structures, LRC has expanded the reach of PFA without requiring parallel systems or additional specialist resources, making the approach both efficient and adaptable for future emergency response.

As a result, First Aid training at LRC has evolved both in content and in practice. Training sessions now explicitly address emotional and psychological reactions to emergencies, helping volunteers feel more confident and prepared when encountering people in shock, fear, or acute distress. This integrated approach has also strengthened coordination between First Aid and MHPSS teams, reducing fragmentation and reinforcing a shared understanding of response priorities.

The integration process has been accompanied by technical reflection and exchange supported by the IFRC Bangkok CCD through engagement with the Asia Pacific MHPSS Collaborative and funded by the Japanese Red Cross, helping Lao Red Cross align its work with the International Red Cross Red Crescent Movement standards while ensuring relevance to the national context.



## A Regional Shift in the Pacific

Since COVID-19, the Collaborative have been supporting Pacific National Societies through extensive online trainings and training-of-trainers programmes, strengthening their MHPSS skills despite travel restrictions. These efforts have laid a strong foundation for emergency response, and we hope to conduct in-person trainings in 2026 to further enhance capacity.

This groundwork proved invaluable after the 7.3-magnitude earthquake struck Vanuatu in December 2024. The Vanuatu Red Cross Society (VRCS) prioritized developing a simplified, context-specific PFA manual to equip frontline volunteers with practical tools. With technical support from the French Red Cross, IFRC Suva, and the Collaborative, VRCS collaborated closely with the Fiji Red Cross Society to tailor materials to Pacific realities. Produced under the AFD-funded “3 Oceans” project, the manuals use culturally relevant language and scenarios and are designed to be shared across Pacific National Societies, promoting harmonized and locally grounded PFA practice.



## Peer-to-Peer Learning Strengthening Samoa Red Cross Society



Regional collaboration has also been central to strengthening PFA implementation during health emergencies. In 2025, during a dengue fever outbreak in Samoa, Mental Health and Psychosocial Support was integrated into the DREF response led by the Samoa Red Cross Society (SRCS). The response prioritised psychosocial support for families experiencing illness, bereavement, and economic hardship linked to hospitalisation and loss of income.

Basic PFA training for staff and volunteers was delivered with peer-to-peer technical assistance from the Fiji Red Cross Society, demonstrating the value of National Societies supporting one another during active emergencies. This collaboration was further strengthened through the Psychological First Aid Online Training of Trainers, facilitated by the Asia Pacific MHPSS Collaborative, which equipped national focal points to cascade skills and sustain capacity beyond the immediate response.



## Our Way Forward

### The Collaborative's Plan for 2026

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In 2026, the MHPSS Collaborative will deepen its commitment to strengthening Mental Health and Psychosocial Support across the Asia Pacific Region, focusing on the people and communities most affected by protracted and evolving crises. With humanitarian needs intensifying in **Afghanistan, Pakistan, Myanmar, and Bangladesh**, the Collaborative will prioritize sustained technical support to National Societies, ensuring they are equipped to provide timely, culturally grounded, and continuous *MHPSS services to those facing conflict, displacement, and climate-driven emergencies*.

To better accompany the region, the Collaborative will expand its sub-regional support model. In *East Asia, efforts will centre on integrating MHPSS into large-scale disaster preparedness systems*, ensuring that psychosocial care is embedded in contingency planning and national response mechanisms. In *Southeast Asia, the Collaborative will invest in developing country-level pools of MHPSS surge delegates*, strengthening local capacity to respond rapidly and reducing reliance on external deployments. In the *Pacific, where communities are increasingly affected by severe storms and climate-related shocks, the focus will be on scaling up Psychological First Aid and MHPSS in Emergencies, reaching even the most remote island communities*.

**A key priority for 2026 is to be more present on the ground.** The Collaborative will increase direct engagement with National Societies through country missions, hands-on technical accompaniment, and in-person capacity building. This presence will ensure that MHPSS systems are strengthened sustainably, grounded in local realities, and aligned with the needs of frontline responders and affected populations.

To sustain this work, the Collaborative will intensify humanitarian diplomacy and resource mobilization, positioning MHPSS as an essential component of emergency response, recovery, and resilience. By engaging closely with donors, partners, and governments, the Collaborative aims to secure long-term investment in MHPSS and to amplify the voices of communities whose mental health needs often remain unseen.

In a region marked by ongoing crises and climate-driven risks, the Collaborative remains committed to ensuring that every National Society has the capacity, tools, and support needed to protect the mental health and dignity of people in the most vulnerable situations. With donor partnership, the Asia Pacific can move closer to a future where MHPSS is not optional—but a fundamental pillar of humanitarian action.



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***Asia Pacific Mental Health and  
Psychosocial Support  
Collaborative***