

PRACTICAL HYGIENE MEASURES FOR PSYCHOSOCIAL SUPPORT (PSS) FOCUSED NON-SPECIALIZED SERVICES FOR WOMEN & GIRLS DURING COVID-19 OUTBREAK

Women and Girls Safe Spaces (WGSS)

are a formal place where women and girls feel physically and emotionally safe and feel comfortable, enjoy the freedom of expression without judgment or harm, in the absence of trauma, excessive stress, violence and/or fear of violence, and abuse. Women and Girls Safe Spaces (WGSS), are an effective psychosocial support intervention, and provide beneficiaries with the opportunities to: Access services and information; engage with each other; exchange information; and rebuild and re-establish their community network and support – thus, strengthening their social assets.

THE VARIOUS SERVICES AT THE WGSS ARE:

- ▶ Social support,
- ▶ Holistic multi-sectorial and interdisciplinary GBV services (psychosocial, legal, case management, and safe referrals).

THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC OUTBREAK MIGHT RESULT IN EMERGING IMPACTS ON GENDER; THESE INCLUDE:

Impact on women's economic empowerment, especially those participating in economic activities and those working in the informal sector; therefore, increasing the gender gaps in livelihoods.

Increase in burden of women and girls' unpaid domestic and care work during lock down.

Increasing GBV and protection risks, particularly women and girls who are at-risk and/or survivors of GBV at the household; or in the case of a survivor being trapped in lockdown/-self-isolation with their abuser where due to heightened tensions in the household, intimate partner violence (IPV) is increased. Life-saving care and support to GBV survivors (including case management and clinical management of rape) may be disrupted.

Interrupted access to sexual and reproductive health, women and girls' access to reproductive health services may be disrupted to contain the outbreak; placing pregnant and lactating women at greater risk – including limiting their access to pre- and post-natal healthcare services.

Focused Psychosocial Support (PSS) is a scale of care and support on a continuum that entails the provision of structured and focused interventions geared towards strengthening the support between the individual and the social environment. The support is offered by trained service providers that focus on the individuals' cognitive, affective, and social needs. Example of focused PSS includes: Basic lifeskills training for women and girls that include a cycle of 10-sessions.

Following the Covid-19 pandemic outbreak, it is strongly advisable and vital to continue providing access to WGSS to ensure continuation of case management of high-risk cases, individual counselling and focused PSS with high attention and precautionary measures taken to deal with Covid-19.

All public gatherings inclusive of awareness info sessions, community events and activities targeting large community groups should be suspended until formal advisory guidance are released by health authorities: the Lebanese Ministry of Public Health (MoPH) and the World Health Organization (WHO).

NOTE FOR CASE MANAGEMENT REFERRAL: Low and medium risk cases can be supported remotely via phone/online. Cases should be monitored closely in case they become high risk.

GUIDELINES FOR PSS FOCUSED SESSIONS WITHIN THE WGSS ARE AS FOLLOWS:

- Avoid stigma and preserve protection spaces for participants, don't attach the illness to someone's living area, ethnicity, religion, etc..
- Ensure non-discriminatory behavior: not everyone with flu symptoms necessarily has Covid-19.
- Ensure confidentiality for participants that disclose health issues.
- Respect the participants' decision not to participate in the sessions.
- Reduce number of participants in one meeting according to the size of the room. Make sure 1 meter distance is kept between one person and another. Do not exceed a maximum of 10 participants.
- Seating arrangements are set to ensure distance between participants of at least 1 meter.
- Avoid distribution of handouts or materials for activities.
- Visual and audio alternative materials to be used (e.g. videos, sound, PowerPoint presentations, etc.)
- Limit role play and avoid physical interaction.
- Avoid handshaking and any other form of physical contact during greetings.
- Facilitator to maintain a safe distance from participants.
- Facilitator and all participants recommended to wash their hands with water and soap before the start of any session.
- Ensure proper preparation of the activity room before and after the session (cleaning, sanitizing, and aeration of the room).
- Ensure the availability of dispensers of alcohol-based hand sanitizers around the venue.
- Recommend participants with similar symptoms to wear face-masks during the session.

Note: Masks should only be used by facilitators or participants who present symptoms. (Studies have shown that masks do not protect healthy individuals from contracting viruses. In some cases, when used more than once or for prolonged periods of time and when discarded inappropriately, they can present more harm than protection.)

- Ensure facilitators are trained on basic health information related to Covid-19.
- Provide Covid-19 health prevention measures at the start of each session.
- Allow space for discussion between participants about Covid-19 and its impact on their well-being if needed.
- To stay up-to-date with latest information by MoPH by accessing the following links:
<https://www.moph.gov.lb/en>
<https://www.moph.gov.lb/en/Media/view/26959/novel-coronavirus-2019>
- To stay up-to-date with latest information by WHO by accessing the following links:
<https://www.who.int/emergencies/diseases/novel-coronavirus-2019/advice-for-public>
<https://www.who.int/emergencies/diseases/novel-coronavirus-2019/advice-for-public/myth-busters>

5 STEPS TO COPE WITH THE STRESS LINKED TO COVID-19

1. Decrease the time you spend on news or social media and seek information only from reliable sources. Check @mophleb @wholeb @UNICEFLebanon.
2. Set a daily routine that includes activities that you enjoy or find relaxing (such as reading, praying, family games, slow breathing, connecting with friends through phone...)
3. Talk to trusted others about any distressing thoughts or feelings you might have.
4. Maintain a healthy diet, proper sleep and regular physical activity. Even walking 15-30 minutes daily at home can make a difference.
5. Don't resort to smoking, drinking alcohol or using other substances to deal with the stress because it doesn't work and harms you on the long-term

LET'S BE KIND, TOGETHER WE CAN FIGHT COVID-19

1. Check-in regularly with those in hospital or home quarantine and their families through calling and texting. Show solidarity and encourage them to do enjoyable activities.
2. Listen attentively when people are sharing their concerns.
3. Provide calm and correct advice to people who may lack access to information (like older adults). Share key factual messages from @mophleb @wholeb @UNICEFLebanon.
4. Avoid stigmatizing language, such as attributing the illness to a person's country of origin, living area, religion, profession, etc.
5. Speak up against harmful practices such as discrimination against affected persons. Protect their privacy and don't disclose personal information.

Call: 1214 MOPH hotline for clarification about COVID-19
1564 "Embrace Lifeline" - the National emotional support and suicide prevention hotline, if you feel severely distressed (from 12:00pm to 5:30 am)



ABAAD SAFE LINE: 24\7
+961 81 78 81 78