





OVERVIEW

Humanitarian Advisory Group, GLOW Consultants and inSights undertook this research to explore the psychosocial challenges and daily stressors experienced by national humanitarian staff and partners, and the support in place to help them navigate these challenges and operate in psychological safety. The paper is designed to contribute to a more nuanced and contextualised understanding of the psychosocial challenges experienced by national humanitarian staff and partners, through case studies of Afghanistan and Bangladesh. It describes the psychosocial support currently available to national staff and partners, including examples of positive practices as well as barriers to accessing existing support. It also invites the sector to reflect on how embedded inequalities exacerbate some of the psychosocial challenges national staff and partners experience. Finally, the paper outlines opportunities for improving psychosocial support for national humanitarian staff and partners.

METHODS



WHAT WE FOUND

-  **The operational environment creates specific stressors for national and local humanitarian workers.** Whilst the nature of the humanitarian setting is a source of stress for all humanitarian workers, national and local workers often grapple with a myriad of specific challenges rooted in security risks and disruptions to social structures. Gender significantly influences key sources of stress in the operational environment and women may face gender-based discrimination – both inside and outside the workplace.
-  **The organisational environment is the primary stressor affecting the wellbeing of national and local humanitarian workers.** Causes of stress included workload, work schedule, pay and conditions. These stressors are often perpetuated and exacerbated by inequalities inherent in how national staff are employed and local and national NGOs are subcontracted.




Existing support for national staff and partners

- **Availability** – Humanitarian organisations provide broad psychosocial support, but national and local humanitarian workers receive relatively limited, less frequently tailored support.
- **Relevance and appropriateness** – Most psychosocial support does not address the specific stressors experienced by national and local humanitarian workers and is not tailored to meet their needs.
- **Accessibility** – Psychosocial support provided by humanitarian organisations is not always accessible due to confidentiality concerns, stigma surrounding mental health, and practical barriers such as language.


WHY IS THIS IMPORTANT

Meaningful psychosocial support for national humanitarian staff and partners is important because psychosocial wellbeing can prevent mental health problems from developing or worsening and support good mental health. It should be part of the broader process of decolonising aid and resolving power imbalances, racism and inequities in the humanitarian system.

KEY OPPORTUNITIES

-  **Equity** – Ensure equitable compensation and benefits, opportunities for career advancement, and fair treatment in the workplace to promote national staff psychosocial wellbeing.
-  **Relevance** – Strengthen contextually relevant and appropriate PSS approaches to lessen the specific stressors experienced by national and local humanitarian workers.
-  **Build awareness** – Strengthen an inclusive culture of wellbeing amongst humanitarian workers by both raising awareness of mental health and psychosocial issues and destigmatising them.

The paper also includes questions for the following actors to help start conversations about how to create more meaningful psychosocial support for national and local humanitarian workers: i) international organisations and intermediaries; ii) donors; and iii) local and national NGOs.

 If you'd like to learn more about this research, or to get involved, please contact: info@humanitarianadvisorygroup.org

