

# Supporting mental health and well-being in the Middle East and North Africa

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Photo credit: USAID Jordan Community Health and Nutrition Project/FHI 360

## MHPSS Experience in MENA

FHI 360's mental health and psychosocial support (MHPSS) activities in the Middle East and North Africa span seven countries and reach new mothers, children and youth, civil society organizations and staff, health care providers, frontline workers and members of marginalized groups, including young lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer and intersex people and those of other diverse sexual orientations and gender identities (LGBTQI+).

## Project Examples

### USAID Jordan Community Health and Nutrition Project 2020–2026

As part of the USAID Jordan Community Health and Nutrition Project (CHN), FHI 360 integrated MHPSS interventions into program activities for new mothers and health care providers. The project designed and is implementing a lactation counseling certification program that integrates MHPSS. Mental health is covered through a breastfeeding and mental health session that focuses on highlighting the psychological benefits of breastfeeding and explaining how stress, exhaustion, depression and grief all affect lactation and breastfeeding.

The session helps future lactation counselors understand the potential mental health problems that a woman may experience during pregnancy and the importance of referring to appropriate specialists when needed.

CHN also has developed training on maternal, infant and young child nutrition and postpartum family planning, which includes a session on maternal mental health. The objective of the session is to provide health care providers with the tools to identify signs of potential mental health issues in patients and refer them to appropriate psychosocial support.

### UNICEF Iraq Life Skills and Citizenship Education (LSCE) 2019–2021

In Iraq, FHI 360 integrated trauma-informed social emotional learning (SEL) and psychosocial support into life skills and citizenship education training and resources developed for youth-serving organizations. Tailored for displaced and conflict-affected youth, the resources focused on fostering SEL (and by default, mental health) skills aligned with the UNICEF LSCE framework, including resilience, self-management, positive relationships and conflict resolution.

### UNICEF UAE Mental Health and Psychosocial Support (MHPSS) 2021

In the United Arab Emirates, FHI 360 supported the Ministry of Education in developing a comprehensive set of resources on mental health and substance abuse for secondary schools. The resources included a screening tool for common conditions, such as depression, anxiety and eating disorders; mapping of school-based referral pathways; training materials for school counselors and teachers on recognizing and addressing mental health and substance abuse disorders; and interactive lesson plans and educational materials for classroom use.

### MENA Moves 2021–2022

In Tunisia, Morocco and Algeria, FHI 360 and its partner Pragma Corporation implemented the USAID-funded MENA Moves project, which was intended to address the high unmet need for mental health support for HIV program providers and participants. The project worked to provide free, confidential mental health care to program implementers and vulnerable groups, including LGBTQI+ people, by connecting those interested in mental health support with trauma-informed, nonstigmatizing psychologists via the Online Reservation and Case Management App (ORA), which was developed by FHI 360 and is now available in 35 countries. ORA enables users to easily make reservations for in-person or virtual services using a smartphone, tablet or laptop.

### Lebanon Civic Action Accelerator Program (LEB-CAAP) 2021–2026

Through the Lebanon Civic Action Accelerator Program, FHI 360 is working with two grantees to support the mental health and well-being of civil society human rights defenders and frontline workers. The grantees will assess and address gaps in the mental health policies and processes of four local civil society

organizations. They will also provide technical expertise and professional knowledge related to mental health, including providing direct mental health and psychosocial support to the defenders of human rights.



FHI 360's Online Reservation and Case Management App (ORA) helps users make reservations for in-person or virtual mental health sessions.  
Image credit: FHI 360

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