



( C ) 2025 ADRA: Children's Day Celebration Afar Region Ethiopia

**ADRA (Adventist Development and Relief Agency)** was initiated by the Seventh-Day Adventist church in 1956.

ADRA International ([www.adra.org/](http://www.adra.org/)) was established in 1983 in Silver Spring in the United States. In 1997, ADRA was granted General Consultative Status by the United Nations. As one of the leading relief organizations in the world, ADRA strives to realize its mission of reflecting God's love through compassionate acts of humanitarian service.

**ADRA Japan** is an international non-governmental organization established in 1985, and it is committed to working for the international cooperation. It is part of ADRA's more than 120 international networks.



*ADRA Japan works to build a peaceful and resilient society through supporting people affected by humanitarian crises. This newsletter reports on dignity and resilience building through mental health and psychosocial support in Afghanistan, mental health, and psychosocial support (MHPSS) for those affected by the war in Ukraine, and Gender Based Violence Prevention in Ethiopia. These activities are made possible by Japan Platform (JPF) and private donations.*

### Healing the Invisible Wounds — Strengthening Dignity and Resilience through Mental Health and Psychosocial Support — An Initiative in Earthquake Affected Kunar Province, Afghanistan —

A major earthquake does not only destroy homes and livelihoods; it leaves deep invisible wounds in people's minds. The anxiety of losing shelter, the grief of losing loved ones, and the uncertainty about the future can have long-lasting effects on people's dignity and daily lives.

In August 2025, major earthquakes struck Eastern Afghanistan and changed thousands of people's lives. While responding to the immediate needs of Food, ADRA Afghanistan, together with ADRA Japan, implemented an awareness-raising initiative grounded in mental health and psychosocial support (MHPSS), protection, and human rights, aiming to address these invisible impacts.

#### Empowering Self-Protection through Accessible Awareness

As part of the initiative, 350 flyers were distributed to affected individuals in Chapa Dara district and Nulgul district. Designed with simple illustrations and clear messages, the materials are accessible regardless of literacy levels.

Key messages include:

- Experiencing strong emotions such as fear or sadness is a natural reaction
- Talking to someone can be the first step toward recovery
- Changes in children's behavior can be signs of distress

A mother told ADRA, "The brochure and explanation helped me understand children's emotions, recognize stress signs, and know what simple support to provide at home such as staying calm, offering reassurance, and responding more confidently when children become upset."

These messages help individuals recognize their own emotional state and that of their family members, serving as a gateway to seeking care and support. Beyond information-sharing,

this initiative strengthens people's ability to protect their own well-being and recover with dignity—enhancing resilience at the individual and community levels.



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### Expanding Awareness to Protect Women and Children

In emergency settings, women and children are often at greater risk of psychological distress and protection concerns. This initiative contributes to expanding awareness within communities to better recognize and respond to these risks.

As seen in the comment from a mother, caregivers and community members are becoming more attentive to children's behavioral changes. Such gradual increases in awareness play a crucial role in preventing violence, neglect, and abuse, while reinforcing respect for human rights within the community.

### Creating Lasting Impact through Government Engagement

A key strength of this initiative lies in its engagement with government counterparts such as staff from District Directorate.

The most significant value of this effort lies in its long-term vision: Embedding mental health and psychosocial support as a standard component of public services.



With increased understanding among government actors:

- Psychological support can be integrated into health, education, and social systems
- Mental health considerations can be included from the early stages of emergency response
- Future responses can be locally led and sustained

In Afghanistan, where decades of conflict and instability have placed immense psychological burdens on communities, institutionalizing MHPSS is critical. Strengthening government ownership and capacity in this area directly contributes to building national resilience. This initiative was welcomed by officials and requested to be made for community leaders of each village. Understanding of mental health and psychosocial support (MHPSS) concepts has improved in Afghanistan, slowly but surely.

### Small Actions, Transformative Change

A single flyer, a single session, these may seem like small steps. Yet, across the earthquake affected areas in Kunar province, this initiative is fostering meaningful shifts in awareness and behavior.

**Recovery from disaster is not merely about rebuilding what was lost; it is about moving toward a safer society where dignity is upheld. The work of ADRA represents a quiet yet powerful force supporting this journey toward resilience.**

## Rebuilding Emotional Strength in Ukraine's Communities

As the full-scale war in Ukraine continues, the humanitarian emergency is increasingly affecting people not only physically, but emotionally and socially. Years of repeated shelling, displacement, family separation, and uncertainty have created deep psychological strain across the country. According to the 2026 Ukraine Humanitarian Needs and Response Plan<sup>1</sup>, 10.8 million people are expected to require humanitarian assistance in 2026, while mental health concerns continue to rise among conflict-affected populations, particularly in frontline and hard-to-reach areas.



For many families, stress has become part of everyday life. Parents struggle to care for children while coping with insecurity, economic hardship, and exhaustion. Older people and people with disabilities often remain isolated with limited access to support services. At the same time, repeated exposure to violence and instability has increased anxiety, panic reactions, grief, and family tensions. In this environment, mental health and psychosocial support (MHPSS) plays a vital role in helping people maintain emotional stability, preserve social connections, and continue functioning under prolonged crisis conditions.

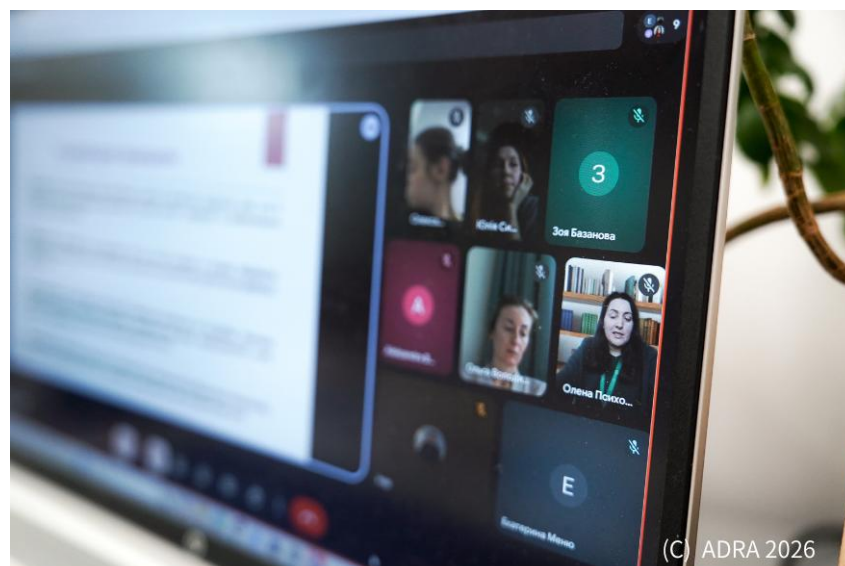
### Expanding Access to Psychological Support

With support from Japan Platform and private donors, ADRA Japan and its local partners provide a broad range of psychosocial support services for war-affected communities across Ukraine. The program combines direct mental health assistance, practical coping support, capacity-building activities, and referrals to complementary humanitarian services.

One of the main areas of support is remote psychological counseling delivered through individual and group-based formats. Online delivery allows people living in insecure or isolated areas to receive assistance despite damaged infrastructure, movement restrictions, or limited availability of in-person services.

During individual consultations, professional psychologists support beneficiaries experiencing anxiety, trauma-related symptoms, emotional burnout, panic attacks, grief, sleep disturbances, and family-related stress. Many people seeking assistance have lived for extended periods under air raid alarms and repeated attacks, making long-term emotional fatigue a growing concern. The private format enables beneficiaries to speak openly about their experiences and receive tailored coping guidance in a confidential environment.

The project also organizes group psychosocial sessions that bring together people facing similar challenges. These sessions provide practical tools for stress management while



<sup>1</sup> [Ukraine Humanitarian Needs and Response Plan 2026 | UNHCR Ukraine](#)

creating opportunities for mutual encouragement and shared understanding. Participants practice grounding techniques, breathing exercises, and emotional regulation methods, while also discussing common difficulties related to war, caregiving, displacement, and uncertainty. For many participants, the group setting reduces feelings of loneliness and helps restore a sense of community connection.

*"One of the most meaningful things for me was realizing how important it is to understand yourself and speak openly about your feelings, especially during difficult times. Before the consultations, I did not really know what to expect because it was my first experience receiving psychosocial support. But through the conversations, I began to see many things about myself from a different perspective. It helped me reflect on my emotions, behaviors, and reactions in ways I had never considered before. What stayed with me most was the feeling of support and connection — even during blackouts and uncertainty, there was still space to talk, listen, and feel understood. I realized that seeking support is already a positive step, and sometimes simply having someone there to listen can make a big difference."*

Alisa, ADRA MHPSS session beneficiary



### **Building Local Support Capacity**

Alongside direct psychological assistance, the project invests heavily in strengthening local response capacity through targeted training activities. In many conflict-affected communities, people in distress first turn to volunteers, social workers, teachers, local NGOs, rehabilitation specialists, or faith-based actors rather than mental health professionals. Strengthening the skills of these frontline actors therefore plays an essential role in expanding access to support.

Training sessions focus on practical topics such as Psychological First Aid (PFA), communication with people experiencing acute stress, support for survivors of gender-based violence (GBV), child protection, inclusion of persons with disabilities, burnout prevention, and safe referral mechanisms. Rather than focusing only on theory,

the sessions emphasize real-life response techniques that participants can immediately apply in their daily work.

As a result, trained community actors are better equipped to recognize signs of psychological distress, provide initial emotional support, and connect vulnerable individuals with specialized services when necessary. These local networks are particularly valuable in remote and frontline areas where professional mental health services may be difficult to access consistently.

*"One of the most important things I gained from the training was understanding that many forms of violence are often hidden within behaviors that society considers 'normal.' Before the sessions, I did not fully recognize that controlling a woman's ability to study, work, or make decisions could be a form of gender-based or economic violence. The training helped me better understand people's rights and gave me the confidence to respond more professionally when vulnerable individuals seek support. I especially appreciated that the sessions were practical and applicable to real situations we face during the war. In my work, people now speak more openly about difficult experiences, and I feel more prepared to listen, provide psychological first aid, and guide them toward appropriate support. The training did not just provide information — it gave me practical tools and a clearer understanding of how interconnected people's needs are during crisis."*

Yuliia Sirenko, ADRA MHPSS training beneficiary

affecting daily life.

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### **Connecting Mental Health Support with Legal and Humanitarian Assistance**

The project recognizes that emotional wellbeing is closely linked to broader living conditions. Psychological distress is often intensified by unresolved legal problems, housing insecurity, financial hardship, displacement, or concerns related to documentation and access to services. For this reason, ADRA promotes an integrated assistance approach that combines psychosocial support with other forms of humanitarian aid.

When needed, beneficiaries receiving psychological support can also be referred to legal assistance services for issues such as documentation, displacement-related procedures, housing concerns, or protection-related challenges. Individuals may additionally access multi-purpose cash assistance and other humanitarian support programs designed to reduce immediate pressures

## Supporting Resilience During Prolonged Crisis

As the war continues, humanitarian needs in Ukraine



*"One thing that stood out to me was how important accessible legal support can be for people facing difficult personal situations during displacement. Before receiving assistance, I did not know where to apply, what documents were needed, or how to navigate the complicated procedures related to child support. The consultations helped me understand each step clearly and gave me confidence that my issue could be resolved. What mattered most was not only the professional legal guidance, but also the patience, respect, and willingness to listen. Having someone explain things calmly and supportively made a stressful situation feel manageable. For displaced families like mine, this kind of assistance provides not only practical solutions, but also reassurance and a sense that we are not facing these challenges alone."*

*Marina Serhiyivna, ADRA legal consultation beneficiary*

are becoming increasingly long-term and complex. Many people are no longer dealing only with short-term shock, but with cumulative stress caused by years of instability and uncertainty. In this context, accessible mental health support, trusted community networks, and practical coping resources remain essential.

Through psychological counseling, peer-based support activities, local capacity strengthening, and integrated humanitarian assistance, ADRA's MHPSS initiatives help conflict-affected individuals and communities navigate prolonged hardship while strengthening their ability to cope, adapt, and recover.

### Gender-Based Violence Prevention in Afar region Ethiopia

In Ethiopia's northern Afar Region, 200,000 internally displaced persons (IDPs) are living in difficult conditions. Approximately 90% of the population has neither access to sufficient food nor clean water. ADRA Japan in cooperation with ADRA Ethiopia implements food provision support, water supply, and hygiene awareness activities in Afar Region with financial support from JPF and private donations.

We also work to improve women's and girl's health and prevent gender-based violence to build more resilient and peaceful communities in Afar. We provided "Dignity Kits" to 550 Girls in March 2026.

We also conducted awareness activities promoting gender equality and mutual respect to prevent Gender Based Violence (GBV) for multiple communities in Afar region in January 2026.



To share our lessons learnt from the past projects we have succeeded in improving vulnerable people's health and quality of life. Vulnerable individuals, including IDPs and households headed by women were able to recover from food insecurity and poor health. Additionally, access to water improved significantly: households previously without any access who walked over 40 minutes daily now have access to safe water within 10 minutes. People who previously practiced open defecation gained access to toilets, improving hygiene and safety. For women, who previously faced the risk of infection due to lack of menstrual hygiene products, this project's support reduced disease risk and restored their dignity.

**ADRA expresses heartfelt gratitude for everyone's cooperation on this occasion and kindly asks for continued warm support for ADRA's activities**



Awareness activities promoting gender equality and prevent Gender Based Violence in Afar region



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