

Terms of Reference for Direct MHPSS Support Services

Support to frontline workers in Israel, the West Bank and Gaza

1. Context

Over the past two years, the situation in Palestine has significantly deteriorated, with a marked escalation in violence, displacement, and humanitarian needs. Large-scale hostilities resumed in October 2023, resulting in civilian harm and significant destruction. Humanitarian access remains limited, and the space for civil society activity has narrowed in both contexts. Despite these challenges Palestinian organizations committed to peace and justice continue their work on the ground under growing political, administrative, and financial pressures.

In this context, Expertise France, in partnership with Canal France International (CFI) and with the support of the European Union, is implementing the Civil Society and Media Support Programme in Palestine. The project responds to the need for rapid response approaches that go beyond traditional models, which have often failed to address structural inequalities and entrenched power asymmetries. The overall objective of the project is to contribute to creating a more conducive environment for sustainable coexistence by strengthening Palestinian civil societies and supporting independent media in advancing dialogue, mutual understanding, and collaboration.

2. About Expertise France

Expertise France is the French international development cooperation agency, created in 2015. Expertise France is part of the Agence Française de Développement (France Agency for Development, AFD) since 2022. It designs and implements projects which aim to contribute to the balanced development of partner countries, in line with the Sustainable Development Goals of the 2030 Agenda.

EF's Stabilization and Resilience Unit has been implementing programs in crisis and conflict settings since 2013, positioning itself as a leading organization in supporting the recovery, stabilization, and resilience of vulnerable populations in fragile contexts.

3. The Project

Expertise France, with support from the European Union's Foreign Policy Instrument (FPI), is implementing an 24-month project that aims at empowering Civil Society and Media to foster community resilience and social cohesion. The project responds to the need for inclusive, justice-oriented approaches that go beyond traditional models, which have often failed to address structural inequalities and entrenched power asymmetries.

The overall objective of the project is to contribute to creating a more conducive environment for sustainable peacebuilding by strengthening Palestinian civil societies and supporting independent media in advancing dialogue, mutual understanding, and collaboration.

The project is structured around two sub-objectives that focus on reducing immediate tensions and fostering gradual steps towards peaceful coexistence between communities in Palestine:

- Sub-objective 1 (SO1): to sustain and amplify the voices and actions of Palestinian civil society - including community leaders, diaspora, youth, and women – through initiatives that promote dialogue, reduce tensions, and foster mutual understanding within their communities and amongst different communities.
 - Output 1.1: CSOs demonstrate strengthened capacity to lead and implement peacebuilding initiatives
 - Output 1.2: Peacebuilders have strengthened resilience and access to trauma support, enabling sustained engagement in conflict-affected environments
 - Output 1.3: Communities experience incremental progress toward peace through CSO-led collaborative projects and intra-community dialogue

- Sub-objective 2 (SO2): to support independent media actors in fostering a more pluralistic and informed public debate, combating disinformation, and facilitating collaboration with civil society to enhance peacebuilding efforts.
 - Output 2.1: Independent media actors maintain operational resilience and continue delivering unbiased information amidst external pressures
 - Output 2.2: Media actors produce and disseminate quality, fact-based information that counters disinformation and hate speech
 - Output 2.3: Palestinian media stakeholders engage in exchanges, building trust and addressing shared challenges

The project currently funds 42 initiatives implemented by local civil society organizations registered and/or active in the Israel West Bank, Gaza, and East Jerusalem. The project currently supports approximately 42 grants implemented by local civil society and 36 media organizations operating in Israel and Palestine, including the West Bank, East Jerusalem and Gaza. The final number of organizations and staff members benefiting from the services will be determined based on identified needs, accessibility, available resources and the methodology proposed by the service provider.

The assignment will focus on the delivery of direct, confidential and context-sensitive MHPSS services to frontline workers and staff members of selected partner organizations, including civil society and media organizations. It is not intended to provide organizational assessments or technical capacity-building support to the partner organizations.

4. Purpose of the consultancy

The Consultant will deliver direct MHPSS and staff-wellbeing services to eligible frontline workers from organisations and medias supported by the project. The primary clients of the service are individual staff members and staff groups, not the partner organisations as institutions.

This is a service-delivery consultancy. It does not include organisational capacity building, technical review of partner programmes, grant oversight or development of partners' MHPSS interventions. The Consultant may coordinate practical access with designated organisational focal points, but the content of support remains confidential.

Target groups

Frontline programme, outreach, protection, psychosocial, media and community-facing staff exposed to acute or cumulative stress through their work.

Staff working in or supporting Gaza, the West Bank, East Jerusalem and Israel, including personnel operating remotely because of access or security restrictions.

Managers or team leaders only when they seek support for their own wellbeing or participate in a staff group session; management coaching and organizational development are outside the scope.

5. Scope of direct services

5.1 Access and initial support planning

Establish safe and accessible pathways through which eligible frontline workers can request support directly or join an agreed group session.

Conduct an initial, proportionate assessment of needs, risks, preferred language and appropriate support modality, without creating unnecessary clinical or personal records.

Explain confidentiality, its limits, informed consent, data handling, safeguarding and emergency procedures before support begins.

5.2 Individual support

Provide confidential short-term individual psychosocial support sessions focused on stabilisation, coping, stress management, work-related distress, grief, secondary trauma and burnout prevention.

Develop an individual support plan where more than one session is appropriate and review progress jointly with the participant.

Identify needs that exceed the scope or competence of the consultancy and facilitate referral to appropriate specialised, clinical, protection or emergency services with the participant's informed consent.

5.3 Group support

Facilitate confidential group wellbeing, psychoeducation and peer-support sessions tailored to frontline workers' realities and languages.

Offer practical sessions on stress regulation, coping, secondary trauma, grief, boundaries, sustainable helping practices and recognition of signs requiring further support.

Facilitate structured reflection after difficult periods or events when appropriate. The Consultant will avoid compulsory or potentially harmful single-session psychological debriefing.

5.4 Crisis response and referral

Maintain current, verified referral contacts for mental-health, medical, protection and emergency services relevant to the operational areas.

Apply a clear protocol for imminent risk, safeguarding concerns and urgent clinical needs, consistent with applicable law, professional ethics and Expertise France procedures.

Provide supported referral and reasonable follow-up while respecting consent, confidentiality and the boundary between psychosocial support and clinical case management.

5.5 Service accessibility

Deliver services in person or remotely according to participant preference, safety, access and connectivity, using secure and confidential arrangements.

Offer a predictable schedule with reasonable flexibility for frontline workers, including urgent appointments where feasible and within the agreed service model.

Adapt approaches to cultural, linguistic, gender, disability and contextual needs across Israel, the West Bank and Gaza.

6. Service standards and boundaries

Participant-centred and voluntary: no staff member will be required to disclose personal information or participate as a condition of employment or project involvement.

Confidential: employers and Expertise France will receive only anonymised and aggregated service information. Session content and identities will not be shared without explicit consent, except where disclosure is required to address imminent risk or a safeguarding obligation.

Do no harm: support will be appropriate to the Consultant's qualifications and will avoid interventions unsupported by the context or evidence.

Professionally bounded: the Consultant will not combine a therapeutic relationship with performance appraisal, grant monitoring, investigation or organisational decision-making.

Referral-based where necessary: long-term psychotherapy, psychiatric treatment, emergency care and specialised case management are outside the service unless expressly contracted and legally permitted.

Standards-informed: services will be consistent with relevant IASC and WHO MHPSS guidance and applicable professional codes.

7 Deliverables and evidence of service delivery

No.	Deliverable	Required content	Evidence for validation
1	Inception and safeguarding package	Service model, eligibility, access pathway, confidentiality and consent protocol, risk and referral protocol, secure record-management approach, session formats and workplan.	Approved inception package
2	Direct individual support sessions	Confidential short-term sessions delivered to eligible frontline workers, with referral when needs exceed the scope.	Anonymised service log showing only date, modality, duration and broad service category
3	Direct group support sessions	Facilitated wellbeing, psychoeducation, peer-support or structured reflection sessions adapted to participant needs.	Agenda or session outline, anonymised participant count and brief facilitator record
4	Referral support	Verified referral directory and supported referrals for specialised, clinical, protection or emergency needs.	Updated directory and anonymised referral statistics
5	Monthly service report	Aggregated services delivered, uptake, accessibility issues, non-identifying trends, risks and operational recommendations.	Approved monthly report and invoice support
6	Final report and handover	Consolidated anonymised results, utilisation, lessons, remaining needs and recommendations for continuity of care.	Approved final report and secure handover or closure confirmation

8 Indicative service volumes

The following volumes provide the basis for the technical and financial proposals. They are ceilings rather than guaranteed minimums and may be reallocated with prior approval if demand, access or safeguarding considerations require it.

Service	Indicative volume over 6 months	Standard format	Planning assumption
Individual MHPSS support	Up to 160 sessions	Approximately 50 to 60 minutes per session	Average of 20 sessions per month; follow-up sessions may be provided to the same participant
Group MHPSS and wellbeing support	Up to 24 sessions	Approximately 2 to 3 hours; normally 6 to 12 participants	Average of 3 sessions per month, adapted to language, location and staff availability
Urgent support and supported referral	Up to 20 cases	Risk assessment, stabilisation, referral and reasonable follow-up	Mobilised according to need; does not replace emergency or long-term clinical care
Access and orientation sessions	Up to 8 sessions	Brief introduction to the confidential service and how staff can access it	Normally one per month or clustered by geographical area

The Consultant/s will propose a realistic appointment system and monthly schedule. Cancelled sessions, no-shows and unused urgent-response capacity will be managed according to arrangements agreed at inception and will not automatically be invoiced as completed services.

Duration and indicative level of effort

The consultancy will run for 6 months, with a maximum of 90 working days. This ceiling is designed for an intermittent direct-service model, averaging up to 15 days per month.

Days will be mobilised through approved monthly schedules and invoiced against services actually delivered and accepted. The final allocation should be confirmed at inception against the expected number of frontline workers, individual sessions, group sessions, languages, locations and travel requirements. Expertise France does not guarantee use of the full ceiling.

Services may be delivered in person or remotely. Support to Gaza-based workers and travel elsewhere will depend on access, security, authorization, connectivity and duty-of-care requirements.

9 Management and reporting arrangements

The Consultant/s reports contractually to the Project Director or designated focal point for scheduling, deliverables and invoices.

A limited administrative focal point may coordinate availability with participating organisations, but will not receive participant identities, session notes or personal disclosures.

Only anonymized, aggregated data necessary to validate delivery and understand overall service needs will be reported.

Any breach of confidentiality, safeguarding concern or serious incident will be managed through the agreed protocol.

10 Required profile

- Advanced university degree in psychology, clinical psychology, counselling, mental health, social work or a directly relevant discipline.
- Current professional registration, licence or accreditation required to provide the proposed services in the relevant jurisdiction or delivery modality.
- At least five years of relevant experience providing direct MHPSS or mental-health support in humanitarian, conflict-affected or high-stress settings.
- Demonstrated experience supporting frontline humanitarian, civil-society, protection, community or media workers affected by chronic stress, grief, secondary trauma or burnout.
- Strong competence in risk assessment, safeguarding, suicide-risk response, confidentiality, informed consent and safe referral.
- Experience providing both individual and group support, including through secure remote modalities.
- Excellent spoken and written English and professional proficiency in Arabic and/or Hebrew. Ability to deliver support in both Arabic and Hebrew is a strong advantage; French is an asset.
- Strong knowledge of the contexts and available referral systems in Israel and/or the occupied Palestinian territory, including the constraints affecting Gaza.

11 Application requirements

- Technical proposal presenting the direct-service model, support modalities, safeguarding and confidentiality measures, referral approach and quality assurance.
- The selected service provider must demonstrate the operational capacity to deliver services in both Palestine and Israel, including appropriate personnel, language capabilities and access arrangements. Delivery modalities must be adapted to each location, including remote delivery where physical access is restricted.

_ Indicative monthly schedule and proposed allocation of days among individual sessions, group sessions, coordination, referrals and reporting.

- Financial proposal stating the daily fee and any travel or reimbursable-cost assumptions.
- Curriculum vitae, evidence of relevant registration or accreditation, and two references for comparable direct-service assignments.
- Declaration of availability and conflicts of interest.