



**Intisar  
Foundation**

## Response to the COVID19 Pandemic

### The Evolving Landscape of MHPSS in 2020

March-June 2020



The COVID19 pandemic has affected lives all around the planet, forced sudden changes in our lifestyles, and imposed new challenges in our daily lives. One alarming aspect of the pandemic has been the increased inequalities for vulnerable populations, including refugees, around the world. The situation has caused considerable psychological distress for a population that is already [disproportionately more vulnerable to higher rates of mental health issues](#). As the [UN warns of an impending mental health crisis](#) as a result of increased stress around the world and the [UNHCR urges the prioritization of mental health care for refugees as a part of the response for the pandemic](#), we have adapted our approach to mitigate the situation for our beneficiaries. As a charity foundation focused on providing psychological support for refugee and disadvantaged women, we had to find new and creative ways to continue supporting the communities we work with in Lebanon and Jordan. Hence, Intisar Foundation has taken several steps to maintain our work in two parts: virtual and on the field.

#### Our virtual interventions:

1. **Online activities:** Within days of the lockdown starting in Lebanon and Jordan, our teams maintained contact with our beneficiaries and provided them with audio and video activities that can be performed at home to help them manage stress and emotional turmoil at home. These activities are shared via our social media platforms and sent directly to our beneficiaries via WhatsApp.
2. **Weekly “check-in” calls:** Every week since the lockdown started, our teams have made individual phone calls with our beneficiaries to check in on them, reduce their sense of loneliness and provide a sense of solidarity with them during this uncertain time.
3. **Virtual Online sessions:** Since the lockdown, we started delivering virtual online sessions as a part of our “Follow up” programs. The sessions are held twice monthly for each group and largely focus on managing stress rather than tackling trauma. The sessions are designed to help our beneficiaries manage this crisis and emerge empowered and equipped to handle stressful and life-altering events. The sessions are held using video call on platforms like WhatsApp and Duo.
4. **Online Platform:** Intisar Foundation is currently in the process of developing an online platform and mobile application that will be designed to utilize Drama therapy for at-home psychological wellness. This project will be the first of its kind in the Arab world, fully adapted to match the culture and language of Arab populations affected by war or otherwise. This platform will include at-home exercises designed by our Drama Therapists that can be used by both the refugee and internally displaced populations, as well as the general population in the Arab world.

### Our return to the field:

As lockdown restrictions ease around the world, Intisar Foundation will be taking steps to ensure its return to the field will be conducted in a safe manner. Psychological support is an essential intervention for the communities we work with, and hence, we will be resuming fieldwork as soon as the situation is deemed safe. Upon returning, we will be implementing changes to the sessions as follows:

1. The sessions will be shortened to reduce the risk of transmission.
2. Groups will be divided into smaller subgroups (7 to 10 women per subgroup) to be able to practice physical distancing during the sessions.
3. The beneficiaries and staff will be provided with face masks to wear during all fieldwork.
4. Temperature checks will be conducted for the beneficiaries and staff before sessions.
5. Good hygiene practice will be ensured before, during and after the sessions as recommended by the CDC, WHO, and ministries of health in Lebanon and Jordan (regular hand washing, changing masks every 4 hours, use of alcohol-based hand sanitizer regularly, avoiding any form of physical contact like handshakes and hugs).
6. Exercises used during the sessions will now be completely contact-free.

### Impact of our virtual sessions:

**100%** of our beneficiaries found the virtual Drama Therapy sessions helpful

**100%** of our beneficiaries felt less distressed after participating in the virtual Drama Therapy sessions

**100%** of our beneficiaries say they feel more confident after the virtual Drama Therapy session

**90%** of our beneficiaries were better able to manage stress after participating in the virtual Drama Therapy sessions

**80%** of our beneficiaries repeated the exercises done during the virtual Drama Therapy sessions again on their own