

12th International Conference on **Mental Health and Psychiatry**

June 18, 2026 | Webinar

Mental Health and Psychosocial Support in Yemen: Challenges and Opportunities**Samah Ali Mohammed Zabara**

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Yemen is among the world's most fragile states, with a healthcare system that is close to collapse. According to the World Health Organization (WHO), mental health and psychosocial support (MHPSS) services remain severely limited due to a shortage of trained professionals, inadequate facilities, and widespread social stigma that discourages help-seeking behavior.

Throughout my professional experience, I have worked closely with some of the most vulnerable populations in Yemen, including women, children, refugees, and asylum seekers. Most interventions targeting these groups are delivered through emergency humanitarian responses. As part of broader humanitarian efforts, several organizations attempted to integrate psychosocial support (PSS) into primary healthcare services. However, these efforts encountered significant barriers and achieved limited progress.

Two key factors contributed to these challenges. First, Mental health and psychosocial support programs have faced significant operational constraints in some areas of Yemen due to the political and administrative environment there. Second, social stigma surrounding mental health remains deeply entrenched. Individuals who receive psychosocial support often experience increased anxiety due to fears of

judgment, discrimination, and social exclusion. Women may face isolation within their communities, while children can be stigmatized by peers and school environments.

This paper highlights the complex interaction between political constraints and societal attitudes that continue to hinder access to mental health services in Yemen. It argues that sustainable progress requires a dual approach: strategic advocacy to elevate mental health as a public health priority and targeted community awareness initiatives to improve understanding, reduce stigma, and encourage help-seeking behaviors. Strengthening public acceptance of mental health services is essential for expanding access and improving the well-being of vulnerable populations in Yemen.

Biography

Samah Zabarah is an accomplished humanitarian professional based in Yemen, specializing in psychosocial support (PSS) and child protection. She holds a Bachelor's degree in Sociology from Sanaa University and a Master's in International Cooperation and Humanitarian Aid from the Kalu Institute. With over five years of field experience across prominent organizations like Blumont International, Humanity & Inclusion, and SRPD, Samah has extensively managed emergency case coordination, socio-economic assessments, and mental health interventions for vulnerable women, children, and refugees. Her work focuses heavily on data integrity, community advocacy, and delivering Psychological First Aid (PFA).