

Supporting the mental health of women affected by floods in rural Pakistan: a pilot study

Submission date 23/10/2026	Recruitment status No longer recruiting	☐ Prospectively registered
		☐ Protocol
Registration date 27/10/2026	Overall study status Completed	☐ Statistical analysis plan
		☐ Results
Last Edited 27/10/2026	Condition category Mental and Behavioural Disorders	☐ Individual participant data
		☒ Record updated in last year

Plain English summary of protocol

Background and study aims
Floods in Pakistan cause not only physical harm but also significant psychological distress, particularly among women. This study aimed to pilot a low-cost, tailored intervention combining WHO-endorsed Psychological First Aid (PFA) and Problem Management Plus (PM+) in post-flood affected communities in Thatta, Sindh province, and assess feasibility through changes in health worker training outcomes and mental health outcomes of flood-affected women, alongside implementation experiences, perceived outcomes, and barriers and facilitators to delivery.

Who can participate?
Female health workers aged between 18-65 years, who can speak and understand Sindhi and Urdu languages, have at least completed Matriculation, and are actively working with flood-affected people in interior Sindh. Also, flood-affected women (known as Marvi Workers) would receive the intervention via convenience sampling by their local female health workers as part of their ongoing in-person visits. The inclusion criteria is female participants aged between 18-65 years, who could speak and understand Sindhi or Urdu, had directly or indirectly been affected by floods, and get a score of 20 or higher on the Kessler Psychological Distress Scale (K-10).

What does the study involve?
The study involve two phases. Phase 1 is a scoping visit to adapt the PFA and PM+ manuals, capacity-building training, and pre- and post-assessments of female health workers. Phase II involve recruitment of flood-affected women (Marvi Workers) with psychological distress and delivered four monthly tailored PFA and PM+ sessions. Changes in depression, anxiety, PTSD, and resilience scores were assessed. Focus group discussions with female health workers and in-depth interviews with Marvi Workers captured qualitative insights.

What are the possible benefits and risks of participating?
Potential benefits included improved mental wellbeing and coping skills. Risks were minimal and participants could withdraw at any time and were referred for further professional support if needed.

Where is the study run from?

The study was conducted in Thatta district, Sindh Province, Pakistan, and was coordinated through Interactive Research and Development (IRD Global) (Pakistan)

When is the study starting and how long is it expected to run for?

July 2023 to October 2023

Who is funding the study?

This study was funded by the National Institute for Health and Care Research (NIHR) (UK) through its Research and Innovation for Global Health Transformation (RIGHT) programme (grant number NIHR200824), using UK international development funding from the UK Government to support global health research. The study was supported through the PIECEs Small Scale Research Grant, administered by Queen Mary University of London (UK).

Who is the main contact?

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Study information

Scientific Title

Psychosocial support for women in post-flood settings: a mixed-methods pilot of community-based psychological first aid and problem management plus in rural Pakistan

Study objectives

The study objectives are to explore preliminary signals of change in:

1. The knowledge, skills, and mental health awareness and sensitivity of female health workers following capacity-building training in PFA and PM+ delivery.
2. Mental health outcomes (depression, anxiety, PTSD, and resilience) of flood-affected women following a tailored PFA and PM+ intervention delivered through female health workers.

Ethics approval required

Ethics approval required

Ethics approval(s)

Approved 11/04/2023, Institutional Review Board of Interactive Research & Development (IRD) Global in Pakistan (4th Floor, Woodcraft Building, Plot 3 & 3-A, Sector 47, Korangi Creek Road, Karachi, 75190, Pakistan; N/A; info@ird.global), ref: IRD_IRB_2023_02_002

Primary study design

Interventional

Allocation

N/A: single arm study

Masking

Open (masking not used)

Control

Uncontrolled

Assignment

Single

Purpose

Health services research, Prevention, Supportive care

Study type(s)**Health condition(s) or problem(s) studied**

Psychological distress, depression, and anxiety in flood-affected women in Sindh Province, Pakistan

Interventions

Participants are flood-affected women experiencing psychological distress residing in Thatta district, Sindh Province, Pakistan. This is a single-arm pilot study with no control group.

Participants receive a culturally adapted combined intervention comprising Psychological First Aid (PFA) and Problem Management Plus (PM+), delivered by trained Lady Health Visitors (LHVs) from the community. The LHVs are recruited via convenience sampling from HANDS to receive

capacity-building training on PFA and PM+. And the flood-affected women (Marvi Workers) are recruited to receive the intervention via convenience sampling by their local LHVs as part of their ongoing in-person visits.

The tailored intervention combining the PFA and PM+ sessions includes: PFA component is delivered using the Look-Listen-Link framework to provide immediate psychosocial support and connect women to available resources.

The PM+ component covers evidence-based strategies including stress management skills, and problem-solving techniques, behavioral activation through task-oriented activities and explore avenues for strengthening social support and developing new skills. The adapted intervention consists of four monthly sessions, each lasting 45 to 60 minutes, and session content from PM+ Session 5 (staying well and looking forward) is integrated into the final session.

Participants complete standardized quantitative assessments at baseline and endline. A subset of participants also takes part in individual in-depth interviews (IDIs) and focus group discussions (FGDs) to explore their experiences of the intervention. All sessions and qualitative data collection are conducted in in-person in Sindhi and Urdu by female researchers and LHVs.

Intervention Type

Behavioural

Primary outcome(s)

1. Depression measured using the Patient Health Questionnaire-9 (PHQ-9) at baseline (before the intervention started) pre-intervention assessment and endline (immediately after the conclusion of final fourth session)
2. Anxiety measured using the Generalized Anxiety Disorder Questionnaire (GAD-7) at baseline (before the intervention started) pre-intervention assessment and endline (immediately after the conclusion of final fourth session)
3. PTSD measured using the PTSD Checklist for DSM-5 (PCL-5) at baseline (before the intervention started) pre-intervention assessment and endline (immediately after the conclusion of final fourth session)
4. Resilience measured using the Resilience Scale (RS-14) at baseline (before the intervention started) pre-intervention assessment and endline (immediately after the conclusion of final fourth session)

Key secondary outcome(s)

Completion date

28/10/2023

Eligibility

Key inclusion criteria

Marvi Workers (MWs):

1. Female participants aged between 18-65 years

2. Speak and understand Sindhi or Urdu
3. Directly or indirectly affected by flood
4. Score of 20 or higher on the Kessler Psychological Distress Scale (K-10)

Lady Health Visitors (LHVs):

1. Aged between 18-65 years
2. Speak and understand Sindhi and Urdu languages
3. Have at least completed Matriculation
4. Actively working with flood-affected people in interior Sindh

Healthy volunteers allowed

No

Age group

Mixed

Lower age limit

18 Years

Upper age limit

65 Years

Sex

Female

Total final enrolment

40

Key exclusion criteria

1. Individuals with severe mental illness or cognitive impairment
2. Unable to provide informed consent

Date of first enrolment

04/07/2023

Date of final enrolment

31/07/2023

Locations

Countries of recruitment

Pakistan

Sponsor information

Organisation

Interactive Research and Development

ROR

<https://ror.org/04mccvy52>

Funder(s)

Funder type

Funder Name

National Institute for Health and Care Research

Alternative Name(s)

National Institute for Health Research, NIHR Research, NIHRresearch, NIHR - National Institute for Health Research, NIHR (The National Institute for Health and Care Research), NIHR

Funding Body Type

Government organisation

Funding Body Subtype

National government

Location

United Kingdom

Funder Name

Queen Mary University of London

Alternative Name(s)

Queen Mary Uni of London, Queen Mary, Queen Mary and Westfield College, The London Hospital Medical College, St Bartholomew's Hospital Medical College, Westfield College, East London College/Queen Mary College, QMUL, QM

Funding Body Type

Government organisation

Funding Body Subtype

Universities (academic only)

Location

United Kingdom

Results and Publications

Individual participant data (IPD) sharing plan

IPD sharing plan summary

Not expected to be made available