



UKRAINE MENTAL HEALTH PSYCHOSOCIAL SUPPORT SESSIONS

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Program Summary

The Azadi Project (Azadi) has worked for years in refugee women's mental health, focusing on the challenges faced by female refugees and migrants. Following the Russian invasion of Ukraine in early 2022, Azadi ran a six-month long mental health and mental health psychosocial support sessions (MHPSS) (June to December 2022) for Ukrainian refugee women in Poland. Trained facilitators and psychologists lead the PSS sessions. This created a safe space where Ukrainian women could come to terms with their feelings of loss and grief and their new reality of being a refugee. Azadi partnered with the Jewish Community Center (JCC) of Krakow, Poland to train Polish volunteers and Ukrainian refugee women in ongoing facilitation of the MHPSS.



Program Objectives

1. To improve the mental health of Ukrainian refugee women through psychosocial support, using creative and innovative tools, such as storytelling, to address trauma caused by war and forced migration and exacerbated by other issues, such as gender-based violence.
2. To empower refugee women participants with the confidence, agency, and skills to share their stories in an uninhibited manner, increasing their resilience and emotional health.
3. To transform Ukrainian women refugees into leaders and agents of change, enabling them to identify solutions to mental health and gender equity issues and implement them in their community.
4. To train local Polish and Ukrainian women, so that they could serve as facilitators for MHPSS, making it a self-sustainable model.

Key Facts



6

Month Duration



18

Group Sessions



20

Total Participants

About Guidehouse's Evaluation Team



Who is Guidehouse?

Guidehouse is a global provider of consulting services to public and commercial markets. In fulfillment of its corporate social responsibility mission, Guidehouse offers its skills and perspectives through pro-bono consulting services to help organizations realize their full potential.

What was Guidehouse's role?



The Azadi Project engaged Guidehouse pro-bono consultants to conduct an independent evaluation of that mental health and psychosocial support (PSS) program for Ukrainian refugee women. The focus of the evaluation was on assessing the process, performance, and short-term outcomes of the program.



Engagement Overview

- In May 2022, **Azadi** launched a project in Poland to support Ukrainian refugees through its on-site workshops and individual consultations.
- **Guidehouse** evaluated the project supporting Ukrainian refugees in Poland to measure performance and outcomes by collecting and analyzing quantitative and qualitative data in collaboration with on-site facilitators and psychologists.
- The **goal of the evaluation** was to provide the Azadi Project with insightful findings and recommendations that enable program improvements for Ukrainian refugees and future projects working with refugee populations and can be leveraged as a strategic communication tool for future conversations with donating partners.
- Guidehouse produced the following engagement deliverables:
 - **Standardized post-session survey** and data collection process used to measure MHPSS performance and outcomes
 - **Customized, interactive web-based dashboard** for analysis and visualization of program results to inform program development and present performance results to stakeholders

Evaluation Design & Approach



Design Evaluation

- Identified evaluation criteria and methodology
- Created survey and approach to capture in-depth individuals' experiences

Data Collection

- Received a total of 92 survey results from session participants across numerous sessions administered by an Azadi facilitator.
- Collected data over a period of six months from two Azadi MHPSS cohorts, and one cohort of one-on-one counseling participants.
- Conducted three interviews with therapists and past participants for more comprehensive understanding of Azadi and the MHPSS.



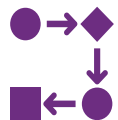
Data Analysis

- Identified four key themes from survey results and interviews.
- Uploaded data into a dashboard for the analysis of survey results.
- Utilized the data analysis dashboard to create word clouds of the common feelings and experiences expressed by participants about Azadi and the impact of the MHPSS.

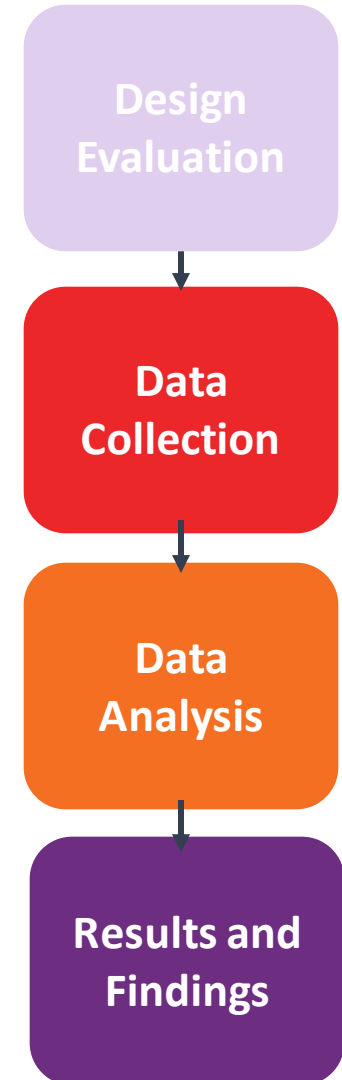


Results and Findings

- Refined surveys to capture pre- and post-session data on participant feelings and quantify the impact of Azadi's programming.
- Developed a data analysis dashboard for visualization of survey results.



Program Evaluation



Challenges & Limitations

Challenges

- **Language Barrier:** MHPSS were focused on providing a safe space for Ukrainian participants to speak freely, therefore the sessions were conducted in their native language. Very few participants spoke English, therefore Azadi provided translation during interviews and of the surveys.
- **Crafting Survey Questions:** Early survey iterations included abstract questions that received neutral responses or questions that did not provide conclusive findings on the impact of Azadi's programming. Following the first round of MHPSS, the survey was revised based upon feedback from Azadi.

Limitations

- **Small Sample Size:** There is a small sample size of data from our interviews with participants and facilitators, due to the small size of each cohort as well as a time constraint in conducting individual interviews. This may limit our findings to be less representative of each participant's experience.
- **Transient Population:** Limited opportunities to conduct follow-up interviews with past participants due to the nature of their refugee status and the ongoing development of the Russian invasion in Ukraine.

Post Session Survey

Guidehouse created a survey* to understand the experience of Ukraine women refugees who participated in an Azadi MHPSS*. The purpose of the survey was to collect data from participants after each session for analysis of the effectiveness of the sessions to achieve Azadi's objectives and identification of areas for improvement.

	Survey Question	Response Type
1	How many sessions have you attended?	Written, Open ended
2	Before the session, I was feeling (example: hesitant, worried, excited, eager):	Written, Open Ended
3	After the session, I am feeling (example: confident, hopeful, unsure, sad)	Written, Open Ended
4	After the session, I have skills and strategies to help me manage my worries and feelings.	Scaled
5	During the session, I felt supported in coping with my emotions in the group environment.	Scaled
6	After the session, I feel empowered to share my story with others.	Scaled
7	I am confident in my ability to use the skills I learned during the session in the long-term future.	Scaled
8	What recommendations do you have to improve future sessions?	Scaled

* The survey was updated following its use during the first cohort and based upon feedback from Azadi. Adjustments included simpler language and questions to capture both pre- and post-session sentiments.

Evidence and Findings

*Guidehouse evaluated **two of Azadi's four Program Objectives:***

Azadi's Program Objectives

1. To improve the mental health of Ukrainian refugee women through psychosocial support, using creative and innovative tools, such as storytelling, to address trauma caused by war and forced migration and exacerbated by other issues, such as gender-based violence.
2. To empower refugee women participants with the confidence, agency, and skills to share their stories in an uninhibited manner, increasing their resilience and emotional health.
3. To transform Ukrainian women refugees into leaders and agents of change, enabling them to identify solutions to mental health and gender equity issues and implement them in their community.
4. To train local Polish and Ukrainian women, so that they could serve as facilitators for MHPSS, making it a self-sustainable model.

Evaluation Questions

- What are the lessons learned from the existing approach to on-site workshops?
- To what extent are the workshops achieving their intended results?

What We Heard from Participants

Common feelings and experiences expressed by participants about Azadi and the impact of the MHPSS

Prior to the sessions

Worries

unsafe stress employment resettlement
existential depression adaptation safety trauma

Feelings

discrimination stress despair overwhelmed
worry aggression uncertainty anger unwell

At the end of sessions

Experiences

communication community
vulnerability resettlement empathy self-regulation
cartharsis family

Strategies

perseverance outreach
self-regulation ongoing communication
proactivity adaptation grounding
adaption continuity community vulnerability

Findings for the MHPSS Program

Guidehouse evaluated MHPSS post-session survey data and key informant interviews against MHPSS program objectives and identified five key takeaways:

- **Safe Space / Community Feelings**

100% of participants felt supported in coping with their emotions in a group environment and, in doing so, found commonality with other refugees' stories.

- **Emotional Support**

Participants expressed appreciation for a space where they can "tell [their] own story and share emotions," and receive support in coming to terms with their new reality.

- **Coping Mechanisms**

72% of participants left the session feeling empowered to share their story, and 97% of participants felt the sessions taught them skills and strategies to manage their feelings.

- **Reinvestment in Azadi**

Out of 20 total participants, two joined the Azadi team to work as a translator and a therapist.

- **Language Support**

Interviewees noted the language barrier as a challenge after their arrival in Poland. One praised The Azadi Project for "connecting" people from different backgrounds and cultures.

"Every time when we finish [participants] feel more safe and more strong because now she understands what she can do." - Therapist



"My emotions and feelings can be controlled. Although it is not easy for me, now I understand it is possible and this can improve the quality of my life." - Participant

"Sometimes without knowing the language, you will start to understand each other. Azadi connected people and that is why people with different languages and nationalities work together." - Past Participant/Therapist



Recommendations

Dashboard

- Maintain data collection process and expand collection to include pre-session data when possible.
- Develop a data management system to store and organize the data and to improve quality.
- Use the dashboard to analyze data and create visualizations to inform future program changes and to demonstrate progress.

Building Opportunities for Growth

- Routinely seek and utilize employee feedback on program operations to organize project retrospectives to inform program improvement decisions.
- Review the process by which feedback is evaluated and incorporated to improve program effectiveness, impact, and growth.

Additional Program Analyses

- Compare and analyze Azadi programs to identify best practices_{1,2}

Dashboard Overview

Guidehouse created a web-based, data analysis dashboard for the purpose of analyzing and visualizing Azadi Project survey results. Guidehouse supported The Azadi Project team in establishing an upload and refresh process. Post session survey data is loaded into the dashboard and immediately available for use. The dashboard is fully accessible to Azadi.



Azadi Project Survey Results

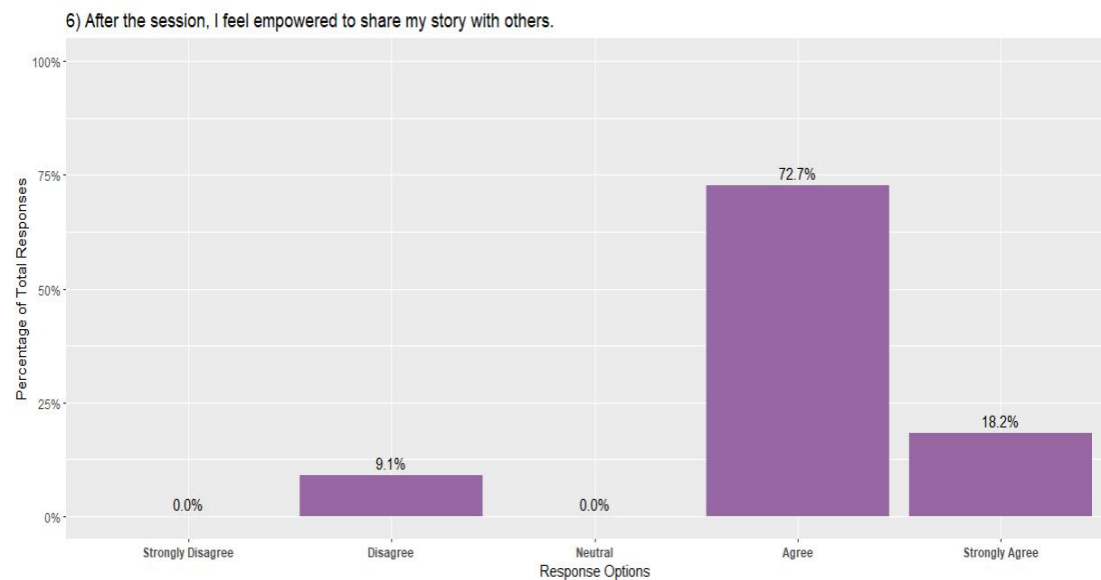
Choose a survey question from the drop-down menu and the resulting visualization will appear on the right.

Choose a survey question

6) After the session, I feel empowered to share my story with others.

Click this button to download the plot

There are 11 total responses to this question



Thank You!



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