

Inside Humanitarian Peer Support



*Repairing souls, healing bodies: in solidarity
with humanitarians despite the challenges*

Workshop in Brussels
8-9 October 2025

CoCreate Humanity (CCH)

Rue des Savoises 15, 1205 Geneva - Switzerland

www.cocreatehumanity.org | info@cocreatehumanity.org

**protect
humanitarians**



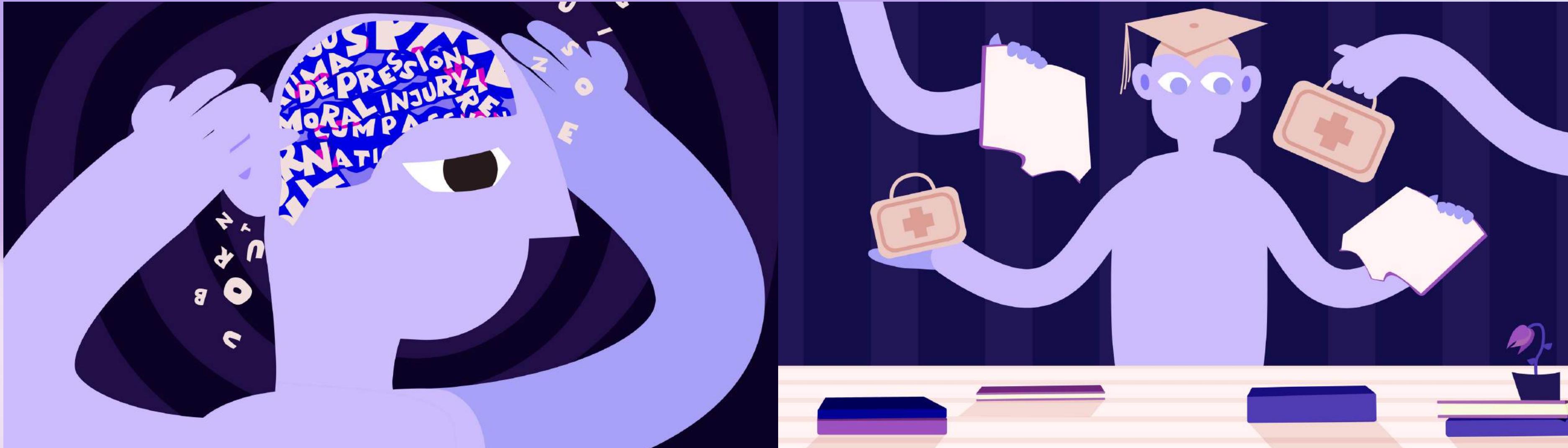


Motion design presentation video

Inside Humanitarian Peer Support - September 2025

Arianna Razavi & Laura Mingant - Two students from Gobelins Paris School.

YouTube link: https://youtu.be/xomT7VVuD3Q?si=RXT1Yip_UNilqW3





Summary

- 1. What is Peer Support? What is Humanitarian Peer Support?**
- 2. Key Benefits of Humanitarian Peer Support**
- 3. Partnership with International NGO Safety Organisation (INSO)**
- 4. Testimonials**
- 5. In the Future...**
- 6. Contacts**





What is Peer Support?

Alcoholics Anonymous (AA), founded in 1935, is one of the earliest formalized peer support systems.

The model of individuals in recovery helping others became foundational for addiction and mental health peer support.

The principle of “nothing about us without us” in **disability rights movement**.

Became a tool for empowerment, advocacy, and reclaiming autonomy.

More recently, peer support has been intentionally structured for first responders, military, and in humanitarian contexts.





What is Peer Support?

“

Peer support is a system of **mutual assistance** where people with **shared experiences** offer each other emotional, social, or practical help. It is based on the idea that individuals who have faced similar challenges – such as trauma, mental health struggles, displacement, or illness – can uniquely understand and support one another in ways that professionals alone often cannot.

Peer support **can take a number of forms** (peer mentoring, counseling, or mental health).

“



What is Peer Support?

Key elements include:

- Reciprocity (both parties can give and receive support)
- Empathy from lived experience
- Empowerment and reduced hierarchy (support as equals, not patients vs. experts)
- Co-construction of the recovery journey

Support grounded in **mutual understanding** and shared **lived experience**, fostering a **non-hierarchical, empathetic relationship** that can **empower** individuals toward recovery and personal growth.

In mental health, peer support is grounded in the principle of **recovery** when accompanying someone living with psychological challenges.





What is Peer Support?

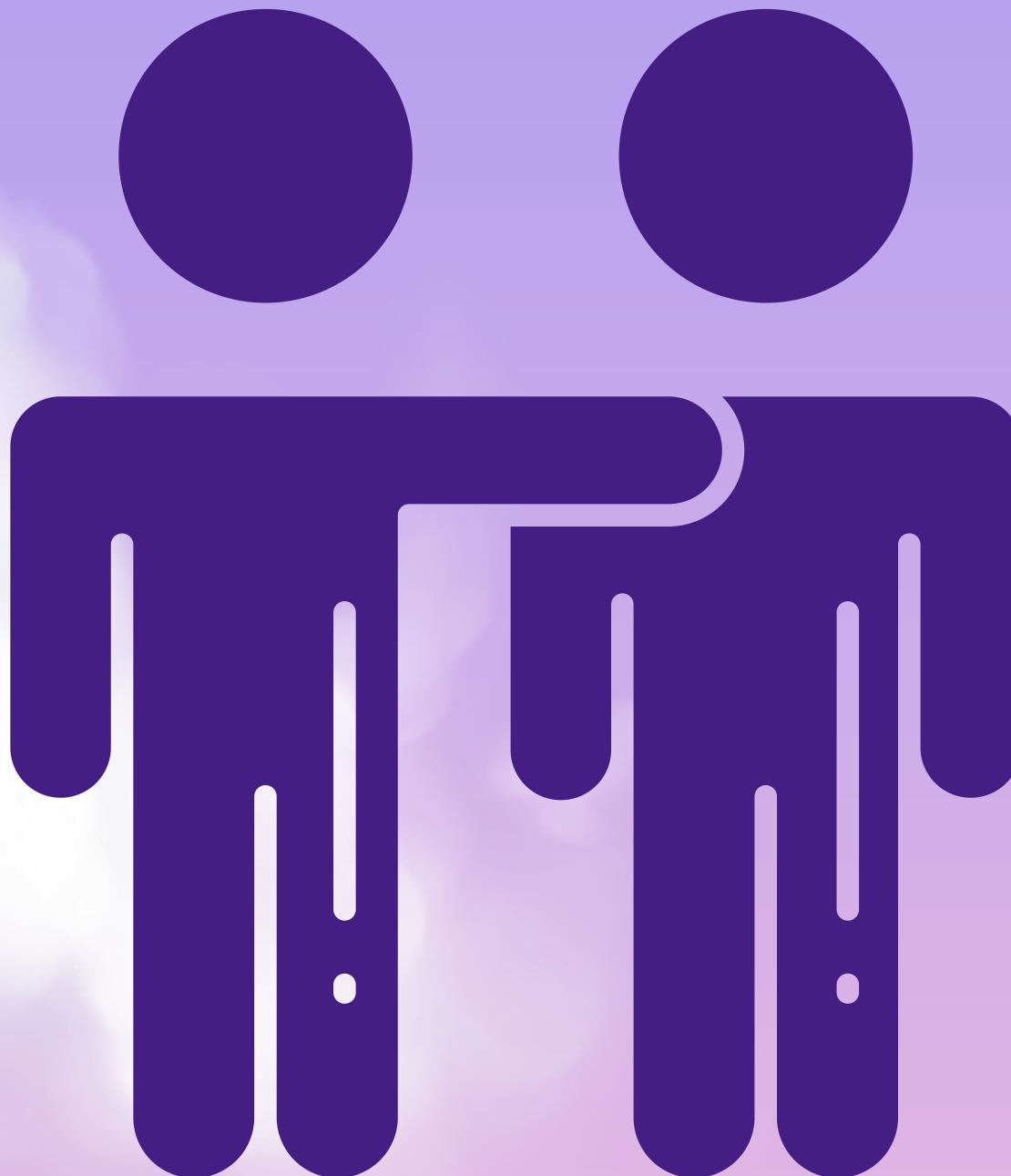


“Sometimes, we just need someone who gets it...”

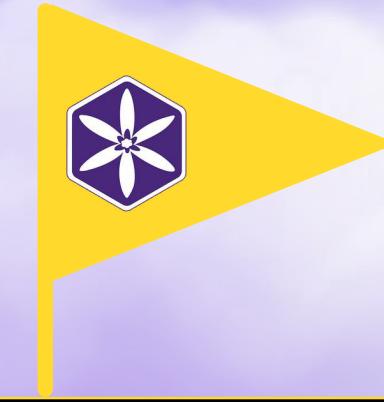
Peer support does not replace therapy. It complements the knowledge and expertise of mental health professionals.



What is Humanitarian Peer Support?



**Humanitarian peer support
cannot be improvised. It must be
professional, structured, and
supervised by mental health
professionals.**





What is Humanitarian Peer Support?

Humanitarian Peer Supporter (HPS)

Mental Health Humanitarian Peer Supporter (MHHPS)

Training in psychological first aid for first responders with Sylvain Goujard, Scientific Director and Psychologist of the European Association of Fire Rescue Psychology.

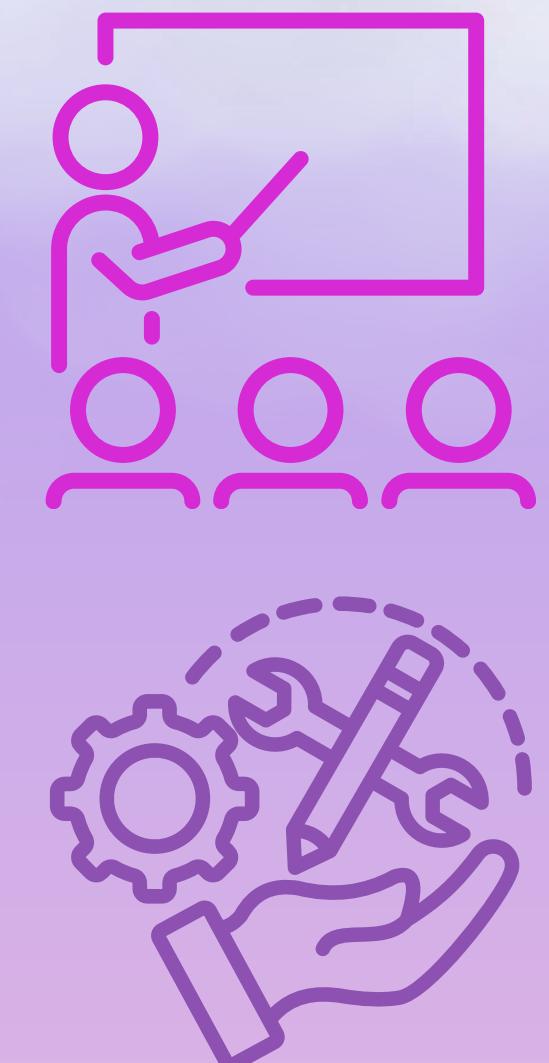
Training in peer support:

- University Diploma in Peer Support in Mental Health and Neurodiversity (Université Claude Bernard Lyon 1, France)
- University Diploma in Professional Peer Support in Psychiatry and Mental Health (Université de Grenoble, France)
- Specialized Quebec training in peer intervention (AQPRP - Association Québécoise pour la Réadaptation Psychosociale)
- Certificate in Peer Practice in Mental Health with The University of Applied Sciences and Arts – Social Work in Lausanne (HETSL), Switzerland

And a lot more...

Complementary training:

Institut Alpha (Canada) - Compassion fatigue, vicarious trauma, traumatic grief





What is Humanitarian Peer Support?

On September 12, 2025, Sarah Verrier—who was part of the sixth cohort of the university diploma in peer support in mental health and neurodiversity, and a peer supporter with CCH—presented her academic dissertation on the following topic: **“Humanitarian Peer Support in Mental Health: A Link in the Psychosocial Support Chain for Humanitarians?”**

Sarah received the excellent grade of 18/20, which will lead to the publication of her work at the national level.

On 19 November 2025, four members of CCH will return to student life as part of the University Diploma program in Peer Support in Mental Health and Neurodiversity.

CoCreate Humanity is building its **academic and scientific foundation** in order to ensure a professional and sustainable support initiative.



Diplôme Universitaire

Parcours : Pair-aidance en santé mentale et neurodiversité

Mémoire de fin d'études – 2025

La pair-aidance humanitaire en santé mentale, un maillon de la chaîne de l'accompagnement psychosocial des humanitaires ?

Sarah VERRIER

Sous la direction de Genny DALSASSO
Psychologue – Psychothérapeute OFSP – Centre Istós, Sion, Suisse

Membres du jury : Estelle BENNASAR et Lotfi BECHELLAOUI



What is Humanitarian Peer Support?



CoCreate Humanity has been part of the **Coraasp** (Coordination Romande des Associations d'Action pour la Santé Psychique / Romandy Coordination of Associations for Mental Health Action) in Switzerland, since 20 June 2024.

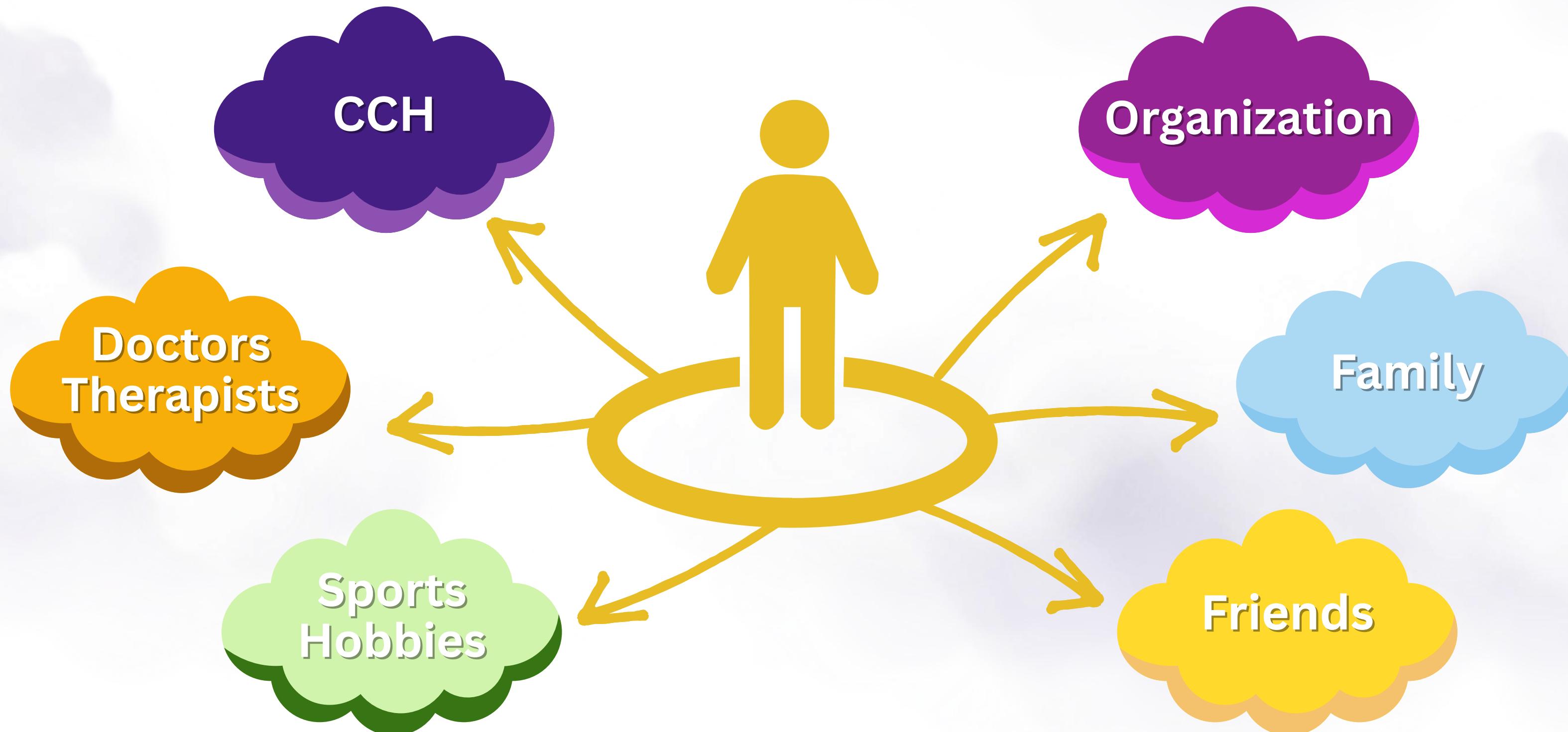
CoCreate Humanity has been part of the **FAPAF** (Fédération des Associations de Pairs Aidants Francophones / Federation of Francophone Peer Supporter Associations) in Brussels, since 30 June 2025.





What is Humanitarian Peer Support?

The person and their resources at the heart of the recovery journey

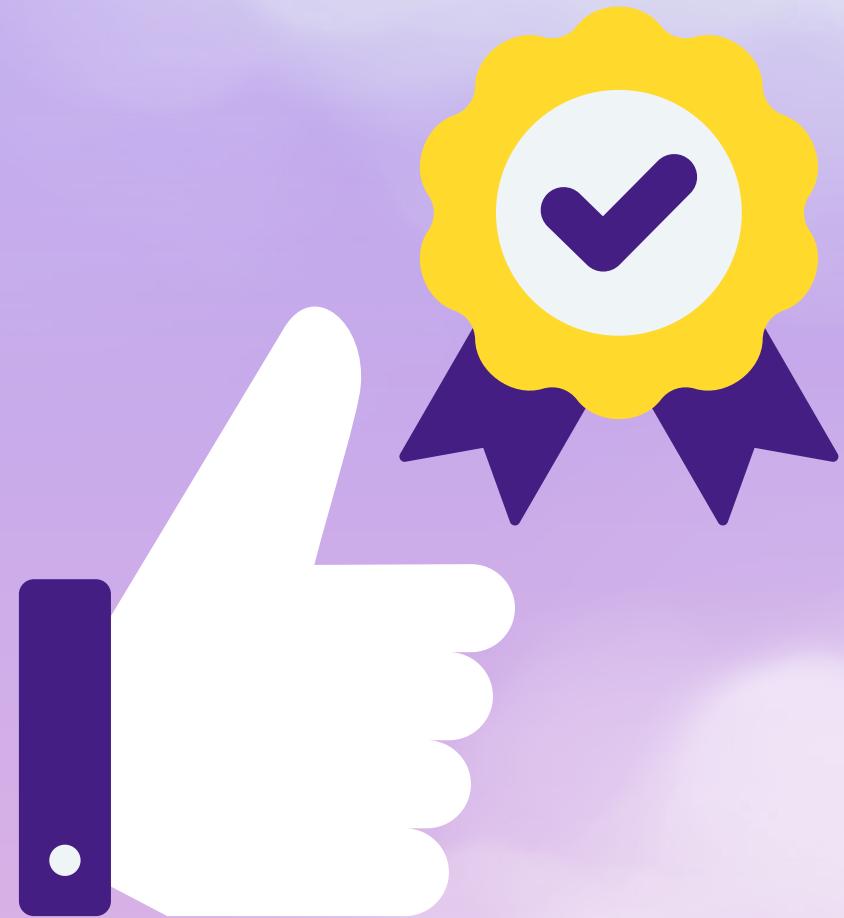




Key Benefits of Humanitarian Peer Support

What peer support brings to the humanitarian sector...

- Culturally sensitive approach
- Horizontal relation instead of a top-down approach
- Shared language and understanding
- Breaks stigma of asking for help
- Fosters resilience and empowerment
- Sustainability of support
- Easy accessibility
- Psychosocial rehabilitation
- A support between equals





Key Benefits of Humanitarian Peer Support

What peer support brings to the humanitarian sector...

- Increased retention and alleviation of impact of mental issues on everyday life and work
- Improved emotional balance and mental health
- Prevention of mental health issues of personnel
- Greater resilience, self-awareness and sense of belonging
- Strengthened team dynamics and organizational culture
- Higher quality of intervention, better impact on vulnerable communities

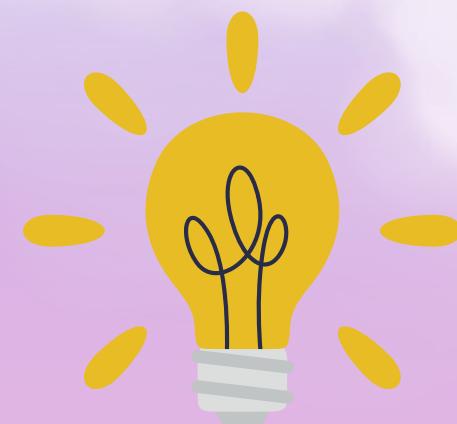




Key Benefits of Humanitarian Peer Support

The ++ of CoCreate Humanity...

- Secure, confidential and safe space (outside the organizations)
- Online and in-person support available – no membership required
- Different generations: those on their first missions, currently in the field, in transition, those who have left the humanitarian sector, and retirees
- Building trust more easily than formal therapy
- Conveying a positive message of hope
- Co-construction of the recovery journey



Humanitarian peer support is a vital psychological and psychosocial link in the recovery process of aid workers.



Peer Support and Supervision Teams



HPS: 25

Supervisors: 9

Peer Support Sessions : + 70



From left to right: Brigitte Louison, Sarah Verrier & Thibault Malzieu (HPS). Moustapha Maidougou, Mounkeila Abdoulaye & Sabine Grégoire (psychologists from the supervision team).



Partnership with INSO



The impact of this system can be fully assessed after all planned redeployments. We are already seeing positive effects: participants gain trust more quickly during interviews and express a desire to remain in contact with the duo in case of need or problems during the mission.

40 peer-support sessions (for international and local staff in Ukraine, Somalia, Lebanon, Haiti, Niger, Kenya, and Jordan).

In addition to peer support since August:

- 1) CCH provides **psychological support** through its supervision team, which is composed of psychologists and clinical psychologists.
- 2) CCH has developed and conducted a **pre-deployment psychological assessment jointly designed by HPS and psychologists**. This assessment – carried out collaboratively by a psychologist and a humanitarian peer supporter – is unprecedented among the preventive and follow-up measures of humanitarian organizations.



Testimonials



"Mental health for those working in the humanitarian field must be protected or restored. Supporting disaster victims or those subjected to violence – or being a victim oneself – can lead to immediate consequences (acute stress) and, at times, delayed ones (post-traumatic stress), both of which require appropriate care to prevent their future from being compromised. CoCreate Humanity addresses this essential need, making its work indispensable."

Professor Nicolas Franck

Head of the Pôle Centre Rive Gauche Le Vinatier Hospital Center
Head of the Psychosocial Rehabilitation and
Cognitive Remediation Resource Center
Professor at the Claude Bernard Lyon 1 University





Testimonials

Florence | Humanitarian worker for twelve years

CCH was a breath of fresh air when I was at my lowest ebb. It was an unparalleled support in rediscovering the joy of being oneself outside work, and succeeding in destigmatizing and removing the guilt from years of trauma in the field.

The support I received from caring, non-judgmental people who understood my situation and tried to guide me towards various possibilities for getting better, helped me to accept my therapy, encouraged me to reconnect with something inside me other than my PTSD, and forged me into the person I am today by trying to be gentle with myself (...). Thanks for everything.

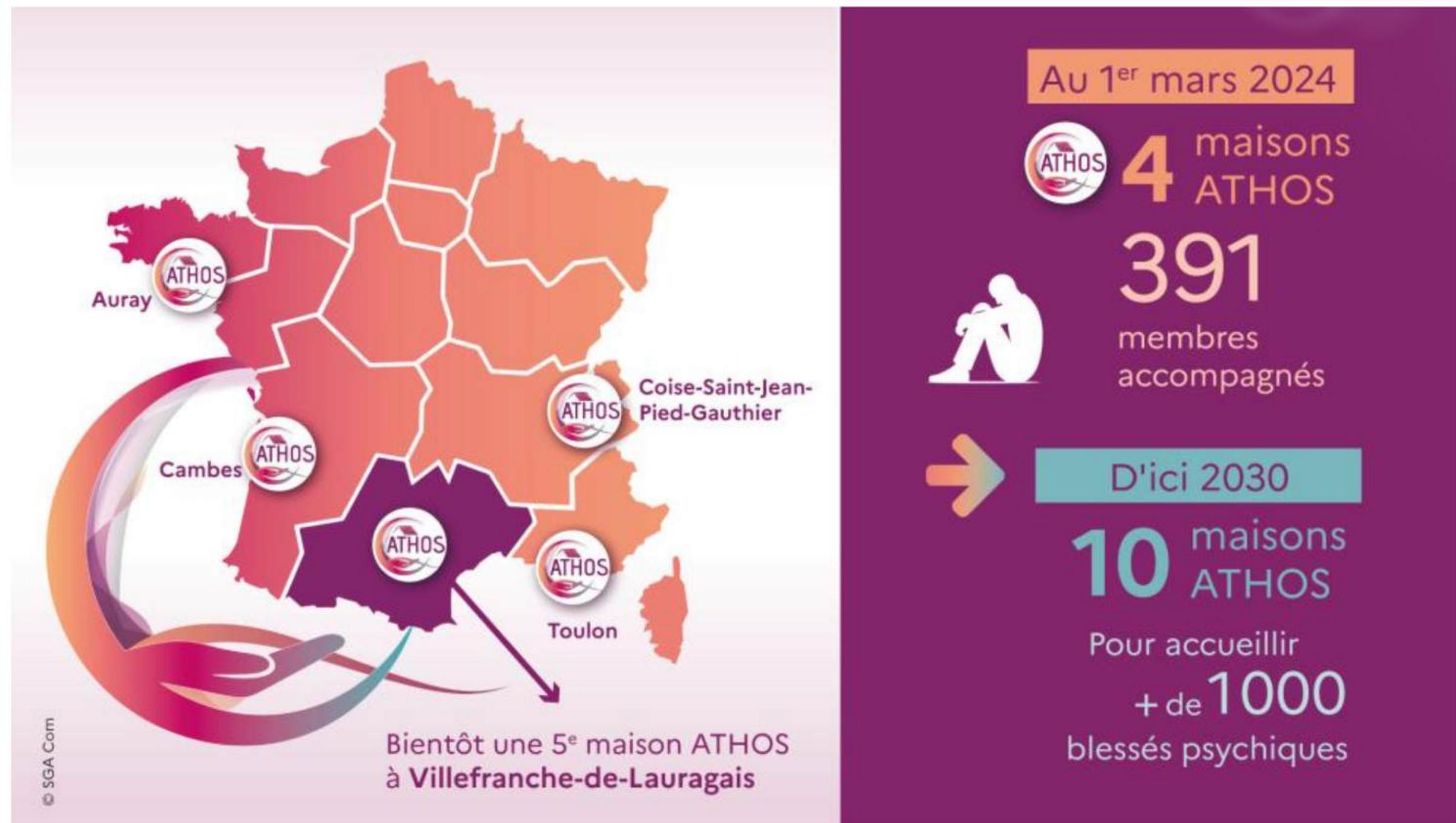
Luc | Former Field Coordinator for MSF France | Retired

As a former humanitarian worker, I would like to thank CoCreate Humanity for their attentiveness and availability as I cope with Parkinson's disease and post-traumatic stress disorder, following several humanitarian missions. The association even coordinated with my psychologist to support the continuation of my therapeutic care. Their interest in me and in my projects has deeply moved me. CoCreate Humanity is doing real good for the humanitarian community – even for those who have fallen out of the loop or are suffering in silence. Thanks to their support, I felt understood, accompanied, and able to make sense of what I was experiencing during my post-traumatic stress disorder. CCH has been a tremendous help to me, and I am truly grateful.



In the future... A psychosocial rehabilitation center

Le dispositif ATHOS en France © SGA/COM



The ATHOS houses were founded in 2021 for military personnel with psychological injuries. CCH intends to draw on this psychosocial rehabilitation model to open **the first center in Switzerland**. Any innovation in mental health for humanitarian workers must happen here, where the majority of international and humanitarian organizations are based.





Contacts

Website: www.cocreatehumanity.org

Contact: info@cocreatehumanity.org

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