

## **Mental Help Global: Leveraging AI to Address the Mental Health Crisis in War Zones**

By General David Petraeus and Clara Kaluderovic

The rapid advance of artificial intelligence (AI) has enabled groundbreaking applications across industries, from search to finance to healthcare. Among its most promising and urgent use cases is AI-driven mental health support—particularly in conflict zones, where traditional services are often overwhelmed.

In Ukraine, for example, the mental health crisis is staggering. Over half the population is in need of psychological support ([UNDP](#)), yet the country has only 0.7 qualified psychologists and psychotherapists per 100,000 people, compared to 7.3 per 100,000 in the United States ([Kyiv Post](#)). The war has not only traumatized millions of Ukrainians, it has also devastated healthcare infrastructure and mobilized much of the workforce, leaving those in need with few options for care.

To bridge this gap, Mental Help Global (MHG)—a Houston-based nonprofit—has developed an AI-powered platform in collaboration with Ukrainian partners at the American University of Kyiv and experts across Ukraine and the United States. If successful, this initiative will help address the vast unmet need for mental health assistance and, if successful there, also will serve as a model for other crisis-affected regions facing similar challenges due to war or natural disasters.

### **The Urgent Need for AI-Driven Mental Health Support in Ukraine**

Since Russia's invasion in February 2022, Ukraine's mental health needs have surged to an unprecedented scale. The World Health Organization (WHO) estimates that 9.6 million Ukrainians suffer from conditions ranging from debilitating anxiety to severe post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) ([CSIS](#)).

Despite the overwhelming demand, stigma and accessibility remain major barriers for care. Many Ukrainians hesitate to seek help due to cultural taboos surrounding mental health, while those who do face long wait times for assistance or a complete lack of services in their area. The physical damage and destruction of hospitals and clinics, combined with the displacement of healthcare workers, has exacerbated the crisis.

This is where AI-driven solutions can make a transformative difference. By leveraging AI and big data, Mental Help Global aims to provide immediate, scalable, and culturally sensitive mental health support to those who need it most.

### **Harnessing AI and Big Data to Expand Mental Health Access**

MHG's AI-powered platform is designed to augment—not replace—traditional therapy by providing accessible, scalable, and multilingual support in Ukrainian, Russian, and English. The system's capabilities will include:

- **Pattern Recognition at Scale:** Using big data analytics, MHG can identify common stressors, emerging psychological trends, and shifts in emotional well-being across different demographics and regions.
- **Reaching the Unreachable:** AI will allow MHG to provide mental health support to people in remote or high-conflict areas where human professionals are scarce or entirely unavailable.
- **Personalized, Adaptive Assistance:** Machine learning algorithms tailor responses to individual users, offering personalized recommendations and evolving based on user interactions.
- **Scalability in Crisis Situations:** Unlike human-dependent models, AI can handle thousands—if not millions—of users simultaneously, ensuring that support is available whenever and wherever it's needed.

#### Big Data as a Game Changer for Mental Health Interventions

By integrating big data analytics into mental health care, MHG can not only provide support—but also generate invaluable insights that can shape future interventions. The platform's ability to analyze massive datasets will enable:

- **Real-Time Identification of High-Risk Areas:** Geographic analysis helps prioritize regions experiencing particularly severe distress.
- **Ongoing Assessment of Intervention Effectiveness:** By tracking engagement and outcomes, MHG can refine its approach for maximum impact.
- **Data-Driven Decision-Making for Policymakers:** Insights from MHG's platform can inform government and humanitarian efforts, guiding resource allocation and response strategies.

These capabilities go beyond immediate aid; they build the foundation for a more responsive and effective global mental health system in times of crisis.

#### Setting a Precedent for Ethical, Scalable AI in Mental Health

MHG's work in Ukraine will offer valuable lessons for the global AI community, particularly as discussions on AI ethics, inclusivity, and scalability gain urgency. Key takeaways include:

- **The Power of Data-Driven Interventions:** AI and big data enable targeted, evidence-based mental health strategies that would be impossible through conventional methods alone.
- **Human-Centered AI Design:** Technology must be built with the end-user in mind, ensuring accessibility, cultural sensitivity, and psychological safety.
- **AI as a Scalable Public Good:** The success of AI in Ukraine could set a precedent for how technology can address systemic challenges in conflict zones, disaster relief efforts, and underserved communities worldwide.

### The Future of AI in Global Mental Health

The work of Mental Help Global is not just about Ukraine—it's about pioneering a new model of AI-assisted mental health care that can be deployed in crisis-affected regions across the globe. With the rapid evolution of AI and big data technologies, the lessons learned in Ukraine will be invaluable for shaping future humanitarian applications.

For policymakers, AI developers, and mental health advocates, the message is clear: when designed ethically and deployed responsibly, AI has the power to transform mental health care on a global scale—without compromising the values that matter most.

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