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PROMOTING PSYCHOLOGICAL RESILIENCE IN DISASTER AND CONFLICT: REVIEW OF THE FACTORS THAT MATTER

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Background Despite rising interest on the concept of societal resilience and its measurement, little has been done to provide operational indicators. Importantly, an evidence-based approach to assess the suitability of indicators remains unexplored. Furthermore few approaches that exist do not investigate indicators of psychological resilience, which is emerging as an important component of societal resilience to disasters. Disasters are events which overwhelm local capacities, often producing human losses, injury and damage to the affected communities. As climate hazards and disasters are likely to increase in the coming decades, strengthening the capacity of societies to withstand these shocks and recover quickly is vital.

Objectives To review the evidence on indicators of psychological resilience to disasters.

Methods A literature review using the Web of Knowledge was conducted. We examined 58 references identified through our search, which included predefined key terms and a search strategy along with clear inclusion and exclusion criteria. Six studies were included in this work.

Result We provided a qualitative assessment of six selected studies. We find that an evidence-based approach using features from systematic reviews is useful to compile, select and assess

the evidence and elucidate robust indicators. We conclude that strong social support received after a disaster is associated with an increased psychological resilience whereas a female gender is connected with a decrease in the likelihood of a resilient outcome. These results are consistent across disaster settings and cultures and are representative of approximately 13 million disaster-exposed civilians of adult age.

Conclusion An approach such as this that collects and evaluates evidence will allow indicators of resilience to be much more revealing and useful in the future. They will provide a robust basis to prioritize indicators to act upon through intersectoral policies and post-disaster public health interventions.