

Facts:

- 450 million people experience mental or neurological disorders around the world. These disorders constitute 5 of the 10 leading causes of disability worldwide, thus creating devastating socioeconomic impact for individuals, families, and governments.
- Mental disorders can be diagnosed and treated cost-effectively.
- In many parts of the world, mental health is still not acknowledged as important and remains a low health priority. Access to effective treatments is limited.

What are Mental Health Policies? Why are they Important?

Mental health policies define a vision for the future, which in turn helps to establish benchmarks for the prevention, treatment, and rehabilitation of mental disorders, and the promotion of mental health in the community. Mental health policies are important because they coordinate, through a common vision and plan, all programmes and services related to these objectives. Without this type of organization, programmes and services are likely to be inefficient and fragmented.

Mental Health outcomes are optimized when:

- Mental health is an essential component of public health
- Government policies and actions protect and promote the mental health and well-being of its peoples
- Services are appropriate, accountable, accessible, and equitable
- People are treated in the least restrictive and intrusive manner

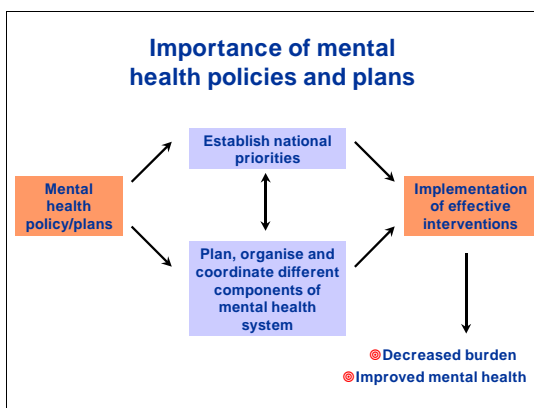
Why have a project focused on mental health policy?

A paradoxical situation is emerging, worldwide. As scientific evidence mounts concerning the cause, course, and consequences of mental disorders, and new treatments are emerging that can make real differences in the lives of sufferers, most people with mental disorders do not receive even the most basic treatment, and suffer from stigma and dis-

crimination. National policies and programmes in mental health are urgently needed to change this situation, yet over 40% of countries have no mental health policy, and over 30% have no mental health programme. The majority of countries' mental health budget constitutes less than 1% of their total health expenditures.

WHO Mental Health Policy Project

A Mental Health Policy Project has been created by WHO's Department of Mental Health and Substance Dependence. The goal of the project is to bring together the latest information on mental health policy and service development, compile it into a guidance package, disseminate it to Member States, and assist with its implementation. The project will help countries to create policies and services and then put them into practice, which in turn will lead to improved mental health care, treatment, and promotion.



Key areas of Work

- To develop a guidance package for mental health policy reform
 - National level planning and management (stewardship)
 - Financing
 - Service organization and delivery
- To assist countries in the formulation and implementation of country-specific mental health policies.
- To enhance the capacity of countries to manage mental health policy issues over the long-term

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