



WHO Mental health Improvements for Nations Development

The WHO MIND Project: Helping youth overcome mental health problems

- The WHO MIND project works with countries to ensure that people with mental health problems are able to access the treatment, care and support they need in order to live full and productive lives.
- In too many parts of the world, people are subject to stigma, discrimination and human rights violations and are denied the basic life opportunities given to other citizens because of their mental disorder. This makes their condition even worse and prevents their recovery.

➔ The WHO MIND project is working to:

- Increase awareness in communities about mental disorders and their treatment, and to improve people's skills at managing problems
- Stop human rights violations and discrimination
- Ensure that services are competent to address mental health issues
- Support governments in addressing mental health in their policies for health, education, social services, etc.

➔ The extent of mental health problems among youth:

- Mental health of youth is an **extremely important but neglected topic** worldwide.
- We all know that youth are **our future** and the foundation of our future society
 - ~ Youth represent the **largest part of the population worldwide**: Half of the world's population is under the age of 25
 - ~ Most mental health problems & disorders start during adolescence and continue into adulthood with severe emotional and social consequences for individuals and families if they are not treated
 - ~ Early prevention, identification, and treatment of mental disorders is highly cost-efficient, preventing long term disability into adulthood
- Mental health problems are increasing among youth, which is sadly reflected by the increasing rates of suicide worldwide
 - ~ Approximately **one million people** die from suicide every year, which represents **one death every 40 seconds**
 - ~ Rates among **young people** have been increasing to such an extent that they are now the **group at highest risk in a third of countries**, both developed and developing
 - ~ Suicide is now the 3rd leading cause of death among 15-44 years of age





➔ **What can explain the problems?**

- Rapid social changes, development and globalization
- Urban migration, social isolation, unemployment, poverty
- Pressures/competitiveness to perform well at school, university, and work
- Peer pressure, bullying
- Individual and family crises
- Breakdown in traditional values which can also lead to different aspirations, values & goals within families and between parents and children

➔ **What can be done?**

- 1. Help people to help themselves:** Self-care - that is, giving people knowledge and skills to recognize, discuss and manage stress and emotional problems as they arise, and to know when to seek help and whom to seek help from
- 2. Community education:** Using media, community leaders, role models and well known, respected figures in the community to raise awareness of mental health problems arising in youth and to de-stigmatize the issue.
- 3. Interventions in schools:**
 - ~ Working with teachers to give them skills to recognize mental health problems in students (crises in particular), to discuss and resolve these with students and families where appropriate or to refer people to services where this is required.
 - ~ Setting up of life skills programs to enhance self-esteem, coping skills and health decision making - this has been demonstrated to reduce the risk of suicide among youth.
 - ~ Promoting a social and physical environment conducive to good mental health. For example, strategies to reduce bullying, promote social inclusion, and promote sports and leisure activities to develop good social relationships and networks.
- 4. Health services should provide good treatment and support for mental health problems among youth.**
 - ~ This means that health staff need to be knowledgeable and skilled in mental health issues.
 - ~ Treatment and support should be delivered in the community where people can recover best.
 - ~ The practice of putting young people with mental health problems into institutions which are associated with human rights violations must be stopped.
 - ~ Young people should be given the opportunity to interact with health services in order to create youth friendly mental health services that are more acceptable and accessible to young people.





5. **Health policy and education policies should address child and adolescence** mental health issues. For example, education policy should cover issues in relation to mental health prevention and promotion; mental health policies should include specificities related to improving treatment, care and support for children and adolescents with mental health problems.
6. **The needs of special vulnerable populations** must be given attention, including AIDS orphans, children of displaced populations, child soldiers, AIDS affected and infected youth, children of political or economic migrant populations, and other marginalized groups. The difficulties faced by the youth of vulnerable populations in integrating into society and accessing educational and economic opportunities jeopardizes not only their own future, but the future of entire nations.

Citation

Helping youth overcome mental health problems. Geneva, World Health Organization, 2007 (url: http://www.who.int/mental_health/policy/development/en/index.html, last accessed 7 November 2007; Mental Health Core to Development Information Sheet, Sheet2).

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