

Secretary-General

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'NEED IS HIGH, CARE INADEQUATE,' SECRETARY-GENERAL SAYS IN WORLD MENTAL HEALTH DAY

MESSAGE, URGING MOBILIZATION OF INTERNATIONAL RESOURCES TO TREAT MENTAL DISORDERS

Following is UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon's message for World Mental Health Day, to be observed on 10 October:

As defined in the constitution of the World Health Organization (WHO), health is not merely the absence of disease or infirmity, it is a state of complete physical, mental and social well-being. Mental disorders contribute more to disease burden and disability in developing countries than any other category of non-communicable disease, yet only a small minority of people with mental disorders in these countries have access to mental health services. The need is high, and care is inadequate.

World Mental Health Day is an important opportunity to mobilize international resources to meet the goal of providing adequate mental health care. Governments and public health organizations, civil society, multilateral agencies and donors must join hands to make this happen. Effective treatments exist for a wide variety of mental disorders. Let us unite to scale up mental health services and involve primary health-care systems in delivering mental health services worldwide.

The WHO Mental Health Gap Action Programme (mhGAP) seeks to narrow the distance between needs and services by providing treatment packages for mental disorders that can be implemented on a large scale in low- and middle-income countries. With limited available human and financial resources, delivering these services means involving community-based primary care facilities. Providing effective mental health services in primary care settings would help to reduce the stigma associated with mental disorders and could prevent unnecessary hospitalization and human rights violations of people with mental health problems.

Such a strategy makes good economic sense. Mental disorders impair the ability of children to learn and the ability of adults to function in families, at work and in society at large. It is also a pro-poor strategy. Research shows that mental disorders are overwhelmingly concentrated in lower income groups. Poverty and its associated stresses, which include unemployment, violence, social exclusion and constant insecurity, are closely linked to the onset of mental disorders.

Health is an important human right. Let us this year resolve to reduce the public health burden and the individual suffering of people with mental health problems worldwide.

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