



Secretary-General António Guterres in a three-way video call with frontline mental health workers, Mr. Umair Bachlani in Pakistan and Ms. Charlene Sunkel in South Africa. UN Photo/Eskinder Debebe

LAUNCH OF THE POLICY BRIEF ON COVID-19 AND MENTAL HEALTH

"Mental health services are an essential part of all government responses to COVID-19"

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Mental health is at the core of our humanity.

It enables us to lead rich and fulfilling lives and to participate in our communities.

But the COVID-19 virus is not only attacking our physical health; it is also increasing psychological suffering.

Grief at the loss of loved ones...

Shock at the loss of jobs...

Isolation and restrictions on movement...

Difficult family dynamics...

Uncertainty and fear for the future...

Mental health problems, including depression and anxiety, are some of the greatest causes of misery in our world.

Throughout my life, and in my own family, I have been close to doctors and psychiatrists treating these conditions. As prime minister of my country, Portugal, and as High Commissioner for Refugees, I became acutely aware of the suffering they cause. This suffering is often exacerbated by stigma and discrimination, which is absolutely unacceptable.

After decades of neglect and underinvestment in mental health services, the COVID-19 pandemic is now hitting families and communities with additional mental stress.

Those most at risk are frontline healthcare workers, older people, adolescents and young people, those with pre-existing mental health conditions and those caught up in conflict and crisis.

We must help them and stand by them.

I urge governments, civil society, health authorities and others to come together urgently to address the mental health dimension of this pandemic.

Even when the pandemic is brought under control, grief, anxiety and depression will continue to affect people and communities.

This is the background to the policy brief on COVID-19 and mental health that we are launching today.

Mental health services are an essential part of all government responses to COVID-19. They must be expanded and fully funded.

Policies must support and care for those affected by mental health conditions, and protect their human rights and dignity. Lockdowns and quarantines must not discriminate against those with poor mental health.

As we recover from the pandemic, we must shift more mental health services to the community, and make sure mental health is included in universal health coverage.

The United Nations is strongly committed to creating a world in which everyone, everywhere, has someone to turn to for psychological support.

I urge governments, civil society, health authorities and others to come together urgently to address the mental health dimension of this pandemic.

And I call on governments in particular to announce ambitious commitments on mental health at the upcoming World Health Assembly.

About the author

António Guterres

António Guterres is the ninth Secretary-General of the United Nations, who took office on 1st January 2017.



Civil society supports UN on COVID-19 mental health action



[Policy Brief: COVID-19 and the Need for Action on Mental Health](#)

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ANTÓNIO GUTERRES

"Good communication saves lives"

The United Nations is launching "Verified", an initiative to combat the growing scourge of COVID-19 misinformation by increasing the volume and reach of trusted, accurate information. Verified, led by the UN Department for Global Communications (DGC), will provide information around three themes: science – to save lives; solidarity – to promote local and global cooperation; and solutions – to advocate recovery for support to impacted populations. It will also promote recovery packages that tackle the climate crisis and address the root causes of poverty, inequality and hunger.



UNIC MOSCOW

Russian WWII vet raises funds to defeat Covid-19

World War II veterans, no strangers to grave threats, find strength and solidarity in a united front against a global coronavirus pandemic that is especially dangerous to people their age. Sergeant Zinaida Korneva, 98, rallies Russian citizens with inspiration from Captain Thomas Moore, a fellow WWII veteran from the United Kingdom.



DEPARTMENT OF GLOBAL COMMUNICATIONS

Staying fit in the time of COVID-19 – tips from the UN

Concerns are growing that being cooped up indoors all day due to the pandemic-induced lockdowns is creating greater risks for high blood pressure, hypertension, coronary heart disease, stroke, diabetes and mental illness. From Olympians to Hello Kitty, influential figures are collaborating with the United Nations to help people stay active during the COVID-19 pandemic.