

PRESS RELEASE

Mental Health as a Priority for UN in Lebanon during COVID-19

Beirut, Lebanon

Friday, 19 June 2020 (United Nations) – The COVID-19 pandemic has hit Lebanon at a time of instability, not only affecting physical health, but also increasing stress and anxiety. Those population with vulnerability during this pandemic today 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. Within this context, the UN in Lebanon worked closely with the National Mental Health Programme in the Ministry of Public Health towards developing a mental health and psychological support action plan as part of the national response to the COVID-19 outbreak, using an integrated approach to mental health. In line with this action plan and in close coordination with the MOPH-National Mental Health Programme, the UN and partners raised awareness on ways to cope with stress and promote mental Health, integrated mental health awareness within the training materials of health frontlines and non-health front liners, and trained an average of 380 front liners on guidelines for the provision of remote psychosocial support for children and caregivers with key messages related to stigma, coping with stress and safe identification and referral. 31,288 boys, girls and caregivers were sensitized to promote their psychosocial wellbeing and protection of their children. 5,975 children, parents and primary caregivers were provided with remote community based mental health and psychosocial support. The UN also shared psychosocial support kits for children in hospitals and distributed cognitive games for adults during quarantine. Leaflets and posters on coping with stress for persons in quarantine were also developed in partnership with the National Mental Health Programme.

During this period where online education became a critical challenge to both students and parents, the UN also worked on addressing the well-being of children by adapting harmonized psychosocial support competencies and turning them into activities for children and their caregivers to better deal with the isolation and distance learning during the COVID-19 outbreak.

Within this context, the World Health Organization Representative in Lebanon Dr. Iman Shankiti highlighted that “Mental health is an integral part of health and we need to safeguard the mental health of our communities, our health care workers, our adults, our women and children and the most vulnerable of our society. We are committed to share credible and evidence-based guidance on mental health to professionals and to the public and to improve access to mental health treatment to those who need it. We will work with our partners and the UN community to make this happen and to maintain mental health during this time of crisis.”

To target the youth population, a campaign under the title of “How Are you Doing in Corona Times?” was launched, in partnership with the National Mental Health Programme and the Ministry of Education and Higher Education, to normalize the discussion around youth mental health in such times of uncertainty aiming to lift all taboos around it on one hand, and to help youth identify when they are not feeling well, to accept that sometimes “it’s ok not to be ok” and to encourage them to seek help when they feel they need it. The campaign enabled youth and adolescents to interact around topics that are of importance to their lives and shared experiences in ways that can open discussions and normalize behaviors that will allow them to cope with the COVID 19 impact, and with issues related to it.

“There is no health without mental health and youth should be encouraged to take care of their physical and mental health. As a matter of fact, 50% of mental disorders start before the age of 14 and 75% by the mid-20s. The number of youth in Lebanon is about 520 thousand young men and women, of whom 305 thousand are Lebanese. We believe in the importance of their role and the importance of their participation in developing their societies and will maintain our commitment to to empower young people and enhance their participation and involvement in Lebanon” said UNICEF Representative Yukie Mokuo. The “How Are you in Corona Times?” campaign featuring 8 episodes can be found on the following link <https://www.unicef.org/lebanon/keefakkeefik-show>

[National Mental Health Programme](#)

[UNICEF Lebanon](#)

[WHO Lebanon](#)

[Mental health and psychosocial support action plan as part of the national response](#)