

Media Update

6 April 2017

WHO

Press Release

WORLD HEALTH DAY-2017

Fight stigma. Speak out about depression

7 April 2017 – Today, on World Health Day, the World Health Organization (WHO) is calling on individuals and communities to speak out about depression and to fight the stigma surrounding it. The slogan for this year's Day is "Depression: let's talk". Talking about depression helps break down stigma and encourages more people to seek help.

Currently, more than 300 million people around the world are living with depression, an increase of more than 18% between 2005 and 2015. Depression is an illness in which people feel overwhelming sadness, lose interest in activities they enjoy and find it difficult to carry out daily tasks. It can affect anyone, anywhere, especially populations experiencing humanitarian crises. In the Eastern Mediterranean Region, as many as 1 in 5 people are affected by depression and anxiety in countries affected by armed conflict, insecurity and displacement.

Dr Fikri, WHO Regional Director for the Eastern Mediterranean, says, "Despite common misperceptions, depression is not a sign of weakness but stigma and discrimination are preventing people from seeking the care they need. Effective treatment is available through talking therapies and antidepressant medications, or a combination of both.

Depression is treatable, failure to act is costly

In many countries of the world, there is little or no support available for people with mental health disorders. Even in high-income countries, nearly 50% of people with depression do not get treatment. Investment in mental health makes financial and social sense, and failure to act is costly. If untreated,

depression can be debilitating and even lead to suicide, which is the second leading cause of death among 15- to 29-year olds.

“Governments can improve mental health services, families and communities can provide social support, civil society groups can raise awareness and individuals can seek help and treatment and talk to others about how they feel,” urges Dr Fikri.

Mental health services are also being provided in some countries by non-specialist general practitioners under the supervision of national specialists, trained through the WHO Mental Health Gap Action Programme, introduced in more than 90 low- and middle-income countries around the world. This scaling up of mental health services and care is crucial, especially for the most vulnerable populations experiencing humanitarian crises, conflict and displacement.

Note to the editor:

Depression has many causes. A combination of physical, psychological or social factors can cause depression. Some of these factors include:

- a family history of depression
- loss of a parent, child or other close relative or friend
- chronic physical illnesses
- alcohol or drug use
- extreme stressors like war, conflict or natural disasters
- experiencing adversity and abuse in childhood
- rapid changes in life situations like marriage, childbirth or loss of a job
- financial problems
- belonging to a minority group, and
- marital difficulties.

However, having strong social support can help ease some of the effects of these factors.

Low levels of recognition and access to care for depression and another common mental disorder, such as anxiety, result in a global economic loss of more than US\$ 1 trillion every year. The losses are incurred by households, employers and governments: for households, with absence from work affecting household income; for employers, with lower productivity of employees when at work and absence from work; and for governments, with higher health and welfare expenditures. Yet, every US\$ 1 invested in scaling up treatment for

depression and anxiety leads to a return of US\$ 4 in improved health and ability to work.

(Press Release and other information materials in Urdu are also attached herewith)

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FAO

Press Release

Government of Pakistan committed to development of wool sector in Balochistan

The Ministry of National Food Security and Research (MNFSR) in collaboration with Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) organized a one day workshop on ‘National Wool Development Programme’ at the FAO Representation premises in Islamabad on April 6.

Mr. Sikandar Hayat Khan Bosan, Federal Minister for National Food Security and Research chaired this workshop.

The workshop aimed at seeking suggestions and recommendations for the best way forward in developing the wool sector in Balochistan to improve the rural economy of the province by implementing a long term sustainable wool development programme in Pakistan.

Speaking on the occasion Minister Bosan said: “There is a need to expand and professionalize the wool sector in Balochistan which accounts for 50% of sheep in Pakistan with eventual expansion to other parts of the country. Workshops like this will help bring all stakeholders on one platform and this will lead to a

more unified and complete approach towards uplift of wool farming and relevant sectors”.

He also said that the Government with the help of FAO and USAID are progressing steadily in highlighting the issues related to wool production and improving the conditions for local livestock farmers.

The wool programme will be coordinated by FAO in close cooperation with the Government of Balochistan and the Federal Government (MNFSR) as main programme partners and the DGs of Sindh, Punjab and KP at a later stage. Mr. Patrick T. Evans, FAO Representative to Pakistan informed the participants that wool has a high potential for development in Balochistan and this important resource will be used to improve livelihoods of rural farmers including women. He invited the participants to make practical recommendations and financial contribution for development of the wool value chain in Balochistan.

Mr. Ubaidullah Jan Babat, Adviser to the Chief Minister Balochistan on Livestock, Forest and Environment Department was also present on the occasion along with representatives from government and development sector organizations.

A well-functioning wool value chain in Balochistan will create employment for herders, shearers, wool washers, sorters, graders, balers, spinners, dyers, traders and transporters. Much of this work can be done by women. The proposed program (From Sheep to Shawl) will cover all aspects of the wool value chain from improved and sustainable rangeland management to vaccination, better feeding of sheep, delivery of shearing services and added value activities such as carpet making.
