



World Federation for Mental Health

Mental Health Policies

Ana de Sousa Baptista

Keywords: Policymaking, Mental Health

No health without mental health, a state of the art

Persons with mental and psychosocial disabilities represent a significant proportion of the world's population. Millions of people worldwide have mental health conditions and an estimated one in four people globally will experience a mental health condition in their lifetime. Almost one million people die due to suicide every year, and it is the third leading cause of death among young people. Depression is the leading cause of years lost due to disability worldwide. Mental health problems, including alcohol abuse, are among the ten leading causes of disability in both developed and developing countries. In particular, depression is ranked third in the global burden of disease and is projected to rank first in 2030.

Persons with mental and psychosocial disabilities often face stigma and discrimination, as well as experience high levels of physical and sexual abuse, which can occur in a range of settings, including prisons, hospitals and homes.

The economic cost of mental health problems is vast, while reasonable investment in mental health can contribute to better mental health for people. Poor mental health is both a cause and a consequence of poverty, compromised education, gender inequality, ill-health, violence and other global challenges. It impedes the individual's capacity to work productively, realize their potential and make a contribution to their community.

There is growing recognition within the international community that invisible disabilities, such as mental health is one of the most neglected yet essential development issues in achieving internationally agreed development goals. (United Nations, Mental Health and Development, Sustainable Development Goals)

United Nations Vision

*For the first time, **world leaders recognized the promotion of mental health and well-being, and the prevention and treatment of substance abuse, as health priorities** within the global development agenda. The inclusion of mental health and substance abuse in the Sustainable Development Agenda, was adopted at the United Nations General Assembly in September 2015.*

*"As we embark on this great collective journey, we pledge that **no one will be left behind**. Recognizing that the dignity of the human person is fundamental, we wish to see the goals and targets met for all nations and peoples and for all segments of society. And we will endeavour to reach the furthest behind first."*
(2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development)



World Federation for Mental Health

WHO - World Health Organization Statement

Mental health is an integral and essential component of health. The WHO constitution states: "Health is a state of complete physical, mental and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity." An important implication of this definition is that mental health is more than just the absence of mental disorders or disabilities.

Mental health is a state of well-being in which an individual realizes his or her own abilities, can cope with the normal stresses of life, can work productively and is able to make a contribution to his or her community.

Mental health is fundamental to our collective and individual ability as humans to think, emote, interact with each other, earn a living and enjoy life. On this basis, the promotion, protection and restoration of mental health can be regarded as a vital concern of individuals, communities and societies throughout the world.

It is important to acknowledge that Mental health is everyone's business – individuals, families, health professionals, formal and both informal caregivers, employers, educators, communities and governments all need to play their part.

Good mental health and resilience are fundamental to our physical health, our relationships, our education, our training, our work and to achieving our potential. Moreover, good mental health and wellbeing also bring wider social and economic benefits. But to realise these benefits, we all need to take action and be supported by Policies.

We all need to take responsibility for caring for our own mental health and that of others and to challenge the blight of stigma and discrimination.

Policymaking, a must do.

Considering that there is ***no health without mental health***, and mental health comes as an essential condition to accomplish the full potential of the individuals and the communities, it is most imperative that mental health achieves the same relevance of the physical health to the governments, institutions and citizens.

In general, countries governments face a budget deficit in order to satisfy the health system and if mental health is not taken as important as physical health it will not be considered as an equal priority. Policies demonstrate and establish the equality, allowing the individual being treated in a holistic and integrative way - physical, mental, social, with respect for his wellbeing, rights and potential.

There is an emergent need of establishing best practices, along with guiding principles, in order to the governments and institutions be cost-effective on their decisions, *i.e.*, maximize the benefits from the investments and be sure to follow the best practices.



World Federation for Mental Health

Based on that, policies supported in respect for human rights and positive guiding principles, will facilitate the establishment of the vision, the communication and the plans that should be implemented in order to achieve the goals in an effective and coordinated way with economic reasoning.

We all benefit.

Mental health policymaking areas

There are many areas where mental policymaking can focus, such as:

- Improve the scientific understanding of physical and mental health relations;
- Establishment and legitimacy the various agents involved in mental health practices, namely: patient, caregiver, psychotherapist, psychiatrist, psychologist, social counsellor, nurse, others;
- Improve the coordination services of different mental health professionals and agents;
- Improve service quality, policing the relation of mental health patients and carers;
- Applied training and education;
- Establishment of service quality standards for mental health;
- Establishment of the best practices of medication versus alternative recognized practices;
- Establishment of best practices for mental health preventive care for individuals, families, communities and organizational systems.
- Creation of synergies with the establishment of cross knowledge platforms in order to improve policy making;
- Establishment of mental health public awareness policies;
- Others.

In this Section, WFMH introduces an online platform which brings together a range of country and international policies and resources, covering mental health, substance abuse, disability, general health, human rights and development.

We address our work to all individuals, suffering or not of any kind of mental illness or addiction, caregivers, mental and general health professionals, social workers, mental health activists, politicians, educators, and to all that understand the need of taking care in the present to accomplish a better future. Please, take a step and join us.