

The Ministry of Public Health in collaboration with partners launches the third national awareness campaign on mental health “Time to Talk”.

14 september 2018-Beirut- The Ministry of Public Health (MoPH), launched the third National Awareness Campaign on Mental Health “Time_To_Talk” “صار_وقت_نحكي”, under the sponsorship of the World Health Organization (WHO), ABAAD, International Medical Corps (IMC), and Medecins du Monde, through an official launching event open to the public in Nejme Square in the capital’s centre on Friday September 14, 2018.

The launching event of the campaign included interactive awareness raising activities through booth organized by non-governmental organisations working in the mental health field across Lebanon. The official launching ceremony featured a short documentary on the public’s perception of mental health, speeches by H.E Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Public Health, Mr. Ghassan Hasbani, the head of the National Mental Health Programme at the MOPH Dr. Rabih El Chammay, representatives of the sponsoring partners of the campaign Dr. Alissar Rady (World Health Organisation), Ms. Ghidad Anani (Abaad), and Mr. Ali-Kan Rajani (Global Affairs Canada). The ceremony also featured live testimonies from two persons sharing their lived experience with mental disorders, Mr. Mahmoud Kebbe El Halabi and Ms Leen Farhat. The ceremony was followed by a Questions and Answers session featured Live on the Facebook of the Ministry of Public Health that persons can watch anytime through visiting the MOPH Facebook page.

In Lebanon, as is the case globally, mental disorders are a common health condition. 1 in 4 person can pass through a mental disorder in his or her life. Yet, despite the high prevalence, only 1 out of 10 persons with mental health conditions access the care they need. This is due to many factors including largely to the stigma around mental health. This stigma is mainly due to the many common misconceptions about mental health and constitutes a barrier for persons to talk about it and seek help. Lack of knowledge on mental health also prevents persons from realizing that what they are going through is a mental health condition that they can seek care for.

Through its third public awareness campaign, the National Mental Health Program (NMHP) at the MoPH will be encouraging persons to talk about mental health openly, anywhere and anytime, and to listen and encourage persons to seek care when they need it. The campaign will extend for a month until October 10, 2018, which commemorates World Mental Health Day. Throughout the month, an awareness-raising TV spot will be airing on local television channels and on social media. Awareness messages and information about mental health will be posted on a regular basis on the social media platforms of the Ministry of Public Health. The hotline of the MOPH 1214 will be referred to during the campaign to provide information about available services for Mental Health in Lebanon. Community Talk events will be organized in different governorates facilitated by NGOs collaborating in the campaign to highlight the idea that we can talk about mental health anywhere and anytime. Coasters and flyers as well as table separators will be featured in many restaurants who were interested to take part of the campaign to keep the discussion flowing about mental health everywhere.

It is “Time_to_Talk about #Mental_Health anytime, anywhere and it is time to listen and encourage persons to seek care. There are effective treatments for mental disorders. With adequate treatment, a person can recover and lead a productive life. Talking is the first step towards recovery as testified by Ms. Leen Farhat: “I’m here to tell you that talking helps! (...) It wasn’t until I started talking about my situation did I start to get better.” Mr. Mahmoud Kebbi Al Halabi emphasized in his testimony that “I am sure that each one of us has a family member, a colleague or a



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friend who is experiencing a mental disorder. It can also be us. What would you do in this situation? I am confident that you will be there to support them and stand by them.” In talking, there is an important role as well that can be played by the Media as emphasized by Dr. Rabih Chammay “The media has a critical role to play in changing the discourse around mental health and the Ministry is going to be launching soon a guide and toolbox designed for media professionals, with media professionals, that can be used to support them in producing successful media outputs on mental health.”

The Ministry of Public Health has placed mental health high on its agenda. In 2014, it launched the National Mental Health Programme (NMHP) with the support of WHO, IMC and UNICEF with the aim of reforming mental health care in the country. In 2015, the NMHP launched the first strategy for mental health for Lebanon, the “Mental Health and Substance Use-Promotion, Prevention and Treatment- Strategy for Lebanon 2015-2020”. The implementation of the Strategy is successfully ongoing since its launching to increase the availability and accessibility to high quality evidence-based mental health care to all persons living in Lebanon and to strengthen the prevention of mental disorders and the promotion of mental health; and many achievements have been made.

“Mental health is an integral part of health. There is no health without mental health”, as stated by WHO, which assured in the launching event, through its representative Dr. Alissar Rady, that “the WHO will continue to support the efforts of the Ministry of Public Health and all partners in the domain of promoting mental health in Lebanon”. Collaboration and coordination is a key element in national work and as Ms. Ghida Anani highlighted “All of us today we hope are vigilant about the size of national responsibilities, which are truly carried through a partnership between the public sector and civil society guided by a common concern “The person first”. Mr Aly-Khan Rajani, Head of Cooperation at Global Affairs Canada, call upon all stakeholders stating: “let us vow to remove the stigma associated with mental health issues, and make it our goal to support a friend, colleague, or family member who may be affected because mental health matters to us all to build stronger, healthier, and more resilient communities.” As H.E Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Public Health, Mr. Ghassan Hasbani assured to the public “A new era for mental health has begun in Lebanon in the past years. An era where mental health is a need and a right and where the Ministry of Public Health has a clear vision to build a system that can ensure the opportunity for all persons living in Lebanon to enjoy the best possible mental health and wellbeing”.

To access all the campaign material mentioned in this press release, please visit the campaign section on the National Mental Health Programme webpage:

<http://www.moph.gov.lb/en/Pages/6/553/the-national-mental-health-program>

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