



WHO Country Representative Dr Richard Peeperkorn delivers a speech at the World Health Day event in Kabul on 9 April 2017. The Ministry of Public Health and WHO celebrated World Health Day at an event held in Kabul today to increase awareness and mobilize action around depression, a common mental health disorder and the leading cause of ill health and disability worldwide. According to latest WHO estimates, more than 300 million people are living with depression globally, an increase of more than 18% between 2005 and 2015. While accurate data on depression and mental health disorders is not available in Afghanistan, according to recent WHO estimates more than a million Afghans suffer from depressive disorders while over 1.2 million suffer from anxiety disorders. Actual figures are likely to be much higher.

Depression affects people of all ages but the risk of becoming depressed is increased by multiple factors such as poverty, insecurity and conflict, unemployment, physical illness, gender-based violence and drug use. Depression causes mental anguish and impacts people's ability to carry out even the simplest everyday tasks, with sometimes devastating consequences for relationships with family and friends and the ability to earn a living. At worst, depression can lead to suicide, now the second leading cause of death among 15-29-year-olds globally.

"The Ministry of Public Health has recently trained over 700 professional psychological counselors and 101 specialized mental health doctors. Of these, 300 are currently working in government-run health centres while the others are working for different health NGOs," said H.E. Dr Ferozuddin Feroz, Minister of Public Health, speaking at the World Health Day event. "We need to fight the stigma and discrimination associated with depression and other mental health problems and ensure all people have access to help when they need it."

