



10 October 2023, Damascus, Syria – To mark World Mental Health Day, WHO and the Syrian Ministry of Health launched a 2-day workshop for media professionals to emphasize this year’s theme, “Mental health is a universal human right.” The activity aims to improve knowledge, raise awareness and drive actions that promote and protect everyone’s mental health.

“It’s essential to underscore that mental health is not a luxury; it is a basic human right,” said Dr Iman Shankiti, Acting WHO Representative in Syria. “Regardless of who we are or where we come from, everyone deserves the highest attainable standard of mental health. This not only entails prevention, but also includes access to quality mental health care.”

Many years of crisis have affected the health and mental well-being of people in Syria. The negative impacts have been further exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic, disease outbreaks, the recent earthquake and the country’s ongoing economic challenges.

WHO has responded with mental health initiatives that have reached more than 922 000 individuals in 2023 alone. Over 197 000 people in earthquake-affected areas have benefited from integrated and specialized consultations at primary health care centres, and mental health and psychosocial support (MHPSS) services have been provided to more than 161 000 individuals. Moreover, WHO has invested in training over 3000 health and community workers to ensure the sustainability of these essential services.

To promote a multisectoral approach to services, WHO has also supported the Ministry of Health in developing and rolling out the [national mental health and psychosocial support \(MHPSS\) strategy](#). This strategy, which involves numerous partners and stakeholders, clarifies the vision, goals and actions that will guide the phased enhancement of MHPSS services from 2023 to 2027, in line with regional and global frameworks.

To pave the way for a healthier, more resilient future, WHO emphasizes the critical importance

of healing the minds and spirits of everyone in Syria who has been deeply affected by years of turmoil. WHO remains ready to lend its expertise and resources to support this effort.

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