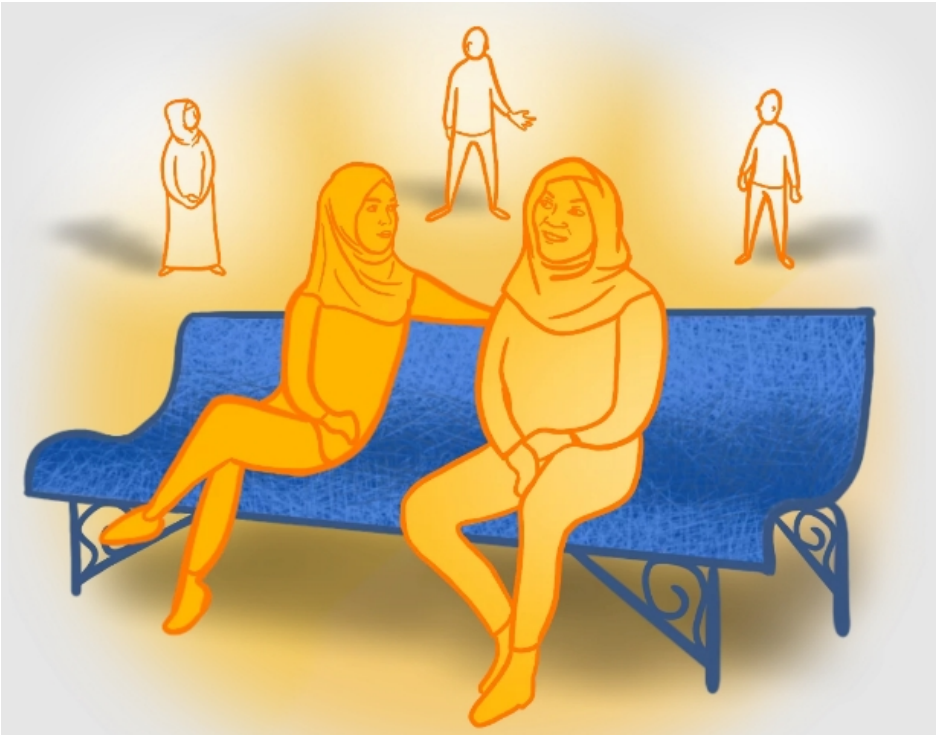

7 September 2023, Cairo — World Suicide Prevention Day is being marked globally today, under the theme “Creating hope through action”.

Suicide is a major public health problem with far-reaching social, emotional and economic consequences. It is the fourth leading cause of death among people between 15 and 29 years old.

Estimates show that more than 700 000 people die due to suicide every year globally. Moreover, for every suicide, there are many more people who attempt suicide.

According to the global report “Suicide Worldwide in 2019: Global Health Estimates”, more than 77% of suicides occur in low- and middle-income countries, including in the Eastern Mediterranean Region. In 2019, an estimated 41 673 people died by suicide in the Region.

Studies demonstrate that hanging, pesticide poisoning, self-immolation, firearms, drowning and drug overdose are among the most common methods of suicide in countries of the Region.

“Suicide is a tragic act that demonstrates despair, and its prevention requires further care and attention to the issue, including within communities and among family members, caregivers and others. Timely, effective action by all stakeholders – governments, civil society, communities, families and individuals – can create hope and reduce suicidal behaviour,” said Dr Ahmed Al-Mandhari, WHO Regional Director for the Eastern Mediterranean.

“Creating hope through action” has been the theme for World Suicide Prevention Day for the last 3 years. It serves as a powerful call to action and a reminder that through our actions, we can encourage hope and reduce the number of individuals who, through despair, take their own lives.

As part of the 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda, Member States have committed to working towards achieving the global target of reducing the suicide rate in countries by one third by 2030.

“WHO works with countries of the Region to enhance efforts aimed at achieving the global target; however, we are still far from achieving that target. Greater efforts are needed by all stakeholders to make this happen. This is imperative as part of our vision to ensure Health for All by All,” Dr Al-Mandhari added.

Suicide prevention requires adopting key effective evidence-based interventions. In this context, WHO recommends the following actions:

Limit access to the means of suicide such as pesticides, firearms, certain medications, etc.

Interact with the media for responsible reporting of suicide.*

Foster socio-emotional life skills in adolescents.

Ensure early identification, assessment, management and follow up with anyone who is affected by suicidal behaviours.

Creating hope through action includes raising awareness about suicide prevention and reducing the stigma around suicide.

On World Suicide Prevention Day 2023, WHO calls on governments, communities, families, civil society and individuals to contribute to creating hope and being the light to show support for all those who have lost loved ones by suicide, and those who survived.

Creating hope through action provides evidence to people experiencing suicidal thoughts that there are alternatives to suicide and helps people restore their passion for life.

WHO will continue to work with its partners to support countries in taking concrete measures in this direction.

Related links

International Association of Suicide Prevention

MHPSS PLATFORM SUICIDE MODULE

* Regional media monitoring tool for suicide

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