

NEWSLETTER

MENTAL HEALTH



THE RIGHT TO LIVE WITH DIGNITY!



One in four people worldwide are affected by a mental disorder at some point in their lives. Mental disorders are a shattering experience, not only for the individual but also for his or her family.

A good part of this burden is a result of the fear and opprobrium that these conditions attract in society, making it unlikely that the sufferer will seek help, find work and more likely that they will have profoundly restricted social networks, live in poverty and in sub-standard accommodation and have their wider health needs overlooked and un-addressed.

For thousands of people with mental disorders it is not just that they are discriminated against, stigmatised and marginalised but they are also subject to emotional and even physical abuse. In many parts of the world this violation of human rights is compounded by poor quality of mental health care, the lack of qualified health professionals and inadequate mental health facilities. Hence the importance of the theme of this year's World Mental Health Day, celebrated on 10 October: "Dignity in mental health".

The World Association of Social Psychiatry and Sanofi have decided, in this newsletter, to showcase some of the remarkable initiatives which have been implemented around the world to celebrate the 2015 World Mental Health Day. These are truly inspiring.

By raising awareness, by talking more about mental disorders, we can ensure that mental health problems are better understood, that they are absolutely nothing to be ashamed of, and that people with mental health conditions can continue to live with dignity.

Professor Tom Craig
President of the World Association of Social Psychiatry (WASP)

WORLD MENTAL HEALTH DAY

Taking action together for the respect of all



"All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights". This is the first article of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, and the message conveyed by the WHO on World Mental Health Day, on 10 October. In fact, living with dignity is something out of reach for far too many people suffering from mental disorders. Populations are misinformed, symptoms are misunderstood. In many countries, the discrimination which patients and their families are subjected to discourages them from accessing specialist care services. They are frequently ostracised from society, locked away, subjected to degrading treatments and to physical and emotional violence. More often than not they receive no care and have access to neither education nor employment. In order to fight such stigmatisation, there is a need to inform, to explain...

The World Association of Social Psychiatry is working towards this aim, with support from Sanofi and other partners. As such, programmes have been implemented in a dozen countries, in Africa, Asia and South America, to develop access to care for such patients and improve their quality of life. On World Mental Health Day, imagination has been put to work to raise awareness about mental health. From Guatemala to Cambodia, from Madagascar to Armenia, via India and the Comoros, initiatives have flourished to promote access to mental health services and to challenge common beliefs. Free consultations, parades and public lectures, debates with patients and their families, fun runs, dedicated radio programmes, drawing competitions in schools... to name a few. Let's have a look at some of the most remarkable initiatives.

KEY FIGURES⁽¹⁾

More than 450 million people worldwide suffer from mental disorders.

In developing countries, around 80% of these people go untreated.



GUATEMALA

AN EXEMPLARY PROCESS OF MOBILISATION

Raising awareness through discussion, providing free consultations, getting children to draw, marching in the streets in order to combat the stigmatisation of patients, running for mental health... In Guatemala, in the Sololá region, World Mental Health Day was celebrated with a week of particularly remarkable activities. The public responded enthusiastically to the call from organisers, associations and healthcare professionals. A programme to improve access to mental health care in Guatemala, was initiated in 2013 by *Alas Pro Salud Mental* ("Wings for Mental Health"), in partnership with the WASP and Sanofi. The recent World Mental Health Day events shed light on what has been achieved so far.

San Marcos la Laguna

This small town of 3,000 inhabitants, one of the poorest in the region, has suffered several traumas over the past ten years. However, all people of goodwill responded to the call.

STIGMATISATION AT THE HEART OF THE DEBATE

Discrimination, the rejection which people with mental disorders, as well as their families, are subjected to, prevents them from accessing specialised care services. On 3 October, around thirty psychiatrists from the Guatemalan Association of Psychiatry attended a symposium focussed on this painful topic.



FREE CONSULTATIONS AND MEDICATION

Three psychiatrists and three psychologists from the *Alas Pro Salud Mental* Foundation held a free consultation day on 5 October. Fifty people were seen by

these psychiatrists and psychologists, and received three to four months worth of medication. Sixty children and teenagers took also part in information and awareness-raising meetings.

Santiago Atitlán



A DRAWING COMPETITION, A PARADE AND A FUN RUN TOOK PLACE

The theme for the drawing competition, open to all primary schools, was "*Mental health in my community*". In all, 759 pieces were submitted. The three winners were rewarded with educational and awareness-raising material.

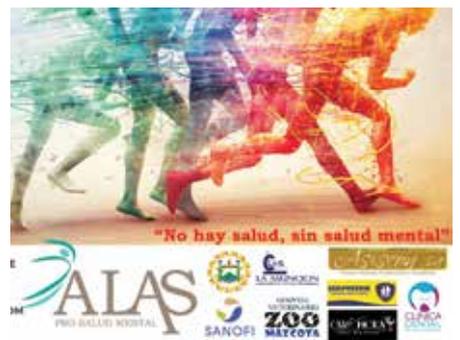
On 8 October, several hundred people took part in a large parade organised by *Alas Pro Salud Mental*, along with healthcare professionals, municipal representatives and a number of schools.

The motto for the World Mental Health Day Race was "*a healthy mind, in a healthy body*". An eight-km run, with 150 participants, was held on 11 October.

"WE CAN MOVE THINGS FORWARD"

"Not so long ago, there was a huge gap between the misunderstanding and low level of interest in mental health among the population on the one hand, and the reality of the problem on the other. The mobilisation shown here, and the significant rates of participation, demonstrate that we can move things forward".

Dr Alejandro Paiz, Psychiatrist, Medical Director of the Philippe Pinel Mental Health and Rehabilitation Centre in Sololá, and President of the *Alas Pro Salud Mental* Foundation.





PARAGUAY

BRAINSTORMING WORKSHOPS, CONCERTS, PARADES AND BICYCLE RACES...

In **Asunción**, around a hundred health-care professionals were brought together for a workshop on the issue of access to care for patients suffering from mental disorders. Awareness-raising activities took place throughout the week across

the country, on radio, in schools, through parades, bicycle races, concerts and other events. In Paraguay, access to care has been free since 2009. Sixteen out of the country's 18 health regions have a mental health department, with psychiatrists and psychologists who were involved in the organisation and facilitation of this mental health week.



PANAMA

PUBLIC CONFERENCES AND ZUMBA

In Panama, mental health was celebrated through a week of events, inaugurated by the Health Minister. Mental health and nutrition, difficulties forming social relationships among adolescents, and psychotherapy issues were at the forefront of the debates. Demonstrations and zumba classes provided light relief.



EUROPE



ARMENIA

INAUGURATIONS OF SPECIALIST CENTRES AND FREE CARE

On 10th October, Prof Armen Soghoyan, President of the Armenian Psychiatry Association (ArPA) and Prof Khachatur Gasparyan, Executive Secretary of the ArPA opened the day with a press conference on mental health in Armenia. Issues involving patients' human rights and the development of new structures for psychiatric and psychological care were discussed. It also provided an opportunity to present several of the projects undertaken in the country during an entire month dedicated to mental health.



A consultation and training centre for people with mental health problems and their families was opened. Training will be provided by mental health professionals and rehabilitated former patients.

Free consultations and treatments were offered by a number of NGOs on 9 and 12 October, as suggested by the World Association of Social Psychiatry. Twenty-seven patients took advantage of these free consultations.

In **Spitak**, in the North of the country, the first 'Care House' opened its doors on 22 October. This specialist care centre will welcome patients treated for mental disorders who require continuous care. This is a pilot project which could be rolled out into other regions of Armenia.



FRANCE

LISTENING TO MIGRANTS' STORIES OF SUFFERING

They experienced the fear, the pain of uprooting and, for some, terrible abuses. How can we support migrants and help them to rebuild their lives, how can we assist them and facilitate their integration? The Minkowska Centre in Paris dedicated the most recent World Mental Health Day to issues around the psychological risks and traumas linked to migration and exile. This was a combined initiative with the French Association of Social Psychiatry, along with the French League for Mental Health and the European Movement of Social Workers. Twenty-four people suffering from psychiatric disorders or psychological problems, linked to a traumatic exile context, were given free consultations. Bilingual guides, in French and in their mother tongue, were provided in order to facilitate exchanges.



EXPERTS PROVIDE TRAINING AND INFORMATION



In Antsirabe, the capital of the Vakinankaratra region, World Mental Health Day led to a series of celebrations on 19, 20 and 21 October.

Free consultations were provided to approximately a hundred patients in two primary healthcare centres, over the course of these three days. Three mental health specialists were involved: psychiatrists

Prof. Bertille Rajaonarison and Dr Lanto Ratsifandrihamanana, as well as child psychiatrist Dr Hanitra Raonizanany. Each specialist was assisted by general practitioners trained in the diagnosis and management of the main psychiatric conditions. The psychiatric unit of the Regional Referral Hospital (CHRR) was also part of this initiative. This was a learning experience for all involved.



Almost 500 people were reached through awareness-raising activities and the distribution of information leaflets on mental disorders and substance abuse (alcohol, cannabis). The importance of combating the discrimination of people suffering from mental disorders, and of the role played by community for social reintegration was emphasised.

Lectures and discussions open to the general public were facilitated by specialists in the fields of substance abuse (Prof. Rajaonarison), age-related memory problems (Prof. Rajaonarison), and learning disabilities (Dr Raonizanany).

On 21 October, an official ceremony was held with the Minister of Public Health and other high-ranking officials, the Antsirabe CHRR team, representatives from local NGOs and partners of the "Mental Health" programme. At the end of this ceremony, participants were invited to a tour of the CHRR's brand new Psychiatry Unit.





THE UNION OF THE COMOROS



THE FIRST MENTAL HEALTH UNIT OPENS ITS DOORS

Announced on World Mental Health Day, the first Comorian mental health unit was inaugurated on 6 November, located within El-Maarouf national hospital in Moroni (Grande Comore). «Over a quarter of the Comorian population is affected by mental health disorders», said Dr Mistoihi Hassani Msoma, Psychiatrist and Head of this unit. He highlighted the fact that while illnesses of the body threaten people's vitality, those of the mind threaten people's relationships. "Many of those affected suffer in silence and are isolated", he noted. From now on, this new unit will welcome patients with mental disorders, and liaise with other units at the hospital, as well as with health centres across the country. Patients will also have access to out-patient services.



MAURITANIA

LET'S TALK ABOUT SUICIDE!

"Almost ten years ago, when the WHO chose suicide as the theme for World Mental Health Day, not one Mauritanian media outlet would raise such a taboo topic. Today, an inter-ministerial committee has been created to address all aspects of the problem. This is a real public health issue, which across the world kills one million people a year"

These were the words used by **Dr Ousmane Sall, Head of the Psychiatry Department of Nouakchott Specialist Hospital**, to introduce the opening ceremony of the "Suicide and mental illnesses" day, organised by the hospital alongside the Health Ministry. It was a celebration linking World Mental Health Day with one dedicated to suicide prevention.

Among other contributors, **Youssef Ould Limame, Head of Primary Healthcare at the Ministry of Health**, gave a presentation on "Suicide prevention within the framework of community mental health"



Khalilou Koita, a clinical psychologist, highlighted the importance of practitioners recognising depressive states which can complicate certain conditions, such as HIV/AIDS for example.

Fatimetou Mint Abdel Malick, the mayor of Teveragh Zeina, brought up the absence of structures for assisting the mentally disabled who are on the streets in her locality.

ASIA



CAMBODIA

STUDENTS' COMMITMENT IN A SCARRED NATION

In **Phnom Penh**, Panhastra University opened its doors in order to host the main events of World Mental Health Day. The student community enthusiastically joined up with the Mental Health Association of Cambodia for the organisation of conferences and festivities centred around traditional songs and dances. Following speeches made by the president of the university and the director of the Clinical Unit, the students expressed their interest in, and commitment to, the promotion of mental health in the country.



BRINGING HOPE TO MOVE BEYOND TRAUMA

World Mental Health Day carries a particular significance in Cambodia. "Our country has suffered three decades of war, a genocide, and political unrest, severely impacting economic and social well-being of our citizens. The distress caused by the civil unrest has potentially resulted in increased susceptibility to psychological disorders, social mistrust, breaks in psychological development and parenting skills, loss of human resources and has negatively impacted our young generation", said Prof. Kim Savuon, President of the Mental Health

Association of Cambodia, during the inaugural conference on 10 October. The country currently has 57 psychiatrists and 44 psychiatric nurses for a population of 15 million. According to the most recent estimates, 28% of the population suffers from anxiety, 17% from depression, 3% from post-traumatic stress disorder, 2% from psychotic disorders and 1% from alcoholism. "Indeed, we have very limited resources to cope with this situation, however days such as this one show how important it is to raise awareness of the problem amongst the population. The aim is to improve access to care, and in particular to give those who suffer from mental disorders their dignity back", he concluded.



BANGLADESH

PROFESSIONAL AND CULTURAL MEETINGS

In **Dhaka**, many events were organised by the National Institute of Mental Health. Meetings and conferences were held on 10 October.

On 11 October, the Thikana Clinic, specialised in the management of people with substance abuse, hosted a meeting between experts and caregivers, and put on cultural and musical entertainment.



INDIA

Bangalore

THE IMPORTANCE OF REHABILITATION

The National Institute of Mental Health and Neuroscience (NIMHANS) hosted numerous interactive sessions involving primary care professionals, families and patients. Their main focus: combating the stigmatisation and discrimination of people with mental disorders, and demanding respect for their dignity.

Chennai

COME FOR COFFEE!

The Schizophrenia Research Foundation (SCARF) organised a coffee party, open to all, on the topic of mental health on 10 October.

