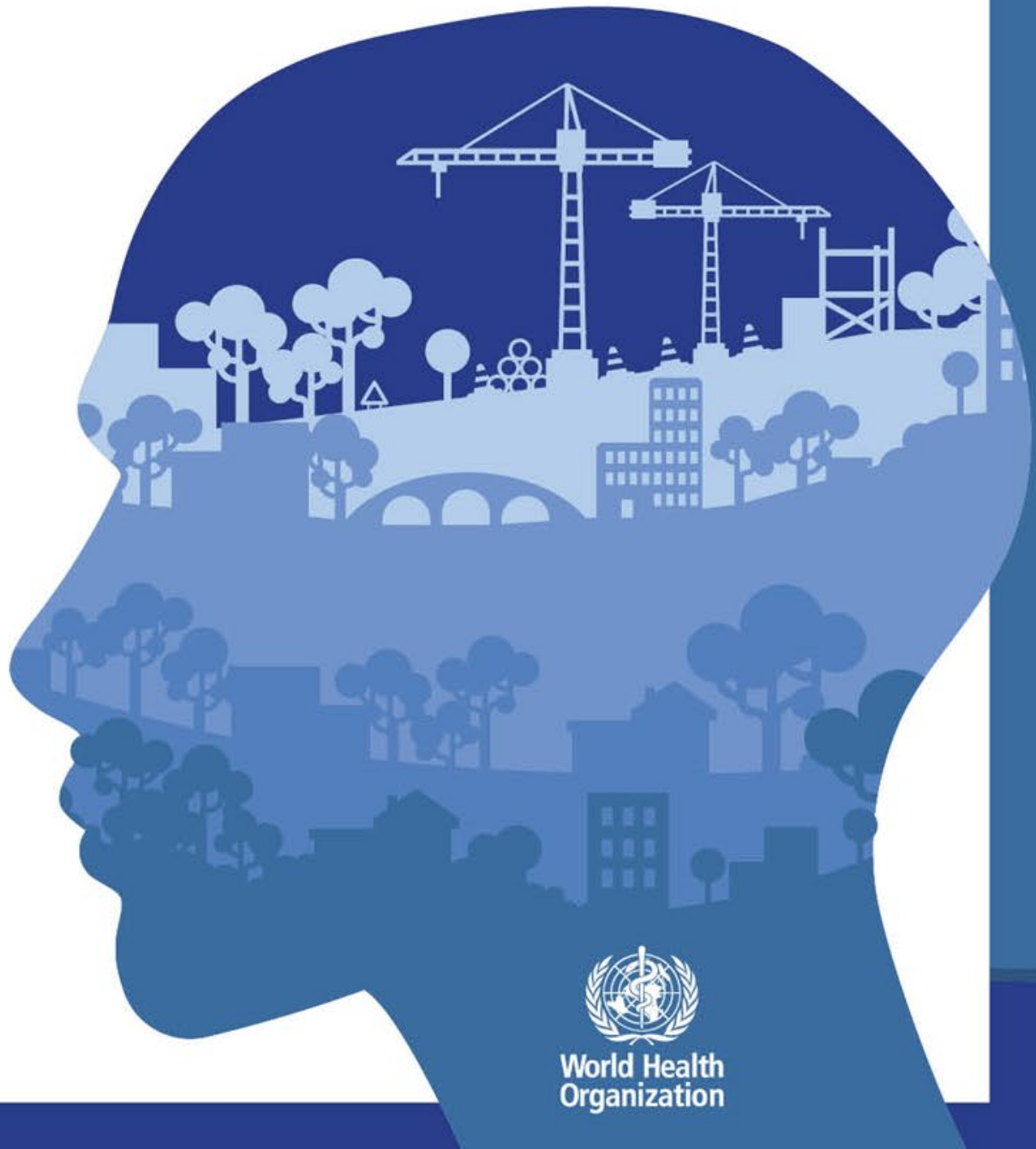
Mental health preparedness and response during the COVID-19 pandemic

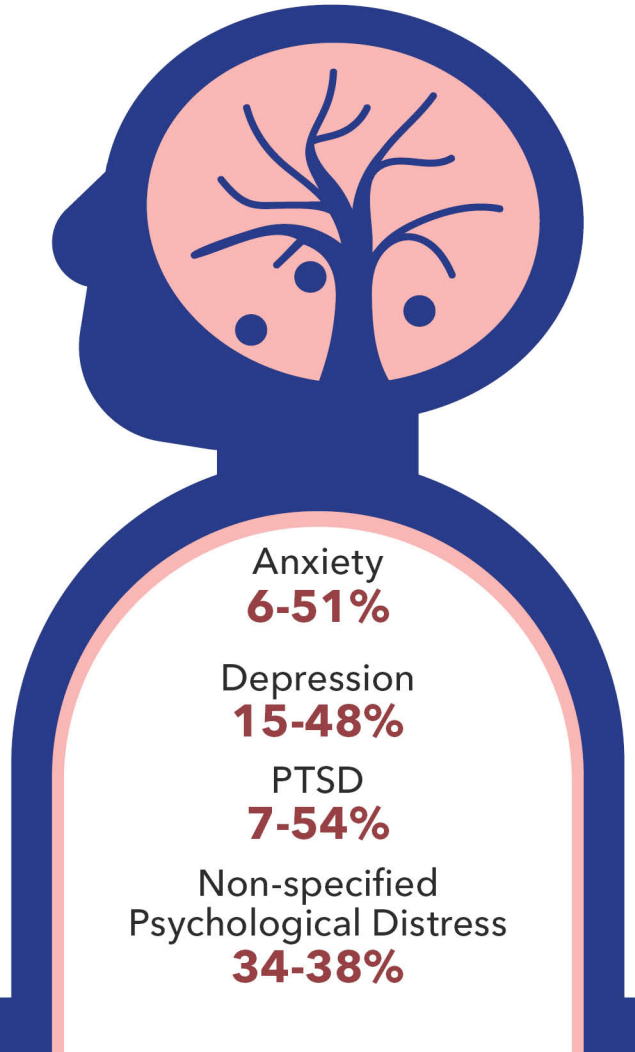


Dévora Kestel
Director
Mental health and substance use
April 2021

COVID-19 and mental health

People with preexisting severe mental health and neurological conditions are a high-risk group for more severe infection and higher mortality from COVID-19
A priority for vaccination.

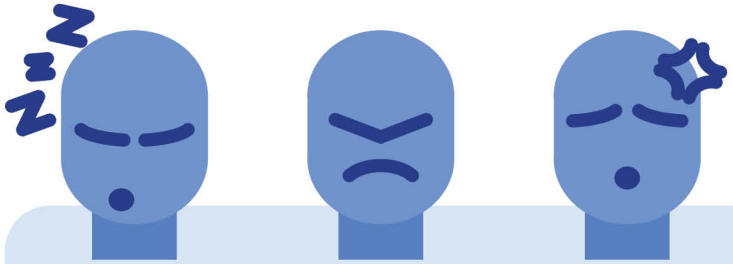
Examples of COVID-19 mental health manifestations in general population



Examples of COVID-19 infection mental and neurological manifestations

- Depression
- Anxiety
- Delirium
- Headache
- Insomnia
- Altered sense of smell and taste

Examples of long term COVID-19 infection mental and neurological manifestations



- Fatigue
- Anxiety depression
- Headache

COVID-19 and substance use and addictive behaviours

World Health Organization

People with substance use disorders are at higher risk of acquiring COVID-19 and having worse outcomes (death, hospitalization, overdose, etc.)

Currently **wide range of data** from different countries on changes in levels and patterns of psychoactive substance use during COVID-19 pandemic

Preliminary data suggests **increased** levels of **online gaming** and **online gambling** during lockdown and confinement.

Disruption of services for people with substance use disorders and their coordination, especially **long-term care**, psychosocial support, recovery management

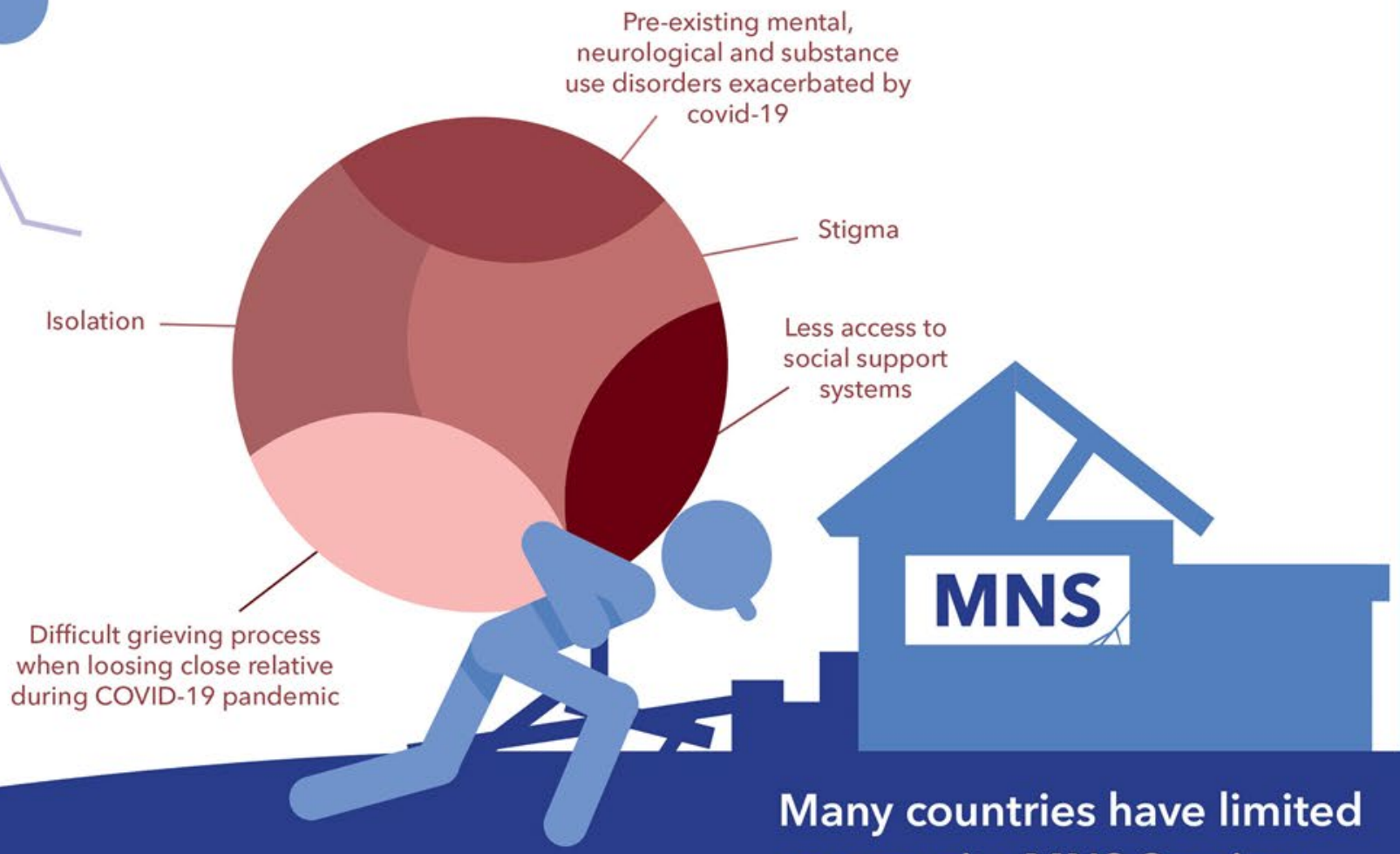
Changes and adjustments in **policy responses** (alcohol policies and treatment policies)

(Wang at al., 2020; Volkov, 2020; Sun et al. 2020)

Adversity is a risk factor for short-term and long-term mental health problems.

World Health Organization

COVID-19 pandemic is causing widespread anxiety, panic, feeling of helplessness and uncertainty.



Many countries have limited community MNS Services

Situation of mental, neurological and substance use services during the COVID-19 Pandemic

2020

World Health Organization

93%

of countries reported disruptions in one or more of their services for MNS disorders

nearly

3/4

reported at least partial disruptions to school and workplace mental health services

60%

of all psychotherapy and counselling services were partially disrupted

more than

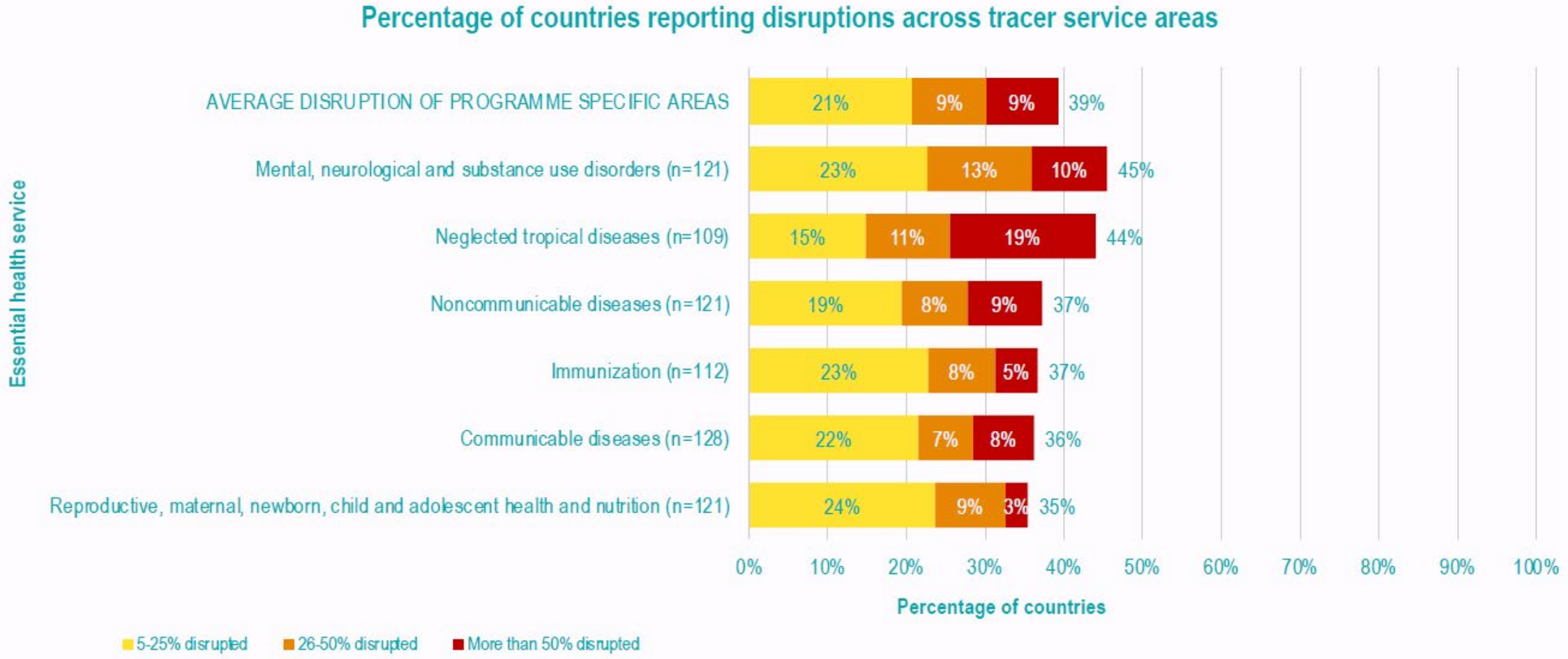
50%

of countries had their overdose prevention and management programmes and critical harm reduction services disrupted

Situation of mental, neurological and substance use services during the COVID-19 Pandemic

2021-Just published

World Health Organization



Denominator: excludes "Not applicable" or "Do not know" responses.

Situation of mental, neurological and substance use services during the COVID-19 Pandemic

World Health Organization

From prevention and promotion: school mental health programmes and suicide prevention programmes

To diagnostics and treatments neuroimaging and neurophysiology, psychotherapy, counselling and psychosocial interventions, and prescriptions

For life-saving emergency care: management of emergency MNS manifestations, critical harm reduction services, overdose prevention and management programmes

For the most vulnerable populations: older adults, children, and adolescents with mental health conditions or disabilities

Post-acute/Long/Long-haul Impacts of COVID-19

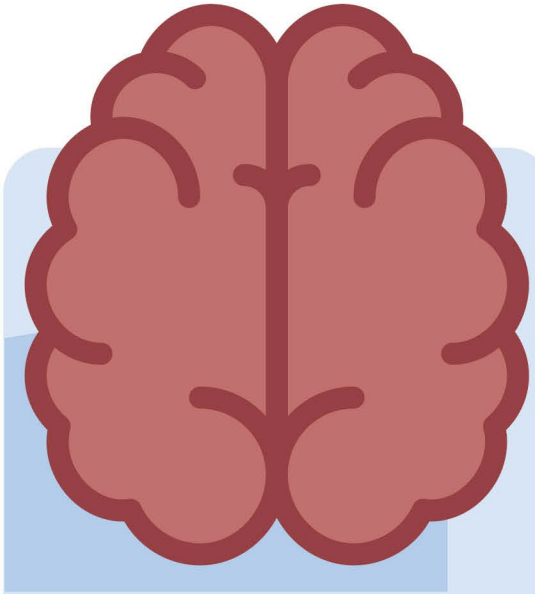
World Health Organization

Commonly reported MNS manifestations (so far):

Cognitive impairment/fatigue

May lead to or be associated with depression, anxiety, substance use and post-traumatic stress.

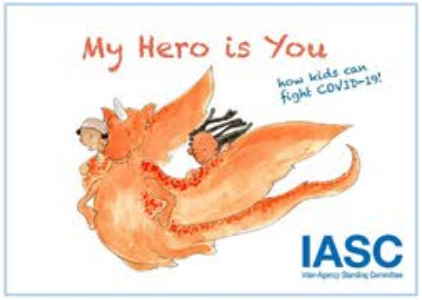
Social stigma implications.

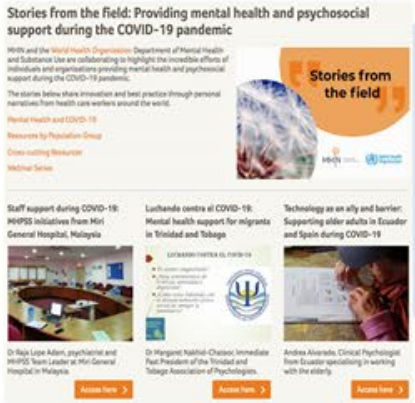


Other neurological sequelae

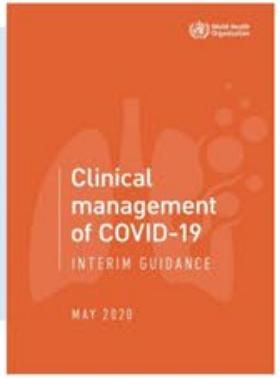
Resources for the public, clinicians and programme managers

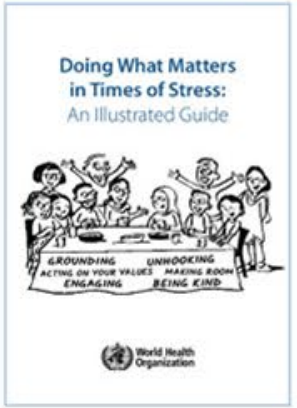
World Health Organization



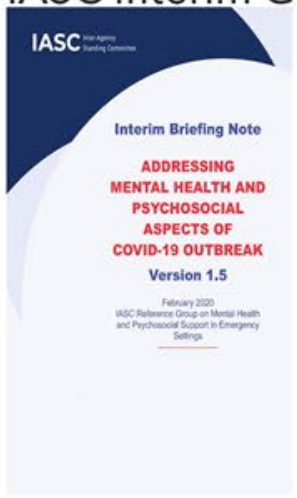


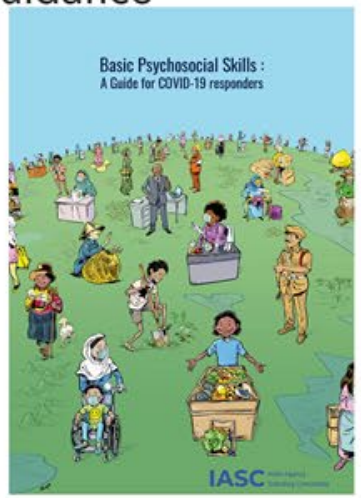
104 case studies received from **40** countries from all WHO regions





IASC Interim Guidance



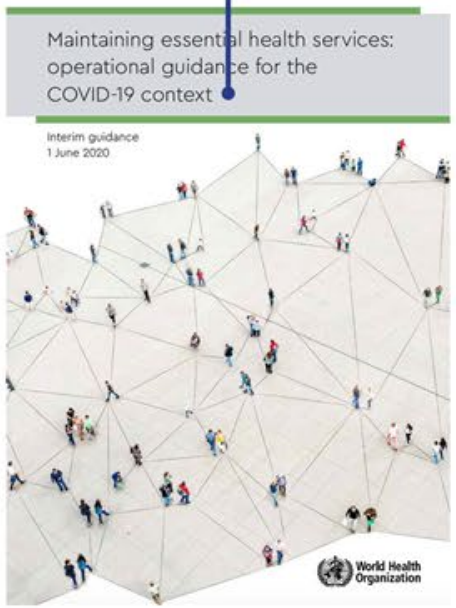


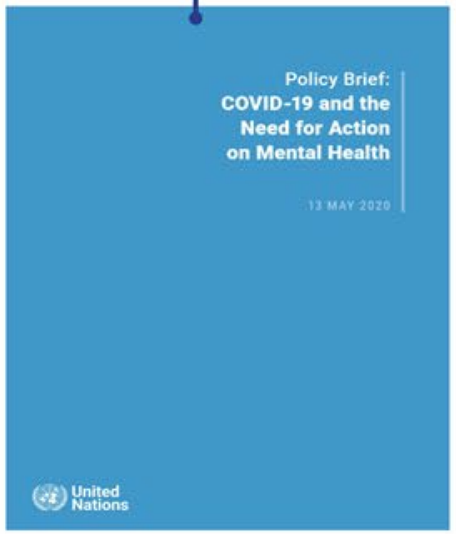
MHPSS identified as a priority during COVID-19 response

World Health Organization

UNSG
UNICEF
UNHCR
IOM
OCHA
UNFPA
WHO

Mental health is a priority



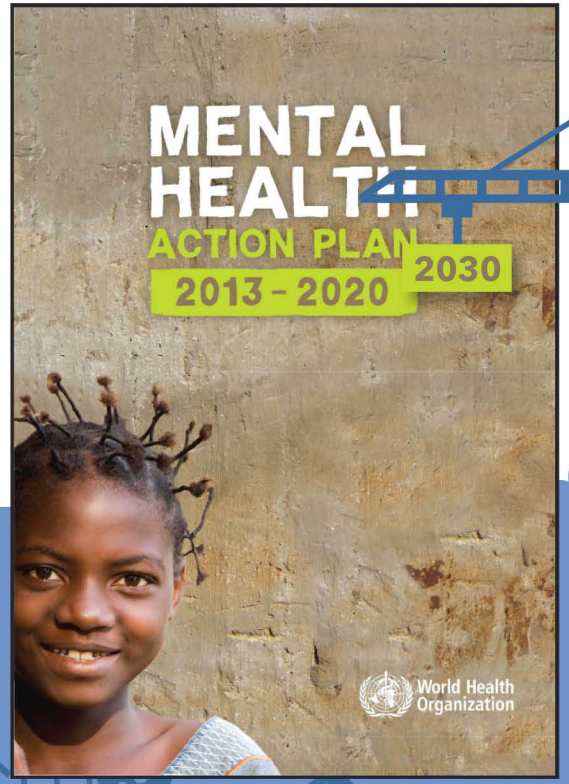


Promoting mental health preparedness and response for public health emergencies

World Health Organization

(1)

To endorse the updated comprehensive mental health action plan 2013-2030



Promoting mental health preparedness and response for public health emergencies

World Health Organization

(2) a.

To develop and strengthen, as appropriate, as part of a broader whole-of-society approach, the timely and quality provision of the whole range of comprehensive and integrated mental health services and psychosocial supports which, as stated in the Political Declaration of the high-level meeting on universal health coverage (2019), are essential components to achieving universal health coverage, including.

- promotion of mental health literacy and awareness
- elimination of stigmatization
- promotion, prevention, early detection

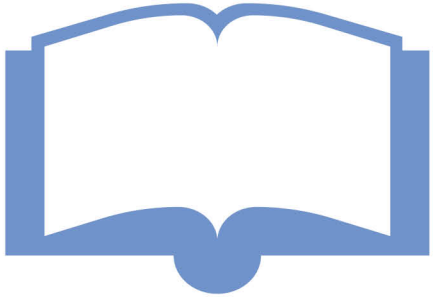
- treatment and rehabilitation, respectful of human rights and dignity
- reach people at high risk and those in vulnerable situations
- use innovative technologies, remote mental health services, telehealth

Promoting mental health preparedness and response for public health emergencies

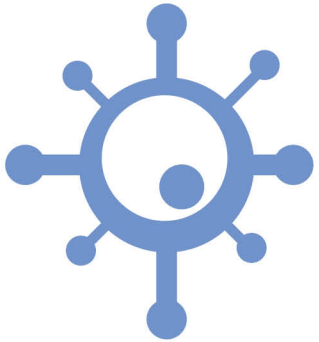
World Health Organization

(2) b.

to allocate adequate funding for mental health



to increase knowledge of mental health among other health professionals



to study the impact of COVID-19 on mental, neurological and substance use conditions and their consequences

Promoting mental health preparedness and response for public health emergencies

World Health Organization

(3) a.

to provide technical support to Member States to monitor changes and disruptions in services, and to promote and expand access to inclusive, integrated, evidence-based primary and community mental health services and psychosocial supports, which boosts community resilience and engagement, especially in the context of public health emergencies, while sustaining and scaling up, as appropriate, the provision of existing mental health services;

Promoting mental health preparedness and response for public health emergencies

World Health Organization

(3) b.

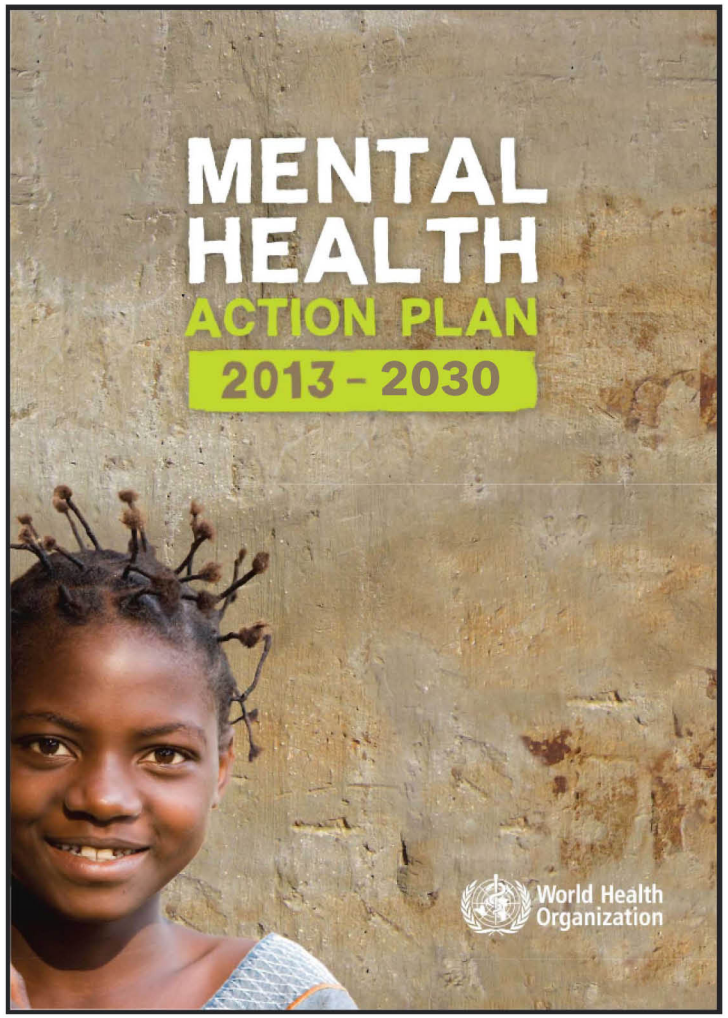
to strengthen WHO's capacity in respect of work on mental health at global, regional and country levels and to systematically integrate mental health into all aspects of the work of the Secretariat on universal health coverage

Promoting mental health preparedness and response for public health emergencies

World Health Organization

(3) c.

to report on the implementation of this decision as part of the progress report on the implementation of the comprehensive mental health action plan 2013-2030, in line with the reporting requirements of decision WHA72(11) (2019).



The way forward - Support recovery from COVID-19 by building mental health services for the future:

World Health Organization

1.

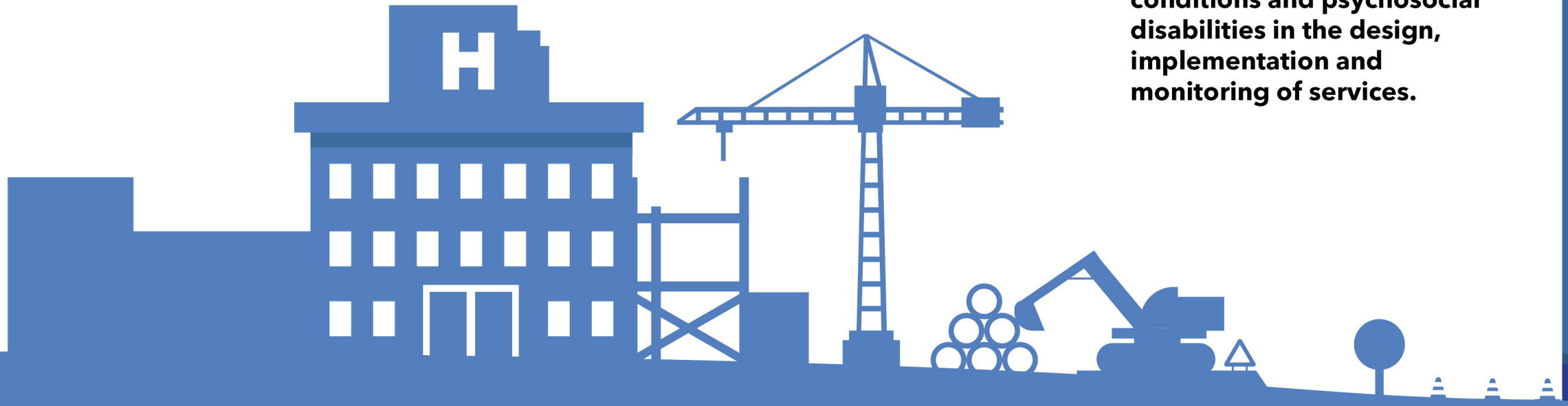
Using the current momentum of interest in mental health to catalyse mental health reforms.

2.

Ensuring that mental health is part of universal health coverage.

3.

Building human resource capacity to deliver mental health and social care.

4.

Organizing community-based services that protect and promote people's human rights and actively involve people with mental health conditions and psychosocial disabilities in the design, implementation and monitoring of services.