

# Some 300 million people suffer from depression, UN warns ahead of World Health Day

31 March 2017 – More than 300 million people are now living with depression, which is the leading cause of ill health and disability worldwide, according to the latest estimates from the World Health Organization ([WHO](#)) released ahead of World Health Day.

“These new figures are a [wake-up call](#) for all countries to re-think their approaches to mental health and to treat it with the urgency that it deserves,” WHO Director-General Margaret Chan said in a news release.

With the number of people with depression increasing more than 18 per cent from 2005 to 2015, WHO is carrying out a year-long campaign, [Depression: let’s talk](#), with the aim of encouraging more people with depression to get help. This is also the theme of the 2017 edition of World Health Day, marked on 7 April.

Lack of support for people with mental disorders, coupled with a fear of stigma, prevent many from accessing the treatment they need to live healthy, productive lives. Depression is an important risk factor for suicide, which claims hundreds of thousands of lives each year.

One of the first steps is to address issues around prejudice and discrimination. “The continuing stigma associated with mental illness was the reason why we decided to name our campaign Depression: let’s talk,” said Shekhar Saxena, Director of the Department of Mental Health and Substance Abuse at WHO. “For someone living with depression, talking to a person they trust is often the first step towards treatment and recovery.”

Increased investment is also needed. In many countries, there is no, or very little, support available for people with mental health disorders. Even in high-income countries, nearly 50 per cent of people with depression do not get treatment. On average, just three per cent of government health budgets is invested in mental health, varying from less than one per cent in low-income countries to five per cent in high-income countries.

Every \$1 invested in scaling up treatment for depression and anxiety leads to a return of \$4 in better health and ability to work.

Failure to act is costly. According to a WHO-led study, which calculated treatment costs and health outcomes in 36 low-, middle- and high-income countries for the 15 years from 2016-2030, low levels of recognition and access to care for depression and another common mental disorder, anxiety, result in a global economic loss of \$1 trillion every year.

Households lose out financially when people cannot work. Employers suffer

when employees become less productive and are unable to work. Governments have to pay higher health and welfare expenditures.

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## [Guterres voices 'disappointment and alarm' after latest Israeli settlement announcement](#)

31 March 2017 – United Nations [Secretary-General](#) António Guterres today reiterated his support for a two-state solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, voicing concern about the latest decision to build a new settlement in the Occupied Palestinian Territory.

“The Secretary-General took notice with disappointment and alarm of the decision by Israel to build a new [settlement](#),” according to a statement from his spokesman.

“He condemns all unilateral actions that, like the present one, threaten peace and undermine the two-state solution,” the spokesman added.

The UN and the international community have for years urged the establishment of a Palestinian state living side by side in peace and security.

Mr. Guterres today reiterated the call adding that “that there is no Plan B.”

The settlement noted also that settlement activities are illegal under international law and present an obstacle to peace.

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## [In Iraq, UN chief Guterres urges more support for those who have 'suffered enormously'](#)

31 March 2017 – Highlighting the lack of resources for United Nations programmes assisting those displaced by the fighting in Iraq’s Mosul [Secretary-General](#) António Guterres urged the international community to do more to help the people who have “suffered enormously and go on suffering.”

“This is a moment in which the Iraqi people [and] the people of Mosul need the solidarity of the international community,” Mr. Guterres [told the press](#) at the Hassan Sham camp, located about 30 kilometres east of Mosul.

“Solidarity with those liberating Mosul [and] with the civilians who are suffering [...] to guarantee protection of those civilians and, at the same time, solidarity with the victims and creating the conditions for reconciliation,” he added.

In his remarks, he also drew attention to the severe lack of funding for UN programmes assisting the displaced. Currently, the funding stands at eight per cent.

“[This] shows how limited our resources are compared to the tragedy these people are facing,” noted the UN chief.

According to estimates, there are about 11 million people in need of humanitarian assistance in the country. Of this figure, about three million are internally displaced. In Mosul, more than 285,000 individuals have been displaced due to the military operations to retake the city from Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL/Da’esh) terrorists, including some 122,000 over the past month. Cumulatively, more than 350,000 individuals have been displaced since the operations began on 17 October 2016.

Mr. Guterres further spoke of efforts by the regional government of Kurdistan as well as by non-governmental organizations and stressed that international solidarity is vital to improve the conditions of those affected as well as to create conditions for reconciliation within the communities and at the national level once Mosul is fully liberated.

Also highlighting that terrorism is a global threat and terrorist groups are interlinked, greater support from the international community was in everyone’s interest.

“Because the terrorist threats we see in Mosul are the same as the terrorist threat we see everywhere in the world,” he said.

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## [Colombia: UN receives 7,000 weapons from FARC-EP as hunt for hidden caches continues](#)

30 March 2017 – The United Nations Mission in Colombia is set to register some 7,000 weapons this weekend, but the search for other caches of weapons hidden by the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia-People’s Army (FARC-EP) continues, the Mission’s chief has said.

Jean Arnault, the head of the [Mission](#), said yesterday: “As for registration, [we are at 85 percent of the weapons](#) in the camps. This weekend we will reach a figure of approximately 7,000 registered weapons. On these weapons there are concerns: many are new and are short and long weapons, high calibre. It is a record that covers the range of FARC-EP weapons.”

The weapons hand over has been in place since the beginning of the month and the UN hopes to possess 60 per cent of all FARC-EP arms by April 1. However, in a press conference on the topic yesterday, Mr. Arnault said accessing hidden and hard to reach caches could delay the process.

A further 1,000 weapons are set to be received from FARC-EP members participating in peace promotion or, *pedagogia de paz*, bringing the number of arms collected by the UN to 8,000.

It was also reported at the press conference that commitments made at the Cartagena meeting of the Follow up, Promotion and Implementation Commission (CSIVI) to make progress on preparation of registration zones and camps, security and legal guarantees and provision of health services would further accelerate the laydown of arms process.

In November last year, the Colombian Government and FARC-EP, the largest rebel group in the South American nation, signed a peace deal, ending a 50 year conflict.

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## [Conflict now eroding food security in 'stable' areas of South Sudan – UN Mission](#)

30 March 2017 – The ongoing conflict in South Sudan is affecting food security in some of the country’s more [stable](#) states, the head of United Nations peacekeeping operation there has said.

[Dwindling](#) provisions arriving in the town and skyrocketing food prices have meant that places like Aweil, which are generally peaceful, have suffered the effects of the conflict taking part in other parts of the country, [said](#) David Shearer, the head of the UN Mission in South Sudan ([UNMISS](#)), during a visit to Aweil in the country’s north.

It is [imperative that fighting stops](#), so the citizens of the world’s newest nation can live in peace and enjoy the benefits of independence, [he added](#).

The insecurity has directly affected the cost of goods in greater Aweil. Mr. Shearer heard from UN humanitarian agencies working in the region how many

families had migrated north to Sudan because they could either not produce crops or could not afford the high price of staple foods in the market.

Those agencies have stepped in to provide emergency humanitarian aid in a region where the UN Food and Agriculture Agency ([FAO](#)) says 52 per cent of people are food insecure.

The Governor of Aweil state, Ronald Ruay Deng, told Mr. Shearer that his administration was doing all it could to move our people from dependency on emergency food aid to a more resilient rural agricultural model of production, including the piloting of a new community farming approach to feed the most vulnerable people.



David Shearer, head of the UN Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS), meeting residents of Kuajok, the capital of Gogrial state. Photo: UNMISS/Isaac Billy

Mr. Shearer also heard about the efforts under way to build peaceful understanding between communities, particularly pastoral communities who arrive on a seasonal basis from Sudan to share water and grazing land with the residents of greater Aweil.

UNMISS is facilitating improved inter-communal understanding through dialogue.

Meanwhile, the World Food Programme ([WFP](#)) today began to move food assistance to reach famine-hit and food-insecure people in South Sudan by using a newly opened humanitarian corridor announced by the Government of Sudan earlier this week.

This new route will allow WFP to regularly reach famine-affected people in South Sudan with food assistance and help to avert the consequences of starvation, [said](#) WFP Sudan Representative and Country Director Matthew Hollingworth.

Today, the first convoy of 27 trucks carrying an initial 1,200 metric tons of sorghum started moving from El Obeid in central Sudan towards Bentiu in South Sudan. The convoys will take at least five days to complete the 500 kilometre journey.

In the next few weeks, WFP plans to deliver 11,000 metric tons of sorghum including 1,000 metric tons donated by the Government of Sudan in seven convoys of 30 to 40 trucks. This is enough food to feed 300,000 people for three months.