

## Fifth meeting of the UN Inter-Agency Task Force on the Prevention and Control of NCDs on COVID-19 and the NCD-related SDGs

**Date of meeting:** 8 May 2020

**Participants:** 20 Members of the Task Force joined. Interventions were provided the Global Fund, IAEA, OECD, UNHCR, UNICEF, UNODC, UNSCN, WHO and the World Bank.

### Summary:

1. The theme for this meeting was intersectoral action on mental health and psychosocial support (MHPSS) and a presentation was given by WHO, UNICEF and UNHCR (PowerPoint presentation attached).
2. The pandemic is having significant impact on mental health and wellbeing and services in many countries are overstretched and unable to keep up with the needs. The presentation highlighted work of the Inter-Agency Standing Committee Reference Group on Mental Health and Psychosocial Support in Emergency Settings,<sup>1</sup> including: (i) guidelines on mental health and psychosocial support in emergency settings;<sup>2</sup> (ii) an interim briefing note with regards COVID-19 (available in over 30 languages); and (iii) My Hero is You.<sup>3</sup> A further publication on operational considerations for multi sectoral mental health and psychosocial support will be released shortly. MHPSS is included in the global humanitarian response plan for COVID-19.<sup>4</sup>
3. WHO described work in documenting how countries are delivering mental health support during COVID-19. UNHCR described activities they are undertaking around MHPSS. OECD described their framework for benchmarking the performance of mental health system (to be released early 2021). UNODC highlighted their collaboration with other agencies on substance abuse prevention and substance use treatment.
4. Main discussion points following the presentation were: (i) the importance of mental health as part of maintaining essential services, including the effect on supply chains for treatment and engaging with the mental health community; (ii) the importance of ensuring that mental health institutions are part of an effective COVID-19 response – and the opportunities for encouraging deinstitutionalisation; (iii) the potential for an increase in violence and neglect during COVID-19; (iv) the importance of including substance abuse during the pandemic.

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<sup>1</sup> [Inter-Agency Standing Committee Reference Group on Mental Health and Psychosocial Support in Emergency Settings](#)

<sup>2</sup> [Interim Briefing Note Addressing Mental Health and Psychosocial Aspects of COVID-19 Outbreak. Briefing note on addressing mental health and psychosocial aspects of COVID-19 Outbreak - Version 1.1](#)

<sup>3</sup> [My Hero is You](#)

<sup>4</sup> [Global humanitarian response plan for COVID-19](#)

5. The Task Force Secretariat provided an update on the 8 theme areas under the WHO COVID-19/NCD Working Group and invited agencies to identify areas where they could provide inputs. Responses had been received from IAEA, UNODC and the World Bank and each in turn described their approach to developing their responses. Other members were encouraged to submit their returns as soon as possible.
6. The Task Force Secretariat shared the Task Force COVID-19 webpage on the Task Force's website. It includes: (i) information on the links between NCDs and COVID-19; (ii) summaries of Task Force COVID-19 meetings; (iii) the multi-partner trust fund, which in the first instance will look to support countries respond to NCDs as part of their COVID-19 response and recovery; (iv) how joint programme and theme groups are responding to COVID-19; and (v) selected products from Task Force members. Agencies asked for the website to include the COVID-19 related websites of UNIATF members.
7. The Task Force Secretariat reminded Members that the 2020 Task Force Awards was now open, with the closing date for nominations being 5 June 2020. Task Force members were encouraged to promote nominations in the 4 categories.<sup>5</sup>

### **Actions**

1. Agencies to continue to raise the importance of mental health in their work (identified as an action at an earlier meeting), incorporate mental health into NCD programming, and disseminate and use MHPSS guidance being developed by UN system agencies.
2. Agencies to provide returns on their inputs into the 8 theme areas under the WHO COVID-19/NCD Working Group (attached once again for ease of reference).
3. Task Force Secretariat to continue to update the website. As part of this, agencies to continue to share new publications/other outputs as they emerge with Task Force Secretariat.
4. Task Force members to promote the 2020 Task Force awards and disseminate the call for proposals on their webpages and social media.

### **Next meetings:**

Will now start at 4pm CET (10am EST). Please note this new time (one hour earlier).

- Friday 15 May 2020. Subject to be determined
- Friday 22 May 2020. Gene Bukhman to present on ongoing work on COVID-19 under the NCDI Poverty National Commission.

*11 May 2020*

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<sup>5</sup> (i) ministries of health and government health agencies, (ii) ministries and government agencies outside health, (iii) UN country teams, (iv) NGOs, academia and foundations. Note: awards for individuals will not be accepted.