

IIMHL & IIDL Leadership Briefing XXV

International aspects for COVID-19 and mental health in 2020

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This concise briefing looks at three international aspects of how COVID-19 might:

1. Change mental health in the future
2. Affect world financial issues
3. Need more practical actions for first responders in communities.

We hope these articles are helpful for IIMHL and IIDL leaders.

1. The Lancet: How mental health care should change as a consequence of the COVID-19 pandemic

16th July 2020

Despite the diversity of worldwide health systems, efforts have been made to adapt the delivery of mental health care to the demands of COVID-19. Mental health concerns have been addressed both through public mental health responses and by adapting mental health services, mostly focusing on infection control, modifying access to diagnosis and treatment, ensuring continuity of care for mental health service users, and paying attention to new cases of mental ill health and populations at high risk of mental health problems.

The Lancet position paper suggests sustainable adaptations of delivery systems for mental health care should be developed by experts, clinicians, and service users, and should be specifically designed to mitigate disparities in health-care provision. Thorough and continuous assessment of health and service-use outcomes in mental health clinical practice will be crucial for defining which practices should be further developed and which discontinued.

In this position paper, an international group of clinicians, mental health experts, and users of mental health services came together to reflect on the challenges for mental health that COVID-19 poses. The paper argues that the interconnectedness of the world made society vulnerable to this infection, but contends that the infrastructure to address previous system failings by disseminating good practices can result in sustained, efficient, and equitable delivery of mental health-care delivery.

Thus, the COVID-19 pandemic could be an opportunity to improve mental health services.

[https://www.thelancet.com/journals/lanpsy/article/PIIS2215-0366\(20\)30307-2/fulltext](https://www.thelancet.com/journals/lanpsy/article/PIIS2215-0366(20)30307-2/fulltext)

2. International Monetary Fund (IMF): Policy tracker

24th July 2020

There are two publications from the IMF that may be of interest to IIMHL countries.

First, the *Policy Tracker* summarizes the key economic responses governments are taking in an attempt to limit the human and economic impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. The tracker includes 196 economies.

<https://www.imf.org/en/Topics/imf-and-covid19/Policy-Responses-to-COVID-19>

Secondly, the report *World Economic Outlook: A crisis like no other, an uncertain recovery* published in June 2020 notes that global growth is projected at -4.9 percent in 2020, 1.9 percentage points below the April 2020 World Economic Outlook (WEO) forecast.

The COVID-19 pandemic has had a more negative impact on activity in the first half of 2020 than anticipated, and the recovery is projected to be more gradual than previously forecast. In 2021 global growth is projected at 5.4 percent. Overall, this would leave 2021 GDP some 6.5 percentage points lower than in the pre-COVID-19 projections of January 2020.

The adverse impact on low-income households is particularly acute, affecting the significant progress made in reducing extreme poverty in the world since the 1990s.

<https://www.imf.org/en/Publications/WEO>

3. World Health Organisation: Basic Psychosocial Skills: A Guide for COVID-19 Responders

1st June 2020

This Guide aims to help orient people supporting the COVID-19 response to integrate psychosocial support skills into their daily work, thereby making a difference to the well-being of people they come into contact with during the pandemic. More specifically, the Guide is intended for health and social workers; emergency responders; people working in food stores, public transport, funeral parlours and pharmacies; employers and managers; and people who are providing support to vulnerable family members or members of their community.

The illustrated chapters provide practical advice for taking care of one's own mental well-being, communicating with empathy, and helping people suffering from stress or severe distress. Case studies and tips to remember are included throughout.

The Guide was developed by the Inter-Agency Standing Committee's Mental Health and Psychosocial Support Reference Group, a unique collaboration of United Nations agencies, national and international nongovernmental organizations and

international agencies providing mental health and psychosocial support in emergency settings.

More than 200 people who have recovered from COVID-19 and emergency responders in 24 countries provided input to the document.

<https://interagencystandingcommittee.org/system/files/2020-05/Basic%20Psychosocial%20Skills-%20A%20Guide%20for%20COVID-19%20Responders.pdf>

A short animated guide to this document is available on:

<https://www.facebook.com/WHO/videos/2907059912746030/>