

# IIMHL Leadership Briefing LIII

## COVID-19 and International work

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### Introduction

The pandemic has shown the importance and value of international collaborations and is stimulating the reimagining of ways of working around the globe. This Briefing shares the example of across-nation mental health work led by Dr Roberto Mezzina and colleagues. It also describes work undertaken by UNICEF on behalf of children; and it gives the results of research across 130 countries about the extent of disruption to mental, neurological and substance use services due to COVID-19, the types of services that have been disrupted, and how countries are adapting to overcome these challenges.

### International

#### Call for Global Action: Coalition of International and National Organisations 2021

IIMHL is pleased to share the call for global action and support in mental health. We all need to work together to make real and lasting change in mental health and addiction services. The work described is one example of how this is done. Led by Dr Roberto Mezzina it calls for more collaboration.

#### **1 A Local and Global Action Plan: Big issues identified by Covid-19 Requiring Fundamental Change in Mental Health**

This was developed and adopted by a Coalition of International and National Organisations and led by Roberto Mezzina.

"Now is the time we must all make fundamental changes to improve mental health around the globe and mutually learning from one another. These changes must embrace emancipation and be applied in ways that respect values, culture and differences. Therefore, we acknowledge that we should learn from all parts of the world and not only from Western approaches and prioritise identifying and sharing good practice across the world."

<https://www.iimhl.com/files/docs/20210122a.pdf>

#### **2 And for supporting arguments, experiences and lessons across many countries and many agencies**

<https://www.iimhl.com/files/docs/20210122b.pdf>

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UNICEF: **Five opportunities for children we must seize now: An open letter on why I believe we can reimagine a better post-COVID world for every child**  
2021

COVID-19 is the first truly global crisis we have seen in our lifetime. No matter where we live, the pandemic affects every person – children most of all. Millions are missing out on basic health services, education and protection simply because they were born into poverty or because of their ethnicity, religion or race. COVID-19 has widened this inequality gap and the social, economic and health impacts of the pandemic will reverberate for years to come, threatening child rights.

While we must be clear-eyed about the scale of the challenges facing the world's children, we can also advance in partnership and solidarity by building on our past, with ambition and confidence in our future.

This is not about a return to the way things were. For hundreds of millions of children around the world, 'normal' was never good enough to begin with.

UNICEF outlines **five opportunities** for the world's children revealed by the COVID-19 pandemic, and **five lessons** on how we can reimagine a better future for them, as reflected in the voices of young people.

[1: For vaccines to work, we must build trust](#)

[2: Bridging the digital divide can help bring quality education for all](#)

[3: COVID-19 has unlocked attention on global youth mental health](#)

[4: COVID-19 does not discriminate, but our societies do](#)

[5: Climate change is the other planetary crisis that won't wait](#)

[https://www.unicef.org/reimagine/five-opportunities-children-open-letter?utm\\_campaign=open-letter&utm\\_source=referral&utm\\_medium=newsletter-](https://www.unicef.org/reimagine/five-opportunities-children-open-letter?utm_campaign=open-letter&utm_source=referral&utm_medium=newsletter-)

WHO: **The impact of COVID-19 on mental, neurological and substance use services: results of a rapid assessment 130 countries**  
2020

This report of a survey completed by 130 countries during the period June-August 2020 provides information about the extent of disruption to mental, neurological and

substance use services due to COVID-19, the types of services that have been disrupted, and how countries are adapting to overcome these challenges.

An important finding is that some life-saving emergency and essential MNS services were reported as being disrupted; 35% of countries reported some disruption of management of emergency MNS manifestations (including status epilepticus, delirium and severe substance withdrawal syndromes) and 30% reported disruption in supply of medications for people with MNS disorders.

Almost 60% of all psychotherapy and counselling services were reported as partially disrupted. Overdose prevention and management programmes and critical harm reduction services were disrupted in more than 50% of countries.

<https://www.who.int/publications/i/item/978924012455>