

ECOSOC

Improving Youth Well-being and Mental Health

Topic Background

In the wake of a traumatic event, lived by humanity, the comfort and happiness of people has been damaged like many other crises lived throughout the ages. This can prolong long-term severe trauma for youth that can affect not only them but also their family and society.

It is normal for children and youth to experience various types of emotional distress as they develop and mature. For example, it is common for children to experience anxiety about school, or youth to experience short periods of depression that are transient in nature. When symptoms persist, it may be time to seek professional assistance. While most youth are healthy, physically, and emotionally, one in every four to five youth in the general population meet criteria for a lifetime mental disorder and as a result may face discrimination and negative attitudes.¹

Despite this, wide gaps exist between mental health needs and mental health funding. Globally only 2.1% of government health expenditure is allocated to mental health. We pay a high economic price for this neglect – around US\$387.2 billion worth of lost human potential that could go towards national economies each year. The cost in terms of how it affects real lives, however, is incalculable.²

Mental health challenges are the leading cause of disability and poor life outcomes in young people. Unfortunately, in recent years, we've seen significant increases in certain mental health disorders in youth, including depression, anxiety, and suicidal ideation.³

¹ Mental Health

² The Global Coalition for youth mental

³ Young Mental Health

Among 8,444 adolescents and young people between the ages of 13 and 29 in nine countries and territories in the region, 27% reported feeling anxiety and 15% depression. For 30%, the main reason influencing their current emotions is the economic situation.⁴

Adding to this, only about 20% of children with mental, emotional, or behavioral disorders receive care from a specialized mental health care provider. Pointing to gaps in assistance across all countries – including high-income ones - only one third of people who suffer from depression receive formal mental health care.

It is especially important to protect the mental health of minority and marginalized young people. Also, Increased funding and action is needed urgently. Failing to address mental health needs among youth can extend into adulthood; limiting young people's opportunities to lead fulfilling lives, and societies' pathways for upward growth.

⁴ Impact of Covid-19

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