



Addressing Nepal's Youth Mental Health Crisis

Context

With the second highest rate of youth suicide in South Asia, Nepal is faced with a compelling case to improve mental health services, especially for adolescents who are most in need.

Only one out of four people who are in need of mental health services in Nepal are effectively accessing them. Stigmatization of mental health and psychological distress represent a major barrier to help-seeking behaviors particularly for youth.

Children are also paying a high price from the gap in mental health service provision ranging from the impact it has on their ability to learn to an increased engagement in risky behaviors, poor socio-economic outcomes and in the worst cases, death.

- At this date, **470,000 adolescents** have planned killing themselves
- Out of 29,7 million residents, **340,000 teenagers** have attempted suicide
- **30% of the population** is estimated to suffer from or is highly likely to develop mental health problems

Our solution

UNICEF is mobilising its expertise in health, child protection and community engagement to address this mental health challenge in a multidisciplinary, innovative and participatory manner.

These interventions will provide a comprehensive model linking community networks and government systems, ensuring that all adolescents in Nepal can thrive.

UNICEF key actions



- Help to shift the perception of mental health issues and to increase help-seeking by youth at risk
- Provide 45 municipalities with capacity to manage adolescent mental health challenges
- 25% of youth targeted municipalities able to access mental health and psychosocial services
- 400,000 adolescents equipped with self-care skills and peer support methodologies

Story from the field

Nirmal Mahato is a mental health worker from UNICEF. He heads to the home of children identified as potentially suffering from a mental health problem and counsels the parents, explaining to them at length what the condition entails, and laying out options for treatment and care.

"I have made over 200 home visits and diagnosed over 50 children with some kind of mental health disorder." These diagnoses have ranged from autism, intellectual disability and attention deficit,

hyperactive disorder to anxiety and substance abuse. "The next step is to refer them to the closest hospital," Nirmal explains. "If treatment is not available locally, I advise the parents to take the child to facilities elsewhere in the country."

"Although it is great that we have started to identify mental health issues in children and young people, without the necessary services and trained human resources to actually treat these cases on the ground, we are only at step one."



Financing examples

30,000 €

Maintain a counselling helpline for 2 years

80,000 €

Help 23,400 children receive an early intervention through community counsellors

150,000 €

Help youth to confront stigma and amplify their voices

400,000 €

Support 4,680 children with specialised mental health services



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