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## සෞඛ්‍ය අමාත්‍යාංශය சுகாதார அமைச்சு Ministry of Health

All  
Provincial Directors of Health Services  
Regional Director of Health Services  
Deputy Director General/National Hospital  
Heads of Line Ministry Health Care Institutions  
Medical Officers of Health

### Suicide Prevention Day - 10<sup>th</sup> September 2022 “Creating hope through action”

Globally, more than 800 000 people die due to suicide every year. One in every 100 deaths worldwide is the result of a suicide and there are many suicide attempts for each death. In year 2019, suicide is the fourth leading cause of death in young adults between the age group of 15-19 years. Majority of suicides occur in low and middle-income countries. Globally, the most common methods are the ingestion of pesticide, hanging and use of firearms.

Suicide and self-harm remain a significant public health concern in Sri Lanka. In 2021 we lost three thousand two hundred and seventy nine (3279) lives due to suicide which gives a crude suicide rate of 15.24 per 100000 population. Every suicide is a tragedy yet suicides are preventable and the impact on families, friends and communities is devastating. However, by raising awareness, reducing the stigma around suicide and encouraging well-informed action we can prevent suicides.

The world suicide prevention day is commemorated on 10<sup>th</sup> September each year. It is an opportunity to raise awareness of suicides and to promote actions that will reduce the number of suicides and attempted suicides. The theme for this year (2022) is “creating hope through action” which focuses on the importance of taking action to help individuals who are suffering and a reminder that there is an alternative to suicide. As a parent, friend and colleague or a member of the community, we can play a role in supporting individuals experiencing a suicidal crisis or those bereaved by suicide. Encouraging understanding, reaching in and sharing experiences would give people the confidence to take action.

The Covid 19 pandemic has created increased feelings of isolation and vulnerability. Our Island nation is also grappling with an economic crisis which is taking an immense toll not only on a person’s physical health but also on mental health and wellbeing. By creating hope through action, we can support and care for individuals who are experiencing distressful thoughts. Networking with

people, family members, friends, neighbors and others in similar life situations can provide invaluable social and emotional support.

According to the International Labour Organization, 57% of global citizens, 15 years and older are employed. Loss of employment and loss of routine during the crisis can create the feeling of not being in control. Therefore, it is important to create/provide a psycho social support network to help people to regain control of their lives. By creating hope through action, the workplace leaders can develop a suicide prevention actions by listening to the workers and their experiences around despair and distress.

Create hope through action by reaching in and making a connection with someone who is experiencing distress or suicidal thoughts. Encourage understanding to create a more compassionate society to reduce stigma which is a barrier for help seeking. By sharing the experiences of people who are in emotional distress, suicidal thoughts or attempts or by sharing the experiences of recovery, we can inspire hope in others.

The goal of a suicide prevention day is to highlight the message that "suicide is preventable". Therefore, it has been proposed to conduct national, provincial, district, divisional and community level activities with the aim of raising awareness regarding suicide and reducing stigma. Most of the factors which contribute to suicide lie outside the health system. Therefore, it is important to get all the relevant stakeholders involved from the initial stages of planning and keep them engaged and accountable throughout the process. Suicide prevention would be a success when it is entwined with political leadership as they play a major role in making and implementing policies.

Some of the proposed activities –

Conduct awareness programmes for the community regarding the issues that contribute to suicide and reduce stigma

Conduct programmes for the community to improve mental wellbeing

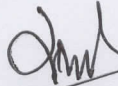
Conduct programmes at work places for mental health promotion

Conduct gatekeeper-training programmes to identify people at risk and refer them for appropriate care and support services

Conduct media programmes to create awareness regarding the issues that contribute to suicide and reduce stigma

More information can be obtained from the Consultant Psychiatrists, Medical Officer Mental Health (Focal Point) in your district and Directorate of Mental Health, Ministry of Health ([mhusrilanka@gmail.com](mailto:mhusrilanka@gmail.com)).

All PDHS and RDHS are requested to provide leadership and guidance for the activities/programmes conducted in your respective districts. Your corporation and contribution to commemorate the suicide prevention day is appreciated.



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