

Meeting of Regional Experts on Promotion of Mental Well-Being

*Report of the Meeting
Jakarta 11–13 June 2009*



**World Health
Organization**

Regional Office for South-East Asia

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1. Opening session

The meeting was opened by Dr Eka Viora, Directorate of Mental Health, Ministry of Health, Indonesia. Dr Palitha Abeykoon, Acting Director, Noncommunicable Diseases and Mental Health of WHO Regional Office for South-East Asia (SEARO), welcomed the delegates on behalf of WHO and thanked them for participating in this new but important initiative of the Regional Office.

2. Election of chair, co-chair and facilitators

Prof. Diyanath Samarasinghe was elected as Chairperson and Professor Radha Sharma as the Co-chairperson. Dr Avdesh Sharma was nominated as the facilitator for the session on promotion of mental well-being for individuals; Professor Radha Sharma for the session on promotion of mental well-being for groups; Dr Amporn Benjaponpitak for the session on promotion of mental well-being in the community and Dr Than Sein for the session on public policy for promotion of mental well-being. These facilitators served as rapporteurs for the respective sessions.

3. Introduction and objectives of meeting

Dr Vijay Chandra, Regional Adviser, Mental Health and Substance Abuse WHO/SEARO explained the background and objectives of the meeting. He stated that since its inception WHO had focused on important causes of morbidity and mortality. WHO also focused on health promotion and prevention of diseases. These programmes had made excellent progress, and now WHO/SEARO was advocating a fresh approach to promote the well-being of individuals. Policies and programmes aimed at improving well-being were few and far between. It was a new and challenging subject and this meeting was therefore extremely important to suggest the way forward.

The objectives of this meeting were to:

- (1) Describe the concepts of mental well-being.
- (2) Discuss promotion of mental well-being as a public health strategy.
- (3) Share experiences among experts on programmes promoting mental well-being at individual, group and community level.
- (4) Discuss incorporating mental well-being in national, state and local policies.
- (5) Prepare the agenda for the inter-country, inter-sectoral meeting on promoting mental well-being in October 2009.

3.1 Background to the programme for the promotion of mental well-being

In his presentation, Dr Vijay Chandra said that WHO defines health as a "state of complete physical, mental and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity". This definition was developed in 1946 and remains valid. The definition clearly emphasizes mental well-being. Since its establishment, WHO has focused on addressing the major causes of morbidity and mortality. It also emphasized health promotion and prevention of disease. However, the concept of well-being (including mental well-being), even though included in the original definition of health, has not been implemented as a public health strategy.

In programmes on promotion of mental well-being, the concept of "primordial prevention" should be used. In 1978, Strasser coined the term "primordial prevention" to mean activities that prevented the penetration of risk factors into populations. The basic idea is to intervene in order to stop

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