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## Editorial

### Introducing the Regional Suicide Prevention Networks Programme (RSPNP) to Support the Development, Implementation and Evaluation of National Suicide Prevention Strategies

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Although the majority (just under 80%) of suicides occur in low- and middle-income countries (LaMICs), the majority of the 38 comprehensive national suicide prevention strategies have been established in high-income countries (HICs). It is therefore vitally important to encourage and promote the design, implementation and evaluation of national suicide prevention strategies in LMICS.

At the 29<sup>th</sup> World Congress of IASP, which was held in Kuching, Malaysia in 2017, the International Association for Suicide Prevention (IASP) launched the Special Interest Group (SIG) for the Development of Effective National Suicide Prevention Strategy and Practice. The aim of this SIG, co-chaired by Professor Stephen Platt and me, is to support the development, implementation and evaluation of national suicide prevention strategies, particularly in LaMICs, by establishing an active forum of international experts who will support the development of effective suicide prevention strategy and practice, especially in countries where, historically, there has been little or no suicide prevention activity.

Two years later, at the 30<sup>th</sup> World Congress of IASP, held in Derry, Northern Ireland, we were involved in a workshop which addressed the important proposition: “In order to promote the design, implementation and evaluation of national suicide prevention strategies, especially within LaMICs, the SIG should establish networks of interested colleagues on a regional basis (adopting the six WHO regions).” These regions are the Americas (AMR), Europe (EUR), South-East Asia (SEAR), Eastern Mediterranean (EMR), Western Pacific (WPR) and Africa (AFR).

Subsequently, in June 7, 2021, we launched a new SIG initiative (the Regional Suicide Prevention Networks Programme [RSPNP]) to establish the six regionally designated suicide prevention networks. The aims of this initiative are:

- To share experience in, and/or knowledge and learning about, suicide prevention strategies between countries within each WHO region
- To support the development of a strategic, cross-sectoral and evidence-informed approach to suicide prevention in countries within each region
- To support collaboration, coordination and mutual support with respect to the development, implementation and evaluation of suicide prevention strategies between countries within each region and between regions
- To promote learning and provide mentorship between countries with established suicide prevention strategies and countries which are at an earlier stage of suicide prevention strategy development
- To raise global awareness about the importance and potential positive impact of a comprehensive, national strategic approach to suicide prevention

We have established a RSPNP Steering Group, comprising colleagues who are charges with coordinating strategy and action in each region (Dr. Jerry Reed [AMR], Dr. Thomas Niederkrotenthaler [EUR], Dr Lakshmi Vijayakumar [SEAR], Dr Yutaka Motohashi [WPR], Dr Joseph Osafo [AFR] and I [EMR]), the IASP Executive Director (Wendy Orchard), the IASP International Advisor (Vanda Scott) and SIG co-chair Professor Stephen Platt. The Steering Group is responsible for ensuring the successful implementation of the initiative, guiding and overseeing the delivery of the work programme in each region, and providing mutual support to meet ongoing challenges and barriers to progress.

By the end of Year 1 (mid-2022), we will have:

- Identified and acquired initial resources
- Identified key suicide prevention contacts in countries within each region, with whom the regional coordinator will have established a strong working relationship and mutual understanding
- Undertaken a situational analysis in countries within each region, with a view to consolidating accurate information about the national context (social, political, cultural, health-related) and epidemiology of suicidal behaviour
- Commenced a strategic and operational planning process with the support of our global partners
- Launched a global survey, with a view to updating knowledge about the activities, gaps and potential for suicide prevention and development/maintenance of a national strategy in each country

- Designed sustainable packages that support the establishment/maintenance of national teams and collaborative activity under the leadership of the key contact in each country.

Join us in taking action to prevent suicide through the introduction and implementation of comprehensive national suicide prevention strategies (WHO, 2021 “*Live Life - implementation guide for suicide prevention in countries*”).

This ambitious and challenging initiative has a massive potential to improve the comprehensiveness and coordination of suicide prevention across the globe. Your support for our regional networks will undoubtedly enhance the reach and effectiveness of our efforts. I would like to invite all of you to get involved by contacting your regional network coordinator.