

# Stepping up our Efforts to Prevent Suicide

*A Joint Statement by MAP and MAPHM*

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Suicide Prevention is the theme for this year's World Mental Health Day, observed on the 10 October. In Malta, there are around 20 suicides in men and 2 in women yearly, and for each adult who dies there are 20 more who attempt suicide. Beyond the tragedy of a preventable death, suicide's impact on families, friends and communities is devastating, far-reaching and lasts all life long.

Suicide is thus a serious local and global public health problem that needs to be tackled urgently. The truth is that every suicide is preventable. Since suicide is a complex issue, suicide prevention efforts require coordination and collaboration among multiple sectors of society, including Health, Education, Labour, business, Justice, law, politics, and the media.

There are a number of measures that can be taken to reduce suicides, including

- Reducing access to the means of suicide (e.g. firearms, certain medications, locations frequently used);
- Reporting by media in a responsible way;
- Alcohol policies to reduce the harmful use of alcohol;
- Early identification, treatment and care of people with mental and substance use disorders, chronic pain and acute emotional distress;
- Training of non-specialized health workers in the assessment and management of suicidal behaviour;
- Follow-up care for people who attempted suicide and provision of community support.

Raising community awareness and breaking down the taboo to access help for ourselves or for others, is vitally important for countries to make progress in preventing suicide.

As such, the Maltese Association of Psychiatry and the Malta Association of Public Health Medicine are encouraging the upcoming national budget to be explicit in its focus on mental health. Furthermore, we urge policy makers to facilitate the recognised expert bodies in this area in order to develop an appropriate action plan, containing concrete and funded measures aimed at preventing and decreasing suicides by at least 10% by 2020, in line with existing WHO recommendations.