

**The Ministry of Public Health in collaboration with its partners launches the fourth national awareness campaign on mental health “Mental Health in the Workplace”.**

**18 September 2019-Beirut-** The Ministry of Public Health (MoPH), launched the fourth National Awareness Campaign on Mental Health “Mental Health in the Workplace” with the slogan “Don’t miss the opportunity” “ما تضيعوا الفرصة”, in collaboration with the World Health Organization (WHO), ABAAD, ACTED, Ecole Supérieure des Affaires (ESA), Human Resources Association of Lebanon (HRAL), International Medical Corps (IMC), Médecins du Monde (MDM), and SKOUN, through an official launching event at ESA Business School (Auditorium Fattal) on Wednesday, September 18, 2019.

The launching event of the campaign featured speeches by the Minister of Public Health, Dr. Jamil Jabak and the Representative of World Health Organization in Lebanon, Dr Iman Shankiti, delivered by Dr Alissar Rady (head of technical team). The ceremony included the official launching of the National Campaign video clip, and the National initiative to promote Mental Health in the Workplace. The National Charter for Mental Health in the Workplace and the National web portal were featured. The event also held a panel discussion on the subject of “Mental health in the workplace: perspectives from employers and managers.” With professionals from various business sectors, Mr. Walid Hallassou, a healthcare management consultant and the former general manager of GlobeMed, Mrs. Carole Abi Jaoudeh, a human resources manager in Airfrance Lebanon and a board member in the Human Resources Association Lebanon, and Mrs. Perrine Malaud Wakim, the responsible of the health care unit in ESA Business School and a capacity building and strategic consultant and professional coach. Finally employers and managers concluded with a symbolic charter signing ceremony.

The main objectives of the Mental Health in the Workplace initiative are to sensitize employers in Lebanon to improve mental health in their workplace, to engage employers in committing to promote mental health in their workplace and to increase the number of employers that are implementing changes at the level of policies and practices in their organization to improve mental health at the workplace. Along with the National Mental Health Campaign, this initiative includes:

- **The National Charter for mental health in the workplace:** Statement of intent, which employers will be encouraged to sign, laying out the key principles that the organization is committed to and what can be expected of the organization to do to be mentally healthy. (accessible on the web portal: [www.mhworkplace.moph.gov.lb](http://www.mhworkplace.moph.gov.lb))
- **The National web portal on mental health in the workplace:** A full-fledged website which is designed as a web portal, accessible to anyone, with resources to promote mental health in the workplace. The website includes general information on mental health, the charter, the number of organizations pledging, case studies and testimonies, a map of mental health services available, etc. [www.mhworkplace.moph.gov.lb](http://www.mhworkplace.moph.gov.lb)

Work is an integral part of modern-day life. Working individuals spend most of their life span in the workplace growing and developing while supporting children, the elderly and the unemployed. The World Health Organization (WHO) and the World Bank have highlighted that mental disorders in the workplace are recognized as a global public health and development concern given their economic and personal costs on individuals and organizations. A poor psychosocial working environment can increase the risk of developing common mental disorders, especially depression and anxiety resulting in an increase of staff absenteeism, turnover and low levels of productivity which translate into major economic losses. The loss in productivity was estimated to amount to US\$ 1 trillion by WHO in 2017.

The campaign will aim to engage employers to see investing in mental health as an essential and cost-effective method to maintaining productivity and well-being of their employees. “Investing”, refers to any action taken to promote, prevent and support the mental health and wellbeing of individuals in the workplace setting, be it at the individual/interpersonal level or at the structural level, and be it in terms of policies or practices.

For this year, the Ministry is working on tackling mental health in the workplace in line with the global momentum towards improving Mental Health (MH) at the workplace, and the national “Mental health strategy for Lebanon 2015-2020” contributing directly to at least three of the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) that aim to achieve health and wellbeing (Goal 3), decent work and economic growth (Goal 8) and reduced inequalities (Goal 10). Also indirectly contributing to many more goals and targets of the 2030 global agenda as mental health affects the ability of persons to work and to achieve their potential, which can affect the achievement of all goals. This area of action has been flagged this year by the World Health Organization as a global priority. “This campaign is an important milestone for mental health in Lebanon. We hope that this can be the start of a major shift in our working culture towards businesses and workplaces ensuring mentally healthy working environments and reducing the substantial burden of work-related mental health problems”, as acknowledged by, WHO Lebanon.

As the Minister of Public Health, Dr. Jamil Jabak stated “Mental health in the workplace is a central issue that cannot be ignored. It is gaining increasing attention globally because of its linkage to health, productivity, the economy and every conceivable development sector... By signing the charter and pledging to implement it, you are taking a fundamental step towards the success of your institutions and contributing to the national vision that "all people living in Lebanon will have the opportunity to enjoy the best possible mental health and wellbeing."

**For additional information, please contact:**

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