09 October 2020   Marc Liberati, Chairperson of the UNV Staff Association Committee
and Policy Specialist, Volunteer Solutions Section

Marc Liberati, Chairperson of the UNV Staff Association Committee and Policy Specialist in UNV's Volunteer Solutions Section, during celebrations of International Volunteer Day 2018.
© UNV, 2018

Strengthening our community safety net this World Mental Health Day

World Mental Health Day is observed on 10 October every year, with the overall objective of raising awareness of mental health issues around the world and mobilizing efforts in support of mental health. We live in turbulent times and compacted by the COVID-19 pandemic, the issue of mental health is not only relevant, but crucial.

Mental health is more than the presence or absence of a mental illness. It is a crossroad between emotional, psychological and physical well-being.

UN Staff Members and UN Volunteers are not immune and may even be more susceptible to mental health issues, due to the nature of their jobs and tireless service on behalf of universal peace and sustainable development.

❝ World Mental Health Day enables us to address mental health issues

> in an empathetic way. We need to build hope by empowering everyone to act and create lasting change. This year's theme is "Mental Health for all. Greater Investment – Greater Access. Everyone, everywhere." --Marc Liberati, Chairperson, UNV Staff Association Committee

Throughout the month of October, the UN is encouraging and supporting the mental health of employees by offering conversation, interaction and events. Topics include improving mental health throughout the UN system, supporting and welcoming personnel with mental health conditions and reducing stigma, and encouraging employees to nurture your own mental health and wellbeing. These are fantastic opportunities to get involved.

A key focus is to ensure access for all, particularly as some population groups are more at risk and less likely to get help than others.

To those who are, or may suspect they are, experiencing mental health symptoms – we are here for you.

Please know that you are first and foremost in a community you can turn to for help without stigma or judgement. If you feel comfortable, you can reach out to your manager, colleague and Human Resources department for support. Additionally, the UN-provided medical insurance has coverage for mental health, including for psychological and psychiatric support to those who may need professional attention.

> The challenge with mental health is that it is often hidden, and you may not know who may be struggling. Please take the opportunity this World Mental Health Day to reach out to family, friends, colleagues – and even a stranger – and see how they are. Together, we can strengthen our community safety net and ensure that when it comes to mental health, no one is left behind. --Marc Liberati

This World Mental Health Day, let us all reflect on what mental health means to us and how together we can support a mentally healthy, happy and stigma-free world.

Together, we will get through this – may you all be well.

Marc Liberati is the Chairperson of the UNV Staff Association Committee, which represents UNV staff and protects their interests. If you are a staff member or volunteer in need of support, please reach out to your staff representative at UNV or in your host UN entity. Marc is a former UN Volunteer and currently a Policy Specialist in UNV's Volunteer Solutions Section in Bonn, Germany.

📍 Global

• World Mental Health Day • COVID-19 • Coronavirus

Sustainable Development Goal: SDG 3: Good health and well-being SDG 8: Decent work and economic growth SDG 10: Reduced inequalities