

Korea and World Bank join forces to combat mental health stigma

June 14, 2024



South Korea's Ministry of Health and Welfare's National Center for Mental Health, in partnership with the Ministry of Economy and Finance and the World Bank, hosted a workshop on reducing mental health stigma on June 12, 2024. The event brought together leading mental health experts from around the world to share knowledge and develop strategies to address this pressing issue in South Korea.

The workshop featured keynote presentations on the global impact of mental health stigma and the current state of mental health in South Korea. Experts from various countries shared successful case studies of stigma reduction programs and discussed their potential application in the Korean context.

The workshop concluded with discussions on developing effective strategies to reduce mental health stigma in South Korea. The insights gained from this event will inform the government's ongoing efforts to transform mental health policy in the country.

Chang Eui Soon, Director of the Development Finance Division at the Ministry of Economy and Finance, said, "To overcome the dishonor of having the highest suicide rate among OECD countries, it is essential to eliminate the stigma surrounding mental illness so that those in need can receive timely help."

Alberto Rodriguez, Regional Director for Human Development in the East Asia and the Pacific Region at the World Bank, stated, "Investment in mental health sector is essential for accumulating and effectively utilizing human capital. Without appropriate psychiatric treatment, academic achievement declines, unemployment risks increase, and productivity is likely to drop. To address and cope with mental health issues, we need to identify various problems and share diverse approaches and best practices."

Lee Hyoung Hoon, Director General of the Bureau of Mental Health Policy at the Ministry of Health and Welfare, remarked, “Last December, the Korean government declared a transformation in mental health policy under President’s leadership and is preparing detailed action plans. We will faithfully incorporate the valuable suggestions discussed at today’s workshop into Korea’s mental health policies.”

Kwak Young-sook, President of the National Center for Mental Health, noted, “For sustainable improvement in the perception of mental illness in Korea, it is crucial to pool the wisdom of mental health experts worldwide and translate these discussions into action. To this end, we will continue to strengthen our collaboration with the World Bank.”