Table 2 World Health Organization recommendations for action on mental health [1] and means of addressing them in Lebanon

1. Provide treatment in primary care

Place mental health services in primary care on the national agenda for primary care.
- Train primary care providers and other staff to:
  Search for symptoms of psychiatric illness
  Recognize somatization
  Encourage patients to discuss mental health issues
  Treat and follow-up psychiatric illnesses
  Recognize the need for referral.
  Ensure the availability of mental health services in private and public outpatient departments.

2. Make psychotropic drugs available

Ensure continuous supply of psychotropic medications at the MoPH.
- Create mechanisms to protect imports from border control corruption and transport delays.
- Import generic drugs as they become available.
- Enforce price-control laws on all medications.

3. Give care in the community

Establish district-based mental health care action teams and programmes.
- Provide venues for vocational rehabilitation.
- Ensure enforcement of antidiscrimination laws in the workplace.
- Train counsellors in each municipality for acute stress debriefing.
- Promote the role of municipalities in developing and sustaining mental health services.

4. Educate the public

Address stigma.
- Increase awareness of the causes and symptoms of mental disorders through media campaigns (including television, radio, and newspapers to ensure sufficient access by all communities including rural areas) and school-based programmes.

5. Involve communities, families and consumers

Recruit people with mental disorders and their families to advocate for mental illness.
Encourage communities to participate in the assessment of community needs.

6. Establish national policies, programmes and legislation

Create a division for mental health issues in the MoPH to:
- Oversee the medical branch of mental health services throughout the country, ensuring that the quality of acute and long-term care provided to patients is optimal, and ensuring the availability of necessary medications, etc..

Establish an independent sister organization, a national institute of mental health, and secure its funding from the national budget to:
- Carry out or delegate nationwide research projects under direct supervision with frequent independent statistical analysis and surveillance
- Create and implement a mental health policy
- Formulate and pass legislation on various aspects of mental health, including the rights of patients with mental disorders.

7. Develop human resources

Increase the number of PCPs, psychiatrists, psychologists and mental health nurses.

Provide incentives for mental health professionals and paraprofessionals to practise in rural areas.

Establish training for lay mental health personnel

Increase psychiatric education in medical school curricula.

Establish psychiatry training programmes for nurses.

Promote involvement of social workers in mental health.

Table 2 World Health Organization recommendations for action on mental health [1] and means of addressing them in Lebanon (concluded)

8. Link with other sectors

Promote intersectoral action at the national and district level.

Promote coperation between nongovernmental organizations, MoPH, MoSA, Lebanese Order of Physicians and academic institutions.

Compile and mass distribute national directory describing available mental health services.

9. Monitor community mental health

Establish a national institute of mental health.

Obtain feedback from community services on a regular basis and establish watchdog organizations.

10. Support more research

Gather data on prevalence, incidence, demographics and risk factors for mental disorders in various settings including the community, primary care and among different age groups.

Increase research in under-served and under-studied areas including poverty-stricken northern and southern regions of the country.

Conduct cost–effectiveness studies in different areas of interventions and with different patient groups.

Investigate what contributes to stigma and how to best target it based on cultural and religious trends in various regions.

Ensure high-quality research designs and integrity of data through independent evaluation of studies and data analysis by professional groups in developing and sustaining mental health services.