



SUICIDE: “Every 40 seconds, someone loses their life to suicide”

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Suicide is the act of killing oneself, most often as a result of depression or other mental illness¹. According to World Health Organization close to 800 000 people die due to suicide every year, which is, one person every 40 seconds. Suicide is a global phenomenon and occurs throughout the lifespan. Globally for every suicide death, many more people attempt suicide².

In Bhutan, suicide deaths rank among the top six leading causes of deaths after alcoholic liver disease, other circulatory diseases, cancers, respiratory diseases, and transport deaths. Suicide deaths outnumber the combined deaths due to TB, malaria and HIV. In a five-year review of suicide cases from 2009 -2013 in Bhutan, a total of 361 suicide deaths were documented by the Royal Bhutan Police. This is an average of 73 suicide cases in a year or six suicide deaths in a month. The death by suicide rate in Bhutan is 10 per 100 000 population slightly lower than the global rate of 11.4 per 100 000 population per year. The proportion of suicide deaths among all deaths is 4.5% higher than the corresponding proportion of 1.4% in the low middle-income countries. Suicide occurs among the most productive age groups; 87% of deaths occurred within the age group of 15-40 years. Although the global suicide rate has seen a drop, suicide rates in Bhutan have remained steady and rather increased particularly in the recent years³.

There's no single reason why someone may try to take their own life, but certain factors can increase the risk. Someone may be more likely to attempt suicide if they have a mental health disorder. About 90 per cent of people who commit suicide have a mental illness at the time of their death.

Depression is the top risk factor, but there are various other mental health disorders that can contribute to suicide, including bipolar disorder and schizophrenia.

In Bhutan, some of the major contributing social factors identified were lack of job opportunities, the percentage of

broken families, and a high rate of domestic violence⁴. Alcohol and substance use were also found to be contributing factors for suicide according to a study on reported suicide cases in Bhutan published by Ministry of Health in 2014⁵.

World Mental Health Day 2019 observed on 10th October 2019 focussed on the theme: “Every 40 seconds, someone loses their life to suicide”⁶. The World Health Organization asked everyone to join for “40 seconds of action” to raise awareness of the scale of suicide around the world and the role that each of us can play to help prevent it.

The common myth that suicide prevention is the prerogative of health sector isn't true, it is everyone's responsibility. Therefore, in improving the awareness of the significance of suicide as a global public health problem, reducing stigma associated with suicide and dissemination of messages about what can be done to prevent suicide are some of the things that all of us can do. Let people who are struggling know that they aren't alone.

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