MINISTER’S MESSAGE.

WORLD MENTAL HEALTH DAY 2016.

THEME:

DIGNITY IN MENTAL HEALTH

PSYCHOLOGICAL & MENTAL HEALTH FIRST AID FOR ALL.

Mental health disorders contribute significantly to the global burden of disease.

Suicide, depression, bipolar affective disorder, schizophrenia and stress in its various forms, substance and alcohol use and abuse are just a few of the mental disorders affecting our society.

The adage, there is no health without mental health speaks to the need to prioritise mental health. Mental health consumers are stigmatized and are discriminated against in the workplace and in the communities.

The 2016 theme “Dignity in Mental Health --- Psychological & Mental Health First Aid For All’ will enable us to contribute to the goal of taking mental health out of the shadows so that people in general can feel more confident in tackling the stigma, isolation and discrimination that continues to plague people with mental health conditions, their families and carers.
In 2015 a total number of **316 clients** were admitted to the Acute Psychiatric Unit so as to receive treatment for a mental health condition.

At least one in four adults will experience mental health difficulties at one time or the other but many will receive little or no help when they present in an emergency. In contrast the majority of people with physical health difficulties who present in an emergency in a public or hospital setting, will be offered physical first aid.

Every 40 seconds somebody somewhere in the world dies from suicide and the young are disproportionately affected. Providing more people with basic psychological and mental health first aid skills will help decrease the rate of suicide.

Psychological and mental distress can happen anywhere --- in our homes, in our schools, in the work place, on the transport system, in the supermarket, in public places, in the military and in hospital. Psychological and mental health first aid is a potentially life-saving skill that we all need to have.

When terrible things happen in our communities, we can reach out a helping hand to those who are affected for example this year 2016 in the Seychelles we had three major incidents whereby psychological first aid was required and was given to those affected. Throughout the year the mental health team is engaged
in psychological interventions due to medical, obstetrical and road traffic accidents and incidents.

Perhaps you are a health worker or teacher talking with someone from your community who has just witnessed the death of a loved one, or you are a volunteer or staff member in a disaster learn the basic principles of psychological first aid and this will help you provide support to the people who are distressed and more importantly to know what not to say.

Efforts in support of the World Mental Health Day 2016 theme will make this a global reality so that we can make Seychelles and the world a better place.