



INTERCOUNTRY GROUP MEETING ON THE DEVELOPMENT
OF THE MENTAL HEALTH PROGRAMME

EM/INT.GRP.MTG.DEV.MHP./21

Amman, 24 - 28 September 1983

NATIONAL REPORT ON MENTAL HEALTH PROGRAMME

IN

IRAQ

By

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The general population of the Republic of Iraq is about 13 millions according to 1978 cens. The Iraqi Government has been established since 1922, and the medical services were provided by the Ministry of Health and Social Affairs. In late 1940s, the Iraqi Ministry of Health was established and ambitious plans have been adopted by many ministers to improve the medical services in urban as well as rural areas. The medical policy is based on preventive programmes, education and treatment.

The mental health services were neglected at the beginning, but during the last three decades, an increasing interest has been shown in the mental health and was stimulated by rapid social and economic development.

The psychiatric services in Iraq started as out-patients facilities, then chronic patients have been segregated in an asylum called Dar-Al-Shafa (the House of Recovery). The name was misleading, because there was no proper treatment or rehabilitation. It was something resembling a life long prison. In 1952, a new psychiatric hospital with a capacity of about 1000 was opened in Baghdad district area. The number of bed then increased to 1500 to face the increasing number of chronic cases. The majority of the chronic patients are schizophrenic, followed by chronic paranoid state, organic states etc. This new hospital called AL-SHAMAIYA Mental Hospital.

A department of forensic psychiatry has been established in the AL-SHAMAIYA Hospital, and a forensic psychiatric medical committee is preparing the reports for the courts. The usual number of patients in the forensic psychiatric units ranges between 300 - 400 patients.

This large number of patients in AL-SHAMAIYA Hospital covered by only four psychiatrists, two of them usually involved in administration as well

as clinical work. The nature of the cases and the policy of the Hospital gradually converted this Hospital to a new asylum. Recently, intensive efforts have been made to improve the socio-medical care for the 1300 patients in this Hospital.

The cooperation between the Iraqi Association of psychiatrists and neurologists, and the Ministry of Health led to the adoption of a national policy based on the following :

1. Prevention or reduction of psychiatric illness
2. Improvement of the available facilities
3. Integration of the medical and psychiatric services.

The programme of prevention based on active health education, crisis intervention, child guidance clinic, genetic counselling control of drugs and alcohol.

The number of registered doctors in the Iraqi Medical Association is about 10.000 doctors. Only 50 psychiatrists registered and work in the mental health services, 7 psychiatrists work as full-time private practice, while all the other have part-time private practice as well as their work in the state hospital and psychiatric centre.

The present psychiatric system in Iraqi medical services is based on the following scheme:

1. Long-stay psychiatric hospital in Baghdad serve the whole Country.

AL-SHAMAIYA Hospital (recently the name was changed to AL-RASHAD Hospital to face the social stigma attached to the previous name).

No. of patients 1300

No. of the psychiatrists	4
No. of the nurses (females)	8
No. of the social workers	1

2. Small short-stay psychiatric hospital as :

- IBN-RUSHID Psychiatric Hospital, Baghdad
- AL-KINDY Psychiatric Hospital, in Najaf

each hospital with 50 - 60 beds and two consultants psychiatrists, and 2 - 3 trained psychiatrists (as S.H.O. or registrar in psychiatry).

In IBN-RUSHED Psychiatric Hospital there is a special unit for the treatment of chronic, alcoholic and drug abusers, 20 beds and small department for child psychiatry (child guidance clinic), 5 social workers, 12 psychiatric nurses, no clinical psychologists, 3 occupational therapists.

3. Psychiatric Unit in General Hospital as :

- Al-Yarmouk psychiatric Unit in Al-Yarmouk General Teaching Hospital, Baghdad
- The Neuro-psychiatric Unit in Medical City Teaching Hospital in Baghdad

In Iraq, there are 18 governorates, only 9 have established a psychiatric unit in the Central General Hospital of each governorate. The reason why the other governorates have no psychiatric services is the limited number of the consultants psychiatrists. Some psychiatric care can be provided by a trained G.P.

4. O.P. Psychiatric Clinic run by part-time consultant psychiatrists in many general hospitals in Baghdad as AL-NOOR Hospital, Karama Hospital, KADIMIA General Hospital, and the Central Psychiatric Clinic in the Mental Health Directorate in Baghdad.

5. Psychiatric care for special groups as :

- Mentally and physically handicapped children and adults
- Slow learner children (ESN)
- Prisoners and delinquents
- some psychogeriatric facilities in the small psychiatric hospital in Baghdad and the psychiatric units.

Legislation :

There is no legislation in Iraq, but the Ministry of Health is planning to establish a team-work to prepare the Iraqi Mental Health Act.

Training :

There is an active teaching and training programme in our five medical colleges and College of Nursing as well as School of Nursing and high medical institutes.