Guyana is working to reduce its suicide rate, which is among the highest in the world. In 2014, the country published a national suicide prevention plan that identifies common risk factors and strategies to address them. These risk factors include poverty, interpersonal violence, alcohol abuse, access to lethal chemicals, and discrimination against people with mental illness. Since much of the population lives in rural areas, limited access to mental health care is also common. To address these challenges, the plan calls for improved mental health services and increased awareness about issues associated with suicide. Since the plan’s release, 120 physicians have been trained to treat depression, and the number of practicing psychologists and psychiatrists has more than tripled. There are also increasing efforts to foster a more open dialogue about suicide and mental health issues. A government-funded initiative is encouraging conversations about depression and training teachers how to talk to kids about mental health. Teacher and suicide loss survivor Govin Munswami said, “After I share my story with young people who think their life is messed up, they say that if I can make it, maybe they can make it as well.”

Spark Extra! Read Guyana’s suicide prevention plan [2].

Links within this resource