

Are suicide and poverty associated in low and middle income countries?

by **Valentina Lemmi and Jason Bantjes**

Over **800 000 people** die by suicide every year – approximately one person every 40 seconds. **Three out of four** suicides take place in low and middle income countries where the majority of the world's population live and where poverty is concentrated. Evidence supports a positive association between suicide and poverty in low-income and middle-income countries at the individual level. As a result of limited data it is not possible to draw firm conclusions about the association between poverty and suicide at the national level. These are the findings from our recent **systematic review**. The review was conducted by LSE in collaboration with the University of Cape Town and Stellenbosch University.

How was suicide defined?

Suicide is a multi-dimensional phenomenon that results from a complex interaction between personal characteristics and situational, socio-cultural and economic factors. Reflecting the classification used by **WHO**, we used the term *suicidal ideations and behaviours* in our systematic review to include the entire spectrum of suicidal phenomena, from thinking about suicide, to making suicide plans, self-harming, attempting suicide, and completing suicide.

WHO: Preventing suicide: a global imperative



© Video by World Health Organization

How was poverty defined?

Poverty is a complex and multifaceted concept; how to define and measure poverty is the subject of continuing debates. Poverty may be defined in terms of deprivation across the multiple



© Video by NDTV

Call to action!

Understanding the role of poverty as a risk factor for suicide in low-income and middle-income countries is crucial to inform the design of suicide prevention strategies and policies. The soil has been prepared... now it is up to researchers and policy-makers to lay the seeds!

Further information

Iemmi V, Bantjes J, Coast E, Channer K, Leone T, McDaid D, Palfreyman A, Lund C (2016) [Suicidal behaviour and poverty in low-income and middle-income countries: a systematic review](#), *The Lancet Psychiatry*, 3, 8, 774–783.

About the authors

[Valentina Iemmi](#) is Research Fellow within the Personal Social Services Research Unit at the LSE.

[Jason Bantjes](#) is Senior Lecturer within the Department of Psychology at Stellenbosch University, South Africa.

August 5th, 2016 | [Mental Health](#) | [1 Comment](#)

☺

^