

“Outstanding achievement in the field of mental health care”

The fight against putting mentally ill people in chains



Fondation Suisse pour la Santé Mondiale The Swiss Foundation for World Health (<https://www.santemondiale.ch>) in collaboration with the World Health Organization (WHO) has awarded the Prize 2019 for an “Outstanding achievement in the field of mental health care” jointly to Mr. Avent Saur and Mr. Wan Marsuan for their effort to free people with mental illness from chains.

Avent Saur is a catholic priest who has devoted his time and effort to help severely mentally ill people in one of the least developed areas of Indonesia. Many of them were in chains from which he has freed them, others were homeless and he found families which accepted them and hospices to admit them. He created a nongovernmental organization to help in this work and attracted several hundred people to join it. The government has recently ordered to discontinue “pasung” (putting mentally ill people in chains, a customary way of restraining them particularly in areas in which there are no services) but progress is slow and Avent Saur’s work is a shining example. It shows that it is possible to help people with mental illness and protect their rights even in the poorest areas of the world.

Avent Saur fought to unchain the mentally ill and help them with support of volunteers supporting those engaged in health services who have devoted their time and effort to the same goal. Among them is **Wan Marsuan** working in South Sumatera, one of the provinces of Indonesia with the highest rate of shackling mentally ill people. Mr. Marsuan made it to his goal to free them from chains and find ways to help them to live a life worth living. As a health officer working in the area for many years, first as a public health officer and later as the head of the noncommunicable disease and mental health section of the District Health Office Wan Marsuan is one of those who have demonstrated that health services could do very much to help the mentally ill and their families even when human and material resources are extremely restricted. (Photo: [Liberal Democrats](#)/flickr, CC BY-ND 2.0)

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