

**Global Mental Health—What’s Up?  
Recent Developments and Directions**  
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*It’s time for the world to listen. It’s time for leaders to act. It’s time for mental health for all.*  
Amina Mohammed, UN Deputy Secretary-General, 18 May 2019 ([two minute video message](#))



It’s time for the world  
to listen. It’s time to  
**#SpeakYourMind**

[Speak Your Mind Campaign](#), global launch for mental health, 19 May 2019, Geneva

Are we shifting into a new phase of global mental health (GMH)? Very likely. In this short article we highlight several recent markers over the past year (events, reports, manuals, campaigns, consortia, etc.) that collectively reflect crucial developments and directions as well as increased momentum for GMH. It is the latest in an [ongoing series of articles](#) to orient colleagues in mental health and across sectors to GMH. We sense that GMH Generation 2.0 is upon us—as seen in the major growing awareness, acceptance, advocacy, collaboration, action, and hopefully increased funding for mental health (e.g., national health budgets, the [Wellcome Trust’s additional £200 million for mental health research](#)). Click on any of the links below and see what’s up with GMH!

GMH is an emerging domain of research and practice, which promotes equitable mental health and wellbeing for all. It is international, interdisciplinary, culturally-relevant, multi-sectoral; emphasizes the right to health and equity in health; encourages healthy behaviors and lifestyles; is committed to preventing and treating mental, neurological, and substance use conditions (MNS) especially for vulnerable populations (e.g., in settings of poverty, conflict, calamity, and trauma) and in low- and middle-income countries; and seeks to improve policies and programs, professional practices and research, advocacy and awareness, and social and environmental factors that affect mental health and wellbeing. ([O’Donnell and Lewis O’Donnell, 2016](#) and [O’Donnell and Eaton, 2017](#))

GMH at first can seem daunting, even “foreign.” But the more you track with it, the more manageable and familiar it becomes. Two influential factors for GMH becoming more organized were the launch of the first [Lancet Report on GMH](#) (2007) and the formation of the [Movement for Global Mental Health \(2008\)](#). For more background information, see the historical notes in the [Lancet Commission’s Report of GMH and Sustainable Development](#) (2018, pages 1556-1561) and the GMH overview in [O’Donnell and Eaton, 2017](#). For updates see the [GMH-Map](#) website with links to [GMH newsletters](#), [GMH texts](#), and [GMH critiques](#) as well as Globally Minded for a [GMH events list](#) and a list of [international psychology-related events](#) from the American Psychological Association’s Office of International Affairs.

GMH has contributed to making the mental health and wellbeing of populations a primary global concern for the first time. It has brought together often divergent academic and practice traditions to offer the potential for evidence- and values-based action to impact on the quality of life of people around the world, who were previously neglected. In particular there has been progress in the broader conceptualization of mental health and acknowledging its many determinants, the role of those with lived experience, and the development of psychological interventions that are culturally-sensitive and scalable, deliverable by supervised non-specialists. “The global community has a historic opportunity to reframe the global mental health agenda by use of the broader conceptualisation of mental health and disorder, and to position this agenda as an integral element of the [Sustainable Development Goals, SDGs]” ([Lancet Commission’s Report of GMH and Sustainable Development](#), 2018, page 1561).

Colleagues across disciplines, sectors, and organizations large and small, are encouraged to relevantly connect and contribute to GMH as part of the growing efforts for sustainable development and wellbeing for all. Many strategic collaborations are possible in view of the [17 UN Sustainable Development Goals](#) (SDGs), and specifically [Goal 3, the “health goal,”](#) which includes an explicit focus on non-communicable diseases and the promotion of “mental health and wellbeing” (SDG 3.4).



*Ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages.  
By 2030, reduce by one third premature mortality from non-communicable diseases through prevention and treatment and promote mental health and well-being.*  
SDG 3 and 3.4, [United Nations Sustainable Development Goals, 2015](#)

## 10+ GMH Markers (examples, chronological)

[Blue Print Group for GMH](#) (current, formed July 2018). Funded by the [Wellcome Trust](#) and coordinated by [United for GMH](#), this is the first global alliance of actors in GMH, with common policy objectives, and a clear advocacy and communications strategy. The working group meets regularly via telephone and quarterly in person, and produces a monthly newsletter [see [April Newsletter](#)] as well as Policy Briefs to support advocacy. BPG is comprised of over 200 members who are representatives of governments, international organizations, NGOs, academia and the private sector. “[It] was formed to encourage greater global collaboration on mental health advocacy and communications and to enable anyone with a professional interest in mental health and/or in health policy to have a means to link up with others who share this interest. Since July 2018, the group has successfully developed jointly agreed advocacy and communications messaging to strengthen support for existing, and proposed, global frameworks, policies and processes (e.g. the WHO Comprehensive Mental Health Action Plan, the UN Sustainable Development Goals and Universal Health Coverage). Members of the group have jointly organised the main mental health side events at the UNGA and Davos, helped support the successful delivery of the first Global Ministerial Mental Health Summit in London in 2018, and worked together to advocate for greater action on mental health at other health-related events and in the global media [e.g., #TimeToAct and #SpeakYourMind].” For updates and to join the google group, contact [anna@unitedgmh.org](mailto:anna@unitedgmh.org).

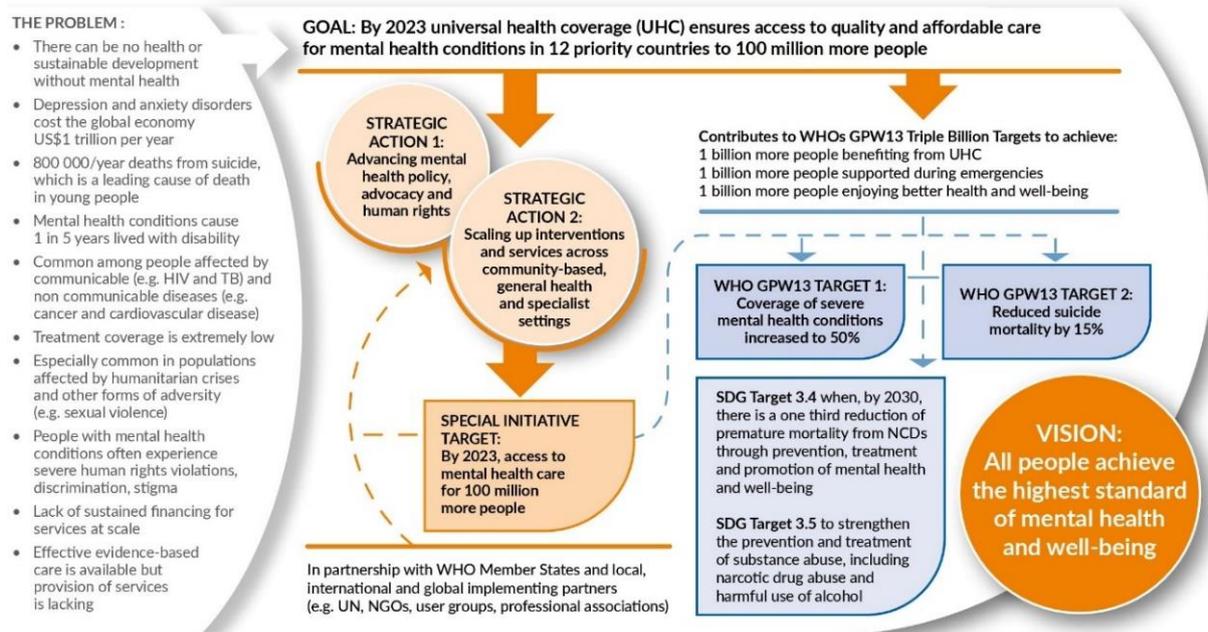
[Speak Your Mind—A Global Campaign for Mental Health](#), is a nationally driven globally connected mental health campaign coordinated by United for Global Mental Health. It was launched in Geneva on 19 May 2019. By sharing powerful messages through carefully crafted communications strategies, the Campaign seeks raise the profile of mental health, not only to change policy, but to speak directly to the public about mental health. [The Campaign was developed at a meeting in Johannesburg in January 2019](#), where groups from 10 countries came together to decide on what they felt were key messages, and how they could design effective national campaigns, as well as drive a global campaign. #GoSpeakYourMind #mentahealthforall

[World Economic Forum](#), Davos (22-25 January 2019). One of the highlights: [Mental Health](#). Mental health was highly visible at Davos, including major media coverage and stories, a [panel session](#), [press conference](#), [Mental Health Matters](#) plenary session, etc. WEF also published a series of articles on mental health: [Its Time to End Stigma about Mental Health](#), [How Zimbabwe’s Grandmothers Are Turning the Tide on Mental Health](#), [Why This Year We Must Take Action on Mental Health](#), and [Three Ways the World Must Tackle Mental Health](#). This is the first time WEF has spotlighted mental health to this degree. Read more about it in the short summary by [United for Global Mental Health](#).

[The WHO Special Initiative for Mental Health \(2019-2023\): Universal Health Coverage for Mental Health](#) (January 2019 and launched further during the WHO World Health Assembly May 2019). “To date, mental health care has had many advocates but there has been limited commitment and funding for sustained implementation and scale-up of services. For WHO to realize its 2019-2023 mission to *Promote health, keep the world safe, serve the vulnerable*, mental health has been flagged as a priority area for accelerated implementation.” This *Special Initiative* contributes towards the Sustainable Development Goals and aligns with the global WHO [Mental Health Action Plan 2013-2030](#), as well as the recommendations of the [Lancet Commission on Global Mental Health and Sustainable Development](#). It will do so by implementing two strategic actions: 1) Advancing mental health policies, and human rights; and 2) Scaling up interventions and services across community-based, general health and specialist settings. It “will scale up these key strategic actions in 12 priority countries” with the goal of “achieving access to quality, affordable mental health care of 100 million more people”.

## The WHO Special Initiative for Mental Health (2019-2023): Universal Health Coverage for Mental Health

### THEORY OF CHANGE



--[Global Conference on Primary Health Care](#) and the [Astana Declaration](#), WHO, UNICEF, Ministry of Healthcare, Republic of Kazakhstan (25-26 October 2018). "This conference "endorsed a new declaration emphasizing the critical role of primary health care [PHC] around the world. The declaration aims to refocus efforts on primary health care to ensure that everyone everywhere is able to enjoy the highest possible attainable standard of health...The PHC approach is foundational to achieving our shared global goals in Universal Health Coverage (UHC) and the health-related Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The new declaration has renewed political commitment to [PHC] from Governments, non-governmental organizations, professional organizations, academia and global health and development organizations. It will be used to inform the UN General Assembly high-level meeting on UHC in 2019. The new declaration was also a chance to commemorate the 1978 Alma-Ata Declaration on Primary Health Care and reflect on how far we have come and the work that still lies ahead." (website). The conference and Declaration are significant for GMH in their explicit inclusion of mental health. See also the [Alternative Civil Society Astana Declaration on PHC](#) (organized by [People's Health Movement](#)).

--[10th mhGAP Forum: Accelerating Country Action on Mental Health](#), WHO, Geneva (11-12 October 2018). This Forum "is a partnership event organized by WHO every year in Geneva, coinciding with World Mental Health Day (10 October). The mhGAP forum offers a platform by which to exchange information on the implementation of the [Mental Health Action Plan 2013-2020](#) (to be extended along with the *Non- Communicable Diseases Action Plan* to 2030) and to strengthen collaboration among partners" (website). You can access: [videos of the four plenaries](#) and the [Summary Report](#). The Forum also included updates on the [WHO QualityRights](#) initiative for mental health. The new Director of the Department of Mental Health and Substance Abuse, Devora Kestel, an Argentinian psychologist, was announced this year.



[Launch](#) of the [Report](#) by the Lancet Commission on GMH and Sustainable Development (10 October 2018). The Commissioners here are part of the growing body of colleagues in GMH.

--[Lancet Commission on GMH and Sustainable Development](#) (10 October 2018). The 2018 Commission report was launched in London at the Global Ministerial Mental Health Summit (see below). “A decade on from the 2007 *Lancet* Series on global mental health, which sought to transform the way policy makers thought about global health, a *Lancet* Commission aims to seize the opportunity offered by the Sustainable Development Goals to consider future directions for global mental health. The Commission proposes that the global mental agenda should be expanded from a focus on reducing the treatment gap to improving the mental health of whole populations and reducing the global burden of mental disorders by addressing gaps in prevention and quality of care. The Commission outlines a blueprint for action to promote mental wellbeing, prevent mental health problems, and enable recovery from mental disorders.” (abstract) Note: *The Lancet* also announced the creation of [Countdown Global Mental Health](#), a monitoring and accountability mechanism that draws on the Commission’s recommendations to assess mental health determinants, system and service components, outcomes, and risk protection. Note also [My Mind Our Humanity](#), the GMH campaign led by young people to disseminate the Lancet Commission report to young people worldwide #LancetGMH and #THEWORLDNEEDS.

--[The Global Ministerial Mental Health Summit](#), UK Department of Health and Social Care in collaboration with OECD and WHO, London (9-10 October 2018). This event “convened political leaders, innovators, advocates and civil society groups from around the world to share learning and experiences on the most effective approaches to mental health and psychosocial support...586 delegates from 61 countries attended the event. 106 of these were from Ministries of Health in 47 countries. Delegates took part in the multiple work streams designed to produce recommendations for a [Global Declaration on Achieving Equality for Mental Health](#)...The Global Declaration encourages action on addressing the burden on mental disorders and documents the commitments of political leaders for more coordinated promotion and prevention approaches, resource provision and allocation, addressing discrimination and stigma, empowering people and communities and focusing on innovative, data-driven and evidence-based solutions.” (MHIN website) See also the six areas of [Recommendations for Ministers](#) as well as a review, [Some Uncomfortable Reflections](#) (Mad in Asia Pacific blog, October 2018). A second Ministerial Summit, hosted by the Dutch government, is scheduled to be held in The Netherlands on 7-8 October 2019 and will focus on mental health and psychosocial support in emergency settings.

--[Mental Health Innovation Network](#) (MHIN). [MHIN Latin America/Caribbean Hub](#) (launched 10 October 2018). The new regional hub aims to: “Promote and disseminate the evidence and implementation of mental health programs to help promote uptake in the mental health evidence for research, policies and practices in Latin America and the Caribbean. Promote mental health evidence to improve practice and mental health policies. Provide specific and dedicated support to mental health innovators in Latin America and the Caribbean. Encourage bi-directional learning and networking of groups with interest in the promotion of mental health.” MHIN works with United for GMH to support the Blue Print Group and the Global Campaign for Mental Health. See also MHIN’s [Africa Regional Hub](#), launched in 2016, and its various [Policy Briefs](#).



--[Third UN High Level Meeting on Non-Communicable Diseases \(NCDs\)](#), New York (27 September 2018). “NCDs are one of just five global health issues that have been the subject of dedicated UN HLMs, together with HIV/AIDS, [Anti-Microbial Resistance], Ebola, and TB. This reflects the magnitude of the challenge, and the threat posed by NCDs worldwide, which requires global dialogue at the highest political level, as well as international cooperation and urgent action....In the broader context of the 2018 UN HLM, there are key opportunities for synergistic action. These include the elevation of Universal Health Coverage (UHC) as a global priority, the growing recognition of the need to address social and commercial determinants of health, and the widespread consensus around a minimum package of cost-effective solutions for NCDs with high returns on investment (known as ‘WHO Best Buys’)...The UN HLM will [brought] together Heads of State and Government, civil society, people living with NCDs, private sector and academia, and will result in an Outcome Document that will guide the next phase of the political response to NCDs.” ([NCD Alliance, Enough Campaign website](#)) See the resulting [Political Declaration on the Prevention and Control of NCDs](#) (10 October 2018), the [NCD Alliance’s critique](#) of it, and the NCD Alliance’s many resources on NCDs including its [Enough Campaign](#). Note that mental health language is included in the Political Declaration, as mental health was formally added as one the five broad categories of NCDs by WHO at the [Montevideo conference in October 2017](#).

--[5th Summit, Movement for Global Mental Health \(MGMH\): Leaving No One Behind](#), South Africa (8-9 February 2018) The Summit, like MGMH itself, is a core part of GMH itself. In addition to the presentations, panels, and networking, it launched the [GMH Peer Network and Newsletter](#) to support the development of global leaders with lived experience.

--[Global Action Plan for Healthy Lives and Well-Being for All](#) (2018) is a joint initiative of several global health and development organizations, coordinated by WHO, “uniting to accelerate progress towards the health-related SDGs.” The final plan is to be delivered to the UN General Assembly in September 2019.



# Global Action Plan

for healthy lives and well-being for all

Cover image: Pan American Health Organization

## 15+ More GMH Markers (examples, chronological)

--[A Week to Change Direction](#) is a major advocacy campaign to change the culture on mental health #ChangeDirection #ChangeMentalHealth (9-15 June 2019)

--[On Becoming Globally Engaged](#) (webinar), International Council of Psychologists (29 April 2019)

--[Psychological Contributions to Global Gender Equality](#), 12<sup>th</sup> Annual Psychology Day at the UN (25 April 2019)

--[GMH Without Borders](#), 10<sup>th</sup> GMH Workshop, National Institute for Mental Health (USA) and Grand Challenges Canada (8-9 April 2019)

--[Universal Health Coverage](#) (UHC), World Health Day (7 April 2019). Note: [UHC2030](#) is engaged in major advocacy in route to the UN High Level Meeting on UHC in New York (23 September 2019).

--[Rebalancing Power in GMH](#), symposium, Centre for GMH, CBM, Fracarita International, London (22 March 2019)

--[Innovations and Lessons from PRIME: Integrating Mental Health into Primary Healthcare in Low- and Middle-Income Countries](#), PRIME and University of Cape Town, London (8 March 2019)

--[Universal Health and Mental Health Coverage for All](#) (conference), World Psychiatric Association, World Association of Social Psychology, World Federation for Mental Health etc., Malta (12-14 December 2018). See: [Malta Universal Mental Health Declaration](#)

--[World Mental Health Day--Young People and Mental Health](#) (10 October 2018), organized each year since 1992 by the [World Federation for Mental Health](#)

- [World Suicide Prevention Day](#) (10 September 2018)
- [Multi-Sectoral Mental Health](#), *Global Integration Update* (August 2018)
- [Rebuilding Lives: Addressing Needs, Scaling-up and Increasing Long-term Structural MHPSS Interventions in Protracted and Post-Conflict Settings](#), UNICEF and the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development, Berlin (4-5 July 2018)
- [Mental Health and Psychosocial Support in Humanitarian Emergencies](#), *Humanitarian Exchange* (July 2018)
- Alliance of Champions for Mental Health and Wellbeing (initially formed by Australia, Great Britain, Canada and now including 20+ countries, [launched 20 May 2018](#))
- [Mental Health Atlas 2017](#), World Health Organization ([launched June 2018](#))
- [Where There is No Psychiatrist: A Mental Health Care Manual](#) (second edition, 2018)
- [WHO Mental Health Intervention Guide 2.0 for Mental, Neurological, and Substance Use Disorders in Non-Specialized Health Settings](#) (2016; 2018 [Marathi](#), translation--100 million speakers in India)
- [Joint Learning Initiative on Faith and Local Communities \(JLI\)](#) (new and ongoing Learning Hubs)



Image: [United for Global Mental Health](#)

## Going Forward Together--Into the Next GMH Phase

So what's up with GMH? In sum, the **GMH markers** above represent many advances on behalf of "mental health and wellbeing for all." They point to what we sense is a tangible shift into a new phase for GMH: a collective game changer with serious positive implications for on the ground, community-based improvements in mental health.

Some of the many areas impacted—the advances and shifts—include greater awareness, acceptance, advocacy, collaboration, and action for: health budgets, policies, and laws; scaling up, task shifting, and the central roles of people with lived experience; parity, primary health care, and universal health coverage; humanitarian action, trauma-informed care, and peacebuilding; health, mental health, and social work training programs in academic, organizational, and community settings; implementation science, indigenous psychologies, and culturally-appropriate and faith-sensitive services; and social and commercial determinants of health, stigma, and human rights. We are seeing a convergence of many efforts, the fruit of the labor of thousands of civil society, lived-experience, local and faith-based, business, academic, and government colleagues around the world.

This next GMH phase--Generation 2.0--is increasingly “human.” It is about investing in our common humanity, our human family. It is people committed to people in order to resolutely make healthy lives—including mental health--and wellbeing for all a reality. It is everyone’s responsibility.

Health encompasses both physical and mental well-being. Yet, for too long, mental health has been mostly an afterthought, despite its overwhelming impacts on communities and young people, everywhere...Healthy societies require greater integration of mental health into broader health- and social-care systems, under the umbrella of universal health coverage. The United Nations is committed to creating a world where, by 2030, everyone, everywhere has someone to turn to in support of their mental health, in a world free of stigma and discrimination. If we change our attitude to mental health—we change the world. It is time to act on mental health. ([Message for World Mental Health Day-10 October 2018](#))

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**Acknowledgments:** We note, with much appreciation, that many of the developments and directions in GMH are being shaped and implemented by colleagues out of the spotlight, on the ground, in the trenches—often unrecognized and under-funded. Thank you for your commitment and perseverance! *"All that is gold does not glitter."* Tolkien