

SEIZING THE CHANCE TO MAKE MENTAL HEALTH PART OF UHC IN GHANA



Ghana wants to ensure 80% of its population has access to essential health services by 2030. For the first time ever, this will include mental health – and that’s a huge step forward!

Mental health certainly needs a major boost in Ghana. Right now, only 2% of the [2.3 million people](#) who live with mental health conditions there receive psychiatric treatment and support from the country’s health system.

THE OPPORTUNITY

In 2022, the Ghanaian government launched its [2020-2030 UHC Roadmap](#), setting out how its ambitious goal of access to essential health care and population based services for all by 2030 can be achieved. Several other initiatives coincided with this launch to make 2022 a year full of advocacy opportunities:

- [UHC2030](#), a global movement established by the WHO and UN member states to build stronger health systems for UHC, chose Ghana for a review of its progress towards universal health coverage (UHC) commitments
- The World Health Organisation launched its global Special Initiative on Mental Health in Ghana with Ghana being one of the Special Initiative countries
- The National Country Coordination Mechanism (CCM) explored ways to leverage Global Fund investments to support the integration of mental health into HIV and TB programmes in the upcoming 2023-2025 allocation.

Basic Needs Ghana – with UnitedGMH’s support – seized these opportunities to push mental health up the UHC agenda.

PARTNERING FOR IMPACT

UnitedGMH was a member of the UHC2030 task force that oversaw a [review of national progress towards UHC](#) through stakeholder consultations in 40+ countries. It used this position to nominate and secure funding for Basic Needs Ghana to lead the review in Ghana. This ensured mental health would have a prominent place in the review's findings, which would be shared with the Ghanaian government and drive action on UHC reforms.

"Mental health needs to be at the community level and should be adequately funded to provide the best of care for the most underserved in our society" - Cecilia Assibi [service user]

These findings also helped inform Basic Needs Ghana's three-year advocacy and communications strategies on integrating mental health into UHC. They will help shape how the organisation engages with key stakeholders such as the Ministry of Health; Ministry of Gender, Children and Social protection; Ghana's health NGOs and the Global Fund.

"The UHC advocacy strategy is a reference source for the advocacy actions of Basic Needs Ghana and the Mental Health Alliance. The strategy provides the action-points that are used for country-level advocacy engagements."
Peter Yaro, Co-founder and Executive Director, Basic Needs Ghana.

MAJOR ADVOCACY SUCCESSSES

By working together to push mental health up the government's agenda, United for Global Mental Health and Basic Needs Ghana have scored several major advocacy successes:

- The UHC2030 led country summary report of Ghana's UHC progress review focused on mental health for the first time.
- People living with mental health conditions are now covered under the National Health Insurance Scheme, making treatment free of charge and already benefiting almost 1,000 people.
- The Alliance for Mental Health in Ghana – the country's biggest mental health civil society organisation network – put integrating mental health into UHC at the top of its agenda, a move likely to accelerate progress on the issue given the network's strong ties with the government.
- Basic Needs Ghana has been engaging with the Global Fund's Country Coordinating Mechanism in Ghana, exploring potential entry points to support the design and delivery of mental health services in the existing and future health programs funded by the Global Fund.

NEXT STEPS ON THE PATH TO UHC

There is still work to do to make sure Ghana integrates mental health into UHC. So in 2023:

- Basic Needs Ghana and the Alliance for Mental Health are meeting with the secretariat of the UHC Committee of Ghana's Ministry of Health to call for mental health's integration into the national UHC roadmap
- As part of their drive to ensure availability and access to mental health support for those most in need, Basic Needs Ghana will lead a campaign to decriminalise suicidal behaviour in the country.
- Advancing the groundwork on UHC, Basic Needs Ghana will participate at the upcoming country level dialogue of key stakeholders hosted by the Global Fund and Ghana's funding request preparation for submission in May 2023.