



Impact Report: July to December, 2025

**Advocacy that listens.
That mobilises.
That transforms.**

Eastern
Mediterranean,
Romania and
Sub-Saharan Africa
Gathering 2025



OUR WORLD WIDE PACE

Child and Youth Mental Health advocates gather at the Being Initiative regional gathering in Cape Town, South Africa.



“We wanted to put mental health on the map. We wanted a conversation at a UN level about mental health. This is the first time we are now seeing it in a High-Level Meeting. Thank you so much.”

Sarah Kline addresses audience at UnitedGMH’s Side Event at the High-Level Meeting on NCDs and Mental Health.

Foreword

As we reflect on the past six months, I am proud of what we have achieved together. From securing new commitments at the highest levels of government to amplifying the voices of lived experience, we have shown what is possible when advocates, policymakers, partners, and communities join hands with a shared purpose.

This report captures a historic moment for mental health, but it also reminds us that our work is far from finished. The challenges ahead demand courage.

Courage to shift power, to champion rights, to confront systems that harm, and to stand alongside those whose voices have too often been silenced. Looking forward, our mission is clear: to ensure mental health is never optional, marginal, or ignored, but recognised as fundamental to health, dignity, and justice. Together, hand in hand with our partners, we will continue to build momentum, strengthen partnerships, and deliver impact.

Let's make 2026 a time of transformation, ambition, and hope for mental health, and for all who deserve care, respect, and support.

**Thank you for all your support;
it means the world.**

**Sarah E Kline
CEO and Co-Founder**

SECTION 1 - WHAT'S IN THIS REPORT?

Advocacy that listens. That mobilises. That transforms.

We don't just raise our voices, we help others reclaim theirs. Our advocacy is about more than policy papers or podiums. It's about shifting power, eradicating stigma and discrimination, and opening doors to care and dignity for people too often left behind.

That means everything from decriminalising suicide to demanding maternal mental health

support; from moving mental health care out of harmful institutions to confronting the impact of the climate and environmental crisis on mental health.

We advocate so that everyone has somewhere to turn to get the mental health care they need.

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Coming Up?



A historic turning point
UN High-Level Meeting on NCDs and Mental Health



Move for mental health
World Mental Health Day 2025



Network-driven collaboration
Global Mental Health Action Network



Advocacy success



Looking ahead to 2026



Our funding

SECTION 2

Elevating Mental Health on the Global Stage.

We remain steadfast in our vision: a world where everyone, everywhere has access to mental health support, free from stigma and discrimination.

The second half of 2025 marked a significant surge in global momentum towards our goal, with UnitedGMH and the Global Mental Health Action Network (GMHAN) at the forefront.

From the corridors of power at the UN to grassroots campaigns around the world, our efforts amplified community voices, elevated mental health up the global agenda and helped secure vital political commitments. It all reminded us of what's possible when advocacy, collaboration, and lived experience come together.

We are proud to highlight three initiatives where our work helped achieve progress.

Our Side Event discussion on young people's mental health featuring Juliana and Sasha, youth advocates, Bill Ready, CEO of Pinterest, and John Arne Røttingen, CEO of Wellcome Trust.



1. A Historic Turning Point – UN High-Level Meeting on NCDs and Mental Health

In September 2025, the UN High-Level Meeting on NCDs and Mental Health marked a historic turning point. For the first time, mental health was recognised at the UN General Assembly as:

- > **a priority health issue**
- > **an integral part of any effective health system**
- > **a unique set of challenges and solutions**

Governments adopted a historic Political Declaration recognising mental health as a global priority. Countries committed to integrating mental health into primary and community care, scaling up prevention and promotion, protecting human rights, increasing financing, improving data and accountability, and embedding mental health within national NCD strategies.

The meeting's outcomes reflect years of coordinated advocacy by UnitedGMH in our role as Secretariat for the Global Mental Health Action Network. We brought together thousands of members of civil society and mental health networks, as well as lived-experience champions to unite behind a shared agenda for change.

Our effort led to progressive commitments from governments worldwide and the international community to:

- > **Prioritise youth mental health**
- > **Reform mental health systems**
- > **Increase efforts to tackle suicide prevention**
- > **Tackle the commercial and social determinants of mental health**

Our role:

- Co-led advocacy with the NCD Alliance, UN agencies, experts by experience and more than 100 civil society organisations to ensure mental health was prioritised in the High-Level Meeting's Political Declaration.
- Worked with over 60 governments across the world through coordinated advocacy efforts at global and national levels to make the case for strong mental health commitments.
- Published multiple reports, briefings and responses to consultations calling for integrated, people-centred care and a shift from institutional to community-based services.
- With the World Health Organization (WHO) and the Wellcome Trust, co-organised the leading mental health side-event to the High-Level Meeting, which included health ministers, Pinterest CEO Bill Ready, UN agencies, youth advocates and experts by experience.



2. Move for Mental Health – World Mental Health Day 2025

On 10 October 2025 – World Mental Health Day – we launched a global campaign: Move for Mental Health.

The campaign revolved around a single question we posed to our community:

What does
#MoveForMentalHealth
mean to you?



“We’ve spoken enough... It’s time to move for mental health – for everyone, everywhere, across the globe”

Zion, mental health advocate, Nigeria



“Move for Mental Health is about action. Moving together as a community to push for change. For a world where mental health can be understood...”

Puspita, mental health advocate, Indonesia

“A move for mental health is a move for wellness...”

Charmaine, Mental Health Specialist,
Zimbabwe

Our Move for Mental Health campaign video received over 12,000 organic views. Hundreds of advocates from around the world shared it on their networks. The film generated more comments from the global mental health community than any single post has before. Proof, if it were needed, that the mental health movement is here, and it's loud.

Our suite of supporting content featured short videos and blogs from social impact leaders. This included those driving corporate impact and wellbeing initiatives at lululemon, A&O Shearman and New Balance, as well as mental health advocates from grassroots organisations and leading sports teams such as the Springboks and Team USA. It even included a blog by Sally Houghton, our Director of Fundraising, about the mental health benefits she experiences from running races with her dog, Pip!

Working with lululemon, we launched GMHAN's Need2Know brief on Movement and Mental Health. The brief and the launch webinar outlined the positive psychological benefits of exercise, showcasing the latest evidence. We were thrilled the resource was co-produced with lululemon Gives, a new global impact initiative and the latest evolution of the lululemon Centre for Social Impact.

Combined, **our Move for Mental Health campaign reached more than 30,000 people** across digital channels in October – working with sports organisations, private sector partners and mental health advocates to take the message of movement and mental health to advocates in all corners of the globe.



Sally and Pip moving for mental health at a Canicross race

3. Network-Driven Collaboration – Global Mental Health Action Network

Network growth and reach

The Global Mental Health Action Network (GMHAN) now connects 9,500 advocates across 176 countries and territories – an amazing 70% jump in membership in just one year. Our members include NGOs, researchers, youth leaders, government officials, UN agencies, donors and people with lived experience.

This year, we've focused on increasing our membership in previously underrepresented areas, such as the Eastern Mediterranean and the Western Pacific (both regions saw membership increase by over 100% through strategic partnerships with regional and national organisations).

"It was not until I joined GMHAN that I began to reflect on the contributions I have made to mental health in China over the past two decades, and to build my confidence that I can extend my reach and achieve more across broader fields in the future." GMHAN member, China

A new member joins the network every two hours.



Global Mental Health Action Network

"The Regional Coalition for Mental Health and Substance Use Prevention is the first opportunity to develop a more sustainable, community-led and interactive network for engagement for civil society organisations, people with lived experience and advocates in our region."

Dalia Elasi, WHO Eastern Mediterranean Regional Office

Empowering our members to drive impact

This year, we have worked with our members to drive key policy change at the national and global level.

Amplifying young people's voices on the road to the UN

The lead-up to the [UN High-Level Meeting \(HLM\) on Non-Communicable Diseases \(NCDs\) and Mental Health](#) provided a rare opportunity to ensure young people, who are often excluded from global decision-making, could directly shape outcomes. Although there have been three previous UN HLMs on NCDs, none has ever focused explicitly on mental health.

Young leaders joined [GMHAN's Short-Term Action Group](#) to define shared CSO priorities. We supported their participation in key meetings in New York and Geneva, including the [WHO's Youth Multi-Stakeholder Hearing](#), which was created to strengthen youth representation in discussions about mental health and NCDs policy at the UN. For many, this was their first time speaking at a global meeting.

The result: the final UN Political Declaration includes five times as many references to children and young people as previous NCD-focused declarations, **committing governments to more decisive action on youth mental health.**

"Participating in the advocacy efforts around the UN High-Level Meeting on NCDs and Mental Health in New York was a formative experience. For many of us, it was the first time having a voice in such a high-level setting. We weren't there just to observe, we were there to contribute, think critically, share our perspectives, and advocate for the beliefs, values and communities we care about. [...] Being able to participate in those conversations didn't just give us insight, but a deeper sense of responsibility, and most importantly, confidence. Above all, this experience left us with a renewed sense of drive. We left New York not only as advocates, but as agents of change with a clearer vision of our role in shaping the future of mental health."

Alexandra Romero Vidal, Chile. Young person from GMHAN's Short-Term Action Group

Securing national commitment to expand youth mental health services

At the heart of GMHAN's mission is ensuring that advocates from the Global South shape the spaces where decisions are made, not just respond to them. Lucero Andaluz, Executive Director of De-Mentes in Peru, joined GMHAN because it offered "a unique global platform that brings together advocates from around the world committed to transforming mental health systems."

GMHAN arranged for Lucero to present De-Mentes' work to UN member states, amplifying the GMHAN community's priorities for integrating physical and mental health ahead of the 2025 UN High-Level Meeting.

"It is vital that we use this opportunity to accelerate progress in mental health by integrating it with non-communicable diseases, so that millions of people can live full lives and find the right support when they need it."

From Lucero's statement at the UN

Lucero's involvement in GMHAN and her participation in global discussions have empowered her to lead similar conversations at home in Peru. Using insight, evidence, and international best practices shared through the GMHAN network, Lucero and De-Mentes have been able to persuade the public authorities to prioritise youth-centred mental health services. They have secured government support for new Youth Mental Health Hubs: accessible, local centres where young people can get early, integrated mental health and wellbeing support.

As Lucero notes, "GMHAN provides us with global best practices, peer learning, and alignment that has helped us mobilise more support and influence national conversations." In Peru, these changes have the potential to improve the mental health and wellbeing of more than 1 million young people.

Directly influencing a new national strategy

In 2025, the government of Cyprus formally approved the country's first-ever National Mental Health Strategy (2024-2030). It represented a historic shift from an institutional, hospital-based model to a modern, community-focused system integrated into primary healthcare.

The approval came on the back of a year-long consultation and development process, itself a culmination of over a decade of advocacy and planning. Working closely with the WHO European office, GMHAN representatives, led by the Secretariat Lead, Antonis Kousoulis, were directly consulted and involved in the discussions shaping the strategy.

The National Mental Health Strategy's key pillars are in line with key global priorities, also strongly advocated for this year by GMHAN and UnitedGMH at the UN: developing multidisciplinary community mental health teams in all districts; enhancing child and adolescent mental health services; promoting prevention, early intervention, and de-stigmatisation; and protecting the rights of the highest risk groups.

A central operational goal of the strategy is the planned closure of the country's last remaining psychiatric hospital, with resources redirected to community alternatives.

By advocating for the National Mental Health Strategy to be aligned with global best practice and the key WHO priorities, GMHAN was a key influencing presence in ensuring that Cyprus took an inclusive approach and designed an action plan that has the potential to improve the wellbeing of everyone in the country. Crucially, it's a move that will also mean better prevention and care for the nearly 200,000 Cypriot citizens directly affected by mental health conditions.



SECTION 3

Advocacy Success.

Strengthening youth mental health leadership and systems

Adolescence is a critical period for mental health, yet millions of young people, especially in low- and middle-income countries (LMICs), still lack access to early support. The impacts of untreated mental health challenges can shape education, well-being, and future opportunity, while global investment in prevention remains far too low. Strengthening adolescent mental health is therefore essential to advancing equity, resilience, and long-term development, making it a clear priority for our advocacy.

Through the Being Initiative, United for Global Mental Health was part of the Children's 20 Secretariat that ensured youth and civil society contributed to a G20 process that advanced meaningful commitments to child and youth mental health.”

Aviwe Funani, UnitedGMH's senior advocacy officer, who led our G20 advocacy

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We are proud to be the advocacy lead of the [Being Initiative](#), supported by [Fondation Botnar](#) and [Grand Challenges Canada](#). It is a global mental health programme focused on improving the lives of adolescents in 11 low- and middle-income countries. It invests in research, youth-led innovation, and ecosystem building to strengthen prevention and early intervention.

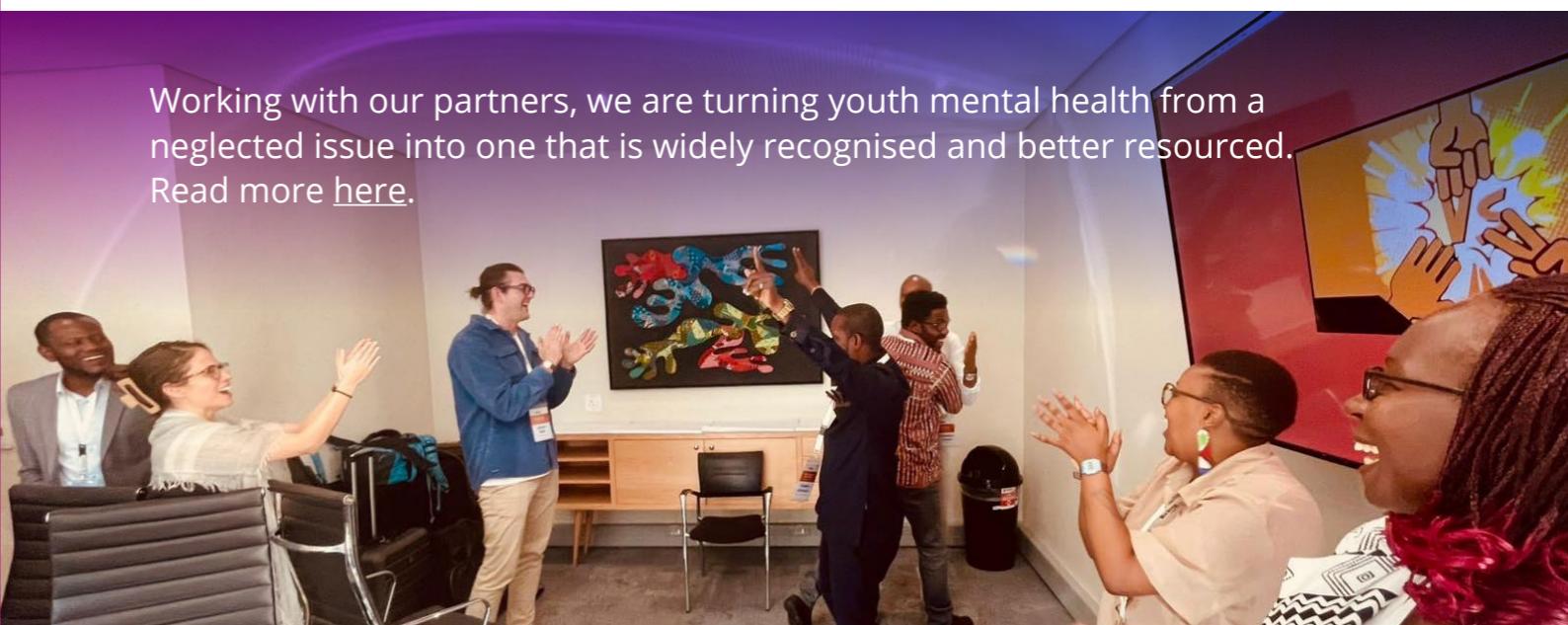
Our impact:

- As part of the [Children20](#), we helped secure new mental health commitments in the 2025 G20 [Leaders' Declaration](#), including on Universal Health Coverage and health systems strengthening.
- Supported youth-led advocacy by ensuring young people with lived experience directly shaped and participated in major national and global policy moments, including the G20, the UN High-Level Meeting on NDCs and Mental Health, and the [Global Ministerial Mental Health Summit](#).
- Delivered in-person capacity-building workshops to Being grant recipients from Tanzania, Ghana, Romania, Morocco and Senegal in Cape Town, South Africa, to equip them with advocacy skills to influence, transform and improve their national mental health ecosystems.

“I have a better understanding of how to conduct effective advocacy... I am grateful.”

Samuel Adjourlolo, Head of the Mental Health Department at the [Research and Grant Institute of Ghana](#)

Working with our partners, we are turning youth mental health from a neglected issue into one that is widely recognised and better resourced. [Read more here.](#)



Climate and mental health: From recognition to action

The climate crisis is increasingly affecting people's mental health, driving anxiety and stress, especially among young people and communities already facing inequality. Yet mental health has long been missing from climate policy and investment. Integrating it into climate action is essential for resilience, recovery, and protecting the wellbeing of those most affected.

“UGMH has been instrumental in accelerating the recognition and integration of mental health into climate policy. Their leadership, including developing high-impact policy analyses on mental health inclusion in national plans for climate adaptation and mitigation, gathering and amplifying case studies, and directly working with governments, has meaningfully advanced global progress.”

Jessica Newberry Le Vay, Senior Researcher, Climate Cares Centre, University of Oxford

Key milestones

COP30 in Belém, Brazil marked a historic shift in how countries understand and respond to the mental health impacts of the climate crisis, with several first-ever commitments agreed at the talks.

- Mental health was formally acknowledged for the first time in COP history as a core element of climate adaptation.
- The Belém Health Action Plan, endorsed by more than 80 countries and organisations, set out concrete steps to integrate mental health into climate adaptation efforts.
- Mental health was included in the Global Goal on Adaptation, marking its first-ever appearance in a COP-negotiated outcome.

UnitedGMH played a key role in delivering these commitments. In the lead-up to COP30, we briefed major climate stakeholders, including the African Group of Negotiators and the Least Developed Countries Group.



Viviane and her parrot, Maloqueira, in front of their recycling shed, after their hometown of Porto Alegre, Brazil, was hit by floods. Credit: Greice Tonietto.

We ensured that mental health was clearly positioned within the climate and health agenda. By equipping negotiators with evidence, messaging, and practical policy options, we helped make mental health an integral part of climate discussions rather than a peripheral issue.

[Learn more here.](#)

SECTION 4

Looking Ahead to 2026.

We are very proud of all we have achieved in 2025. As we look ahead to 2026, we are focused on making this year a time of transformation, ambition, and hope for mental health and for all who deserve care, respect, and support.

In 2026, we will accelerate our work to:

Drive the deinstitutionalisation of mental health care

Launch a new campaign to mobilise governments, donors, and civil society to end institutionalisation and scale evidence-based community-support models.

Advance the decriminalisation and prevention of suicide

Develop regional briefings and support national governments and lived-experience campaigners to work together to change laws.

Strengthen mental health support for children and young people

Work with young people, and national and international organisations, particularly through the Being initiative.

Embed mental health within climate and environmental action

Advance its integration into National Adaptation Plans, climate financing frameworks, and COP 2026 processes as a core pillar of resilience and adaptation.

Grow the Global Mental Health Action Network (GMHAN)

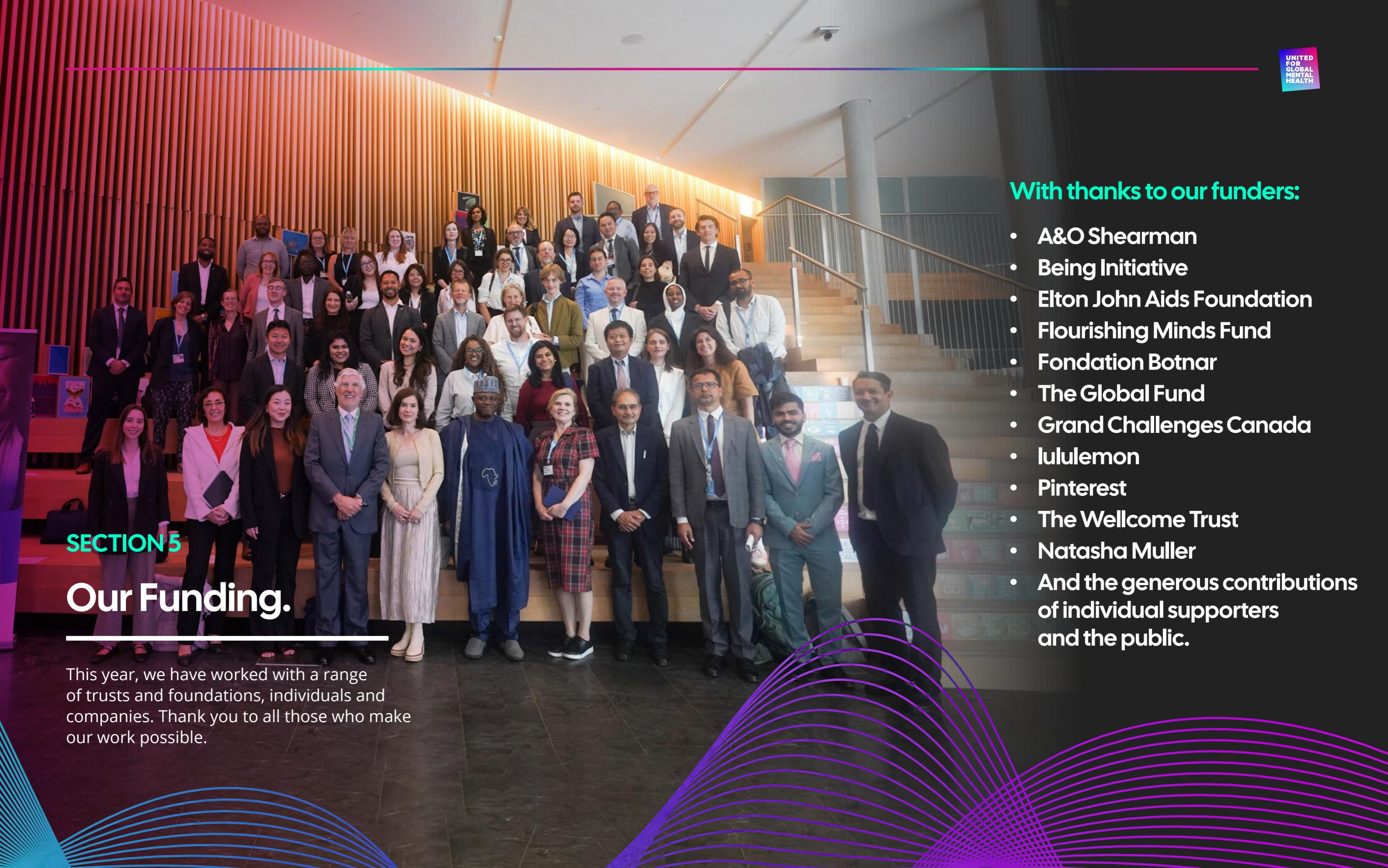
Keep the momentum on mental health, pushing for continued action globally. Deliver an annual forum with over 2,000 participants, driving policy change across multiple areas, supporting national and international advocates.

Improve mental health care

Advocate for its integration across health systems, from maternal and perinatal care to HIV/TB programmes, primary care, and community services.

Influence development banks

Support the design and delivery of the NCDs and mental health financing dialogue to secure greater investment in mental health globally and nationally.



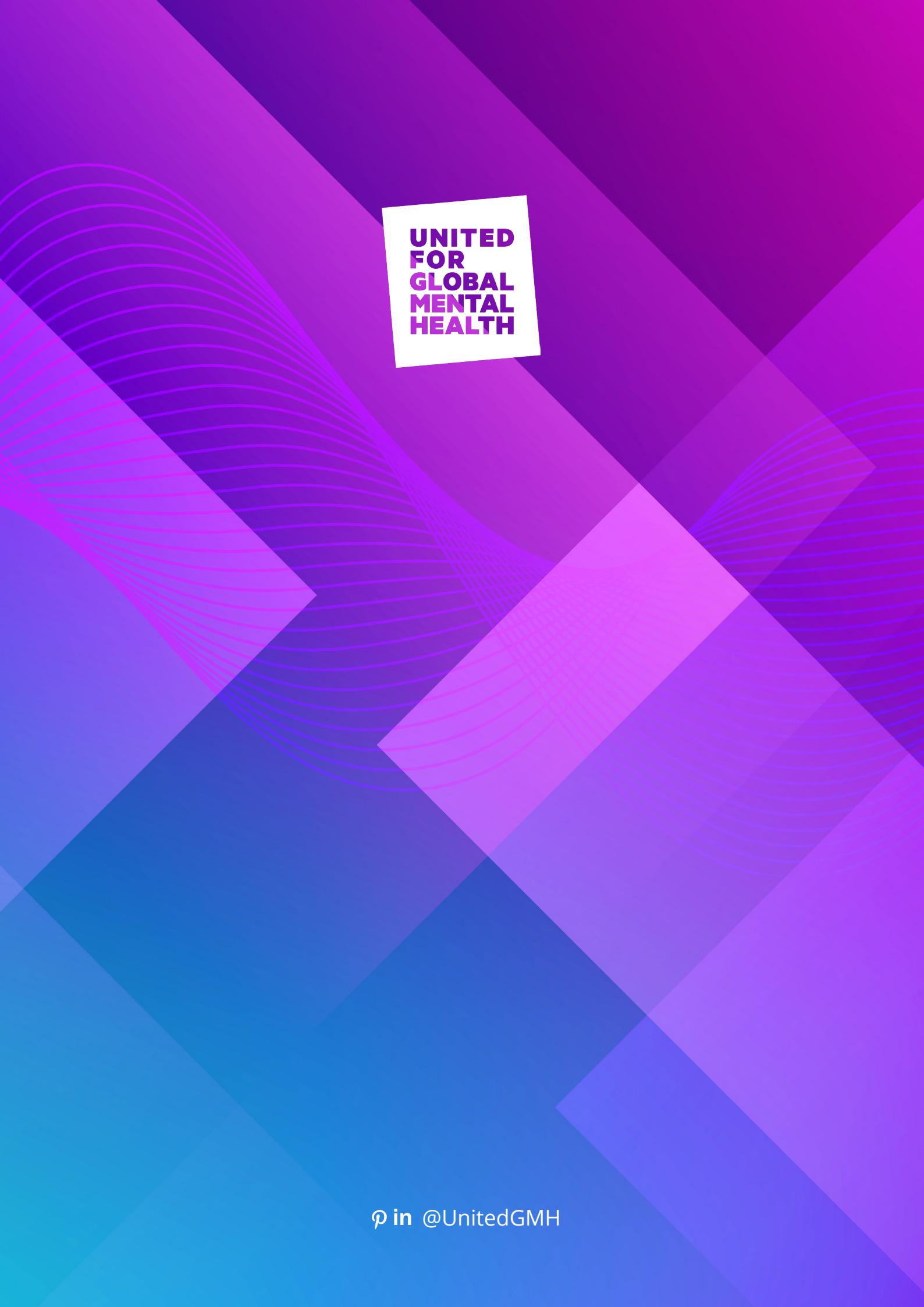
SECTION 5

Our Funding.

This year, we have worked with a range of trusts and foundations, individuals and companies. Thank you to all those who make our work possible.

With thanks to our funders:

- **A&O Shearman**
- **Being Initiative**
- **Elton John Aids Foundation**
- **Flourishing Minds Fund**
- **Fondation Botnar**
- **The Global Fund**
- **Grand Challenges Canada**
- **lululemon**
- **Pinterest**
- **The Wellcome Trust**
- **Natasha Muller**
- **And the generous contributions of individual supporters and the public.**



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