

Briefing note: how to join global action on mental health



This briefing explains why it's #TimeToAct on mental health worldwide, recommends what each of us can do and details milestones to capitalise on.

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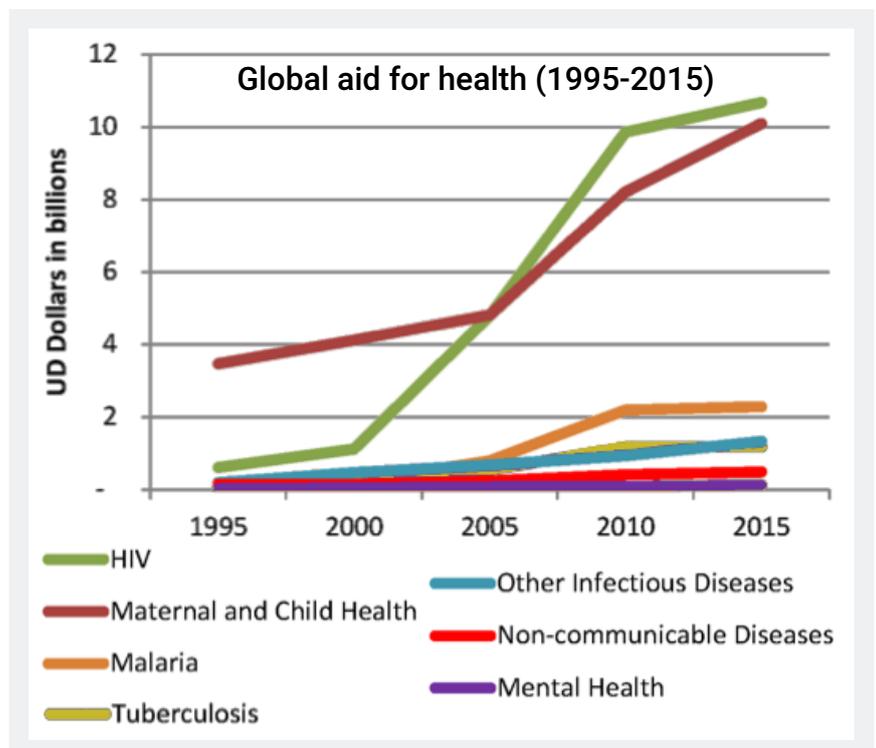
Why it's #TimeToAct on mental health

Poor mental health is an escalating global challenge, which damages our economies, societies and physical health:

- Mental health conditions are **on the rise** in every country in the world.[i]
- Depression is the **leading cause of disability** worldwide.
- Suicide is the **second leading cause of death** among 15 to 29-year-olds.[ii]
- Mental health conditions could cost the global economy **US\$ 16 trillion** from 2010 to 2030.[iii]
- People with the most severe mental health conditions die prematurely – as much as two decades early – due to preventable physical conditions.[iv]
- Anxiety and depression are enormously costly for employers, causing at least **12 billion days of lost productivity** every year.[v]

Yet the escalating mental health challenge has met with inaction and inadequate funding, even amidst increasing awareness of its scale and scope:

- Over three-quarters of people with mental health conditions in low- and middle-income countries receive no support at all.[vi]
- On average, countries spend less than 2% of their health budgets on mental health.[vii]
- Estimates show that mental health receives less than 1% of international aid for health, amounting to just US\$ 132 million of global aid a year (see graph).[viii]



Fortunately, it looks like these historic failures are about to be corrected, amidst growing recognition that it's #TimeToAct. Here's why the world has never been better placed to address these challenges:

- Considerable work is already underway to prioritise mental health globally and nationally, with action increasingly coordinated across borders and sectors.
- Our understanding of mental health has reached a tipping point; a strong knowledge base of what works has been built up and is ready for scaling up.
- There is rising awareness that mental health is **not just a problem for governments**, with the World Economic Forum community proving central to determining what businesses could bring to a broader and stronger response.

Our call to action on mental health at the Annual Meeting is:
Work for better mental health in your organisation and beyond

What you can do at the Annual Meeting

Participants at the Annual Meeting have the chance to rally behind the global call that it's #TimeToAct by joining the growing movement working towards a world where everyone, everywhere has someone to turn to when they need support with their mental health. Here's how you can get involved:

1. Find out how to work with organisations already promoting mental health. To find out about how to get involved in existing work, get in touch with the contacts below, who are all available to speak in-person at the Annual Meeting:
 - Zander Woollcombe, Campaign Lead, United for Global Mental Health (zander@unitedgmh.org)
 - Edward Whiting, Director of Policy and Chief of Staff, Wellcome Trust (e.whiting@wellcome.ac.uk)
 - Elisha London, CEO, United for Global Mental Health (elisha@unitedgmh.org)
 - Peter Varnum, Project Lead, Global Health and Healthcare, World Economic Forum (peter.varnum@weforum.org)
2. Visit the Friendship Bench in the Main Corridor of the Congress Centre to demonstrate your commitment to leading change. You're encouraged to bring along someone to have a conversation with about mental health.

Originating in Zimbabwe, the Friendship Bench programme was created by Dr Dixon Chibanda and trains grandmothers to support people with mental health conditions and talk about how to find solutions to their problems. With multiple studies proving that the project improves mental health, the Friendship Bench has already been introduced in New York and is poised to go global.



3. Use #TimeToAct in your social media posts throughout 2019 to build momentum for action. For example, you could share:

I agree it's #TimeToAct on #mentalhealth. In 2019, I commit to working for better mental health in my organisation and beyond. I hope everyone at #wef19 in @davos will join me.

How to show your personal commitment to action

1. **Respect experience:** Ensure the priorities and unique perspectives of people with mental health conditions steer every aspect of what you do about mental health.
2. **Increase understanding:** Explain how better mental health is good for business, the economy and all of society.
3. **Lead by example:** Push mental health up the agenda by treating it as a boardroom issue and making it a key metric for measuring success.
4. **Use your networks:** Bring in new organisations and leaders from outside the health sector to address mental health.
5. **Reduce stigma:** Challenge prejudice, emphasising that prevention, care, treatment and access to quality medicines must improve alongside attitudes.

How to create a mentally healthy workplace

1. **Recognise mental health as essential to maximising organisational performance:** Work with senior leadership to embed mentally healthy workplace behaviours and keep staff motivated and productive.
2. **Treat mental health as key to employee well-being:** Feature it in your organisation's overall strategy, annual report, online platforms and social media.
3. **Prevent mental ill health:** Pursue preventive measures as equally important as treatment for addressing mental ill health.
4. **Train and brief leaders and staff:** Your employees should know how to get support, help each other, access resources and better manage problems like stress, long hours and bullying.
5. **Account for mental health:** Update your human resources and operations procedures, such as those for supporting staff returning to work.

How to advocate for change at a national level

International mental health experts have developed a set of goals and targets, based on the internationally agreed UN Sustainable Development Goals and the WHO Comprehensive Mental Health Action Plan 2013–2020 and supported by the latest evidence detailed by the Lancet Commission on Global Mental Health and Sustainable Development.

To help achieve these objectives, tell your government it's #TimeToAct and ask them to:

1. **Uphold the right to mental health:** All countries must implement national mental health laws, policies and plans that uphold human rights and take into account the priorities of people with lived experience.
2. **Involve all of society:** In tandem with reforming our health care systems, the places where we work, learn and live need to become more mentally healthy, with all sectors – from housing to education – responsible for leading change.
3. **Act at every stage:** It is vital that more is done to prevent mental ill health, promote good mental health and provide access to appropriate care.
4. **Commit bigger budgets:** Low and middle-income countries must spend at least 5% of their health budgets on mental health and high-income countries must spend at least 10%.
5. **Reach US\$ 1 billion by 2023:** Global aid for mental health must increase 10-fold from US\$ 132 million per year in 2015.

Next steps on global mental health research

Going forward, there should be more support for and investment in:

- **Multi-disciplinary research**, harnessing novel approaches from across fields.
- **Implementation research**, looking at how to scale up mental health interventions.
- **Discovery research** to improve understanding of what causes mental health conditions, how they work and how to best prevent and treat them.

The Wellcome Trust has made mental health one of its priority areas, with a particular focus on better understanding psychological therapies, supporting young people and improving treatments for anxiety and depression.

Timeline of past and future activities

2018 was a breakthrough year for mental health with an inaugural ministerial-level summit and notable prominence at the UN General Assembly.

In 2019, we have the opportunity to further accelerate action within several 'tracks' of activity (see below) already underway.

The 'Blueprint Group on Mental Health'

Convened by United for Global Mental Health since July 2018 and supported by the Wellcome Trust, this group enables organisations and individuals from around the world to coordinate action on mental health, under the **#TimeToAct** banner.

The Blueprint Group aims to:

- Agree **goals and messages** for the global mental health community.
- Increase the **impact** of advocacy and communications activities.
- Amplify and **coordinate tracks of activity**, with a global coordination structure due to be formalised at a February 2019 meeting.

Track	Aim
Civil Society:	Connect and strengthen national campaigners to make local changes and achieve global influence.
Donors:	Increase international funding to catalyse domestic spending in low- and middle-income countries and address mental health in emergency and conflict settings.
Ministerial:	Prioritise mental health within health ministries and across government as relevant.
Private Sector:	Advocate for mental health in society-at-large and adapt workplaces.
UN:	Support Member States so that all people may enjoy mental health, regardless of race, religion, political belief, economic or social condition.

Track	Date	Moment (past)
	1992	First World Mental Health Day held on 10 October, organised by the World Federation for Mental Health
	1995	<i>World Mental Health: Problems and Priorities in Low-Income Countries</i> published
	2001	Release of <i>World Health Report, Mental Health: New Understanding, New Hope</i>
		World Health Day calls for end to exclusion of people because of mental health conditions
UN	2006	UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities adopted
	2007	Inter-Agency Standing Committee issues <i>Guidelines on Mental Health and Psychosocial Support in Emergency Settings</i>
CS	2008	Movement for Global Mental Health set up as a network to improve mental health services, especially in low- and middle-income countries
		WHO Mental Health Gap Action Programme launched to guide mental health service delivery in countries
	2013	WHO Comprehensive Mental Health Action Plan 2013–2020 adopted by the World Health Assembly
M		G8 dementia summit takes place in London
UN	2015	UN Sustainable Development Goals agreed, including mental health targets
	2016	World Bank and WHO co-host high level panel, <i>Out of the Shadows: Making Mental Health a Global Development Priority</i>
	2017	Friends of Mental Health and Well-being Group established among Missions to the UN in New York City
		World Health Day focuses on depression
	2018	
	January	United for Global Mental Health established Global Mental Health Peer Network launches
	May	UN Secretary-General's office, WHO and the Wellcome Trust co-organise roundtable discussion on mental health
M		Alliance of Champions for Mental Health and Wellbeing launches at World Health Assembly, co-founded by Canada, the UK and Australia
UN	September	Heads of State commit to improving mental health and wellbeing at 3rd UN High-level Meeting on noncommunicable diseases
		#TimeToAct side event on mental health at UN General Assembly
M	October	Inaugural Global Ministerial Mental Health Summit hosted by the UK government
		Lancet Commission on Global Mental Health and Sustainable Development launches, building on 2007 and 2011 <i>Lancet</i> Series on Global Mental Health
UN	December	UNAIDS Programme Coordinating Board includes thematic segment on mental health

Track	Date	Moment (future)
	2019	
	Ongoing/ TBD	Negotiation process for the next phase of the WHO Comprehensive Mental Health Action Plan to take it beyond 2020
D		UK and the Netherlands to establish informal donor group to improve quality and quantity of funding for mental health
		Countdown Global Mental Health established
PS		World Economic Forum Annual Meeting of the New Champions, in Dalian, People's Republic of China
PS	5-6 April	World Economic Forum on the Middle East and North Africa to take place at the Dead Sea, Jordan
CS	May	Global campaign calling for government action, led by national civil society groups launches
PS	4-6 September	World Economic Forum on Africa in Cape Town, South Africa
	September	UN General Assembly side event on mental health
M	7-8 October	Global Ministerial Summit on Mental Health and Psychosocial Support hosted in Amsterdam by the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs
CS	10 October	Global activities to celebrate World Mental Health Day 2019 on suicide prevention
	2020	
PS	21-24 January	Annual Meeting of the World Economic Forum in Davos-Klosters, Switzerland <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Coordination of private sector engagement with the global mental health agenda • Global Futures Council on Neurotechnology report on how to scale up services using technology

With thanks to

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