



2023

# GMHAN Action Plan

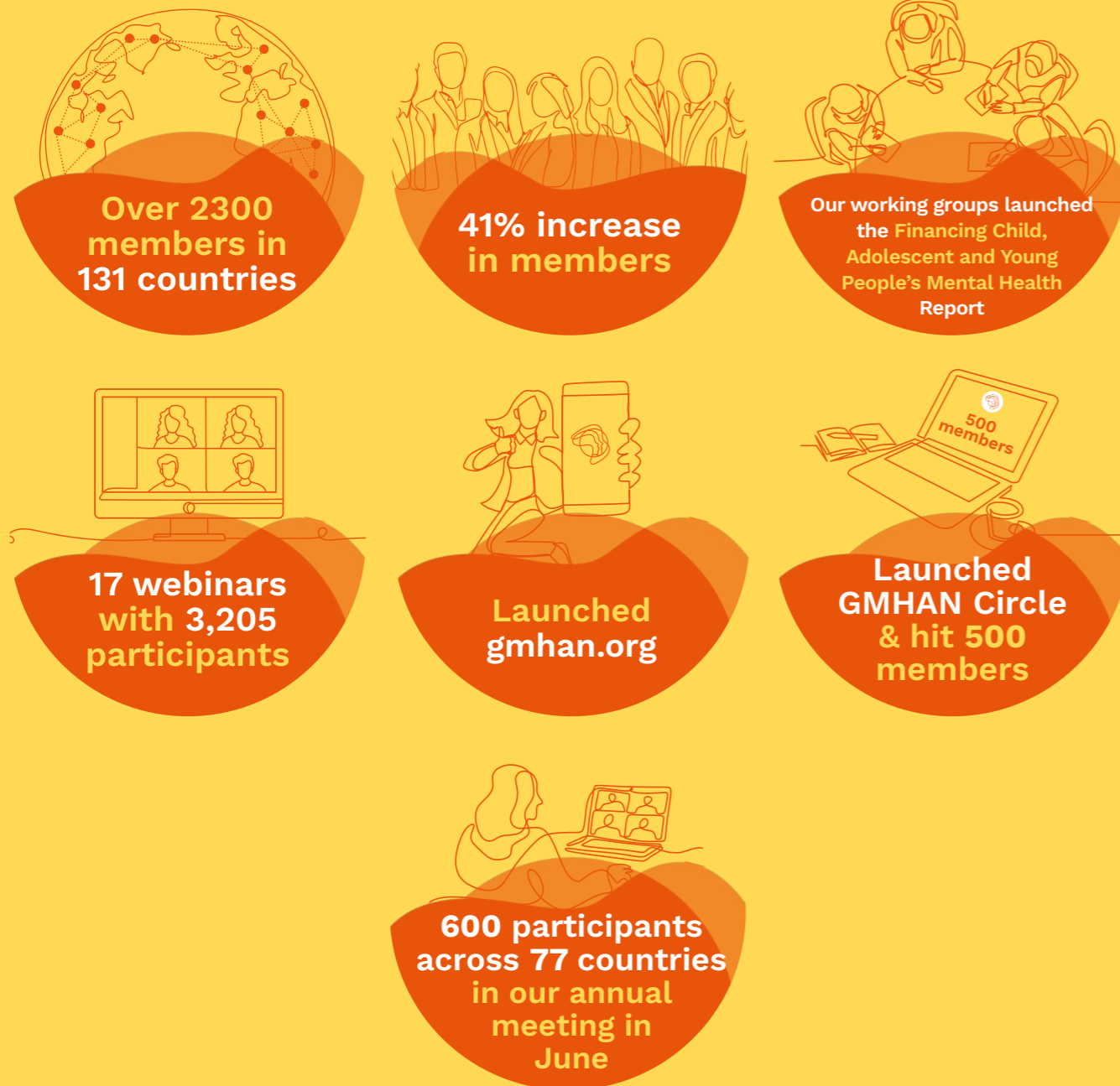
This document provides external audiences and GMHAN members with a high-level overview of the network's activity and priorities in 2023.



Global Mental Health  
Action Network

**Mental Health for all**

## GMHAN in 2022



## MENTAL HEALTH: A GLOBAL CRISIS

In a world seemingly moving from crisis to crisis it can be easy to overlook an issue that is widespread and affecting people from all walks of life: poor mental health. It is an issue exacerbated by a lack of access to mental health support and services, particularly in low- and middle-income countries. Coverage gaps can be as high as 90% in some low-income countries. A growing body of evidence – [including a study on Universal Health Coverage from United for Global Mental Health](#) – suggests gaps in care have profound and far reaching socio-economic costs. The social stigma surrounding mental health – as well as the serious after-effects of the COVID-19 pandemic – compound these costs.

Marginalised communities and the young tend to be worst hit. [Original research by the Global Mental Health Action Network](#) has shown that young people are consistently under-prioritised, with funding for young people's mental health services in 90 low-income countries comprising at most less than one US cent per person, and often nothing at all. The picture that emerges is of an underfunded and fundamentally reactive global mental health system. The gaps and failures in this system hinder progress on, or even cause, seemingly bigger or more urgent global issues.

**It is time to break the cycle of despair, stigma and discrimination – particularly in low-income countries.**





## WHAT IS THE GLOBAL MENTAL HEALTH ACTION NETWORK?

Everyone, everywhere should have access to the mental health support and services they need. To turn that ambition into a reality, it is crucial that civil society organisations across the world are united, coordinated and supported in calling for change. The Global Mental Health Action Network was born in 2018 to bring together a movement of organisations working to increase the financial, political and social will to prioritise and improve mental health worldwide.

What started out as a small group of advocated meeting virtually and in person in New York, London, Geneva and Nairobi, has now grown into a virtual community of over 2,300 members across 131 countries. They include clinicians, people with lived experience, the private sector, UN agencies (including the WHO and UNICEF),

civil society organisations, INGOs and academia. Together they work to bring about change on mental health across the world. You can find a full list of [who we are here](#).

GMHAN is creating a global network where every campaigner and professional working in mental health has somewhere to go to access the support they need to make the change they want to see.

United for Global Mental Health (UnitedGMH) founded GMHAN and acts as the secretariat of the network. GMHAN is primarily funded by UnitedGMH's unrestricted funds as the organisation considers GMHAN central to achieving better mental health for all. GMHAN would also like to give special thanks to the following organisations for their support:



## WHAT ARE THE VALUES WHICH GUIDE THE WORK OF GMHAN?



### MEMBER-DRIVEN

As the secretariat, GMHAN exists to serve the needs of its members. GMHAN members dictate the direction and priorities of the network through the Advisory Group, regular member engagement and working groups.



### DIVERSITY, INCLUSION AND EQUITY

GMHAN works to promote true global representation and make sure all vulnerable and/or disadvantaged groups can participate in the network. For example, it is translating its content into more languages, using sign language to make its events more inclusive and amplifying the work of and for vulnerable groups such as the LGBTQIA+ communities. It is also campaigning to end conversion therapy and reduce stigma and discrimination globally.



### PEOPLE WITH LIVED EXPERIENCE

People with lived or living experience of mental health conditions – and their families and carers – are represented in all areas of GMHAN's work. This includes in the network's Advisory Group, Secretariat and working groups. GMHAN will always strive to amplify the voices of people lived experience at the global level and ensure their perspective informs all discussions and strategies.



### COLLABORATION AND PARTNERSHIPS

GMHAN builds strong relationships with complementary networks, including the Global Mental Health Peer Network, Mental Health Innovation Network and International Initiative for Mental Health Leadership. The organisation will also look for other complementary global and national networks with which to build relationships – within and outside the global mental health sector (e.g. UHC2030, IASC MHPSS Reference Group).



### VOICES FROM LOW- AND MIDDLE-INCOME COUNTRIES

Over 50% of the network's members are from low- and middle-income countries. There is strong commitment to ensuring these members have an equitable say in how the network is governed and the decisions it makes.



### SHARING INFORMATION

GMHAN is committed to sharing knowledge and expertise with as many partners as possible across the world. It provides these partners with access to free resources, toolkits, webinars and other digital information. The GMHAN Circles – the digital members community platform – makes sure the sharing of this information is equitable.





We unite  
We advise  
We support  
We advocate

We are the Global Mental  
Health Action Network



## WHAT ARE THE SECRETARIAT'S COMMITMENTS TO THE NETWORK?

By bringing more than 2,300 mental health advocates and experts together, the network has created a platform for substantive knowledge sharing and real change.

The network's secretariat – supported by the Advisory Group and working groups – is responsible for ensuring its members are given the tools to grow and expand their influence in both global and national conversations on mental health.

Here is an overview of some of the most important steps GMHAN will take to strengthen the network and empower all the voices in it.

## WE WILL EXPAND

GMHAN will continue to expand its membership to include members from as many different countries as possible. At present, most members are from Africa, Europe and North America, so we'll look to increase the number of members from China and the Middle East. We'll explore ways to be more accessible and engaging by, for example, holding regional events and/or translating materials.

We will continue to drive enrolment to the virtual community platform GMHAN Circle, which now has over 500 members.

Key targets for 2023 are:

**90%**  
of new members  
join and contribute  
to GMHAN Circle

**70%**  
of existing members  
join Circle

## WE WILL EDUCATE

In 2023, GMHAN will increase the learning opportunities and skills training offered to members, in particular leadership, advocacy and communications.

### GMHAN will:

Deliver at least six free training modules per year on core advocacy skills open to all network members, in partnership with other experts (including Mental Health Innovation Network and International Initiative for Mental Health Leadership)

Re-launch the communications working group, co-chaired by UnitedGMH and WHO, to help strengthen the communications capabilities of members and organisations across the network

## WE WILL COLLABORATE

We will continue to strengthen relationships with other global, regional and national networks to promote their success and share knowledge, resources and expertise within the global mental health sector. We also work closely with international organisations such as WHO and UNICEF, whose offices and programmes are spread around the world. These collaborations, such as joint webinars, include those with:

### Global

- Global Mental Health Peer Network (GMHPN)
- Mental Health Innovation Network (MHIN)

- International Initiative for Mental Health Leadership (IIMHL)
- World Health Organisation
- UNICEF

### Regional

- Nordic MHPSS Network
- AESC Brazil
- Norwegian Global Mental Health Network

## WE WILL LISTEN

GMHAN appointed a new Advisory Group in 2022, which will guide the strategy and identify new opportunities for the network. In 2023, each elected Advisory Group member will hold two sessions for the members they represent – to provide feedback, discuss priority areas and explore the network's strategic direction.

The Advisory Group represents members from regions such as the Americas and South East Asia, from among young people and people with lived experience, and from institutions such as the WHO and UN.

Members will have the chance to engage directly with the Advisory Group twice a year. There'll also be opportunities for members to feedback and collaborate with their regional representatives through drop-in sessions.

GMHAN is committed to maintaining open lines of communication and collaboration at all levels of decision-making across the network, and creating a safe and enabling environment for everyone.

People with lived experience of mental health conditions and young people play a significant role in the network,



and we've updated our best practice guidelines on youth engagement and the inclusion and participation of people with lived experience.

**The Advisory Group is committed to helping the network:**

- shape the priorities in the 2023 action plan and support in their implementation
- review, contribute to and approve written communications from the different working groups
- plan and shape the agenda of conference and webinar sessions hosted by (or with representations from) the GMHAN
- plan the GMHAN annual meeting.

## WE WILL REPRESENT

In 2023 the GMHAN secretariat will work to increase one-to-one engagement with a larger number of members. It will support the building of regional coalitions among the membership to combine expertise and voices to change national, regional and global policy.

**Our key activities and targets include:**

- using the GMHAN Circle to monitor key trends, prioritise areas where members need support and tailor the offerings within these areas
- encouraging members to engage directly with one another
- piloting a regional meeting of GMHAN members, subject to funding, to foster greater collaboration, strategy creation,

- peer support and expertise/training
- rolling out regional meetings of the network in 2023/24 if desired across the membership
- hosting regional resource hubs for mental health in 2023 on the GMHAN Circle.

## WE WILL TRANSLATE

GMHAN will translate more of our content to make sure it benefits even more members who do not have English as a working language. In 2022 we launched webinar materials and resources in French, Spanish and Mandarin.

**Our key activities and targets include:**

- making more communications available in French and English
- exploring Spanish and Portuguese as additional languages in 2023 given the increased appetite from GMHAN members in South America
- making automatically translated captions available in all 2023 webinars
- pursuing language partners for the network, e.g. universities
- securing additional funding to ensure more content is available in French, Spanish and other languages.



Mental  
Health for all  
Help make  
change happen



## HOW DOES GMHAN WANT TO USE IT'S COLLECTIVE INFLUENCE?

Global conversations on mental health should be as informed and as ambitious as possible. The network will create engaging content, reports and briefings to support change and influence policy makers across the globe.

### In 2023, GMHAN will:

- **launch a report on youth engagement in global mental health, and briefings on integrating mental health within Universal Health Coverage, and on innovative global financing**
- **produce best practice guidelines on engaging with people with lived experience**
- **influence the UHC high level meeting**
- **work on guidelines to help civil society organisations to more effectively engage with pharmaceutical companies**
- **conduct a mapping exercise of how different regional, cultural, religious and socio-economic contexts and influence ssuicide prevention and decriminalisation efforts**
- **examine financing for mental health, share that learning, and create tools for advocates and campaigners to call for better financing of mental health systems**
- **influence the SDG summit on the importance of national suicide prevention strategies to realise the SDG's**

We'll continue to be guided by the Global Mental Health Advocacy Roadmap. It will ensure that the voices of people with lived experience, and people from LMICs, are fully represented, heard and instrumental in decision-making processes.

As well as the commitments within the working groups in 2023, as a collective membership will focus on these top 5 priorities:

1

### Increase support for child and adolescent mental health

#### GMHAN will work to boost:

- support for youth leadership and the meaningful participation of young people in decision making and the creation of mental health policy and provisions
- investment for child and adolescent mental health services, education and advocacy
- investment in the prevention of young people's mental health conditions, including through infant, early childhood and parental mental health services, education and advocacy.

5

### Push for effective national suicide prevention strategies.

#### GMHAN will:

- support members to campaign for suicide decriminalisation in the 20 countries where suicide is illegal
- support the creation of effective national suicide prevention strategies
- ensure the voices of people with lived experience are heard in decision making processes.

## TOP 5 PRIORITIES

2

### Eliminate stigma and discrimination towards people experiencing mental health conditions

#### GMHAN will:

- advocate for the delivery of the recommendations of the Lancet Commission's report on ending stigma and discrimination
- support national campaigns and share best practice strategies on eliminating stigma and discrimination
- influence and educate the media through the Communications Working Group

4

### Increase global mental health financing

#### GMHAN will:

- examine and share learning about mental health public budgets, out-of-pocket spending on mental health, financing youth mental health, mental health finance and rights, and mental health and climate change finance
- develop policy briefings, blogs, commentaries, op-eds, peer-reviewed publications, and other learning and advocacy materials
- organise events, both virtual and in-person, to share and discuss learning, and to facilitate action.

3

### Ensure the inclusion of mental health within Universal Health Coverage (UHC)

#### GMHAN will work to:

- influence the 2023 UN high-level meeting on UHC to ensure the inclusion of mental health as an area of need
- engage with UHC 2030 mechanisms and civil society forums to ensure the inclusion of mental health provision

#### Other advocacy priorities across the network include:

- Ensuring a rights based approach to mental health and community care. Promote the WHO Quality Rights e-training as a key learning opportunity.
- Build the evidence base on successful mental health interventions and programming that exist across the network by sharing best practices and innovations. We will include training and dissemination of Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning (MEL) frameworks to support this.
- Build our strategy on ensuring the importance of mental health within climate change is recognised. We will launch a new working group in order to achieve this.
- Connect partners working on maternal and early years mental health, to expand our collaborations on this often neglected population group.

## HOW WILL WE BRING PEOPLE TOGETHER?

The network's collective intelligence and passion can be unlocked by bringing people together through online platforms, ambitious working groups and in-person meet-ups and conferences.

### Annual meeting of the Global Mental Health Action Network

In 2022, 600 participants from 77 countries participated in our virtual annual meeting. Members have listed their top four objectives for the annual meeting:

1. Networking
2. Increasing knowledge
3. Collaborating on advocacy strategies
4. Exchanging best practice.

In 2023, the possibility of holding the annual meeting as a hybrid event, with an in-person element, will be explored. Members will decide the location, timing and format of the meeting via membership surveys and feedback.

### Working Groups

GMHAN supports a number of working groups – Universal Health Coverage, Child & Youth, Financing Mental Health, Communications, Suicide Decriminalisation/Prevention and Francophone – to maintain a high level of output guided by collective work plans and advocacy strategies. The working group co-chairs have committed to ensure:

- that the inclusion and contributions of members support the success of the group without any bias or discrimination
- the group engages with at least one global moment/event in their thematic field per year
- the group contributes to global, regional or national policy change by identifying at least two countries or partners to support
- two to three co-chairs represent the voice of the group, with at least one of the co-chairs coming from a LMIC and from outside UnitedGMH.

## UNIVERSAL HEALTH COVERAGE WORKING GROUP

The Universal Health Coverage Working Group brings members together for joint advocacy, networking, resource sharing, learning and capacity building geared towards the meaningful integration of mental health into Universal Health Coverage (UHC) by 2030 in line with targets set in the [WHO's Comprehensive Mental Health Action Plan 2013-2030](#).

### Key objectives for 2023 are to:

- finalise and disseminate 'key asks' on integrating mental health into UHC for use in global and national advocacy
- engage with the official processes of the high level meeting on UHC to ensure the meaningful inclusion of mental health language in the political declaration

- engage with other global moments such as the G20 and UNHLPF
- develop comprehensive UHC resources containing content shared by members for members
- bring at least 50% of all working group members on to GMHAN Circle

## CHILD & YOUTH WORKING GROUP

The Child & Youth Working Group was established to champion the lived experiences of young people and amplify their voices to help bring about change.

### Key objectives in 2023 are:

- developing guidance documents on how national and local partners can meaningfully engage young people in global advocacy – including publishing the youth-engagement report
- making sure the working group and its members are highly visible during key global moments – such as the GMHAN annual meeting and the Global Adolescent Forum – through advocacy and policy recommendations for increased investment and commitment in young people's mental health from decision makers
- boosting research and evidence for meaningful investment advocacy for youth mental health.
- increasing member engagement in the GMHAN Circle and in meetings by 50%, and creating more opportunities for members to lead advocacy on these platforms.

## FINANCING MENTAL HEALTH WORKING GROUP

The Financing Mental Health Working Group was established to help increase and improve financing for mental health services and support across the world.

### Key objectives in 2023 are:

- examining mental health budgets, out-of-pocket spending on mental health, the financing of young people's mental health care, mental health finance and rights, and mental health and climate change finance – then share any learning from that exploration
- developing policy briefings, blogs, commentaries, op-eds, peer-reviewed publications, other learning materials, and advocacy materials
- organising virtual and in-person events to share and discuss learning, and to facilitate action
- growing the working group in both numbers and expertise

## COMMUNICATIONS WORKING GROUP

The Communications Working Group will be relaunched to coordinate communications across the membership and support working groups championing advocacy around key thematic areas.

The group will explore developing joint strategies around key global moments and cross-cutting projects to advance the collective work of the membership. It will aim to bring together comms



professionals working in the mental health field to network and share best practice. And to work towards these key objectives for 2023:

- the working group will bring comms professionals together to plan on joint strategies for World Mental Health Day 2023 with intention of announcing a GMHAN call to action on Global Mental Health for WMHD in conjunction with the GMHAN Secretariat
- working group will conduct research and insights on providing messaging on Global Mental Health objectives which are inline with member organisations aims on various mental health initiatives
- creating open source resource libraries e.g. photography
- developing and implementing a communications strategy around World Mental Health Day, and advising partners on their communications approach
- educating and collaborating with national and global media
- providing training and support on communications tools whether social media, traditional media or communications expertise

## SUICIDE DECRIMINALISATION/ PREVENTION WORKING GROUP

The Suicide Decriminalisation/Prevention Working Group has been set up to support advocacy for the decriminalisation of suicide and suicidal

behaviour in countries where it is illegal.

### Key objectives for 2023 are to:

- participate in public consultations and support the launch of the WHO policy brief on decriminalising suicide, ensuring it reaches members' national governments
- conduct a member-facilitated mapping exercise/regional comparison of different cultural, religious and socio-economic contexts and how they impact suicide prevention and decriminalisation efforts
- engage with a key moment – potentially the SDG summit – to spark discourse on suicide prevention and decriminalisation
- bring at least 50% of all working group members on to the GMHAN Circle
- develop comprehensive suicide prevention and decriminalisation resources, containing content shared by members for members

## FRANCOPHONE WORKING GROUP

Established in 2022, the Francophone Working Group is engaging with stakeholders in Francophone communities across Africa. Its main purpose is to bridge the gap between Francophone and Anglophone mental health organisations, and ensure greater access to global resources and knowledge sharing.



“providing training and support on communications tools whether social media, traditional media or communications expertise”



## NEW WORKING GROUPS IN 2023

GMHAN is always open to more working groups, created by and for its members. Potential groups include a Mental Health and Climate Change Working Group and a Spanish Language Working Group.

## THE “#MHFORALL” WEBINAR SERIES AND VIRTUAL MEETUPS

GMHAN will build on the success of the webinar series as a vital tool for members and stakeholders. The webinars provide an opportunity to share information and expertise in different areas of mental health. In 2023 we hosted 17 webinars with over 3,000 participants.

GMHAN will host 15 webinars in 2023 and ensure that the recordings are made available within one week on YouTube, along with the notes of the session and recommended reading.

**Members have identified the following key thematic priorities for the 2023 webinar series:**

- **Child and youth mental health**
- **Climate change and mental health**
- **Community mental health**
- **Global mental health financing**
- **Human rights and mental health**
- **Mental health in emergency and conflict settings**
- **Supporting the mental health of LGBTQIA+ communities**

The GMHAN working groups and wider membership will work to design and deliver the webinars. GMHAN will consult the working groups and survey the membership in May 2023 to identify more webinar topics for the second half of 2023.

## WORLD MENTAL HEALTH DAY

World Mental Health Day is a key moment for the global mental health community. With the [World Federation for Mental Health](#), which sets the theme for WMHD each year, GMHAN will provide messaging and events, and space and support for members to come together, share vital information, and plan and undertake activities for World Mental Health Day.

In 2022 GMHAN saw over 350 attend the webinar on plans for WMHD. A further 300 members attended the webinar reflecting on what was announced on and around WMHD, and the next steps.

To mark World Mental Health Day 2023, GMHAN will publish an open letter to national governments, highlighting the changes needed to mental health across the world. We will encourage members to use this letter to advocate for change.



# HOW YOU CAN HELP?

Interested in playing an active role in promoting better global mental health? Here's how:

- Become a GMHAN member
- Join a working group
- Get active on GMHAN Circle
- Contribute and collaborate with members
- Partner with the secretariat to:
  - bring your expertise to the network and share your knowledge
  - partner with us on running a webinar
  - fund the activities of the network
  - become a sponsor or run a session at the GMHAN annual meeting
  - support a policy briefing or report on an area of mental health that matters to you
  - talk with GMHAN to share ideas on what a potential collaboration could look like.



[hello@gmhan.org](mailto:hello@gmhan.org)  
[emma.scott@gmhan.org](mailto:emma.scott@gmhan.org)



**Global Mental Health  
Action Network**

**Mental Health for all**  
**gmhan.org**