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"No one should be in such a difficult situation that death becomes the only way out - no matter where in the world they belong."

Youth Mental Health Norway strategy for international work 2021-2024.



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## Introduction:

### Mental health in a global perspective:

Mental health problems can have a significant impact on various aspects of life, such as academic performance, work environment, relationships with family and friends, and social participation. In countries with limited treatment options, individuals with psychosis and dementia may be subjected to confinement, restraints, cages, or imprisonment. These patients often lack the capacity to advocate for themselves and are frequently left at the bottom of the priority list when allocating resources.

Globally, over 400 million people are affected by mental illness, with 80% residing in low- and middle-income countries. Up to 85% of these individuals do not have access to treatment. Depression is now one of the leading causes of disability, and approximately 20% of the world's children and young people experience mental health issues. Suicide is the second leading cause of death among 15–29-year-olds worldwide. People with severe mental health problems die prematurely, up to two decades earlier, due to preventable conditions. Despite these statistics, the global median of public health spending on mental health is less than 2%. This represents a minimal investment, considering that the two most common mental health problems, depression and anxiety, cost the global economy \$1 trillion annually.

Despite advancements in certain countries, individuals with mental health problems often face severe human rights violations, discrimination, and stigma. Many mental health issues can be effectively treated at a relatively low cost, but there remains a significant gap between those in need of care and those who can access it. Enhanced investment is required on all fronts.

### Norway's role:

In recent years, there has been an increasing recognition of the crucial role mental health plays in achieving global development goals, as evidenced by the inclusion of mental health in the United Nations' sustainability goals. Norway has also been actively involved in this endeavour and took a significant step in 2019 by launching the world's first development strategy for non-communicable diseases. The strategy, titled "Better Health - Better Life," aims to contribute to meeting the health sustainability goal in low-income countries and reduce premature deaths caused by non-communicable diseases by one third by 2030 (sub-goal 3.4). Non-communicable diseases, such as cardiovascular disease, cancer, respiratory diseases, diabetes, and mental disorders, account for over 70% of global deaths.

To support this initiative, Norway has tripled its assistance, allocating NOK 200 million for 2020, with plans to increase funding further by 2024. If all the cost-effective measures outlined in the strategy are implemented, over eight million lives could be saved annually by 2030. Additionally, these measures would result in a total saving of \$7 trillion in low- and middle-income countries over the next 15 years, according to data from the World Health Organization.

### What does Youth Mental Health Norway base its international work on?

The United Nations' sustainability goals serve as a guiding force for Norwegian development policy until 2030, and they are also central to Youth Mental Health Norway's development work. These ambitious goals, along with the guiding principle of "leave no one behind," form the foundation of our international projects. The UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, commonly known as the CRPD, aligns with this principle as well. The convention addresses various areas where

individuals with disabilities face discrimination, including access to rights, participation in public and political life, education, employment, freedom from torture, exploitation, and violence, and freedom of movement. Strengthening these fundamental rights is a core objective of our projects and collaborations.

While Youth Mental Health Norway has long been involved in the rights-based disability movement in Norway, we believe in the importance of international solidarity. Drawing on our extensive project experience and expertise, we aim to extend our impact to benefit a greater number of individuals. Why should we not explore the possibility of implementing projects such as a motorhome initiative, a helpline for rights-related issues, a call service, or a chat service in countries like Uganda, Ethiopia, Malawi, or Rwanda? Furthermore, we are eager to collaborate with partner organizations to devise innovative project ideas that promote children's and young people's rights and mental health.

## What will YMHN do in the projects in partner countries during the strategy period?

Health and rehabilitation for children and youth with mental health problems will be a primary focus for Youth Mental Health Norway's assistance work in the years to come. This involves developing projects that promote the rights of the target group and increase access to information and services for mentally ill children and youth. To achieve this goal, we must work on multiple fronts simultaneously.

### Political influence:

In order to promote the rights of the target group, we must hold the authorities accountable for their own policies and international commitments, while also highlighting the need for mental health services through our projects by documenting and communicating the results of our work.

### Information and health services:

Access to accurate and reliable information about mental health issues can be challenging in our partner countries. This is a significant barrier to inclusion and proper treatment, while also fueling stigma, discrimination, and exclusion of the target group. Therefore, Youth Mental Health Norway will have a significant focus on preventive work through information campaigns targeting authorities, stakeholders, and the general population during the strategic period. All of our projects so far have also included a healthcare component to address the lack of public resources and the prioritization of essential health services. We aim to continue this approach in future projects as we have previously succeeded by highlighting the needs and solutions through a political lens rather than solely engaging in advocacy work.

### Participation:

Last but not least, Youth Mental Health Norway will continue to promote participation of youth with mental health conditions in its international partnerships. Participation will be a central principle in the design and implementation of new projects, a principle that our partner organizations already show interest in.

## What will YMHN do domestically?

In order for the organization to establish stronger international partnerships that promote the rights of people with disabilities and healthcare services in partner countries, we must also focus on certain areas domestically. Here, too, we need to work on multiple fronts.

### Increased capacity

To ensure the development of new international projects, the organization must ensure that its department has enough capacity to seek funding and take on new collaborations. So far, the organization has worked reactively, seizing the opportunities that arise along the way, which unfortunately often results in projects not being sufficiently embedded within the organization. Increased capacity will ensure that we can work more proactively during the strategy period and, consequently, plan the expansion of the project portfolio in line with the organization's development.

### Improved communication

Mental Helse Ungdom's humanitarian work has largely gone unnoticed by most of our members. We aim to change that during the strategy period. Through the use of social media, our humanitarian work will become better known among members and the general population. This is a crucial foundation for future project activities involving fundraising on the Norwegian side. Increased awareness can also facilitate various collaboration opportunities between active local chapters within MHU and foreign youth organizations in the long run.

### Enhanced competitiveness

As a relatively new humanitarian actor, Mental Helse Ungdom has already attracted the interest of larger and more experienced Norwegian actors. Many are interested in collaboration and knowledge exchange due to the increased public interest and funding for mental health in the humanitarian sector. We are pleased that mental health is being elevated on the development policy agenda. However, as many major actors are now expanding their programs to include mental health as well, the organization must anticipate intense competition and ensure that we have competitive working conditions to secure relevant expertise.

# Overall objective for strategy for international work:

Youth Mental Health Norway promotes better quality of life and the fulfillment of human rights for children and youth worldwide by implementing international projects, engaging in political advocacy, and building a strong network of international organizations that promote mental health.

The strategy aims to establish more robust international partnerships that advance the rights of people with disabilities and healthcare services in partner countries.

|   |   |   |   |
|---|---|---|---|
|   |   | <b>Main goal</b>  |   |
|   |   | YMHN has several strong international partnerships that promote the rights of the disabled as well as health services in partner countries. |   |
| <b>Strategic goal area: Organization</b>  |   | <-this we get through->   | <b>Strategic goal area: Activities</b>  |
| Goal 1: YMHN's international work is known and engages employees across departments and local chapters. | Goal 2: The general public is aware of YMHN's international work and supports it. |   | Goal 3: YMHN strengthens its advocacy and health work through new partnerships and projects.                |
|   |   |   | Goal 4: YMHN is a prominent aid actor and sought-after collaborative partner in the field of mental health. |

## Strategic Goal Areas and Objectives

We have chosen to focus on two strategic goal areas to achieve the main objective, namely "Organization" and "Activity."

**Strategic Goal Area 1: Organization:** Ensure that the organization has sufficient expertise and capacity to handle a larger international project portfolio and the ability to communicate project results to relevant stakeholders, as well as the general public.

**Objectives to achieve this:**

**Objective 1:** YMHN's international work is known and engages employees across departments and local chapters.

**Objective 2:** The general public is aware of YMHN's international work and supports it.

**Strategic Goal Area 2: Activity:** YMHN is a sought-after aid actor in the field of mental health, promoting both human rights and service provision for children and youth with disabilities, particularly mental health problems.

**Objectives to achieve this:**

**Objective 3:** YMHN strengthens its advocacy and health work through new partnerships and projects.

**Objective 4:** YMHN is a prominent aid actor and sought-after collaborative partner in the field of mental health.

### Goals, sub-goals and measures

In this section, sub-goals and measures are described. Since the strategy and objectives in the various goal areas depend on each other, it is not appropriate to rank them in terms of importance, as they all need to work together for the strategy to be successful. In other words, we must think and work holistically throughout the entire strategy period.

**Goal 1: YMHN's international work is well known and engages employees across departments and local chapters.**

**Sub-goal 1.1:** Raise the knowledge of employees and local chapters about the progression of our international projects and why the projects are important in light of the UN's sustainability goals.

Measures:

- a) Regular updates on project progression and activities at Monday meetings.
- b) Employees and local teams get information about the projects by following MHU's social media.
- c) The organizational department disseminates information about international collaboration opportunities and application schemes to local chapters.
- d) The organizational department and the international department have regular meetings on how to engage local chapters to participate in international work.

**Sub-goal 1.2:** Employees and local teams gain increased ownership of international work.

Measures:

- a) All departments in YMHN shall have increased focus on the UN's sustainability goals in planning, design and budgeting of activities and projects.
- b) Investigate how employees in the organization can contribute to international projects.
- c) Employees with competence that can be used in the projects are given the opportunity to take part in a business trip in partner countries / possible partner countries.
- d) Include employees with relevant projects and professional background in the development of projects under the application scheme of the EEA-Active Citizens Fund (many project requests are similar to our own projects so exchange of experience is appropriate).
- e) Local chapters can receive guidance from the department head regarding applications for study trips / summer camps / exchanges, etc.
- f) Inspira is invited to write articles about the collaborations on a regular basis.

**Goal 2: The general public is aware of MHU's international work and supports it.**

**Sub-goal 2.1:** MHU uses social media to promote our international work

Measures:

- a) The communication group provides information on 1 UN day a month on social media and relates the topic to global mental health. See overview of days in appendix 1.
- b) The working group for communication regularly updates followers on social media about our international work and project progression.
- c) The results communicated in the annual report are made more visible on social media.
- d) Excerpts from the annual report are sent in article form in the newsletter.

**Sub-goal 2.2:** MHU uses traditional media to support its own development assistance work

Measures:

- a) The department produces at least 2 articles a year about development assistance work
- b) The department makes sure to continuously update project pages on MHU's website.
- c) All documents related to international projects that can legally be published to the public must be published to the public - we must be transparent in our development work to build trust with our membership and donor base.

**Goal 3: YMHN strengthens its advocacy and health work through new partnerships and projects.**

*Situation description: Until now, YMHN has been reactive in its international project development work. Opportunities have presented themselves continuously and the organization has jumped on. In order to work more proactively and ensure long-term and appropriate planning of future portfolio expansion, it is necessary to free up capacity in the department for the following tasks: identify potential partners and build networks in new partner countries, develop new applications for the framework agreement (2023/24), TOFI (2022), Operation Dagsverk and the TV campaign, prepare and develop internal routines for program and financial follow-up, as well as strengthen anti-corruption work. Without stronger internal routines and capacity for program and financial follow-up, it is unlikely that we will be awarded several large projects (3 million + per year). The current situation, where there is only a 100% position, must eventually be further developed. From a purely academic point of view, the international department should consist of two man-years in order to fully fulfill the intentions in the program of principles. Therefore, the administration will work systematically to solve this.*

**Sub-goals 3.1** . YMHN increases its capacity and competence to strengthen its ability to perform key tasks in order to facilitate future growth in the project portfolio.

Measures:

- a) The central board invests in hiring a project coordinator to free up capacity for projects and department development.
- b) Internal routines are developed for finances and program follow-up, as well as the accompanying annual cycle with deadlines for tasks to rig the organization for further growth.

**Sub-goal 3.2:** The organization retains and manages to recruit essential competence in a critical growth phase.

Measures:

- a) The salary must be competitive with other aid organizations in Norway.



- b) Funds are set aside for professional development (courses / internships) in revised project budgets.
- c) Employees in the department are included in the «Norwegian network for global mental health».
- d) Weekly department meetings ensure professional development and exchange of experience across projects.

**Sub-goal 3.3:** YMHN increases its capacity to be able to identify and support several international partnerships and projects.

Measures:

- a) The department conducts outreach activities to relevant partner organizations in relevant partner countries.
- b) The department maps various application schemes and ranks them according to financial sustainability.
- c) The department does not take on projects that cannot cover its own capacity needs during the strategy period, unless there are very good reasons for it.
- d) The department uses the support scheme of NOREC to do a partner check at the first visit.

**Sub-goal 3.4 :** International projects are linked to the fundraising work in the organization in order to cover current and future project costs.

Measures:

- a) A working group is set up to study the potential for fundraising in the international sector.

**Goal 4: YMHN is a prominent aid actor and sought-after collaborative partner in the field of mental health.**

**Sub-goal 4.1:** YMHN strengthens its political advocacy work aimed at development policy in Norway.

Measures:

- a) YMHN follows and provides input on the action plan for the NCD strategy (strategy for non-communicable diseases, 2019).
- b) YMHN engages in social and traditional media in the event of a possible change of government and subsequent development policy.
- c) YMHN is applying to host the Global Disability Summit for Youth (2022) in connection with the real international summit.
- d) YMHN promotes political views and the youth perspective in the «Norwegian network for global mental health» which has a close dialogue with Norad and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

**Sub-goal 4.2 :** YMHN succeeds in communicating the results of the international work to aid actors / politicians / the population.

Measures:

- a) YMHN posts once a year in the «Norwegian network for global mental health» about project results and challenges.

- b) The working group for communication in MHU creates stories / posts on social media based on the annual results report.
- c) Employees in the department have a special responsibility for contributing to seminars and lectures hosted by the Atlas Alliance and brought in by the Minister for Development Aid / Ministry of Foreign Affairs / Norad.
- d) Young people's contributions via reference groups and participation are made visible in reports, lectures and other communication work.

**Sub-goal 4.3:** YMHN is known for its youth participation in our international projects

Measures:

- a) All projects with young people and young adults as the target group must be reference groups to ensure that the youth perspective is reflected in the project.
- b) All partner organizations receive training in real participation and why this is important in all project development.

## Roles and responsibilities:

Implementation of measures requires close cooperation between the international project department, the management, the finance department, the organizational department and the fundraising and communication department. This section provides an overview of particularly prioritized tasks in the various departments.

### International department:

- Development of internal routines, policies, guidelines and tools regarding finances and program follow-up (incl. Annual cycle for these activities) to rig the organization for future growth. Includes the following:
  - Anti-corruption routine
  - Monitoring and evaluation routine
  - Financial Checklist and follow-up routines
  - Due diligence and routines for follow-up
  - Routines for good program follow-up and measurement of progression towards performance targets.
  - Performance framework and routines for follow-up and revision
  - Budget revision in accordance with requirements in the contract and routines for this
  - Travel policy and routines for safe travel
  - Routines for review and approval of audits
  - Routines for review and follow-up of management letters.
  - Procedures for procurement in line with contract.
  - Routine for validating bank account.
  - Routine for assessment of currency, Profit and loss.
  - Routine for risk analysis and assessment.

*(many of these routines must be developed in collaboration with the finance department, and the finance department must be responsible for the implementation and follow-up of some of them)*

- Outreach and research-based based work to find relevant partners in countries covered by the TOFI agreement and framework agreement.
- Actively participate in the Atlas Alliance's and Norwegian network for global mental health's political influence work as the youth's voice.
- Map and inform local teams about opportunities for international work / exchange of experience / study trip together with the organizational department.
- Actively coordinate joint efforts in all departments to achieve the goals of the strategy.

## Fundraising and communication:

- The fundraising department sets up a working group and tests models for fundraising work that can work for international projects.
- Develop a «content calendar» for international work / themes / projects (coincides with the working groups' progress plan).
- Produce content about international work.
- Actively share project results at completed results report in April each year.
- Produce articles for newsletters and the media in general about challenges and success stories.

## Organizational department:

- Inform local teams about collaboration opportunities and application schemes that promote international work.
- Publish content about international work / topics / projects in Inspira.

## Finance department:

- Has a special responsibility for developing internal finance routines and guidelines for international projects in line with requirements in the contract.
- Actively participates in the anti-corruption work by
  - Have regular meetings with the finance manager in partner countries.
  - Control function of vouchers.
  - Controls and approves the "Transfer of Funds" routine.

## Attachment 1:

List of international days to be marked in social media and related to our international work.

1. January 24 - International Day of Education
2. February 6 - the international day against female genital mutilation (same as the Sami national day....)
3. March 1 - International Day Against All Discrimination
4. April 7 - World Health Day
5. May 3 - International Press Freedom Day
6. June 19 - International Day Against Sexual Violence in Conflict
7. July 15 - World Youth Skills Day.
8. August 12 - International Youth Day
9. September 10 - World Suicide Prevention Day
10. October 10 - World Mental Health Day
11. November 19 - World Toilet Day
12. December 3 - International Day of Persons with Disabilities.