

The Lancet Commission on Global Mental Health and Sustainable Development

Evidence for action on mental health and global development



Summary

The Lancet Commission on Global Mental Health and Sustainable Development, published on World Mental Health Day 2018, aims to bring scientific evidence alongside the moral case for appropriate prioritisation and investment to close three key gaps in mental health: access to care, quality of care, and prevention of mental health conditions. It celebrates the inclusion of mental health in the Sustainable Development Goals following a history of exclusion, highlighting the close links between mental health and virtually every major issue in development, from education and economic growth, to conflict and climate change. Accordingly, it calls for a more holistic understanding of mental health that necessitates a coordinated, multisectoral response.

Summary of Key Recommendations

1. Address mental health across all the Sustainable Development Goals
2. Include mental health in the essential package of services for Universal Health Coverage
3. Take a public health approach to prevention and promotion
4. Ensure inclusion of people with mental health conditions
5. Increase investment in mental health
6. Harness learning from research to help drive change
7. Measure progress against existing commitments

From “No health without mental health” to “No sustainable development without mental health”

Mental health conditions are responsible for much of the global burden of disease. Mental health conditions cause more years lived with disability (32.4%) than any other health condition and nearly as many disability-adjusted life-years (13.0%) as cardiovascular disease (13.5%). People living with mental health conditions are also more likely to develop physical health problems, less likely to receive quality healthcare and less likely to adhere to treatment, resulting in poorer physical health outcomes— including premature mortality.

But this is not just a health issue. People with mental health conditions are often excluded from development interventions, despite strong evidence of the close links between mental health and virtually every key issue in international development; for example, research has shown a cyclical relationship between poor mental health and inequalities in educational attainment, income, nutrition, housing and social support [Figure 1].

The economic cost is overwhelming. Every year more than 12 billion working days are lost due to mental health conditions. Between 2011-2030, this will cost the global economy \$16 USD trillion in lost economic output— more than cancer, diabetes, and respiratory diseases combined.

But so is the return on investment. Every \$1 USD invested in common mental health conditions like depression yields a \$3-5 USD return. Research has demonstrated that cost-effective solutions to the provision of mental health care exist even in low-resource settings. Invested correctly, just \$2 USD per capita could extend mental health care to nearly half of the population living with mental illness in low- and middle-income countries.

The inclusion of mental health in the Sustainable Development Goals means the world needs to recognise mental health as a holistic issue relevant to every sector of development— and respond accordingly.

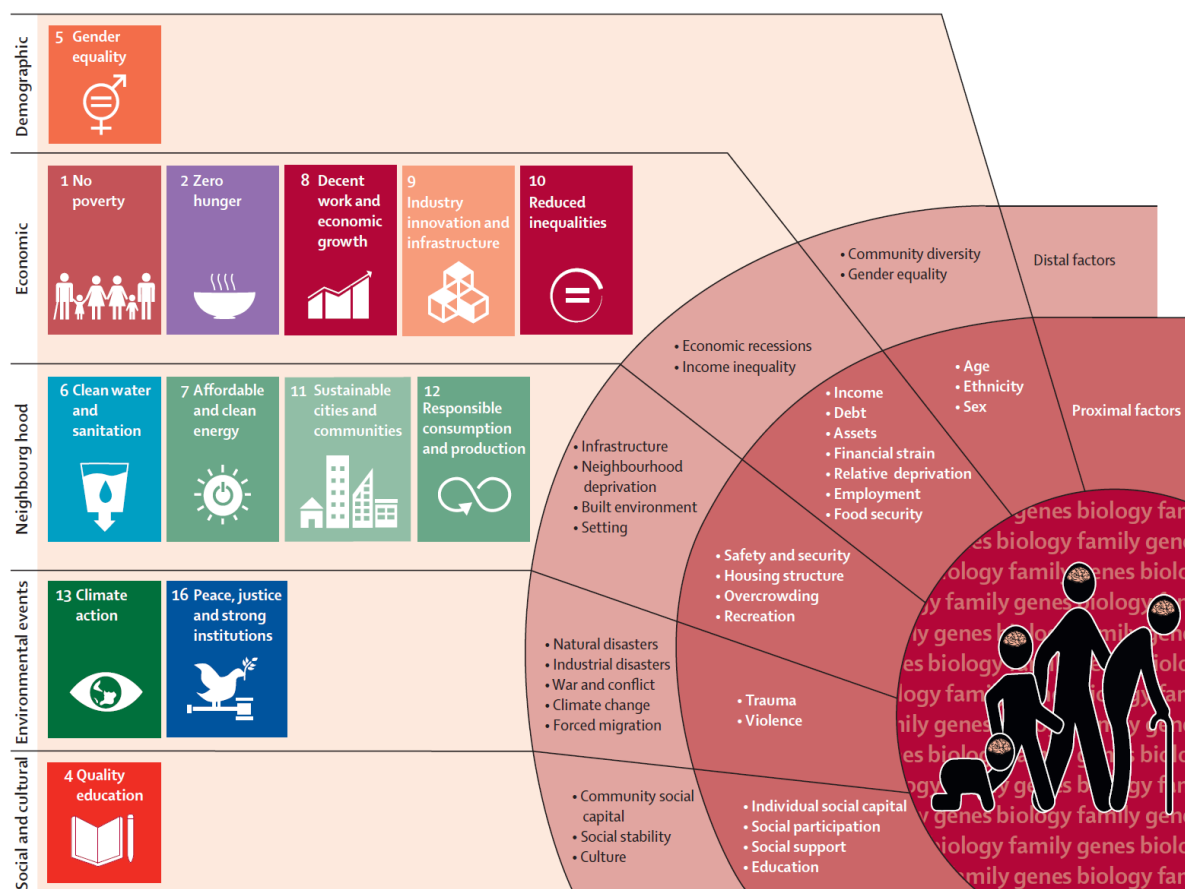


Figure 1. Social determinants of global mental health and the Sustainable Development Goals, Reproduced with Permission from the Lancet Commission on Global Mental Health and Sustainable development (Lund et al. 2018, Patel et al. 2018)

From Evidence to Action

The Lancet Commission on Global Mental Health and Sustainable Development celebrates the inclusion of mental health in the Sustainable Development Goals, recognising that improvements to the physical, social and cultural environment can make important contributions to overall mental health and wellbeing [Figure 1]. The Commission makes seven key recommendations to guide action in global mental health [Box 1] and reasserts the need to deliver on existing commitments [Box 2].

Box 1. Key recommendations of the Lancet Commission

1. Reframe mental health within the Sustainable Development Goal Framework

Mental wellbeing is a universal attribute, and we need to think beyond just treating mental illness. Integrate mental health into development work across sectors, not just health services.

2. Establish mental health care as a pillar of Universal Health Coverage

Ensure that there is parity in investment and prioritisation for mental health care, and address gaps in accessibility and quality of services, with care being available at primary level.

3. Use public policies to protect mental health

Promote mental health and prevent illness by implementing targeted public health strategies at key stages in the life course, including in maternal and infant health, education and suicide.

4. Listen to and engage people with lived experience

Facilitate meaningful participation at all stages of development and implementation of services. Strengthen the advocacy voice of people affected to hold governments accountable.

5. Invest far, far more in mental health

Increase dedicated mental health funds to 5-10% of national or agency health budgets, and include mental health in funds for research and implementation in other sectors.

6. Use research to guide innovation and implementation

Invest in research, and make use of new evidence for service reform and improving population wellbeing - from neurosciences to implementation science.

7. Strengthen monitoring and accountability

Follow through on commitments to meet key development targets. Ensure mental health indicators are present in national health information systems and programme evaluation.

Box 2. It is time to deliver on existing commitments



Objectives of the WHO Comprehensive Mental Health Action Plan 2013-2020

1. Strengthen effective leadership and governance for mental health
2. Provide comprehensive, integrated and responsive mental health and social care services in community-based settings
3. Implement strategies for promotion and prevention in mental health
4. Strengthen information systems, evidence and research for mental health

Sustainable Development Goals 2015-2030

Target 3.4: By 2030, reduce by one third premature mortality from non-communicable diseases through prevention and treatment and promote mental health and well-being.

Indicator: Suicide mortality

UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities

There should be no discrimination against people with psychosocial disabilities. This means being able to live in communities (**Article 19**), access civil and political rights (**29**), be treated with dignity in services (**24,25**), earn a living (**27**), and be able to make decisions about their own lives (**12,14**). People with psychosocial disabilities should participate in reporting processes, but are often excluded.

“Mental health is an integral part of health for all. To ensure quality mental health services for everyone, we need a multisectoral response.” Dr Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, Director General, WHO

More information

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Acknowledgements

This policy brief was produced by the Mental Health Innovation Network for United for Global Mental Health with funding from the Wellcome Trust. It is based on the findings of The Lancet Commission on Global Mental Health and Sustainable Development. Lancet, 2018.

Publication details: ©London School of Hygiene & Tropical Medicine, October 2018

Cover image: Centre for Global Mental Health Photo Competition Entry Winner © Maria Calderon Cahua, 2017

Suggested citation: Julian Eaton, Onaiza Qureshi, Natasha Salaria, Grace Ryan. The Lancet Commission on Mental Health and Sustainable Development: Evidence for action on mental health and global development. Mental Health Innovation Network, Centre for Global Mental Health, London, UK: London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine, 2018.

Disclaimer: The views expressed in this publication are those of the authors and should not be attributed to the Mental Health Innovation Network, The Lancet, their funders or affiliates.

