

Being LEARNING AND SUPPORT NETWORK

Global Gathering Snapshot

26–29 November, 2024 – Rabat, Morocco



Being connected: Global collaboration for youth mental health

Being Global Gathering in collaboration with:



Being is a global collaboration for youth mental health



The Being Learning and Support Network is in collaboration with:



Led by Orygen Global, the Being Learning and Support Network aims to improve the mental health and wellbeing of young people through strengthening the capacity of community-based and youth-led innovations around the world.

In November 2024, the Being Learning and Support Network held a Global Gathering in Rabat, Morocco. The event brought together 36 youth mental health innovators from around the globe for four days of networking, collaboration and knowledge sharing.

Attendees forged connections and shared insights, drawing inspiration from each other, strengthening their innovations and progressing the youth mental health agenda.

Program Highlights included:

Keynote Panel:

Insights on mental health innovation – including crisis settings, scaling and youth participation – were shared by Yasmine Smires, UNICEF Maroc, Marielle Sander, United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) Maroc, Melani O'Leary, Grand Challenges Canada and Friendship Bench Zimbabwe's Providence Jongwedzvuku.

Tabletop Presentations:

Innovators showcased their projects, and shared best practice and lessons learnt in a collaborative, informal format.

Facilitated Discussions:

Four parallel discussions explored the role of social media and technology, schools, monitoring and evaluation and youth participation in youth mental health innovations.

Site Visits:

Hearing from organisations addressing stigma, autism support, and psychiatric care highlighted exemplary regional approaches to mental health.

Workshops:

Fundraising strategies, such as storytelling and crowdfunding, were shared by Reinserta, Women Friendly Initiative, Siya Fana Fana and the International Federation of Medical Students' Association. Waves 4 Change shared insights into monitoring and evaluation while United for Global Mental Health inspired action with lessons on advocacy.

Energisers:

To enliven our minds and bodies, Dream Sports Africa led a 30-minute yoga session, while Waves 4 Change got us jumping and laughing and Contact Trust Youth Association unleashed our inner sanctuary with an art-based exercise.

Ecosystem discussions:

Being Learning and Support Network regional hubs and Being Initiative Partners mapped ways to impact micro, meso and macro mental health ecosystems regionally with innovators.




“My heart is full, inspired by so many folks, reflecting on the past three days I learnt so much from you, from innovators who’ve recently started, I learnt a lot ... as innovators and advocates often we are in a dark spot, [then we] regain hope and come back and advocate.”

Global Gathering attendee

Participants told us the following...

Something new you learnt

Ecosystem change 

I learnt a lot from the ecosystem discussion on how to engage stakeholders by mainstreaming mental health into other areas prioritized by government (i.e. education, violence, HIV, etc).

The role of schools and public education in supporting positive youth mental health outcomes.

The ecosystem in every country looks so different! Even in Nigeria vs. Cameroon, [there is] huge regional variability.

Fundraising 

Be ready to react to unexpected opportunities.

If you want money, ask for advice and if you want advice, ask for money.

Prepare grant applications ahead of time and use numerous approaches to raise funds, getting feedback from the funders on what they would like to focus on.

Advocacy 

That advocacy is a strategic, well-disciplined and sometimes discrete process.

Advocacy relies heavily on how well you can tell your story - marketing strategies should be part of our work.

That advocacy is not just about public policies but also about decisions or behaviours to bring about social change.

Using data for advocacy. Selling outcomes of the project to get buy in of stakeholders.

It takes powerful individuals to take on powerful systems.

Innovation strategies 

I learnt how effective social media can be in providing youth mental health support.

The use of IEC [information, education, and communication] materials is critical for younger youth.

That sport play and recreation-based programmes are being increasingly recognised as viable and useful interventions with at risk youth.

Program design 

I realised that rather than reinvent the wheel and work in silos, we need to network better.

Scaling should not always be the ultimate goal. Some things are meant for the scale [for which] they were developed.

Prevention and promotion interventions are more lifesaving because they help to strengthen young people's resilience which helps in the future.

Contextual understanding: Develop a deep understanding of the local context, including cultural nuances and societal pressures.

The need for longitudinal studies.

The importance of having an implementation plan.

Key takeaways 

Lived stories are key in creating awareness - focusing on collecting testimonials of the affected so that we create more awareness.

We need a holistic worldview to bring about change. No single innovation can change the world.

One thing that stands out to me that I will definitely take back to my team will be inclusivity of people living with disabilities.

Qualitative measures to capture stories and share how things can be culturally adapted are important and we should be doing more of this.

[On average] 16 months pass between when mental illness symptoms begin and when help seeking begins.

There is still a lot of diversity and even disagreement when it comes to measurement of impact.

Innovation means taking risks and its okay to fail because even that failure can help us understand better what works and what doesn't.

Knowing and understanding your target audience helps you identify their needs and help them better



