
New podcast: Mental health advocates set out priorities on the road to 2025

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Impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic are still being felt on mental health globally, explain two guests on Mental Health in 2024 and Beyond, an episode of the NCD Alliance (NCDA) podcast, *Voices of the health revolution*.

“We are still post-COVID. We are still facing the effects of COVID on our communities, on our economy,” says Charity Muturi, who has lived experience with bipolar, a mental health condition, and is a caregiver for parents who live with NCDs.

Things are improving in Kenya in some areas, notes Charity, who is a member of the NCDA Our Views, Our Voices [Global Advisory Committee](#) [1]. “There is an increase of interest and willingness and goodwill to improve county mental health services.” But on the other hand, “100 years of negligence have caused us to be behind.” For example, Charity describes a “toxic political environment” during election campaigns that contributes to the incidence of mental illness.

Yves Zuniga, Policy and Advocacy Advisor for Health Systems at the organization United for Global Mental Health, estimates that worldwide, “the majority of those who actually need mental health care might not have access to good quality support and services.”

Youth need particular support, adds Yves, who co-founded Mental HealthPH, a youth-led advocacy organisation in the Philippines. “Globally, 75% of mental health conditions begin before the age of 24; the majority are from low- and middle-income countries, so the burden of disease falls on countries that are least resourced to deal with them.”

Looking ahead to the United Nations High-level Meeting on NCDs in 2025, Yves says that collaboration among advocates for mental health and NCDs will be crucial to success. “Leadership is really needed. We also want to highlight... that mental health should be given the same priority as physical health... integrating mental health (into health systems) leads to better physical outcomes.”

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“At the core of it,” adds Yves, “are people with lived experience with both physical and mental health conditions... they should be meaningfully engaged so that their voices are truly heard in order to better inform our advocacy, policies and services.”

In Kenya, Charity is hoping for more outcomes in 2024 and 2025 that go beyond planning and affect people on the ground. “And for my fellow advocates, please familiarize yourself with the public health system because public policy is supposed to impact public patients. We need to learn better so we can represent better.”

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