



POSITION STATEMENT

PROMOTION OF PEER SUPPORT AS A COST EFFECTIVE WAY TO ADDRESS MENTAL HEALTH IN THE COMMUNITY

IMPLEMENTATION OF THE EAST ASIA SUMMIT LEADERS' STATEMENT ON MENTAL HEALTH COOPERATION, 27 October 2021

The [Global Mental Health Peer Network](#) is an international organisation for people with lived experience with mental health conditions. GMHPN cannot emphasise enough that it is critical to protect the safety, security, and rights of the most vulnerable in our communities. Therefore, persons with lived experience of mental health conditions must be authentically involved in developing support strategies and implementing, monitoring and evaluating awareness and protection campaigns.

The Global Mental Health Peer Network congratulates the ASEAN governments and regional companies for their joint statement on Mental Health Cooperation issued in October 2021. Some highlights from the joint statement are reproduced below.

Now that the immediate Covid crisis has abated, we encourage all ASEAN governments do more to implement the commitments made in 2021. Specifically, we recommend governments provide resources and support to local community mental health peer support groups, including funding training and mentoring for peer support group leaders and providing suitable venues for peer support groups to meet safely and conveniently, and for support group leaders to meet each other to share experiences and best practices and to learn from and support each other in their community leadership role.

The cost of running peer support groups is insignificant compared to the impact they have on improving mental health in the community, which in turn saves governments significant costs in the mental health, physical health and social services in particular. To the extent groups prevent people turning to unhealthy coping strategies like drugs, gambling, drinking etc, support groups may also save governments costs in their policing and criminal justice services.

More information on peer support groups can be found here in a report that the Global Mental Health Peer Network contributed to.

https://cbm-global.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/06/Good-Practice-Guide_CBM_Peer-support.pdf

EAST ASIA SUMMIT LEADERS' STATEMENT ON MENTAL HEALTH COOPERATION, 27 October 2021

<https://asean.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/10/97.-EAS-Leaders-Statement-on-Mental-Health-Cooperation-FINAL.pdf>

The East Asia Summit Leaders' statement on mental health contained a number of references to providing affordable and accessible mental health services and social support, capacity building, and encouraging greater involvement of non-health care professionals such as those rendering community service in the mental health sector as well as collaboration with those living with mental health conditions. The relevant sections of the statement are reproduced below for ease of reference with highlighting of key statements added.

GMHPN stands ready to work with any ASEAN government to help build affordable and accessible capability in the community led by people with lived experience to provide peer support to supplement the important work being done by health care professionals.

GMHPN's CEO, Ms Charlene Sunkel can be contacted at the email address below.

We salute and acknowledge the grassroots peer support community as well as the health workers, educators, and countless others who are actively doing what they can to support mental health in their communities.

The key statements referencing peer led, community support are reproduced here.

"6. Promote mental health literacy and awareness to enhance understanding on mental health, including through efforts such as increasing mental health awareness and education programmes across all levels of healthcare, and advancing the provision, affordability and accessibility of mental health services, and psychological and social support;"

"8. Strengthen cooperation in human resources through training, mentorship programmes and create capacity building opportunities, including early detection and addressing mental health treatment gaps for health providers in remote areas as well as encourage greater involvement of primary and general health care personnel, non-health care professionals such as care givers, and those rendering community service in the mental health sector;"

"12. Promote multisectoral collaboration as well as engagement with all relevant stakeholders, including those living with mental health conditions, those in vulnerable situations, non-government organisations, organisations for children and adolescents, women's organisations, youth-led organisations, the private sector and academia, which can, as appropriate contribute to the investment, development, implementation and evaluation of mental health and well-being initiatives and programmes;"

Additional information on mental health in Asia can be found [here](#).



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Partners in support of the statement

Contributed by the GMHPN Western Pacific Regional Executive Committee and supported by the GMHPN as an organisation.