

Ms Claudia Sartor
Deputy CEO: Global Mental Health Peer Network
Email: claudia.sartor@gmhpn.org

THE GLOBAL MENTAL HEALTH PEER NETWORK: A BEST PRACTICE MODEL FOR GLOBAL MENTAL HEALTH LIVED EXPERIENCE LEADERSHIP

The Global Mental Health Peer Network (GMHPN) is an international lived experience organisation, based in South Africa. The organisation's work is primarily focused on empowering persons with lived experience and advancing global lived experience leadership in mental health. It mobilises its efforts through capacity building, peer led activities and through a mentorship programme encouraging open dialogue on important mental health topics and further emphasising lived experience empowerment.

Definition of Lived Experience

The GMHPN regards "lived experience" as being an experience, personal in nature, through which the individual has or has had experience of symptoms of a mental health condition and for which care and treatment has been sought. Treatment is however not limited to clinical care and extends to psychosocial assistance, therapy, and other forms of non-medical services.

Through years of work and

collective efforts from advocacy groups, including persons with lived experience, there is worldwide established consensus on the importance and value of lived experience expertise in the domain of global mental health.

The report of the Lancet Commission on Ending Stigma and Discrimination in mental health, launched in 2022 presents key findings that state persons with lived experience ought to be leading and/or co-leading on anti-stigma programmes for advancing change in the status quo of mental health across the world. There is strong global recognition that mental health related discussion ought to be inclusive of people with lived experience of a mental health condition as they have rich experiential value and perspectives to share.

Why GMHPN was established

With a purpose to create a safe space for dialogue, advocacy, engagement, leadership and mentorship and

support, GMHPN has become recognised as a leading example of an organisation exhibiting best practice as it pertains the role of persons with lived experience in mental health. It provides a platform for recognition of the value of persons with lived experience worldwide.

Member profile

The GMHPN has a global footprint across Africa, Europe, South East Asia, Western Pacific, Eastern Mediterranean and the Americas region; covering the six listed World Health Organisation regions. Its members come from different backgrounds and hold diverse cultural belief systems, thereby broadening our level of expertise. While they join us a volunteer, we provide them with access to a platform that offers opportunities for growth and development as leaders in mental health advocacy.

To date, the GMHPN is represented largely by females and youth and a large representation is throughout

Africa; all members having commonality in having a lived experience. See illustration of GMHPN representation to the right.

Our impact and what we do

People with lived experience are experts stemming from their personal journeys in navigating mental health systems in seeking treatment and care. Our members provide opinions and practical solutions on mental health themes that are trending globally; advocating for a world in which they can thrive and reach their full potential and not merely exist and live. GMHPN's objective is to improve mental health and human rights literacy across the world, and to review and reform policies and practices, to destigmatise mental health and reduce discrimination against persons living with mental health conditions.

GMHPN areas of expertise include Advocacy and awareness; Empowerment, Engagement; Research; Human Rights; Mentorship and service delivery.

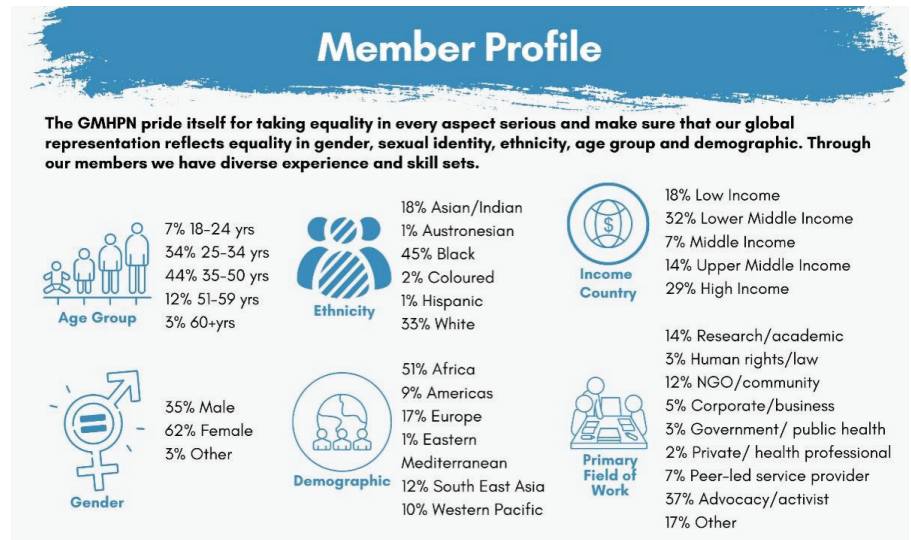
Advocacy and awareness: for influencing policy and practice in mental health, worldwide. GMHPN has developed policies and guidelines to assist researchers, academics, corporate and other relevant stakeholders, on how to effectively work with and alongside people with lived experience. Thereby ensuring effective, authentic and meaningful inclusion of people living with mental health in matters by which they are affected directly.

Empowerment: through capacity building and leadership development among people with lived experience. **Engagement:** through the delivery of consultancy services by means of the expertise of people with lived experience.

Research: by contributing both academic and non-academic expertise through the perspectives of people with lived experience.

Human rights: by integrating principles of human rights into mental health and our work in the mental health field.

Support: by offering a platform to members where peer-to-peer



knowledge exchange is encouraged and supported.

Mentorship: by offering members the opportunity to attend and/or themselves host monthly workshops on trending mental health topics and topics which they identify as important.

Experts by Experience Consultancy Services:

by providing opportunities for member collaboration, engagement, service delivery and public speaking at local and global events, conferences and workshops. A list of our services can be found on our website via the following link www.gmhpn.org.

It is worth mentioning the importance of complying with the principle of “equal pay for equal work” for full enjoyment of employment and services rendered. At the GMHPN, we promote and advocate strongly for betterment in the acknowledgment of both the experiential and monetary value that is associated with lived experience expertise. After years of advocacy efforts, there still remains a gap in non-remunerating the work done and participation of people with lived experience in service delivery. This is not merely an issue of fairness but actually a principle of human rights, protected by international human rights instruments such as the United Nations Convention of the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) and particularly, Article 7 (seven) of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights.

Member Feedback:

GMHPN management team monitors and evaluates the progress of its impact and the dis/satisfaction of its members via biannual surveys, through which we collect data so as to improve upon areas that members feel need attention. This ensures that we maintain our integrity as a lived experience peer led organisation, truly empowering individuals to thrive in their personal and professional growth.

We would like to share some feedback from our members on their experience with GMHPN and within the network and they replied with what they believe is the best part of being part of the GMHPN. In summary, we received great feedback stating that they really enjoy being part of a community that is empowered and able to rely on their perspectives in being part of change and transformation in mental health. Other individuals are content with the consultancy services, that they as people with lived experience are valued and respected just as much as the next person.

Members have indicated that the GMHPN has impacted them in various domains and that they are proud to be associated with the GMHPN, that they would recommend the GMHPN to fellow peers, that they feel like part of a global family in the GMHPN.

GMHPN, pledges to continue to fight against the inequalities that continue to exist in mental health.

References available on request.