

The Health4Life Fund

Country Action on NCDs and Mental Health

- Noncommunicable diseases (NCDs) and mental health are among the top health priorities identified by countries. Yet these areas are critically underfunded, including in existing global health and development financing streams. Around the world there is growing demand for catalytic support that is impactful, and country led.
- The Health4Life Fund was created in direct response to multiple political mandates — including the 2018 Political Declaration on NCDs and follow-up resolutions at the UN Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) and the World Health Assembly — for a new kind of financing mechanism focused on NCDs and mental health.
- The Fund is now operational, with USD 8 million committed and initial investments in Rwanda and Zambia catalyzing national action. Rwanda is integrating NCD and mental health services across schools, workplaces, healthcare, and refugee settings, while Zambia is advancing prevention through fiscal policies and youth-focused mental health programmes. Three additional countries are finalizing proposals under a second round of funding.
- The Fund aims to raise at least USD 15 million by the end of 2025 — a targeted scale-up to enable more countries to advance nationally-led responses to urgent NCD and mental health priorities.
- Recognized as a model for pooled financing, the Fund reflects a shift toward more coherent, effective and country-driven cooperation — putting national leadership at the forefront and emphasizing sustainability of results.

The High-level Meeting: a moment to align efforts and scale impact

The Fourth High-Level Meeting on NCDs in September 2025 is an opportunity to align political ambition with country-led solutions to close the financing gap for NCDs and mental health. Member States and partners can:

- **Reaffirm** the Health4Life Fund as a country-led financing platform that responds to national priorities on NCDs and mental health.
- **Recognize the Fund in the Political Declaration** as a concrete example of aligned UN action that is delivering results — and ready to scale.
- **Demonstrate financial commitment** to expand the Fund’s reach and meet rising country demand.

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The Health4Life Fund presents an unprecedented opportunity for us to not only scale up our investments in these areas but to do so in a way that promotes equity, efficiency, and global solidarity — Ted Herbosa, Secretary of Health, Philippines

Why the Health4Life Fund matters now more than ever

NCDs and mental health place a growing burden on health systems, undermine child and adolescent health and development, and slow progress across the Sustainable Development Goals. Yet, they remain critically underfunded, despite strong evidence that scaled-up action delivers high returns. Support remains fragmented across partners and misaligned with national strategies.

At the same time, there are growing calls for global health cooperation to be more effective, coordinated, and better aligned with country priorities. With the UN80 reform agenda and the fourth High-Level Meeting on NCDs and Mental Health setting a renewed political direction, the Health4Life Fund serves as a tangible model to deliver on those calls.

The Health4Life Fund is more than a financing instrument — it is a collaborative platform that brings together governments, civil society, and development partners around a shared vision for more resilient and sustainable systems for health. Anchored by national leadership and aligned UN expertise, the Fund is already delivering catalytic investments — such as policy and financing reforms, multisectoral planning, and health systems strengthening — in Rwanda and Zambia, with grantmaking advancing in three additional countries. The Fund advances universal health coverage and accelerates SDG progress, supporting people of all ages—including children and young people—to thrive and contribute to stronger societies.

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The Fund provides the best opportunity to support a One-UN response to NCDs and mental health toward country-led action. I urge Member States and development partners to contribute — Dr Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, WHO Director-General

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Through the Health4Life Fund, Rwanda intends to use schools as the best way (to reach) children even (for) mental health programmes— Minister Sabin Nsanzimana of Rwanda

How Funds are being used

Round 1. Two countries were selected through a competitive process

- ✓ Rwanda is using funds to enhance multisectoral coordination and integrate mental health and NCD services into schools, workplaces, healthcare facilities, and refugee settings.
- ✓ Zambia is using funds for prevention by strengthening fiscal and legislative frameworks to reduce youth exposure to NCD risk factors, and by promoting mental health among adolescents and youth through psychosocial programmes, digital platforms, peer counseling, and behavior change campaigns.

Round 2. Three countries — one each from Africa, Asia, and the Pacific — have been selected through a competitive process to submit full proposals:

- Country 1 proposes to catalyze: (i) enhanced NCD surveillance; (ii) multisectoral action on NCDs through a costed, prioritized and funded plan; and (iii) youth-led community engagement.
- Country 2 proposes to catalyze investment in NCDs by: (i) making the economic case for scaling up prevention and treatment; (ii) strengthening multisectoral governance; and (iii) creating a health promotion fund using health taxes.

- Country 3 proposes to catalyze: (i) sustainable health system financing, aligned with recommendations from the 2024 WHO-World Bank Financing Dialogue; and (ii) mainstreaming NCDs into broader health sector programmes.

The three countries will be announced following Steering Committee approval of proposals.

From political mandate to country-level delivery

The Health4Life Fund has grown from a political mandate into a tangible mechanism — shaped by key milestones, institutional support, and growing global momentum.

Political Foundations (2018–2021)

- 2018: The Political declaration of the third high-level meeting called on WHO to explore new financing mechanisms.
- 2019: WHA 72(11) requested the WHO Director-General to identify voluntary innovative funding mechanisms, such as a multi-donor trust fund.
- 2021: ECOSOC E/2021/L.35 called for resources to support sustainable national responses to NCDs and mental health, reinforcing earlier mandates.
- In response, the Health4Life Fund was established by WHO, UNDP, and UNICEF — designed to be country-led, catalytic, participatory, and inclusive.

Early Implementation and Inclusion (2022–2023)

- Kenya, Thailand, and Uruguay joined as founding government champions, helping steer the Fund's early direction.
- Civil society joined the Steering Committee, reinforcing a whole-of-society and multisectoral approach.
- The Fund was capitalized at the 78th UN General Assembly, with an initial pledge of GBP 2.5 million from the Scottish Government.
- The Fund launched its first round of disbursements to Rwanda and Zambia, supporting integrated and adolescent-focused responses.

Building Momentum: Political, Financial, and Operational (2024–2025)

- The Eli Lilly and Company Foundation committed USD 4 million to UNICEF USA, a supporter of Health4Life Fund, during the 79th UN General Assembly, positioning UNICEF USA efforts to be able to support the Fund to reach three additional countries through a second round of funding.
- The governments of the Philippines and Mauritius joined the Fund at the 2024 World Health Assembly —the the first Global South partners to make financial commitments.
- A WHO–World Bank dialogue on sustainable financing spotlighted the Fund's catalytic potential to support country priorities and fund public goods.
- WHO's pooled funding strategy identified such mechanisms as essential to reducing fragmentation and enabling joint UN action.
- ECOSOC E/2024/L.22 called for public, private, and philanthropic partners to mobilize additional resources for the Fund.
- The UN Sustainable Development Group Funding Compact encouraged increased contributions to interagency funds.
- Stakeholders at the UNGA Multistakeholder Hearing urged recognition of the Fund in the 2025 Political Declaration.

Hear what global health leaders are saying

The Fund has garnered wide support across government and international partners — reinforcing its political legitimacy and practical relevance.

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The Fund will support collaboration led by the Global South... and encourage solutions better adapted to those countries' health needs and priorities — Humza Yousaf, former First Minister of Scotland

We are a big believer in multi-partner trust funds. I'm very happy that the Health4Life Fund gives so much attention to mental health — Ambassador Bekker, Netherlands

Ultimately the cost of managing high blood pressure in a country comes down because you avoid the complications. We are confident that... the catalytic funding from the Health4Life partnership will help us to achieve this initial thrust — Permanent Secretary Kennedy Lishimpi, Zambia

We are proud to support the US Fund for UNICEF in its innovative initiatives tackling NCDs in resources-limited communities in low-and middle-income countries — Cynthia Cardona, President of the Eli Lilly and Company Foundation

We would encourage Member States to call for greater investment in the Health4Life Fund in the political declaration — Maik Dünnebier, Movendi International

While domestic funding has to be the mainstay of funding responses, development assistance is crucial for catalyzing ever more effective responses. We therefore urge Member States to commit to the UN Health4Life Fund by including it in the political declaration — Andrea Feigl, CEO, Health Finance Institute

The Philippines actively participates in the UN Health4Life Fund and proudly serves on its steering committee, promoting sustainable financing and championing investment in NCDs and mental health, especially for low-and middle-income countries — Philippines Mission in New York

A shared commitment for scaled up action

Health4Life Fund Steering Committee: WHO (permanent co-chair), UNICEF (rotating co-chair), UNDP, governments of Kenya, Mauritius, Philippines, Scotland and Uruguay, the NCD Alliance, United for Global Mental Health, and the UN Multi-Partner Trust Fund Office.



**Uniting
partners across
government and
society**

because multisectoral action
is required to tackle NCDs and
promote mental health



**Catalyzing
country-level
investments**

on NCDs and mental health
to achieve universal health
coverage and the SDGs



**Promoting
Global-South
leadership**

because local priorities and
expertise must guide global
investment in NCDs and
mental health

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