

## Healthy Brains Global Initiative

*A sea-change in the impact of delivery, in research and learning, and in accountability to donors and governments.*

*Creating new 'outcomes funds' with key regional partners, to mobilize new programs at scale: addressing mental health and its associated socio-economic impacts; giving donors a new mechanism to connect their funding more effectively with results, significantly increasing accountability and transparency; bringing in social or impact investment where needed to provide working capital; embedding research and learning from day one of delivery; working in concrete collaboration with donors, governments, researchers, service providers and service users.*

### The problem

Poor mental health is a global killer that dwarfs virtually all other illnesses and diseases, with a vast economic impact. It is inextricably linked with poverty and social exclusion. It drags on our recovery from the pandemic and from every disaster and conflict.

The cost of mental health conditions account for nearly 10% of the global disease burden. 70% of that burden originates between the ages of 11 and 24. This represents an estimated \$4 trillion in annual cost to the global economy and has been exacerbated by COVID-19. Despite this, countries spend less than 2% of their health budgets on mental health and millions of people in rich and poor countries alike, receive no treatment at all.

The effects are obviously particularly acute for vulnerable groups and in low resource settings. They are mixed up with a wide range of personal and social challenges, from unemployment to child pregnancy, from homelessness to addiction, from domestic abuse to HIV patients dropping out of treatment.

Why has there not been more progress? The problem is twofold: there are **insufficient services and programs** which truly address the needs of individuals held back by poor mental health and its socio-economic challenges and there is **inadequate knowledge about what works for whom**.

### How HBGI will operate

The Healthy Brains Global Initiative (HBGI) was founded in 2020, uniting world leaders across sectors to tackle this growing global issue. Over the past two years, HBGI has commissioned studies to develop its strategy, as well as bringing in a wide variety of stakeholders through its Interim Board and Lived Experience Council. HBGI is now operationalizing by:

- **establishing four new 'outcomes funds'** (giving donors a new stand-alone mechanism to enable them to fund results);
- **contracting new programs and paying for them on the basis of outcomes** (linking funding to clearly evidenced outcomes, at the level of the individual service user, maximizing the funding impact);

- **learning from day one through generating and sharing data at scale** (undertaking research to drive a change in the global understanding of mental illness, across populations, in its prevention and treatment, and its place in government policy).

This flexible, outcomes-based model, with embedded research, will support bottom-up approaches to improve mental health, to improve life chances, and to foster systems-level change. We will grow this in stages, starting with four regional funds: South Asia, Africa, California and Ukraine. With an initial target of \$50m to be spent on outcomes in each.

Donors and multilaterals are all increasingly interested in performance/outcomes – they want to see and pay for results. But their systems are not geared up for this so they find it complex, with high transaction costs. HBGI, on the other hand, will be structured from the outset to contract, manage and pay for performance. This will be our function.

Over the next 6 months, HBGI aims to mobilize \$10-15m of private capital, which will be used to develop the systems and to secure the outcomes funds that HBGI will then administer on behalf of our donors. The first programs will go live in 2024.

Garen Staglin  
Acting CEO, HBGI  
[garen.staglin@hbgi.org](mailto:garen.staglin@hbgi.org)  
+1 707 280 5374

Richard Johnson  
Senior Advisor, HBGI  
[richard.johnson@hbgi.org](mailto:richard.johnson@hbgi.org)  
+44 7837 166360

### **Healthy Brains Global Initiative - New Voices, New Science, New Finance**

- **The voice of the community.** *Listening to the voices of people with lived experience, focusing on currently excluded communities, delivering programs that are centered on the needs of each individual service user.*
- **Research to deliver impact.** *Generating learning at scale with implementation research, seeking constant performance improvement, working with populations that are usually ignored, sharing data and findings openly.*
- **Making every dollar work harder.** *Regional ‘outcomes funds’, in partnership with local stakeholders, giving donors the ability to connect funding with verified results, efficiently and effectively, bringing in social or impact investment where needed.*