



Bridging the Gap in Youth Mental Wellbeing

A roadmap to scaling impact and how we
can join forces

September 2026



Photo credit: JA Canada

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Head of Improving Mental Wellbeing,
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Foreword

How many of us were taught emotional literacy when growing up?

At the Z Zurich Foundation (the Foundation), our ambition is for a world where young people can voice how they feel, ask for help, and receive support.

I was fortunate to receive a great education: one that challenged me intellectually, broadened my horizons, and gave me tools I still rely on today. When I was 15, I benefitted from a school system that expanded my thinking in the greatest way. But looking back, I wish that alongside math, history, languages and sport, teachers had seen equal value in emotional intelligence - in understanding how to recognize what young students experience, and what to do about it. Those are the foundational skills for success at school, in work, in relationships, in life.

More than 25 years have passed since then, yet young people today face the same gap. We live in an era of extraordinary attention to physical health, but we have not extended that same rigor, or that same care, to mental wellbeing. And young people pay the price for that oversight every single day.

One in seven young people worldwide are currently living with a mental health condition. They are growing up in the long shadow of a pandemic, navigating the pressures of social media, climate change anxiety, and inheriting economies and societies in turbulence. We cannot fix the world for them. But we can equip them with the skills to navigate it.

Our vision for 2035 is a generation of young people who know that it is okay not to be okay, who feel able to speak up when they are struggling, and who are surrounded by teachers, coaches, parents and peers who know how to respond when they do.

Over the last ten years, we have made a global movement take shape. **Today, our mental wellbeing programs span 30 initiatives across 28 countries**, every one of them evidence-based, designed with young people at their center, and proven to work. From football coaches in Australia learning to recognize and respond to signs of distress in their players, to emotional literacy being woven into the Portuguese national school curriculum with the backing of the Ministry of Education, the work is alive, and it is scaling – in a deep and sustainable way.

This is bigger than any single organization. The era of one funder, one program, one pocket of impact is over. Real and lasting change calls for collective action: between governments, civil society, private sector, communities and funders. It requires people who are willing to connect the dots, share resources, and build a better future for millions of young people globally.

This report is an overview of the programs the Foundation has invested in, piloted and evidenced. These impactful initiatives are ready to be scaled with the right partners to help achieve change that lasts.

This is our invitation to you. Look through these pages not simply as a record of what has been achieved, but as **a roadmap of what is possible**. Join us in a generation-defining effort to ensure that 25 years from now, young people will look back on their teenage years as the foundation of their resilience.

Introduction

Adolescence is a time of possibility, of discovering who you are and imagining who you can become. Yet for millions of young people, it is marked by stigma, distress, and a sense of being overwhelmed and alone.

There are around 1.3 billion adolescents globally. Nearly 190 million, or one in seven, are living with a mental health condition, and 75% will never receive treatment. Youth mental wellbeing is a defining global challenge of our time.

The economic cost is often cited: USD 1 trillion lost each year. But the deeper cost is human. It's in missed school days, lost confidence, and futures put on hold. Mental wellbeing is declining at a critical stage that lays the foundations for lifelong wellbeing.

We know how to prevent physical harm. We wear seatbelts to prevent injuries. We install smoke alarms to prevent fires. Prevention is second nature when it comes to physical safety. Why is this not the case for mental health and wellbeing?

The imbalance is stark. Mental health accounts for a significant share of global health needs but receives just 2% of global health funding.

Continued underinvestment carries real and lasting consequences for young people, families, communities, and economies alike, as stressed by Zurich Insurance's recent 'The Value for Mental Health' report. At the same time, evidence shows that effective approaches already exist:

- Prevention, supporting young people before challenges escalate
- Youth-led and locally led solutions, delivering stronger outcomes, including significantly higher retention and engagement
- Embedding mental health education in schools, helping build resilience early and at scale

This report is written for everyone who shares a clear vision: communities, funders, NGOs, public authorities, businesses and partners who want to make a measurable difference in youth mental wellbeing.

When we know more, we can do better. This report is an invitation to learn, connect, and act together, at a moment when demand is growing and solutions are already within reach. What comes next is building the systems together that can carry them forward.



1 in 7 youth

Suffer from a mental health condition



Anxiety



is the most common mental health disorder, surpassing even depression in terms of global prevalence

It is estimated that every \$1 invested in public mental health prevention saves \$24 in health spending (WHO, 2025)

Our promotion and prevention ambition

Prevention

By focusing on prevention and giving the tools and resources to individuals to **manage their stress and anxiety**, we have a better chance at helping people **improve their mental wellbeing at an early stage**.



Promotion

We are joining forces with others to create a mental wellbeing movement that is helping people **see their feelings for what they are and search for support, so they can prevent stress from developing into anxiety**.



Young people

Our programs' **core target audience is young people aged 13-35**. By engaging people from this age range, we aim to support a segment that is often overlooked but that we believe can create a **positive impact over a longer time frame**. We also **engage with and equip caregivers around them**.



Impact creation

Our programs acknowledge the need for a whole-system approach, which entails working with caregivers, teachers, athletes, role models and all relevant actors in youth's life. Partners identify context-specific ways of delivering programs while aiming for system-level change and multi-stakeholder partnerships that **create lasting impact**.



Where programs are delivered

Nearly all prevention and promotion initiatives are delivered via non-clinical settings **like schools, community centers, sport clubs and online spaces** for digital campaigns.

Since young people already frequent these settings, delivering initiatives this way **increases access to adolescents** and reduces the stigma-related barrier of going to a space dedicated to mental health.

Close coordination and referrals systems between community-based programs and healthcare providers that can support individuals with more acute and clinical needs is also essential.

Our approach to grant making

We look for multi-year trusted collaborations, combining the strengths of NGO partners, Zurich Insurance Group (Zurich) and the Z Zurich Foundation for the best outcome in communities. We aim to support NGO partners beyond just financial contributions, through activism, expertise, partnerships and advocacy, to create a brighter future for vulnerable people.

We look at funding innovative ideas, as well as scaling up successful interventions. Programs are expected to demonstrate a clear pathway to transformation for young people, and to track positive impact and transformation through individual metrics.



Program Participants in Tackle Your Feelings, Ireland

Where programs are delivered



The Foundation currently supports 30 active youth mental wellbeing programs in 28 countries, impacting more than 12 million people in the last two years.

As one of the leaders in the growing movement of philanthropic funders prioritizing and promoting mental wellbeing, in 2025, the Foundation donated more than €10 million to prevention and promotion programs.

By engaging with the public, private, and non-profit sectors, the aim is to build a world in which every young person is empowered to speak about how they feel and is equipped with tools and support to promote their mental wellbeing.

New Zealand - nationwide



Name of the program:	Mitey
Implementation partner:	Sir John Kirwan Foundation
Setting:	Primary and intermediate schools
Target groups:	5-13 years old (primary school students) and teachers
Foundation grant started:	2021

Incorporating mental health in the school curriculum


Over 50%
of New Zealand
youth under 24
years experience
anxiety or
depression

For 15- to 19-year-olds
suicide is the leading cause
of death, 3 times higher
than the EU



The greatest contributing factors include bullying, social media harms, climate change, anxiety, discrimination, and socioeconomic factors like poverty and housing. Māori and Pasifika youth groups are often more vulnerable.

Approach:

Mitey supports primary schools in New Zealand to teach mental health as part of the school curriculum, alongside subjects such as maths and science, making it an important but ordinary subject that all students learn.

It aims for system change by guiding schools to operate through a lens of wellbeing addressing issues of discrimination and inequity, together with intentional teaching of mental health education through the curriculum, in a way that fits the culture and context of the school.

Refined their concept into a three-year support cycle for schools to become self-sufficient, with a strong emphasis on schools learning from each

other and sharing successes. It deploys coaches to work with senior leadership and teachers, giving them the confidence and competence to deliver effective mental health education in the classroom, within a school environment that prioritizes wellbeing for all.

Mitey builds strong school cultures to support staff mental wellbeing, together with enabling senior leadership to develop mental health policies and important community partnerships.

Its approach is adaptable and wide enough in scope to meet the context of every school, including the launch of a hybrid model of 'in person' and 'by zoom' delivery to reach schools in isolated areas.

Key achievements to date:

- 344,000 lives impacted
- 295 schools reached (representing 17% of all schools in New Zealand)
- Three-year external evaluation (2025) of Mitey concluded Mitey has the potential to radically alter the landscape of mental health education in New Zealand, with behavior 'changing in the playgrounds'
- Successful national media campaign promoted awareness of mental health across radio, billboards and social media, encouraging both funders and schools to get onboard
- Secured government funding in 2025 and 2026 from the 'Mental Health Innovation Fund' plus other key partnerships with the The Wright Family Foundation, the Cotton On Foundation and the Joyce Fisher Trust
- Building an alliance for reform and advocating for the government to mandate mental health education based on the Mitey model (expected by 2029).

Program expansion:

Mitey has laid the foundation for depth of impact, sustainability, scalability and an accelerated rollout in the whole country. Mitey aligns to the New Zealand Curriculum and is woven into everyday teaching to spark and stimulate new learning. The reach of Mitey extends school wide from policy to staff wellbeing to community engagement to ensure that the school environment supports the learning and promotes overall wellbeing across the school and community. The biggest challenge to scale being the geographic spread of schools across the country, more coaches are required to reach every school across the North and South Islands of New Zealand. With over 220 schools already on a waiting list for the program, demand keeps growing and more resources are required for implementation.



The power of working together
Photo credit: Mitey



Mitey is based on the best research evidence in the world, and our research tells us it's working. It's changing New Zealand's schools for the better."

Lead Evaluator from University of Auckland
July 2024

Why this is a strategic expansion opportunity:

- Hundreds of New Zealand teachers and children are already embracing Mitey in their schools
- Designed to be flexible and wide enough in scope to suit each unique school setting
- Grounded in international best practice and pioneering local research, bringing bicultural understanding of mental health education, unique to New Zealand
- Social return on investment: for every \$NZ 1 invested in Mitey the social return is \$NZ 5.80

What participants say about the program...



It is good to have a shared language around mental health across the school. We're talking about 'mental health' and not skirting around it. Mental health education is now a normal part of our whole community and is just what we do."

Teacher



In the playground I have noticed a heap of difference in the way kids play and interact and stand up for what is not ok."

Principal



I have learnt a lot about bullies and how to deal with them and about mental ways to keep my body and mind healthy and happy. I tell my Mum about it too."

Student



Students brainstorming words people say that help and words that hurt
Photo credit: Mitey



Türkiye - nationwide



Side
by Side

Name of the program:	Side by Side
Implementation partner:	Needs Map
Setting:	High schools, universities, youth centers, online platforms
Target groups:	Youth aged 15–24 (students in high schools and universities), youth-serving professionals and caregivers.
Foundation grant started:	2023

Transforming youth into agents of change

Türkiye is facing a growing youth mental health crisis, driven by academic pressure, unemployment, and digital stress

The Youth Wellbeing Report shows that life satisfaction among youth has declined sharply, **from 71%** (2017) **to 46%** (2023), with only **44%** expressing hope for the future



22.9% of the youth population

is not in employment, education, or training, limiting their opportunities for social and economic integration

(TURSTAT, 2024)



Approach:

Side by Side transitioned in early 2026 from Mental Health Psychosocial Support in earthquake-affected provinces in 2023, to promoting youth mental wellbeing across the whole country. Shifting from healing to empowerment and community ownership, the new model transforms youth from beneficiaries into active agents of change.

Through preventive group sessions, peer-led methods, creative youth pathways, and integrated online and on-site components, the program empowers youth, caregivers, and professionals while reducing stigma at scale.

Activities are primarily implemented in universities, high schools, and youth centers, and additionally through online platforms.

Capacity building is at the heart of the approach, through the Master Trainer Track and Youth Ambassadors. The aim is to build a national network of youth volunteers trained in empathy, active listening, and self-care, who in turn will lead mental wellbeing and community resilience initiatives.

Key achievements to date:

- 1,300,000 lives impacted
- Launched the Side by Side online mental health platform, providing free and accessible psychosocial support to healthcare professionals and teachers
- Established and operated three community-based Psychosocial Support Centers, delivering mental health services in earthquake-affected areas.
- Delivered nationwide youth-focused prevention campaigns to strengthen emotional resilience and preparedness for future crises among young people and caregivers
- Developed the MHPSS Response Handbook, translating field-based learning into an actionable resource
- Established strong partnerships with key national and local institutions, including the Provincial Directorates of Family and Social Services

What participants say about the program...



After watching this digital campaign content, I realized that instead of staying in my room constantly checking my phone and withdrawing into myself, I started going out more and socializing with my family, friends, and loved ones”.

Program participant



I spent more time with my friends, allowed myself to feel my emotions and cry, and gave myself permission to be sad. I sang, danced, wrote about my feelings, and listened to songs that gave voice to my emotions”.

Program participant



Photo: A group session with children in the community-based Psychosocial Support Center in Antakya, Türkiye, an earthquake-affected area. Training is facilitated and delivered by Needs Map.

Learn more about the Psychosocial Support Centers in earthquake affected communities in this film [‘The unseen emergency after a disaster’](#).

This film was produced for the Z Zurich Foundation and Zurich Insurance Group Türkiye by BBC StoryWorks Commercial Productions.

Program expansion:

With additional support and strategic partnerships, the program aims to expand its reach and deepen impact. Key priorities include:

- **Advancing AI and mental health:** explore the impact of AI on youth mental health, develop ethical and youth-friendly tools, contribute to psychosocial AI standards, and pilot a Side by Side–informed “psychosocial AI” approach co-developed with schools, families, and young people.
- **Supporting and scaling youth-focused initiatives:** expand youth-led and youth-serving programs, strengthening peer networks, volunteering pathways, and the Youth Ambassador and Volunteer Certification pipelines, while also scaling the Needs Map’s Volunteer Map, a digital platform that connects volunteers with projects and social impact opportunities.
- **Developing innovative content on psychological resilience:** produce scalable and culturally adaptable content that promotes resilience, reduces stigma, and supports community ownership of mental wellbeing.
- **Building cross-country partnerships for replication:** collaborate with international partners to adapt and implement the Side by Side model in new country contexts through knowledge transfer and localized capacity building.

Why this is a strategic expansion opportunity

- Side by Side has evolved over time to respond to needs and an ever-changing context showing relevance and adaptability
- Strong technical expertise and in-house knowledge generation
- Nationwide coverage through multiple delivery channels meeting young people where they are



A photo from the Side by Side with Youth stand of the TED Needs Map Student Club at TED University Spring Festival, 2025.
Photo Credit: Tuğçe Akdemir

Hong Kong



Name of the program:	Chill Lab
Implementation partner:	Mental Health Association of Hong Kong (MHAHK)
Setting:	High schools, universities, youth centers, online platforms
Target groups:	Students, parents, school personnel and the public
Foundation grant started:	2023

Changing the picture on mental wellbeing for youth

36.6%

of secondary school students show symptoms of depression, and 24.4% of children and adolescents aged 6-17 experience at least one mental health issue in the previous 12 months



The suicide rate for those aged 15-24

increased by 27%

from 2014 to 2020

Young people in Hong Kong face high levels of stress, whether over parents' expectations, academic performance, or future career options. **Most mental health challenges emerge during adolescence and young adulthood.**



Approach:

The Mental Health Association of Hong Kong designs and delivers mental health education for secondary school students, embedding practical wellbeing elements into regular student support systems. It also builds capacity among young people to become youth ambassadors for mental wellbeing and enhances mental wellbeing knowledge among caregivers and teachers.

It established and operates the Youth Hub, the first experimental youth mental health gaming space in Hong Kong. The space utilizes innovative technologies such as augmented reality (AR) and virtual reality (VR) to promote mental health literacy, emotional awareness, coping skills, and help-seeking behaviors among young people.

Alongside this, MHAHK runs community campaigns aimed at raising public awareness on, and changing attitude toward, mental wellbeing.

Key achievements to date:

- 263,000 lives impacted
- 278 secondary schools engaged in the project (including 18 international schools and 9 ethnic minority schools), representing nearly half of all secondary schools in Hong Kong
- Embedded youth-led mental health promotion models (Youth Pioneer Program) within formal school systems to shift from one-off talks to sustained engagement
- Established the Youth Hub as a replicable experiential prevention model within the community service system
- Promoted by the Education Bureau and Social Welfare Department of Hong Kong, as well as District Councils

What participants say about the program...



I have gained a deeper understanding of my own mental wellbeing after visiting Chill Lab. I now actively try to manage my emotions and show care and concern for people around me. I have developed stronger empathy for others”.

Student Participant



After the Youth Hub experience, students engaged in meaningful reflection. Understanding the daily challenges faced by people in recovery helped them become more empathetic and compassionate individuals”.

Teacher



Young people explore mental wellbeing through the Chill Lab Youth Hub Experience Center using VR technology.



Program expansion:

There is significant potential to scale the program to reach every secondary school in Hong Kong and embed mental wellbeing frameworks in the schools through collaboration with the Education Bureau. MHAHK strives to redesign its Youth Hub to include an AI-enabled immersive learning space (using Virtual Reality 2.0 and Augmented Reality tools). It also plans to enhance its digital presence through a gamified wellbeing portal with AI-driven feedback, digital prevention campaigns, and music, storytelling and performance initiatives to make mental wellbeing learning accessible to a wide range of youth. MHAHK envisions a strong peer-led support system which can be obtained by scaling the Youth Ambassador program and Mental Health First Aid training for teenagers and older youth. Finally, MHAHK also aims to position Chill Lab as a replicable regional blueprint, by establishing an Asia-wide Youth Mental Health Platform for regional knowledge exchange.

Why this is a strategic expansion opportunity:

- Favorable government policies
- Condensed urban population within easy reach and experience in underserved districts through youth mobile vans
- Diverse tested materials, resources and multiple delivery platforms for school and non-school settings
- MHAHK's reputation and range of services place it as Hong Kong's go-to-partner for mental wellbeing programming
- Every HK\$ 1 invested in MHA generated at least HK\$ 3.64 in social value



Young people explore mental wellbeing through the Chill Lab Youth Hub Experience Center using VR technology.





Name of the program:	Henka
Implementation partner:	Hospital Sant Joan de Déu Barcelona (SJD)
Setting:	Secondary schools, online platforms
Target groups:	Youth aged 11-25
Foundation grant started:	2021

Inspiring cultural change to make mental wellbeing a priority for young people



Psychiatric emergencies in children and young people in Spain have **increased by 50%**



Suicide has become the **leading cause of death** amongst Spanish youth



Only 5% of the **total health budget in Spain** is destined to mental wellbeing and it is focused on medication and hospitalizations, with no prevention methods

Approach:

The Henka program provides tools, knowledge and guidance to secondary schools, empowering them to develop and implement a work plan that places the promotion of mental wellbeing as one of the main axes of their educational project.

It trains family and school-based caregivers to implement a prevention program aimed at increasing the resilience of young people. It also runs events showcasing scientific research on mental wellbeing and young people, national and international educational projects and public policies.

The program also creates content to bring awareness, accompany, empower, inform, and provide training on mental wellbeing. This includes #BeHenka testimonials with young influencers who speak about their experience having mental wellbeing conditions and how they have overcome or are overcoming them.

Key achievements to date:

- 560,000 lives impacted
- Reached almost 200 schools across Spain through agreements with regional governments
- Program became a national reference through partnerships with Fundació Princesa de Girona, Accenture, Arte Paliativo, Som Via, Fundació Ajut i Esperança, and others and with the launch of a Scientific and Institutional Relations Advisory Board
- Flagship event, Henka Day – Viva la Vida, brought together 1,200 young people and 450 adults to celebrate resilience and hope
- Growing network of partners, including UNICEF, Fundació Ibercaja and Fundació Alicia Koplowitz
- Member of the Multi-Stakeholder Alliance for Child and Adolescent Mental Health in Spain, bringing together voices from across society to transform the mental health of children and adolescents

Program expansion:

Having already reached 10% of Spanish secondary schools, there is significant potential to scale “Henka” across the country, notably in new regions such as Castilla La Mancha, the Balearic Islands, Navarra and Andalusia. The program provides a scalable blueprint for cultural and systemic transformation through a universal, resilience-based, school-wide approach that trains caregivers, equips teachers, empowers adolescents and helps schools design sustainable wellbeing plans.

Why this is a strategic expansion opportunity:

- Clear national urgency coupled with strong societal and political momentum
- High uptake in the first phase
- Built on scientific rigor
- Strategic partnerships and positioning with UNICEF, public administrations and private sector actors

What participants say about the program...



Henka offers students a concrete and structured pathway to grow in self-awareness, learn to regulate their emotions, develop empathy, and express themselves with both respect and authenticity. These competencies help them face academic and personal challenges typical of their age with greater calm and confidence”.

Teacher



The workshops have allowed me to relax and express topics that I used to avoid because I didn't have enough confidence. They have also helped me reflect on myself and learn good examples to deal with conflict situations properly”.

Student



Photo credit: Henka



Name of the program:	Por ti - Programa de Promoção de Bem-estar Mental nas Escolas
Implementation partner:	EPIS and University of Coimbra
Setting:	Public schools
Target groups:	Youth aged 12-15
Foundation grant started:	2023

Supporting students, teachers and families in developing emotional regulation skills

Portugal is experiencing a **concerning decline in adolescents' mental health and well-being** as evidenced by increased rates of unhappiness, self-harm, and psychological and physical symptoms.

Between 2018 and 2022, the percentage of adolescents reporting feelings of unhappiness **nearly doubled**.

Anxiety rates are nearly double in girls (44.7%) compared to boys (23.4%). Girls consistently report higher rates of sadness, irritability, and fear compared to boys.



Approach:

Por Ti promotes mental wellbeing in public school settings through a multimodal intervention delivered to 12–15-year-old students, as well as their families, teachers and school staff. Schools are a critical setting for early prevention and structured emotional skill development

The program combines two complementary components:

- Changing Attitudes: educational workshops aimed at increasing mental health literacy and reducing stigma;
- Changing Behaviors: structured group interventions building emotional regulation skills.

The research and clinical team at the University of Coimbra is responsible for program design, training and supervision. Through continuous evaluation, it rigorously measures its impact, ensuring scientific credibility and evidence-based implementation – which has received both academic and public recognition.

Key achievements to date:

- 126,000 lives impacted
- Reached 389 public schools in 158 municipalities, representing 48% of all public-school groupings and 52% of municipalities nationwide
- Teachers completing the full program receive official accreditation recognized within the Portuguese public education system, contributing to systemic integration and sustainability
- Strategic media partnerships in national TV and press and a dedicated podcast increased public awareness and institutional visibility of the program among key Portuguese stakeholders

Program expansion:

There is significant potential to scale Por Ti to reach every secondary school in Portugal, prioritizing low-density and underserved areas where needs are the greatest. Por Ti strives to establish new strategic partnerships with schools, municipalities and businesses to support sustainable co-funding, local ownership and long-term integration.

Why this is a strategic expansion opportunity:

- Program is being progressively embedded in the public school system leveraging on the presence of trained psychologists for long-term systemic change
- Successful implementation to date in urban, semi-urban and rural territories
- Scientific evaluation and evidence-based delivery builds credibility and trust

What participants say about the program...



The sessions helped the class communicate better, and they gave me more courage to speak up — both with my classmates and even in front of an audience. I discovered new ways to manage anxiety, and I learned not to be ashamed to talk about certain things in front of others. I found out new things about some classmates (just like they found out things about me).'

Student



I enjoyed it because the sessions were very dynamic and interesting. Since the psychologist was relatively young, she was able to understand our point of view as teenagers. I learned to respect my thoughts, realizing that they are all important for our well-being."

Student



Photo credit: Por ti

Ireland



Name of the program:	Tackle Your Feelings
Implementation partner:	Rugby Players Ireland
Setting:	Secondary schools
Target groups:	Youth aged 14-19 (secondary school students)
Foundation grant started:	2015

Reducing stigma through school interventions and sport ambassadors

Ireland has the 4th highest rate of suicide among young people in Europe


40% of Irish adolescents

experience levels of depression outside the normal range


49% of Irish adolescents

experience levels of anxiety outside the normal range

Approach:

Launched in 2015, the Tackle Your Feelings (TYF) campaign has now been running for 10 years with the core purpose of reducing the stigma surrounding mental health and wellbeing and inspiring more people to become proactive and look after their mental wellbeing on a regular basis.

The campaign has evolved from a public awareness campaign utilizing the role models of professional rugby players, to becoming a school program, with additional information and workshops available for workplaces and sports clubs.

TYF Schools is a free, classroom-based multi-component positive and sport psychology intervention accessible to all schools on the island of Ireland, supporting the wellbeing curriculum. Led by teachers, it provides a practical toolkit for building resilience, emotional intelligence, and positive mental wellbeing, enabling students to cultivate healthy habits.

The program is enriched by personal insights from some of Ireland's top rugby players, creating a relatable and inspiring experience for students and young people.

Key achievements to date:

- 10 Years of TYF in Ireland, inspiring other mental wellbeing campaigns and projects internationally
- 200,000 lives impacted
- 686 schools reached
- Over 50 ambassadors from Rugby Players Ireland – including high profile sporting ambassadors such as National Team Rugby Captains Caelan Dorris and Erin King – engaging in the program as role models and contributing to content
- Digital content reached over 2 million people
- Overwhelmingly positive preliminary results from PhD research linked with the University of Limerick

Program expansion:

TYF Ireland's ambition is to obtain approval from the Department of Education for adoption of the program in the school curriculum, which would open doors for nationwide implementation. The program also strives to further develop resources to embed into the school's program for other year groups as well as for outside of school settings such as sports clubs and youth groups. A comprehensive teacher training program will fulfil the additional needs requested by teachers, contributing to continuous professional development. Funding for further research would enable the generation of strong evidence on the effectiveness and application of the TYF Schools Program, informing best practice and international adaptation.

Why this is a strategic expansion opportunity:

- Long-standing program with a strong reputation and capacity to reach young people nationwide
- Successful participation of sport ambassadors to influence young people's perspectives on mental health
- Easily replicable school-based program



Caelan Dorris, a TYF ambassador mentoring students in the program.



Greystones Community College, a visit from Kathy Baker, a TYF ambassador with 4th year students who completed the Tackle Your Feelings Program.

Australia



Name of the program:	Tackle Your Feelings
Implementation partner:	AFL Coaches Association, AFL Players' Association
Setting:	Sport clubs
Target groups:	Young players/umpires aged 17–35, community coaches and committee members
Foundation grant started:	2019

Empowering sports clubs to champion youth mental wellbeing

Australia is experiencing a mental wellbeing crisis and there is significant strain on the public and private support systems

40% of
Australians



aged 16–24 years had a diagnosable mental disorder in the past 12 months



Almost

1 in 4 people

aged 16–34 years saw a health professional for their mental wellbeing

Approach:

Tackle Your Feelings Australia is a **preventative mental health initiative** inspired by a program of the same name based in Ireland. It harnesses the power and influence of local community sport to **connect community football and netball players, coaches, umpires and other club support staff with mental health education**. Training is delivered in an environment where they want to be and in language that resonates.

The three-year program is carried out by a **local psychologist** and aims to help participants gain the tools to understand, recognize and respond to signs of mental ill-health in their players.

Backed by evidence-based research, a **whole-of-club approach is a key lever to achieve systems change**. Clubs are supported in building their own mental health 'game plans' to help drive self-sufficiency and sustainability, through resources that influence systems, policy and club culture.

Collaboration with well-known football and netball influencers boosts the reach of content and extends it to non-followers.

Key achievements to date:

- 375,000 lives impacted across 1,400 Australian Football League and netball community clubs
- Game Plans adopted by 75% of participating clubs in 2025
- Successful partnership with a First Nations club, Fitzroy Stars, where the connection to TYF's First Nations psychologist became vital when the club experienced a number of deaths in succession throughout the season

Program expansion:

TYF Australia's ambition is to reach a greater number of clubs at the state and national level, particularly in regional locations. There is also great potential to transfer and adapt the program to other sports, further increasing its impact. TYF Australia piloted the 'Wellbeing Warriors' initiative, designed to upskill young leaders within community AFL clubs so they can drive mental health initiatives within their environment. After its initial success, it is now seeking funding to scale the initiative.

Why this is a strategic expansion opportunity:

- Endorsement by high-profile player and coach ambassadors, serving as role models to many AFL fans and young people.
- Established partnerships with state bodies, community leagues, AFL clubs and regional sports assemblies
- Already developed and evaluated numerous downloadable resources

What participants say about the program...

“

The Tackle Your Feelings program has given me a great opportunity to share my knowledge about mental health with not only my club, but other clubs as well. It's a great program to help your club set up its support systems around mental health”.

Karen McColl

Football Club, Willaston (South Australia)

“

It's an awesome program. It's so succinct and gives you really good strategies...It's a great conversation starter”.

Nathan Buckley

Former AFL coach and player



Photo credit: Tackle Your Feelings Australia



Name of the program:	Autistic and OK
Implementation partner:	Ambitious About Autism
Setting:	Secondary schools
Target groups:	Autistic and non-autistic young people aged 13–18, parents, carers of autistic young people, education staff in schools, local authorities and academy trusts
Foundation grant started:	2022

Transforming the lives of thousands of autistic young people across the UK



31% of autistic people are persistently absent from school compared to **18% for non-autistic peers**



4 out of 5 autistic young people experience poor mental health, compared to **1 in 5 of their peers**



Autistic young people are up to

28x more likely to have suicidal thoughts or attempt suicide than their non-autistic peers

Approach:

Ambitious About Autism is an award-winning peer-led program that empowers autistic pupils to take control of their mental health and wellbeing, understand themselves and feel okay.

Its program toolkit, co-produced by autistic young people, is a downloadable resource that equips secondary mainstream and specialist schools in the UK to support the wellbeing of their autistic pupils.

The program centers on a series of peer-led sessions, delivered by older autistic pupils to their younger peers, with support from school staff. The sessions cover key mental health and wellbeing topics as well as providing spaces for autistic young people to build understanding of themselves.

The toolkit also contains resources such as a teacher training module, parent information pack and assembly session which promote autism understanding and acceptance across the whole school community.

Key achievements to date:

- 933,000 lives impacted
- Autistic and OK toolkit accessed in 1,061 secondary and specialist schools across the UK
- Created implementation frameworks for local authorities and multi-academy trusts, designed to support sustainable change at all levels of the education system
- Built key relationships with 17 Multi-academy trusts and 27 local authority teams across England, each responsible for overseeing SEN and autism provision in their areas
- Amplified the program through national media outlets, including Sky News, BBC Politics London and ITV News Meridian

Program expansion:

Autistic and OK's ambition is to build new partnerships with schools and colleges in Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland as well as Further Education settings for post-16 education. By scaling nationwide, the program can bring system-level change through integration into regional and national Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) provision. To place mental wellbeing and autism inclusion at the heart of school life, the program intends to further develop a Whole-School Approach to autism by designing resources for all pupils, teaching and support staff, governors, senior management and parents.

Why this is a strategic expansion opportunity:

- Widespread support from local authorities across England
- Tailored resources which any school can benefit from
- Best practice example of a program entirely co-designed by autistic youth and their peer students
- Every £1 invested generates at least £2.33 in social value

What participants say about the program...



One of the best things about the sessions was meeting other autistic students from different year groups. It made me realize that I'm not alone in my experiences, and there are other people who understand what it's like to mask, struggle with anxiety, or feel overwhelmed by certain situations".

Autistic pupil



This is such a wonderful initiative, with the focus on young people's voices and experiences. We have had Autistic Identity interventions in the past, but this program's structure is much more engaging and feels more authentic. I am hopeful that this will develop into a long-term student-led space for autistic students at our school".

Secondary school teacher



Photo credit: Ambitious about Autism, pupils in the Autistic and OK program



Strengthening youth mental wellbeing and life skills through experiential learning



An estimated
19%
of young people in Canada are affected by mental health conditions



By age 25,
1 in 5 Canadians
will have developed a mental illness



Suicide
is the **second leading cause** of death among young people in Canada, responsible for **1 in 5 deaths**

Approach:

JA Canada delivers mental wellbeing education through school-centered programs, and complementary experiential activities to engage youth over their full academic lifecycle and promote mental wellbeing.

Students enhance their resilience, build confidence and learn mental wellbeing skills through facilitated classroom programs, webinars, an afterschool entrepreneurship program, and a dynamic youth challenge, which incentivizes youth to take tangible and meaningful action towards improving their mental wellbeing. At the same time, training for educators makes them more effective at facilitating conversations about mental wellbeing, maximizing youth learning outcomes. Peer-to-peer engagement and advocacy are enabled through the Peer Leaders Summits and the Alumni Workshop series.

Discover highlights from the program in [this video](#).

Name of the program: Improving Mental Wellbeing

Implementation partner: Junior Achievement Canada

Setting: Secondary schools

Target groups: Secondary school students aged 12-18, JA Alumni aged 17-30, teachers

Foundation grant started: 2022

Key achievements to date:

- 274,000 lives impacted
- 80% report enhanced knowledge, change of attitude, development of new and improved skills
- 90% express increased optimism and preparedness
- Youth participants set action plans, including commitments to forming wellness clubs at school, hosting workshops and leading anti-stigma campaigns
- Mental Health Commission of Canada used learnings and feedback from JA Canada to adapt its workplace mental health program for youth
- Scaled impact through new partnerships with the Mental Health Commission of Canada, Enterprise Mobility, the Department of Education in PEI and local Chambers of Commerce

Program expansion:

JA Canada's ambition is to expand across all of Canada, strengthening the delivery and scaling of its classroom-based program. They also welcome smaller funds for specific initiatives. For example, its annual Youth Mental Wellbeing Summits each directly empower 100 students aged 13-14 with mental wellbeing education and life skills. Similarly, the Peer Leaders Summits are experiential and discussion-based workshops that build personal wellbeing skills and prepare young people to become peer advocates in their communities. JA Canada further plans to embed mental wellbeing support into its JA Company Program, an 18-week program that develops entrepreneurship skills for young people.

Why this is a strategic expansion opportunity:

- Potential for JA Canada's mental wellbeing program model to be adapted by JA Worldwide, the world's largest and most-impactful youth-serving NGOs
- Already established a strong network of volunteers, partners and educators
- JA local offices have assumed ownership of the programs and are advocating for the expansion of youth mental health promotion

What participants say about the program...

“

They showed and explained to us how to counter anxiety, depression and stress. I think it's the best part because that's what most of the teens go through.”

Student

“

The most helpful.. was the workshop about the four mental health techniques. This skill can help me when I'm nervous, to encourage myself and to increase my confidence.”

Student



Students engaging in team building activities at experiential Youth Mental Well-Being Summit in British Columbia, Canada. Photo credit; Garcia Creative.



Argentina, Bangladesh, Bhutan, Colombia, Ecuador, Egypt, India, Indonesia, Jordan, Malaysia, Maldives, Mexico, Nepal, Pakistan, Vietnam



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Name of the program:	Thriving Together
Implementation partner:	UNICEF
Setting:	In schools, online, community platforms
Target groups:	Adolescents aged 10-19, caregivers of adolescents
Foundation grant started:	2021

Promoting and prioritizing mental wellbeing for every young person

Adolescence is a critical window for promoting mental well-being and preventing problems before they escalate.



Many adolescents face exposures such as violence, poverty, and social exclusion that increase vulnerability.



Approach:

‘Thriving Together’ centers around protective policies, nurturing school and community environments that promote mental wellbeing, the presence of connected and supportive caregivers and the cultivation of resilience in adolescents. Building on a successful 2021–2024 pilot in six countries, it has now expanded to 15 countries.

At the heart of “Thriving Together” are innovative program tools collaboratively developed and field-tested, offering in-person as well as digital interventions. The tools provide adolescents and caregivers with useful information, skills and strategies on topics such as emotional regulation and stress management.

Opportunities for scaling:

Thriving Together Program Expansion

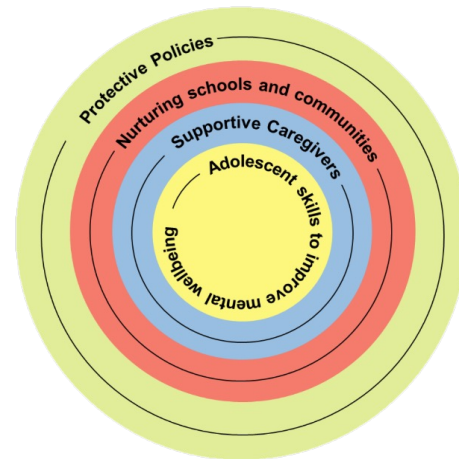
There is significant potential to scale “Thriving Together” in countries where the Z Zurich Foundation is already providing direct support, such as India, and to expand to additional countries such as Angola, Belize, Jamaica, Kenya, Mongolia, Rwanda, South Africa and Sri Lanka, where governments and partners are increasingly prioritizing adolescent mental health and recognizing the value of evidence-based, multisectoral approaches.

Spotlight on India

India offers one of the most urgent and high-impact opportunities for scaling, with the largest adolescent population globally and growing concerns related to anxiety, depression, self-harm, academic pressure, digital stress and stigma. Through “Thriving Together”, the Helping Adolescents Thrive (HAT) initiative is already underway in Maharashtra and Chhattisgarh, where government demand is strong and delivery platforms are established. Two additional states, Madhya Pradesh and Rajasthan, have signaled readiness for expansion in 2026, creating a demand-driven opportunity to extend support across schools, communities, child protection systems and health services.

Why India is a strategic expansion opportunity:

- Strong government interest and multisector partnerships
- High-burden environments where support can reach marginalized adolescents
- Contextualized HAT materials and national training teams, digital assets and delivery platforms ready for scale
- Potential to inform national policy through establishment of national task force and evidence from four diverse states.



©UNICEF/ECU/2024/Arcos: Adolescent students participate in a mental health and psychosocial support workshop for adolescents and young people at Luis Vargas Torres Educational Unit in Esmeraldas, Ecuador

Global Coalition for Youth Mental Health

The Global Coalition for Youth Mental Health was founded on a simple but powerful belief: the mental health of children and young people cannot be addressed by any one entity alone. Real and lasting change requires collective action.

The Coalition was launched with the support of the Z Zurich Foundation and has since grown into a dynamic alliance of private sector leaders committed to driving impact at scale.

Our vision is to ensure child and youth mental health is prioritized on the social, economic, and political agenda, strengthening the skills and supportive environments for the mental health of 150 million children and young people in 150 countries by 2030.

Everything we do is centered around achieving our four objectives:

- Challenge stigma, raise awareness and change the global conversation on the need to protect and support child, youth, and caregiver mental health
- Call for governments to invest and act on child and youth mental health
- Increase private and public investment in child and youth mental health
- Drive business practice and influence to support child, youth and caregiver mental health including in the workplace

Become a member

Interested organizations can become members of the Coalition. Together, we can leverage our unique strengths to secure investment and action to support youth mental health and wellbeing.



© UNICEF/UNI646507/Upadhayay, school nurse Bhawana Bhandari interacts with students at Shree Sarada Secondary School in Surkhet District Western Nepal

This report is both a record of progress and an invitation: be part of the change

This portfolio of programs demonstrates what is possible when youth-centered approaches meet determined action. From Mitey's curriculum-embedded education in New Zealand to Chill Lab's immersive tech in Hong Kong, our partners are finding creative ways for young people to learn about their mental health and build resilience in a constantly changing world.

These programs have already reached millions, transforming individual lives and the ecosystems surrounding youth. With investment, they could reach millions more.

The path to a mentally healthy world requires sustained action, driven by Public-Private-Philanthropic-Partnerships to scale the impact of promising initiatives.

The Z Zurich Foundation has the partners, groundwork, setup and impact measurement systems ready. Through collaboration, we can combine funding and advocacy efforts and exchange knowledge, joining forces to drive lasting change.

Supporting these ready-to-scale programs is an investment in our collective future. Let's work together to safeguard young lives, unlock their potential and build a world in which every young person can thrive.

Join us in empowering the next generation.

Contact us

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