

Aga Khan University's Brain & Mind Institute Impact Report 2025

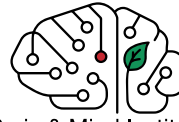


Five years of progress in brain and mental health





THE AGA KHAN UNIVERSITY



Brain & Mind Institute
from neuron to neighbourhood

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A word from the Vice Provost, Research, Aga Khan University

Mental and brain health is receiving increasing attention, as the scale of need becomes clearer across different settings. This calls for research that is shaped by the contexts in which people live and that can guide how services are developed and improved.

At Aga Khan University, we are committed to advancing research that bridges disciplines, geographies and systems to generate meaningful impact. As reflected in AKU's Strategic Plan (2024–2028), the University recognises the increasing importance of mental health and the unique opportunity it has to lead in this area through research, innovation and partnership. The Brain and Mind Institute exemplifies this vision. Over the past five years, it has emerged as a leading platform for interdisciplinary research in brain and mental health across East Africa and South/Central Asia, producing high-quality, locally relevant evidence while contributing to global knowledge.

A consistent feature of the Institute's work is the link between research and how brain health is understood and addressed in practice. This reflects AKU's broader commitment to knowledge creation that improves the quality of life of the communities it serves and supports evidence-informed systems of care. Through its contribution to national discussions and to changes in policy and service delivery, the Institute demonstrates how research can shape both thinking and action.

Equally important is the Institute's role in supporting research capacity and fostering collaboration across institutions. By bringing together partners across sectors and regions, and by investing in the next generation of researchers, the Brain and Mind Institute is helping to build sustainable ecosystems for mental health research and innovation.

This report reflects the progress made over the past five years and the potential of what lies ahead. Aga Khan University will continue to support this work and its contribution to research and practice in mental and brain health.

*Salim S. Virani, MD, PhD | Vice Provost, Research
Aga Khan University*

A word from the Founding Director



Over the past five years, the Brain and Mind Institute (BMI) has grown into a platform advancing brain and mental health across Africa and South and Central Asia. The Institute has built a research agenda grounded in local contexts, supported the development of emerging scientists, and worked with communities and policymakers to ensure evidence informs real-world systems.

BMI's work is anchored in three thematic areas: Healthy Brain Aging, with a focus on dementia and Alzheimer's; Mental Health, including psychosis, depression and anxiety; and Transgenerational Resilience. Across these areas, the Institute has focused on translating evidence into practice to strengthen systems and improve wellbeing.

This focus on evidence, systems and engagement has also contributed to broader shifts in how mental health is understood and addressed. In 2025, Kenya's High Court declared Section 226 of the Penal Code unconstitutional, decriminalising attempted suicide and reframing it as a public health issue. This marked an important step toward aligning mental health responses with human rights and strengthening access to care.

Africa is entering a period of demographic change, with population growth and ageing increasing the demand for brain health services. This presents an opportunity to invest in prevention, strengthen systems and support long-term resilience. BMI will continue to contribute through research, partnerships and innovation.

This report reflects five years of progress shaped by the contributions of researchers, communities and partners. The work ahead remains significant, and the Institute will continue to build on this foundation.

*Professor Zul Merali | Founding Director
Brain and Mind Institute, Aga Khan University*



Introduction

COURTESY: akdn.com

The Brain and Mind Institute (BMI) at Aga Khan University advances brain and mental health through interdisciplinary research, education and innovation. Working across Africa and South/ Central Asia, the Institute generates locally relevant, ethically grounded evidence designed to inform real-world systems.

Brain health underpins human development and societal wellbeing, yet services remain limited in many settings. Stigma continues to shape public attitudes, and research and policy have not kept pace with growing need. Dementia is often misunderstood and dismissed as normal ageing, while many young people face trauma and adversity without adequate support. Health systems also continue to face gaps in workforce, tools and sustainable financing.

BMI contributes by strengthening evidence, building capacity and supporting prevention, while working closely with communities and policymakers to ensure that knowledge informs action. Its work is grounded in the principle that solutions should be developed with the people they serve and shaped by the contexts in which they are applied.



About us

Vision

Healthy Brain, Healthy World

Mission

We are advancing brain health through collaborative research, education and innovation in mental health and neuroscience.

Core Guiding Principles

- Impact
- Quality
- Relevance
- Access

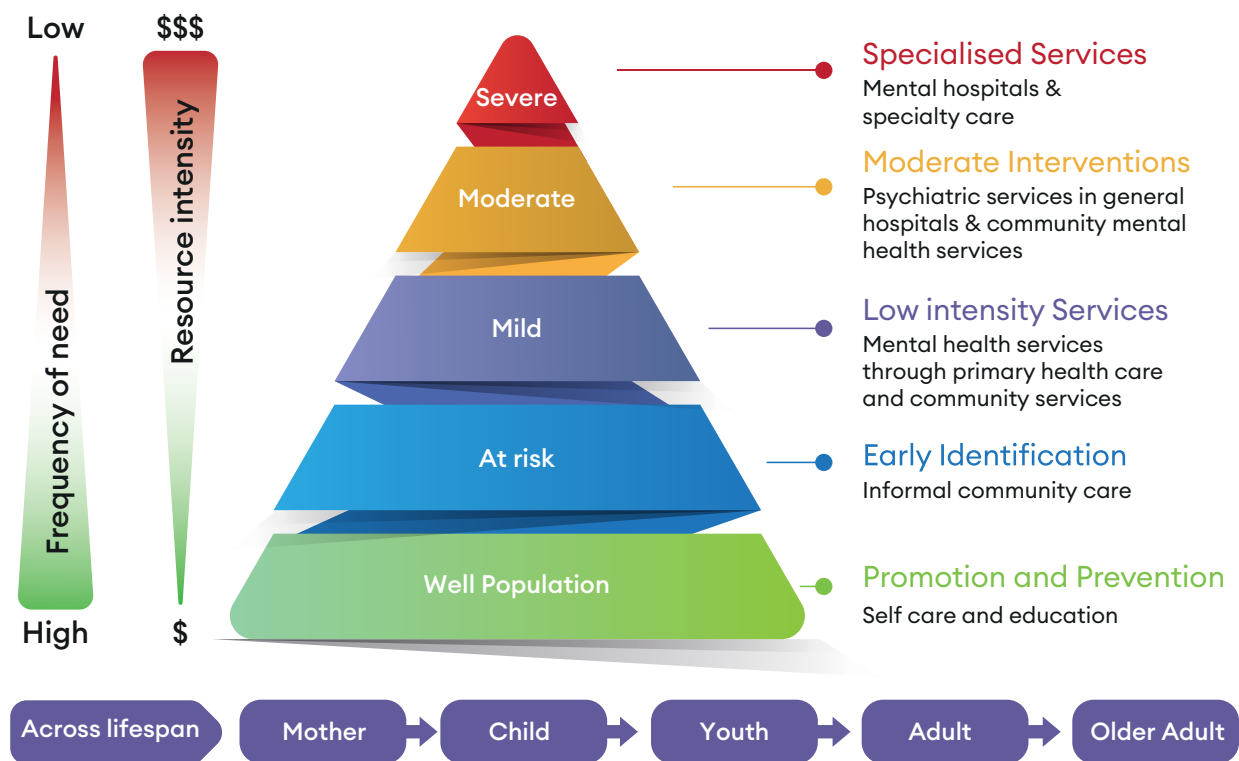
Values

- Ethics & Integrity
- Excellence & Innovation
- Care, Compassion, and Respect
- Continuous Learning
- Empowerment & Accountability





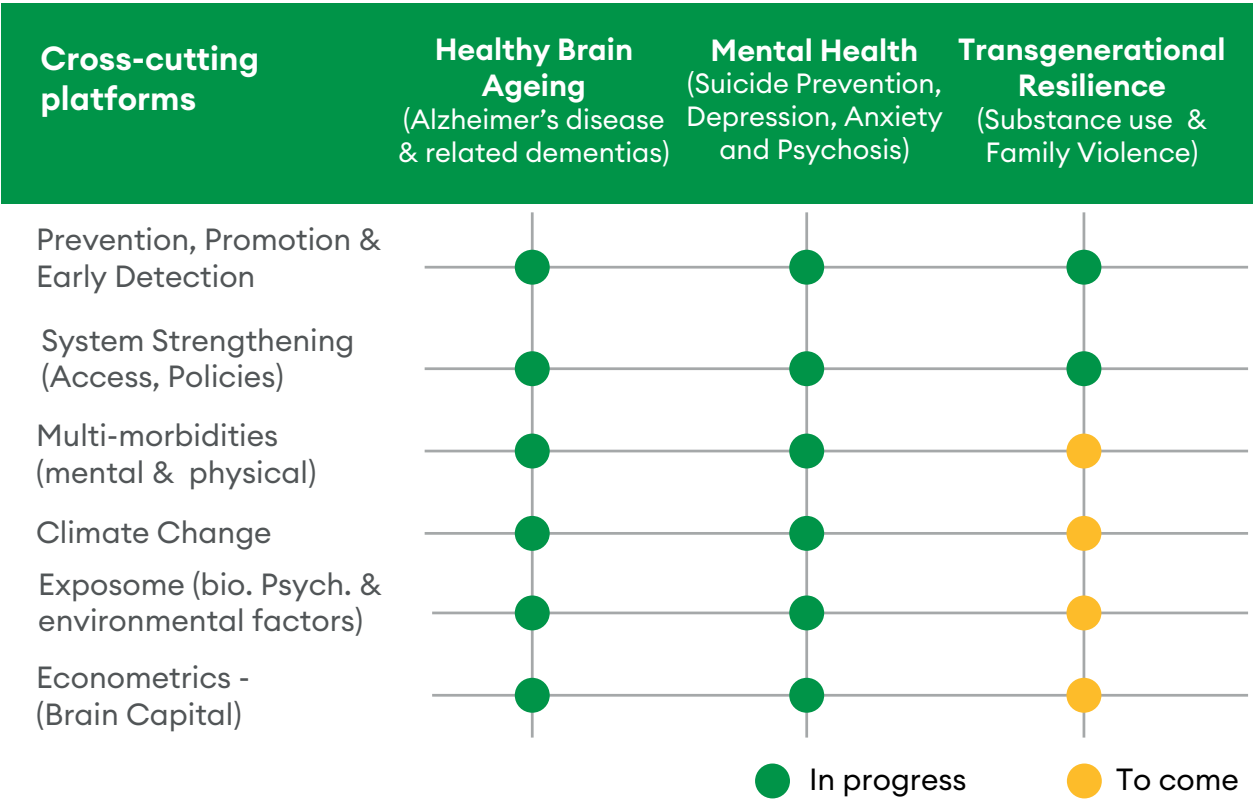
AKU's Integrated Mental Health Framework





Our Strategic Areas of Focus

Impact of stress & trauma on mental & brain health



Five years of Growth & Influence

Over its first five years, the Brain and Mind Institute has evolved into a recognised platform for brain and mental health leadership across Africa and South and Central Asia. The timeline below highlights key milestones, showing how the Institute's work has grown in reach, partnerships and influence.

Formal Launch and Early Wins

- Formal announcement of the BMI by the founding Chancellor, His Late Highness Aga Khan IV
- Integrated mental health framework put in place
- Awarded first major grant: Uzima – Data Science for Mental Health

2021

International Recognition

- Launched the Brain Resilience Kenya project supported by Wellcome Leap and Temasek Trust
- Signed a collaborative MoU with Davos Alzheimer's Collaborative
- Hosted BMI's first Global Brain Health Conference in Nairobi
- Launch of the mPareshan (m-distress) programme at communities doorstep in Pakistan

2023

Continental & Global Presence

- Hosted the second BMI Global Conference in Karachi, strengthening South-South collaboration
- Launched the AKDN Integrated Mental Health Programme in Northern Pakistan connecting entities and people to nurture mental well-being

2025



2020

Inception & Strategic Foundations

- Approval by the university leadership and board of trustees
- Vision set to advance brain and mental health across East Africa and South/Central Asia
- Landmark philanthropic gift awarded by Waverley House Foundation to set up Brain and Mind Institute
- International expert advisory committee established

2022

Global Thought Leadership

- Launched the Mental Health Ambassadorship training programme
- Hosted the Lancet-WPA Commission on Depression in Africa, convening global and regional leaders
- Convened an institution-wide Strategic Planning meeting in Kenya

2024

Expansion and Scale

- Launched multiple new strategic projects
- Official launch of AFRICA-FINGERS, a multi-country dementia prevention trial
- Hosted the first Nature Conference in Africa on Dementia in collaboration with Davos Alzheimer's Collaborative
- Launched the Living Labs ecosystems (cohorts) in Kenya and Pakistan

***See Impact
on next page***

Impact at a Glance



\$14M+
research funding
secured



270+
peer-reviewed
publications



20+
active projects
across brain and
mental health



6500+
reached through
engagement
(webinars and events)



11000+
people trained



70+
researchers and
practitioners

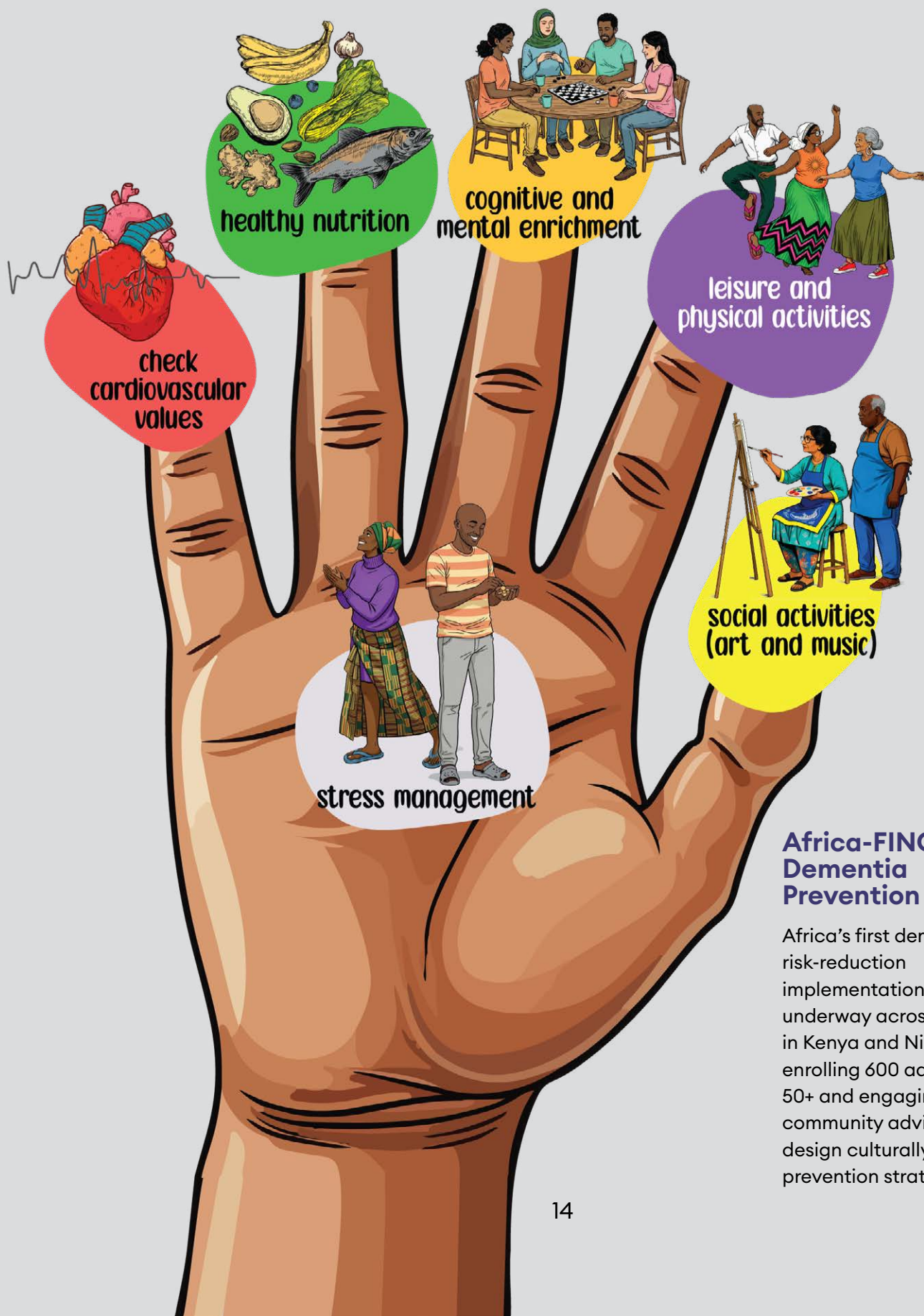


BMI's brain health programmes have led to the largest structural brain aging study in East Africa

▶ Healthy Brain Aging

BMI is advancing one of Africa's most comprehensive healthy brain aging portfolios, addressing the full pathway from prevention, early detection and care, resilience and systems change.

BMI's brain health programmes have led to the largest structural brain aging study in East Africa, developed African-derived resilience models and created a Kenya-adapted brain age model using 100 local brain scans.



Africa-FINGERS: Dementia Prevention

Africa's first dementia risk-reduction implementation trial is underway across 6 sites in Kenya and Nigeria, enrolling 600 adults aged 50+ and engaging 80+ community advisors to co-design culturally relevant prevention strategies.



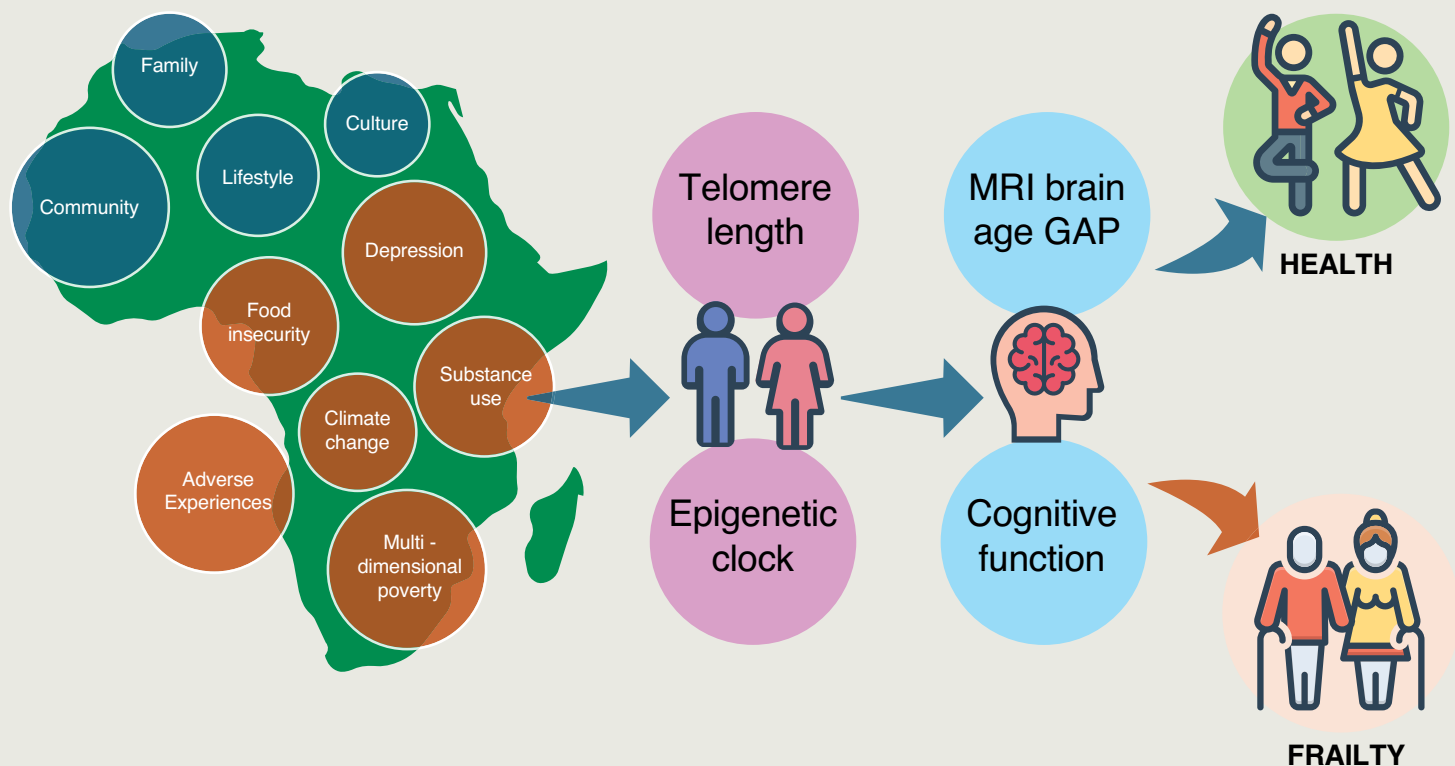
Attitudes and Perceptions of Dementia in Kenya

One of the first in-depth studies of dementia experiences in Kenya revealed how stigma, cultural misconceptions and limited awareness delay diagnosis and care, often leaving families to navigate dementia with little support. The research highlighted the hidden burden carried by caregivers, most of them women, and identified critical gaps in dementia services, workforce capacity and care pathways. These findings are helping shape national conversations on dementia, informing workforce training and awareness efforts, and laying the groundwork for more timely, person-centred dementia care in Kenya.

B-HAP Kenya: Brain Health Assessment

BMI successfully completed the Brain Health Assessment Protocol–Kenya, advancing fair and culturally relevant tools for healthy aging and dementia detection. Working with 155 adults aged 45+ in Nairobi, the project validated cognitive assessments across memory, attention, language and problem-solving, with over 90% task completion rates. By accounting for multilingualism, education and local context, B-HAP created critical local reference data that will improve diagnosis, strengthen research and support earlier detection of cognitive decline in Kenya and across Africa

BRAIN-RESILIENCE-KENYA Study
Design: Qualitative (Ethnographic) and Quantitative
Longitudinal Mixed Methods



Medical
Anthropology Core

Biomarker
Core

Oncology
Core

Imaging and
Cognition Core

45 ----- Age Span ----- 90



Brain Resilience Kenya (BRK): Understanding What Protects the Aging Brain

BRK is providing some of the first African evidence on why some people maintain strong cognitive health despite adversity. Emerging findings show that early-life poverty and hunger are among the strongest predictors of cognitive ageing, while education, safety, social connection, and vascular health help protect brain function later in life. The study is generating critical African evidence to inform strategies for healthy brain ageing and contributing to global understanding of brain resilience.

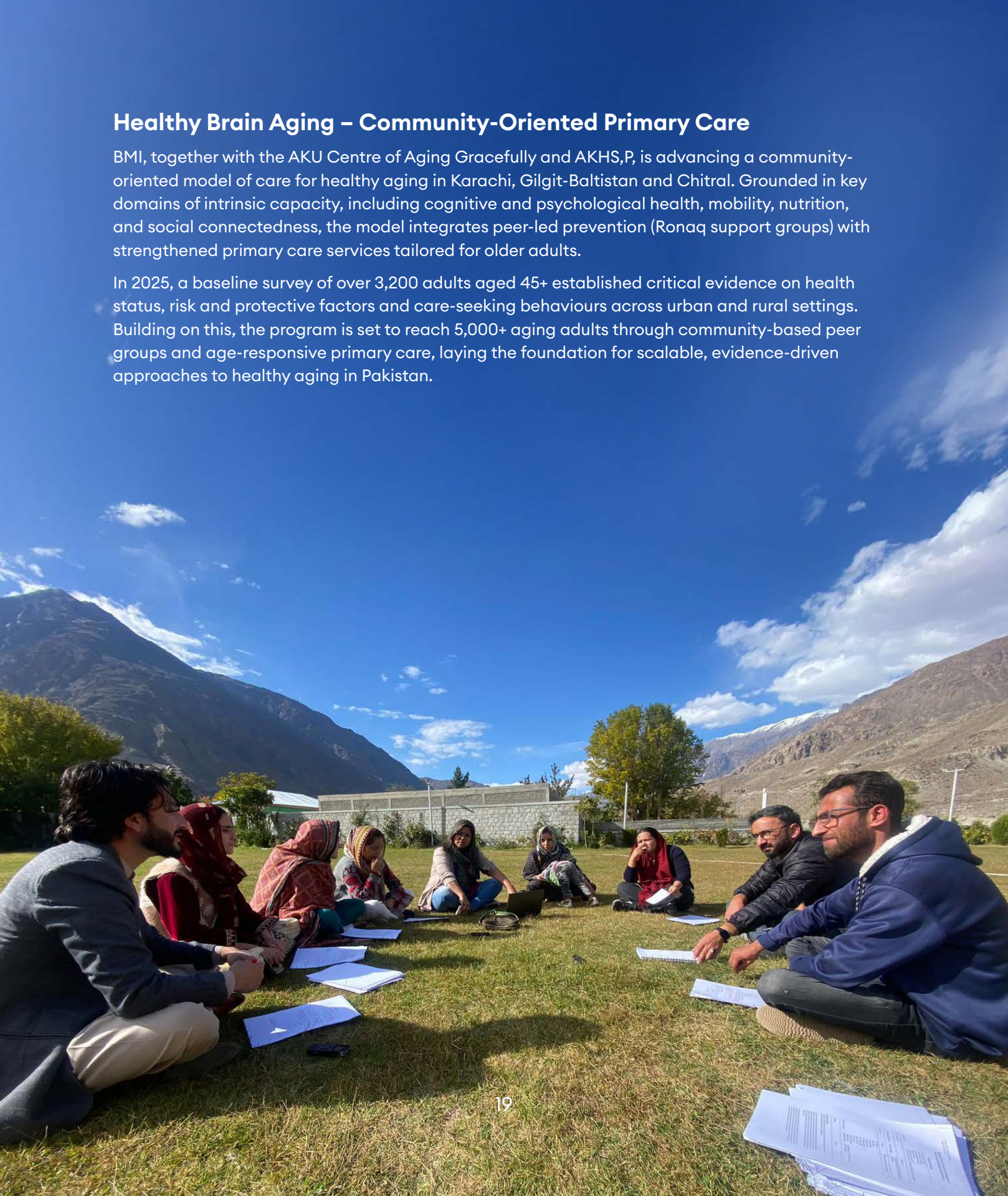
Dr Karen Blackmon, Principal Investigator, BRK; Prof Zul Merali, Founding Director, Brain and Mind Institute; Dr Chi-Udeh Momoh, Principal Investigator, BRK; Dr Rebecca Kiptui, Ministry of Health; Prof Lukoye Atwoli, Deputy Director, Brain and Mind Institute; and Dr Mansoor Saleh during the dissemination event.



Healthy Brain Aging – Community-Oriented Primary Care

BMI, together with the AKU Centre of Aging Gracefully and AKHS,P, is advancing a community-oriented model of care for healthy aging in Karachi, Gilgit-Baltistan and Chitral. Grounded in key domains of intrinsic capacity, including cognitive and psychological health, mobility, nutrition, and social connectedness, the model integrates peer-led prevention (Ronaq support groups) with strengthened primary care services tailored for older adults.

In 2025, a baseline survey of over 3,200 adults aged 45+ established critical evidence on health status, risk and protective factors and care-seeking behaviours across urban and rural settings. Building on this, the program is set to reach 5,000+ aging adults through community-based peer groups and age-responsive primary care, laying the foundation for scalable, evidence-driven approaches to healthy aging in Pakistan.





The Genetics of PTSD in African Ancestry research staff pose for a group photo following the dissemination event.



Mental Health

Findings revealed a high burden of trauma, with 55% reporting probable lifetime PTSD and 21% recent symptoms, with women disproportionately affected

Understanding Trauma and PTSD in Urban Kenya

BMI conducted a population-based study in Nairobi with 4,017 participants, generating some of the strongest evidence to date on trauma in urban Kenya. Findings revealed a high burden of trauma, with 55% reporting probable lifetime PTSD and 21% recent symptoms, with women disproportionately affected. The study is informing scalable responses, including piloting the mobile-based STAIR Coach (Skills Training in Affective and Interpersonal Regulation) support tool to expand access to care.



Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) Among Adolescents

A national study by Shamiri Institute, in collaboration with BMI, found that one in five adolescents had experienced multiple forms of adversity. High exposure was strongly linked to mental health challenges, with 23.9% reporting moderate to severe depression and 21.4% reporting anxiety symptoms.

Adversity was also higher among vulnerable groups, including adolescents with one surviving parent (18% higher scores) and those facing academic difficulties (15% more likely to report high adversity), with a strong association with bullying, particularly among boys.

Findings are informing more preventive, school-based mental health responses.

What Works 2: Preventing Violence Against Women and Girls

Through the UK-funded What Works 2 programme, BMI is generating evidence from Pakistan on school-based, gender-transformative life skills programmes designed to reduce violence and strengthen adolescent wellbeing, resilience and gender-equitable attitudes. By examining how students, teachers, school leaders and families can collectively shape safer learning environments, the project is identifying scalable approaches that can reduce sexual harassment and peer violence while informing education policy and investment decisions in Pakistan and globally.





Innovation in Action

Community-Driven Research: The Living Labs Framework



Since 2023, the initiative has established long-term research platforms in Kenya and Northern Pakistan.

BMI's Living Labs place communities at the centre of research design, ensuring solutions are relevant, trusted and sustainable. Since 2023, the initiative has grown from community consultations and early studies in Kilifi County, Kenya, to established long-term research platforms in Kenya and Northern Pakistan.

In Kilifi, BMI engaged 65 stakeholders, conducted multiple studies on mental health, caregiving, climate stress and child development, and later enrolled 1,035 adolescents, adults and older adults in baseline research. In 2025, 33 Community Health Promoters and Community Health Assistants were trained in ethics, screening and digital data collection, strengthening local research capacity.

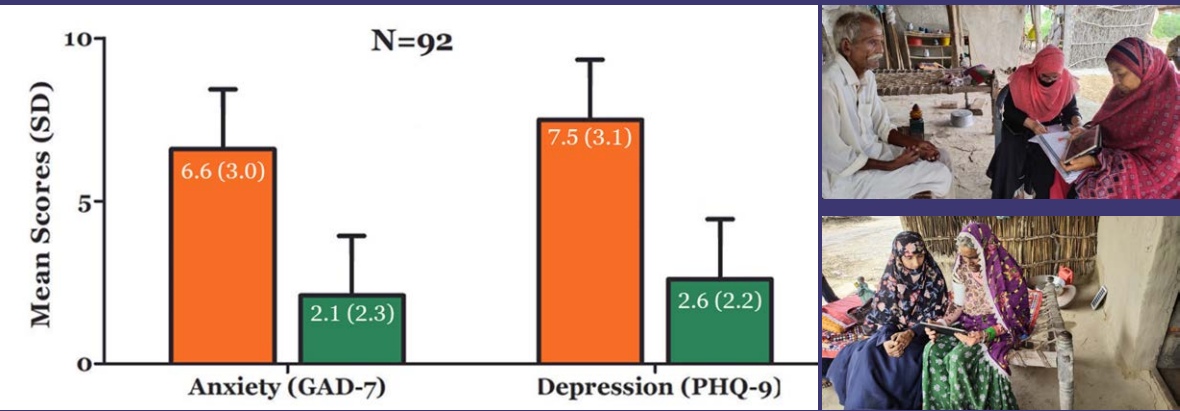
Now expanding across South and Central Asia, the model is generating locally led solutions for mental wellbeing, family violence, substance use and healthy ageing.

mPareshan: Expanding Access to Mental Health Care Through Digital Innovation

BMI developed mPareshan, a digital intervention enabling Lady Health Workers to deliver community-based support for anxiety and depression in rural Sindh, including flood-affected areas. Implemented between 2021 and 2023, the programme reached vulnerable populations, with women representing 46% of those impacted.

The intervention led to significant reductions in anxiety and depression while strengthening the health workforce, training 72 health workers and contributing to a cascade model reaching 30 districts. It also supported systems change, with mental health integrated into the Lady Health Worker curriculum and contributions to provincial policy.

Recognised in a World Health Organization evidence brief, mPareshan is informing national and global policy conversations on digital mental health and service innovation in low-resource settings.



Deploying lady health workers



Screening and providing support for mental ill health at the doorstep



Referral to higher levels of care when needed

Deployment by AKDN/ AKHS being designed



Impacted policy and is being adapted by the Sindh government



Being considered by WHO as a potential tool for climate change related interventions



UZIMA–Data Science: Using Data to Advance Mental Health in Kenya

Healthcare Workers: Uncovering a Workforce Mental Health Crisis

UZIMA-DS generated important evidence on the mental health of healthcare workers in Kenya, finding that 43.1% experienced major depressive symptoms during follow-up. The study identified workplace discrimination, stressful life events and limited social support as key drivers, while demonstrating the feasibility of using digital tools for real-time mental health monitoring to support workforce wellbeing and early intervention.

University Students: Understanding Mental Health in Young Adulthood

Following more than 4,500 first-year university students, UZIMA-DS is generating new evidence on mental health during a critical life transition. Early findings highlight high levels of stress, loneliness, depression and anxiety, alongside barriers to seeking care. The study is helping inform more responsive and accessible mental health support for students in higher education.





Capacity Building



Through its capacity-building programmes, BMI has reached 11,000+ individuals across East Africa and South/Central Asia

Community and Youth Capacity Building

Community and youth leaders are often the first point of support when distress becomes visible, yet many lack the training and pathways needed to respond effectively.

Through its capacity-building programmes, BMI has reached 11,000+ individuals across East Africa and South/Central Asia, equipping communities with practical skills to recognise distress, respond with empathy, strengthen resilience and connect people to care.

Key initiatives included:

1,000 religious and community leaders trained in Mental Health First Response

2,052 healthcare workers, leaders and patients reached through wellbeing programmes

5,635 participants engaged in resilience-building initiatives

1,926 children, caregivers and educators reached through youth wellbeing programmes

757 researchers and professionals trained in brain health, neuroethics and research capacity development

400 professionals reached through artificial intelligence seminars and research application workshops

150 community members engaged in healthy aging education programmes

Academic and Research Capacity Building

Bridging gaps in dementia research and care

Dementia care in East Africa remains under-developed, with limited specialist capacity and weak links between research, clinical services and community support.

BRIDGE Africa brings together regional and international expertise to strengthen research and care systems, improving diagnostics, advancing methodologies and building local capacity.

This work is helping to create more coherent care pathways and a stronger foundation for future research and service delivery across the region.



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African College of Neuropsychopharmacology (AfCNP)

BMI hosts the African College of Neuropsychopharmacology (AfCNP), providing structured training for early-career researchers in neuroscience and mental health, and strengthening the pipeline of African-led research. Across the first two cohorts:

- 48 early-career researchers completed the AfCNP School
- Participants represented 16 African countries
- Training covered core areas including neurobiology, trauma, substance use, research methods, ethics and scientific communication

Beyond the annual school, AfCNP has expanded access to learning and professional development through:

- Webinars reaching 500+ participants
- Regional symposia and conference sessions
- Mentorship and networking opportunities that support longer-term career development

Global Mental Health Postdoctoral Fellowship Programme

Building a strong pipeline of research leaders is essential to advancing locally relevant mental health research. In East Africa and South and Central Asia, this means creating opportunities for early-career scientists to grow into leadership roles.

In partnership with Harvard Medical School, BMI established the Global Mental Health Postdoctoral Fellowship Programme to support advanced research training and leadership development, strengthening the next generation of research leaders.

- The programme is designed to prioritise depth, quality and long-term contribution:
- Two fellows selected annually

- Two-year fellowship combining advanced research and leadership development
- Emphasis on implementation-focused research with real-world relevance

Since inception:

- 4 fellows have been selected
- Fellows have been based across Kenya and Pakistan
- Three fellows have completed advanced training at Harvard Medical School and returned to implement research projects within their home contexts



In partnership with Harvard Medical School, BMI established the Global Mental Health Postdoctoral Fellowship Programme to support advanced research training and leadership development, strengthening the next generation of research leaders.

Dr Moses Kachama (Kenya), a first-cohort fellow, and Dr Shireen Bhamani (Pakistan), a second-cohort fellow, in the fellowship programme.

nature conferences

The Future of
Dementia in Africa:
Advancing Global
Partnerships

Engagements, Partnerships & Influence



Institutional Convening and Network Building



During the Nature Africa Conference on Dementia: (From left to right) Vaibhav Narayan, Executive Vice President and Head of Strategy and Innovation, DAC; Dr Mie Rizig, Clinical Senior Research Fellow, UCL Queen Square Institute of Neurology; Prof. Zul Merali, Founding Director, Brain and Mind Institute; Dr Chi Udeh-Momoh, Translational Neuroscientist, Brain and Mind Institute; and George Vradenburg, Founding Chairman of the Board, DAC.

Over its first five years, BMI has grown into a platform for dialogue, partnership and exchange, bringing together research, policy and practice across Africa, South and Central Asia and beyond.

Through 27 webinars, roundtables and stakeholder forums, and two major international conferences, the Institute has engaged policymakers, researchers, practitioners and civil society, strengthening collaboration and elevating regionally grounded evidence within global conversations.

Key milestones include co-hosting the first Nature Conference in Africa on dementia, hosting the AAIC Neuroscience Next Nairobi Hub, convening two BMI Global Biannual Conferences in Nairobi and Karachi with 900+ participants, launching the Lancet–World Psychiatric Association Commission on Depression in Africa, and convening national forums on youth suicide prevention and childhood adversity.

Strategic Regional and Global Engagements

BMI's engagement strategy has prioritised two complementary goals: ensuring that low- and middle-income country perspectives are represented within influential global platforms and strengthening regional ecosystems for collaboration in brain and mental health.

As part of this effort, BMI leadership has contributed to high-level global platforms including:

- The World Dementia Council
- The Davos Alzheimer's Collaborative Brain House at the World Economic Forum
- The UN Science Summit
- The Vatican Symposium on Global Aging

Participation in these forums has enabled BMI to contribute evidence and perspectives grounded in African and South Asian contexts, while engaging directly with global stakeholders shaping priorities for ageing, dementia and mental health.



Strengthening Trans-AKU and AKDN Collaboration

Across its hubs in East Africa and South and Central Asia, BMI has played a growing strategic role in advancing mental health as a cross-cutting priority across Aga Khan University and the wider Aga Khan Development Network (AKDN).

BMI contributed to the development of an integrated mental health framework spanning AKU and sister AKDN agencies. This work has supported alignment of programmes, expertise and institutional resources across education, health, community development and policy domains.

This reflects BMI's evolving role not only as a research institute, but as a strategic connector and catalyst within a wider institutional ecosystem.





A Systems Approach to Mental Health: The Integrated Mental Health Programme

BMI is a core partner in a joint AKDN mental health program in Northern Pakistan, delivering a stepped-care model across Gilgit-Baltistan and Chitral that serves over 500,000 people. Since 2021, the program has strengthened community resilience, trained frontline providers in early detection and care, and expanded access to psychologists and psychiatrists through both in-person services and telemedicine.

Since 2023, the Tandruti Community Program (TCP) has been delivered by 140 community volunteers to 5,000+ parents, with significant reductions in depression, anxiety and suicidality. As demand and awareness have grown, 1,632 patients have accessed psychological care and nearly 8,000 have received psychiatric services (over 4,500 via telemedicine), alongside 600 counselling calls through a local-language helpline. Now adopted and scaled by AKHS, TCP is embedding a sustainable, community-driven model for mental health care in remote regions.



Decriminalization of Suicide in Kenya

Kenya's High Court ruling declaring Section 226 of the Penal Code unconstitutional marked a major shift, reframing suicide attempts from a criminal offence to a public health issue grounded in human rights and modern mental health policy.

BMI contributed to advocacy and technical engagement alongside national institutions and professional bodies, including the Kenya National Commission on Human Rights and the Kenya Psychiatric Association. The reform has created space for more compassionate, care-centred responses by reducing stigma, strengthening access to treatment and psychosocial support, and aligning legal frameworks with national mental health priorities.

Faith and Community Engagement in Legal Reform

Faith leaders play a powerful role in shaping public attitudes and community norms around mental health.

BMI co-convoked a Religious Leaders Forum on Suicide Prevention and Decriminalisation with the Ministry of Health and national partners, bringing together senior faith leaders, policymakers and mental health professionals. The forum resulted in a unified call to repeal punitive provisions in the Penal Code.

This engagement highlights the role of cross-sector collaboration in shifting public discourse and supporting policy change, particularly where cultural and religious leadership shapes how mental health is understood.



Informing Policy on Tobacco and Emerging Nicotine Products

BMI researchers, in collaboration with the National Taxpayers Association (NTA) and national stakeholders, co-authored a landmark report on emerging tobacco and nicotine products in Kenya, generating critical local evidence on consumption patterns, health risks, illicit trade, and gaps in existing regulation. This work has strengthened the evidence base informing policy discussions on tobacco control reform, including taxation, enforcement, and the regulation of new-generation nicotine products.



The Future

BMI's next phase focuses on building on five years of progress, driving research innovation, expanding capacity and deepening engagement with policy and practice to drive sustained impact.

Driving Research Innovation

Priorities include expanding longitudinal studies using our living lab ecosystem, advancing digital and community based mental health through a clinical trial of mPareshan, establishing memory clinics in Kenya and Pakistan, and strengthening locally led brain health research. A new Centre on Transgenerational Resilience will further advance interdisciplinary research across the life course.

In collaboration with the Aga Khan University Hospital, we aim to create Africa's first Brain Health Centre, to serve as a regional hub for innovation in research and care.

Scaling Capacity

Efforts will focus on expanding mental health first response training, expanding postdoctoral fellowships and early-career pipelines and developing new learning platforms for wider audiences, moving toward more sustainable ecosystems for research and leadership.

Deepening Policy Engagement

BMI will strengthen sustained engagement with policymakers and institutions, supporting the translation of evidence into policy, building relationships with ministries and regulators, and contributing to continental initiatives such as the 6 x 5 Plan (A 5-year framework focused on dementia management amid growing aging-related health concerns, building on a journey that began when the Davos Alzheimer's Collaborative and the Brain and Mind Institute hosted the first-ever Nature Conference on the African continent).

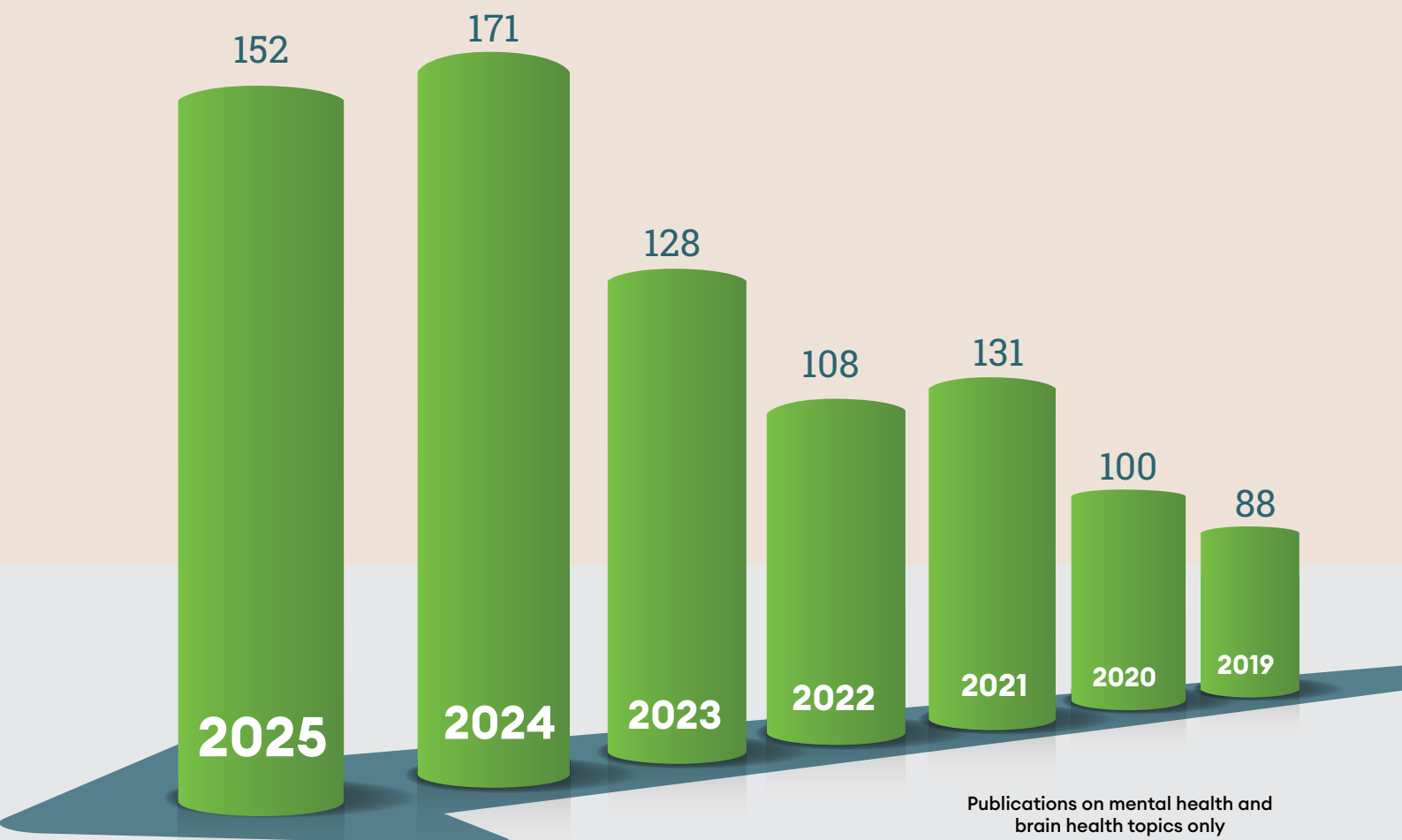
Additionally, in collaboration with the Ministry of Health and other stakeholders, BMI is developing the dementia action plan, with plans to launch in 2026.



Doubling of Brain and Mental Health Research Output at AKU

The Brain and Mind Institute was established to advance research on brain and mental health challenges that affect communities across Africa and South and Central Asia. To understand its contribution, we analyzed Aga Khan University publications related to key brain and mental health topics, including mental health, depression, anxiety, suicide, substance use, dementia, Alzheimer’s disease, neuroscience, brain health, psychiatry, psychology, and psychosis.

By comparing publication output before and after the Institute’s establishment, we illustrate the growth in research activity and the expanding body of evidence being generated in these critical fields.



With Gratitude

We thank our generous funders, strategic partners and communities for walking this journey with us. Your support powers progress, shapes science and policy and changes lives.

Funders and Donors



Partners

1. Universities (Harvard Medical School, University of Michigan, Dartmouth College, University of Capetown, Moi University, McGill University, The University of Nairobi, Kenyatta University, Newcastle University, Stellenbosch University, Georgetown University)
2. Government Organizations (Ministries of Health, Kenya & Pakistan, Kilifi County, Gilgit Baltistan, Sindh)
3. National and Community NGOs (Shamiri Institute, Befrienders Kenya, Futbol Mas, Nivishe Foundation, Taskeen, Chezacheza)
4. Foundation and NGOs (Medtronic LABS, African Dementia Consortium, Alzheimer's Disease International, Worldwide FINGERS, Global Dementia Prevention Program)

Where it all began

In 2021, the Waverly House Foundation made a visionary seed investment that led to the establishment of the Brain and Mind Institute at Aga Khan University. More than funding a new institute, this gift laid the foundation for a bold vision: advancing brain and mental health research in regions where the need is immense but investment has historically been limited.

What began as a seed grant has grown into a thriving institute that is generating new knowledge, training future leaders, influencing policy and building partnerships across Africa and South and Central Asia. Every milestone we have reached traces back to that initial act of belief in what was possible.

As we look to the next five years, we are building on that foundation by establishing an Afro-Asian Brain Health Incubator that will nurture the next generation of precision brain health science. By bringing together researchers, innovators, clinicians and communities across two continents, we aim to accelerate equitable brain health innovation where it is needed most.

The need has never been greater, and neither has the opportunity. The Waverly House Foundation's early investment made this journey possible, and its impact continues to shape a future in which better brain health is within reach for millions of people.

From left to right: Prof. Zul Merali, Founding Director, Brain and Mind Institute; Meghan Hanley, Director, Waverly House Foundation; Dr Sulaiman Shahabuddin, President, Aga Khan University; Bruce McKean, Founder, Waverly House Foundation; and Prof. Lukoye Atwoli, Deputy Director, Brain and Mind Institute.







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