



Mental Health in All Policies: what, why and how?

PROMENS workshop 26th November 2025

Workshop by: Nina Bos (Trimbos-institute)



Co-funded by
the European Union

What is mental health in all policies?

Mental Health in All Policies (MHiAP) is **an approach to promote population mental health and wellbeing** by initiating and facilitating action within **different non-health public policy areas**.

MHiAP emphasises the impacts of public policies on mental health determinants, **strives to reduce mental health inequalities**, aims to highlight the **opportunities offered by mental health to different policy areas**, and **reinforces the accountability of policy-makers for mental health impact**.





Do you want to discover how to transform public mental health?

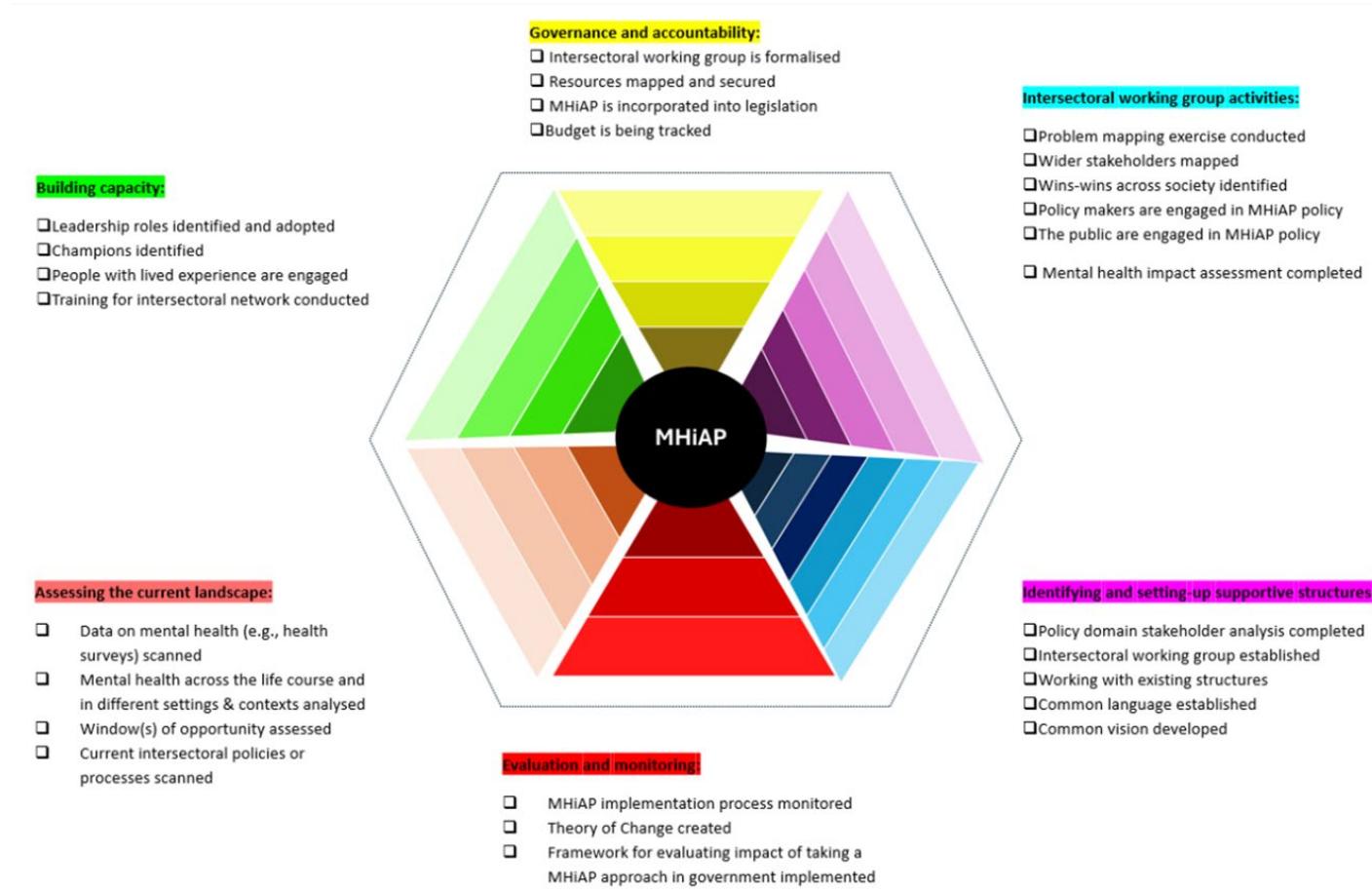
- The social economic determinants of mental health
- Learn how to move upstream and influence public mental health at the policy level through the Mental Health in All Policies approach
- Get hands-on with a new practical tool designed to help you advance Mental Health in All Policies in your country

What we will cover:

1. The social and economic determinants of mental health: a brief overview
2. Why Mental Health in All Policies is a good solution moving forward
3. Breaking it down:
 1. How to get started with Mental Health In All Policies
 2. How to get going with Mental Health in All Policies
4. The Mental Health in All Policies Target Tool: time to get to work!



Sneak peek





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Who is in the room today (name, country & role)

- ⓘ The Slido app must be installed on every computer you're presenting from

The social and economic determinants of mental health: a brief overview

Determinants of mental health include (but are not limited to):

- Education (lack of/ interrupted/ higher)
- Employment (job stability/security/ working condition)
- Housing (housing instability/ housing stability/ homelessness/ housing quality/ housing availability)
- Income (income stability/ income instability)
- Neighbourhood conditions (physical/ social environment/ safe/ hazardous)
- Food security (lack of/ enough of)
- Childhood situation (adversity/ lack of adversity/ support)
- Social support (lack of/ enough of)
- Discrimination (free from/ impacted by)
- Accessibility to healthcare (affordability/ lack of access)

Intersectoral approaches for mental health also bring benefits to these sectors: a win-win.



Exposure to risk is not equally distributed across populations

SOCIAL DETERMINANTS AND SOCIAL NEEDS: MOVING BEYOND MIDSTREAM



Looking against the current → moving upstream to address these factors through laws, policies and regulations.

Some examples..

Employment:

A report from 2022 by Mcdaid and Park concludes that investing in prevention for mental health could be cost-effective, with evidence drawn from the UK. For example, a review found that on average, for every pound that is invested in mental health in the workplace, 5 pounds are saved (McDaid & Park, 2022).

Countries with strong workplace mental health policies, like Sweden, report higher overall life satisfaction and lower social isolation (OECD, 2013).

Some examples..

Housing:

Housing one long-term houseless person saves about 15,000 euros per year in Finland (Y-Foundation, 2017).

Secure housing fosters stronger community relationships, as people are more likely to engage in local activities when they have stable living conditions. Affordable housing decreases reliance on emergency shelters, food assistance programs, and other social services (Constellation Consulting Group, 2023).

Some examples..

Income:

Ensuring income security also enables individuals to pursue further education and training, invest in their children's future, etc thereby improving employment and educational outcomes for themselves and in future generation (Knapp et al., 2011).

Income stability creates space for innovation, potential entrepreneurship and empowerment. At the same time this has a positive impact on crime and violence (Nicolaou et al., 2025).

Some examples..

Social support

Improvements in social cohesion at the population level result in significant cost savings, particularly due to reduced healthcare utilisation (including emergency room visits, specialised health care, etc.) (Nicolaou et al., 2025).

So why Mental Health in All Policies?

- Recognizes social and economic determinant across various policy domains to be essential for both promoting mental well-being and preventing mental ill-health
- Underscores the responsibility for mental health beyond the health sector
- Can yield significant benefits for improved mental health and other relevant outcomes





A National Mental Health Action Plan vs. MHiAP: what's the difference?

A number of countries in Europe and globally have a policy at national level that aims to address mental health. For example, a national plan on mental health may provide objectives on ensuring the availability and accessibility of mental health care or state a commitment to community participation in mental health service development. For the most part, such national plans outline expectations and commitments of the mental health system and the approach to providing mental health care.

MHiAP, rather than being a singular plan or program, is a way of working that involves bringing together policy makers from across departments and sectors. MHiAP means working towards results that can be considered win-wins as they are in the interest of mental health and other policy areas. MHiAP is an approach or method of policy development.

Note: a national mental health plan can be developed in a MHiAP format. This would mean that it has been developed with stakeholders outside of mental health and has the intention of improving outcomes outside of mental health (in addition to mental health outcomes). For example, a stakeholder may suggest that healthy lunches should be mandatorily available in schools: this would have benefits on health as well as mental health of children (and on children's learning ability (education)), but could be included in the national plan on mental health.



An integrated care approach vs. MHiAP: what's the difference?

Integrated care, also referred to as intersectoral care, can be defined as (mental) health services that are managed and delivered in a way that the care received is from a continuum of health promotion, disease prevention, diagnosis, treatment, disease management, rehabilitation, and palliative care services, which is coordinated across the different levels and sites of care within and beyond the health sector (Thornicroft et al., 2018). It refers to the structure of care, the way that services are organised and the manner in which care is received.

Where integrated care is focused on mental health services, MHiAP is an approach to policy making that occurs across departments at national (e.g., Ministry) or local (e.g., municipal) level. MHiAP is about integrating decision-makers from different departments to work on policy in a way that keeps mental health in mind, while also benefiting other outcomes. MHiAP or HiAP approaches sometimes go by a different term, for example a whole-of-government approach (Poliquin, 2022) or inter-ministerial collaboration on mental health or health equity in policy.

Note: If your mental health services in your country delivers integrated care, this is an important aspect within mental health systems development but is not the same thing as taking a MHiAP approach in policymaking.



In different contexts, following a MHiAP has different names such as a Whole of Government approach or a Cross-Domain approach.

The elements that these approaches have in common can be distilled into:

- **Involvement:** there are multiple stakeholders from different sectors/ domains involved in the process of developing, reviewing and updating policy
- **Intention:** the aim of the approach is to benefit population mental health as well as outcomes in other policy areas
- **Impact:** the outcome of the policy or action is evident, intentional and benefits across multiple policy domains

Core requirements for a MHiAP approach (WHO, 2025)

- Political will
- Stakeholder engagement
- Financial resources
- Accountability mechanisms

The European Joint Action Mental Health Together (MENTOR)

What is this project and why is MHiAP part of it?

- Collaborative EU project funded by the EC and Member States
- Launched in October 2024
- Goal: promoting mental health and well-being at both individual and population levels through sustainable, long-term strategies.
- Key focus: elevating mental health as a priority across all sectors using the MHiAP approach.



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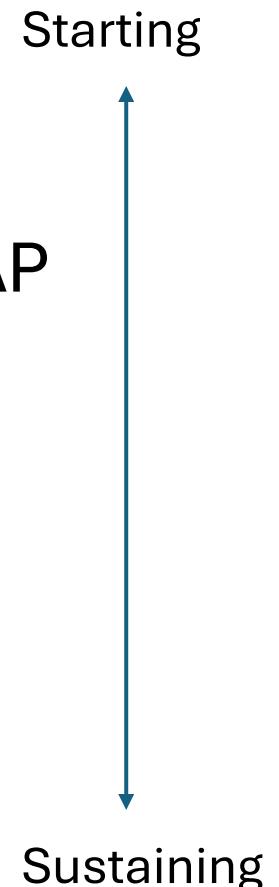
Our task (Trimbos institute and RIVM)

To support policy makers at national and regional government levels in the **design, implementation, and improvement** of mental health in all policies approaches



Six chapters:

1. Assessing the current landscape for MHiAP
2. Identifying and setting up supportive structures for MHiAP
3. Building capacity
4. Intersectoral working group activities
5. Governance and accountability
6. Evaluation and monitoring



Assessing the current landscape for MHiAP

- Finding the right moment: windows of opportunity
- Scanning the current situation

Identifying and setting up supportive structures for MHiAP

- Stakeholder mapping to enable collaboration
- Setting up an intersectoral working group
- Working with existing structures
- How to communicate about MHiAP
- Developing a common vision

Building capacity

- Identifying and adopting leadership roles
- Identifying and working with champions
- Engaging people with lived experience
- Training for the intersectoral working group

Intersectoral working group activities

- Mapping stakeholders
- Identifying wins across sectors
- Mental health impact assessment
- Engaging the public in policy
- Engaging other policy makers in the MHiAP approach
- External communication

Governance and accountability

- Formalisation of the working group
- Resources and joint budgeting
- Incorporating MHiAP into legislation

Evaluation and monitoring

- The MHiAP process
- Qualitative & quantitative
- Broader impact of MHiAP approach

But how?

The MHiAP target tool offers a simple and visual way to map out where your country, region or municipality stands in relation to the MHiAP approach. It is divided into key zones that are relevant to both initiating and sustaining MHiAP efforts.

Action zones →

Checkpoints →

Building capacity:

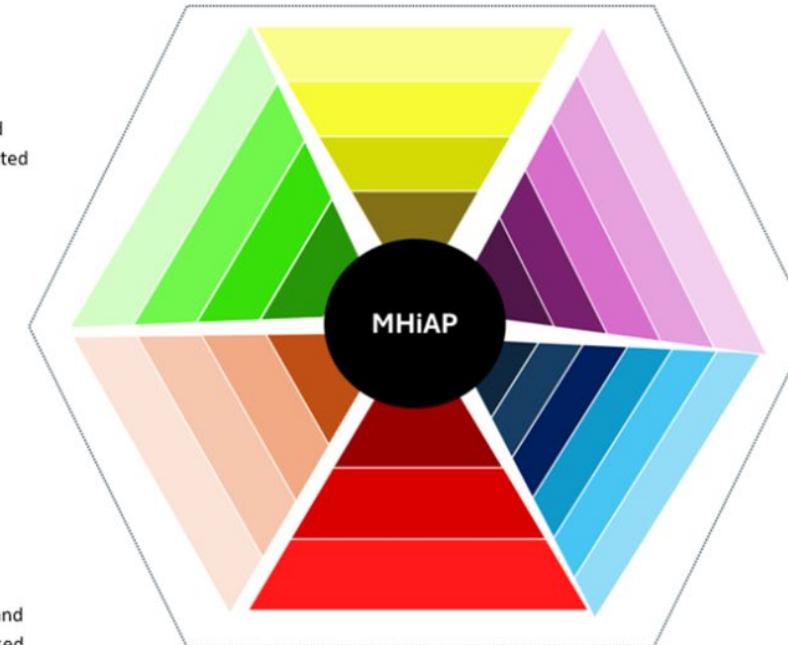
- Leadership roles identified and adopted
- Champions identified
- People with lived experience are engaged
- Training for intersectoral network conducted

Governance and accountability:

- Intersectoral working group is formalised
- Resources mapped and secured
- MHiAP is incorporated into legislation
- Budget is being tracked

Intersectoral working group activities:

- Problem mapping exercise conducted
- Wider stakeholders mapped
- Wins-wins across society identified
- Policy makers are engaged in MHiAP policy
- The public are engaged in MHiAP policy
- Mental health impact assessment completed



Assessing the current landscape:

- Data on mental health (e.g., health surveys) scanned
- Mental health across the life course and in different settings & contexts analysed
- Window(s) of opportunity assessed
- Current intersectoral policies or processes scanned

Evaluation and monitoring:

- MHiAP implementation process monitored
- Theory of Change created
- Framework for evaluating impact of taking a MHiAP approach in government implemented

Identifying and setting-up supportive structures:

- Policy domain stakeholder analysis completed
- Intersectoral working group established
- Working with existing structures
- Common language established
- Common vision developed

That might look something like...

Building capacity:

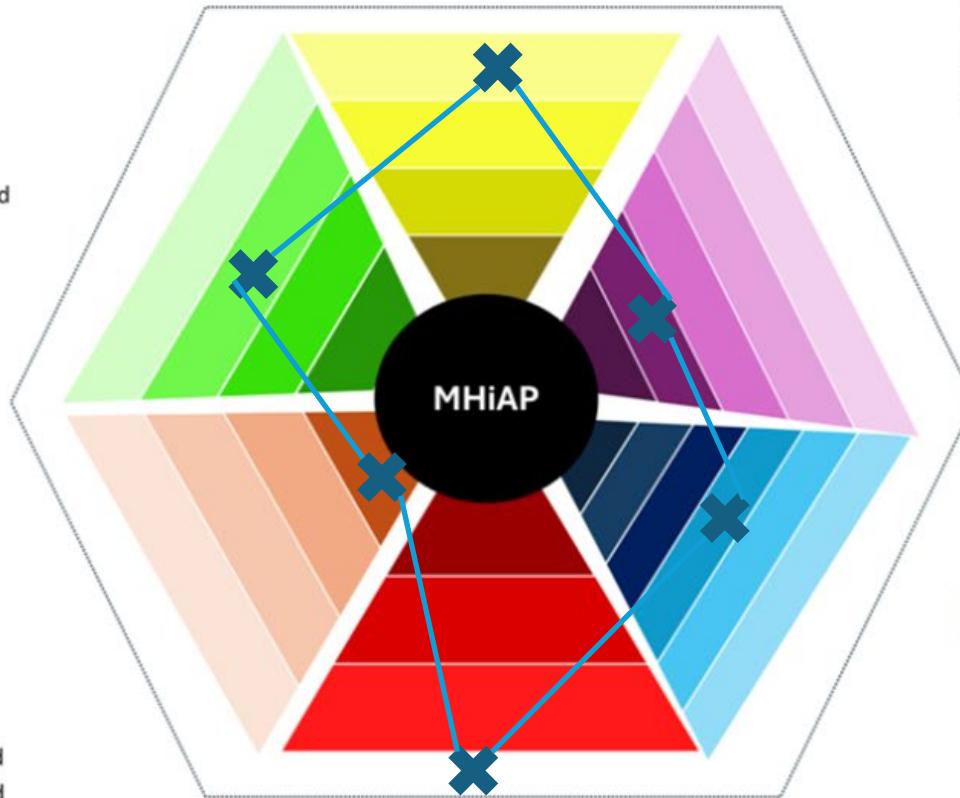
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Assessing the current landscape:

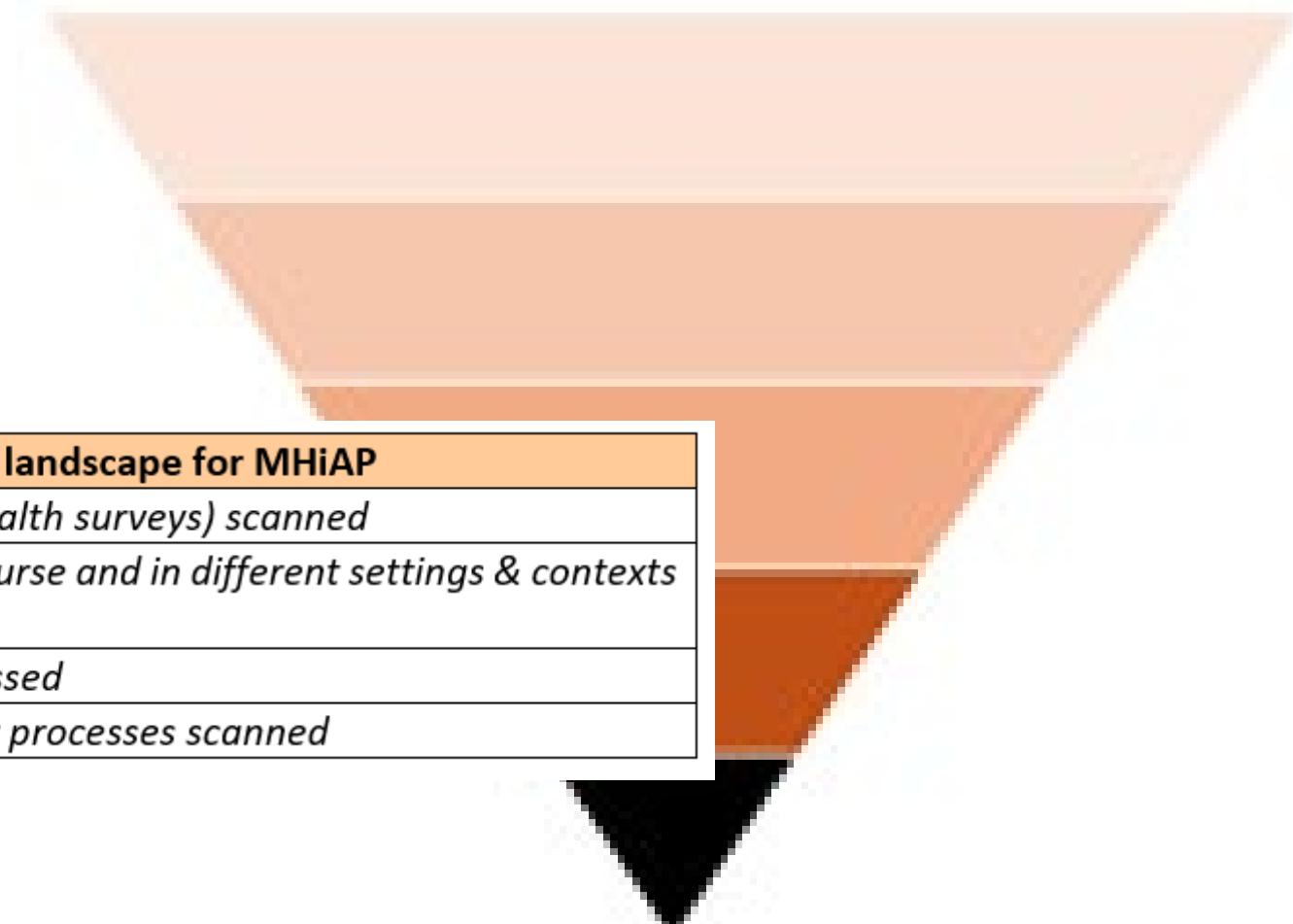
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Evaluation and monitoring:

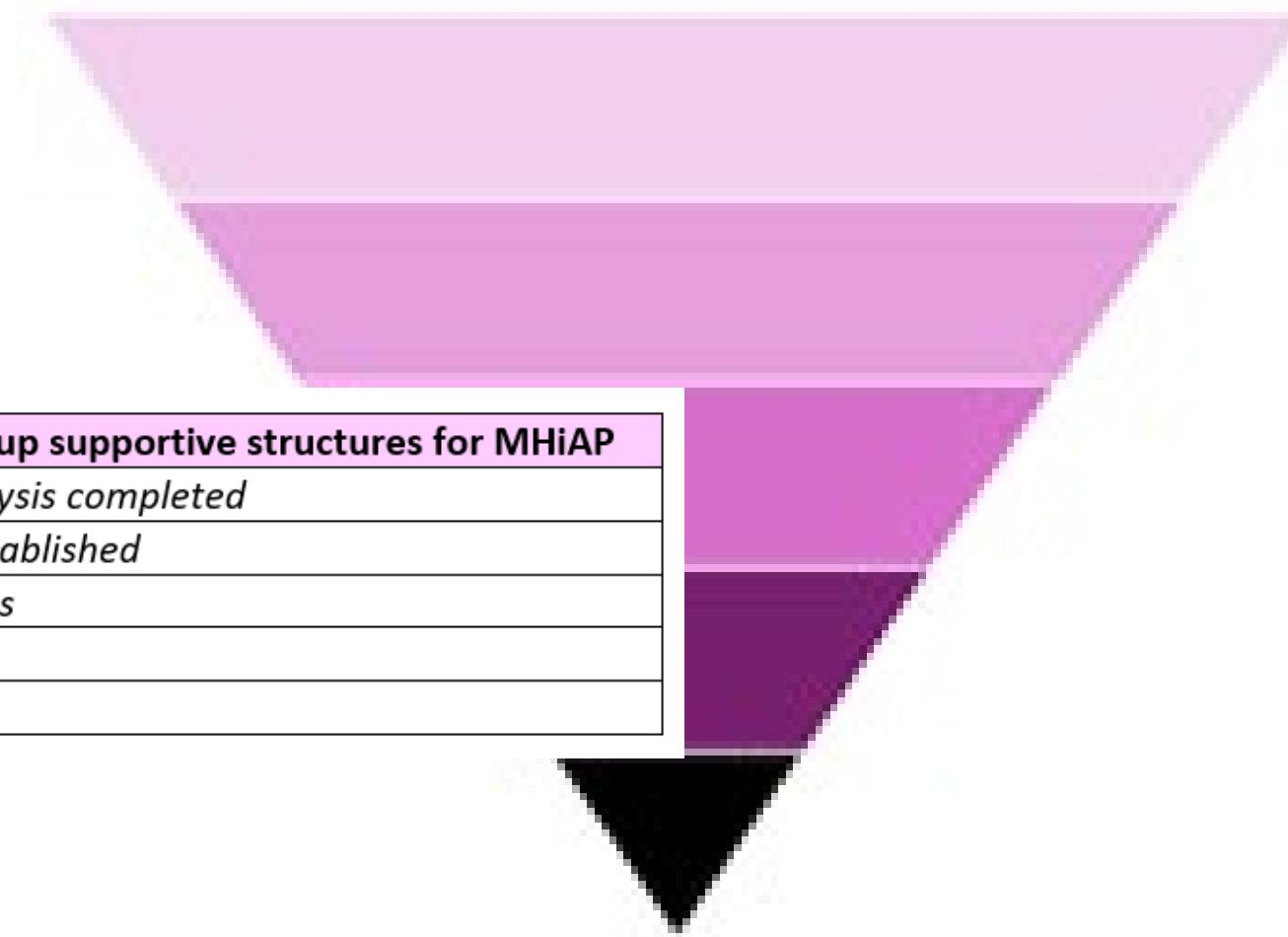
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Intersectoral working group activities:

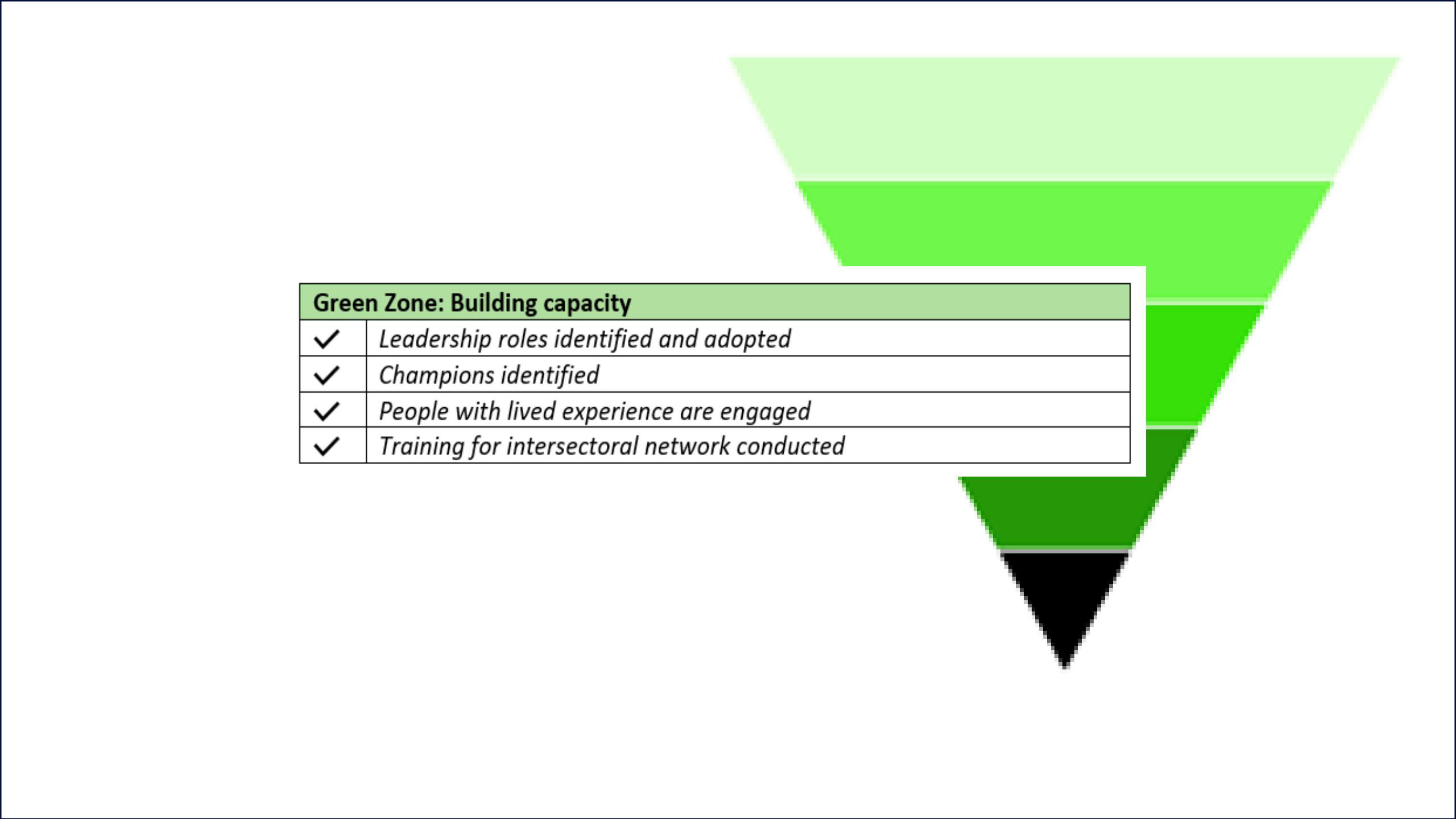
- Problem mapping exercise conducted
- Wider stakeholders mapped
- Wins-wins across society identified
- Policy makers are engaged in MHiAP policy
- The public are engaged in MHiAP policy
- Mental health impact assessment completed



Orange Zone: Assessing the current landscape for MHiAP	
✓	<i>Data on mental health (e.g., health surveys) scanned</i>
✓	<i>Mental health across the life course and in different settings & contexts analysed</i>
✓	<i>Window(s) of opportunity assessed</i>
✓	<i>Current intersectoral policies or processes scanned</i>



Purple Zone: Identifying and setting-up supportive structures for MHiAP	
✓	<i>Policy domain stakeholder analysis completed</i>
✓	<i>Intersectoral working group established</i>
✓	<i>Working with existing structures</i>
✓	<i>Common language established</i>
✓	<i>Common vision developed</i>

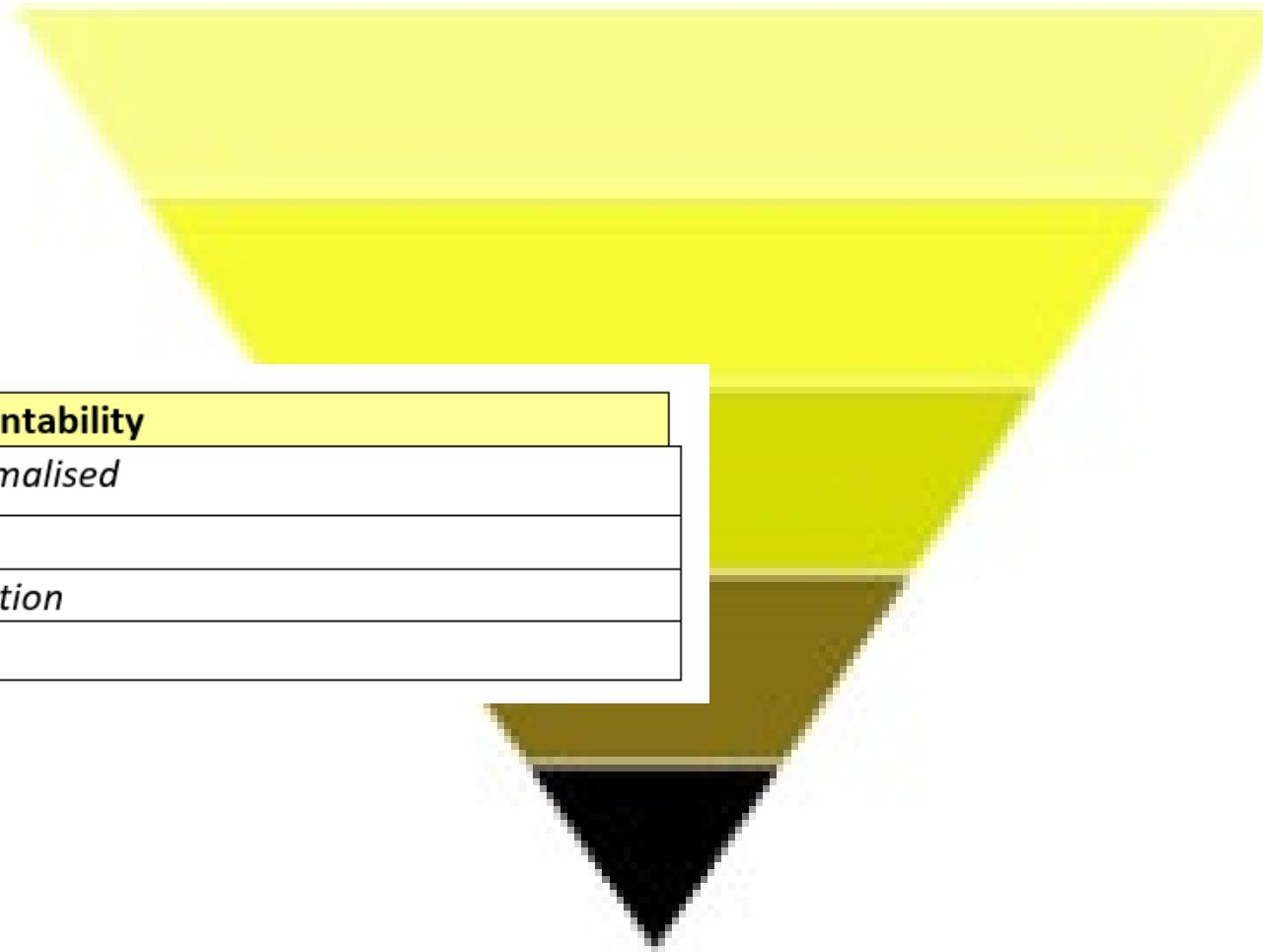


Green Zone: Building capacity

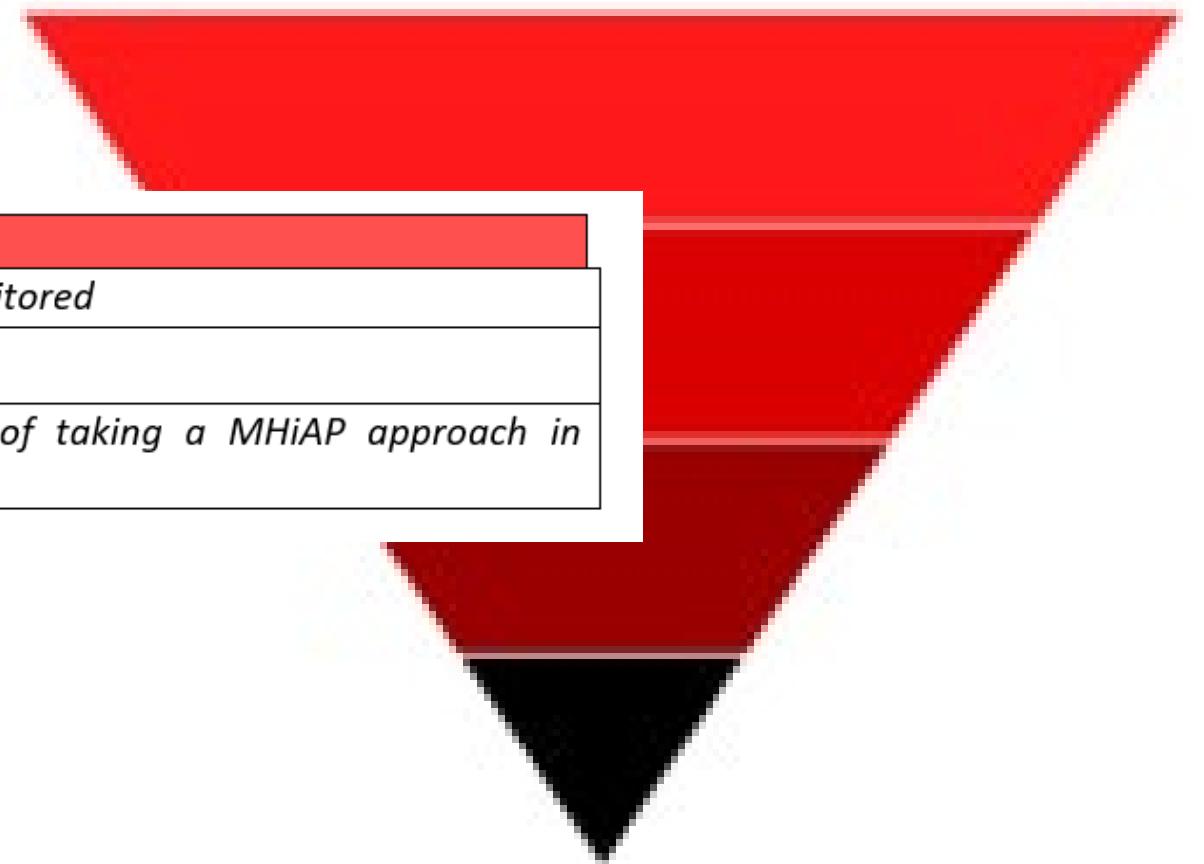
✓	<i>Leadership roles identified and adopted</i>
✓	<i>Champions identified</i>
✓	<i>People with lived experience are engaged</i>
✓	<i>Training for intersectoral network conducted</i>

Blue Zone: Intersectoral working group activities

✓	<i>Problem mapping exercise conducted</i>
✓	<i>Wider stakeholders mapped</i>
✓	<i>Win-wins across society identified</i>
✓	<i>Policy makers are engaged in MHiAP policy</i>
✓	<i>The public are engaged in MHiAP policy</i>
✓	<i>Mental health impact assessment completed</i>



Yellow Zone: Governance and accountability	
✓	<i>Intersectoral working group formalised</i>
✓	<i>Resources mapped and secured</i>
✓	<i>MHiAP incorporated into legislation</i>
✓	<i>Budget is being tracked</i>



Red Zone: Evaluation and monitoring

✓	<i>MHiAP implementation process monitored</i>
✓	<i>Theory of Change created</i>
✓	<i>Framework for evaluating impact of taking a MHiAP approach in government implemented</i>



Blue Zone

Intersectoral working group activities

Blue Zone: Intersectoral working group activities	
✓	<i>Problem mapping exercise conducted</i>
✓	<i>Wider stakeholders mapped</i>
✓	<i>Win-wins across society identified</i>
✓	<i>Policy makers are engaged in MHiAP policy</i>
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Problem mapping exercise conducted

A structured problem analysis helps identify where policy can make a difference.

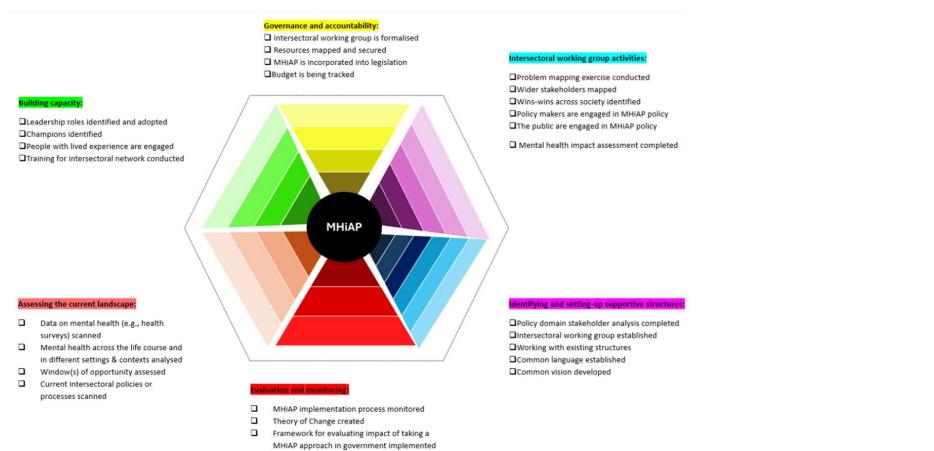
What to do:

- Choose a root cause mapping method that fits your context. This might be a visual diagram, a flowchart, or a written causal chain. Root cause mapping involves repeatedly asking “why?” to help people identify the ‘causes of causes’, or the social determinants of the issues they seek to address. It can illustrate the many opportunities for change, and the overlapping roles that various sectors may play in contributing to healthy environments. Consequently, root cause mapping can be used to identify potential intervention points and possible partners.
- Involve stakeholders with diverse perspectives—including people with lived experience, sector experts, and community reps.

Tip: Start with a basic root cause map and expand it through structured assessments. Identify which root causes are most frequent, impactful, or feasible to address. In group exercises, map out which agencies influence specific root causes directly on the diagram.

In summary the MHiAP target tool helps with:

1. Supporting decision-making
2. Offering quick tips
3. Breaking steps into clear “what to do” actions
4. Does not dictate a starting point







Break time!

- After the break we will work and experience the target tool
- Print outs on the table

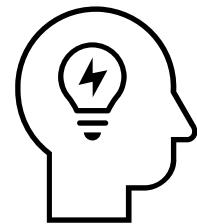
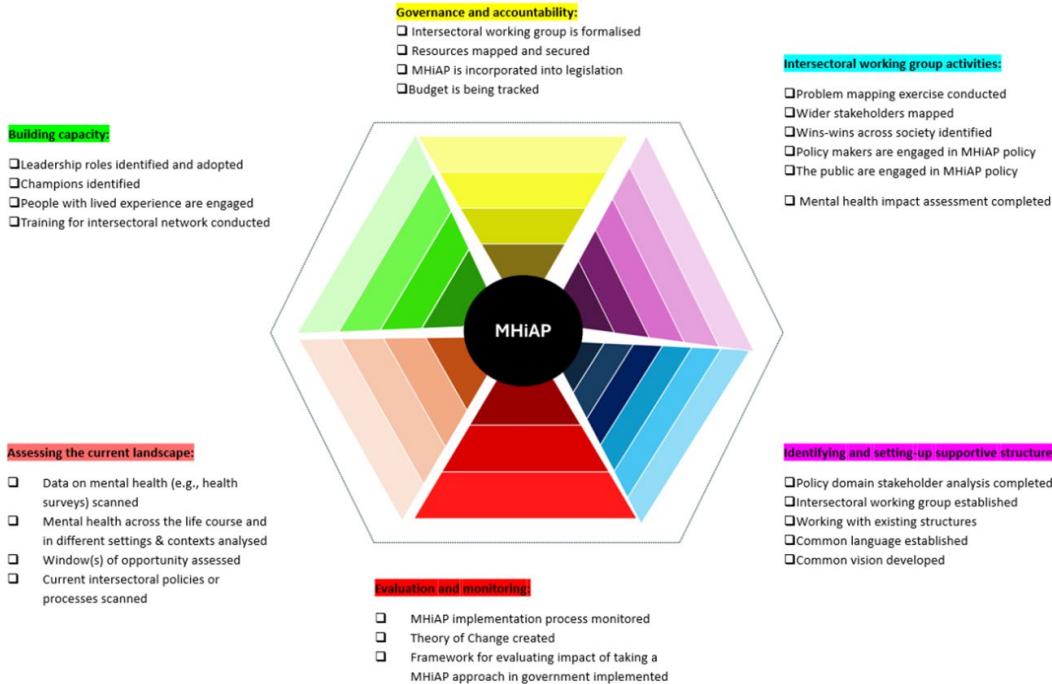


Hands up if:

You are unsure how to get started with a MHiAP approach in your country

Hands up if:

You think similar approaches to MHiAP are being implemented in your country



Testing out the target tool for MHiAP

- 1. Group assessment (15 minutes)**
 - Quick & dirty for a country/region on the print out
 - Does not have to be perfect
- 2. Plenary discussion and reflections (15 minutes)**
 - How was it to use the target tool?
 - What was easy and what was difficult?
 - What do you consider the best starting point?
- 3. Thinking of impact (10 minutes)**
 - How can this policy approach impact your field of work?
- 4. Final plenary discussion (10 minutes)**
 - Main take-aways



**What is your main take-away from
this workshop?**

- ⓘ The Slido app must be installed on every computer you're presenting from

Resources JA MENTOR on Mental Health in All Policies

