

Rise and Thrive: Building Resilient Communities through Inclusive Mental Health

OUR APPROACH TO MENTAL HEALTH IN THE PHILIPPINES AND FIJI

What is Rise and Thrive?

Rise and Thrive is a CBM Australia mental health program working in the Philippines and Fiji from 2024 to 2028. The program supports people with mental health conditions and psychosocial disabilities to live healthier, more included lives.

The program is supported by the Australian Government through the Partnerships for a Healthy Region initiative, and works closely with local government, organisations, communities and individuals in both countries.

Why mental health matters

More than one billion people around the world live with a mental health condition. Anxiety and depression affect people's daily lives, work, and relationships, and are among the leading causes of long term disability. Suicide remains a major global concern, especially for young people.

In the Philippines and Fiji, many people cannot access the mental health care they need. Services are limited and often based in institutions, far from people's homes and families, and frequently linked to human rights abuses. There are often not enough trained mental health workers, and many do not have the skills to support people in ways that focus on recovery, rights, and wellbeing. This means there are very few community-based services or non-medical options for support. Stigma remains strong, and people with psychosocial disabilities are often left out of decisions that affect their lives.

Climate related disasters such as floods, cyclones, and droughts also increase stress, trauma, and mental health needs, placing further pressure on already stretched services.

Program: Rise and Thrive: Building Resilient Communities through Inclusive Mental Health

Location: Philippines and Fiji

Duration: April 2024 – June 2028

Implementing partners:

- Philippines: Ateneo Center for Research and Innovation (ACRI) and Balik Kalipay Centre for Psychosocial Support (BKC).
- Fiji: the Psychiatric Survivors Association (PSA), the national organisation representing people with psychosocial disabilities.

Funder: CBM Australia with support from the Australian Government through the Partnerships for a Healthy Region initiative.

What Rise and Thrive aims to do

Rise and Thrive takes a community focused approach to improving mental health, working at both the people and systems level to create lasting change. The program works to improve mental health by making support more accessible, inclusive, and community-based. It focuses on people with lived experience, strengthening local services, and helping communities respond to crisis and change.

The program works in three main ways:

- Empowering people with lived experience by supporting peer groups and disability organisations, building leadership and confidence, and creating opportunities for people to influence decisions, laws, and funding that affect their lives.
- Improving mental health services and suicide prevention by working with governments, health workers, community leaders, and volunteers to provide inclusive, rights-based care. This includes community awareness activities, training on the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD), peer and family support, integrating Psychological First Aid and Mental Health and Psychosocial Support (MHPSS) into communities and health facilities, and helping people access social protection and livelihoods.
- Supporting mental health in a changing climate by helping communities prepare for and recover from climate related disasters by strengthening health systems and community-based mental health services to be more resilient, and ensuring mental health is included in emergency planning.

By working with communities, local partners, and governments, Rise and Thrive helps build lasting change so mental health support is closer to home, shaped by the people who use it, and available when it is needed most.

Rise and Thrive: “Ka-ginhawa” – bringing hope for mental health in the Philippines

Hope is growing for people with mental health conditions and psychosocial disabilities in the Philippines through CBM Australia’s Rise and Thrive program. Known locally as Ka-ginhawa, the project strengthens community support, improves access to care, and promotes rights-based mental health systems. Led by Dr. Dinah from CBM partner the Ateneo Center for Research and Innovation (ACRI), the project is addressing long-standing gaps in mental health support. As she explains, “Mental health is contributory to national development. We recognise several needs in the gaps in mental health in the Philippines. We hope that this project will address some of these gaps.”

Ka-ginhawa is creating community-level support where little existed before. “It’s good that there is Ka-ginhawa. No one was helping us before,” shared one project participant. Local disability leaders also recognise its impact: “Ka-ginhawa is the only project available for psychosocial or mental illness [that is] inclusive or for everyone.” Beyond improving services, the project empowers communities themselves. As Dr. Dinah says, “The community is actually a big support... They’re not just receivers, but they’re also supporters.” The vision is clear: “We hope that we will influence the government and systems to be able to change for providing better services that are rights-based and recovery oriented.”



Above: Dr Dinah.