

Mental Health

Mains: *GS II – Health, Human Resources*

Why in News?

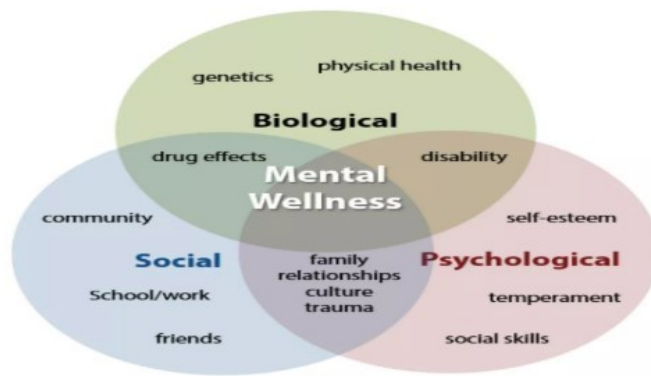
Recently, the World Health Organization (WHO) report revealed that, more than 1 billion people are living with mental health disorders.

What is mental health?

- **Mental health** – The World Health Organization (WHO) defines mental health as a state of well-being in which every individual realizes his or her own potential, can cope with the normal stresses of life, can work productively and fruitfully, and is able to make a contribution to her or his community.
- Mental health is a public and global health topic that is not discussed as much as physical health.



• Causes



- **Issues** – The issues and impacts of mental health are
 - **Impacts everyone** – Mental health conditions adversely affect people of all ages and income levels.
 - **Reason for disability** – They represent the second biggest reason for long-term disability, contributing to loss of healthy life.
 - **Increases health care costs** – They drive up health-care costs for affected people and families while inflicting substantial economic losses on a global scale.
 - Transforming mental health services is one of the most pressing public health challenges.
 - **Stigma and reluctance** – The hesitancy to seek help and treatment and lack of manpower remain the major concerns in the sector.
- The report states that most countries have functional mental health promotion initiatives such as early childhood development, school-based mental health and suicide prevention programmes.
- Over 80% of countries now offer mental health and psychosocial support as part of emergency responses, up from 39% in 2020.

What are the flaws in the mental care environment?

- **Absence of legal reforms** – While many countries have updated their policies, adopted rights-based approaches, and enhanced preparedness for mental health and psychosocial support during health emergencies, this momentum has not translated into legal reform.

- Countries remain off track to achieve the targets set in WHO's Comprehensive Mental Health Action Plan.
- Fewer countries have adopted or enforced rights-based mental health legislation, and only 45% of countries evaluated laws in full compliance with international human rights standards.
- **Reduced investments** - The report reveals a concerning stagnation in mental health investment.
- Median government spending on mental health remains at just 2% of total health budgets, unchanged since 2017.
- **Disparities in investments** - While high-income countries spend up to \$65 per person on mental health, low-income countries spend as little as \$0.04.
- **Less availability of mental health experts** - The global median number of mental health workers stands at 13 per 100,000 people, with extreme shortages in low- and middle-income countries.
- **Less Reforms and development of mental health services** - Fewer than 10% of countries have fully transitioned to community-based care models, with most countries still in the early stages of transition.
- Inpatient care continues to rely heavily on psychiatric hospitals, with nearly half of admissions occurring involuntarily and over 20% lasting longer than a year.
- Integration of mental health into primary care is advancing, with 71% of countries meeting at least three of five WHO criteria.
- **Gaps in data** - Only 22 countries provided sufficient data to estimate service coverage for psychosis.
- **Lack of care** - In low-income countries fewer than 10% of affected individuals receive care, compared to over 50% in higher-income nations, highlighting an urgent need to expand access and strengthen service delivery.

What is India's Status on Mental Health?

- **Status in India** - Mental illness affects around **one in seven** Indians, yet a large majority of those needing treatment do not

receive it because of a severe shortage of mental-health professionals and inadequate access to care.

- Mental and physical health are closely connected.
- **Initiatives** - India already has important infrastructure in place, including Ayushman Bharat Arogya Mandirs, the District Mental Health Programme, and Tele-MANAS.
- **Progress made** - There has been significant infrastructure development, the national tele-mental health programme has expanded.
- The educational development is happening at a fast pace and focused work is being done to create awareness about mental health and the treatment.
- **Insufficient budget** - India's direct mental health budget has remained at roughly Rs.1,000 crore for recent fiscal years, with FY 2025-26 allocating Rs.1,004 crore.
- This constitutes just over 1% of the Ministry's budget, with significant portions going to central institutions and programmes.
- Adequate funding for community-based programmes and the effective utilisation of allocated funds is still a concern.
- **Lack of experts** - India has a significant shortfall of mental health professionals, with roughly 0.7 psychiatrists per 100,000 people, far below the WHO's recommended ratio of 3 per 100,000 people.

What India could do Further?

- **Expansion of Schemes** - The next step is to expand the initiatives by training frontline health workers, strengthening community-based mental healthcare, and improving financial protection through insurance and government health schemes.
- **Empowering Stakeholders** - Empowering ASHA workers, investing in community-based care, and expanding affordable mental-health coverage.
- ASHA workers and other frontline health workers should receive better training so they can identify mental-health problems early,

provide basic support, and connect patients with appropriate services

- Community-based programmes should be expanded, especially in rural and underserved areas, using trained community workers to make care more accessible and affordable.
- Mental-health treatment should become more financially accessible by expanding insurance coverage and outpatient benefits.
- **Prioritising Mental Health** – Treating mental health as an investment in human capital and economic development will be essential for building a healthier and more productive India by 2047.
- If India wants to achieve its vision of becoming a developed nation by 2047, mental health must become an integral part of public health policy rather than remaining a neglected issue.
- Mental health should be made a central part of India's public health strategy if the country is to achieve the goal of Viksit Bharat 2047.

What is the way ahead?

- Ultimately, mental health is not merely a social or medical concern. It is an investment in India's human capital, productivity, economic growth, and overall quality of life. Making mental well-being a core component of public policy will be crucial to achieving the ambitions of Viksit Bharat 2047.

*If you are in distress, please reach out to **MANAS at 14416 or 18008914416** and **Sanjivini Society for Mental Health at 011-40769002***

Reference

[The Hindu| Mental Health](#)



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