The need for action on mental health

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

The Need for Mental Health Action in the COVID-19 Era

The COVID-19 situation is initially a physical health catastrophe, but if action is not taken, it also has the makings of a serious mental health crisis. Even in the best of circumstances, society depends on good mental health to function. Every nation's response to and recovery from the COVID-19 epidemic must put it front and Centre. This catastrophe has had a serious influence on the mental health and wellness of entire societies, and it is vital to address this issue.

Furthermore, a number of population groups are displaying extreme psychological suffering brought on by COVID-19. First responders and front-line healthcare workers are subject to a variety of stressors, and maintaining COVID-19 preparedness, response, and recovery depends heavily on the mental health of healthcare professionals. There are a lot of elderly folks and persons with pre-existing diseases in every neighbourhood who are afraid and lonely. At crucial junctures in their emotional development, parental stress, social isolation, disruptions in education and uncertainty about the future all contribute to the emotional issues that children and adolescents experience. The majority of the burden of domestic stress and other disproportionate effects falls on women. Moreover, those caught in unstable humanitarian and crisis situations run the risk of being greatest susceptible to this crisis.

Prevalence of Mental Health Crisis

According to Un Policy Brief on Action Plan for Mental Health, claiming that Mental Health has been considered as a matter of distress and negligence, never put to concern or apprehension;

But until recently, it went into spotlight for the intense mortality that the world started treating the issue as a global crisis. .

Statistics on mental health issues, such as neurological and substance use disorders, suicide risk, and related psychosocial and intellectual deficits, were already sobering before COVID-19was developed:

Depression and anxiety cost the world economy more than $1 trillion each year.

Around half of all mental health issues begin before the age of 14, and suicide is the second highest cause of mortality for young people between the ages of 15 and 29.

More than 1 in 5 residents of conflict-affected areas suffer from a mental health disorder.

Those who suffer from severe mental illnesses pass away 10–20 years sooner than the normal population.

Less than half of nations say their mental health laws comply with human rights agreements.

Despite the effects of mental health issues on people's lives, families, and society as a whole, there hasn't been much money spent on mental health, especially on community-based services. The average amount spent by nations on mental health is barely 2% of their health budgets; it is unknown what percentage is spent on other sectors, although it is anticipated to be a negligible amount. Less than 1% of total funding for health-related development is thought to come from abroad for mental health. Despite the well-documented co-morbidity of physical and mental health disorders for diseases like HIV/AIDS, TB, and now COVID-19, this continues to be the case. This confirms the need for effective management of the bold, serious effects on mental health as well as an emphasis on raising global standards of living.

Reducing Repercussions

It is crucial to promptly take into account the following three suggested activities to reduce the pandemic's effects on mental health:-

1. Apply a whole-of-society approach to promote, protect and care for mental health :
   The national response to COVID-19 must include measures pertaining to mental health as vital elements. According to COVID-19, a society-wide approach to mental health means:
   - Incorporating mental health and psychosocial concerns into national response plans across pertinent sectors, such as fostering learning environments and nurturing
   - environments for children and young people who are confined at home ;
   - acting pro-actively to reduce pandemic-related adversities that are known to be detrimental to mental health, such as acute poverty and domestic violence and crafting all communications with consideration for their potential impact on people.

2. Ensure widespread availability of emergency mental health and psychosocial support: Any emergency must have access to mental health care and psychological assistance. During the COVID-19 pandemic, achieving this goal entails:
   - Promoting community initiatives that increase social cohesiveness and decrease
   - loneliness, such as promoting events that keep lonely elderly people linked ;
   - Investing in interventions for mental illness that can be carried out remotely, such as quality-assured tele-counselling for frontline healthcare providers and those suffering from depression and anxiety at home ;

- Protecting and promoting the human rights of people with severe mental health
- conditions and psychosocial disabilities, such as by ensuring that they have equal access to care for COVID-19 ;
- Ensuring continuous in-person care for severe mental health conditions by formally defining such care as essential services to be continued throughout the pandemic.

3. ASSIST COVID-19 RECOVERY BY CREATING FORECAST MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES :

   To aid society & recovery from COVID-19, all impacted localities will require top-notch mental health services, which calls for spending on the following:
- Exploiting the present wave of interest in mental health to spur improvements in this field, such as by creating and supporting

national service reorganization plans that move care from institutions to community services ;
- Ensuring that universal health coverage includes mental health, for instance by
- integrating treatment for mental, neurological, and substance use disorders in benefit packages and insurance plans ;
- Building community workers' human resource capabilities to deliver mental health and
  social care, for example, so they can offer support, as well as organizing community-based services that protect and promote people's human rights, for example by involving people with lived experience in the design, implementation, and monitoring of services .
- To ensure that people and society are better safeguarded from the effects of COVID-19 on mental health, swift implementation of these suggested solutions will be crucial.