

## Global trends: Mental health crisis

One of the current global trends of greatest importance to me is the rising mental health crisis. According to WHO, 1 in 8 people currently have a mental health condition.<sup>1</sup> The burden of mental health conditions is rising.<sup>2</sup> This rising trend has been even more evident during the COVID-19 pandemic. During the first year of the pandemic, the global burden of mental health conditions such as depression and anxiety increased by 25%.<sup>3</sup> Budget of less than 2% is designated towards mental health.<sup>1</sup> Although mental health is widespread, it is highly undertreated.<sup>1</sup> The COVID-19 pandemic has disproportionately impacted the mental health of women and young people.<sup>3</sup> Research has shown that people with mental health conditions when infected with COVID-19 are more likely to undergo hospitalizations and have severe complications.<sup>3</sup> In 2019, 13% of world's population had a mental health condition.<sup>1</sup> With the lack of proper data from many low- and middle-income countries, I expect this number to be even higher. Also, public health issues such as climate change, public health emergencies and humanitarian crisis are all threats to mental health.<sup>1</sup> So, I ranked growing mental health crisis as having the greatest importance.

There are several gaps in mental health crisis such as information, governance, resources, and services gaps.<sup>1</sup> Several action steps need to be taken to address this global threat. Data has shown that almost 71% of people with psychosis do not receive treatment.<sup>1</sup> So, concepts such as vertical equity should be put into action. Based on this concept, people with conditions such as major depressive disorders and schizophrenia should be receiving greater support and resources due to the higher level of impairment.<sup>1</sup> So, to mitigate the global trend, we need stronger governance and leadership.<sup>1</sup> There should be focus on prevention, promotion, and community-based care with integrated approach.<sup>1</sup> Countries should build a better evidence-based research and data collection system. Mental health needs to be prioritized by policymakers in their agenda. It is imperative to designate more funding towards mental health. Awareness raising campaigns highlighting that mental health is as important as one's physical health is a must. Social inclusion should be promoted.<sup>1</sup> Steps should be taken to strengthen the mental health care system.<sup>1</sup> With the formation of The WHO Comprehensive mental health action plan (2013-2030), there seems to be a commitment made by WHO and member states around implementation. Effective implementation of mental health policies requires multi-sectoral approach with involvement of all the relevant stakeholders. The pandemic has brought mental health to people's attention and implementation seems to be moving in the right direction.

References:

1. World Mental Health Report. www.who.int. <https://www.who.int/teams/mental-health-and-substance-use/world-mental-health-report>
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3. World Health Organization. COVID-19 pandemic triggers 25% increase in prevalence of anxiety and depression worldwide. World Health Organization. Published March 2, 2022. <https://www.who.int/news/item/02-03-2022-covid-19-pandemic-triggers-25-increase-in-prevalence-of-anxiety-and-depression-worldwide>