
BRIDGING MENTAL HEALTH AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS: A PATHWAY TO HOLISTIC WELL-BEING AND GLOBAL PROGRESS

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ABSTRACT

Mental health and sustainable development are intricately connected yet often addressed in isolation. Mental health, encompassing emotional, psychological, and social well-being, is influenced by social, economic, and environmental conditions, making its integration into sustainable development frameworks imperative. The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) provide a global blueprint for holistic well-being, addressing poverty, inequality, education, climate change, and urbanization—factors that significantly impact mental health. This paper explores the interplay between mental health and SDGs, highlighting legislative frameworks, global burden, and the prevalence of mental disorders, and examining mental health's links to poverty alleviation, education, gender equality, sustainable cities, and climate action.

Recommendations include mainstreaming mental health in SDG implementation, investing in infrastructure, empowering communities, and utilizing ecotherapy to build resilience. Acknowledging and addressing structural inequities and stigma are essential for equitable access to mental health services. By prioritizing mental health within sustainable development agendas, societies can achieve inclusive growth, resilience, and global progress, fostering a future where mental well-being and sustainability are intertwined.

Keywords: Mental Health, Sustainable Development Goals, Sustainability, Mental Disorders.

1. Introduction

The World Health Organisation has long said that mental health is a human right and that good health and sustainable development are not possible without it.¹ The United Nations included mental health to its list of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)² in September 2015. The United Nations (UN) made history by recognising the prevalence of mental illness and establishing mental health as a top priority for global development for the next 15 years. In addition to addressing climate change, the United Nations' 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development lays out 17 SDGs³ that serve as a guide for member states to collaborate in order to enhance economic development, health, education, and inequality.⁴

Mental health and sustainability are two critical yet often overlooked aspects of human well-being and global development. Emotional, psychological, and social well-being are all included in mental health, which affects how people think, feel, and behave as well as how they handle stress, interact with others, and make decisions.⁵ Contrarily, sustainable development—which takes into account social, economic, and environmental factors—refers to addressing current demands without endangering the capacity of future generations to address their own.⁶

Despite their fundamental importance, mental health and sustainability have historically been treated as separate issues, addressed in isolation from one another. However, recent research and discourse have increasingly recognized the interconnectedness between mental health and sustainability.⁷ Individuals' mental well-being is profoundly influenced by the social,

¹ World Health Organization, *Mental Health: Strengthening Our Response* (WHO, 2018) <https://www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/mental-health-strengthening-our-response> accessed 13 August 2025.

² World Health Organization, *Mental Health and Sustainable Development Goals* (WHO, 2022) https://www.who.int/mental_health/SDGs accessed 13 August 2025.

³ United Nations General Assembly, *Transforming Our World: The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development* UNGA Res 70/1 (25 September 2015) UN Doc A/RES/70/1. The *2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development*, adopted by all United Nations Member States in 2015, is a “shared blueprint for peace and prosperity for people and the planet. At its core are the 17 Sustainable Development Goals, or SDGs, which are an urgent call for action by all countries—developed and developing—working in global partnership. These goals address interconnected global challenges such as poverty, inequality, climate change, environmental degradation, peace, and justice. Importantly, mental health is recognized within Goal 3—*Good Health and Well-being*—specifically under Target 3.4, which commits countries to promote mental health and well-being alongside reducing non-communicable diseases.”

⁴ J Goodwin and U Zaman, ‘Editorial: Mental health stigma and UN Sustainable Development Goals’ (2023) 14 *Frontiers in Psychiatry* 1190406 <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsy.2023.1190406>.

⁵ ‘World Health Organization, ‘Mental Health: Strengthening Our Response’ (Fact Sheet, 30 March 2018) <https://www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/mental-health-strengthening-our-response>.

⁶ World Commission on Environment and Development, *Our Common Future* (Oxford University Press 1987).

⁷ S Clayton and others, *Mental Health and Our Changing Climate: Impacts, Implications, and Guidance* (American Psychological Association and ecoAmerica 2017).

economic, and environmental conditions in which they live, while unsustainable development practices can exacerbate stress, anxiety, and other mental health challenges.⁸

The growing recognition of this interdependence has prompted calls for a more integrated approach to addressing mental health within the framework of sustainable development.⁹ By acknowledging the reciprocal relationship between mental health and sustainability, policymakers, practitioners, and advocates can develop more holistic strategies to promote human flourishing and environmental stewardship simultaneously.¹⁰

2. Mental Health

Mental health refers to “a state of well-being in which an individual realizes their own abilities, can cope with the normal stresses of life, can work productively and fruitfully, and is able to make a contribution to their community.”¹¹ This definition, as proposed by the World Health Organization¹² (WHO), underscores the multifaceted nature of mental health, encompassing not only the absence of mental illness but also the presence of positive attributes such as resilience, emotional intelligence, and social connections.¹³

Mental health is not a static state but rather a dynamic continuum that can fluctuate over time and vary in intensity. It encompasses various dimensions, including:

1. Emotional Well-being¹⁴: The ability to recognize, understand, and manage one’s emotions effectively, as well as to experience a range of positive emotions such as happiness, joy, and contentment.
2. Psychological Well-being¹⁵: The capacity to think clearly, solve problems, make decisions,

⁸ Helen L Berry and others, ‘Climate Change and Mental Health: A Causal Pathways Framework’ (2010) 55(2) *International Journal of Public Health* 123.

⁹ Vikram Patel and others, ‘Mental Health for Sustainable Development’ (2015) 23(3) *Sustainable Development* 157–65.

¹⁰ Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, *Climate Change and Human Health: Risks and Responses* (World Health Organization 2003).

¹¹ World Health Organization, *Promoting Mental Health: Concepts, Emerging Evidence, Practice* (World Health Organization 2004).

¹² World Health Organization, *Mental Health and Climate Change: Policy Brief* (World Health Organization 2022) <https://www.who.int/publications/i/item/9789240061717> accessed 13 August 2025.

¹³ C L M Keyes, ‘The Mental Health Continuum: From Languishing to Flourishing in Life’ (2002) 43(2) *Journal of Health and Social Behavior* 207 <https://doi.org/10.2307/3090197> accessed 13 August 2025.

¹⁴ E Diener and others, ‘Subjective Well-Being: Three Decades of Progress’ (1999) 125(2) *Psychological Bulletin* 276 <https://doi.org/10.1037/0033-2909.125.2.276> accessed 13 August 2025.

¹⁵ C D Ryff, ‘Psychological Well-Being Revisited: Advances in the Science and Practice’ (2014) 83(1) *Psychotherapy and Psychosomatics* 10 <https://doi.org/10.1159/000353263> accessed 13 August 2025.

and adapt to change, as well as to maintain a sense of purpose and meaning in life.

3. Social Well-being¹⁶: The quality of interpersonal relationships and social connections, including friendships, family support, and community involvement, which provide a sense of belonging and support.

4. Functional Well-being¹⁷: The ability to engage in daily activities, fulfill roles and responsibilities, and pursue personal goals and aspirations, contributing to a sense of competence and self-efficacy.

Mental Health Policies and Laws:

Mental health laws in India and on the international level are critical in safeguarding the rights and dignity of individuals facing mental health challenges. In India, the **Mental Healthcare Act, 2017**¹⁸, which replaced the **Mental Healthcare Act, 1987**¹⁹, marks a significant milestone by shifting the focus from custodial care to community-based treatment. It guarantees every individual the right to access mental health services, ensures informed consent for treatment, decriminalizes suicide, and emphasizes the need to respect patient autonomy and dignity. Internationally, frameworks like the **United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD)**²⁰ set global standards for protecting the rights of individuals with mental health conditions, promoting non-discrimination, accessibility, and social inclusion. Many countries, such as the United States with the **Mental Health Parity and Addiction Equity Act**²¹, and the United Kingdom with the **Mental Health Act, 1983**²², have specific laws addressing mental health care and rights. However, significant gaps remain in both domestic and global implementation, necessitating greater investment, awareness, and accountability to achieve equity in mental health services and rights worldwide.

¹⁶ L F Berkman and T Glass, 'Social Integration, Social Networks, and Health' in L F Berkman and I Kawachi (eds), *Social Epidemiology* (Oxford University Press 2000) 137.

¹⁷ A Bandura, *Self-Efficacy: The Exercise of Control* (W H Freeman 1997).

¹⁸ *Mental Healthcare Act 2017* (No 10 of 2017), Gazette of India, Extraordinary, Part II, Section 1, 7 April 2017 <https://www.indiacode.nic.in/handle/123456789/2243> accessed 13 August 2025.

¹⁹ *Mental Health Act 1987* (No 14 of 1987), Gazette of India, Extraordinary, Part II, Section 1, 22 May 1987 <https://www.indiacode.nic.in/handle/123456789/1760> accessed 13 August 2025.

²⁰ *Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities* (adopted 13 December 2006, entered into force 3 May 2008) 2515 UNTS 3 <https://www.un.org/disabilities/documents/convention/convoptprot-e.pdf> accessed 13 August 2025.

²¹ *Mental Health Parity and Addiction Equity Act of 2008*, Pub L No 110-343, div C, 122 Stat 3765 (2008) <https://www.congress.gov/110/plaws/publ343/PLAW-110publ343.pdf> accessed 13 August 2025.

²² *Mental Health Act 1983* (c 20) <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1983/20> accessed 13 August 2025.

Global Burden and Prevalence of Mental Disorders:

Mental disorders represent a significant public health challenge globally, contributing to substantial disability, morbidity, and mortality. According to the WHO, mental disorders account for approximately 13% of the global burden of disease, with depression alone being the leading cause of mental illness worldwide.²³ Other common mental disorders include anxiety disorders, bipolar disorder, schizophrenia, and substance use disorders.²⁴

The prevalence of mental disorders varies across countries and regions, influenced by factors such as socioeconomic status, cultural norms, access to healthcare, and exposure to environmental stressors.²⁵ However, studies indicate that mental health problems are pervasive and affect individuals across the lifespan, from childhood to old age.²⁶

Furthermore, mental health disorders often coexist with other health conditions, such as chronic physical illnesses, exacerbating the overall burden of disease and complicating treatment and management efforts.²⁷ Despite the significant impact of mental disorders on individuals, families, and communities, mental health remains underprioritized and underfunded in many healthcare systems worldwide.²⁸

3. Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)

The SDGs²⁹ are a set of 17 interconnected global goals adopted by the United Nations General Assembly in 2015 as part of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.³⁰ The SDGs build upon the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs)³¹ and aim to address a wide range of social,

²³ World Health Organization, *The World Health Report 2001: Mental Health—New Understanding, New Hope* (WHO 2001).

²⁴ T Vos and others, 'Global, Regional, and National Burden of Mental Disorders: A Systematic Analysis' (2016) 3 *The Lancet Psychiatry* 875.

²⁵ C Lund and others, 'Poverty and Mental Health: Towards a Research Agenda for Low and Middle-Income Countries' (2005) 61 *Social Science & Medicine* 1094.

²⁶ RC Kessler and others, 'Lifetime Prevalence and Age-of-Onset Distributions of Mental Disorders in the World Health Organization's World Mental Health Survey Initiative' (2007) 6 *World Psychiatry* 168.

²⁷ FJ Charlson and others, 'The Burden of Mental, Neurological, and Substance Use Disorders' (2014) 1 *Global Mental Health* e19.

²⁸ S Saxena and others, 'Resources for Mental Health: Scarcity, Inequity, and Inefficiency' (2007) 370 *The Lancet* 878.

²⁹ *Supra* 1

³⁰ United Nations General Assembly, *Transforming Our World: The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development* (UNGA 2015).

³¹ United Nations General Assembly, 'United Nations Millennium Declaration' UNGA Res 55/2 (18 September 2000) <https://undocs.org/en/A/RES/55/2> accessed 13 August 2025.

economic, and environmental challenges facing the world today, while promoting sustainable development in its three dimensions: economic, social, and environmental.³²

The 17 SDGs³³ are as follows:

1. No Poverty	10. Reduced Inequality
2. Zero Hunger	11. Sustainable Cities and Communities
3. Good Health and Well-being	12. Responsible, Consumption and Production
4. Quality Education	13. Climate Action
5. Gender Equality	14. Life Below Water
6. Clean Water and Sanitation	15. Life on Land
7. Affordable and Clean Energy	16. Peace, Justice, and Strong Institutions
8. Decent Work and Economic Growth	17. Partnerships for the Goals
9. Industry , Innovation and Infrastructure	

Table 1: The 17 SDGs³⁴

Each SDG³⁵ is accompanied by a set of targets and indicators designed to measure progress towards its attainment.³⁶ The SDGs are intended to be universal, applying to all countries regardless of their level of development, and are guided by the principle of leaving no one

³² Sachs JD and others, 'The Sustainable Development Goals and COVID-19' (2021) 27 *Nature Medicine* 364 <https://doi.org/10.1038/s41591-021-01268-6> accessed 13 August 2025.

³³ Supra 1

³⁴ United Nations, *Sustainable Development Goals* <https://sdgs.un.org/goals> accessed 13 August 2025.

³⁵ Supra 1

³⁶ Le Blanc D, 'Towards Integration at Last? The Sustainable Development Goals as a Network of Targets' (2015) 23 *Sustainable Development* 176 <https://doi.org/10.1002/sd.1582> accessed 13 August 2025.

behind.³⁷

4. Interlinkages between Mental Health and SDGs:

Mental health is intricately linked to the achievement of multiple SDGs, as it affects and is affected by various social, economic, and environmental factors. Recognizing the interdependence between mental health and sustainable development is essential for promoting holistic well-being and addressing the root causes of mental health challenges. Some key interlinkages between mental health and the SDGs include:

1. Health and Well-being (SDG 3): SDG 3³⁸ explicitly addresses the promotion of good health and well-being for all ages, including mental health. Mental health disorders contribute significantly to the global burden of disease, highlighting the need for investment in mental health promotion, prevention, and treatment services.³⁹

2. Poverty Alleviation (SDG 1)⁴⁰ and Reduced Inequality (SDG 10): Mental health problems are more prevalent among individuals experiencing poverty and social inequality, exacerbating disparities in health outcomes. Addressing mental health can therefore contribute to poverty reduction and the promotion of equitable development.⁴¹

3. Education (SDG 4)⁴² and Gender Equality (SDG 5)⁴³: Mental health influences educational attainment and gender equality, with mental health problems often acting as barriers to learning and participation, particularly among marginalized groups. Promoting mental well-being in educational settings and addressing gender disparities in mental health

³⁷ United Nations Development Programme, *The SDGs in Action: Mental Health and the 2030 Agenda* (UNDP 2020) <https://www.undp.org/publications/sdgs-action-mental-health-and-2030-agenda> accessed 13 August 2025.

³⁸ United Nations, *Transforming Our World: The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development* UNGA Res 70/1 (25 September 2015) UN Doc A/RES/70/1 <https://sdgs.un.org/goals/goal3> accessed 13 August 2025.

³⁹ World Health Organization, 'Mental Health: Strengthening Our Response' (Fact Sheet, 30 March 2018) <https://www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/mental-health-strengthening-our-response> accessed 13 August 2025.

⁴⁰ Crick Lund and others, 'Poverty and Mental Health: Towards a Research Agenda for Low and Middle-Income Countries' (2010) 70 *Social Science & Medicine* 127.

⁴¹ Vikram Patel and others, 'Mental Health and Poverty in Developing Countries' (2007) 370(9591) *The Lancet* 1304 [https://doi.org/10.1016/S0140-6736\(07\)61245-8](https://doi.org/10.1016/S0140-6736(07)61245-8) accessed 13 August 2025.

⁴² Mary Harris and Christine Emslie, 'The Impact of Mental Health on Educational Outcomes' (2020) 112 *Journal of Educational Psychology* 45 <https://doi.org/10.1037/edu0000367> accessed 13 August 2025.

⁴³ Caroline Kuehner, 'Why is Depression More Common Among Women than Among Men?' (2017) 4 *The Lancet Psychiatry* 146 [https://doi.org/10.1016/S2215-0366\(16\)30263-2](https://doi.org/10.1016/S2215-0366(16)30263-2) accessed 13 August 2025.

outcomes are essential for achieving these goals.⁴⁴

4. Sustainable Cities and Communities (SDG 11) and Climate Action (SDG 13): Mental health is influenced by the social and environmental conditions of urban and rural areas, as well as by exposure to climate-related disasters and environmental degradation. Creating mentally healthy and resilient communities is therefore crucial for sustainable urban development and climate adaptation.⁴⁵

Mental Health and Poverty Alleviation (SDG 1)⁴⁶ - There is a strong link between poverty and mental health. Being poor makes mental health problems worse, and mental illness keeps people in poverty.⁴⁷ People who live in poverty often have to deal with a lot of problems and stresses, such as not having enough access to basic needs like food, housing, and medical care, as well as being socially isolated, facing discrimination, and having few school and job possibilities⁴⁸.

Also, people who are poor may have a harder time getting mental health services and help because they cannot afford them, their insurance doesn't cover them, and mental illness is seen as a shame.⁴⁹ So, mental health problems that are not handled can make people even poorer by making it harder for them to function properly, keep stable jobs, and look for ways to move up in society.

Mental Health and Education (SDG 4)⁵⁰ - The nexus between mental health and education is profound, with each influencing the other in significant ways. Mental health is not only essential for academic success but also for overall well-being and socio-emotional development. When students are mentally healthy, they are able to concentrate, learn, retain information in a better way, and engage actively in the learning process. Moreover, positive

⁴⁴ Van der Molen H and others, 'The Role of Mental Health in Educational Settings' (2006) 45(2) *International Journal of Educational Research* 68 <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijer.2006.03.005> accessed 13 August 2025.

⁴⁵ Friel S and others, 'Climate Change, Food Insecurity, and Mental Health' (2007) 17 *Global Environmental Change* 117 <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.gloenvcha.2006.11.006> accessed 13 August 2025.

⁴⁶ United Nations, *Transforming Our World: The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development* UNGA Res 70/1 (25 September 2015) UN Doc A/RES/70/1 <https://sdgs.un.org/goals/goal3> accessed 13 August 2025.

⁴⁷ Crick Lund and others, 'Poverty and Mental Health: Towards a Research Agenda for Low and Middle-Income Countries' (2010) 70 *Social Science & Medicine* 127.

⁴⁸ World Health Organization, *Mental Health and Poverty* (WHO 2021) https://www.who.int/mental_health/policy/development/mh_poverty/en/ accessed 13 August 2025.

⁴⁹ Patel V and others, 'Poverty and Mental Disorders: Breaking the Cycle in Low-Income and Middle-Income Countries' (2018) 377(9766) *The Lancet* 1502 [https://doi.org/10.1016/S0140-6736\(10\)61850-9](https://doi.org/10.1016/S0140-6736(10)61850-9) accessed 13 August 2025.

⁵⁰ United Nations, 'Sustainable Development Goal 4: Quality Education' (United Nations Sustainable Development Goals, 2015) <https://sdgs.un.org/goals/goal4> accessed 13 August 2025.

mental health fosters resilience, coping skills, and emotional regulation, enabling students to navigate challenges and setbacks effectively.⁵¹

The untreated mental health issues can impair students' ability to thrive academically and socially. Conditions such as anxiety, depression, ADHD, and trauma can hinder students' concentration, disrupt their relationships with peers and teachers, and negatively impact their self-esteem and motivation.⁵² Addressing mental health in education is therefore crucial for creating supportive learning environments where all students can succeed.

Mental Health and Gender Equality (SDG 5)⁵³ - Mental health outcomes differ between men and women due to differences in prevalence, presentation, and treatment.⁵⁴ All genders are affected by mental health disorders, however certain trends are more noticeable than others. Men are more likely to suffer from drug addiction and antisocial behaviour disorders, whereas women are more likely to be diagnosed with depression and anxiety disorders.⁵⁵ Men may externalise their difficulties via drug abuse, aggressiveness, or risk-taking behaviours, but women prefer to internalise their anguish, resulting in emotions of melancholy, worthlessness, and guilt. Gender-related stigma and societal standards are also important, especially for males who could be discouraged from getting therapy because of conventional ideas of masculinity, which leads to underreporting and undertreatment.⁵⁶ Moreover, these problems are made worse by differences in access to mental health services. Women often encounter obstacles that might make it difficult for them to seek and obtain appropriate therapy, such as lack of social support, childcare obligations, or financial limitations. Targeted initiatives are needed to address these gaps and guarantee that all genders have fair access to mental health treatment and support.⁵⁷

⁵¹ Harris M and Emslie C, 'The Impact of Mental Health on Educational Outcomes' (2020) 112(1) *Journal of Educational Psychology* 45 <https://doi.org/10.1037/edu0000367> accessed 13 August 2025.

⁵² Green J, 'Mental Health and Academic Performance: Understanding the Link' (2018) 30(2) *Educational Psychology Review* 219 <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10648-017-9422-8> accessed 13 August 2025.

⁵³ United Nations, 'Sustainable Development Goal 5: Gender Equality' (United Nations Sustainable Development Goals, 2015) <https://sdgs.un.org/goals/goal5> accessed 13 August 2025.

⁵⁴ American Psychological Association, *Guidelines for Psychological Practice with Boys and Men* (APA 2018) <https://www.apa.org/about/policy/boys-men-practice-guidelines.pdf> accessed 13 August 2025.

⁵⁵ Corrigan PW, Druss BG and Perlick DA, 'The Impact of Mental Illness Stigma on Seeking and Participating in Mental Health Care' (2014) 15(2) *Psychological Science in the Public Interest* 37 <https://doi.org/10.1177/1529100614531398> accessed 13 August 2025.

⁵⁶ Gender Equality Advisory Council, 'Report of the G7 Gender Equality Advisory Council 2021: Building Back Better for Women and Girls' (Government of the United Kingdom, 2021) <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/report-of-the-g7-gender-equality-advisory-council-2021-building-back-better-for-women-and-girls> accessed 13 August 2025.

⁵⁷ Kuehner C, 'Why is Depression More Common Among Women than Among Men?' (2017) 4(2) *The Lancet Psychiatry* 146 [https://doi.org/10.1016/S2215-0366\(16\)30263-2](https://doi.org/10.1016/S2215-0366(16)30263-2) accessed 13 August 2025.

Mental Health and Sustainable Cities (SDG 11)⁵⁸ - For mental health, urbanisation brings both possibilities and problems, because moving to cities introduces people to new sources of stress that can have a big effect on their health. In cities even after living among large population, many people still feel loneliness and isolation because in cities people does not like to interact much because life in cities is very fast.⁵⁹ Another reason that make people in cities more vulnerable to stress , anxiety and irritation is various issues like noise, smog, lack of clean air and open spaces . Lack of green areas and long-term exposure to pollution make mental health problems even worse.⁶⁰ These problems are made worse by socioeconomic differences that are common in cities. People in marginalised areas often have to deal with more stress from things like poverty, unemployment, and homelessness, and they also have trouble getting mental health tools.⁶¹ Even while cities often provide a wide range of mental health services, many people, especially those from marginalised communities, still find it difficult to receive treatment because of cost, transportation issues, and the stigma attached to seeking help.⁶² Finding solutions to these mental health problems in cities is important for making cities more sustainable and welcoming.

Mental Health and Climate Change (SDG 13)⁶³ - Climate change affects mental health in many ways. Hurricanes, wildfires, and floods are becoming more frequent and intense, causing trauma, displacement, and sorrow, which may lead to PTSD, depression, and anxiety.⁶⁴ Environmental deterioration, including increasing temperatures, biodiversity loss, and pollution, damages ecosystems and livelihoods, causing stress, helplessness, and eco-anxiety over the planet's future.⁶⁵ Extreme weather or slow environmental changes cause migration and undermine social bonds, producing psychological suffering.⁶⁶ Furthermore, the health effects

⁵⁸ United Nations, 'Sustainable Development Goal 11: Sustainable Cities and Communities' (United Nations Sustainable Development Goals, 2015) <https://sdgs.un.org/goals/goal11> accessed 13 August 2025.

⁵⁹ Galea S, Freudenberg N and Vlahov D, 'Cities and Population Health' (2011) 62(5) *Social Science & Medicine* 1017 <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.socscimed.2005.08.027> accessed 13 August 2025.

⁶⁰ Gehl J, *Cities for People* (Island Press 2010).

⁶¹ Giles-Corti B, Vernez-Moudon A, Reis R and others, 'City Planning and Population Health: A Global Challenge' (2016) 388(10062) *The Lancet* 2912 [https://doi.org/10.1016/S0140-6736\(16\)30066-6](https://doi.org/10.1016/S0140-6736(16)30066-6) accessed 13 August 2025.

⁶² Oliver Gruebner and others, 'Cities and Mental Health' (2017) 114(8) *Deutsches Ärzteblatt International* 121 <https://doi.org/10.3238/arztebl.2017.0121> accessed 13 August 2025.

⁶³ United Nations, 'Sustainable Development Goal 13: Climate Action' (United Nations Sustainable Development Goals, 2015) <https://sdgs.un.org/goals/goal13> accessed 13 August 2025.

⁶⁴ World Health Organization, *Mental Health and Climate Change: Policy Brief* (World Health Organization 2022) <https://www.who.int/publications/i/item/9789240061461> accessed 13 August 2025.

⁶⁵ American Psychological Association and ecoAmerica, *Mental Health and Our Changing Climate: Impacts, Implications, and Guidance* (2021) <https://www.apa.org/news/press/releases/2017/03/mental-health-climate.pdf> accessed 13 August 2025.

⁶⁶ Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), *Climate Change 2022: Impacts, Adaptation, and Vulnerability* (2022) <https://www.ipcc.ch/report/ar6/wg2/> accessed 13 August 2025.

of climate change, including increased morbidity, mortality, and financial burdens, as well as exacerbated respiratory conditions, heat-related illnesses, and vector-borne infections, indirectly impair mental health.⁶⁷ These issues must be addressed to promote resilience and protect mental health in a changing environment.⁶⁸

Mental Health and Partnership for the Goals (SDG 17)⁶⁹ - Multi-stakeholder collaboration is vital for tackling the complex and interconnected challenges of mental health and achieving Sustainable Development Goal 17 (Partnerships for the Goals).⁷⁰ Engaging diverse stakeholders, including governments, NGOs, academia, the private sector, and civil society, brings together a wide range of expertise, resources, and perspectives to create effective solutions for mental health issues.⁷¹ Such collaboration enables the development of comprehensive approaches that address the social, economic, environmental, and cultural factors influencing mental health.⁷² Additionally, partnerships facilitate capacity building and knowledge sharing, promoting the exchange of best practices, innovative strategies, and evidence-based interventions.⁷³ They also amplify advocacy and awareness efforts, mobilizing support to influence policy, reduce stigma, and increase investment in mental health initiatives at all levels.⁷⁴

5. Recommendations

1. Integration of Mental Health into SDG Implementation Frameworks:

⁶⁷ Kristie L Hayes and others, 'Climate Change and Mental Health: Risks, Impacts, and Priority Actions' (2018) 12 *International Journal of Mental Health Systems* 28 <https://ijmhs.biomedcentral.com/articles/10.1186/s13033-018-0210-6> accessed 13 August 2025.

⁶⁸ United Nations, *Climate Change and Health* (United Nations 2021) <https://www.un.org/en/climatechange/climate-health> accessed 13 August 2025.

⁶⁹ United Nations, 'Sustainable Development Goal 17: Partnerships for the Goals' (United Nations Sustainable Development Goals, 2015) <https://sdgs.un.org/goals/goal17> accessed 13 August 2025.

⁷⁰ World Health Organization, *Mental Health and Climate Change: Policy Brief* (World Health Organization 2022) <https://www.who.int/publications/i/item/9789240056085> accessed 13 August 2025.

⁷¹ Susan Clayton, Caroline M Manning and Christie Hodge, 'Psychological Responses to Climate Change: Challenges and Opportunities' (2014) 66(4) *American Psychologist* 265 <https://doi.org/10.1037/a0036047> accessed 13 August 2025.

⁷² American Psychological Association and ecoAmerica, *Mental Health and Our Changing Climate: Impacts, Implications, and Guidance* (American Psychological Association 2021) <https://www.apa.org/news/press/releases/2017/03/mental-health-climate.pdf> accessed 13 August 2025.

⁷³ Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, *Climate Change 2022: Impacts, Adaptation, and Vulnerability* (IPCC 2022) <https://www.ipcc.ch/report/ar6/wg2/> accessed 13 August 2025.

⁷⁴ Hayes K, Blashki G, Wiseman J, Burke S and Reifels L, 'Climate Change and Mental Health: Risks, Impacts, and Priority Actions' (2018) 12 *International Journal of Mental Health Systems* 28 <https://doi.org/10.1186/s13033-018-0210-6> accessed 13 August 2025.

Opportunity: SDGs provide a comprehensive framework for addressing global challenges and promoting sustainable development in various domains.

Recommendation: Integrate mental health considerations into the implementation frameworks of all SDGs to recognize the significant impact of mental health on achieving sustainable development outcomes. This entails:

Mainstreaming Mental Health: In order to ensure that mental health is mainstreamed across all Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), it is important to acknowledge the cross-cutting nature of mental health and the effect it has on a variety of social, economic, and environmental issues.

Developing Indicators for Mental Health: To monitor mental health outcomes and progress towards reaching mental health-related objectives within each Sustainable Development Goal (SDG), it is necessary to develop indicators. Indicators pertaining to mental well-being, access to mental health services, elimination of stigma, and promotion of mental health literacy are included in this category.

Program and Policy Alignment: Bring all government initiatives in line with the SDGs' goals for mental health. To do this, it is necessary to include mental health treatment, preventive, and promotion activities into preexisting development agendas and to ensure that everything is consistent across all sectors.

2. Investment in Mental Health Infrastructure and Services:

Opportunity: Increasing recognition of the economic, social, and humanitarian benefits of investing in mental health.

Recommendation: Prioritize investment in mental health infrastructure and services to address gaps in access, quality, and availability of mental health care. This includes:

Developing Mental Health Infrastructure: For Improving access to treatment, especially in disadvantaged regions, invest in the construction of mental health clinics, hospitals, and facilities. This involves making certain that necessary mental health treatments like medication management, psychotherapy, and counselling are accessible.

Increasing Workforce Capacity: The rising demand for mental health services can be resolved when, more qualified mental health professionals, such as psychologists, social workers, counsellors, and psychiatrists, will be hired. To attract and keep mental health practitioners, particularly in rural and isolated locations, this entails funding mental health education and training initiatives as well as offering incentives.

Mental Health Integration into Primary Care: Early identification, diagnosis, and treatment of mental health issues can be improved by the integration of mental health services into primary care settings. This involves supporting collaborative treatment approaches that incorporate multidisciplinary teams and educating primary care physicians on mental health evaluation and intervention methods.

3. Empowerment of Communities and Marginalized Groups:

Opportunity: Communities and marginalized groups possess unique strengths, resilience, and resources for addressing mental health challenges.

Recommendation: Empower communities and marginalized groups to actively participate in decision-making processes, advocate for their mental health needs, and co-create solutions that are culturally relevant and contextually appropriate. This includes:

Building Community Capacity: Train and assist community leaders, grassroots organisations, and peer support networks to successfully address mental health concerns in their areas.

Encouraging Peer Support and Mutual assistance: Encourage peer support networks and mutual assistance organisations that provide people with mental health issues social support, understanding, and validation. It also includes the establishment of secure environments for the exchange of coping skills, giving emotional support, and sharing of different experiences.

Resolving Structural Inequities: Resolve the structural injustices and systemic obstacles that lead to inequalities in mental health among marginalised groups. Promoting social justice, reducing stigma, and addressing socioeconomic factors of mental health (such as poverty, discrimination, and access to education and work) are all part of this effort.

4. Building Resilience Through Ecotherapy and Green Spaces:

Opportunity: Ecotherapy, also known as nature-based therapy, harnesses the healing power of

nature to promote mental health and well-being.

Recommendation: Through ecotherapy mental health and well being can be promoted in various ways:

Access to Green Spaces: making sure that people in both urban and rural regions have equal access to green spaces, such as parks, forests, and gardens, may help people relax, reduce stress, and connect with nature—all of which can have a positive impact on mental health outcomes.

Therapeutic Horticulture: As part of therapeutic horticulture programs, gardening, farming, and nature-based arts and crafts encourage calmness, mindfulness, and a feeling of achievement, which supports resilience and mental health recovery.

Nature-Based Interventions: Including nature-based interventions in mental health treatment plans, such as outdoor adventure programs, wilderness therapy, and animal-assisted therapy, improves the efficacy of conventional therapeutic approaches and cultivates a closer bond with the natural world.

Green Infrastructure Development: By establishing natural areas for leisure and relaxation, green infrastructure such as green roofs, urban forests, and green corridors improves urban liveability and promotes mental health in addition to offering ecological advantages.

6. Conclusion:

Addressing the global challenges to mental health, such as stigma, discrimination, inadequate resources, and policy gaps, is critical for achieving equity and well-being. Prioritizing mental health within sustainable development requires coordinated efforts across sectors to integrate it into health, social, and development objectives. This includes investing in infrastructure, fostering policy collaboration, promoting mental health literacy, and implementing evidence-based interventions to ensure equitable access to care. By making mental health a global priority, we can build inclusive and resilient societies where everyone can thrive and contribute to the Sustainable Development Goals⁷⁵.

⁷⁵ Supra 1