

Mental health issues don't discriminate

India, a country with a population of over a billion, where one in every 20 people suffer from mental health disorder, allocates only Rs 35 crore for the past seven years constituting only 0.07 per cent of the total health budget.

However, according to a National Institute of Mental Health and Neurosciences (NIMHANS) report of 2016, the average cost for mental health care is still pegged at Rs. 1000-1500 per month, making it unaffordable to the socio-economically backward classes in India. Mpower, an organisation with a multidisciplinary approach towards mental health, is making an endeavour to make mental health care services affordable to the economically lower classes in India. Nitika Gupta, a psychologist at Mpower Centre, said, "The economically poor sections of India dwindle with such issues as awareness amounts to almost a zero in these sections. People suffering with mental illness are taken to religious gurus instead of seeking professional help."

Dr Zirak Marker, Child and Adolescent psychiatrist at Mpower gave the example of a 12 year old boy who grappled with learning disabilities and eventually developed the hallucinatory disease of schizophrenia. "A child like this required psychiatric help and medication. Through the MPower movement, we offered him the services at a reduced price," he added.

Mpower is also affiliated with an Australian programme to offer a 16-hour Youth Mental Health First Aid (YMHFA) training to educators, parents and primary care givers in the city. A social worker also visits the BMC schools regularly to increase awareness on the issue.