

GRAMA AROGYA

DECENTRALIZED MENTAL HEALTH SCREENING



Mental health encompasses emotional, psychological, and social well-being and is a crucial component of overall human health. However, mental health disorders are rapidly escalating globally, affecting around 150 million Indians, and are also associated with chronic diseases such as TB, diabetes, hypertension, and anaemia. It is crucial to address these needs and provide support for individuals with mental health conditions. Poor mental health knowledge poses barriers to seeking treatment, particularly in rural areas, causing stigma and discrimination. To promote mental health literacy and address this gap, a decentralized approach is needed in rural areas.

About Grama Arogya

Grama Arogya initiative was launched to address mental health challenges by providing decentralized primary healthcare and mental health support, aimed at enhancing accessibility and reducing stigma. This initiative empowers healthcare providers and promotes local self-governance. Gram panchayat (GP) leadership identifies and manages mental health concerns effectively for equitable access. KHPT supported the Government of Karnataka, specifically the Departments of Rural Development and Panchayat Raj (RDPR) and Health and Family Welfare (HFW), in implementing the Grama Arogya, a first-of-its-kind initiative aimed at enhancing the capacities of GPs to proactively address public health issues in 5,957 panchayats across all 31 districts of Karnataka.



Gram Panchayat-led Screening Process

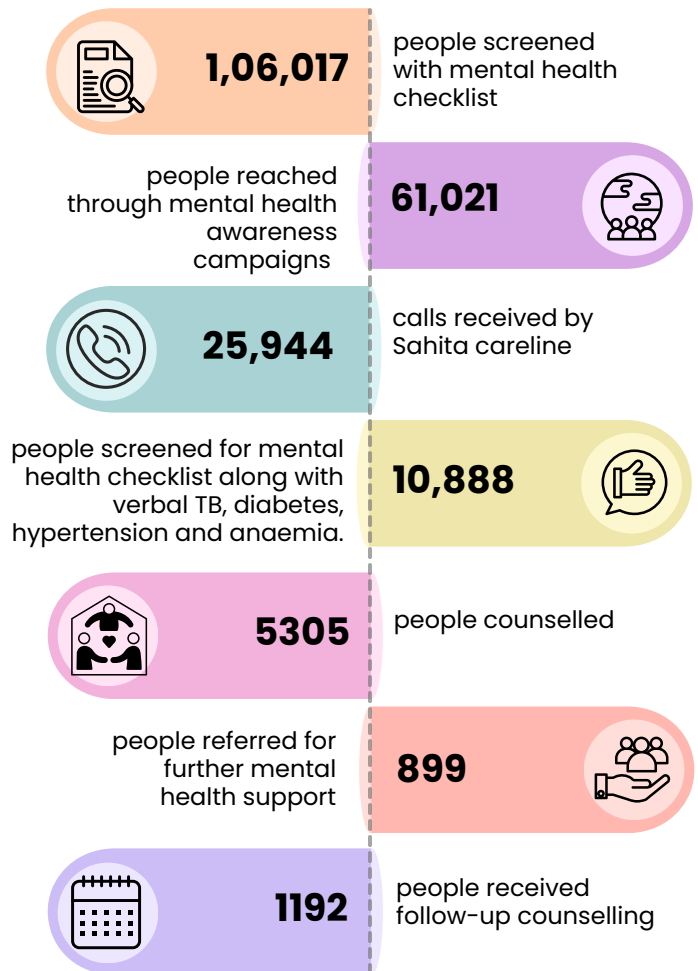
Gram Panchayats spearhead screening initiatives through the Gram Panchayat Task Forces (GPTFs), collaborating with community structures such as Self-Help Groups (SHGs), Village Health Sanitation and Nutrition Committees (VHSNCs), Primary Health Centres (PHCs), and Gram Sabhas. They organise health screening camps and awareness campaigns in the rural areas of Karnataka. During these health camps, screenings were conducted for height, weight, BMI, diabetes, hypertension, anemia, verbal TB, and mental health awareness.

The campaign focused on raising awareness, reducing stigma, improving access to mental health services, and fostering social connections and support systems. Various mid-media activities, along with informative, educational, and communicative audio and video materials, are organised to raise awareness in the community. Details of the mental health helpline are publicised, and in-person and tele-counselling services are provided through the Sahita careline, with referrals made to the district mental health program for further care (See figure 1).



Figure 1: Process of decentralized mental health screening under Grama Arogya

Reach



*The figures are a summation of 31 districts in Karnataka for the September 2021- March 2024 period.



Childrens today frequently experience confusion; they are unable to discuss these issues with their parents or teachers, which leads to mental depression. They are also plagued by exam stress and anxiety. For these reasons, they are grateful to the Grama Panchayat and KHPT team for alerting students to the helpline, which will be extremely beneficial in resolving these issues.

-Shri Nagaraj Aras, Principal, Government Boys Pre-Graduation College, Piriyaapatna

Women are frequently the victims of mental torment because of chronic illnesses, familial issues, stress, domestic abuse, and a lack of avenues to share their pain. They ignore their suffering and go about their everyday lives. Grama Arogya program is very helpful, as they told me that there is a confidential mental health care line to listen to our mental pain and provide solutions.

- Ms Ratnamma, Sanjeevini Federation of Women Self-Help Societies, Mysuru

