

BUILDING THE WORLD'S MENTAL  
HEALTH WORKFORCE



**EMPOWER**

A novel approach to training and equipping frontline  
mental health providers



DEPARTMENT OF  
Global Health and  
Social Medicine

*Dr. Laura Bond, Senior Program Manager*

# A Need for Creative Solutions to the Mental Health Treatment Gap



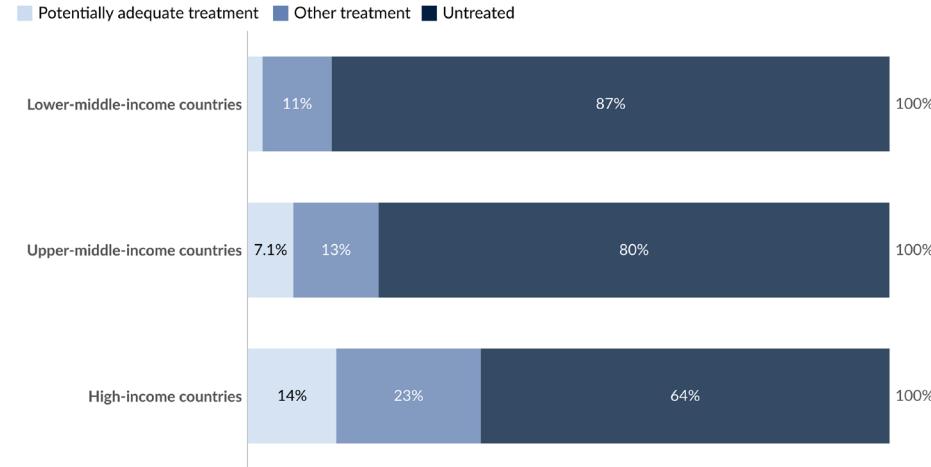
Globally, the demand for mental health care significantly outweighs the availability of trained treatment providers and high-quality mental health services



To address this gap, training and supporting non-specialist providers to deliver mental health interventions, an approach known as task-sharing, has emerged as a strategy

## Treatment gap for clinical anxiety, 2017

Respondents in 21 countries were surveyed about symptoms of anxiety they had in the past 12 months. This shows the share who received treatment for it, among those who met the criteria for anxiety disorders<sup>1</sup>.



Data source: World Mental Health surveys (2001–2015)

OurWorldInData.org/mental-health | CC BY

Note: Potentially adequate treatment was defined by the authors as receiving psychotherapy, medication, or complementary alternative medicine. Surveys used the Composite International Diagnostic Interview (CIDI).

1. Anxiety disorders Anxiety disorders are defined by the ICD as a group of conditions that involve feelings of intense fear and distress, along with other physical symptoms.

Read more: [How are mental illnesses defined?](#)

Find out how each illness is diagnosed in [the International Classification of Diseases manual](#).

# EMPOWER - The Big Picture



EMPOWER aims to scale-up evidence based psychosocial interventions for the prevention and care of mental health problems by deploying a suite of digital tools and methods to build the capacity and skills of the front-line health workers and community members to deliver these interventions.



## MISSION

To empower anyone, anywhere, to master the delivery of evidence - based psychosocial interventions



## VISION

Building the world's front - line mental health workforce

# EMPOWER - *Background, History, and Rationale*



## Motivation

The high burden of mental disorders represents a global crisis, and is amplified by lack of access to evidence-based psychosocial interventions for prevention and care.



## Origin

Initiated by [Vikram Patel](#) in 2018 as the flagship program of the [Mental Health For All Lab](#) at Harvard Medical School



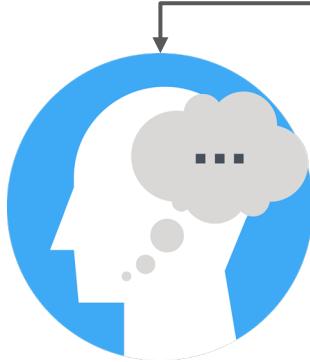
## History

Builds on 20+ years of clinical and implementation science led by Dr. Patel and his international network of collaborators in India, alongside the work of other global mental health scholars and innovators in diverse low-resource settings

# The Journey of an EMPOWER Provider



EMPOWER adopts an **Accompaniment Model** whereby learners are accompanied on a journey of learning, mastering, and delivering evidence-based psychosocial interventions.



EMPOWER LEARNER

Undergo the **EMPOWER training** to learn how to deliver psychosocial interventions and take a **knowledge assessment**



EMPOWER INTERN

Learners complete an internship phase including **case-based practice** with supervision



COMPETENCY ASSESSMENT

Learners take a **skills assessment** to assess their ability to apply the skills they have learned

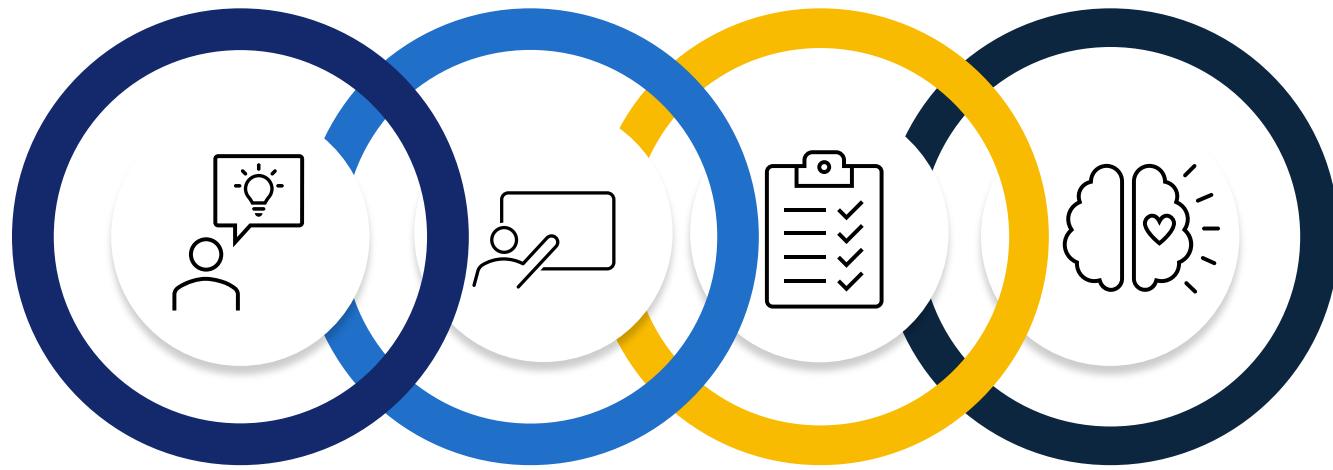


EMPOWER PROVIDER

Individuals **enter the workforce** and deliver care alongside other providers and participate in **peer supervision**

Supervising the next set of learners

# EMPOWER – *Effectiveness of India Programming*



• Behavioral Activation (BA) delivered by community health workers (CHWs) in India

• ASHAs receive supervision from peers and expert providers throughout BA delivery

• >2000 community members who completed BA sessions delivered by an ASHA

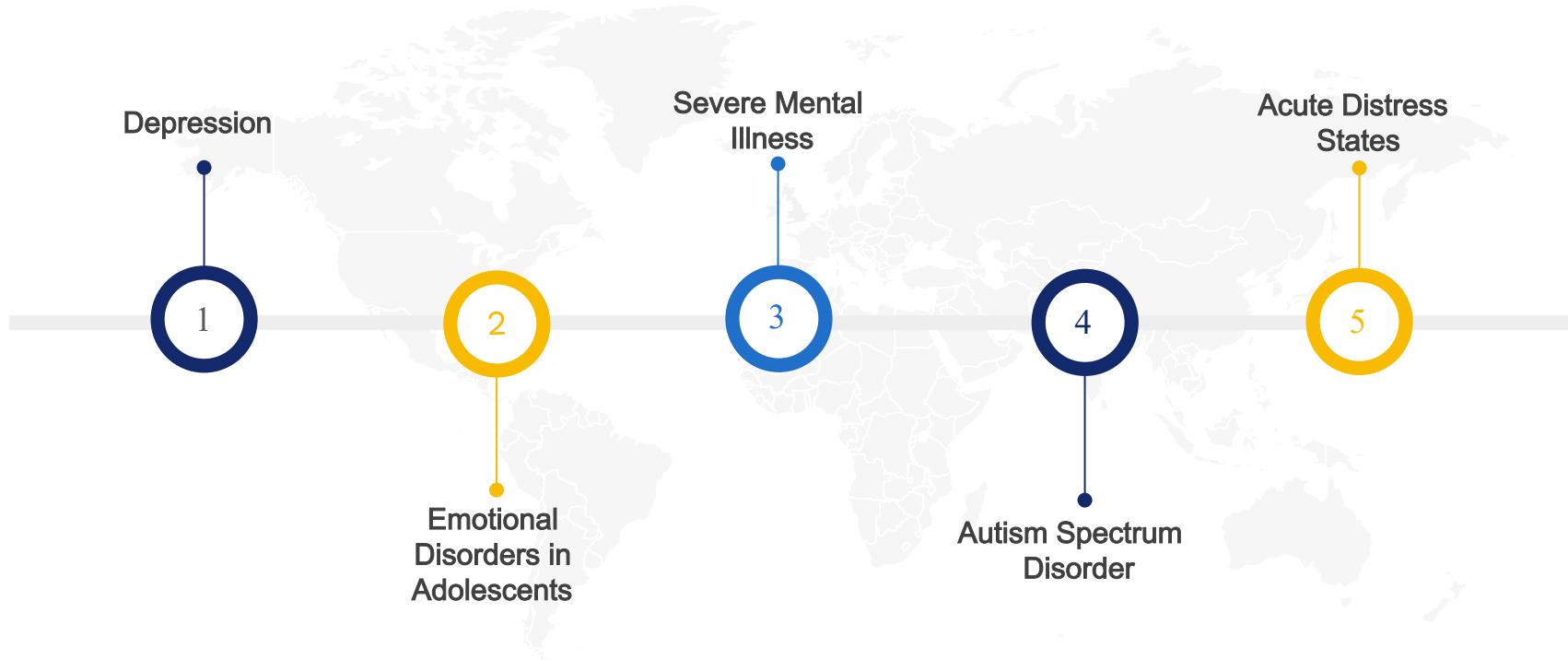
• >50% reduction in depression symptoms for community members receiving BA from an ASHA





# Mental Health Concerns Addressed by EMPOWER

EMPOWER aims to tackle the most common global mental health concerns for which there are evidence-based psychosocial interventions. Our current portfolio includes:



# 1) Scaling up Behavioral Activation (BA) - Depression



We are leveraging digital technology and task-sharing to train front-line workers in the delivery of Behavioral Activation (BA), an evidence-based psychosocial intervention for depression, to diverse populations, especially marginalized communities



BA is a brief yet powerful component of CBT. Delivered in just 6 sessions by front-line workers in low-resource settings, it has proven to be highly effective for severe depression



Building on 10+ years of research and practice in India, EMPOWER is now implementing BA in the US (Texas) and scaling up the intervention in India (Madhya Pradesh)



In India, >1000 BA-trained front-line workers identified and treated ~2460 persons with depression. In Texas, English and culturally adapted Spanish versions of the BA digital curriculum have been tested for acceptability

## Collaborators



## Funders





# The EMPOWER BA Curriculum



Foundational Skills and Behavioral Activation courses are designed to train front-line health workers to master and deliver the BA intervention to address adult depression



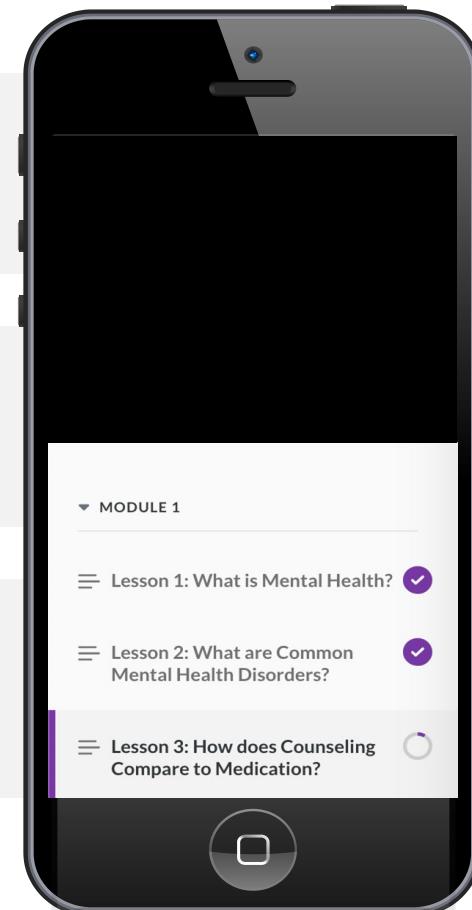
## Both the courses are:

- delivered via an online platform
- self-paced with ease of navigability
- accessible from any computer, tablet, or mobile device



## Courses include a series of evidence-based resources such as:

- video-based lectures
- role-plays of providers interacting with individuals in need of support
- supplemental materials & worksheets for enhanced learning



Click here!

NOTE: Empower BA is now eligible for Continuing Education Credits towards Community Health Worker recertification in the state of Texas, US.

# Examples of BA Implementation Sites in the United States



We are continuously collaborating with diverse implementation sites that have their roots in and a pulse on the health of their community members.

**Congregational Collective:** Faith based leaders trained in BA and are completing their internship phase with UT Health, as part of the organization



**UT Arlington:** Bachelors in Social Work students enrolled in a course at UT Arlington incorporating CHW concepts and the BA curriculum

**Lynn Community Health Center:** Community health workers at the center are undergoing the BA training, followed by the internship phase



**Meadows Mental Health Policy Institute:** In collaboration with them, we are training front-line providers throughout the state of Texas

The BA curriculum has been culturally and contextually adapted to and is also deployed in the Spanish language to increase training access and impact in larger communities.



THANK YOU

Want to explore ways to get involved?

Please write to [empower@hms.harvard.edu](mailto:empower@hms.harvard.edu)

for more information

Or

Visit our website

<https://mentalhealthforalllab.hms.harvard.edu/empower>

