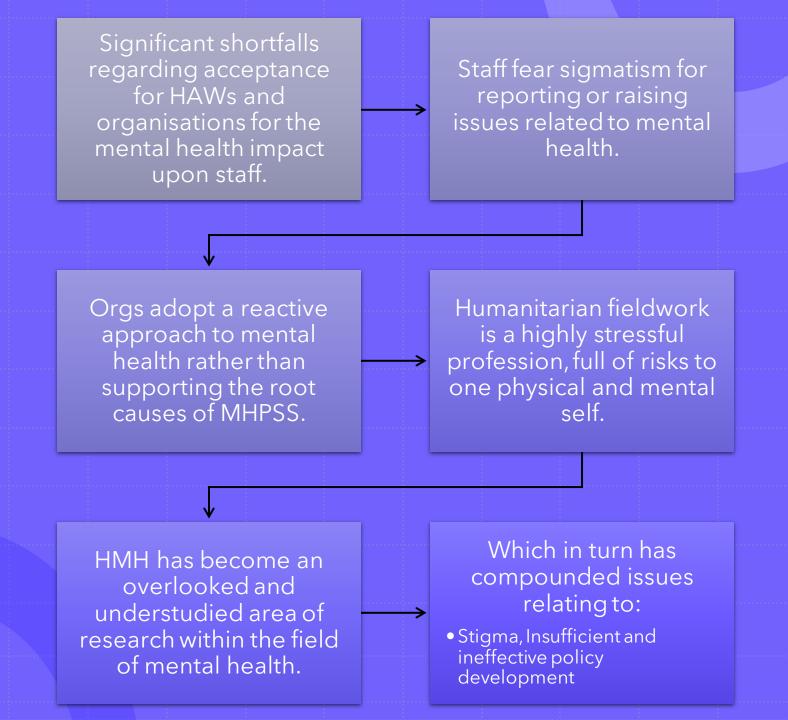# Why is Mental Health Awareness Important for HAWs?

HUMANITARIAN MH AWARENESS IS THE FIRST LINE OF DEFENCE

At present, there is insufficient data to quantify the number of HAWs at risk or who have suffered from mental health-related illnesses or reported experiencing symptoms. However, the importance of awareness and the ability to see ourselves clearly and objectively through reflection, introspection, and the realisation that we are individuals responsible for our own mental health cannot be overstated. It underscores the need for proactive measures to promote mental well-being and foster a culture of support within the humanitarian aid sector.

Significant shortfalls regarding acceptance for HAWs and organisations for the mental health impact upon staff.

Staff fear sigmatism for reporting or raising issues related to mental health.

Orgs adopt a reactive approach to mental health rather than supporting the root causes of MHPSS.

Humanitarian fieldwork is a highly stressful profession, full of risks to one physical and mental self.

HMH has become an overlooked and understudied area of research within the field of mental health.

Which in turn has compounded issues relating to:

- Stigma, Insufficient and ineffective policy development

IT'S TIME FOR A CHANGE

- **Increase funding for humanitarian mental health initiatives**, including staff counsellors, resources, and supportive leave. Allocate dedicated funds for mental health activities within core budgets to ensure sustainability and prioritisation.

- **Develop a comprehensive Humanitarian Mental Health Awareness training** program for aid workers. The program should aim to raise awareness about mental health and reduce stigma. It should include self-care and stress management strategies.

- **Implement peer support networks** for HAWs, fostering a sense of community and solidarity. Peer support groups provide opportunities for HAWs to share experiences, seek advice, and offer mutual support in managing stress and mental health challenges.

- **Encourage collaboration and knowledge-sharing** through research and best practices in humanitarian mental health. Invest in studies to understand mental health challenges faced by aid workers. Share findings and innovative solutions across organisations to support mental well-being in humanitarian settings. Establish platforms for disseminating research and facilitating collaboration among stakeholders.