

# WHO QualityRights



## *Act, unite and empower for better mental health*

*"I was now a resident or rather an inmate of the hospital. I saw no one except the other people on the floor who wore identical striped hospital robes and plastic bracelets with identifying names. Just as the bracelet was a closed stiff bracelet, the door was a locked door which I could not open. The mental health workers were the only ones who could open the locked door. I left my hope on the other side of the locked door."*

*Mental health care user*

WHO gratefully acknowledges the funding and support of the following partners for the WHO QualityRights project:  
Government of Portugal - Government of Spain

**Mental Health Policy and Service Development  
Department of Mental Health and Substance Abuse  
World Health Organization  
Geneva, Switzerland**

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**World Health  
Organization**

## Addressing a hidden human rights emergency

All over the world people with mental and psychosocial disabilities experience a wide range of human rights violations, stigma and discrimination.

The care available from mental health facilities around the world is not only of poor quality but in many instances hinders recovery. Training of staff is minimal and outdated, and the level of knowledge and understanding about the human rights of persons with mental disabilities is very poor. It is common for people to be locked away in small, prison-like cells with no human contact, or to be chained to their beds, unable to move. Inhuman and degrading treatment practices are common, and people in facilities are often stripped of their dignity and treated with contempt. Violations are not restricted to inpatient and residential facilities. Many people seeking care from outpatient and community care services are disempowered and also experience extensive restrictions in their basic human rights. A new paradigm is required, where services promote recovery and emphasize the key elements of autonomy and participation of service users in all aspects of their treatment and private lives.

In the wider community, people with mental disabilities are denied many basic rights that most people take for granted. For example, they are denied opportunities to live where they choose, marry, have families, attend school and seek employment. There is a commonly held yet false assumption that people with mental health conditions lack the capacity to assume responsibilities, manage their affairs, and make decisions about their lives. All of these factors contribute to the ongoing marginalization, disenfranchisement, and invisibility of this group of people in their communities.

## What action must be taken?

Violations often occur behind closed doors and go unreported - unless people know that they are going on, action cannot be taken to stop them.

For this reason, the World Health Organization has developed **QualityRights** - a new project to unite and empower people to improve the quality of care and promote human rights in mental health facilities and social care homes. Not only does this project provide training and develop skills for health care workers and mental health service users to improve services, it leaves a lasting legacy of respect for human rights.

## What are the objectives?



ONE

Improve the quality of services and human rights conditions in inpatient and outpatient mental health facilities.



TWO

Build capacity among service users, families and health workers to understand and promote human rights and recovery from mental disabilities.



THREE

Develop a civil society movement of people with mental disabilities to provide mutual support, conduct advocacy and influence policy-making processes in line with international human rights standards.



FOUR

Reform national policies and legislation in line with best practice and international human rights standards.

## What actions are taken?



Visiting committees are established in countries, which include persons with mental disabilities, families of people with mental disabilities, mental health professionals and legal and human rights experts.



Committee members receive training to be able to undertake the assessment of quality and human rights conditions in mental health and social care facilities using the WHO QualityRights Tool Kit developed by the World Health Organization.



Following the assessment of facilities, visiting committees work collaboratively with service users, family and staff to develop a plan to improve conditions in the facilities.



Improvement plans are implemented in mental health and social care facilities and training on human rights is provided to service users, families and staff.



Technical and administrative support is provided to people with mental disabilities from the facilities and community on how to set up self-advocacy groups and family associations, in order to provide mutual support and information about mental health and human rights to other service-users, their families and members of the community, and to undertake advocacy and campaigning as well as participate in and influence decision making processes.



Policy and legislative reform, informed by the assessment of facilities, is conducted in countries, in order to prevent violations, promote human rights, and encourage the development of a full range of high quality community services to support the recovery of people with mental disabilities.

## What are the long term benefits?

The project has substantial long-term benefits. It will put an end to violations being carried out in the full range of mental health and social care facilities and improve the quality of support and care being provided. Using the skills developed during the course of the project, people with mental disabilities and family members who have participated in the project in their home country, will be employed as consultants to help set up similar initiatives in other countries.

Importantly, the project is a building block for a grassroots civil society movement of people with

mental disabilities. Through the establishment of civil society organizations, people with mental disabilities can take concerted action against human rights violations. They can participate more fully in community life, gain access to education and employment opportunities, actively contribute to decision-making processes on issues affecting them, and work towards the provision of quality mental health services in the communities where they live.

***People with mental disabilities have the same rights as everybody else.  
It is time to act, unite and empower people to improve  
mental health and human rights***