

Kathmandu charter

for the rights of people
with lived experience
of mental health conditions
in the WHO South-East Asia Region



World Health
Organization
REGIONAL OFFICE FOR South-East Asia

The World Health Organization (WHO) Regional Office for South-East convened the summit: “Voices of People with Lived Experience in the Region” in Kathmandu, Nepal on 19 and 20 June 2024, to share perspectives on the rights of people with lived experience, including access to health care, employment, housing and education. It aimed to promote policy reforms that protect the rights of those with mental health conditions by identifying existing gaps and opportunities for reform across different sectors.

The summit provided a platform for people with lived experience to share experiences, challenges and solutions, and to establish a regional dialogue on engaging and empowering this community, as per commitments made by the health ministers of Member States of WHO South-East Asia Region at the Seventy-fifth Session of the WHO Regional Committee for South-East Asia on universal access to people-centred mental health care and services.

AT THIS SUMMIT, THE PARTICIPANTS WITH LIVED EXPERIENCE OF MENTAL HEALTH CONDITIONS AND THEIR CARERS,

RECOGNIZING AND NOTING:

- the estimated 260 million people with mental health conditions live in the Region;
- the urgent need for a holistic, rights-oriented, and multisectoral approach to prevent mental health conditions and promote mental wellbeing and recovery for all;
- the increased risk and vulnerability experienced by people with lived experience as a result of intersectional identities that relate to age, gender, sexuality, race, ethnicity, socio-economic status, religion, indigeneity and caste;
- the necessity for going beyond the standards set by the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities;

AFFIRMING COMMITMENT TOWARDS A FUTURE WHERE MENTAL HEALTH IS PRIORITIZED, STIGMA IS REDUCED, AND ALL INDIVIDUALS HAVE ACCESS TO THE CARE AND SUPPORT THEY NEED THROUGH:

- **operationalizing the Paro Declaration**, signed by Health Ministers at the Seventy-fifth Session of the WHO Regional Committee for South-East Asia that affirms the importance of universal access to people-centred mental health care and services, recognizing the vital role of people with lived experience, caregivers and families in ensuring comprehensive and effective public health, societal, educational and economic responses to address the negative impact of mental health conditions;
- **supporting implementing the Mental Health Action Plan for the WHO South-East Asian Region 2023–2030**, which calls upon Member States to engage people with lived experience and their families in policy development, implementation and evaluation;
- **building capacity** of multiple stakeholders within and beyond the health sector, and mainstream human rights approaches in laws, policies and programmes related to mental health;
- **strengthening collaboration**, sharing best practices, and supporting each other to promote mental health and well-being for all, and ensuring meaningful participation in planning and implementing mental health policies and programmes;

DECLARED THAT THE FOLLOWING RIGHTS ARE INTEGRAL TO PERSONS WITH LIVED EXPERIENCE AND CAREGIVERS IN THE REGION:

- **the right to equal opportunities**, fair and equitable treatment, dignity and liberty, and protection from discrimination, abuse, and exploitation in all areas of life, including health, work, education and community settings;
- **the right to autonomy** in decision-making, access to accurate information in accessible formats, free and informed consent, ensuring their choices and decisions are respected and supported throughout their care;
- **health care rights** to access affordable, quality, community-based health care services that are accessible, safe, least restrictive, and timely, including preventive, promotive and protective psychosocial care, and to be free from forced institutionalization;
- **social inclusion and participation rights** to encompass the rights of individuals to access inclusive social policies and protections, live independently in the community, participate in community activities, and meaningfully engage in the design, planning, implementation and evaluation of policies, programmes and budgets that could impact mental health outcomes;
- **legal rights** to exercise legal capacity and be recognized equally before the law, have the right to access justice in a timely manner, and to be protected from increased vulnerability due to social, structural and systemic factors that may affect their mental health;
- **personal and family rights** to privacy and confidentiality of their health information, as well as the right to be portrayed responsibly and ethically in all forms of media, and the right to choose if, when and whom to marry, whether to have or adopt children, and to raise those children;
- **political rights** to vote and be voted into public offices as well as participate in public and civil processes;
- **the right to freedom of association** to establish representative networks and associations to exchange information, provide informal care, peer support and advocacy.



Disclaimer: This charter was developed by the participants with lived experience of mental health conditions, and carers from Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Indonesia, Maldives, Nepal, Sri Lanka and Thailand who participated at the Regional summit “Voices of People with Lived Experience in the Region”, convened by the World Health Organization (WHO) Regional Office for South-East Asia in Kathmandu, Nepal on 19 and 20 June 2024. The text of this charter is intended to serve as a guide for Member States of the WHO South-East Asia Region to develop their own contextualized national charters.

