

# Shifting towards rights- and recovery-oriented mental health care in India: Call to action

## SUMMARY

150 million people in India are estimated to live with mental health conditions. However, nearly 70-92% do not have access to mental health services, creating a large mental health care gap. There is a significant lack of acceptable and affordable quality care. Social determinants are drivers of mental health and therefore mental health needs to be addressed as a development issue related to social, cultural, and economic factors, not merely biomedical ones. Biomedical interventions by themselves have not helped to close the mental health care gap; therefore, we need rights- and recovery-oriented care that can address systemic and structural barriers to mental health care. Given the impact of the current pandemic on mental health, we need to address this as an inter-sectoral concern.

The first meeting for a new recovery network called *Recovery-Oriented Mental Health System Transformation in India* (ROMHSI-1) was held in Pune in February 2020. The aim of the meeting was to conceptualise recovery and research in the Indian context for mental health system transformation towards upholding rights and supporting recovery. The meeting was attended by 50 people from across India with representatives from funding organisations, and mental health NGOs; people with lived experience; clinicians; journalists; academics and researchers; designers; and human rights activists.

## RECOVERY-ORIENTED MENTAL HEALTH CARE

Most agreed on a people-centred definition of recovery, where mental health services, policies, and interventions should be focused on supporting a person's will and preferences. This requires a paradigm shift from the existing notion of symptomatic recovery to an approach where rights and access to social care are also looked at.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

- 1. Implementation of the Mental Healthcare Act, 2017<sup>1</sup> and the National Mental Health Policy, 2014<sup>2</sup>**
  - ▶ Need to strengthen and create adequate resources in the mental health sector to implement the national law and policy on mental health.
  - ▶ Need to identify and close the gaps in the implementation of the aforementioned law and policy.

<sup>1</sup> To know more about the Act: <https://www.prsindia.org/uploads/media/Mental%20Health/Mental%20Healthcare%20Act,%202017.pdf>

<sup>2</sup> To know more about the Policy: [https://nhm.gov.in/images/pdf/National\\_Health\\_Mental\\_Policy.pdf](https://nhm.gov.in/images/pdf/National_Health_Mental_Policy.pdf)

## 2. Need a shared understanding of recovery

There are multiple interpretations of 'recovery' within mental health and its allied sectors. We need to move towards a shared understanding of the concept to implement and evaluate services, policies, and interventions.

## 3. Co-design mental health care interventions

Inclusion and participation of persons with lived experience, care providers, and mental health professionals when designing mental health programmes, such as peer support, will ensure that policies are representative of people's needs.

## 4. Training for mental health professionals

Need to provide accessible on-going evidence-based training and resources for mental health care professionals that uphold the principles of rights- and recovery-oriented care.

## 5. Implementing rights- and recovery-oriented mental health care

Innovative and evidence-based interventions that support recovery- and rights-based care to be implemented and scaled up in mental health care services. The interventions should be co-designed with persons with lived experiences and care providers. This includes peer support<sup>3</sup>, recovery colleges co-led by persons with lived experience and professionals, and anti-discriminatory work policies that support persons with lived experience.

## 6. Document and disseminate recovery stories in the public domain

There is a need to change the notion of symptomatic recovery to a more holistic understanding of the concept. Arts, culture, and various forms of sharing stories can help in bringing about this shift. This can also raise awareness amongst those with lived experience of mental health problems.

## 7. Prioritise community-based mental health care

Invest in mental health services outside of facility-based care to work with community-led interventions that are acceptable and feasible for the community.

## 8. Role of media

Work with media professionals to provide reliable, person-centric recovery narratives.

<sup>3</sup> To know more about peer support: <https://www.upsides.org/>

**We urge mental health professionals to invest the resources required to implement recovery- and rights-oriented care in mental health.**

For further details, email us at [info@cmhlp.org](mailto:info@cmhlp.org)



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