



# WHO MENTAL HEALTH AND HUMAN RIGHTS PROJECT

*The WHO Project on Mental Health and Human Rights aims to support countries in adopting strategies to protect and promote the human rights of people with mental disorders. It focuses specifically on the development and implementation of mental health legislation, as this represents an important means of rights protection.*

People with mental disorders are exposed to a wide range of human rights violations. Violations can often occur in psychiatric institutions through inadequate, degrading and harmful care and treatment as well as unhygienic and inhuman living conditions. Violations can also occur outside the institutional context. The stigma, myths, and misconceptions associated with mental disorders negatively affect the day-to-day lives of persons with mental disorders leading to discrimination and the denial of even the most basic rights. People all over the world experience limitation in the fields of employment, education, and housing due to their mental disorder. This stigma and discrimination can, in turn, impact on a person's ability to gain access to appropriate care, integrate into society, and recover from illness.

Legislation enables the codification and consolidation of the fundamental principles, values, aims and objectives of mental health policies and programmes. It provides a legal framework to ensure that critical issues affecting the lives of people with mental disorders, both in mental health facilities and in the broader community context, are addressed.



## THE MANUAL ON MENTAL HEALTH LEGISLATION

Currently, WHO is developing a Manual on Mental Health Legislation. The Manual brings together information on international norms and standards in the area of mental health and human rights, as well as best practice information on mental health law in countries, in order to inform and assist countries wishing to formulate and implement legislation.

*"All persons with a mental illness, or who are being treated as such persons, shall be treated with humanity and respect for the inherent dignity of the human person... There shall be no discrimination on the grounds of mental illness..."*

UN Principles for the Protection of Persons with Mental Illness, GA resolution 46/119 of 17 December 1991.

## FACULTY MEETING:

A faculty meeting will be organized in 2003, to train consultants and young professionals to provide countries with technical assistance in developing and implementing mental health legislation. Prior to the initiation of activities at country level, the faculty will convene to develop a common framework of action jointly with the WHO project staff. The content of the technical outputs, as well as the general techniques and strategies for working with countries will be agreed upon. The Manual on Mental Health Legislation will provide the framework for training the faculty members and for providing technical assistance in countries.



## HUMAN RIGHTS TRAINING:

Also in 2003, WHO plans to hold an International Training Forum on Mental Health, Human Rights and Legislation. The Forum will be open to countries wishing to gain core technical information about mental health law and human rights. In addition to offering technical expertise and assistance in this area by the faculty consultants and WHO staff, the Forum will represent an opportunity for countries to share information and learn from one another's experiences, thus facilitating inter-country collaboration and capacity building.

Following the Forum, a number of countries will receive further technical support in the development and implementation of their national mental health laws.

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