



Shuaib Chalklen, UN Special Rapporteur on Disability of the Commission for Social Development

The continued marginalization of persons with disabilities- especially mental health conditions - remains a priority for the Office of UN Special Rapporteur on Disability. My predecessors both included this issue in their stated priorities as I have already done in mine.

The situation of persons with mental health conditions who are living in poverty- including in Africa and other developing countries - needs urgent attention. One of our most pressing challenges is to change attitudes towards persons with disabilities, including those with mental health conditions. We need to raise awareness of the situation that they face and commit ourselves to fighting for their dignity and rights.

Anand Grover, UN Special Rapporteur on the right of everyone to the enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of physical and mental health

People with mental health conditions are more likely to experience substantial disability and are at considerably higher risk of dying prematurely than the general population. The reasons for this include lack of access to health, social and emergency services; discrimination against and human rights violations of persons with mental health conditions and lack of empowerment.

Therefore an important part of the response has to be to empower people with mental health conditions. Historically, civil society advocacy and activism has played a central role in ensuring that issues such as HIV/AIDS and maternal and child health have claimed their rightful place on national and international development agendas. International human rights law requires that people be entitled to participate in decision-making processes at local, national and international levels. Yet persons with mental health conditions continue to be marginalized in decision-making processes that directly affect them. [...] This ultimately requires capacity building of and investment in persons with mental health conditions. The proven benefits are all too evident from the HIV field. Capacity building and empowerment augurs well for better governance and development for society as a whole.

From ***Mental health and development: targeting people with mental health conditions as a vulnerable group***. Funk M, Drew N, Freeman M, Faydi E. 2010. World Health Organization. Geneva, Switzerland. available at http://www.who.int/mental_health/policy/mhtargeting/en/index.html