



Badrul's son has experienced extreme stigma as a result of his disability. To avoid further stigma for his son, Badrul has chosen not to include a photo of himself. Instead, he has chosen an image of apples, as he understands them to be a symbol which represents the mind.

### DISABILITY AND POVERTY THE FACTS

- Persons with psychosocial disabilities are more likely to face discrimination in their communities than persons with other types of disabilities.
- The World Bank estimates that persons with disabilities may account for as many as 1 in 5 of the world's poorest people.<sup>1</sup>

#### SOURCES:

<sup>1</sup> World Health Organization (2002-2004) World Health Survey.

#### MY STORY: BADRUL MANNAN, BANGLADESH

Badrul Mannan's son is 30 years old and has schizophrenia. He speaks about the difficulties and distress he faces when there are social barriers. These barriers are so extreme that his father wanted to protect his son's identity by speaking for him.

*“With schizophrenia, most of the time they are quite OK...But as soon as it becomes obvious—visible—they are labelled. Straight away, without any reason, they lose their employment.”*

*Badrul Mannan, Bangladesh.*

Mental health issues are a common experience of many people. However, when someone experiences a long-term and/or episodic mental health issue, and barriers in their community prevent equal participation, this is considered a disability. This type of disability is often referred to as a psychosocial disability.

#### THE CYCLE:

Mental health is an integral part of human development, and when it interacts with barriers that prevent equal participation, mental health issues can create a cycle of poverty and disability.

Some common barriers associated with mental health issues and psychosocial disabilities are:

- Discrimination on the basis of their mental health issue
- Lack of awareness and availability of mental health services and psychosocial support
- Budget allocation to mental health is less than one per cent of the health budget in many low and middle income countries, and what little resources there are, often go to hospital-based care in urban settings.<sup>3</sup>

Living in poverty can place people at a higher risk of developing mental health issues, including schizophrenia, depression, anxiety, and substance abuse. In turn, mental health issues can contribute and deepen poverty, as a person with mental health issues is more likely to face barriers which prevent their inclusion in health services, education and employment.

Up to 85 per cent of people who have a mental health issue in low and middle income countries do not have access to adequate healthcare or psychosocial support.<sup>4</sup> This can leave the person and their family alone in trying to understand or manage their situation.

There is a great need to provide community-based primary mental healthcare and psychosocial support, as well as housing and social protection, to people with psychosocial disability close to their homes.

## **FIGHTING PREJUDICE AND DISCRIMINATION: INSIDE THE CYCLE**

A lack of knowledge and education means that many communities hold negative perceptions and prejudice towards persons with psychosocial disabilities; creating one of the most marginalised groups in society. Many countries have laws that continue to discriminate against persons with psychosocial disabilities, including limiting their right to vote, to be elected, to be married and have a family, to live independently, and to receive appropriate healthcare that ensures their full and informed consent.

**“In Bangladesh, the Lunacy Act says that once someone is a ‘lunatic’, he cannot vote. What type of citizen is one who doesn’t have the right to vote? They cannot own property. His property will be grabbed. He will lose everything. So they are deprived of all rights.”**

**Badrul Mannan, Bangladesh**

Discrimination, social isolation and abuse are common experiences among persons with psychosocial disabilities – and it’s these attitudes that can cause long term disability.

**“People with poor mental health are being selected for mockery, jest and even physical torture. Society thinks it is a curse, or they blame the parents. There are a lot of myths associated with it, and those myths are making their lives miserable.”**

**Badrul Mannan, Bangladesh**

Persons with psychosocial disabilities face more discrimination in the workplace than persons with other impairments, and are therefore among the most disadvantaged in society. The numbers are clear – and even though the links between poverty and disability are strong, with the right focus and changing attitudes, this cycle can end.



## **MENTAL HEALTH, DISABILITY AND POVERTY – THE FACTS**

- 80 per cent of people with mental health conditions live in low and middle income countries.<sup>2</sup>
- 75-85 per cent of people with mental health problems in poor countries do not have access to appropriate mental health services.<sup>5</sup>
- In most low and middle income countries, the budget for mental health is less than one per cent of the health budget.<sup>6</sup>

### **SOURCES:**

<sup>2, 4, 5</sup> World Health Organization. (2010). Mental Health and Development

<sup>3, 6</sup> World Health Organization & World Bank (2011) World Report on Disability, 67.

## MENTAL HEALTH: WE KNOW WHAT IT TAKES

When persons with psychosocial disabilities are provided with appropriate support, they have the same potential to be active and contributing members of their families and communities as anyone else. Unfortunately, mental health issues and its interaction with disability, has not received adequate attention when it comes to tackling poverty.

**That's why good development practice needs to:**

- **Include mental health awareness programs**
- **Ensure a range of mental health services are part of primary healthcare and emergency services**
- **Include persons with psychosocial disabilities in all development activities improving the living conditions of communities**
- **Assist communities to identify and develop psychosocial support systems and build community resilience**
- **Raise awareness of disability to ensure that all people, including persons with psychosocial disabilities, are able to realise their human rights**

Good development practice that is inclusive of all people can help overcome barriers and ensure people with mental health issues are able to participate in, and benefit from, development on an equal basis with others.

Empowering persons with psychosocial disabilities to participate fully in society, including access to health services, psychosocial support, education, livelihoods, and building community resilience, is essential to end the cycle of poverty and disability.



## LET'S END THE CYCLE

**END THE CYCLE** works to promote the human rights and lived experience of persons with disabilities in low and middle income countries.

Access and download videos, stories and other resources at **[www.endthecycle.info](http://www.endthecycle.info)**