



1 Is there any available information on the treatment of people with psychiatric conditions in Bangladesh?

Sources state that the country's attitude towards mental health is one of stigma and discrimination. The World Health Organisation (WHO) reported that there were no legislative and financial provisions to protect and support people with mental disorders in employment, housing and against discrimination. There is an employment quota scheme in place for people with disabilities, the definition of which includes people with mental disorders. However, the scheme is reportedly not properly implemented. A small percentage of people receive social welfare payments for mental disabilities. Mental health services are also considered to be inadequate.

Bangladesh's National Mental Health Institute (NHMI) has estimated that 16% of adults (over 18 years of age) suffer from some form of mental disease in Bangladesh. Severe cases comprise 0.1% of total sufferers. Most cases (15%) are diagnosed as mild, usually anxiety and depressive disorders.¹

A range of sources, including the WHO, state that the country's attitude towards mental health is one of stigma and discrimination.² According to a mental health physician in Bangladesh, mental health patients are seen as a burden on society and family members. The physician writes that family members tend to hide the issue rather than discuss and seek assistance from mental health professionals.³

A 2007 WHO and Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, Bangladesh report states that there were no legislative and financial provisions to protect and support people with mental disorders in employment, housing and against discrimination.⁴ The report states:

There are no legislative and financial provisions to protect and provide support for users in respect of employment of disabled, protection from discrimination (dismissal, lower wages)

¹ 'Mental health management' 2010, *The Financial Express (Bangladesh)*, 12 January – Attachment 1.

² World Health Organisation (Bangladesh) (undated), 'Mental Health & Substance Abuse' http://www.whoban.org/nc_mental_health.html – Accessed 4 February 2010 – Attachment 2; Khan, Zillur Rahman 2009, 'No health without mental health', *The Daily Star*, 10 October http://www.thedailystar.net/newDesign/print_news.php?nid=109017 – Accessed 3 February 2010 – Attachment 3.

³ Khan, Zillur Rahman 2009, 'No health without mental health', *The Daily Star*, 10 October http://www.thedailystar.net/newDesign/print_news.php?nid=109017 – Accessed 3 February 2010 – Attachment 3.

⁴ World Health Organisation (WHO) & Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, Bangladesh 2007, *WHO-AIMS Report on Mental Health System in Bangladesh*, p.17, World Health Organisation, Regional Office for South-East Asia website http://www.searo.who.int/LinkFiles/Mental_Health_Resources_WHO-AIMS_Report_MHS_Ban.pdf – Accessed 2 February 2010 – Attachment 4.

solely on account of mental disorder, priority in state housing and in subsidized housing schemes for people with severe mental disorders, protection from discrimination in allocation of housing for people with severe mental disorders.⁵

The government has an employment quota for orphans and people with disabilities in all jobs of 10%.⁶ The definition of “persons with disabilities” includes mentally ill people.⁷

However, the Asia-Pacific Human Rights Information Centre reported that the 10% quota has not been properly implemented.⁸ Employment and job creation opportunities for people with disabilities have reportedly never taken off in Bangladesh’s private sector.⁹

The Ain O Salish Kendra (ASK – a national human rights and legal services organisation) in its 2007 report noted that, according to disability activists, government departments did not follow existing employment quotas when recruiting.¹⁰ Although this aspect was not mentioned in ASK’s later 2008 report it did state that there were limited job opportunities and an inadequate work environment for people with disabilities.¹¹

Furthermore, mental health services are considered inadequate.¹² The WHO in Bangladesh reported that mental health activities were generally concentrated on hospital-based

⁵ World Health Organisation (WHO) & Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, Bangladesh 2007, *WHO-AIMS Report on Mental Health System in Bangladesh*, p.17, World Health Organisation, Regional Office for South-East Asia website [http://www.searo.who.int/LinkFiles/Mental Health Resources WHO-AIMS Report MHS Ban.pdf](http://www.searo.who.int/LinkFiles/Mental_Health_Resources_WHO-AIMS_Report_MHS_Ban.pdf) – Accessed 2 February 2010 – Attachment 4.

⁶ United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) (undated), ‘Bangladesh’ in *Disability at a Glance 2009: a Profile of 36 Countries and Areas in Asia and the Pacific*, p.51 http://www.unescap.org/ESID/psis/disability/publications/glance/Disability_at_a_Glance2009.pdf – Accessed 5 February 2010 – Attachment 5.

⁷ United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) (undated), ‘Bangladesh’ in *Disability at a Glance 2009: a Profile of 36 Countries and Areas in Asia and the Pacific*, p.50 http://www.unescap.org/ESID/psis/disability/publications/glance/Disability_at_a_Glance2009.pdf – Accessed 5 February 2010 – Attachment 5.

⁸ Hurights Osaka (Asia-Pacific Human Rights Information Centre) 2009, ‘Bangladesh and Persons with Disabilities’, March <http://www.hurights.or.jp/asia-pacific/055/03.html> – Accessed 1 July 2009 – Attachment 6.

⁹ Hurights Osaka (Asia-Pacific Human Rights Information Centre) 2009, ‘Bangladesh and Persons with Disabilities’, March <http://www.hurights.or.jp/asia-pacific/055/03.html> – Accessed 1 July 2009 – Attachment 6; Hossain, Emran 2007, ‘Disabled denied rights’, *The Daily Star*, 9 December http://www.thedailystar.net/pf_story.php?nid=14771 – Accessed 22 December 2008 – Attachment 7.

¹⁰ Hossain, Sara & Siddiqi, Dina M. (eds) 2008, *Human Rights in Bangladesh 2007*, p.91, Ain o Salish Kendra (ASK) website http://www.askbd.org/web/wp-content/uploads/2008/11/ASK_Human%20Rights%20Report_07.pdf – Accessed 19 January 2009 – Attachment 8.

¹¹ Hossain, Sara (ed) 2009, ‘Chapter 21: Rights of persons with disabilities’ in *Human Rights in Bangladesh 2008*, Ain o Salish Kendra (ASK) website http://www.askbd.org/hr_report2008/21_DISABILITY.pdf – Accessed 5 February 2010 – Attachment 9.

¹² Khan, Zillur Rahman 2009, ‘“No health without mental health”’, *The Daily Star*, 10 October http://www.thedailystar.net/newDesign/print_news.php?nid=109017 – Accessed 3 February 2010 – Attachment 3; US Department of State 2009, ‘Persons with Disabilities’ in *Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2008 – Bangladesh*, 25 February – Attachment 10.

psychiatry which it considered to be “grossly inadequate”.¹³ The 2007 WHO noted that there is a move to community-based mental health facilities, but these are considered “quite inadequate”.¹⁴ It also stated that no mental health facility has access to outside programmes to provide employment for persons with severe mental health disorders.¹⁵

The number of mental health specialists are said to be below Bangladesh’s requirements.¹⁶ It was reported:

According to the NMHI, the number of mental health specialists in the country – **only 117** – is way below the requirement for such a vast population, although, some 4,500 general practitioners, six thousand ‘health workers’, 150 nurses and 172 imams have been specially trained for the purpose. In addition, sixty doctors have received training to deal with post-disaster mental traumas. NMHI sources reportedly deplored the fact that there is only one institute of its kind for the whole of Bangladesh apart from Pabna Mental Hospital and some ‘model’ hospitals here and there, including special departments in the Medical colleges and hospitals...¹⁷

Note: A brief outline on posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD), accessed from the Australian Centre for Posttraumatic Mental Health at the University of Melbourne, is attached.¹⁸ The outline includes information on the signs, symptoms, impact and treatment of PTSD. It defines PTSD as follows:

PTSD is a set of reactions that can develop in people who have experienced or witnessed an event which threatened their life or safety, or that of others around them, and led to feelings of intense fear, helplessness or horror. It could be a car or other serious accident, physical or sexual assault, war or torture, or natural disasters such as bushfires or floods. Other life changing situations such as being retrenched, getting divorced or the expected death of an ill family member, are very distressing and may cause serious mental health problems, but are not events that can cause PTSD.

Anyone can develop PTSD following a traumatic event but people are at greater risk if the event involved physical or sexual assault, they have had repeated traumatic experiences such as sexual abuse or living in a war zone, or they have suffered from PTSD in the past.¹⁹

¹³ World Health Organisation (Bangladesh) (undated), ‘Mental Health & Substance Abuse’ http://www.whoban.org/nc_mental_health.html – Accessed 4 February 2010 – Attachment 2.

¹⁴ World Health Organisation (WHO) & Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, Bangladesh 2007, *WHO-AIMS Report on Mental Health System in Bangladesh*, p.19, World Health Organisation, Regional Office for South-East Asia website http://www.searo.who.int/LinkFiles/Mental_Health_Resources_WHO-AIMS_Report_MHS_Ban.pdf – Accessed 2 February 2010 – Attachment 4.

¹⁵ World Health Organisation (WHO) & Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, Bangladesh 2007, *WHO-AIMS Report on Mental Health System in Bangladesh*, p.17, World Health Organisation, Regional Office for South-East Asia website http://www.searo.who.int/LinkFiles/Mental_Health_Resources_WHO-AIMS_Report_MHS_Ban.pdf – Accessed 2 February 2010 – Attachment 4.

¹⁶ ‘Mental health management’ 2010, *The Financial Express (Bangladesh)*, 12 January – Attachment 1.

¹⁷ ‘Mental health management’ 2010, *The Financial Express (Bangladesh)*, 12 January – Attachment 1.

¹⁸ Australian Centre for Posttraumatic Mental Health 2007, ‘Posttraumatic stress disorder’, 17 October <http://www.acpmh.unimelb.edu.au/trauma/ptsd.html> – Accessed 3 February 2010 – Attachment 11.

¹⁹ Australian Centre for Posttraumatic Mental Health 2007, ‘Posttraumatic stress disorder’, 17 October <http://www.acpmh.unimelb.edu.au/trauma/ptsd.html> – Accessed 3 February 2010 – Attachment 11.

List of Attachments

1. 'Mental health management' 2010, *The Financial Express (Bangladesh)*, 12 January. (FACTIVA)
2. World Health Organisation (Bangladesh) (undated), 'Mental Health & Substance Abuse' http://www.whoban.org/nc_mental_health.html – Accessed 4 February 2010.
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11. Australian Centre for Posttraumatic Mental Health 2007. 'Posttraumatic stress disorder', 17 October <http://www.acpmh.unimelb.edu.au/trauma/ptsd.html> – Accessed 3 February 2010.