# **Human Rights Commission of the Maldives**

Male'

Republic of Maldives



# **HRCM's Comments to National Mental Health Policy**

#### **General comments:**

- It is very important for a mental health legislation to be formulated with the policy so that there will be proper implementation of the policy. And the need to get it passed in the near future is of paramount importance.
- It is stated in this policy that there is little recent research on the prevalence of mental
  disorders, but the available evidence suggests that mental disorders are very common.
  It is important that these policies are based on facts which will help to formulate a
  policy that can address the root causes of the issues in this field. Such research is very
  important to identify the reasons why the mental health issues are increasing in our
  society.
- This policy needs to include a mechanism on regulating and monitoring health services that will be provided under this policy.

#### **Specific Comments:**

### Priorities of Action: 1) Leadership and coordination (Page ii)

State which ministry will be mandated to oversee the functioning of the Mental Health Council. Also clearly outline a mechanism to ensure the effective implementation of its recommendations.

# Priorities of Action: 7) Human Resource and Training (Page iii)

It is important to have a time frame and identify the target group areas that will be focused in human resource and training.

### 3.2 - Guiding Values and Principles (Page 8)

To include the following point;

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• Creating Awareness to combat the stigma and discrimination faced by people with mental illness and their families.

#### 3.3 - Objectives (Page 9)

To include the following points;

- To make the mistreatment and abuse of mentally ill people as a criminal and civil offence with specific penalties stated in the law
- To develop a system of making families responsible for the proper care of mentally ill people
- To improve the capacity and efficiency of the HPSN centre to be able to successfully treat and reintegrate patients of mental illnesses
- To ensure development and implementation of awareness programs to combat the stigma and discrimination faced by people with mental illness and their families
- To progressively ensure equal accessibility and availability of mental health services in each region of the country – in order to reduce the burden of people who have to travel to the capital city for these services

#### 4.1 - Leadership and Coordination (Page 10)

Clearly define the status and the role of the Mental Health Council. It is important to define whether the Council will be a statutory body or an administrative body.

### 4.1.2 - National Mental Health Council (Page 10)

As the composition of National Mental Health Council mentioned in this policy is too large, it might lead to difficulties in operation. Instead, this council may be narrowed down to include the following:

- Psychiatrist / psychologist with adequate professional experience
- Senior level representative from Ministry of Health
- Senior level representative from Ministry of Gender
- Lawyer with experience in human rights and/or civil rights

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To ensure participation from relevant state institutions and relevant NGOs, it can be stipulated that all programs undertaken by the National Mental Health Council should be carried out after adequate levels of consultation from Ministry of Health, IGMH, NDA, Ministry of Gender and Law, Ministry of Education, Ministry of Youth and Sports, Ministry of Islamic Affairs, Maldives Police Service, Human Rights Commission of the Maldives, local NGO representatives and representatives from people with mental disorders as well as their families.

Ensure the representation of the Disability Council.

### 4.3 - Mental Health Promotion and Prevention (Page 14)

The criminally insane people need to be included in the target groups and the people in jails and other institutions with mental illnesses as well.

#### 4.5.1 - Formulating a National Drug Policy (Page 23)

Since it is stated that "Stigma surrounding substance use is a significant and complex issue and remains a significant barrier", it is also important to include that National Drugs Policy will aim to reduce the levels of stigma surrounding substance abuse by educating the public and stakeholders on the realities of drug abuse and the importance of providing support and encouragement to overcome addiction.

# 4.6.2 - Developing Mental Health Legislation (Page 24)

While it is stated that a Mental Health Legislation will be drafted in consultation with all stakeholders, it is important to include a timeline on when this legislation will be enacted. Including this in the policy itself will be a push towards the timely enactment of this legislation.

04<sup>th</sup> February 2015



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