

Empowerment through peer-to-peer support

Rwanda - National Organization of Users and Survivors of Psychiatry (NOUSPR)

SUMMARY OF PROJECT

Through the collection of personal stories, the project aims at giving a voice to persons with psychosocial disabilities at the community, national, and international level. Peer-to-peer support, economic empowerment, and advocacy lead to their full participation in political and public life and enable self-determination and independent living.

“We advocate and provide persons with psychosocial disabilities with a platform for a unified voice to enable them to access all necessary services and opportunities.”

—Sam BADEGE, World Network of Users and Survivors of Psychiatry

FACTS & FIGURES

- The Rwanda office is composed of 4 paid staff and 2 international volunteers, operating since 2009.
- The program currently has some 1,200 members, 79 per cent of whom are persons who have themselves experienced mental health challenges.
- 14 self-help groups are actively leading an independent life.

PROBLEMS TARGETED

Persons with intellectual disabilities face a lack of social support from the state, limited education and employment opportunities, and the absence of sustainable livelihoods. In addition, verbal, physical, and sexual abuse are commonly experienced in institutional settings.

SOLUTION & METHODOLOGY

Through peer-to-peer support, beneficiaries can better manage and address their individual needs, and families are trained to accommodate persons with disabilities. Income-generating activities increase their standard of living and enable them to contribute financially to their families and communities, which in

turn leads to their being recognised as valuable members of society. Such activities also address feelings of low self-esteem and demonstrate to local officials that, given the right support and encouragement, people with disabilities can contribute positively to their community.

OUTLOOK & TRANSFERABILITY

NOUSPR plans to build the capacity of a national office and at least three district offices such that it will be able to represent the entire country's psychiatric care users and survivors. The movement will be built from the 'bottom up', with NOUSPR working with communities in various districts. Currently, such a national umbrella organization does not exist, but it will be an important step towards networking and further cooperation among stakeholders and disabled people's organizations.

Photo

NOUSPR takes delivery of a new sewing machine, which will enable this self-help group to start and run a small-scale tailoring business.

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