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Cultural and gender sensitivity caring for Mental Health Carers in a low income Country

Street project

We promote a holistic person-centred approach rather than institutionalising the mentally distressed men and women found on the streets and disconnected from their family.

Recognising mental health carers

This briefing draws from Chhahari Nepal for Mental Health's experience with mental health carers in the country. It offers insights into the stigma and exclusion carers may face as they try to balance their unpaid care roles with paid work to make a living in a low-income country.

Policy BRIEFING

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The Global Importance of Including Mental Health Carers in Policy

Globally, there is growing awareness of the need to prioritise mental health as a development issue, with a historic step achieved by the inclusion of mental health in the Sustainable Development Goals. Less understood is the impact that providing care for people who are struggling with mental illness has on those who provide it. Drawing from the experiences of an organisation who works with mental health carers, this briefing highlights the importance of widening the global mental health agenda to include local carers' voices, greater government investment in mental health with social protection schemes for carers, flexible paid employment arrangements, and innovative mental health care actions.

One young woman's journey of economic survival and caring

Sister, a young woman, cares for her physically disabled mother and brother with severe mental health problems. Father left the family home and has remarried. Brother has lived on the street for seven years, any close contact with him is difficult. Daily, she takes food to a place he knows. Delight comes when she can see him. The challenge remains to initiate brother's treatment. Sister left education to care for the family then found paid work as a waitress. Juggling her paid work and being a carer is stressful. Sister participates in the carers' group and with this support she's gained confidence and returned to education. A sponsor provides financial assistance for the family and sister's education. Sister will be the long-term carer for mother and brother and with better education paid work opportunities will improve.

A father negotiates his breadwinner and care roles

A father in paid work cares for his wife and daughter who both have mental health problems. Mother has depression and daughter an anxiety disorder. He struggles as a man in his role as carer and faces discrimination within his community. This prevents him from participating in the carers' group. Treatment for his teenage daughter was unaffordable and she was unable to cope with school. Tensions in the home were high. Father receives regular support provided in a sensitive way not to undermine his status as breadwinner. Daughter has financial sponsorship, receives regular treatment and attends school. With improved educational achievement daughter will be better placed for paid work. Mother and daughter regularly attend a weekly support group.

Guiding Values

- Holistic - social, medical, spiritual, economic
- Contextual relevance - culture, gender
- Person centred - right to self determination
- Compassion - relationship, empathy, care, acceptance
- Learning - ethics



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