

An estimated 8.4 million people - equivalent to the entire population of Switzerland - are admitted to mental hospitals every year. Many are institutionalised against their will, sometimes for years, even decades, often enduring serious human rights abuses. Despite this, 66% of mental health budgets are spent on mental hospitals.

United for Global Mental Health in its new report, “Out of Sight, Out of Mind” captures the stories of people around the world who have been institutionalised. They were sentenced to involuntary treatment, forced isolation, restraint, abuse, and unsanitary living conditions - a heartbreaking violation of dignity and rights.

Together we can change this. We must end the institutionalisation of all those with mental health conditions and psychosocial disabilities and replace this with human rights based care that is focused on recovery. We need to support individuals to be reintegrated into their communities to lead their lives, free from stigma and discrimination.

Our report contains a series of recommendations from people who have been institutionalised, civil society, technical experts, and the UN CRPD guidelines on deinstitutionalisation. The three I want to highlight today are:

- 1) reform laws that allow for institutionalisation and human rights violations**
- 2) redirect government budgets from institutions towards community based mental health care, and**
- 3) Meaningfully involve people with lived experience of institutionalisation in service reform**

Some countries featured in the report demonstrate how reform is possible, from Argentina and Brazil to Sri Lanka, Italy, Indonesia and South Africa.

To scale these reforms globally, we are putting together a national action group of individuals and organisations that will drive change at the national level and ensure that deinstitutionalisation is a high priority on the global political agenda. We call upon the committee to read the report and share it within your networks. We also ask that you get in touch with us to learn more about the work and how to get involved with the National Action Group.

People in institutions are not just numbers, they are valued members of the community as parents, children, friends, and loved ones. Their care shouldn't feel like custody. It's time to end institutionalisation.