

Concept Note - Side-Event at Conference of the State Parties

Title: *“Centering youth, women and gender diverse communities of persons with psychosocial disabilities in the deinstitutionalization agenda”*

Organized by:

Transforming Communities for Inclusion in partnership with **Center for Independent Living Kathmandu** and supported by **Disability Rights Fund (DRF)**

Co-Hosted by:

Women Enabled International, Global Coalition on Deinstitutionalization: (Inclusion International, European Network on Independent Living, International Disability Alliance, Validity Foundation, Disability Rights International, University of Pretoria), Korean Disability Forum

Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT) (TBC), CBM-Australia (TBC), CRPD Committee, UN Women (TBC)

Background

Persons with psychosocial disabilities, users and survivors of psychiatry and those with intersectional and neurodiverse identities continue to be marginalized in the context of development, human rights and living in communities. Globally, our movement faces extreme levels of involuntary institutionalization, subjected to coercive procedures and are denied equal access to health, education, social, economic, political and cultural opportunities. Despite 20 years of CRPD, psychiatric, legal, and social control systems continue to dominate lives of persons with psychosocial disabilities, shaping whose voices are heard, whose leadership is recognized, and who is permitted to participate in decision making processes. Our identities are still defined within medical and discriminatory terminologies of persons with mental illness, mental patients, persons of unsound mind, persons living with mental health conditions, etc. Legislations such as mental health laws, guardianship laws, vagrancy laws, strip away our legal capacity, personhood and decision-making authority to enjoy all fundamental human rights on an equal basis to others.

Within these horrid realities, young persons, women and gender diverse persons with psychosocial disabilities experience distinct, yet deeply interconnected forms of discrimination, coercion, violence and exclusion in different settings.

Young people with psychosocial disabilities are routinely exploited, denied recognition as rights-holders and political actors. From an early age, many are drawn into psychiatric systems through diagnosis, forced medication and confinement in mental health institutions, rehabilitation centers, or deaddiction facilities, often against their will and preferences. Such practices are

frequently justified as medical necessities for young persons disrupting access to education and employment opportunities, restricting access to social participation, and erode confidence and agency. Young people with psychosocial disabilities are frequently labelled as “incapable,” “unstable,” or “not ready,” excluding from decision-making in families, communities, organizations, and public life.

Women and gender diverse persons with psychosocial disabilities also face multiple and intersecting forms of abuse, gender based and sexual violence, forced procedures such as sterilizations, abortions, owing to their gender and disability identity. Psychiatric labels are used to justify control over bodies and decisions, discredit testimony, promote substituted decision making and render violence invisible or unaccounted for. For gender diverse persons, these harms are compounded further by transphobia, criminalization, and pathologization of identity, pushing them off the margins of social justice movements. Despite decades of strong advocacy by our constituency, and clear evidence of the harms of institutionalization on all aspects of life, governments still continue to carry out investments in strengthening the medical model through discriminatory, non-CRPD compliant legal frameworks, building new institutions and improving existing institutions. More worrying is the fact that, within the disability and human rights universe of discourses, we are put in the box of ‘right to mental health care’. We notice a tsunami of ‘mental health-ification’ of human rights, pushing us back to just being (forced) subjects of health care and closed door institutions. This limits our access to the open world and its opportunities for inclusion through the realization of civil, political, social, economic and cultural rights as prescribed by the CRPD. Owing to the absence of adequately developed and resourced voluntary, rights-based community support systems or support services, institutional living is presented as the one stop solution for persons with psychosocial disabilities, more so in the context of youth, women and gender diverse groups. Global discourse on deinstitutionalization must also note that institutionalization is not only restricted to physical structures but also reflects a mindset and set of practices that aim to restrict autonomy, limit participation in community life and deny persons with psychosocial disabilities the right to make decisions about their own lives, on an equal basis with others.

TCI Side Event at COSP

TCI (a global OPD of persons with psychosocial disabilities) has been mobilizing with its member OPDs, with support of its cross disability partners and allies from the border disability and feminist movements to steer conversations, and dialogue with a variety of stakeholders for redefining the entry point from medical model to human rights based approach. For more than a decade TCI has promoted inclusion of persons with psychosocial disabilities, covering intersectional identities, by conducting thematic studies, developing tools, and supporting grassroots initiatives on community inclusion. TCI has also been actively mobilizing at national, regional, and global levels,

advocating for directing financial investments towards deinstitutionalization and community inclusion models. In our experience, community inclusion initiatives play a critical role in preventing institutionalization and supporting young persons, women, and gender-diverse communities to live equally within mainstream communities.

At the same time, **TCI recognizes that the experiences, priorities and leadership of youth, women, and gender diverse persons with psychosocial disabilities are still not adequately centered within the broader deinstitutionalization and community inclusion agendas.** Our lived experiences depict that exclusion is not only caused by institutions, but is also sustained through coercion, substituted decision-making, family control, gendered and age-based discrimination, and other systems that deny our autonomy and legal capacity.

To mark the 20 years of the CRPD and to inform these dialogues, Transforming Communities for Inclusion in partnership with Center for Independent Living Kathmandu, with the support of Disability Rights Fund is proposing a Side Event at the 19th Session of the Conference of the State Parties on *“Centering youth, women and gender diverse communities of persons with psychosocial disabilities in the deinstitutionalization agenda”*. The side-event is co-hosted by Women Enabled International, Global Coalition on Deinstitutionalization: (Inclusion International, ENIL, IDA, Validity, DRI, University of Pretoria), Korean Disability Forum, DFAT (TBC), CBM-Australia (TBC), and UN Women (TBC).

The side-event will bring together allied movements, and other multiple stakeholders including state parties, multilateral agencies, donors, and human rights organizations to take stock of the situation, explore status of the current DI agenda and collectively action for inclusion of intersectional groups. The side-event will also present key reflections emerging from TCI’s consultations with its members and disseminate a **Call to Action** to strengthen advocacy and policy dialogue on inclusive deinstitutionalization processes.

Objectives of the Side-Event

- Create a space for youth, women and gender diverse communities of persons with psychosocial disabilities to engage in constructive dialogue with a variety of stakeholders and challenge the systems of oppression, institutionalization, coercion, and segregation from mainstream communities and also highlight how these are further intensified for youth, women, and gender-diverse persons with psychosocial disabilities.
- Highlight how the intersectional groups understand and define deinstitutionalization, how they have been preventing from institutionalization practices, what are some good practices, how they have engaged with deinstitutionalization agendas and processes, what barriers they face, whether legal, attitudinal, community based, or medical dominance, and what priorities and needs continue to go unnoticed within this space.

- Building cross movement solidarity, cooperations and partnerships to support collective advocacy on deinstitutionalization, and creating a world free of exploitation, violence and abuse for young persons, women and gender diverse persons with psychosocial disabilities.

Format:

The side-event will be held online, and it will take the form of a panel discussion. The event of a duration of 1.15 hour will include panelist presentations and interactive debate with the audience. The session will be held in English. Live captioning and international sign interpretation will be provided.

Speakers:

1/2 x TCI members (confirmed) (Agus & Silvestre)

1 CRPD Committee (confirmed)

1 GCDI Speaker (confirmed)

1 DFAT/CBM-A (TBC)

1 DRF Speaker (confirmed)