



Statement at the Civil Society Forum Session 2: Creating a world free from exploitation, violence and abuse for all persons with disabilities

By: María José Montoya

Advocacy Coordinator

A.L.C.E Initiative for the Abolition of Punitive and Confinement Logics- Colombia

Iniciativa ALCE is a Colombian non-profit created by persons with disabilities and human rights activists that aims to eliminate the logic of punishment and confinement by creating community- and people-centered alternatives.

One of the most urgent risks for people with disabilities, especially psychosocial disability, is the violation of legal capacity and the persistence of the biomedical and eugenic model in the policies addressing so-called mental health.

In our region, there is an excessive reliance on institutionalization and coercive psychiatric interventions as primary responses to psychosocial distress.

Governments still fail to recognize that these interventions, based on confinement, forced treatment, and involuntary medication, are a form of torture and undermine autonomy and legal capacity.

The mental health system doesn't acknowledge the societal factors that affect the emotional wellbeing of people, ignoring the systems of oppression that generate impossible situations for marginalized groups such as queer and trans people, women, people in rural areas, indigenous and afro communities, among others.

This excessive reliance on the biomedical model has resulted in a lack of alternatives to address psychosocial distress that are based on human rights and have a people-centered approach. Alternatives that are designed by the people who are experts on their own disability and don't rely on violence, but autonomy.

With this in mind, we in ALCE created an integrated approach that combines legal advocacy, research, public policy work, community education, mutual support, and direct accompaniment. This holistic strategy addresses both the structural causes of institutionalization and its lasting impacts on individuals and communities.

Our organization is divided into 5 pillars:

1. We facilitate a peer-led initiative that creates alternatives to medicalized and coercive approaches, strengthening community knowledge, solidarity, and collective care.
2. Our Escuela Popular Loca (Mad School): where, through popular pedagogy, we build and strengthen a collective movement of mad neurodivergent and PwPsD. We also promote supported decision-making tools.
3. Research team that is currently building the Psychiatric Violence Observatory.
4. Communication strategy that seeks to create and promote narratives for and by PwPsD

5. And the advocacy team, where we provide legal accompaniment, rights-based pedagogical processes, and advocacy in public policy spaces.

Our work ensures that people with psychosocial disabilities are at the center of all decision-making processes affecting their lives, recognizing lived experience as a form of expertise.
