



# **20 Years of the CRPD:**

What Deinstitutionalization  
Really Requires

By Pranami Tamuli  
The Red Door

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# Agenda

## **1 CRPD-compliant deinstitutionalisation**

What it requires beyond merely closing institutions.

## **2 Common mistakes**

Practices that reproduce institutional control.

## **3 Legal capacity**

Why supported decision-making is central.

## **4 Addressing coercion**

How States should respond to rights violations.

## **5 Community supports**

The infrastructure required for dignified living.

## **6 State and donor action**

How funding and governance should change.

# What does CRPD-compliant deinstitutionalisation require?

The core question is not whether people leave a building, but whether systems shift from segregation and control to autonomy, support, and equal citizenship.

- End segregation, coercion, and deprivation of liberty based on disability.
- Replace systems of control and care with support, autonomy, and choice.
- Recognise persons with psychosocial disabilities as rights-holders with full legal capacity.
- Build community-based supports that enable dignity, relationships, and belonging.
- Ensure OPDs lead design, implementation, and monitoring.

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### Key principle

“Institutions are not defined by walls — they are defined by the loss of choice, autonomy and control.”

For a CRPD-compliant approach, the measure of progress is not relocation alone; it is whether people gain decision-making power, support, and freedom in community life.

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## **What are the most common mistakes?**

Many reforms fail because they preserve institutional logic in a different setting. The appearance of community living is not enough if control still governs daily life.

- Moving people from large institutions into smaller institutions.
- Creating group homes or shelters that reproduce institutional culture.
- Shifting forced treatment or surveillance into community settings.
- Maintaining provider-controlled services that require compliance.
- Returning people to families without adequate community support.

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## Reframing the issue

### **The wrong question:**

“Where do we place this person?”

### **The right question:**

“What support does this person need to live a self-directed life?”

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## **Why are legal capacity and supported decision-making central?**

Deinstitutionalisation cannot succeed if people are denied recognition as decision-makers in their own lives. Legal capacity is therefore not peripheral; it is foundational.

- Recognise people as decision-makers in their own lives.
- Replace substitute decision-making with supported decision-making.
- Respect each person's will and preferences.
- Expand peer support and trusted support networks.
- Strengthen autonomy, dignity, and self-determination.

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## Core message

# No deinstitutionalisation without legal capacity

### Recognition

People must be recognised as rights-holders, not passive recipients of care.

### Support

Support should enable decisions rather than replace them.

### Autonomy

The goal is self-determination in everyday life, relationships, and community participation.

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## How should States address coercion?

Institutionalisation often survives in the language of protection, safety, treatment, or best interests. The response must therefore confront coercion directly, not rename it.

- Recognise forced treatment, restraint, seclusion, and involuntary detention as rights violations.
- Replace coercive responses with community-based crisis support.
- Reform laws that permit deprivation of liberty based on disability.
- Invest in non-coercive, trauma-informed, and peer-led approaches.
- Build services grounded in consent, trust, and dignity.

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## Language and power

Institutionalisation often continues through the language of “protection”, “safety”, “treatment”, or “best interest”.

A rights-based response requires States to question the assumptions behind coercion and to redesign support around consent, trust, and freedom.

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## **What supports are needed in the community?**

The alternative to institutions is not abandonment. Community living becomes real only when support systems are built around daily life, security, and participation.

- Peer support led by persons with psychosocial disabilities.
- Supported decision-making networks and personal assistance.
- Safe, accessible housing and broader community supports.
- Livelihood opportunities, social protection, and non-coercive crisis support.
- Family dialogue and protection from violence and discrimination.

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Practical meaning

## Deinstitutionalisation means rebuilding lives — not simply relocating people

**Housing** Safe and accessible places to live in ordinary community settings.

**Support** Peer networks, decision support, and personal assistance.

**Security** Income support, livelihoods, and protection against violence.

**Belonging** Relationships, family dialogue, and inclusion in community life.

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## **What should States and donors do differently?**

The question is not just policy design but how power and resources are allocated. Funding choices determine whether reform is transformative or merely cosmetic.

- Stop funding institutions, segregated settings, and coercive models.
- Do not fund projects that exclude OPD leadership.
- Start investing in community-based supports, peer support, and independent living.
- Support legal and policy reform and partner directly with OPDs.
- Shift resources from institutions to people and commit to long-term systems change.

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Funding direction

# Change what is funded, who leads, and where resources go

## Stop

Funding institutions, segregated settings, and coercive service models.

## Start

Investing in community-based supports, peer support, and independent living.

## Fund differently

Shift resources from institutions to people and back long-term systems change.

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# **Shift power, resources, and decision-making to persons with disabilities**

Twenty years after the CRPD, the challenge is no longer whether community living is possible. The real question is whether States and donors will move power away from institutions and towards persons with disabilities.

**Nothing about us without us**