



Statement at Contextualizing Deinstitutionalization in the Asia-Pacific: From Reflective Assessment to Rights-Based Pathways and Regional Accountability

**By Waqar Puri
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Distinguished delegates, friends and colleagues of our movement,

Good Afternoon Everyone,

My name is Waqar Puri, and I speak here as a person with psychosocial disability, I am working with transforming communities for inclusion, a global and independent organization of persons with psychosocial disabilities, we are a membership based organization, and we work for the empowerment of our national members to lead advocacy and disability inclusive development in their respective countries,

It is our immense pleasure to be with you all here to celebrate the 20 years of the CRPD, sharing and exploring on achievements, and also talking about gaps that needs to be filled in the next 20 years of the CRPD, I also take a moment here to acknowledge the efforts of our past and present leaders, their organizations, users and survivors of psychiatry, peer networks, advocates, and community leaders around the world whose work has laid the foundation for the conversations we are having today.

From TCI we congratulate all the organizers, and supporters of this side-event, for bringing this side-event together and creating this platform to discuss how we can advance the implementation of CRPD in practice, and ensure the right to live independently in the community for all persons with disabilities with dignity, and autonomy, --- and most importantly, how together we can support the agenda of deinstitutionalization, and put a permanent end to coercive practices and human rights violations that take place inside close door institutions, mental health asylums, and other segregated settings, experienced by persons with disabilities in the Asia Pacific region.

To talk about some issues, gaps and experiences from the movement we want to highlight that even after 20 years of the CRPD, we are still far behind in providing legal identities, fundamental human rights, ensuring independent and community living of persons with psychosocial disabilities to live an equal lifestyle as others,

We continue to be surrounded and trapped within the incapacity frameworks, such as mental health laws, guardianship laws, vagrancy laws, which denies our right to legal capacity and within those

frameworks we are labeled with various identities, such as mad people, people who have a mental illnesses, people who are mental patients, persons with psychosocial issues, people having an unsound mind, so on and so forth and in our communities we are continued to be seen as non-persons, and as persons who cannot be part of the mainstream communities, we are seen as a burden on families, communities and societies....

Still today, governments continue to invest in new institutions in the name of care and recovery, these include mental asylums, special education centers, group homes, rehabilitation centers, social care institutions, and there is whole list on the types of institutions to which people with psychosocial disabilities are confined to on the basis of our disability.

These are compounded through the institutionalization and medical model mind sets that still prevail in our societies and communities, that persons with psychosocial disabilities only need medications, or only require mental health treatments, or require rehabilitation services, but there has not been much debate by states about enabling our access to social protection, inclusion in housing programs, inclusion in data collection, education, employment, participation in cultural and economic opportunities. And so on and so forth,

However, in TCI we have been advocating that we need to go beyond changing the existing mental health systems, and not to apply a health lens to our rights,

Till the time the discriminatory incapacity laws are not completely abolished or dismantled, not just updated, modified or adapted, our lives will continue to get interrupted,

We need to step a side from the arguments of engaging solely with mental health systems by redefining our entry point from the narrow door of mental health to the larger, welcoming door of CRPD, inclusion and development.

The General Comment No. 5 on Article 19 sets a clear standard that resources must flow into communities, not into institutions. It affirms that persons with disabilities have the right to choose where and with whom we live, and that supports and services must come to us — on our terms, in our communities, in line with our will and preferences.

The CRPD Guidelines on Deinstitutionalization represent the most comprehensive legal and practical guidance for states to initiate deinstitutionalization processes; the guidelines do not permit gradual reform of institutions. It calls for the immediate dismantling of the legal infrastructure, the physical infrastructure, the financial infrastructure, and the cultural infrastructure that sustains the logic of confinement.

As a post-CRPD movement, we have been working with our TCI members through various program instruments to push for the paradigm shift from institutionalization models to community inclusion models,

We have learnt through the work of our members that community inclusion is not a philosophy or just a theory, it is a measurable set of practical actions, grounded in the CRPD principles, that can be driven by persons with psychosocial disabilities themselves.

In TCI, we have been supporting pilot initiatives on community inclusion in grassroots communities, and also mentoring OPDs to transform their existing community support programs and make them CRPD-compliant. We are doing this by using our recently developed community inclusion indicators tool and other sets of community inclusion resources that support TCI members to initiate a CRPD-compliant community inclusion model. It supports OPDs to document the actions of an ongoing community inclusion program, and also supports transforming existing programs running at the community level,

We had strategized in our movement around developing these support resources because, By today, many of our members are running community inclusion programs for transforming communities for inclusion, using their own cultural ways of organizing rights based support systems and it is highly important that such initiatives and best practices are documented, supported, and reflected in platforms like COSPs and high level political forums for inclusive development,

In TCI we have learned from our members that communities must be empowered and prepared, to enable support for each other, and that Community support systems are a viable social entity that needs to be recognized by states and stakeholders in our countries,

For e.g., there is a normative that if all assistive devices, interpretation services, employment, housing, social protection and personal assistance is provided, then inclusion is done and will happen. Yes, this is important but we also need to see, what are the additional support elements persons with disabilities may require to access those services,

What we have learnt from our grassroots communities is that we call states to highlight and emphasize on community support systems and ensure that these systems are built within our communities by actively engaging communities and families, building stronger community networks, strengthening peer support networks and establishing informal support systems inside communities to prevent institutionalization and facilitate people with psychosocial disabilities to live inside mainstream communities

In TCI we continue to work with our members to document the alternatives to institutionalization, supporting grassroots programs that have elements of preventing institutionalization and to prepare individuals for living in the community. We urge states, donors, and all kinds of stakeholders to invest in community support initiatives, instead of investing in building new institutions or renovating the existing ones.

In TCI our core strategy has been to foster strong collaborations across stakeholders, with this and as the movement of persons with psychosocial disabilities we call all stakeholders in this room, at COSP, and across the world to put collective efforts to advance on the agenda of deinstitutionalization for

all persons with disabilities, we call for partnerships and cooperations between cross disability organizations, state parties, and all other allied movements, - as TCI we have always believed in the power of movements, of people moving together and not in silos, I thank you all.
