TRANSFORMING COMMUNITIES FOR INCLUSION - GLOBAL FELLOWSHIP PROGRAMME

A Six-Monthly Highlight of TCI Fellows

Advancing Rights, and Leadership of Persons with Psychosocial Disabilities in Latin America and Africa Region

March 2026 – August 2026

As part of its commitment to nurturing the next generation of leadership within the movement of persons with psychosocial disabilities, **TCI Global** with support of **Disability Rights Fund** supported two fellowships that has served as an exceptional and strategic instrument to strengthen national leaders and movements for advocacy.

- **Yodit Tesfaye**, our advocacy and outreach fellow based in Ethiopia, has driven national-level advocacy and kept the momentum of the movement alive — building peer leadership, engaging government ministries, and centering the voices of youth and gender diverse communities.
- **María Camila Figueroa Mendoza**, our research fellow based in Colombia, has been building the foundations of TCI's research study on financing for deinstitutionalization — shaping its methodology, tools, and country case studies. Together, their work reflects the two engines of lasting change: advocacy that shifts power, and evidence that informs it.

Six Months of Fellows

2	6	25+	2
Fellows across two regions (Ethiopia & Colombia)	Months of sustained, rights-based work	Advocacy, peer & training engagements led	Country case studies shaped for the DI study

Yodit Tesfaye — National Advocacy and Outreach Fellow, Ethiopia

Yodit's fellowship supports national-level advocacy in Ethiopia, sustaining the momentum of the movement by advocating and promoting the implementation of the CRPD for persons with psychosocial disabilities, with a particular focus on meaningful engagement of youth and gender diverse communities. Yodit is working with the Mental Health Service Users' Association (MHSUA), a full member OPD of TCI-Global. As a Peer Facilitator, she leads youth-led initiatives that promote inclusion, empowerment, and meaningful participation of persons with psychosocial disabilities in research and community engagement. Her work focuses on creating safe peer support spaces and strengthening leadership among young people with psychosocial

disabilities. Drawing from her own lived experience, Yodit brings practical insights to advocacy and program design for advancing rights-based approaches grounded in dignity, autonomy, and community inclusion. She actively leads initiatives on creating awareness, addressing stigma, gender-based violence, and the barriers faced by persons with psychosocial disabilities in accessing justice, support systems, and full participation in community life.



Yodit facilitating a national workshop — advocating that promotion and prevention work be led by persons with psychosocial disabilities themselves

Highlights of her work

- Built a shared foundation of rights literacy for future advocacy work by facilitating weekly peer-support sessions on the CRPD, a base that grew from MHSUA's own membership to include two additional peer networks (Mental Weg and Neurodiversity).
- Consolidated six months of online CRPD learning into a stronger footing for self-advocacy by facilitating an in-person CRPD Summary and Reflection Training for 25 members, including six newcomers, using games such as a memory challenge, group bingo, and an escape room, alongside an exercise connecting MHSUA's values to CRPD rights and the Sustainable Development Goals, to reinforce all 20 articles covered so far
- Influenced public policy at the national level by representing psychosocial disability perspectives on Ethiopia's national mental health strategy evaluation team, embedding lived-experience input into ministry-level review of five years of policy implementation.
- Engaged directly with a national human rights mechanism by pressing for, and securing, formal MHSUA representation in the Ethiopian Human Rights Commission's monitoring report on mental health institutions, after the Commission's initial findings had excluded organizational input.
- Established a cross-institutional partnership that positions MHSUA as a co-producer rather than a research subject, securing OPAL, a new project with the Ethiopian Lawyers

Association, Addis Ababa University, and King's College London to redesign women's health pathways in Addis Ababa.

- Contributed to TCI's regional and global advocacy by advancing an Ethiopia–India Avatar Therapy research partnership and presenting at the University of Delhi and AIIMS on meaningful lived-experience engagement in research design.
- Mobilized youth around gender-based violence and mental health awareness by facilitating self-defense and life-skills training for teenage girls across five schools in Addis Ababa, Debre Zeit, and Awassa.
- Strengthened youth-led advocacy capacity at the sub-national level by training 39 youth leaders across two Addis Ababa sub-cities, each positioned to carry mental health awareness back to roughly 1,000 young people in their own communities.
- Supported the strengthening of national training capacity for psychosocial disability inclusion by preparing 27 disability trainers drawn from all nine regions of Ethiopia, in partnership with Light for the World.
- Made maximum use of social media to build public awareness of a human rights-based approach to psychosocial disability, opening dialogue on marital rape, legal capacity, and the right to leave a marriage through a recurring youth debate series.
- Initiated peer-led, community-based support mechanisms for underserved groups by sustaining monthly trauma-informed journaling and self-discovery sessions for MHSUA members, and by opening MHSUA's first direct engagement with youth inside a federal juvenile detention center.



A peer-support and listening circle in progress.



Building a youth peer-support network in Diredawa.



Representing the movement at a national event.



Training youth leaders on International Youth Day.

Across the six months, Yodit has consistently influenced at the national level — connecting with grassroot leaders, building their capacity on CRPD, and opening doors for her peers to follow.

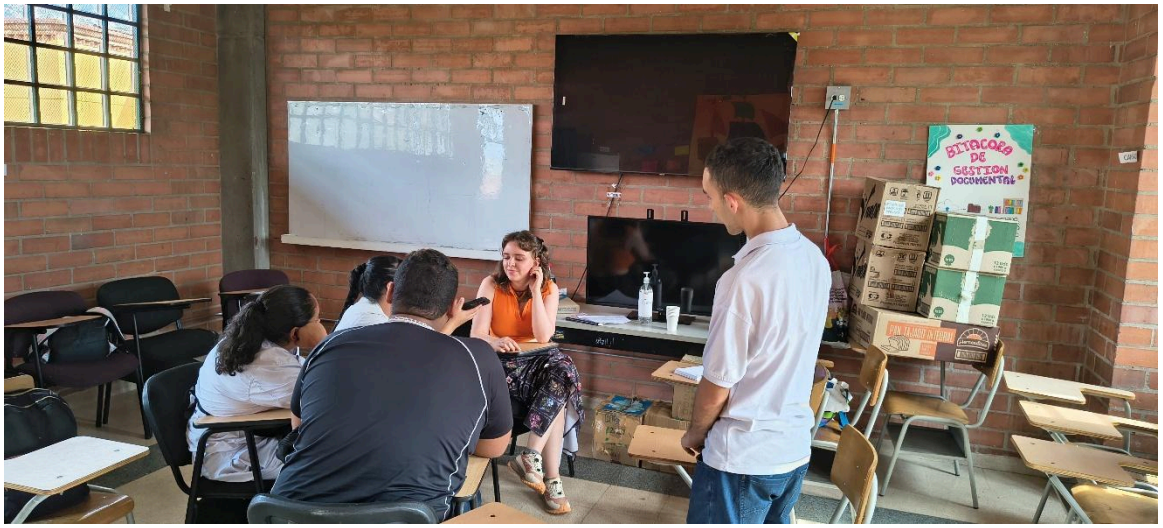
María Camila Figueroa Mendoza — Research Fellow, Colombia

María's fellowship supports TCI's research study on financing for deinstitutionalization — a cornerstone of our practice-based evidence on how public money sustains, or can be redirected away from, institutionalization towards community living models, in line with Article 19 of CRPD. María Camila is associated with A.L.C.E, a full member OPD of TCI in Colombia. She identifies herself as a young woman with psychosocial disability, a mad person, and a class struggle militant. María is deeply committed to advancing anti-ableist and anti-punitive perspectives for supporting community inclusion of persons with psychosocial disabilities. She is a political scientist and a specialist in social management, with research grounded in crip epistemologies that explores questions of care, body, power, and anti-carceral approaches, particularly examining the intersections between prisons and the psychiatric system. In Colombia, she has been actively involved in collective crip processes, including mutual support spaces through the Mutual Support Group of Iniciativa A.L.C.E. She has also been actively contributing to research and advocacy efforts related to disability, public policy, and care systems. Based in Tunja, Colombia, and working closely with the TCI Secretariat, the ALCE team, and Bapu Trust for Research on Mind & Discourse (India), she has built the study's methodological foundations from the ground up.

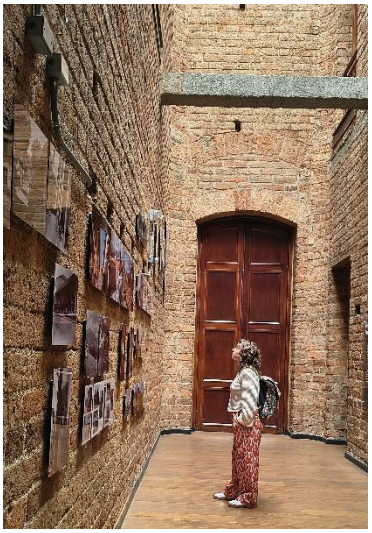
Highlights of her work

- Established the foundation for a two-country comparative study between institutional models and community living models in 2 countries, by co-developing and refining the research work plan with TCI Secretariat and the A.L.C.E research team, expanding its scope to include both cost analysis of psychiatric hospitalization and qualitative data on human costs of institutionalization and life possibilities of community living models, through focus group discussions and key informant interviews.

- Identified and confirmed case study approach by designing and disseminating a selection survey for TCI member organizations, narrowing responses through a comparative assessment matrix and scoring system, confirming India, through Bapu Trust for Research on Mind & Discourse, as the second site alongside Colombia.
- Built an evolving evidence base for the financing analysis by developing and maintaining a literature review matrix that grew to 36 classified sources spanning international human rights standards, health financing architecture, and mental health policy, with an accompanying roadmap document, to support collaborative review with the TCI Secretariat. This would also serve as the foundation for analyzing the financial and policy frameworks in India.
- As costing information is not easily accessible in the public domain, it was sought from Colombian authorities by reaching out to government bodies, including the Family Welfare Institute (ICBF) and the national health tariff regulator, to obtain budgets, contracts, and cost data for both institutional and community-based models.
- Produced the methodological foundation for the fieldwork phase by drafting a full research methodology document, covering the research question, design, and ethical considerations, alongside five qualitative tools: two focus group discussion guides, two semi-structured interview guides, and an Easy Read Spanish-language consent form. For the field work in India, the interview guides were refined and adapted to the local context, and an additional guide was also developed for the staff and senior leadership of Bapu Trust.
- Began building a first-hand institutional record of Colombia's system by conducting key informant interviews with Instituto de Capacitación Los Álamos and an independent expert, and by pursuing further authorization from ICBF where confidentiality provisions limited direct access.
- Set up the cost comparison by building tools to analyze costs in both countries. In Colombia, this meant reviewing contracts between Los Álamos and ICBF to trace what a multi-faceted community living model costs. In India, it meant requesting Bapu Trust's figures on what it costs to run its community living programmes.
- Supported cross-country and cross-member learning within the fellowship by preparing methodological documentation for Bapu Trust, laying the groundwork for a shared analytical framework between the Colombia and India case studies.







From scoping review to a full, bilingual research methodology and toolkit in six months — María has laid the groundwork on which TCI's financing-for-DI evidence will be built in the next six months.