



CONCEPT NOTE

Transforming our communities: from segregation to inclusion

1) Background

People with disabilities have a long history of living outside of communities, segregated and marginalized in institutions that used to be big buildings that gather hundreds of persons with disabilities living in horrific conditions and not having any control over their lives.

Nowadays, institutions are still existing, and in fact growing. They have multiple forms and are called different names but the institutional system is remaining. The UN has provided guidance through many mechanisms, that “institutionalization” is not just physical structures, big or small; but the mentality of surveillance and not being able to make their own decisions. Persons with disabilities are excluded from their circles of support, their families and friends, they do not have a say on their lives and cannot live like other citizens.

All these challenges and discriminations due to living in institutional settings have been well documented during the last several decades. There have been stories, documentaries and reports on the harms caused by institutions developed and shared by organizations of persons with disabilities, human rights organizations, media and others.

Yet, the debate on “de-institutionalization” needs an upgrade. Moving forward from highlighting, documenting and sharing the harm caused by institutions, which has been even more affirmed during the COVID19 pandemic, is now important. Good examples on how to achieve successful inclusion in the community do exist in some countries. Many organizations have dedicated their work in supporting communities to be more inclusive and to guide the transition from institutions to community living by developing community support systems and inclusive communities.

Historically, we are also aware of failed de-institutionalization strategies. We need to learn from pilots as well as successful models and disseminate the good practices that are being implemented in order to make sure that the new deinstitutionalization strategies and programs that are being launched in some countries are CRPD compliant and represent progressive models that really aim to achieve inclusive communities.

Inclusion International (II) and Transforming Communities for Inclusion (TCI) are among the leading DPOs in this field. Other organizations have also actively been involved in supporting the work around deinstitutionalization and inclusion in the community.

This event aims to bring these voices together and to share some of the successful practices.

2) Objectives

The objectives of the side event are:

1. To present alternatives to institutions adopted in some countries
2. To share solutions and good practices on how to achieve successful inclusion
3. To provide a platform to discuss the global initiatives led by the UN in order to achieve inclusion in the community of all persons with disabilities
4. To present recommendations to end institutions

3) Format

The event is co-hosted by Inclusion International (II) and Transforming Communities for Inclusion (TCI).

It is sponsored by International Disability Alliance (IDA), the Office of the High Commissioner (OHCHR), the Christian Blind Mission (CBM) and Open Society Foundation (OSF).

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 will be provided.

The event is tentatively scheduled on 15 June 2021 at 8.30am EST (TBC).

4) Speakers

Opening Remarks:

- Permanent Mission of New Zealand (TBC)
- Alison Hillman, Open Society foundation

Moderator:

- Sue Swenson, president, Inclusion International

Panelists:

- Jonasz Ruskus, CRPD Committee
- Facundo Chavez, OHCHR
- (Speaker), Transforming Communities for Inclusion
- Grassroots voices on de-institutionalization (Bapu Trust)
- (Speaker) IHC New Zealand
- Shantha Rau Barriga, Human Rights Watch