



Transforming Communities for Inclusion Asia Pacific (TCI)<sup>1</sup>, a regional DPO with membership in over 25 countries, is the largest representative voice of persons with psychosocial disabilities in the Asia Pacific Region, advocating for our full inclusion and effective participation in the 2030 agendas and in the full realization of all human rights for persons with psychosocial disabilities, as inspired by the CRPD.

Since the last International Mental health Day, there has been a collective call of persons with psychosocial disabilities and diversities, persons with mad and intersectional identities, users and survivors of psychiatry from the Asia Pacific region and indeed worldwide, for a transformation of the narrative from 'mental health' to 'inclusion'<sup>2</sup>. An elaboration of this paradigm shift was agreed upon by regional and global organizations of our movement<sup>3</sup>. The United Nations has adopted various important reports<sup>4</sup>, <sup>5</sup>, <sup>6</sup> resolutions<sup>7</sup> and the CRPD treaty body has reviewed and provided directives for various countries in the region, with a repeated call for such transformative change. The colonial approach deeply embedded within western psychiatry and its variants, has for the first time been recognized within some of these documents.

We declare that consistent with last year's gains in global disability thinking, this year's new reference point should be on actioning the transformative change, by all policy makers, academia and policy influencers, program managers, international aid agencies and those of various global and regional stakeholders. The clarity in interpreting the human rights framework, knowledge gathering worldwide on rights violations within the mental health systems and our efforts in the movement, have highlighted that anywhere in the world, the traditional 'mental health' door, dominated by biomedicine, leads to a closure of opportunities to full inclusion; and inclusion becomes defined conditionally. Mental health service providers continue to make all key decisions, not only pertaining to mental health treatment, but more broadly, on the life and choices of persons with psychosocial disabilities.

We are attentive to the theme of the year, on greater investment and greater access to mental health services. Through the last year, we have been witness to the humungous psychosocial consequences of the pandemic, caused by the unimaginable social and economic deprivations, unemployment, malnutrition and food scarcity, unmitigated disaster situation for the most vulnerable sections of society, etc. other than the risks of the pandemic and health consequences

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<sup>1</sup> <https://tci-asia.org>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.tci-asia.org/bali-declaration/>

<sup>3</sup> TCI Asia (2019). "Turning the tables: the imperative to reframe the debate towards full and effective participation and inclusion of persons with psycho-social disabilities. Excerpts from 'Galway-Trieste' conversations – part IV", 28 October 2019.

<sup>4</sup> A/HRC/43/41

<sup>5</sup> A/HRC/35/21

<sup>6</sup> A/HRC/44/48

<sup>7</sup> A/HRC/36/L.25

thereof. In such dire social, economic circumstances, threatening survival of populations in our region, access to mental health care is at best a band aid. More so now, we strongly advocate that the bottom line agreed upon through the last year, of transformative change from 'mental health to inclusion', should inform all those actions and investments at every level.

Efforts in the last years to collectivize the voices of 'patients', 'consumers', 'users', etc. initiated and led by a variety of mental health service providers worldwide, is an attempt to finally recognize, though not validate, the personal traumas experienced within the mental health system. For us, persons with psychosocial disabilities, in the Asia Pacific region, these attempts at their best, may result in some harm reduction caused by the mental health system and at worst, may repeat and reinforce the neo-colonial operating systems found at the very core of traditional mental health care, involving infantilizing, paternalizing and cancelling our decision making powers, while exposing us to the hazards of treatment.

We, in TCI Asia Pacific, declare that the best and only way to really allow the transformative change is when medical and other traditional mental health service providers step back from being our guardians and gatekeepers; When they recognize that 'nothing about us without us' is actually about us, persons with disabilities and it's not about them, and that they need not enter our sphere of life until and unless requested; Finally, when they seek reparation for terrible harms caused to us in the past and in the present.

We declare in TCI Asia Pacific, this International Mental Health Day, October 2020, that we assert all our human rights by engaging in actions that essentially starts with us and by us; that we cooperate and collaborate with all stakeholders in the spirit of inclusion, when our personhood is recognized and validated as a holder of all human rights without exception; that our most important ally for transformative change are the local, national, regional and global cross disability movements worldwide. In this regard, we deeply appreciate and acknowledge the support given to us by all national and regional cross disability organizations in the Asia Pacific region; and the International Disability Alliance for its unconditional support to us.

TCI Secretariat,

10-10-2020