



## **WHAT WE NEED SUBMISSION**

**By: The Stronger Project Kenya (A Youth Led Community Based Organisation for Persons with Psychosocial Disabilities)**

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Living independently and being included in the community is a fundamental human right concept that is applied to the context of disability. Persons with psychosocial disabilities are not exempt from this. For years, persons with psychosocial disabilities have been sidelined and not fully accepted as persons with disabilities mainly because the concept of an invisible disability is still not fully grasped. Not only by the public but also, the disability movement. We are still viewed from biomedical and health lens.

Acknowledging these disparities which are mainly because often psychosocial disability associated with criminality, deviance and detention. Thus, persons with psychosocial disabilities don't enjoy their rights fully on an equal basis with others. Further barriers are posed by discriminatory legislation and practices depriving persons with psychosocial disabilities of legal capacity and liberty, and by violence, abuse, cruel, inhuman and degrading treatment on the basis of disability. A good example is policies that deny employment on a basis of one being mentally incapacitated.

This by itself is a barrier to inclusion and participation in society. Institutionalization is another major issue faced by us. Being confined in a mental institution either through coercion or mandatory admission denies independent living and decision making not mentioning that, in most cases the persons dignity is compromised. We do not need to be forced into nor coerced into institutions nor medication. We need more than this. We need support from our communities where we are not seen as a liability but as persons who can thrive in the society with the right and necessary supports in place. It is clear that, psychosocial disability remains one of the most challenging and misunderstood areas of disability.

What we need is our communities to learn from the experiences and insights from persons with psychosocial disabilities fighting for equality and rights around the world. In Kenya, the system is dominated by the medical model this is a detriment to the rights and quality of life. The government setting up more psychiatric hospitals is seen as the main solution. Whilst, real and relevant issues such as housing, support, jobs, education, voting, and political and legal rights are often ignored and if mentioned, it's only for political reasons. What we need is Persons with psychosocial disabilities not being under the domain of psychiatry since this domain, is abusive and infringes on rights. What we need psychosocial disability not being classified as a separate form of disability, and being governed only under mental health legislation, this way legislation we not be able to omit many of the rights and protections guaranteed under the CRPD and instruments, such as the Convention Against Torture, coercion and institutionalization.

What we need is our government to acknowledge that, under CRPD Article 12, persons with psychosocial disabilities have the right to equal recognition under the law and should move to repeal or change mental health legislation not in line with the CRPD.

This is what we need to realize social inclusion, beginning from legislation.

THE STRONGER PROJECT is a Youth-Led Community Based Organization whose major objective is to promote and advocate for the rights of persons with psychosocial disabilities in Kenya and strengthen the capacity of Persons with Psychosocial Disabilities. Our vision is inclusion of persons with psychosocial

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disabilities and the realization of the CRPD In Kenya. Enabling people affected by mental illnesses (psychosocial disabilities) live, enjoy secure, healthy, enlightened lives and a responsive environment that promotes their inclusion in society, through establishing a basis for the recognition that including people with psychosocial disabilities requires a paradigm shift to the concept of psychosocial disability, social model, inclusive development, and community support.

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