



#WhatWENeed Campaign 2024

Our rights, Our lives!

Concept Note





#WhatWENeed 2024 Our rights, Our lives!

Introduction

TCI launched its annual advocacy campaign, #WhatWENeed, as a response to the Lancet Commission on Mental Health (2018)¹. This report reinforced the stereotypes perpetuated against persons with psychosocial disabilities and put the cause of our exclusion on the 'lack of treatment of mental disorders'. A concerning trope in these documents, carried forward into global advocacy by the Global Mental Health Movement and their allies, for example, with respect to the SDGs, is that, if 'mental illness' is left untreated, it will result in the economic downfall of nations and the degradation of peaceful cities². The literature gave no respect at all to the identities of persons with psychosocial disabilities, and the extraordinary human rights violations and humiliations they already face, particularly institutionalization.

Since 2018, #WhatWENeed has been one of our yearly advocacy instruments to continually challenge the globalizing of psychiatry and its institutions and their influence on shaping of international policies. With every passing year, this campaign has reached far and wide demonstrating a global footprint of TCI and capturing rich, insightful and vibrant messages from our movement of persons with psychosocial disabilities and our allies. The contributions have showcased good practice examples of independent living in the community, presented alternatives to institutionalization, advocated for sexual and reproductive health rights of women and girls, discussed identity positions and our location on that spectrum, presented flavours of peer support and community support systems, launched insightful resources and declarations, conducted national advocacy events and steered conversations on critical topics. And all of this done **voluntarily** by our members and networks in a myriad of ways through videos, blogs, pictures, poems, artworks etc.

We have always been forced towards the narrow mental health door by the mental health sector and allied actors has resulted in the medicalization of all aspects of our lives and exposed us to risks of institutionalization and cruel, inhuman, and torturous treatments. Through the campaign and our works, TCI has been advocating for our entry through the human rights door that enables disability-inclusive development and facilitates community inclusion by transforming communities.³ The campaign provides

¹ <https://whatweneed.tci-global.org/campaign-2018/>

² <https://tci-global.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/04/Critiquing-Global-mental-health-Movements-advocacy-around-SDGs-2015-1.pdf>

³ TCI (2022). TCI positionality on Community Inclusion. TCI Global, Geneva. Available at: <https://whatweneed.tci-global.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/12/TCI-Positionality-on-Community-Inclusion-2022.pdf>



#WhatWENeed

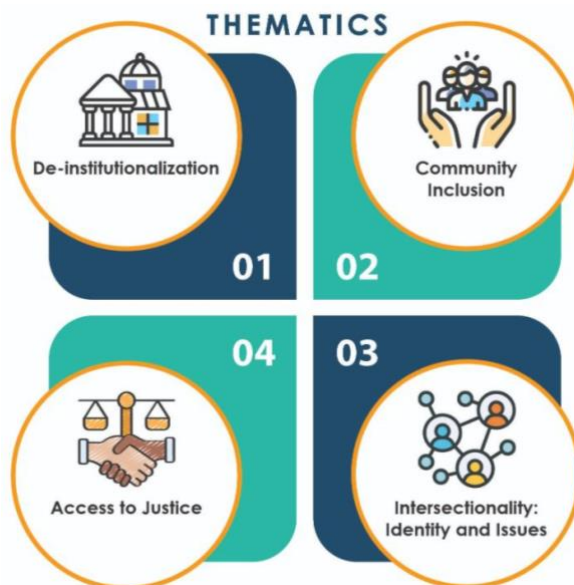
opportunities for engaging persons with psychosocial disabilities and OPDs to amplify our voices on inclusion in development agendas, in all spheres of life, and not being reduced to Article 25 (Health) and Goal 3 (Good Health & Well Being) of SDG. This is our attempt to create a strong counter narrative that establishes our interest and autonomy over all aspects of our lives, and therefore, embrace all of the CRPD and the SDGs. The campaign is a way for our movement to reclaim the mental health week, starting the 1st week of October, to pass these key messages.

#WhatWENeed 2023 was a stellar success, bringing together members voices from diverse regions showcasing their practices towards inclusion of persons with psychosocial disabilities, and to advocate for crucial changes⁴. The enthusiastic engagement and concrete outcomes have set a new benchmark for future advocacy efforts and given us a renewed energy to launch this important campaign, yet again.

The campaign gives a platform for our members to present their work and advocacy to a wider global audience. Every year, the campaign has focussed on issues of topical interest at the time. This year, we are focusing on our core thematics (described below) and invite all our members to submit their works.

TCI pays our respect and homage to our esteemed Founder Director, Dr. Bhargavi Davar, who steered the vision of TCI and launched this campaign in 2018, with the support of Steering Committee members. We dedicate and launch #WhatWENeed 2024 to honour her life, her work, and her legacy.

Specific to this year's thematics are the following:



⁴ TCI Global. (2024). #WhatWENeed 2023: We have a voice! A campaign report. Report of TCI's annual advocacy campaign 2023. [Campaign report]. Available at: <https://whatweneed.tci-global.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/05/WhatWENeed-2023-Campaign-Report.pdf>



Deinstitutionalization:

Since the adoption of the UN Guidelines on Deinstitutionalization, including in emergencies, in 2022, TCI has steadfastly pursued its advocacy efforts towards promoting and implementing these Guidelines. They serve as a reference point for CRPD jurisprudence around Article 19 of the CRPD and have filled a gap by laying down concrete directives and processes to enable deinstitutionalization. TCI members have taken the Guidelines with them and disseminated them far and wide with policy makers and grassroots organizations whereas some have faced challenges with the Guidelines and have used national forums to draw attention to those aspects. Within TCI fold, the work on deinstitutionalization have also focused on developing, implementing and providing resources on alternatives to institutionalization. Along with that, a key strategy among member organizations has also been to prevent institutionalization in the first place by advocating for independent living in the community with community support services and systems. Our movement has been calling for separate funding for deinstitutionalization and community inclusion, so it enables direct investing into the communities, rather than improving or modifying institutions perpetuating the cycle of isolation and segregation. It is critical to understand what forms institutionalization can take, as often times, it is not limited to psychiatric hospitals but a mentality that can also lead to creating of institutions within homes and communities.

To build on the practice-based evidence, TCI has been supporting its members to demonstrate and document the ongoing successful efforts in tackling the topic of institutionalization of persons with psychosocial disabilities with various stakeholders including State Parties. Our members have been relentlessly advocating against institutions and promoting inclusion of persons with psychosocial disabilities in their communities. We aim to take this forward by inviting our members to send us submissions on deinstitutionalization, their engagement with the DI guidelines or any advocacy efforts they wish to portray through the submissions.

Community Inclusion:

Article 19 of the CRPD has been TCI's top hat since inception. All the works, programs and advocacy initiatives of TCI have centred around this thematic of community inclusion. We appreciate the uptake of this thematic in high level policy circles and development agendas worldwide, however, much to our dismay, it is being confined to the narrow definitions of availability of mental health services or psychiatric care or is being bundled along with compliance etc. A lot of work and material is available on the concept of inclusion, however, the how-to information is often missing. TCI has been attempting to bridge this knowledge and practice gap by focusing on bringing



#WhatWENeed

practical and useful resources collating the best practice examples from across our member regions. TCI has also opened the dialogue around community inclusion, its principles and dilemmas so that organizations and funders across the globe are able to introspect and think through their inclusion models, strengthening the practice around it. Community Inclusion is not just a philosophy; it is a practical concept. Through our works on developing community inclusion tools, TCI has tried to showcase how inclusion actions can be measured and the impact of the inclusion models studied. Inclusive community-based support development, support systems and services, inclusive generic and specialist services and thoughtful DI processes led by OPDs is crucial to prevent institutionalization. Additionally, transforming communities for inclusion and preparing individuals for life outside institutions need to be emphasized. A separate stream of funding focused on community inclusion, independent living, bolstering the existing support systems and establishing inclusive and accessible community support services and mainstream services is the need of the hour. In the last one year, the care agenda has grown steadfastly, taking root in every possible space and affecting every constituency. We strongly support that the contribution of care work by women and girls must be acknowledged and redistributed equitably. However, we are concerned about establishing of mini-institutions in the name of care; monetizing care giving leading to corruption of intrinsically held values and emotions bringing interest politics within families and also reinforcing stereotypes around gender and disability (ethics of care vs ethics of rights). We also fear that this agenda will be co-opted by service providers, who also provide paid 'care', reestablishing the power dynamic and status quo. While care is important, as are services, the power dynamic is not acceptable⁵.

Through the campaign, we wish to utilize this opportunity by inviting our members and networks to share with us what community inclusion means to them, how do they practice inclusion in their communities; who are the community actors involved in ensuring inclusion and how do they engage them; how do members utilize the social capital and social networks in the communities and bolster them, how do they enable practice based evidence, what are their local and cultural ways of well being and healing, how do they monitor and measure inclusion actions etc.

Access to Justice:

TCI has always reiterated that community inclusion of persons with psychosocial disabilities is not possible when our lives are interrupted by legal barriers. Legal capacity for us, is our right to have access to all other rights and live on an equal basis with others. Several countries, have colonial baggage in their legal frameworks that limit or obliterate our legal capacity, something we refer to us 'civil death'. Others, without a history of colonisation, have adopted mental health legislations, which are

⁵ <https://tci-global.org/supportnotcare/>



#WhatWENeed

penal custodial laws, that act as a legal filter to catch persons with psychosocial disabilities and haul them in institutions and reinforce stereotypes of the violent and in crisis person, always looking for support within institutions⁶. The UN Guidelines on Deinstitutionalization, including in emergencies have also provided us with a language of reparations and redress. Persons leaving institutions should be respected as survivors to whom reparations are due⁷. There is a need to start and pursue conversations and document successes around legal reforms, legal advocacy, legal tools such as strategic litigation etc. along with partners and stakeholders to ensure that persons with psychosocial disabilities have access to formal justice systems⁸. Additionally, In the Global South, families and communities do not prefer approaching the courts for settling down matters. They are usually handled or managed within community set ups and community solutions are broadly acceptable by everyone. Community inclusion models should also look at these community justice systems, wherein the community takes initiative along with its members, works together and arrives at a common solution⁹. Supported decision making is also essential for persons with psychosocial disabilities to exercise our right to make free, informed decision in alignment with our will, preferences and choices of an individual. This also ensures the right to self determination and provides a CRPD compliant alternative to substituted decision making. Supported decision making is one among many outcomes of programs that work towards developing inclusive communities with robust support systems¹⁰.

Through the campaign, TCI invites its members and networks to share their work and advocacy of legal capacity and access to justice; tell us about any legal tools you have utilized in your works; elaborate upon the advocacy you have done with police, legal personnel, communities to sensitize them to rights and dignity of persons with psychosocial disabilities; share with us your success stories or ongoing efforts to pursue legal reforms etc.

Intersectionality: Identity and Issues:

TCI has a growing membership from the neurodiverse communities and persons with intersectional identities such as gender diverse groups, youth, older persons, persons of colour, indigenous populations, persons with stammering ec. Members and networks are invited to make submissions on their lived experiences, barriers and

⁶ Davar, Bhargavi. (2012). Legal Frameworks for and against People with Psychosocial Disabilities. 47.

⁷ CRPD/C/5

⁸ <https://tci-global.org/inclusive-justice-leaving-no-one-behind/>

⁹ TCI. (2023). Working Group on Community Inclusion (WG-CI) Strategy Meeting: A Learning Report. Available at: <https://tci-global.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/10/WGCI-Strategy-Meeting-Learning-Report.pdf>

¹⁰ Davar BV, Pillai K, LaCroix K. Seher's "Circle of Care" Model in Advancing Supported Decision Making in India. In: Stein MA, Mahomed F, Patel V, Sunkel C, eds. *Mental Health, Legal Capacity, and Human Rights*. Cambridge University Press; 2021:213-229.



#WhatWENeed

challenges they face, shared identities with our movement, advocacy works you are engaged in etc. We also invite our members and networks to send us any lead articles, advocacy manifestos, declarations, projects, good practice examples of their works or advocacy on topics crucial for them. Some issues that could be covered are inclusive disaster reduction risk, climate change, political participation of persons with psychosocial disabilities, sexual and reproductive health of women and girls, inclusion of elderly persons and children at risk in communities, disability assessment tools etc.

Submission formats



Blogs



Poems



Videos



Photos



Artworks



Short
Messages

Submission process

Please send your submissions to secretariat@tci-global.org. All the submissions will be reviewed by TCI Secretariat. We will be in touch with you if there is any feedback or if we have any questions regarding the submission. All reviewed and accepted submissions will then be uploaded on our campaign website, <https://whatweneed.tci-global.org/>. Please feel free to explore the website to check our campaign archives.

Kindly note that this is a voluntary campaign, and we do not have funding available to support any activities. However, we are happy to provide technical support for your submissions.