



Sustainable Development Goal 1 **– No Poverty** *Technical Brief*



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Introduction

Indirectly, most or all activists and organizations focusing on trans and gender diverse work deal regularly with consequences of poverty, regardless of whether it is in light of providing assistance to community members seeking jobs or in need of shelter, food or access to health care. Poverty in its entirety is an underlying element of most trans-related advocacy. However, organizations do not always frame their work with the language familiar to the United Nations or its 2030 Agenda with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). There are countless examples to demonstrate how the work ties in with the SDGs. This brief takes a look at what the SDGs are, what the focus of SDG 1 is, and how activists and advocacy organisations can engage with their relevant governments on the topic of trans and gender-diverse persons in light of SDG 1 – No Poverty – in a way that allows government to meet its SDG targets and activists and advocacy organisations to meet their mandates. This brief argues that through the SDG framework, activists and advocacy organisations can engage more meaningfully with governments and government agencies.

What are the Sustainable Development Goals?

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development is a set of 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) adopted by all (193) member states of the United Nations in 2015. The goals are “an urgent call for action by all countries – developed and developing – in global partnerships. They recognize that ending poverty and other deprivations must go hand-in-hand with strategies that improve health and education, reduce inequality, and spur economic growth – all while tackling climate change and working to preserve our oceans and forests”.¹ The Goals, while focusing on separate issues, are interlinked as there is the acknowledgement that each facet affects the other and that meeting the goals relies on taking the intersectionality of all deprivation into account.

Sustainable Development Goal 1

The first SDG focuses on no poverty: End poverty in all its forms everywhere.² With the emphasis on “leave no one behind”, SDG 1 looks at the intersectionality of poverty, discrimination and key populations. Stigmatization, rejection and discrimination form part of the poverty cycle which is, for most persons, a downward spiral impossible to exit. Poor people, homeless persons and all other structurally challenged people are discriminated against,^{3 4} likewise are people who are not able to secure employment, who do not have identity documents and who literally fall outside all social systems – a description that is all too familiar to many trans and gender-diverse people. The leave no one behind principle is pivotal for trans and gender diverse people to ensure that they are included regardless of the country they live in, their socio-economic status, education, race, religion or any other personal ground.⁵

¹ United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, n.d. The 17 Goals. <https://sdgs.un.org/goals>

² United Nations. n.d. <https://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/poverty/>

³ GATE. (Forthcoming). Poverty is a Trans Issue.

⁴ Raičević, V. (2020). ERA – LGBTI Equal Rights Association for the Western Balkans and Turkey

⁵ Raičević, V. (2020). ERA – LGBTI Equal Rights Association for the Western Balkans and Turkey

Being familiar with these points provides the language with which governments speak in relation to the SDGs. Knowing this language is important in engaging the government. It is important to advocate for more trans-inclusive language, or alternatively to broaden the definitions of who is included as “men” and “women”.

There are a substantial number of targets and indicators listed by SDG 1 for the effort to eradicate poverty by 2030. The recommendations that we provide here are mostly focused on Target 1.4 and Indicator 1.4.2 while considering education, employment and the right to housing among others, utilizing a trans lens. (Here is the full list of [targets](#) and [indicators](#) regarding No Poverty).

Action points – how to make a difference

Target

1.4. By 2030, ensure that all men and women, in particular the poor and the vulnerable, have **equal rights to economic resources**, as well as access to basic services, ownership and control over land and other forms of property, inheritance, natural resources, appropriate new technology and financial services, including microfinance

Indicator

1.4.2. Proportion of total adult population with secure tenure rights to land, with **legally recognized documentation** and who perceive their rights to land as secure, by sex and by type of tenure

Active engagement in policy ensures that the rights of trans and gender diverse persons are represented and visualized. Legal gender recognition is pivotal for the sustainability of trans and gender diverse people around the globe. Nearly all aspects of a person’s sustainability are impacted by the ability to provide identification documentation. Below is a summarized list of recommendations after reviewing a few sources.

Recommendations to Activists and Advocacy Organisations

- Advocacy with a focus on gender markers on a country level is important and can alleviate multiple challenges to address better economic outcome (including access to health services, education, employment, social grants, among others).⁶
- Expand organizational knowledge through research and direct engagement with communities to continue to address the needs of the most marginalized.^{7 8}
- Ensure that organisations pay particular attention to the impact of intersectional oppression on the socio-economic well-being of trans people of colour, trans migrants, sex workers, trans people with disabilities, and others.⁹

⁶. RFSL, Andrew Park and Lucas Ramon Mendos. (2018). For All – The Sustainable Development Goals and LGBTI People

⁷. GATE. (Forthcoming). Poverty is a Trans Issue.

⁸. <https://www.stonewall.org.uk/resources/lgbt-inclusion-and-sustainable-development-goals>

⁹. GATE. (Forthcoming). Poverty is a Trans Issue.

- Develop and raise funds for projects that support community members who want to set up their own business, or self-sustainable projects. Include community programs which provide financial literacy and financial planning.
- Identify which organizations in your country are already addressing the SDGs, even if they are not your typical colleagues and allies. Start working within these existing networks to bring HIV organizations and issues to the table.¹⁰
- Familiarize yourself with Agenda 2030 and, in particular, goals that overlap with your current initiatives¹¹ and review your organizational strategic plans to align the activities with SDGs that are relevant. This will create organizational language in the 2030 Agenda framework, without alterations in the organizational mission and vision while creating awareness.
- Get onto the Board of your country's HIV/AIDS Commission and make allies within civil society; align with those that are strongest in the strongest sectors.¹²
- Integrate SOGIE-specific indicators where appropriate and when safe to do so in national development programmes, using a 'leave no one behind' justification.¹³
- Empower trans organizations, staff and board members as well as community members in strategies to hold government accountable – this can be at municipal, local, provincial and national level, all viable entry points.
- Include regular discussion points on organizational level through platforms such as AGMs, organizational newsletters, website, strategic plan, etc. to connect the links between organizational mission, vision and projects with the SDGs that are relevant to the organization.

Recommendations to international development actors

A selection of tools and frameworks have been developed by organizations, INGOs and various UN agencies to encourage civil society of various sectors in engaging with the SDGs. A 2019 study¹⁴ found that most of the tools are only applicable to 'mapping' and 'reporting' activities, which occur after strategies have been developed and even implemented. A small number of tools were found to align with the early stages of strategic management, that is, 'problem definition' and 'goal setting'. No tools were identified which substantially engaged with actual strategy development, the stage which can shape transformative change.

- Focus can be given to develop toolkits to include SDGs in organizational strategic plans, including M&E plans.
- Develop guides for organizations on the follow through when holding governments accountable.
- Do data collection and research into lessons learned and successes of organizations engaging with, or linking their work directly to, SDGs.

¹⁰. MPact Global. 2018. Getting on Track in Agenda 2030: HIV in Voluntary National Reviews of Sustainable Development Implementation

¹¹. Ibid.

¹². De Larch, G., Theron, L. (2020). Technical Brief: Sustainable Development Goal 3 – Health and Well-Being. Interview with Leigh Ann van de Merwe, S.H.E. <https://transfeminists.org/>

¹³. Mills, Elizabeth, 2015. 'Leave no one behind': Gender, sexuality and the Sustainable Development Goals. <https://gsdrc.org/document-library/leave-no-one-behind-gender-sexuality-and-the-sustainable-development-goals/>

¹⁴. Grainger-Brown, J., and Malekpou, S. (2019). Implementing the Sustainable Development Goals: A Review of Strategic Tools and Frameworks Available to Organisations. <file:///Users/germainedelarch/Downloads/sustainability-11-01381.pdf>

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To promote inclusive development, international development actors can:¹⁵

- Consult with local trans groups in countries of operation. Listen to and work according to their needs and strategies.
- Generate two-way processes of capacity building so local knowledge can bolster international action, and so that international knowledge can support local action using the SDG framework to lobby for change.
- Lobby for greater SOGIE inclusion in international development frameworks, using SDG commitments as a primary justification. In doing so, emphasise that gender identity and expression rights are not 'special rights': all human beings are entitled to be treated equally without discrimination.
- Establish programs and projects that explicitly integrate trans and gender diverse issues across all spheres of development. The 'leave no one behind' discourse and SDG framework can offer primary justification.
- Highlight success stories where trans and gender-diverse individuals and groups have been integrated into programmes with an SDG justification.
- Sensitise delivery partners and staff to 'leave no one behind' principles and how they should apply to trans and gender-diverse as well as other marginalised groups.
- Consider SOGIE policy when choosing delivery partners. Integrate this awareness into procurement processes.

¹⁵ Additionally, we adapted and turned a trans lens to the list of recommendations from Mills, Elizabeth, 2015. 'Leave no one behind': Gender, sexuality and the Sustainable Development Goals.