



**Sustainable  
Development Goal 3  
– Health & Well-Being**  
*Technical Brief*



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# Technical Brief: Sustainable Development Goal 3 – Health and Well-Being

## Introduction

Health and well-being is often central to the work of activists and organizations that focus on trans and gender-diverse individuals. But how does this work tie in with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), specifically SDG 3: Health and Well-Being? This brief takes a look at what the SDGs are, what the focus of SDG 3 is, and how activists and advocacy organizations can engage with their relevant governments on the topic of trans and gender diverse health in a way that allows governments to meet their SDG targets and activists and advocacy organizations to meet their mandates. This brief argues that, through the SDG framework, activists and advocacy organizations can engage more meaningfully with governments and government agencies and get the latter to buy into the work that activists and advocacy organizations do.

## 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”.<sup>1</sup> 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 3

The third SDG focuses on Good Health and Well-being: Ensure Healthy Lives and Promote Well-Being for All at All Ages.<sup>2</sup> With the emphasis on “leave no one behind”, SDG 3 looks at the intersectionality of poverty, discrimination, health issues and key populations. Being familiar with these points provides the language which the government speaks in relation to the SDGs. Knowing this language is important in engaging governments.

There are a substantial number of targets and indicators listed by SDG 3 in the effort to aim for Good Health and Well-being by 2030. The recommendations that we provide here are mostly those in which we found a possible link to trans and gender-diverse advocacy. (Here is the full list of targets and [indicators](#) regarding Good Health and Well-being).

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

<sup>2</sup> United Nations. (n.d.) <https://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/health/>

## Targets

- 3.3. By 2030, end the epidemics of AIDS, tuberculosis, malaria and neglected tropical diseases and combat hepatitis, water-borne diseases and other communicable diseases
- 3.4. By 2030, reduce by one third premature mortality from non-communicable diseases through prevention and treatment and promote mental health and well-being
- 3.5. Strengthen the prevention and treatment of substance abuse, including narcotic drug abuse and harmful use of alcohol
- 3.6. By 2020, halve the number of global deaths and injuries from road traffic accidents
- 3.7. By 2030, ensure universal access to sexual and reproductive health-care services, including for family planning, information and education, and the integration of reproductive health into national strategies and programmes
- 3.8. Achieve universal health coverage, including financial risk protection, access to quality essential health-care services and access to safe, effective, quality and affordable essential medicines and vaccines for all
- 3.D. Strengthen the capacity of all countries, in particular developing countries, for early warning, risk reduction and management of national and global health risks

## Indicators

- 3.3.1 Number of new HIV infections per 1,000 uninfected population, by sex, age and key populations
- 3.3.2 Tuberculosis incidence per 1,000 population
- 3.3.3 Malaria incidence per 1,000 population
- 3.3.4 Hepatitis B incidence per 100,000 population
- 3.3.5 Number of people requiring interventions against neglected tropical diseases
- 3.4.1 Mortality rate attributed to cardiovascular disease, cancer, diabetes or chronic respiratory disease
- 3.4.2 Suicide mortality rate
- 3.5.1 Coverage of treatment interventions (pharmacological, psychosocial and rehabilitation and aftercare services) for substance use disorders
- 3.5.2 Harmful use of alcohol, defined according to the national context as alcohol per capita consumption (aged 15 years and older) within a calendar year in litres of pure alcohol
- 3.8.1 Coverage of essential health services (defined as the average coverage of essential services based on tracer interventions that include reproductive, maternal, newborn and child health, infectious diseases, non-communicable diseases and service capacity and access, among the general and the most disadvantaged population)
- 3.8.2 Proportion of population with large household expenditures on health as a share of total household expenditure or income

## Recommendations to Activists and Advocacy Organizations

As we have seen above, the main threats to the health and well-being of trans and gender-diverse populations are stigma and discrimination, a lack of data on trans and gender diverse people, and institutionalized stigma and discrimination in the form of lack of access to basic and gender-affirming health care. These are three areas that trans organizations and activists already focus on, but not in such a way that it is formalized in the context of the SDGs. “An essential component of ensuring health and well-being is tracking health outcomes of LGBTI populations. Advocates should consider raising issues of data collection with their governments as part of public health efforts”.<sup>3</sup>

The following recommendations<sup>4</sup> to activists and advocacy organizations have been provided: “Organizations of every size and scope can influence Member States to include more information about HIV in VNR reporting. National and Sub-National Civil Society Organizations should:

- 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.
- Familiarize yourself with Agenda 2030, and in particular Goals that overlap with your current initiatives and work [...]
- Communicate with government ministries, HIV and AIDS bureaus, and other common partners in the government about the opportunities detailed in this report with regard to Agenda 2030 and HIV.
- Communicate with UNAIDS and its UN agency co-sponsors working on HIV about the necessity to participate actively in the SDGs and collect robust data on HIV.”

The case study below highlights some useful tips for engaging with governments.

### Case Study

S.H.E. – Social Health and Empowerment Transfeminist Collective<sup>5</sup> spoke to us about their engagement with government and the best way forward for trans and gender diverse activists and advocacy organizations to go about working with government to further their respective mandates and agendas with SDG 3 as the overarching theme. The following are recommendations:

1. Get onto the Board of your country’s HIV/AIDS Commission.
2. Make allies within civil society; align with those that are strongest in the strongest sectors.
3. The lens of intersectionality is important. Governments don’t want to hear about trans and gender-diverse issues, especially when involved with international mandates such as the SDGs. Remind them, however, of the intersectionality of a person: *“The language of the SDGs became important to me when I got my mind out of that I’m not just a trans woman in a vacuum somewhere, the goal around women’s equality, whether that gets interpreted through the lens of women and children, that still has a bearing on me because I identify as a woman, so that goal is important to me.”* Reminding governments and government agencies of our intersectionality is the icebreaker that will start a conversation.

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<sup>3</sup> Park, A. & Menos, L. R. 2019. FOR ALL: The Sustainable Development Goals and LGBTI People. [https://www.researchgate.net/publication/331998586\\_FOR\\_ALL\\_The\\_Sustainable\\_Development\\_Goals\\_and\\_LGBTI\\_People](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/331998586_FOR_ALL_The_Sustainable_Development_Goals_and_LGBTI_People)

<sup>4</sup> MPact Global. 2018. Getting on Track in Agenda 2030: HIV in Voluntary National Reviews of Sustainable Development Implementation

<sup>5</sup> S.H.E. is based in East London, South Africa. <https://transfeminists.org/>

4. Diversify. Do not only sign-up at the LGBT sub-committee (if your country has one), join the women sub-committee, men, youth. Build alliances with other trans organizations in the country to ensure there are broader representations across sectors, as one organization does not always have the capacity to cover a broad spectrum.
5. When engaging with the UN, be part of the regional platforms, for example, the African Commission on Human and People's Rights.
6. Activists and advocacy organizations do not always understand the importance of attending conferences about UN issues, or the importance of being on a certain committee or why it's essential to the work of activists and advocacy organizations that the SDGs become an integral part of the work that they do. Therefore, *"as a strategy there should also be informal academies where we talk about why it is important to be in that space and why it is important to monitor those Goals, because that will seep into accountability."*
7. Attend international LGBTIQ+ conferences aimed at the UN mechanisms and educate yourself about the language that government is speaking in order to meet your mandate, your accountability. These conferences also enable international co-operation and solidarity behind the commitment to centralise your vision and mission around the SDGs of poverty and health and well-being.
8. There should be diversity in who attends these conferences to bring diversity into UN spaces. *"Many times you will find that year after year you see the same faces. We cannot have a national strategy if it all hinges on one person or the same few people. Prioritise the youth in your organisation, in your advocacy. Once you've been to a conference, follow up and educate one other person about what you've learned. We need to go back to our organizations and make a concerted effort to empower one other trans person to be able to go into that space and to sit them down and tell them what the space is about and this is why it's important to be there."*
9. Encourage international NGOs to have pre-conferences discussing the SDGs and the relevant UN mechanisms.
10. The same thing should then happen regionally, then. *"You will find the same people there consistently and there's no hand over. For me I often wonder, what if I'm on a flight and it crashes? All that knowledge is gone. The work will come to a standstill. There should be room for others to learn and to grow. Within that particular space."* People should be capacitated to understand enough about regional government agencies so that they can work with them.