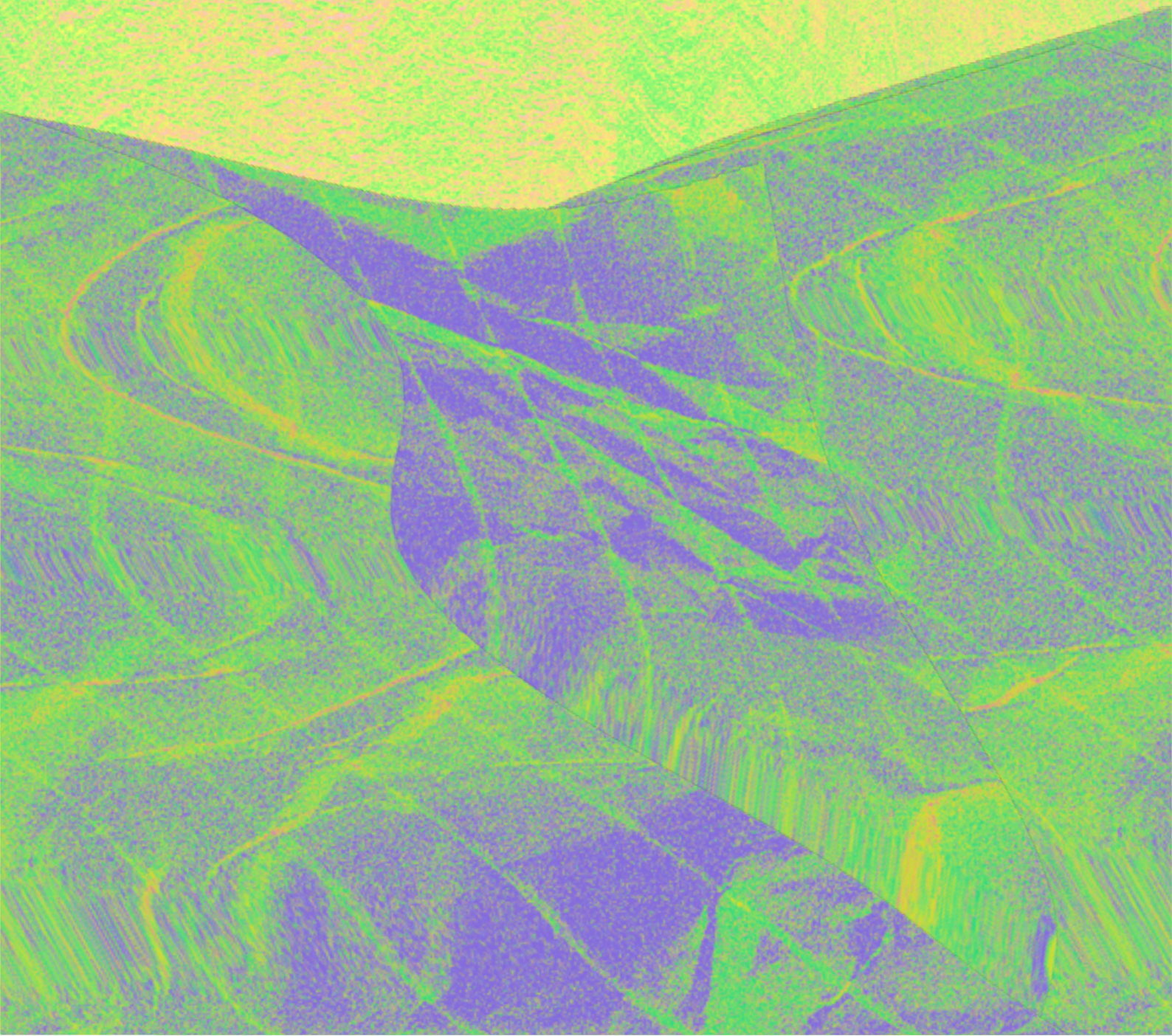


Anti-gender
Mobilizing:
Global
and
Regional
Conversations



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Design and Layout: Kira Xonorika

Suggested citation:

GATE: Berianidze, L.; Castellanos, E; Xonorika, K. (2022) Anti-gender mobilizing: Global and Regional Conversations. New York: GATE.

About GATE

GATE is an international advocacy organization working towards justice and equality for trans, gender diverse and intersex communities. Rooted in our movements, we work collaboratively with strategic partners at the global level to provide knowledge, resources and access to international institutions and processes. Our vision is a world free from human rights violations based on gender identity, gender expression and sex characteristics. Our strategy is to transform the landscape of global advocacy, knowledge creation and resource distribution through critical inclusion of trans, gender diverse and intersex movements at all levels of political, legal and socio-economic processes.

Find out more about GATE by visiting www.gate.ngo

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Background

Since the early 2010s, anti-gender movements (an umbrella term that encompasses groups that sometimes might be referred to as gender critical, far-right, ultranationalist, ultraconservative, and trans-exclusionary radical feminists/TERFS) have demonstrated the capacity to impact and restrict the environment for LGBTIQ+ rights and feminist organizing on a global scale. These movements have shaped, and been shaped by, wider geopolitical trends, such as the growth of authoritarian, right-wing populist, and (other) anti-democratic forces, as well as the socio-cultural shifts they produce (Kuhar and Paternotte 2017; Corrêa et al 2020).

In many contexts, anti-gender movements have successfully rallied broad public support against legislative and policy reform on topics that are important to LGBTIQ+ and women's rights activists, such as same-sex partnerships, comprehensive sexuality education, abortion rights, and trans rights. Trans and gender diverse persons have always been at the heart of anti-gender movement attacks. However, as anti-gender movements have evolved, changed, and learned, there has been a dramatic increase in anti-trans attacks. Due to decades of exclusion and disinvestment, the repercussions include restrictions or rollbacks on rights in various contexts and the demolition of fundamental prerequisites for change.

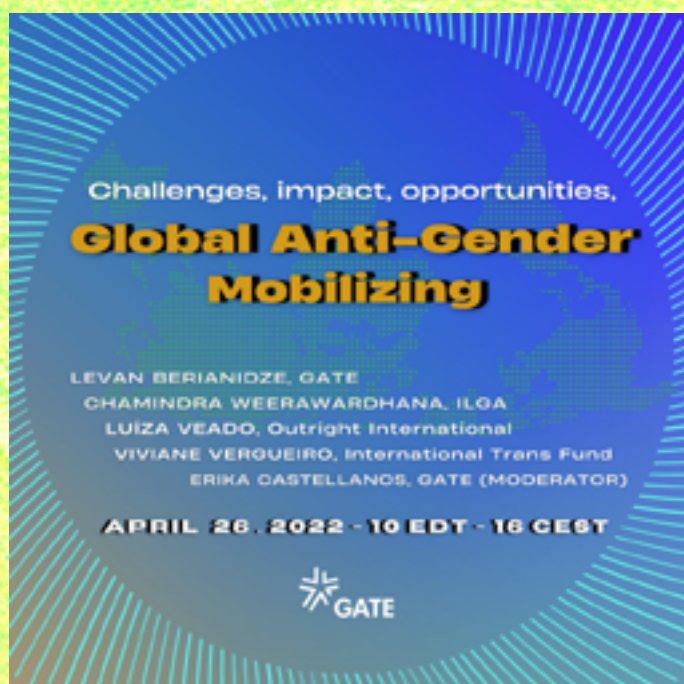
Since anti-gender movements are frequently well-connected with each other transnationally and inform each other's strategies, activist resistance also needs to be informed by transnational experience. Unfortunately, activists often work in silos, lack access to information on "what works," and have few positive examples from which to draw. As part of its work on anti-gender opposition, GATE sees its role in convening trans activists from various parts of the world to enable knowledge and experience sharing to support national organizations in their advocacy efforts.

Dialogues on opposition and opportunities

GATE organized two webinars in April 2022. The first webinar **Challenges, Impact, Opportunities: Global anti-gender mobilizing** was held online on April 24 and discussed the impact of anti-gender mobilizing on trans and gender diverse (TGD) activism at the international level, the challenges posed by these groups as well as new opportunities for TGD activists. The goal of the webinar was to equip TGD activists from all over the world with the most up-to-date information so that they are better prepared when planning international advocacy efforts. The speakers for this webinar were:

1. Viviane Vergueiro (she/her), a transfeminist activist, researcher, and economist based in Brazil, currently focused on trans communities and data production related to trans issues and working as a program officer at the International Trans Fund.
2. Luiza Veado (she/her), OutRight's United Nations Program Officer based in New York. She is a Brazilian attorney with an International Human Rights Law LLM from the University of Essex. She is an Organizing Partner of the LGBTI Stakeholder Group and has trained more than one hundred activists and government officials on international and regional non-discrimination standards, with a focus on LGBTI rights.
3. Chamindra Weerawardhana (she/her), who works in the Gender identity, expression and sex characteristics (GIESC) programme at ILGA World, with the trans human rights portfolio. She is a human rights defender with an intersectional feminist focus and a published author in the area of intersectional feminist international relations.
4. Levan Berianidze (they/them), Gender Movement program officer at GATE. They are a human rights and social justice activist with over 10 years of experience at national and international levels. They will be leading GATE's work on anti-gender opposition.

The webinar was moderated by Erika Castellanos, the Interim Executive Director of GATE and was attended by 68 participants.



The second webinar **Comparative analysis of regional anti-gender mobilizing against TGD activism** was held online on April 28 and focused on anti-gender movements and their strategies concerning (LGB)TGD activism comparatively in different regions. Speakers from different regions examined these issues from the prism of their respective regions (Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC), Africa, and Eastern Europe).

The speakers for this webinar were:

1. Natia Gvianishvili (she/her), who currently works at RFSL on coordinating advocacy efforts of a coalition of organizations from Eastern Europe, focusing, among other things on the subject of anti-gender mobilization. Natia has more than ten years of leadership experience in the Georgian LGBT movement, where she actively engaged in community mobilization, research, advocacy, and increasing positive visibility of SOGI issues in society.
2. Zsa-Zsa Fisher (she/her), is a trans woman and activist who has been at the forefront of fighting for the rights of trans and gender diverse people in Gauteng. Zsa-Zsa works at Pan Africa ILGA.
3. Alexis D'Marco (she/her), Human Rights Defender from The Bahamas and the Executive director of UCTRANS.
4. Alexandra Rodríguez De Ruiz (she/her), is a Sex and Gender consultant with trans migrant experience. Alexandra is the co-founder of the EL/La Para TransLatinas Program in San Francisco CA. She is also the program director of La Jauría Trans in Mexico City, a program dedicated to the empowerment and visibility of trans and non-binary people, including trans children and youth.

The webinar was moderated by Levan Berianidze, the Gender Movement Program Officer at GATE, and was attended live by 26 participants.



The anti-gender movement: trends, challenges, and tactics

Regarding the state of funding, Viviane Vergueiro from the ITF described the overwhelming need for global sustainable resourcing of trans movements. The rise of right-wing politics informs the difficulties in accessing institutional resources; trans and gender diverse groups are threatened and even more vulnerable if they belong to specific age groups: children, adolescents, and those who engage in sex work.

The anti-gender opposition is a transnational anti-right, anti-rule of law, and anti-minority reactionary movement - Veado. The triad - life, family, and nation - is a narrative often used to stigmatize and attack trans and gender-diverse people and their rights. There's also a push for sovereignty informed by the patriotic erasure of LGTBIQ people's existence in advocacy spaces and SGDs, said Veado. The members of this movement often work at disrupting SOGIESC groups in different proceedings. According to Weerawardhana, "there's a monotone pattern in dehumanizing people and calls for conformity to a cis-hetero normative ideal." Longitudinally, these narratives and practices have been existing for a long time.

There is evidence that many feminists, queer and trans activists, have been voicing about the latest trends happening worldwide. These movements are multiplying, and they have shown their power in rolling back some of the most hard-won gains that trans and gender diverse groups have been fighting for, as well as other allied-emancipatory movements. The regression of global advancements is the danger of not addressing this issue, said GATE's Gender Movement Program Officer - Levan Berianidze.

Eastern Europe

Nationalism and militarism are on the rise. There is a puzzle of groups opposed to feminist and LGTBIQ groups with similar modus operandi and different entry points: politicians, the clergy, representatives of dominant religious institutions (Christian Orthodox), and militant far-right groups are the primary agents. There is a larger share of conservative civil society who advocate against progress on the rights of LGBTQI people. Belarus, Azerbaijan, and Russia maintain a monopoly on anti-establishment. They often target reforms proposed by trans people. In countries such as Georgia, broadcasting media often give a platform to discussions about legitimacy on different topics: trans people in sports, in media, and trans representation.

It is unclear where their funding comes from; however, part of it can be traced to the Russian government. These groups often capitalize on frustration among young people in countries and contexts with robust economic inequality, attacking specific groups. Fake news is another tactic they use, creating an illusion of a more significant movement representing the people's will, manipulating discourse, and creating an opposition between western values and local value - Natia Gvianishvili.

Africa

There isn't a separation between church and state, this condition facilitates anti-democracy. Pro-family values are at the center of the discussion, and this narrative is part of a colonial legacy informed by European religious instruction on fear of gender diversity (Christianity). The anti-gender groups in Africa are supported by organizations that promote traditional cis-hetero nuclear family values and speak up against the impact of the Western influence on the continent.

Information is misconstrued: LGBTIQ peoples allegedly recruit children to convert them, and non-hetero-cis identities and bodies are associated with pedophilia. Bringing back Africanism is necessary to eradicate the genealogy of colonialism – Fisher.

Latin America

Broadcasting and social media disseminate content that supports patriarchy, machismo, transmisogyny, and biological essentialism. These systems inform the sensationalized representation of trans people and the so-called "gender ideology." The catholic institution campaigns to disregard trans and gender diverse movements under the premise of the destruction of family values and pedophilia. TERFS in academia engage in pathologization discourse and genitalism, claiming that trans people are working to erase core feminist values - Rodriguez de Ruiz.

The Caribbean

The context is similar to Africa, religious movements fuel narratives around gender ideology and the destruction of the fabric of the nuclear family. The State is responsible (The Ministry of Gender Affairs); there is protection for women and girls, but not all citizens, excluding trans and gender diverse people in programs designed to protect them. The government led-organizations continue the cycle of disruption of human rights. They operate through instructions of guilt and shame (conservative religious epistemology) infiltrating youth spaces and social media, promoting a disinformation currency - D'Marco.

Best practices, opportunities, and success stories

There's a human resource and a financial gap in different areas. To solve this, mobilization to strengthen our position is critical. Cross-movement collaborations have shown to have a positive strategic impact in different contexts, this includes engagement with LGB feminists and social justice organizations - Vergueiro. Partnerships with academia and various State Institutions have proven to be successful as well, through the application of an intersectional framework. Centering the most marginalized voices, like racialized and incarcerated populations is essential to overcome structural barriers within the movements; other practices include developing imaginaries through art and recovering ancestral memories.

In the US, The LGBTI core group works in a coalition to counteract the anti-gender narratives at the UN spaces. Working with the middle-moving part is instrumental in shifting politics, as this is a group that can change their perspectives to support TGD movements – Veado.

Innovative ideas come from working with youth activists and interregional collaborations, elevating grassroots voices and amplifying their scope of action, and creating opportunities for their involvement in UN mechanisms. In addition, building solidarity across the world, with research and a community-building focus, creates opportunities for mutual exchange.

SOGI's human rights report is a document that addresses human rights in an inclusive, holistic way – Weerawardhana. There's a need for the prioritization of a body of work that involves looking out after our communities locally and facilitating their involvement internationally, drawing from different traditions of feminists who center TGD voices.

"We want to advocate for the promotion of good governance, human rights, constructive international cooperation, with a focus on SGDs, cross-community consensus to center people from marginal backgrounds, support work that strengthens intersectional feminist discourses on human rights, to maximize the contribution of donors." - Weerawardhana

It is also necessary to consider the input of the private sector, promoting corporate accountability: Financing organizations that support LGTBIQ rights, having internal policies that protect those who are part of the community within the business, understanding intersectional realities that exist by having conversations, partnering with consultants and expert organizations.

Corporations need to be mindful of whether their practices and sources of funding contribute to upholding systemic inequalities. They need to remove infrastructural barriers that keep people from receiving benefits from them. - Berianidze

Eastern Europe

Organizations are creating research to trace the opposition's funding and build communication strategies against these tactics. Conversations with donors have shifted towards proposing flexible funding informed by these attacks. Creating alliances with different movements and amplifying the visibility of the issues has been instrumental as a documentation strategy - Gvianishvili.

Africa

Counteracting these narratives with other imaginaries (creating memes) gives human rights value. Getting past patriarchal values, Africanism, and Tribalism. Reshaping the narrative around the purpose of the movement - Fisher.

Latin America

Trans and gender diverse people are organizing social media to discuss these attacks, focusing on protecting trans children and youth. Activists are forming coalitions to reclaim their agency in trans marches. Trans people in congress are working to change policies, as well as leading healthcare initiatives - Rodriguez de Ruiz.

The Caribbean

Deliberately reshaping the narrative around citizenship and equality. The visibility of trans Caribbean citizens and people of faith is essential to counteract the narratives of erasure within the anti-gender agenda. Support from funders is critical for grassroots organizations to work as intermediaries: the power of education is key to understanding and changing the language used by these institutions to accommodate decision-makers and political leaders—the labor of care in holding communities together, securing housing, and safe communal spaces - D'Marco.

