

UNITE!

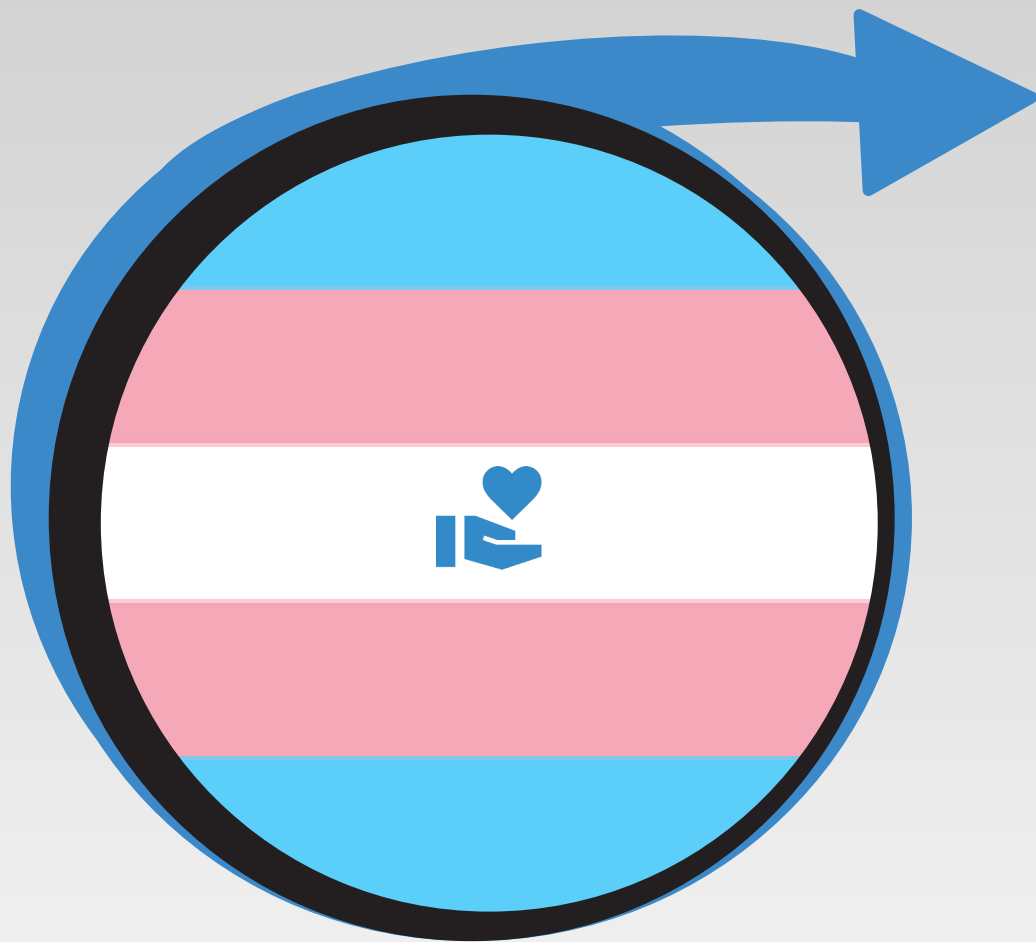
ADVOCATE!

THRIVE!

✧ **Global Trans Conference**

Human Rights

Thematic Report



GATE



Copyright © 2024 GATE

This work may be reproduced and redistributed, in whole or in part, without alteration and prior written permission, solely for non-profit advocacy and/or educational purposes, provided all copies contain the following statement:

© 2024 GATE. This work is reproduced and distributed with the permission of GATE. No other use is permitted without the express prior written permission of GATE. For permission, contact gate@gate.ngo

Author: GATE

Suggested citation:

GATE (2024). *Unite! Advocate! Thrive! Global Trans Conference: Human Rights Thematic Report*. New York: GATE.

Acknowledgments

With gratitude to Best Chitsanupong Nithiwana for her diligent work in attending the human rights track during the Conference, collecting crucial data on the needs, challenges, and priorities of the movement, and drafting this comprehensive report. With thanks to Gabriel de Larch for proofreading, design and layout. With appreciation to all GATE staff, Conference partners and donors who supported the Conference development and implementation.

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



Table of Contents

3

Introduction	4
Executive Summary	6
Plenary Session: Confronting the Anti-Gender and Anti-Rights Opposition	9
Challenges	10
Session 1: Navigating Danger — Anti-Trans Violence in Criminalized Communities	12
Challenges	13
Best Practices	14
Session 2: Criminalization and Cross-Identities — Overcoming Challenges With Resilience	15
Challenges	16
Best Practices	17
Session 3: Setting the Agenda — Identifying Human Rights Community Priorities for Strategic Planning	18
Challenges	19
Recommendations to GATE	19
Session 4: Strategic Communications — Winning People's Hearts and Minds	21
Challenges	22
Best Practices	23
Key Themes and Takeaways	25
Challenges	25
Best Practices	29
High-Level Needs	
Challenges	35
Recommendations to Trans and Gender Diverse Advocates	35
Strategic Priorities	37
Conclusion	42



Introduction

The **Unite! Advocate! Thrive! Global Trans Conference**, held on 20—21 July 2024 in Munich, Germany, convened 200 activists, researchers, policymakers, and community leaders from the trans and gender diverse community. The Conference addressed global issues within this community, with three main program themes: health, human rights, and movement building.

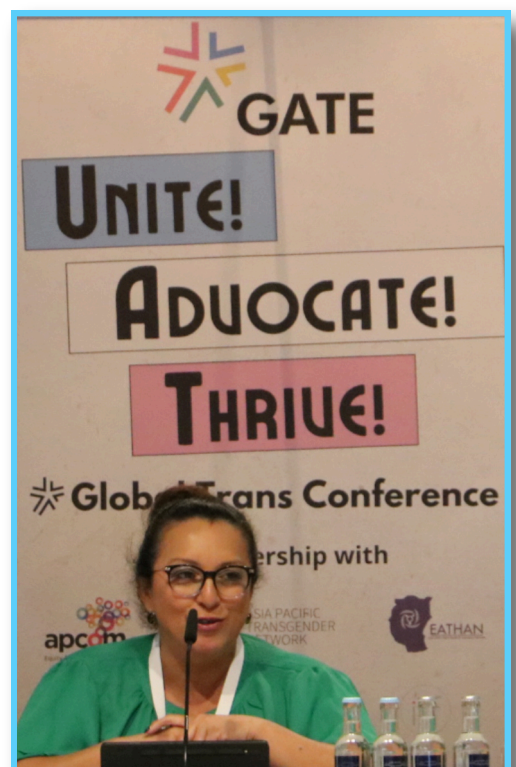
The human rights program served as a crucial discussion for tackling pressing concerns encountered by the trans and gender diverse population.

The words of GATE’s Executive Director, Erika Castellanos, at the opening of the Conference capture the core purpose of the gathering:

“The fight for human rights is not just a struggle for the present. It is a commitment to a future where every person can live authentically, freely, and with dignity. This Conference [is] a beacon of that commitment, bringing together voices from across the globe to address the critical issues faced by trans and gender diverse individuals worldwide.”



GATE’s Executive Director, Erika Castellanos delivers the opening remarks at the opening of the Conference





The purpose of the human rights program was to engage in discussions about the current global issues of trans and gender diverse communities and develop ideas, strategies, practical measures, and a more robust action plan.

The findings from the productive discussions among participants will greatly influence GATE's Strategic Planning process, ensuring that future advocacy activities are closely linked with the needs and objectives of our community and members worldwide.

This **Human Rights Thematic Report** consolidates the key insights from the human rights program of the Global Trans Conference, which included one plenary session and four breakout sessions that were specifically designed to address challenges, exchange best practices, and develop strategies for future trans and gender diverse advocacy and GATE's strategic planning.

This Report presents the results of the sessions on the violence in criminalized communities in Central Asia and Palestine, the intersectionality of challenges and resilience of trans and gender diverse sex workers and inmates, and best practices of strategic communication for trans and gender diverse advocacy within global human rights spaces.

We would also like to express our sincere gratitude to Levan Berianidze, the GATE Human Rights Lead, along with all our speakers, moderators, and participants for their unwavering commitment to organizing and participating in the sessions. Their efforts have played a crucial role in contributing to the success of this Conference.



Some of the participants at the opening of the Conference.



Executive Summary

The Global Trans Conference's human rights program provided a critical forum for addressing the complex and intersectional challenges faced by the trans and gender diverse population on a global scale. The program comprised talks and breakout discussions designed to highlight trans and gender diverse individuals' resilience while identifying best practices for advocacy from different regions. The program provided an essential platform for engaging in critical discussions on the global challenges faced by trans and gender diverse communities, and underscored the importance of recognizing intersectionality and exchanging best practices to foster resilience among trans and gender diverse individuals across different regions.

The opening plenary session, titled "Confronting the Anti-Gender and Anti-Rights Opposition," led by GATE's Erika Castellanos and trans and gender diverse activists from various regions, set the tone for the Conference and brought attention to the increasing global issues posed by the anti-gender movements, which present substantial risks to the rights of the trans and gender diverse individuals in various ways.

The opposition groups employ tactics such as spreading misinformation and disinformation, inciting fear, and even violence against trans and gender diverse communities. The speakers emphasized that efficient counter strategies entail establishing strong advocacy networks, using media to promote a positive portrayal of trans and gender diverse communities, and the importance of the involvement of policymakers and stakeholders in trans and gender diverse advocacy.

The breakout session, "Navigating Danger: Anti-Trans Violence in Criminalized Communities," offered the intersectional experiences of LGBTQI individuals in Central Asia and Palestine. The distinct challenges of criminalized communities include the absence of legal acknowledgment, and the use of trans and gender diverse identity and bodily autonomy as propaganda, political battleground, and rainbow washing.



“The Power of Unity: Fortifying Synergies in Social Justice Movements” session highlighted the importance of cross-movement collaboration between trans and gender diverse communities and other marginalized movements, including those advocating for sex workers, people from migrant backgrounds, asylum seekers, refugees, and incarcerated individuals. Collaboration led by grassroots communities was particularly noted for its effectiveness in enhancing the well-being of trans and gender diverse individuals facing multiple stigmatization and marginalization.

The breakout session, **“Strategic Communications: Winning People's Hearts and Minds”**, offered the best practices of effective communication tactics in crisis, as well as techniques to combat anti-gender rhetoric in the crisis context. Using Poland as an example, the key strategies mentioned included identifying target groups and tailoring communication, the power of public figure allies and partnerships, and facilitating intergenerational conversations.

The final session, **“Setting the Agenda: Identifying Human Rights Community Priorities for Strategic Planning”**, offered a forward-looking perspective. Participants evaluated GATE’s current strategic plans and provided recommendations for future actions.



Group photo of some of the delegates from the Global Trans Conference



In summary, this Report captures the key findings of the human rights track at the Conference, highlighting the challenges of social stigma and legal barriers while also showcasing successful practices in legal advocacy, community resilience, and strategic communication. This Report identifies critical needs and strategic priorities that are essential for global unity, the effective use of international human rights frameworks, and a focus on intersectional advocacy.

Moving forward, the insights gained from this Conference will play a crucial role in shaping GATE's strategic priorities, ensuring that the organization's advocacy remains relevant, impactful, and inclusive to advance the rights of trans and gender diverse individuals, building a future where all can live with dignity, authenticity, and freedom. The resilience and creativity demonstrated by trans and gender diverse communities serve as a beacon of hope and a powerful reminder of what can be achieved through unity and strategic collaboration.



Conference participants enjoying the networking space



Plenary Session: Confronting the Anti-Gender and Anti-Rights Opposition

The human rights plenary session of the Conference focused on the rising global challenges from the anti-gender movements for trans and gender diverse communities, with the increasing backlash and misinformation on trans and gender diverse rights and bodily autonomy in different aspects.

GATE's Executive Director, Erika Castellanos moderated the session. The panelists, **Jay Mulucha** from Fem Alliance Uganda (FEMA), **Liberty Matthyse** from Gender DynamiX (GDX) in South Africa, **Mauro Cabral Grinspan** from Intersex Human Rights Australia, and **Ymania Brown** from ILGA World, provided insights into the key challenges within different geopolitical regions, and the resilient strategies to safeguard and advance trans and gender diverse rights in the face of growing resistance.



Above and right, from left to right: Plenary speakers Jay Mulucha, Liberty Matthyse, Mauro Cabral Grinspan, and Ymania Brown

Bottom right: Moderator, Erika Castellanos



Challenges

10

Erika opened the session by highlighting the importance of addressing prejudice and violence from anti-gender movements as one of the most significant issues for global trans and gender diverse communities:

“All of us are aware of the issues that we are facing, the anti-rights and anti-gender attacks that our communities have had to endure, and the issues regarding laws, policies, and criminalization that we experience daily in several parts of the world.”

Ymania highlighted the dire situation in many countries where criminalizing and discriminatory laws perpetuate the ongoing violations of human rights and the dignity of trans and gender diverse individuals. She stressed the importance of visibility and solidarity, while acknowledging the risks of visibility. She warned, urging the community to unite and support each other,

“The more visible we are, the more we are on the list.”



Plenary panelists, from left to right: Jay Mulucha, Liberty Matthyse, moderator Erika Castellanos, and panelists Ymania Brown, and Mauro Cabral Grinspan



Jay provided an account of the situation in Uganda. He explained that the country is notoriously known for being one of the most deeply homophobic countries in the world, especially since the *Anti-Homosexuality Act 2014*. The systematic abuse and non-recognition of LGBTQI individuals based on sexual orientation and gender identity is highly driven by the anti-gender opposition. Jay also emphasized that the *Anti-Homosexuality Act* criminalizes same-sex conduct and prohibits it as carnal knowledge against the order of nature. While state-sanctioned actions are driven by anti-gender opposition and religious groups, societal attitudes continue to perpetuate homophobic and transphobic hate speech and violence. These beliefs that hinder trans and gender diverse rights in Uganda are similar to the anti-gay sentiments in Africa and the world.

Liberty highlighted South Africa's evolving political landscape after celebrating 30 years of its democracy, where center-right and right-wing parties are gaining influence to undermine gender-affirming healthcare, comprehensive sexuality education, and inclusive school policies.

Mauro provided a global perspective, highlighting how far-right extremists exploit international platforms to frame trans and gender diverse rights as a threat to societal norms, and women's and children's rights:

“We are seeing impacts in debates that go from legal gender recognition to access to healthcare, to rights to use bathrooms, to go to school, to practicing sports.”

This plenary session set the tone for the Conference, highlighting the increasing global issues posed by the anti-gender movements and established the importance of global solidarity and strategic advocacy in safeguarding and advancing trans and gender diverse rights, particularly in response to anti-gender opposition at local, national, and international levels.



Panelist Jay Mulucha (left) and moderator Erika Castellanos (right) listen to Liberty Matthyse's presentation



Session 1: Navigating Danger – Anti-Trans Violence in Criminalized Communities

The first session on the first day of the human rights track of the Conference addressed the pervasive issue of anti-trans violence in regions where trans and gender diverse identities are criminalized in Central Asia and subjected to settler-colonial occupation and apartheid in Palestine.

The session was moderated by Levan Berianidze, the Human Rights Lead from GATE, and included panelists **Kanykei Kyzy** from Kyrgyzstan MyrzAyim, and Palestinian **Iyan Hayadi**, the former Executive Director of AGIR and founder of Mubaadarat. The session centered on the **legal frameworks in each region and the unique challenges affecting trans individuals in these regions.**



*Session 1 speakers, Kanykei Kyzy (left),
Iyan Hayadi (not pictured for safety reasons),
and moderator, Levan Berianidze (right)*



Challenges

Kanykei highlighted **the severe impacts of ongoing criminalizing laws in most countries across Central Asia that enforce and severely oppress LGBTQI individuals in the region.** Despite the absence of explicit anti-LGBTQI laws in Kyrgyzstan, the largest country in the sub-region, there is an attempt by the anti-gender movement to collect signatures for a petition to introduce such legislation.

Kanykei emphasized the dangerous consequences of these laws, particularly how they allow states control over LGBTQI organizations:

“There is complete control over the organizations by the state. If the organization holds any events, then the state has the right to come, take part in these events, and request a list of participants.”

This has caused participants to fear for their safety as government intervention has forced the outing of these LGBTQI organizations' employees based on sexual orientation and gender identity, and has even led to the arbitrary closure of these organizations, while some employees were forced to resign from their organizations. Subsequently, some faced homelessness and fled to shelters because their parents kicked them out upon learning about their identity. Some were even forced to migrate to other countries for safety, as was the case with Kanykei.



Some of the audience at the first breakout session, listening to Kanykei Kyzy (**right**). Moderated by Levan Berianidze (**left**).



Iyan offered an account of the **intersectional challenges faced by queer and trans Palestinians**. Palestinian lives are devalued based on race, regardless of gender or sexuality. The segregation system in the West Bank and Gaza enforces divisions both physically and communally among Palestinians. Iyan emphasized the inextricable link between these racial issues and LGBTQI struggles, as the imposition of criminalizing laws has further marginalized trans and gender diverse individuals. The recent conflict has exacerbated the difficulties of the intersectional identities of trans and gender diverse Palestinians, making it nearly impossible for them to navigate their identities safely, even within their community. Iyan explained,

“When it comes to the issues of criminalized communities in many countries around the world, it came after colonization by putting the criminalizing laws. While the colonizer countries became advanced, then colonized lands become backward.”

Best Practices

Through detailed presentations and interactive discussions, participants gained a perspective on anti-trans violence in criminalized communities in Palestine and Central Asia. They explored solutions to meaningfully support and amplify the voices of concerned communities. This includes identifying urgent support for individuals in crisis areas, strategic advocacy for the crisis context, and supporting representation of trans and gender diverse individuals from criminalized communities within conversations with stakeholders and partners in order to enable all parties to engage in these dialogues from a place of an understanding of the challenges and potential solutions.

Image from the Donor pre-conference





Session 2: Criminalization and Cross-Identities – Overcoming Challenges With Resilience

The second session on the second day of the Conference offered insights into the intersectional experiences of trans and gender diverse individuals living in conflict and wartime, within the contexts of sex work, migration, and jail systems.

Moderated by Levan Berianidze from GATE and presented by **Daniel Benitez-Posada** from the GAAT Foundation in Colombia, and **Sabrina Sanchez**, Executive Director of the European Sex Workers Rights Alliance (SEWA), the session highlighted how these **systemic barriers not only restrict full societal participation due to the lack of legal gender recognition and criminalization, but also exacerbate the multiple layers of marginalization and stigmatization faced by trans and gender diverse individuals, particularly those involved in sex work, migration, and those who are in the jail system.**



Session 2 speakers, Daniel Benitez-Posada (above left), Sabrina Sanchez (above right), and moderator, Levan Berianidze



Challenges

Sabrina demonstrated **the intersections of criminalization of sex work and migration** by sharing her lived experiences as a trans woman migrant and sex worker activist. The legal frameworks for sex work in countries like Germany and the Netherlands, despite legalization, still impose harsh conditions on sex workers.

One of the harmful effects of legal regulations on sex work, particularly for trans and gender diverse individuals, is that **sex worker issues are often cis-centric and lack insights from the personal experiences of trans and gender diverse sex workers**. Furthermore, the **legal frameworks in these countries were designed without consulting trans and gender diverse sex workers**. She criticized these laws for not addressing the actual needs and realities of these sex workers, particularly at the point of intersection of sex work laws and migration regulations, which includes the lack of legal gender recognition from their home country, which further complicates the situation.

For example, the Netherlands created a two-tier system. Sex work is legal by municipal law only if they work in very limited designated areas or 'windows,' which are highly costly and limited to up to 10 windows per street. The high cost of the windows and the long bureaucratic process to authorize sex work has forced sex workers, mainly trans, gender diverse and migrant individuals who lack financial resources or residence permits, to work in forbidden areas.

This has led to the risk of these sex workers being targeted by police. Police often question sex workers multiple times to ensure that they are not trafficked and require residence permits or migration status. If they fail to provide this documentation, they face deportation or fines. Trans, gender diverse and/or migrant sex workers are more likely to be deported or fined, and often face police harassment.

Some of the audience at the second breakout session, listening to Sabrina Sanchez (middle) and Daniel Benitez-Posada (right). Moderated by Levan Berianidze (left).





Daniel provided insights into the **double stigma faced by trans and gender diverse sex workers and inmates in Colombia**. These individuals have been pushed to the margins of society due to the country's long-lasting conflict and war over the last 50 years. Trans and gender diverse individuals who come out of the war zones often enter a society that does not recognize their identity. Subsequently, they resort to sex work and engage in drug-related activities to survive, leading to higher rates of police harassment and incarceration. There is a higher incarceration rate among the LGBTQI population.

The lack of a self-identification gender law (legal gender recognition) exacerbates the issues faced by these people as they are often unjustly blamed and face higher sentences. In prison, they face severe human rights violations, including physical, sexual, and emotional violence due to a lack of gender-sensitive treatment. Some of these prisoners face substantial re-entry issues upon release.

Best Practices

Despite the significant challenges identified during the session, both speakers emphasized **the importance of grassroots movements, mainly trans- and gender diverse-led organizations, in providing support and advocating for trans and gender diverse individuals**. Daniel raised the example of free writing activities for indigenous trans and gender diverse individuals within the Colombian jail system. The participants actively wrote letters to people still in prison or recently released. This simple writing exercise allowed trans and gender diverse individuals to reconnect with their identities, reclaim their narratives, and feel empowered and motivated. This example shows the **importance of the role of grassroots movements in building a sense of solidarity and resilience within the community by employing a more intersectional approach**.

When discussing possible solutions, the speakers agreed that **one of the key solutions is the right to self-identify their gender identity**. Trans and gender diverse individuals are often denied access to healthcare, housing, work, and freedom of movement, making them more vulnerable to marginalization. Sabrina shared a successful strategy that involves **gathering support from cross-movement alliances**. For example, the importance of solidarity with other activism, such as the anti-racist movement and the cisgender sex worker movement. This solidarity provides valuable support for self-identification laws and is crucial for advancing trans and gender diverse rights.



Session 3: Setting the Agenda – Identifying Human Rights Community Priorities for Strategic Planning

In preparation for developing a new organizational strategic plan in 2025, the primary objectives of the first session of the second day were to identify key human rights advocacy priorities within the trans and gender diverse community to guide GATE's upcoming strategic planning process. The session also gathered direct insights and suggestions for potential new directions or improvements from participants, ensuring that community voices play a crucial role in shaping GATE's future initiatives.

The session, facilitated by GATE's **Levan Berianidze** and **Cianan Russell** from ILGA Europe, commenced with a discussion on how multilateral organizations have started to address LGBTQI rights. Yogyakarta Principles and their follow-up documents have opened doors for advocacy in the UN regarding issues related to sexual orientation, gender identity and expression, and sex characteristics. There was a large presence of trans activists at the UN Trans Advocacy Week in 2016, and multiple Member States, UN agencies, special rapporteurs, and High Commissioners actively supported trans and gender diverse issues.



*From left to right: Facilitators
Cianan Russell and Levan Berianidze*



Challenges

Recent years have seen a **rise in opposition to trans and gender diverse rights within the UN system**, particularly from the Special Rapporteur on Violence Against Women and Girls, who has used her position to actively oppose trans rights. This unprecedented opposition highlights the anti-gender movement's strategy of manipulating UN language to distort narratives of trans and gender diverse bodily autonomy and the right to self-determination as threats to family values, women's, and children's rights, and more.

Recommendations to GATE

To counter anti-trans sentiment, Levan and Cianan discussed GATE's current [Strategic Plan](#) and opened the floor for input and recommendations for the organization's ongoing strategic process.

First, **participants agreed on the necessity of preserving existing human rights advocacy in the face of the rising anti-gender movement**. One participant remarked,

“Our main focus should be to preserve what we've achieved regarding access and rights so far. The anti-gender movement threatens various rights, including abortion, bodily rights, and the rights of people with disabilities.”



To ensure unity and a collective fight to counter anti-gender movements as well anti-trans sentiment within the UN, continuous dialogue, and the building of a more shared advocacy agenda between trans and gender diverse grassroots communities and regional and international human rights organizations is critical.

There is also a pressing need for middle-ground organizations like GATE to **develop a comprehensive framework to help trans and gender diverse activists and organizations to understand UN processes**. As one participant suggested,

“Most of us are grassroots organizations have limited knowledge of global legal contexts. We need a comprehensive framework to navigate these processes effectively.”



The discussion also highlighted the need for GATE to **support sustainable movement building and resource allocation**. The rise of far-right governments affects funding for LGBTQI rights work, particularly the funding pools from the governments where far-right parties gain more influence in national politics.

Overall, this session underscored the need for GATE's strategic planning to address the challenges faced by the global trans and gender diverse community. By identifying key priorities, GATE can ensure that its future initiatives align with the needs and priorities of these communities.



Facilitator Cianan Russell



Session 4: Strategic Communications – Winning People's Hearts and Minds

The detailed presentations of the second session on the second day of the Conference focused on the best practices from Poland and valuable tactics for effective messaging and comprehensive communication strategies to support trans and gender diverse rights advocacy and to counter anti-gender narratives.

The session was moderated by GATE's Director of Communications, Naomhán O'Connor, and featured speakers **Monika Pacyfka Tichy** from Lambda Poland Foundation, and **Hannah Willard** from Heart Forward Consulting.



Above, from left to right: Speakers Monika Pacyfka Tichy, and Hannah Willard

Bottom right: Moderator, Naomhán O'Connor





Challenges

Monika shared that Poland is recognized as the least LGBTQI-friendly country in the European Union, as ranked by ILGA Europe for the fifth consecutive year. This is mainly due to the **substantial influence of the Catholic Church on culture and politics**. From 1945 to 1989, Poland was part of the Soviet Union, with the Church serving as a center of resistance. Since 1989, centrist conservatives have predominantly governed the country based on a sentiment of “afraid to oppose” the Church. Despite joining the EU in 2004, little has changed in terms of LGBTQI rights.

From 2015 until October 2023, Poland was ruled by **right-wing authoritarian populists who utilized misinformation about trans and gender diverse identities**. These identities are not legally recognized and a legal gender marker change is only possible through a court procedure that requires suing one's parents for “mistaken gender assignment at birth.” The process requires expensive medical documentation and can take years.

The social situation for Polish trans and gender diverse individuals is dire. **Transphobia is more prevalent than homo- or biphobia, as public reception has been heavily influenced by massive anti-trans propaganda in government-controlled media for almost a decade.**

Despite these challenges, there is growing visibility and social acceptance of trans and gender diverse individuals, especially among the younger ‘Netflix generation’, who see trans and non-binary identities as natural in the media. Additionally, the emergence of queer allies like Piotr Jacoń, a popular TV journalist whose adult daughter, Wiktoria, came out as trans, has positively shifted the narrative about trans people. Jacoń has utilized his platform to educate the public about LGBTQI rights, and has produced documentaries and published books about trans children and their parents.



*From left to right:
Moderator Naomhán
O'Connor, and Monika
Pacyfka Tichy*



Best Practices

To highlight the resilience and tactics of the trans and gender diverse community in responding to these negative narratives led by the anti-gender opposition, Hannah shared that her recent work with GATE over the past six months began as a response to a crisis where various LGBTQI organizations faced attacks from the UN Special Rapporteur, as well as doxing, cyber harassment, and negative media coverage. Hannah argued that **a key aspect of crisis-strategic communications* is a consistent and proactive approach to sharing real-life stories, challenges, and priorities using storytelling techniques.**

This proactive approach based on these techniques includes the need for an adaptable tone reflecting a commitment to human rights, while being relatable and understandable to this audience as human beings is crucial. By sharing diverse and detailed personal stories, a cisgender audience would feel the emotion behind these stories, and sharing these feelings would create space for more emotional and persuasive narratives, potentially leading to a disruption of stereotypes fueled by anti-trans movements, and would create an understanding of the challenges faced by trans and gender diverse communities.

- * [If you are interested in more details about this strategic communication, GATE recently launched a crisis communication toolkit, entitled "Turning the Tide: A Toolkit to Combat Anti-Gender Extremism".](#)



*From left to right:
Panelists Monika Pacyfka Tichy,
and Hannah Willard*



Hannah also argued that **trans and gender diverse movements need to decide when to respond and to whom**, and should often opt not to respond directly to opposition actors in order to avoid amplifying negative headlines. Instead, she said, **the focus should be on proactive actions with a sustainable audience** rather than immediate reactions, often driven by fear and panic.

Hannah also highlighted **the importance of creating cognitive dissonance to challenge stereotypes and flawed mental templates** people may have about trans and gender diverse individuals. When people fear or dislike trans or gender diverse people, they have mental templates or patterns to react to what trans and gender diverse organizations communicate.



*Above, from left to right: From the Conference Photo Wall — Micah Grzywnowicz and Erika Castellanos
Bottom: From the Conference Awards Ceremony*



Key Themes and Takeaways

What follows is a breakdown of the key themes and takeaways from the human rights program of the Conference, divided into challenges, best practices, and high-level needs based on discussion points raised by speakers and participants within the sessions and the plenary. This section of the Report delves deeper into the issues raised during discussions and also includes case study examples and outlines how to develop strategies for future trans and gender advocacy, and will also inform GATE's future strategic planning.

Challenges

Anti-LGBTQI laws and lack of legal gender recognition

The absence of legal gender recognition and the criminalization of trans and gender diverse identities and same-sex behaviors remain a significant barrier for trans and gender diverse individuals in various regions and countries, preventing them from accessing fundamental rights and services. Several speakers highlighted this issue during the Conference, emphasizing **the essential nature of legal gender recognition for safety, respect, and meaningful participation in society**. Daniel, the trans activist from Colombia, argued,

“If there is no guarantee to self-identify, we do not have access to healthcare, housing, work, or freedom of movement. It's a matter of human rights that starts with the right of self-identification.”

This quote encapsulates the profound impact of a lack of legal gender recognition, illustrating how it forces trans and gender diverse individuals to the margins, making them more vulnerable to criminalization, stigmatization, and systemic victimization.



Many speakers raised the urgent need for global attention to hate crimes and anti-trans legislation to combat the criminalization of trans identities and same-sex behaviors. Kanykei from Kyrgyzstan and Jay from Uganda shared testimonies about the legal and systemic oppression they face in their countries. The extreme consequences of criminalization include threats to trans and gender diverse human rights defenders and the forced closure of LGBTQI organizations. Jay shared the situation after the Ugandan government enacted the *Anti-Homosexuality Act 2014*:

“Most of the LGBTQI persons living on the African continent have faced this. And it has not yet reached your community. It is high time, we join hands and stop this before it comes your way.”

The ongoing criminalization and lack of legal gender recognition for trans and gender diverse individuals underscore the urgency for comprehensive legal reforms and global solidarity.

Misinformation and anti-gender propaganda

The spread of misinformation and disinformation about trans and gender diverse lives, bodies, and rights by anti-gender actors fuels prejudice and violence, creating significant challenges for trans and gender diverse advocacy groups. Participants discussed **the urgent need for substantial resources to counter the well-funded anti-gender propaganda that frames trans and gender diverse individuals as societal threats**. The communications landscape has shifted drastically, with anti-rights movements employing massive social media disinformation campaigns. These strategic uses of disinformation not only mislead the public but also drain the resources and energy of trans and gender diverse advocacy groups, serving as a deliberate tactic to weaken the movement.

The politicization of trans and gender diverse rights was identified as a significant global challenge. Trans and gender diverse individuals are often used as pawns in broader political battles. Well-organized and well-funded anti-gender movements are gaining influence in both national and international politics. For example, in Poland during the 2015 elections, the right-wing Catholic populist authoritarian party labeled LGBTQI people as enemies and threats to Polish children and family values. Similarly, in Uganda's 2021 elections, hate speeches using trans slurs were strategically employed to win voter support. These examples reflect the deliberate use of trans and gender diverse rights as a political tool by right-wing actors to gain support and push regressive agendas.



Inadequate funding for trans and gender diverse advocacy

The lack of funding for trans and gender diverse initiatives was a critical issue discussed by many speakers and participants. Mauro, discussing the global situation, emphasized **the financial disparity between trans and gender diverse advocacy groups and anti-gender movements*** by stating,

“The main difference between us and the anti-gender movements is that they have substantial financial resources. We need more than just grants. We need significant investments to support our advocacy and community-building efforts.”

Mauro’s point underscores the need for more substantial and sustained funding to bridge the financial gap between these opposing movements. For instance, the PREDIVA Observatory project led by the GAAT Foundation in Colombia monitors and collects data on how trans and gender diverse individuals are excluded from public spaces. It looks at the challenges of limited resources and indicated that financial instability hampers the ability of trans and gender diverse organizations to sustain their work and expand their reach.

Another critical point is the **intersection of multiple marginalizations and the resulting lack of support and resources for trans and gender diverse individuals' lives, particularly in conflict and war zones.**

* [A more in-depth look at this disparity in funding can be found on page 17 of the **Health Thematic Report** from the Global Trans Conference.](#)



From the Conference Award Ceremony: Left-hand picture, from left to right: Erika Castellanos, Justus Eisfeld, Mauro Cabral Grinspan, and Naomhan O'Connor. Right-hand picture, from left to right: Tiommi Luckett and Amanita Calderón-Cifuéntes

Case study: Kyrgyzstan

Kanykei, a trans activist, spoke about the situation in Kyrgyzstan, which is significantly influenced by post-Soviet socio-political dynamics and Russian economic and political pressures. The legal environment in Kyrgyzstan criminalizes LGBTQI identities, severely impacting trans and gender diverse communities. The ongoing implementation of laws that criminalize LGBTQI actions leads to the outing and persecution of activists and community members, with the government exerting full control over LGBTQI organizations, posing significant safety risks to members of these organizations and the communities they serve.

Kanykei explained that the compounding effects of conflict and war between Russia and Ukraine push trans and gender diverse individuals further into the margins, increasing their vulnerability. Russia has been a strong political and economic influence in Central Asia as a former colony of the Soviets. Kanykei elaborated,

“Currently, there are a few donors in our region of Central Asia; one of the reasons donors leave is that a war is going on now, and there are sanctions against Russia. This affected the countries in Central Asia as well. This shows that the intentionality of criminalization and neighboring countries in crisis affect trans and gender diverse communities as well.”

The challenges faced by trans and gender diverse individuals, as discussed in the human rights track of the Conference, underscore the need for a multifaceted approach to advocacy. Legal reforms, global solidarity, countering misinformation, and securing substantial funding are crucial elements in the fight for trans and gender diverse rights.



Best Practices

This section highlights successful practices that have proven effective in advancing trans and gender diverse rights, and dismantling oppressive systems, despite numerous challenges. **These best practices serve as crucial models for trans and gender diverse movements, showcasing the power of community-led initiatives, strategic alliances, and intersectional approaches.**

Coalition building

In the face of legislative and social challenges, coalition building has proven to be highly effective in addressing the needs of trans and gender diverse individuals, making advocacy efforts more responsive and impactful.

Jay shared successes from past efforts, noting that when the *Anti-Homosexuality Act* was passed into law in 2023 in Uganda, coalition building was key in strengthening solidarity within the trans and the rest of the LGBTQI movement, rather than causing sectoral divisions within the community. A coalition of over 8 trans organizations and over 40 LGBTQI sex workers and mainstream organizations came together to oppose the Law, relying on both local and international support. Soon after, the Law was annulled, and the coalitions were dissolved, marking a significant victory for trans, gender diverse, and LGBTQI movements. This approach showcased **the power of unity and strategic litigation, proving that community-driven efforts can achieve significant legal victories.**

Another key example of these achievements includes **successful legal pushback against anti-rights actors** in South Africa through collaboration with universities to align curriculums with human rights standards in the country. Liberty from Gender DynamiX (GDX) in South Africa shared how GDX collaborated with the University of Cape Town to develop inclusive and comprehensive sexuality education about trans and gender diverse issues and challenges. Liberty said,

“We are working with them on the renewal and revision of professional standards, discipline, and curriculums because we recognize that if we can influence the framework and align it with human rights standards, it minimizes the opportunity for anti-rights actors within educational institutions to influence academic programs.”



Gender DynamiX also engaged with teachers to build greater sensitivity across the education system to create resilient communities and stakeholders to push back against regressive policies. This example from South Africa underscores **the importance of building alliances and collective strength to develop resilient communities and stakeholders to push back against the opposition.**

Strategic communications as a tactic

Communication and digital platforms have provided a means to amplify **LGBTQI voices, help them reach a wider audience, share information quickly, and mobilize support efficiently.** During the strategic communication session, participants learned the importance of using strategic communication techniques through traditional and digital platforms to counter misinformation from the anti-gender opposition, and promote positive representation and narratives about trans, gender diverse and LGBTQI people.



Top left, from left to right: Justus Eisfeld and Mauro Cabral Grinspan

Bottom, from left to right: Opening session speakers Anwar Ogrm and Barbra Wangare



Case study: Piotr Jacoń, Polish journalist and father of a trans child

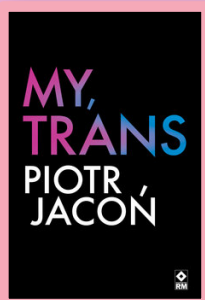
In Poland, ranked the most LGBTQI-phobic country in the EU by ILGA Europe for 5 years, the trans movement faces substantial challenges due to a socio-political environment heavily influenced by the Catholic Church and a right-wing populist party.

Piotr Jacoń, a popular TV journalist in Poland highlighted the significant impact of media and digital platforms in supporting the trans community. After his adult daughter, Wiktoria, came out as trans a few years ago, he utilized his platform to educate the public and support LGBTQI individuals. He produced a series of documentaries on TVN, the biggest private TV in Poland, entitled, *'All About My Child'*. The series was about his and other parents' experiences as parents of trans children. Piotr has also published two books on the subject, entitled *'My, Trans'*, and *'Wiktoria'*.

Another groundbreaking documentary aired on TVN about a trans boy whose parents didn't want to accept him and forced him to go through conversion therapy.

Monika, the founder of Lambda Poland Foundation, explained that the key success of Piotr's works is that they win people's hearts and minds due to the emotions behind all the pieces,

“If we speak with adults, most of them having children, small or big, about the child, their child suffering, their child being afraid, and the fear that the child will die, then, they all can relate because they have children, you know? So, it made such huge educational work in Polish society, like we are like it gave us.”





Intersectional approaches

During the human rights sessions, one participant said,

“I exist as an Arab, a Muslim, and a trans person, facing assumptions and expectations that make it difficult to be part of the discussion. Seeing so many people from different countries here have these dialogues is amazing.”

This point highlights the importance of intersectionality and the need to address the multiple layers of discrimination faced by individuals within the trans and gender diverse community.

With the importance of intersectional approaches, many projects and best practices address the needs and unique challenges faced by the most marginalized within the trans and gender diverse community, ensuring that the movement is inclusive and that all voices are heard. One of the outstanding examples is from the *El Ropero Trans* project in Colombia for trans and gender diverse individuals who have been in the jail system.



From left to right: Anwar Ogrm, Erika Castellanos, and Larkin Callaghan

Case study: *El Ropero Trans* in Colombia

Colombia's civil conflict and socio-political environment have disproportionately affected LGBTQI individuals, particularly, trans sex workers and drug users who face social marginalization that increases their vulnerability to police harassment and victimization within the legal system, where they end up in the jail system in numbers disproportionate to the rest of Colombian society. As a result, they encounter severe physical, sexual, and emotional violence.

To address these intersectional issues, *El Ropero Trans*, a thrift shop in Colombia led by the trans community as part of an initiative by Culturas Diversas Corperación, aims to provide gender-affirming clothing to trans individuals recently released from prison. These individuals often have limited clothing options and some access gender-affirming clothing for the first time in the thrift shop, which profoundly empowers them.

It shows the role of grassroots movements in providing support and advocacy for trans individuals with a more intersectional approach. Daniel, the trans activist from Colombia, highlighted the necessity of helping trans brothers, sisters, and siblings navigate their challenges more effectively, particularly in dealing with sentencing and re-entry into society. This example illustrates the resilience and ingenuity of Colombia's trans community in overcoming systemic challenges with intersectional approaches.



Images source: <https://www.corporacionculturasdiversas.org/el-ropero-trans>

Overall, the good practices identified during the sessions highlight the resilience, creativity, and dedication of trans and gender diverse communities worldwide that can continue to advance rights and improve the lives of trans and gender diverse individuals globally through an inclusive and intersectional approach, as well as prominent allies and partnerships.



High-Level Needs

The discussions within the sessions identified several high-level needs for advancing the trans and gender diverse movement. **The following inputs from participants are crucial to ensuring the rights, safety, and sustainability of these communities on a global scale.**

Global solidarity in the international human rights space

Since 2016, the presence of trans and gender diverse activists and their bringing of the issues and lived realities of their communities to the international human rights level has grown significantly. Today, there are strong alliances with various UN bodies that vocally support trans and gender diverse issues. However, Mauro noted,

“We have become one of the top, if not the top selling point for all extreme far-right politicians and governments. Everyone from the far spectrum of politics knows that they must target trans and gender diverse people.”

Recent years have seen a rise in vocal opposition within the UN system, particularly from the Special Rapporteur on Violence Against Women and Girls, who has used her position to actively oppose trans rights as a threat to women’s and girls’ rights and safety.



GATE's Trans Networking Zone set up in the Global Village at the AIDS 2024 Conference in Munich, Germany



Challenges

Engaging at the UN level presents numerous challenges, particularly in communication. Often, the broader public and representatives of conservative states are not moved by personal stories or facts, especially when they are swamped with anti-gender narratives. To counter this opposition, there is a need for global advocacy organizations and Member States to develop better communication strategies. Due to limited time and resources, creating fact sheets and narratives for permanent missions takes much work. The discussions at the human rights forum of the Conference brought forth suggestions to improve communication and lobby strategy at this level for effective advocacy.

Recommendations to Trans and Gender Diverse Advocates

Trans and gender diverse representation in broader social justice frameworks

There is a need to improve solidarity within the sphere of broader social justice issues and to incorporate development frameworks, such as the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and Agenda 2030, into strategic thinking for international advocacy alongside the human rights framework.

This broader approach is essential for comprehensive and effective advocacy for trans and gender diverse rights on the global stage. As a participant emphasized,

“Representation in SDGs issues and Agenda 2030 is still new for trans voices. Whenever you are in UN New York, it's tough to find trans people working there. It's predominantly driven by gay men, most of whom are white. So, the trans voice is very missed in that space.”



Intersectional approaches to global advocacy

International advocacy ensures that issues faced by trans and gender diverse communities are addressed on a global scale. **Allies and partnerships need to be evaluated critically to ensure that they genuinely support intersectional approaches that recognize the compounded discrimination faced by individuals with multiple marginalized identities in order to ensure inclusive advocacy efforts and impacts on the ground.** For example, discussions questioned whether sufficient space is being created for advocacy, given resistance to trans and gender diverse rights that are perceived to be Western imports. The nominal support for LGBTQI rights from some Member States in the Equal Rights Coalition (ERC) was criticized for its lack of equal power dynamics and effective advocacy on broader trans and gender diverse issues. Inclusive strategies with intersectional approaches genuinely representing and involving Global South voices and issues are crucial.

Watchdog mechanisms and comprehensive documentation

There is a pressing need for comprehensive documentation to monitor the human rights situations of trans and gender diverse communities and for these communities to 'watchdog' the watchdog mechanism. During the sessions, the importance of systematic documentation and the role of watchdog organizations were emphasized. **Effective monitoring and reporting can highlight abuses, influence policy changes, and hold stakeholders and Member States accountable.**

For instance, a participant underlined the need for reliable data and reports to bring international attention to the violence and discrimination faced by trans and gender diverse individuals. During the sessions there were suggestions for **collaboration with national human rights organizations, local NGOs, and community leaders to collect, verify, and disseminate information or co-publish the country's shadow report about hate crimes, violence, and human rights violations perpetrated against trans and gender diverse individuals.** At the same time, **this approach cannot be successful in bringing global awareness if there is no pressure on governments and multilateral institutions to monitor and implement protective laws and policies.**

The high-level needs identified for trans and gender diverse communities raised during the human rights sessions are interconnected and fundamental for developing a holistic and intersectional approach to advocacy, funding, and monitoring.



Strategic Priorities

In the evolving landscape of global human rights advocacy, it is crucial for organizations like GATE to align its strategic priorities with the pressing needs of trans communities.

The following sections outline the key priorities identified by our participants during the "Setting the Agenda: Identifying Human Rights Community Priorities for Strategic Planning" session, ensuring that GATE's future initiatives are not only relevant but transformative in advancing the rights of trans and gender diverse individuals worldwide.

Strengthening organizational capacity

Trans- and gender diverse-led organizations from across the globe often need to be more resourced and less overburdened. The importance of building the capacity of smaller groups and individuals was highly emphasized during the sessions. One participant mentioned that

“We need to focus on systems strengthening and reinventing the wheel to make spaces available for diverse and intersectional identities.”

One priority identified for strengthening trans and gender diverse-led organizations was **building capacity through peer-to-peer learning**, which allows for sharing best practices and strategies for enhancing them, ensuring that they can sustain their work and advocate more effectively.

Participants called on GATE to act as a mediator to facilitate peer-to-peer learning and share existing advocacy tools and knowledge products with trans and gender diverse organization members to ensure that GATE members are more resilient and able to increase their advocacy networks.



Combating misinformation and propaganda

Misinformation and propaganda are major tools used by anti-gender movement to undermine trans and gender diverse rights across the globe. Effective communication strategies are essential to counter these narratives, educate the public, and build broader support for trans and gender diverse rights. One participant emphasized,

“We need to actively create spaces to learn from each other for a comprehensive understanding and move and fight together.”

This highlights **the need for conversational spaces for trans and gender diverse organizations to understand the language the opposition movement uses, particularly the UN or global advocacy languages. This will be useful for identifying the types of communication and developing counter-narratives.**

The importance of understanding the cultural and social context of the audiences trans organizations communicate with in order to craft impactful and respectful messages was also underscored during the sessions. Ymania stated,

“It's no longer a trans issue, right? It is a trans plus 197 other names we are known for worldwide. We need to move in and say, 'Make room for the cultural identities because we're here to support them'.”

Using clear, simple, accessible language for audiences, particularly within Global South countries, ensures that the message is understandable to a broader audience.

During the sessions there were also discussions about **developing new strategies or narratives to counter misinformation and educate the public about trans and gender diverse issues.** For example, the **legal gender recognition narrative** has specifically been about the ability of trans and gender diverse individuals to change their identity documents to reflect their gender identity.

The suggestions highlighted during the sessions include **integrating trans and gender diverse rights with other important areas, such as political rights or poverty issues under the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs),** where trans and gender diverse rights are rarely discussed. This narrative can be compelling in gaining political allies and lobbying power.



Funding for international advocacy

Ensuring the sustainability of the trans and gender diverse movement within human rights spaces requires strategic redirection of resources to national and local organizations, empowering them to feed into global advocacy efforts. With the recent rise of a far-right government, for example in the Netherlands, which has been a major funder of LGBTQI rights globally, there is significant uncertainty about future funding.

This poses a critical question: how are we preparing for this shift? **There is a need to have an organization like GATE to work to ensure that the trans and gender diverse movement can access resources to continue their work and, at the same time, evaluate funding partnerships and partners, such as the EU and the Equal Rights Coalition, to determine whether to push for improvement.**

Response to crisis

The broader social justice issues linked with trans and gender diverse rights were also discussed during the sessions, particularly the need to address the intersectional vulnerabilities of trans and gender diverse individuals in crisis situations, which requires urgent attention, particularly in contexts of war and conflict. The **need for emergency support systems** was highlighted during the Strategic Priorities session, emphasizing the importance of ensuring the safety and well-being of trans and gender diverse activists under threat. The establishment of **rapid response and support systems** for trans and gender diverse activists facing immediate threats was highlighted as crucial. Additionally, **there is a need for global LGBTQI organizations to have a proactive stance on pressing geopolitical issues.** As a participant pointed out:

“It’s not just about what’s happening in Palestine or other war-torn regions; geopolitical tensions in Asia, such as China, Taiwan, and the Philippines, also need attention.”



Even though concerns were raised about the lack of representation and support for trans and gender diverse individuals from conflict zones, apartheid, and genocide, **highlighting the potential impact of these geopolitical tensions on trans and gender diverse people as marginalized communities is essential.** One participant shared a poignant observation,

“There is one thing that keeps catching my attention in conferences sometimes. I think it scared me when we see someone trans coming from or returning home, and they're in a panel discussion, and they say, 'I might go back home and not come back. Look out for me if I disappear'. And for me, I don't understand. How can we hear that, not check on the person afterward, and talk to them about their options? How can we not when someone says 'I might go and die this time'?”

This emphasizes the need to maintain representation and, at the same time, support the emergency needs of participants, speakers, or people who are involved in trans and gender diverse advocacy.

Global solidarity

To foster global solidarity and collaboration between trans and gender diverse organizations in order to create a powerful, unified movement, **it is essential to prioritize intersectional approaches as a crucial tool to address the unique challenges faced by the most marginalized within the trans and gender diverse community**, including trans and gender diverse sex workers, immigrants, refugees, those in prison, and racial minorities.

This includes **more discussion on migration and asylum and pushing for accountability from colonial powers while addressing the consequences of imported social norms.**

It calls for the decolonization of the movement, noting that indigenous trans and gender diverse identities and minorities are being erased and need more representation in these conversations. Ensuring that the voices of marginalized communities are included in trans and gender diverse advocacy is vital.



Lastly, **cross-movement solidarity can amplify the voices of trans and gender diverse individuals and create a unified front against anti-rights movements.** The breakout sessions on human rights highlighted the importance of collaboration countless times. The participants emphasized the priority to **address the intersection of broader social justice issues with anti-trans rhetoric, including poverty, abortion rights, sexual and reproductive health, climate change, youth rights, and disability rights.**

A discussion identifying patriarchy as the system underlying capitalism as an anti-trans system is needed to ensure the genuine inclusion of marginalized voices of trans and gender diverse individuals in the conversations about these social justice issues.

In conclusion, the strategic priorities outlined in this Report reflect a deep commitment to advancing the rights and well-being of trans and gender diverse communities worldwide. By strengthening organizational capacity, combating misinformation, securing sustainable funding, responding to crises, and fostering global solidarity, these priorities will inform GATE's upcoming strategic planning to ensure that the organization is well-positioned to lead transformative change in the fight for trans rights on a global scale.



Panelists sharing a laugh with the audience, from left to right: Jay Mulucha, Liberty Matthyse, Erika Castellanos, Ymania Brown, and Mauro Cabral Grinspan



Conclusion

In moving the trans and gender diverse movement forward, and in informing GATE's future strategic plans, it is imperative to reflect on the profound insights and outcomes that informed the successes of the Global Trans Conference in Munich as reflected in this Report.

Throughout the human rights plenary, sessions, and discussions, human rights aspects were delved into deeply, confronting **significant challenges such as criminalization, multiple stigmatization, and marginalization of trans and gender diverse identities.** These discussions were critical explorations of the real world that our communities face daily.

This Report also highlighted **the resilience and strength of trans communities through good practices such as community-led initiatives, collaborative advocacy, and the effective use of digital platforms.** These strategies have showcased how grassroots movements can spearhead significant social change, even in the face of formidable opposition and crisis.

Combating misinformation through strategic communications is essential to countering the pervasive narratives undermining trans and gender diverse rights. Furthermore, **fostering global solidarity will create a united front against anti-gender movements, amplifying the collective voices of the trans and gender diverse community, and ensuring that no one is left behind.**

One of the most inspiring takeaways from this Conference is **the importance of respect and collaboration.** As our Palestinian speaker encapsulated, the essence of migration and movement is respect:

“Migration and movement are natural parts of life. When you do that, if you go to another nation, you arrive with respect and manners because you don't know that land. You come wanting to learn from the people because they've been there for generations, thousands of years. The loss of any culture is a loss to all of humanity.”



This profound message resonates deeply with the journey of trans and gender diverse individuals and communities. As we advocate for our rights and navigate different spaces, let us carry this respect and willingness to learn and grow together. **Recognizing the unique struggles of our diverse community is crucial to ensuring that we move forward with dignity and solidarity.**

As we look to the future, **the outcomes of these presentations and fruitful discussions will significantly influence GATE's strategic planning.** The strategic priorities will strengthen our organizational capacity, enabling the organization to better support local and global initiatives and ensure that its advocacy is impactful and sustainable.

This Conference has been a platform for dialogue and a catalyst for future actions. This gathering has been more than just a convergence of voices. It has been a powerful testament to our collective resilience, determination, and commitment to advancing the rights of trans and gender diverse individuals globally.

Lastly, as stated in the [Global Trans and Gender Diverse Declaration](#),

“We call on you to champion trans rights, our human rights! Join our movement that strives for a world where everyone can safely be who they are!”

This Declaration, created by over 200 trans and gender diverse activists worldwide, encapsulates our commitments to continue to unite, advocate, and thrive, drawing strength from our shared experiences and the collective fight for our #TransAgenda.

UNITE!
ADVOCATE!
THRIVE!

GATE's Erika Castellanos sharing a joke with the audience at the opening session of the Conference



This

UNITE! **ADVOCATE!** **THRIVE!**

✧ **Global Trans Conference**

Human Rights

Thematic Report

is brought to you by



www.gate.ngo

Read the other reports from the Global Trans Conference:

