

UNITE!

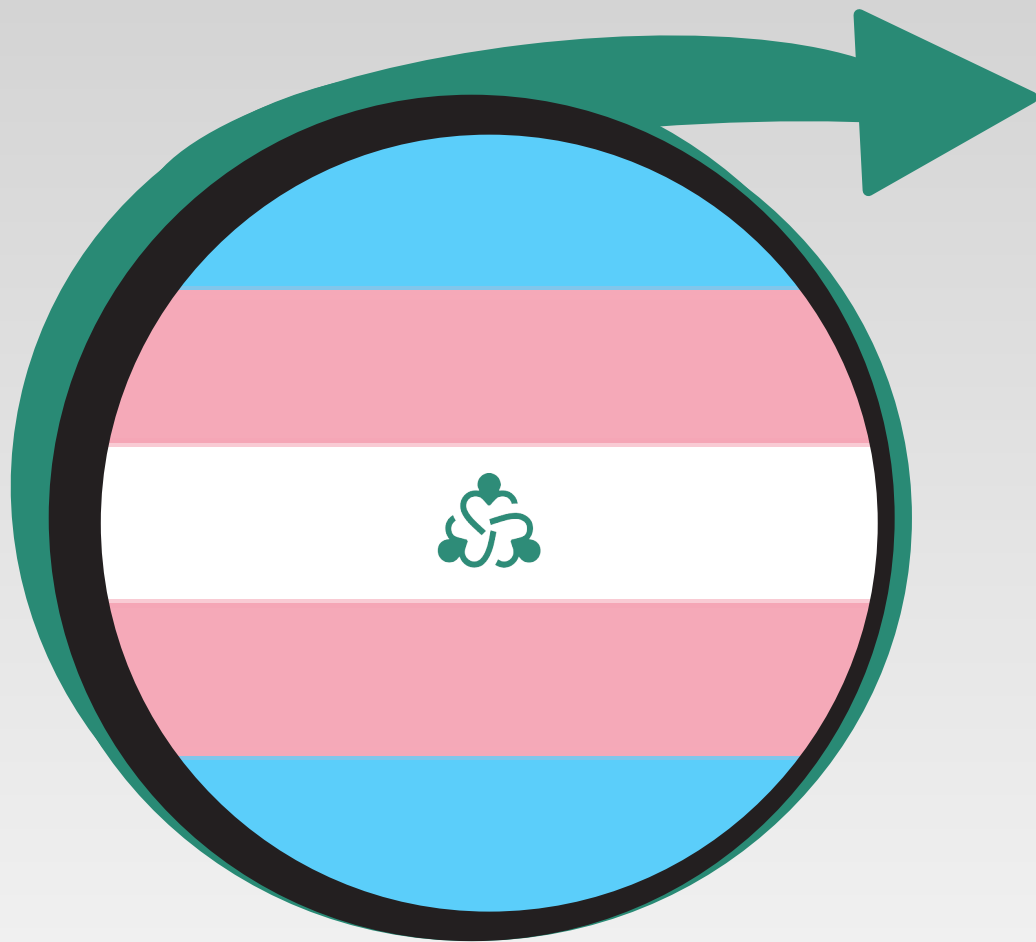
ADVOCATE!

THRIVE!

✧ Global Trans Conference

Movement Building

Thematic Report



GATE



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About GATE

GATE is an international advocacy organization working towards justice and equality for trans and gender diverse. 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 and gender expression. Our strategy is to transform the landscape of global advocacy, knowledge creation and resource distribution through critical inclusion of trans and gender diverse 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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Introduction

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The Unite! Advocate! Thrive! Global Trans Conference held on 20—21 July in Munich, Germany marked a defining chapter in the ongoing struggle for trans and gender diverse rights and visibility worldwide. In an era where the voices and rights of trans and gender diverse individuals are increasingly under threat, the Conference served as a crucial gathering point for activists, advocates, and allies who are united in their commitment to creating a more just and equitable world.

The significance of the Conference cannot be overstated. It was more than an event. It was a call to action, a collective reckoning, and a strategic blueprint for the future of the global trans and gender diverse movement.

The Conference's thematic focus was on human rights, health, and movement building. Movement building is a concept that goes beyond mere activism to encompass the creation of lasting networks, resilient communities, and strategic alliances that can withstand and overcome the multiple challenges faced by the trans and gender diverse community. At a time when anti-rights and anti-gender movements are gaining ground, **the need for a unified and agile trans and gender diverse movement has never been more pressing.**

The Conference highlighted **the importance of intersectionality as a theoretical framework and a practical approach to activism that recognizes the interconnectedness of various forms of oppression.** By fostering cross-movement alliances and building solidarities that transcend geographical, cultural, and social boundaries, the Conference participants aimed to forge **a collective trans and gender diverse agenda that is as diverse as it is cohesive.**

This *Movement Building Thematic Report* encapsulates the critical discussions, insights, and strategic directions that emerged from the four parallel sessions and the main plenary of the Conference. It offers a comprehensive framework for future action, providing both a reflection on the challenges that lie ahead and a roadmap for overcoming them.





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.

The Report is structured to capture the essence of the Conference's focus areas, including:

- the necessity of unity and solidarity within the trans and gender diverse movement,
- the importance of visibility and representation,
- the challenges of resource mobilization, and
- the strategies needed to overcome internal and external obstacles.



Above: Group photo of some of the delegates from the "Unite! Advocate! Thrive!" Global Trans Conference, Munich, Germany

Below: A very proud Erika Castellanos





Executive Summary

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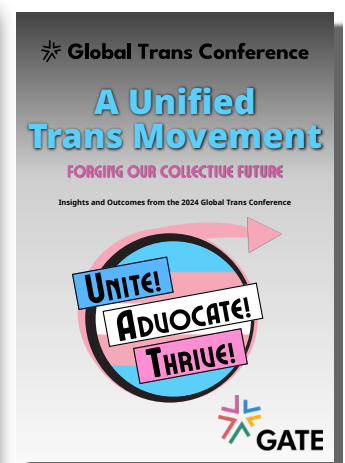
Transformative Solidarity

A key theme that permeated the Conference was the concept of transformative solidarity. Participants repeatedly emphasized that **solidarity must go beyond symbolic gestures and should be actionable, mutual, and transformative.**

This means engaging in partnerships that are strategic and grounded in a shared commitment to liberation for all oppressed groups. The Conference discussions challenged participants to critically examine the ways in which solidarity is enacted within and across movements, urging **a shift from performative allyship to genuine, transformative collaboration.**

Visibility and Representation

Visibility and representation were also underscored as crucial elements for the empowerment and advocacy of trans and gender diverse individuals. The Conference called for **the amplification of trans and gender diverse voices in global forums, ensuring their active participation in decision-making processes and addressing the stigma and violence associated with trans and gender diverse visibility.** The importance of **inclusive policies and grassroots mobilization at local levels** was highlighted as a necessary step toward achieving meaningful representation and ensuring that trans and gender diverse individuals are not just seen but are also heard and respected in all spheres of life.



Donor Pre-Conference participants, Munich, Germany. You can read about the Donor Pre-Conference on p. 21 of the main conference report from the "Unite! Advocate! Thrive!" Global Trans Conference — [A Unified Trans Movement](#).



Resource Mobilization

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Resource mobilization emerged as one of the most significant challenges discussed at the Conference. Participants from low- and middle-income countries, in particular, highlighted the ongoing struggle to secure the necessary resources to sustain their activism and community work. The Conference emphasized the need for **more flexible, intersectional, and strategic investments that can address the urgent needs of trans and gender diverse communities, particularly in regions where resources are scarce**. Discussions also pointed to the importance of **building capacities for advocacy, security, and effective communication**, recognizing that these are essential components for the survival and growth of trans and gender diverse movements.

Overcoming Challenges

Overcoming challenges was a recurring theme, with participants acknowledging **the diversity of cultural, legal, and political contexts in which trans and gender diverse movements operate**. The Conference recognized that while global solidarity is essential, approaches must be tailored to local conditions to be effective. This requires **a nuanced understanding of trans and gender diverse communities' unique challenges in different regions, and a commitment to developing context-specific and globally-informed strategies**.

In conclusion, this Report does not merely document the proceedings of the Global Trans Conference in Munich. It serves as a strategic guide for the future of the global trans and gender diverse movement. The insights and strategies captured in this Report are intended to inspire, inform, and guide trans and gender diverse activists and their allies as they continue to fight for justice, equality, and dignity.

The path forward is fraught with challenges, but the collective strength and resilience of the trans and gender diverse community, as demonstrated at this Conference, provide a solid foundation for the continued struggle for trans liberation worldwide. This moment in history calls for bold action, strategic alliances, and an unwavering commitment to the cause of trans and gender diverse rights — a commitment that was clearly articulated and reinforced at the Global Trans Conference in Munich.



Key Highlights

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The key highlights from the Conference centered on

- unity, solidarity, and intersectionality,
- visibility and representation,
- knowledge creation and sharing,
- mobilizing resources, and
- overcoming challenges.

Unity, Solidarity, and Intersectionality

Recognizing the interconnectedness of various forms of oppression, the Conference underscored the importance of intersectionality in movement building.

Participants called for intentional cross-movement alliances and strategic partnerships to dismantle systems of oppression both within and outside the trans and gender diverse movement. The discussions highlighted that solidarity must go beyond mere support. It should be actionable and transformative, ensuring mutual benefit and shared commitment to liberation. A critical call for reflection emerged from a participant:

“Is solidarity enough? Is that all we are going to receive?”

Another participant noted,

“We need transformative, not performative, solidarity to thrive and survive. Solidarity should be active and include mutual support, resources, and commitment.”





Visibility and Representation

Visibility and representation emerged as crucial elements for empowerment and advocacy. **Amplifying the voices of trans and gender diverse individuals in global forums, ensuring their participation in decision-making processes, and addressing the stigma and violence associated with trans visibility were identified as critical steps.**

The Conference stressed the importance of **inclusive policies and community mobilization at local levels to achieve meaningful representation.** Sabrina Sanchez from the European Sex Workers Rights Alliance (ESWA) emphasized,

“You cannot engage or pretend to engage a marginalized community when you do not include them in working together or sharing space and deciding the organization's destiny.”



From the Gala Award Ceremony at the end of the "Unite! Advocate! Thrive!" Global Trans Conference, from left to right: Tiommi Lockett, Amanita Calderón-Cifuéntes, Prempreeda Pramoj Na Ayutthaya, Barbra Wangare, and Alexis D'Marco

Knowledge Creation and Sharing

Creating and sharing accurate and empowering knowledge is essential in the face of rising anti-gender/anti-rights movements, including disinformation campaigns.

The Conference called for **developing collective frames to counter disinformation, building secure platforms for sharing ideas and best practices, and ensuring that regional and international conferences are accessible and inclusive.**



Resource Mobilization

Resource mobilization remains a significant challenge for trans and gender diverse movements, particularly in low- and middle-income countries. **The Conference highlighted the need for flexible, intersectional, and strategic investments to meet the urgent needs of trans and gender diverse communities.**

Beyond funding, there is a pressing need to develop capacities for advocacy, security, and effective communication, addressing structural issues such as poverty and housing. One participant poignantly noted,

“We don't lack capacity. We lack resources and opportunities.”

Overcoming Challenges

The Conference recognized several challenges, including the diversity of cultural, legal, and political contexts, hostile operating environments, and the increasing momentum of anti-rights/anti-gender movements.

Tailoring approaches to local conditions while maintaining global solidarity was identified as a complex yet necessary endeavor. Addressing resource scarcity, bureaucratic funding procedures, and misinformation were highlighted as critical areas needing attention.



Top: Participants engaging in a plenary session

Below: Participants at a breakout session



Good Practices and Strategic Priorities

Insightful ideas come from the wisdom of the crowd. Throughout the movement building plenary and four parallel sessions, participants and experts engaged in crucial reflection and strategizing, applying collective wisdom to share solutions and strategies to address identified challenges.

Below are some of the good practices and strategic priorities based on the themes of themes of unity, intersectionality, resource mobilization, and strategic networking, among others, that emerged from the Conference:

- **Cross-movement collaboration:** Building strategic alliances based on mutual benefit and shared commitment.
- **Regional and global conferences:** Hosting accessible events for community-building and knowledge exchange.
- **Grassroots engagement:** Strengthening local support and addressing regional challenges.
- **Intersectional approaches:** Ensuring all voices within the trans and gender diverse community are heard and represented.
- **Spaces for collective learning:** Creating platforms for knowledge exchange and mentorship.
- **Collective advocacy strategies:** Developing innovative advocacy strategies and monitoring their impact.
- **Resource mobilization:** Advocating for equitable resource allocation and building sustainable alliances.
- **Collaborative funder coordination:** Streamlining funding processes and reducing the burden on communities.



Session 1: The Power of Unity – Fortifying Synergies in Social Justice Movements

The times are challenging for global trans and gender diverse movements. These movements are facing a myriad of challenges, the most threatening being the rising anti-rights/anti-gender groups perpetuating a global anti-trans ecosystem. This requires a united front and collaborative efforts with other movements facing interconnected struggles.

The first session on the first day of the Conference therefore aimed to provide activists from diverse contexts with the space to discuss ideas and share inspiring and impactful cross-movement and collective solidarity-building strategies.

Moderated by GATE's Movement Building Lead, Anwar Ogrm, the session brought together participants from diverse backgrounds: **Miles Tanhira** from Transgender Europe (TGEU) and founder of Queerstation Media, **Alexus D'Marco** from the United Caribbean Trans Network (UCTRANS) and founder of the D M A R C O Foundation, and **Özge Sofia Aldynay Brand**, member of GATE's Trans and Gender Diverse Steering Committee.



Panelists, from left to right: Miles Tanhira, Alexis D'Marco, and Özge Sofia Aldynay Brand

Right: Moderator, Anwar Ogrm



The panelists set the scene for the discussion by sharing inspiring case studies highlighting **specific and practical experiences of cross-movement building**. They emphasized **the interlinked challenges faced by trans and gender diverse communities and other marginalized movements, such as the Refugee, Intersex, and Climate Justice movements**. The panelists' interventions explored **contextual challenges and good practices by highlighting exemplary intersectional cross-movement building case studies**.

Some of the key questions addressed during the session included why cross-movement building matters and how to navigate and sustain it. In addition, drawing from their experience of cross-movement building, the trio proffered recommendations for other trans and gender diverse activists to consider.

Participants also had the opportunity to share their contextual cross-movement building experiences while exploring what a global movement strategy would look like, and how it would be created and implemented, given the diverse contexts. The common thread in all contributions from the floor was **the need for cross-movement solidarity, strategic resource mobilization, and amplifying and addressing the unique challenges faced by multiple marginalized trans and gender diverse communities**.

Furthermore, the discussions emphasized **the need to interrogate and connect the root causes of the systemic oppression trans and gender diverse people experience, while acknowledging their commonalities and distinctions**.

At the end of the session, participants agreed that **building a healthy, connected trans and gender diverse global movement called for collective problem analysis and the design of agile strategies to suit complex and diverse contextual needs**.



From the Movement Building breakout session, "The Power of Unity —Fortifying Synergies in Social Justice Movements." From left to right: Alexus D'Marco, Özge Sofia Aldynay Brand, and Miles Tanhira



Why Cross-Movement Building Matters

The resounding message from all panelists was that **the liberation of all trans and gender diverse communities is interconnected. Therefore, to confront systemic oppression, the building up of mobilizing capacities, strategies, and resources need to be focused on in order to strengthen solidarity within and across movements.**

The speakers highlighted the impending threats to trans and gender diverse rights and movements and touched on the need for a unified front against anti-rights actors targeting the diverse trans community.

Alexus highlighted **how climate justice presented an opportunity for trans and gender diverse communities to collectively mobilize with other communities and movements.** Her intervention clearly explains why climate justice is a trans and gender diverse issue. She also gave an example of a study survey conducted by her organization, the United Caribbean Trans Network (UCTRANS), to understand the community's knowledge of climate change and its effects, particularly during natural disasters such as Hurricane Dorian. She also shed light on how **natural disasters impact trans and gender diverse communities, often leading to exclusion from emergency services due to lack of proper identification.**

Additionally, Alexis touched on the lack of access to emergency services and resources for trans and gender diverse individuals during such crises and emphasized **the need for visibility and recognition of trans and gender diverse people in disaster response and policymaking.**

Similarly, Miles reiterated **the importance of collaboration among diverse social movements, which creates avenues for amplifying collective voices and strengthening solidarity.** Miles addressed the challenges of exclusion and tokenization and the need for strategic collective frames and resource mobilization. He shared the case of Transgender Europe's (TGEU) Trans Refugee Network (TRN) as a cross-movement initiative between the trans and refugee movement and strategic allies. He also acknowledged the importance of resolving movement challenges and ensuring activists' well-being.





Echoing similar sentiments, Özge touched on **the importance of building a cross-regional intersex movement**, further stressing the need for diverse and culturally-relevant approaches to address the unique experiences of intersex individuals. Her presentation focused on the case of the Southern African Intersex Forum (SAIF), which was formed in 2023 and consists of groups from Botswana, Malawi, South Africa, Tanzania, Zambia, and Zimbabwe. She further elaborated that the forum's primary focus is to support Southern African organizations regarding their work on awareness and advocacy for the protection of the rights of intersex people. Özge emphasized **the need to set up spaces for collective and critical reflection to interrogate the tribalism between trans and intersex communities**, adding:

“We are so afraid to have such uncomfortable conversations, but we need to investigate these issues within our movements.”

Below are some key challenges, good practices, and recommendations from the in-depth and insightful deliberations.

Challenges

Competition for resources

Competition for resources occurs owing to limited funding and a culture of donor dependency is a major challenge. As Alexis boldly proclaimed,

“Before funding, the community existed. We have always been taking care of ourselves. Trans people have always been at the forefront of community mobilization and support. We need to find our way back to doing this. Now, funding has divided us. The way I see it is there is no more money left. We have to find ways to generate support from our own communities.”



The strength of the diversity of cross-movement alliances could also be a weakness

The opposition could exploit this diversity to create divisions.

Elitism and tokenism

It is essential for activists to critically reflect on a point raised by Özge. She said, we need to ask

“what it takes to sit in spaces. Do we need to align ourselves with the narrative of the global minority? How much do we have to give up to fit into those spaces when we have dissenting opinions we are silenced and canceled?”

Power dynamics within movements

More well-established groups tend to exert power over smaller or unfunded groups.

Contextual and cultural differences

The diversity of communities' cultural, legal, and political contexts across regions presents challenges in creating unified strategies. Tailoring approaches to local conditions while maintaining global solidarity is complex and messy, but necessary.

Hostile environments

Anti-rights movements and far-right groups are gaining momentum and perpetuating an anti-rights/anti-gender ecosystem. Consequently, the shrinking of democratic spaces means allies are unwilling to support.

Capacity building/training

Capacity building/training would be critical for allies to understand, for example, intersex issues, and how to work collaboratively.



Data and research gaps

Gaps in data and research hamper our collective advocacy efforts because, as Miles highlighted,

“We need stories and knowledge to design collective frames, and these are pivotal for cross-movement building.”

Lack of awareness and visibility of trans and gender diverse communities and issues

For example, in hostile contexts, this lack makes it challenging to mobilize local support.

Good Practices

Mobilizing shared resources

Miles gave the example of Transgender Europe (TGEU), who provided a central, stable mobilizing structure for the Trans Refugee Network (TRN). The structure provided the space, networks, credibility, and shared resources necessary for cross-movement building.

Capitalizing on strength in diversity

Speaker after speaker stressed the need to capitalize on the opportunity offered by honoring and acknowledging the rich diversity of our communities.

Building collective power

The co-liberation of all people depends on creating, sharing, and shifting power, realizing that the liberation of each group is intertwined. All groups are unfree if one group is oppressed. Alexis shared how they had used emotional appeal to garner support from diverse stakeholders by framing Hurricane Dorian as an emergency adversely impacting all citizens, particularly vulnerable communities, including trans and gender diverse people.



Diversifying strategic allies, partners, and donor bases

Galvanizing support and solidarity with strategic stakeholders with shared values and creating more social capital and inclusive connective spaces is essential. All panelists pointed out the importance of centering intersectionality in cross-movement building efforts.

Strategic collective action

As Özge pointed out, the added value of the Southern African Intersex Forum (SAIF) was the ability to create inclusive and strategic initiatives, joint advocacy, and campaigns at local and regional levels.

Recommendations to Trans and Gender Diverse Movements

Intersectional movement building

Strengthening cross-movement alliances and integrating intersectional perspectives can enhance the effectiveness of advocacy. This strategy involves working across different movements to address shared challenges and amplify collective impact.

Resource mobilization and access

Developing strategies to improve access to funding and resources is crucial. This process involves simplifying funding processes and prioritizing local issues alongside global agendas.

Strengthen local capacities

Building the capacity of local organizations and activists by providing identified training needs empowers grassroots groups to lead.





Center further marginalized voices

Some participants pointed out that this approach validates the lived experiences of trans and gender diverse people, and amplifies their voices. Other participants highlighted that it is necessary to consider those who cannot always be in the room, for instance, rural indigenous communities of trans femmes in Colombia, refugees feeling stuck, and those under-supported and left out of collective organizing because of Brexit.

Address tokenism

As Miles suggested,

“When you realize you are the only person in the room, do not just sit with the discomfort; name it. It's important not to settle with the idea of always being the only voice in the room. We need to normalize, making space for and amplifying the voices not included in the room.”

Invest in research and data collection

Knowledge creation and ownership are crucial because data provides evidence to support advocacy efforts. Comprehensive data informs policy-making and highlights the areas requiring attention.

Collaboration and coalition building

Forming alliances and coalitions with other organizations strengthens the movement. Collaborative efforts enable the sharing of resources, strategies, and support, creating a more unified front.

Education and awareness for communities and institutions

Raising awareness and educating local communities and institutions is crucial. This approach helps to build support and understanding, reducing stigma and discrimination.



Sustain unity and mutual commitment

Critically reflecting before engaging in cross-movement collaboration. Collaboration should be based on a commitment to the issues and should not just be an entry point.

Collaborate with communities

Working with local artists and nurturing a culture of activism (art that reflects activism) to creatively organize for mutual liberation.

Focus on the needs of the communities

Mapping out resources and needs and creating a directory for communities that best suit their needs.

Trust building and assessing alliances

Thinking about transformative solidarity, not those practicing performative solidarity only to obtain funds for trans and gender diverse communities.

Build communities of resistance for reconnection, healing, and restoration

Acknowledging that activists cannot solve these complex problems from their corners alone. Collaboration is essential.

Holistic, intersectional, and inclusive narratives

This will allow for broader framing, harnessing marginality as a site of opportunity and resistance.

Facilitating and convening spaces for peer-to-peer engagement

These spaces will build relations and strengthen trust and exchange in collective visions of liberation.



Session 2: South-South Cross Regional Movement Building – Imagining Asia, Pacific, and African Initiatives

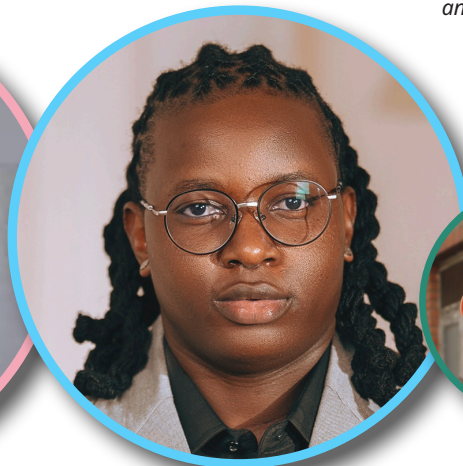
Activists from diverse geopolitical contexts and lived realities gathered during this second session on the second day. The discussion's central goal was to bridge divides by bringing together various perspectives and experiences of activists from the global majority to create a shared sense of purpose and strengthen cross-regional organizing.

The session, moderated by GATE's Anwar Ogrm, featured speakers **Joe Wong** from the Asia Pacific Transgender Network (APTN), **Joey Joleen Mataele** from the Tonga Letis Association, and **Sylvester Kazibwe** from Iranti in South Africa. The panelists shared the work of current regional initiatives in promoting **intersectional movement-building, leadership, and sustainable advocacy**. They also pointed out how the **existing power imbalances between the global North and South perpetuate challenges such as under-representation and a lack of resources for movements in the global South**. To avert these barriers, the session also deliberated on **strategies to strengthen South-South movement-building**.

The highly-interactive session culminated in a collective drawing exercise in which participants had to reimagine and design the future of cross-regional trans movement building. As highlighted in the collective mapping, some topical issues on the agenda include militarism, migration, genocide, feminism, technology, and trans rights, i.e., the intersection of AI technologies and digital rights.

Panelists, from left to right: Joe Wong, Joey Joleen Mataele, and Sylvester Kazibwe.

Below: Moderator, Anwar Ogrm





Challenges

Contextual variations

Sylvester reminded the participants of the importance of considering contextual differences in order to organize across regions because some nations, such as Uganda, have criminalizing laws that complicate programming. He further stressed that the challenge was creating programs that accommodate these differences while adopting good practices from other regions.

Jolene emphasized the importance of respecting local cultural contexts and not simply adopting Western constructs or terminology on gender identity, because

“this might overshadow local solutions in the push for decriminalization.”

Regional disparities in equity and opportunities

Panelists argued that disparities hindered effective collaboration as the lack of access to necessary resources led to the under-representation and invisibility of minority communities. Jolene highlighted that more resources were needed for minorities within minorities, such as sex workers.

Safety and security threats

Joe shared that movements in the Asia Pacific region operate in hostile environments, which demand careful navigation due to criminalization, and activists live in perennial states of fear.

Internal conflicts, resource shortages, and limited leadership opportunities

The discussion highlighted how these challenges contribute to a general insecurity for movements. Furthermore, panelists elaborated on how the lack of diverse leadership and decision-making power resulted in the limited representation and visibility of trans and gender diverse people.



Good Practices

The Trans Asia Pacific and Africa Solidarity (TAPAS) was highlighted as an example of cross-regional opportunity that has provided chances for trans groups to explore and collaborate on various activities. The meeting also heard about some critical successes of the work of documenting hate crimes against trans people conducted under the THRIVE Consortium, a cross-regional partnership of trans and gender diverse-led networks such as the East Africa Trans Health & Advocacy Network (EATHAN), Transgender Europe (TGEU), the United Caribbean Trans Network (UCTRANS), and GATE.

Below follow the good practices that emerged from the meeting.

Trans and gender diverse health module and mapping

Collaborative efforts to sensitize healthcare providers and ensure that trans- and gender diverse-specific healthcare has been successful. These initiatives highlight the importance of tailored health interventions in addressing the unique needs of trans communities.

Mutual aid and crisis response

Emphasizing mutual aid and support during crises and security threats has proven effective in maintaining the resilience of trans and gender diverse communities across regions.

Merging of groups to strengthen movements in countries where organizing is illegal

Sylvester shared how, in Uganda, the various human rights and LGBTQI groups had merged during the introduction of the *Anti-Homosexuality Act 2023* in order to strengthen strategic litigation, advocacy, and community support.



Recommendations to Regional Trans and Gender Diverse Movements

Design a collective agenda

Creating a common, shared agenda that reflects each region's diverse needs and contexts.

Facilitate regional convenings for peer exchange

Creating more spaces and opportunities for exchange, collective learning, and strategizing.

Center an intersectional approach

Instead of working in silos, seeking out other movements working on intersecting struggles and joining forces at local and regional levels.

Invest in leadership capacity building

Strengthening leadership within trans and gender diverse communities and investing in capacity-building initiatives can address the gaps in representation and decision-making power.

Foster intergenerational dialogues

Promoting intergenerational dialogues to inculcate a culture of knowledge sharing and movement memory transfer for sustainability.

Global advocacy and accountability

Participants highlighted the need to engage with global platforms like the UN to incorporate trans and gender diverse rights into broader development agendas (for example, SDGs) that can amplify the voices of trans and gender diverse communities. Ensuring accountability from international organizations and strategic allies can further the cause.





Contextualized solutions

Tailoring approaches to fit local contexts rather than imposing Western constructs can lead to more effective and sustainable outcomes. This includes leveraging local resources and knowledge in advocacy and programming.

Resource mobilization

Enhancing fundraising efforts and resource mobilization for underfunded regions, particularly in Africa, can help sustain and expand trans and gender diverse movements. Collaborative efforts to share resources and knowledge across areas are essential.

Enhance mutual aid systems

Strengthening mutual aid systems to support communities during crises and ensure security.

Embed joy and pleasure in activism

Incorporating elements of joy and pleasure to sustain the morale and well-being of activists.



From the Movement Building breakout session, "South-South Cross-Regional Movement Building — Reflecting and Imagining Towards Asia, Pacific, and African Initiatives."

Facilitated by Anwar Ogrm, Joe Wong, Joey Joleen Mataele, and Sylvester Kazibwe



Plenary: Resourcing the Trans and Gender Diverse Movement – Strategies, Challenges, and Future Directions

Trans and gender diverse communities face intersecting global crises, including wars, internal conflicts, pandemics, and inflation, as well as the rising influence of funded far-right groups perpetuating anti-rights agendas. More than ever, the need for trans and gender diverse communities to be resourced, connected, and empowered to defend their rights and counter the opposition sustainably is dire. The donor community plays a crucial role in providing the much-needed financial support.

The plenary session, held on the second day of the Conference, was moderated by Erika Castellanos, GATE's Executive Director, and featured panelists **Mukasa Samora** from the International Trans Fund (ITF), **Alli Jernow** from Arcus Foundation, and **Darwin Thompson** from Gilead Sciences.



Above: Panelists, from left to right — Mukasa Samora, Alli Jernow, and Darwin Thompson

Below: Moderator, Erika Castellanos



The conversation focused on the donors' experiences and perspectives, and the three experts exchanged rich insights on the funding landscape, emerging challenges, priorities and needs of resourcing trans and gender diverse movement building. Notable and recurrent themes during the deliberations on critical challenges included the

- volatile and diverse operating contexts,
- the current inaccessible and complex funding mechanisms, and, most importantly,
- the limited funding for advancing democracy and human rights and trans and gender diverse organizing.

From a forward-looking and optimistic view, the panelists illuminated a few critical strategies for sustainable and adequate resourcing.

The plenary invited questions and comments from the audience to fuel discussion. **The key message from the audience was for donors to offer multi-year operational support, and minimize the administrative and reporting barriers often associated with application submission processes.**



Participants and donors engaging in the "Unite! Advocate! Thrive!" Global Trans Conference networking space

In responding to the question: Why is it crucial to have community-led funding initiative strategies to reach the most marginalized effectively? Mukasa highlighted that trans and gender diverse movements are volatile, fragile, and dynamic, impacting philanthropy's operations. He argued that the anti-gender movement was a global crisis affecting the lives and work of activists in Eastern Europe, Central Asia (EECA) and Africa. Mukasa further clarified that the International Trans Fund (ITF) was structured to give flexible funds and general support to meet diverse needs and combat and respond to crises.

Some of the main challenges highlighted by panelists and participants are listed overleaf.



Challenges

Limitations of funding mechanisms

As Alli acknowledged, most funding mechanisms must be more flexible and accessible. She also pointed out that applicants were often not given feedback and that the funding opportunities did not cater to grassroots communities' needs and local realities.

Lack of intersectional approach

A participant highlighted that donors need to center an intersectional lens in their funding approaches, adding that the lack of such a holistic funding strategy could be counterproductive and unsustainable. The issue of elitism was also pointed out, as those who know the system and are connected get access to resources and information about grants.

Limited funding

Alli indicated that

“Despite a slight upward trajectory indicated in the Global Philanthropy Project study, trans groups are under-resourced, money is not trickling down to grassroots, especially further marginalized communities.”



*From the opening plenary of the Conference, from left to right:
Jay Mulucha, and Liberty Matthyse*



Good Practices

Community-centered approach

The key message from all speakers was the call for donors to let communities lead. For example, Mukasa highlighted that as a participatory grantmaker, the International Trans Fund (ITF) centers community voices and engagement in all resourcing decisions:

“Our work is rooted in the foundational principle of nothing about us without is community affected to make decisions. This means communities decide funds that go into the community.”

Similarly, Darwin explained that, as part of their corporate responsibility, Gilead Sciences has an advisory committee that includes representatives from various communities:

“In our programming, we use what we heard from the community as a benchmark. When it's time to make funding decisions, we involve the community.”

Multi-year grants

Speakers indicated that donors need to offer multi-year grants in order to ensure program sustainability. Beyond grants, Gilead Sciences also invests in supporting organizations with general operative support and capacity building. The International Trans Fund (ITF) offers a Renewal Grant targeting previously funded groups and the Opportunity and Crisis Grant for emergency response.

Feedback to unsuccessful applicants

This feedback from donors would help applicants understand why their application was unsuccessful in order to improve on their future funding applications. Alli pointed out that, as of 2025, the Arcus Foundation will pilot oral reporting and extensively document the process for lessons learned.



Leverage philanthropic influence

From a foundation perspective, Alli acknowledged that

“other than having access to funds, foundations hold power and privilege”,

which they can use to influence money flows and build relationships and trust. She outlined five critical questions for funders to reflect on:

1. How can we shape the flow of money?
2. How can we shift philanthropic focus?
3. Who are we speaking to?
4. What conversations are we having?
5. How do we bring people in?

Facilitate convenings not tied to project deliverables

This would promote a knowledge-sharing culture and enable organizations to learn from each other.

Engage democracy and civic engagement funders

This engagement would prioritize trans and gender diverse funding. Alli observed that the opposition is well funded, and authoritarianism is rising, so the pitch to democracy funders is to link the control of bodily autonomy to liberty. She argued that shifting their mindsets to get involved is critical:

“We are at a moment of crisis for freedom and democracy. People have to show up for trans communities.”

Offer general operating funding to sustain organizations

Alli shared that Arcus Foundation was opening applications for small projects, capital grants, healing justice, and human resources policies.

Promote a culture of reflection

As Darwin argued,

“As part of our corporate responsibility, we have to think of, ‘How can we be better continuously?’ We know this is a continuous process.”



Recommendations to Donors

Agility and flexibility

This would ensure that groups are funded, taking into consideration various intersecting and contextual realities.

Rapid response services for groups in crisis and protect activists' well-being in distress

This would be useful to sustain movements and keep activists' well-being at the forefront.

Adapt to local realities

Adapting funding practices to reflect local contexts would ensure that support is relevant and practical. This includes funding non-registered groups and considering the intersectional needs and geopolitical and cultural contexts of the groups they fund.

Partner with intermediaries

This would minimize administrative management and manage risk. For example, the Arcus Foundation is a seed donor to the International Trans Fund (ITF).

Promote donor coordination, collaboration, and knowledge sharing

A participant pointed out that donors must collaborate and convene at a micro level without burdening the communities.

Facilitate holistic and sustainable resourcing

As one participant stressed, movements should be thought of as 'processes' rather than 'projects', and funders ought to give sustainable support beyond finances to include capacity strengthening and solidarity.



Session 3: Setting the Agenda – Identifying Movement-Building Community Priorities for Strategic Planning

The first breakout session on the second day of the Conference was a pivotal opportunity for diverse activists to define critical priorities for directly shaping GATE's strategic direction and the global trans and gender diverse movement. Through vigorous discussions, participants identified critical movement-building priorities and valuable perspectives on GATE's existing strategies, which will be instrumental in shaping the organization's future.

Facilitated by **Sabrina Sanchez** from the European Sex Workers Rights Alliance (ESWA), the session elicited challenging yet strategic talking points that led to a dynamic discussion. **Departing from an intersectional movement-building perspective, Sabrina explained why sex work was also a trans and gender diverse rights issue.** She problematized the criminalization of sex work, which further marginalizes trans femmes such as BIPOC migrants, the undocumented, and refugees. Sabrina shared historical examples of how other movements have supported the sex worker movement in Europe. For instance, she highlighted that Amnesty International initiated a decriminalization statement, and that in 2016, Transgender Europe (TGEU) followed with a decriminalization policy, and the International Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans and Intersex Association (ILGA) followed suit.

In her interventions, Sabrina pointed out some of the challenges impacting trans and gender diverse communities as well as global movement building.



*Facilitator, Sabrina Sanchez
and moderator, Anwar Ogrm*



Challenges

Lack of prioritization of social and economic rights

Sabrina indicated that social and economic rights not prioritized include access to decent healthcare, housing, and employment. She added that a lack of access to housing impacts many trans and gender diverse people. This is particularly the case for those who are unemployed, as well as refugees, sex workers, and migrants.

Access to healthcare interlinked with social and economic rights

Sabrina explained how access to healthcare is linked to other material conditions, for example, housing. Sabrina pointed out that

“the self-identification law is an important base of all vulnerabilities and discriminations. If you cannot identify yourself, you don't have access to housing, formal job education, or health.”

Movement building dependent on social and economic rights

Sabrina shared that access to housing, for example, impacts trans and gender diverse people's prospects for community building:

“You cannot build community if you are constantly on the move.”

Lack of skills capacity

Sabrina highlighted that many trans and gender diverse people did not have the relevant skills to engage in formal work:

“When hiring within our communities, we are often caught with the dilemma of whether to recruit someone from the community to train and mentor for 2—3 years to build their capacities or to follow funder capitalist pressures' typical way of reporting timelines and evaluations and hire a cis hetero, often white person.”



Insufficient training to fill skills gaps

Sabrina said,

“We can have training to fill the skills gap and find ways to get economic material resources to distribute to communities. The available money is sadly not going down to communities. We need to think about how we can get resources to the grassroots.”

Limited funding

Sabrina outlined the need for more funds and alternative strategies to have access to resources.

Lack of representation of workers' voices

Workers' voices remain invisible and under-represented in many organizations. Sabrina argued that you cannot engage or pretend to engage a marginalized community when you do not invite them to work together, share space, and decide the organization's destiny.

Understanding power relations

Sabrina called on global organizations to check their positionality, reflect on and understand existing power relations, and ensure that the people they are partnering with have an influential voice. She added that international organizations need to know when to step back, let people speak, organize, and articulate their issues:

“Most global organizations focus more on producing reports and briefs that no one knows exist. Grassroots communities live in survival mode—for example, trans sex workers or refugees have no time to engage in some of these processes or huge surveys.”



Sabrina pointed out that to remain valuable and relevant for the communities they serve, organizations should:

“Involve people with lived experiences and nuances we probably don't see. It's easy to get lost when we engage in bubbles and lose ground and touch with reality. Organizations must reflect on how to remain useful, relevant, and responsive to the needs of the communities they are supposed to serve.”

What Does Trans and Gender Diverse Movement Building Look Like?

Building on Sabrina's interventions, Anwar, representing GATE, asked the audience to state one word that comes to mind when they hear about trans and gender diverse movement building. The words included 'messy', 'drama', 'resilience', 'diversity', and 'empathy'. Anwar then took a deep dive into GATE's current strategic plan, zooming in on the movement-building pillar and centering the discussions on the related objective.

Next were the interventions from the audience, who were invited to provide input on three questions designed to guide their discussion of the current GATE strategies and give suggestions for potential improvements or refocus. These questions are addressed here:

- 1. What are the movement building priorities for the trans and gender diverse community? (What can we do to make trans lives better?)**
 - **Three key priorities:** The key priorities were identified as healthcare, movement building, and funding.
 - **Solidarity within movements and amongst trans and gender diverse communities:** Participants argued that when something is happening in one area of the world, there is a need to for the rest of the world's trans and gender diverse communities to show solidarity and center the realities of our communities when a nation is facing crises, such as genocide, emergency disasters, conflict, or war.



- **Contextual needs:** The audience highlighted the importance of understanding and centering organizations' contextual needs. For example, some organizations face administrative and legal barriers to registration, opening bank accounts, and receiving funding for community work. In such cases, fiscal sponsorship for partners in volatile contexts is needed.
- **Historical memory:** Some participants emphasized the need to invest in a decolonized history of our communities. This means working to counter the invisibilization of trans and gender diverse identities, and making more effort to decolonize mindsets about what we were before colonizers came into the picture. Participants pointed out that historically, our identities were celebrated before colonization demonized them.



Participants relaxing and striking a pose in the "Unite! Advocate! Thrive!" Global Trans Conference networking space

2. What are the crucial factors that influence movement building that need to be addressed?

- **Diversity of contextual differences:** There is a need to recognize that we have different contextual needs and approaches and then apply an international lens to work and ensure representation of multiple minoritized communities, for example, sex workers and BIPOC refugees.
- **Sustainable and flexible resources:** These are needed to support movement work and increase and avoid 'projectization' (seeing organizations as projects rather than processes) of our community organizations.
- **Centering and sustaining activists' well-being:** Most people within trans and gender diverse organizations are volunteers or work long hours without pay. This explains why trans and gender diverse refugees are experiencing burnout and why they need opportunities and spaces for healing and recovery.





Good Practices

Trans and gender diverse-sensitization training

Deliver trans and gender diverse-sensitization training to healthcare providers on the sexual, physical, and mental health of trans and gender diverse communities.

Reflect on using Western tools

These “master’s tools” (Audre Lorde) need to be used in the most emancipatory ways possible. Cooperative models need to be focused on as they are centers of resilience. Participants also pointed out the need to find ways to provide their own healthcare to support their communities.

Showcase community champions

Examples of good practices of self-reliant groups that do not depend on donor funding need to be promoted.

Increased capacity

Especially within the HIV movement engagement. The audience noted that it is essential to advocate for improving the funding infrastructure so that trans and gender diverse communities can access adequate resources, particularly for HIV and human rights.

3. What should GATE continue doing in our movement-building programmatic areas?

- **Share information on donor mapping and convening strategic spaces:** This would empower activists to familiarize themselves with donor processes and enable them to dialogue with donors.
- **Create platforms for conflict resolution and restorative justice:** Such platforms would enable the addressing of conflicts and toxicity, and center activists' well-being and collective care.



- **Offer spaces for peer-to-peer exchange:** Be more mindful of the digital divide and invest more in local or regional spaces where people can meet and engage without visa limitations when traveling.
- **Hold space for intergenerational dialogues:** This would enable the sharing of knowledge and preserve the historical memory of movements.
- **Build inclusive and contextual advocacy:** Critically engage with UN organizations and Western powers, ensuring that they support and do not undermine local initiatives. Emphasize the need for advocacy efforts recognizing the unique challenges faced in different regions.
- **Create sustainable funding models:** Encourage cooperative models and centers of resilience to create self-sufficient funding mechanisms within the community. Advocate for sustainable, flexible funding that supports long-term community organizing and avoids the pitfalls of project-based funding.



Participants connecting in the "Unite! Advocate! Thrive!" Global Trans Conference networking space





Session 4: Self-Reliant Trans Movements – Let's Make Money Differently

Trans, gender diverse and intersex organizations remain underfunded, and many are volunteer-led and operate on shoestring budgets. As spaces for democratic civic engagement continue to shrink, access to funding is becoming more challenging, especially for trans communities.

Based on this understanding, the second session on the second day of the Conference explored sustainable alternative resource mobilization strategies beyond traditional grant-making by analyzing the challenges and opportunities for funding sustainability within trans and gender diverse organizations.

The session featured compelling case studies presented by **Abhina Aher** from Transgender Welfare Equity and Empowerment Trust (TWEET) Foundation in India, **Manisha Dhaka** from the Blue Diamond Society in Nepal, and **Daniel Benitez-Posada** from Talento Trans in Colombia.



Panelists, from left to right: Abhina Aher, Manisha Dhaka, and Daniel Benitez-Posada

Below right: Moderator, Anwar Ogrm



The trio presented case studies highlighting **innovative self-sustaining financial and empowerment strategies**. They offered insights into **overcoming economic and systemic barriers, creating self-reliance, and designing inclusive and resilient economic models**. Given donors' dwindling funding, the speakers reminded the audience about **the importance of localized resource mobilization and the need to be flexible and creative in organizing**. The innovative case studies inspired participants to **envision what financial sustainability could look like and mean for local organizing and cross-movement building**.

Challenges

Registration

Speakers highlighted the issue of organizations not being legally allowed to conduct business as they were registered as non-profit.

Limited financial skills

Gaps in knowledge and skills in conducting business and entrepreneurship, and in diversifying funding received.

Competition for limited funding

Scarcity of resources and under-representation of specific communities and voices. Abhina shared how, in India, for example, most funding is allocated to gay organizations, and trans and gender diverse people are often not on boards or in decision-making spaces. She also highlighted how some populations were under-represented and ignored in programming. For instance, trans men were further marginalized and stigmatized in HIV intervention and discourse.

Limited opportunities for economic empowerment

Daniel stressed that trans and gender diverse people were invisibilized in economic development opportunities, resulting in heightened vulnerability to violations.





Lack of access to resources

Speakers argued that movement building is severely hampered by a lack of access to resources. One participant stressed,

“To mobilize and self-identify, we need money.”

Limited access to basic human rights

These basic rights include employment, housing, health mobility, education, and legal gender recognition.

Good Practices

Flexibility and adaptability

Manisha explained how in order to circumvent the registration of the Blue Diamond Society in Nepal as a non-profit, hindering them from engaging in business, they applied for suitable registration as a company.

Generate revenue from fixed assets

Brainstorm around income-generating ideas, for example, having a property. The Blue Diamond Society bought a building they rent out for outside parties to hold meetings and events.

Seek local technical support to develop business ideas and skills

Manisha shared that they had to consult experts to create a business model for their organization due to limited business management and design capacity.



From the opening plenary of the "Unite! Advocate! Thrive!" Global Trans Conference, from left to right: Anwar Ogrm, Erika Castellanos, Larkin Callaghan, and Barbra Wangare



Collaborate and find common ground with businesses to secure funding

Abhina shared about the TWEET Foundation's Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) sensitization, through which they offer companies a skilling program for a fee of 5 US dollars per employee. The Foundation also holds the Transpire CSR annual event. During this gathering, the Foundation disseminates information about their work. All existing donors are invited and obliged to bring one new additional donor to the space. This has enabled the Foundation to expand its donor base.

Encourage community engagement

Ensure community buy-in to the organization's work by including their needs and voices.

Reduce pinkwashing

In order to combat the dominance of gay issues within funding, Daniel stressed,

“To hack the system, we need to think like the opposition. This means we need to truly understand our needs and barriers so we can be able to create concrete strategies to penetrate different spaces where our presence is limited.”

Strengthen economic development

Daniel explained that Trans Talento was setting up an e-commerce platform to showcase the work of trans entrepreneurs. Similarly, the TWEET Foundation holds a trans employment fair, which brings together trans and gender diverse people and companies scouting for talent. The Foundation has allocated funds to conduct this event and sensitize companies about trans and gender diverse rights and issues.

Investment in activism

The TWEET Foundation has created a group called the Dancing Queens, a sex worker performative dancing group that performs at functions and also spreads messages about gender and sexuality. (Activism is art that reflects activism).



Strengthen ally relationships and reduce grant dependency

Daniel shared that Trans Talento cooperated with businesses to ensure that they were sensitized and empowered to hire trans people. They offered training for companies that prioritized people in decision-making spaces. As a result, over 1,308 business personnel have been trained and qualified to accept trans and gender diverse CVs and resumés. Daniel also explained how, through their education program partnering with businesses, they have managed to have 104 trans individuals graduate with different skills, such as marketing strategies and digital website creation. Most of these trainees now work in over 12 territories.

Recommendations to Trans and Gender Diverse Groups

Fill the gap

Focus on the unique or specialized vision and work the group brings to the table, as well as how the group complements the work of other groups. This will avoid the issue of competing for funding in the same area.

Donor financial mapping

This includes finding out who is giving money for what. As Abhina said,

“Find out where the money lies.”

Learn and collaborate

Learn from other networks and collaborate with different groups in the community.

Document sustainability and financial literacy

Research and document what others are doing in this area. Documentation on good practices and sustainability initiatives is essential.



Widen training and make it inclusive

Widen the scope of the training, be inclusive, and talk about broader intersecting issues.

Localization of resource mobilization

Pay attention to domestic fundraising efforts. Communities also have resources to give back.

Focus on activities that require less investment and have more community impact

Abhina shared how the TWEET Foundation organizes fundraising community events such as pool parties that require very little outlay but attract a larger audience.

Design a business plan for the organization

The funding landscape is changing, so it is always a good idea to have a business plan that also includes the necessary structures to allow for expansion. For example, the Blue Diamond Society sought local technical support to develop business ideas and skills.

Register as a business organization

If contexts permit this model, it enables groups who are not allowed to function as an NGO in their context to continue their work.

Diversify the organization

For example, include other social justice issues like climate change into the scope of the organization's work. Expanding to include intersectionality increases the chances of being funded and being able to collaborate with other groups.



*Right, from left to right: Raven Gill
with Erika Castellanos*

Below: Anwar Ogrm



Have an innovative and flexible approach

Initiate activities that will bring the organization more revenue streams. For example, the TWEET Foundation knew their community was struggling with housing, so they embarked on a trans hostel initiative. They rented an entire apartment building and sublet single-unit apartments to trans and gender diverse communities. Similarly, the Blue Diamond Society bought a building they use to generate income by renting it out for meetings and events.

Research and understand the need to avoid community backlash about engaging corporations

Be clear and transparent about engagements, values, and ethics so as not to alienate the community.



Conclusion

As we move beyond the Conference, the path for the trans and gender diverse movement is clear: this moment is about responding to the present and reshaping the future. It is about turning challenges into opportunities, setbacks into stepping stones, and ensuring that every action reflects the solidarity and resilience of the trans and gender diverse movement. The journey will be arduous, but the promise of a just world awaits those who dare to envision and strive for it.

The in-depth movement-building insights and strategies shared throughout the Conference and captured in this Report are not mere bullet points, but a call to action. Our agenda is bold, and our collective organizing must be intentional, strategic, and relentless.

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THRIVE!



GATE's Erika Castellanos sharing a joke with the audience at the opening session of the "Unite! Advocate! Thrive!" Global Trans Conference

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