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About GATE

GATE is an international advocacy organization working towards justice and equality for trans and gender diverse 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 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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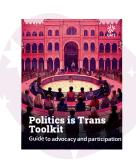
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About the Politics is Trans Toolkit

The **Politics is Trans Toolkit** is a collection of two interconnected resources designed to empower trans and gender diverse people to participate in politics and advocate for systemic change:

Politics is Trans Toolkit: Guide to advocacy and participation

This **guide** provides foundational knowledge to help you understand political systems, build advocacy strategies, and advance trans and gender diverse liberation.





2. Politics is Trans Toolkit: Workbook for advocacy and action

The **workbook** complements the guide with practical exercises, reflection tools, and actionable steps to turn strategies into transformative action.

Together, these resources are grounded in resilience and self-determination, equipping individuals, collectives, and allies with the tools to challenge systemic barriers and create meaningful change.

Why this toolkit matters

Politics is inherently trans. Every act of living authentically as a trans or gender diverse person challenges oppressive systems and reclaims space. *The Politics is Trans Toolkit* channels those acts of resistance into systemic transformation. Whether you're organizing grassroots movements, leading campaigns for gender-inclusive policies, or crafting strategies to dismantle barriers, the toolkit strengthens your efforts to create more just and safe societies.

What this toolkit offers

By engaging with the guide and workbook, you will:

- **Analyze and navigate systems:** Understand political systems, power structures, and decision-making spaces to identify where and how to advocate effectively.
- Apply practical strategies: Use adaptable exercises and frameworks to strategize, negotiate, and advocate across diverse political contexts.
- **Center lived experiences:** Explore case studies and activities that reflect intersecting identities, ensuring strategies resonate with your unique context.
- **Develop essential skills:** Build capacities such as storytelling, coalition-building, and advocacy to amplify your impact and navigate challenges.

How this toolkit is organized

The *Politics is Trans Toolkit* is composed of two distinct yet complementary resources:

Politics is Trans Toolkit: Guide to advocacy and participation

The guide introduces key concepts, frameworks, and strategies for political participation, organized into four practical sections:

O1 Reclaim political power

Identify barriers, uncover opportunities, and strategize for transformative action.

O2 Understand political systems and power structures

Navigate political systems, identify decision-makers, and map advocacy opportunities.

Step | Engage in politicalprocesses

Learn tactics for impactful participation in elections, legislative advocacy, public policy, and global movements.

Our Stories:

Resistance, progress, and political transformation

Draw inspiration from real-world case studies of resilience and collective power.

Politics is Trans Toolkit: Workbook for advocacy and action

The workbook translates the concepts in the guide into actionable steps through a series of 10 practical exercises that you can pick and choose from or fill out completely in order.

- Exercise 1: Identifying key advocacy issues
- Exercise 2: Understanding your political systems
- Exercise 3: Power mapping
- Exercise 4: Breaking down political processes
- **Exercise 5:** Decoding electoral systems

- Exercise 6: Role-playing negotiations
- **Exercise 7:** Advocating through legislative processes
- **Exercise 8:** Navigating risks in advocacy
- **Exercise 9:** Storytelling as advocacy
- **Exercise 10:** Crafting a personal advocacy plan



A call to action

This toolkit is more than a resource — it's an invitation to action. By engaging with these tools, you are building the foundation for equitable, inclusive systems. Your voice and advocacy matter. Let's begin this journey, one step at a time.

Let's begin this journey, one step at a time."

Step Reclaim political power

Politics shapes every aspect of life for trans and gender diverse people — our rights, opportunities, and access to resources. Reclaiming political power begins with understanding how systems operate, identifying barriers, and recognizing opportunities for change.

In this chapter, you will:

- **Understand political systems:** Explore how politics impacts trans and gender diverse people, from the policies that govern access to healthcare and education to the societal norms that shape public spaces.
- **Identify barriers and opportunities:** Examine systemic challenges like exclusionary laws, discrimination, and violence, while uncovering avenues to advocate for justice and inclusion.
- **Redefine resistance:** Understand how acts of trans resilience whether public or private acts of survival challenge oppressive systems and open pathways for transformation.
- **Harness collective power:** Discover how trans and gender diverse communities amplify their impact through solidarity, partnerships, and shared struggles across movements.

This chapter highlights political participation as a means to challenge systemic oppression and advocate for justice. Trans resistance is presented as a multifaceted tool for transformation — not only about survival but about creating lasting change.

This chapter sets the stage for transformative action, and **Politics is Trans Toolkit: Workbook for advocacy and action** is your roadmap to making it happen. This companion resource invites you to move from reflection to action, helping you translate ideas into tangible advocacy strategies. Through dynamic and adaptable exercises, you can:

- **Activate your strengths:** Discover and harness your personal and collective power to drive impactful change.
- **Plan with purpose:** Use the exercises to craft strategic approaches that align with your vision for systemic transformation.
- **Build lasting connections:** Strengthen your advocacy efforts by fostering solidarity and collaboration across movements.

The practical exercises are more than tools — they are opportunities to explore your potential, refine your strategies, and take meaningful steps toward reclaiming political power. Dive in and see how your ideas can shape a more just and inclusive future.

Why is politics trans?

Politics exists in everyday interactions that challenge oppressive norms. It's present when you correct a pronoun, assert your identity, or demand safe spaces. These acts of resistance confront systems that attempt to erase us, while also creating new pathways toward inclusive realities.

Politics is trans because the act of living as a trans or gender diverse person in a world designed to exclude us is deeply political. It is a statement of existence, a redefinition of space, and a push for systemic change. Every seemingly small decision like accessing hormones, walking through your neighborhood, or participating in a protest is a political act that builds collective strength and lays the foundation for structural transformation.

But politics is not always visible or openly confrontational. For those navigating environments where being trans is dangerous, politics can look like carefully choosing what to wear to balance self-expression and safety. It's in the quiet, strategic ways people assert their existence — participating in community life, fostering solidarity, or finding subtle ways to resist oppressive norms. Politics is survival, resilience, and the creation of space, even when the risks are high.

What is political participation?

Political participation is the process of engaging in decisions that shape our lives. This can take many forms: voting, joining political parties, organizing within communities, or advocating for public policies. It is not limited to formal spaces like elections or public office; it also encompasses grassroots efforts, local initiatives, and any action that works toward creating fairer and more inclusive systems.

For trans and gender diverse people, political participation is a way to reclaim our agency and challenge exclusion. It's about demanding recognition, fostering community, and shaping the systems that impact our lives.

Trans resistance

Trans resistance is the **ongoing act of defying systems that deny, control, or exclude us.** It's built on personal courage, collective struggles, and the shared goal of transformation.

While trans and gender diverse people have historically been excluded from decision-making spaces, this has given rise to powerful movements. These movements do not merely demand inclusion; they work to reimagine and reconstruct power structures altogether. When trans voices occupy spaces of influence, they challenge dominant narratives and create lasting change.

Trans resistance isn't just about survival, it's about redefining what is possible. To participate, resist, and transform are not separate acts but interconnected steps toward justice and liberation.

Introduction to political advocacy

Political participation is the starting point; advocacy goes further. Advocacy is a strategic and collective effort to directly influence decision-makers and achieve concrete, sustainable change. It's not reserved for experts or those with formal power; anyone can advocate by sharing their stories, organizing their communities, and taking action.

Advocacy goes beyond changing laws or policies. It challenges societal norms, reshapes narratives, and envisions a better future. It empowers trans and gender diverse people to not only claim their space, but also transform the systems that exclude them.

What is political power?

Political power is the **ability to influence policy-level decisions and systems.** It's not limited to holding formal positions — it includes questioning unjust laws, building coalitions, and fostering safe spaces. Political power is dynamic; it grows through strategic action and collaboration.

Recognizing and wielding political power requires understanding the systems at play and leveraging opportunities for influence.

Advocacy goes beyond changing laws or policies. It challenges societal norms, reshapes narratives, and envisions a better future. It empowers trans and gender diverse people to not only claim their space, but also transform the systems that exclude them.

What is political capital?

Political capital refers to the **resources and credibility needed to exercise influence.** It's built through experience, skills, achievements, and networks. For example, a community leader who organizes successful initiatives or shares their personal story in public builds political capital by gaining trust and amplifying demands.

Political capital is not static; it evolves based on how effectively resources are used and demands are connected to decision-making spaces. In challenging contexts, such as authoritarian regimes, political capital can be a vital tool for turning obstacles into opportunities.

What is collective power?

Collective power is the combined strength of individuals acting as a unified force. It surpasses the impact of individual efforts, enabling communities to pool resources, knowledge, and energy toward shared goals. By uniting, we create movements capable of challenging oppression, reimagining systems, and driving transformative change.

For trans and gender diverse people, collective power has been at the heart of movements that dismantle exclusionary systems and build new narratives. Rooted in our lived experiences, this power not only drives our own struggles, but also connects us with broader fights for liberation and justice. From Black and Indigenous liberation and disability justice to workers' rights and feminist movements, trans communities are both partners and leaders, standing at the forefront of transformative action.

Our ability to bring together intersecting struggles strengthens our collective capacity to advocate for systemic change. By linking issues of gender, sexual orientation, race, class, cast, disability, religion and more, we can see how oppression operates across systems — and how solidarity can dismantle it.

Examples of Collective Power:

- A community organizing mass protests against discriminatory policies, connecting the fight for trans rights with demands for racial justice and anti-colonial liberation.
- International networks amplifying local demands to confront global injustices and hold systems accountable.
- A coalition of activists collaborating across movements such as climate justice and reproductive rights to address the interconnected roots of inequality.

Collective power allows us to amplify our voices, form strategic alliances, and forge new pathways toward equity. It is through solidarity and shared struggle that we transform not only our own realities but also those of future generations. In this way, trans and gender diverse people continue to lead the charge for a world that honors dignity and diversity.

Political advocacy and trans resistance

Advancing advocacy for trans and gender diverse people requires both strategic prioritization and recognition of the unique ways in which our communities resist systemic oppression.

Effective advocacy and resistance efforts must be intentional and focused to maximize impact and ensure sustainability. Resistance is rooted in the understanding that trans and gender diverse struggles are interconnected with broader movements for justice. To ensure that efforts remain impactful and responsive, prioritization is key. Advocacy grounded in trans resistance should consider:

- **Urgency:** What issues demand immediate attention due to severe violence, exclusion, or systemic harm against trans communities?
- **Viability:** Which demands are most likely to succeed in the current political and social context, and how can they serve as stepping stones for broader change?
- **Transformative potential:** What actions or policies will create the most significant and farreaching impact, particularly for trans and gender diverse people at the intersections of other forms of marginalization?

Trans resistance is inherently adaptive, responding to shifting threats and opportunities with resilience and innovation. From grassroots organizing to global advocacy, these efforts are not just defensive but proactive, seeking to dismantle oppressive systems while envisioning a more equitable future. Prioritization is not about leaving some issues behind; it is about building momentum in ways that create the conditions for lasting systemic change.

By focusing trans resistance on advocacy strategies, movements can focus on what matters most — ensuring that the fight for trans and gender diverse people's rights becomes a catalyst for justice across systems of oppression.

Tailored approaches for diverse contexts

The experiences of trans and gender diverse people vary widely across geographic, cultural, and political contexts. Recognizing this diversity, advocacy strategies must be adaptable, responsive, and inclusive of intersecting struggles. Whether building coalitions to challenge police brutality, advocating for inclusive policies in schools, or connecting grassroots activism with global movements, the collective strength of our communities is a critical force for change.

Below, we present examples of key demands and the impact they seek to have on the lives of trans and gender diverse people. **These are meant to inspire reflection and guide concrete, context-specific actions, rather than serve as an exhaustive or universal roadmap.**

Table 1: Examples of Key Demands and Their Impact on Trans and Gender Diverse People

Category	Key Demand	Impact on Trans and Gender Diverse People
Health	Universal access to gender-affirming care: Provision and Integration of trans-specific healthcare, including gender-affirming therapies and surgeries, into public healthcare systems as a universal right.	Ensures trans people can access essential, gender-affirming and, many times, life-saving care without financial or systemic barriers.
	Ban on 'so-called conversion therapies': National and international bans on all forms of 'so-called conversion therapies' alongside accountability mechanisms to address these abuses.	Protects individuals from violence and abuse tied to their identity.
	Trans-inclusive healthcare training: Programs to sensitize health personnel on the specific needs of trans and gender diverse people of all ages.	Improves access to dignified and knowledgeable medical care.
	National protocols for trans health: Guidelines to standardize respectful and competent healthcare for trans people.	Ensures consistent care across all regions and providers.
	Inclusive curricula: Integrating gender diversity, intersectionality, and social justice into educational programs at all levels, challenging cisnormativity and colonial frameworks.	Promotes systemic change by equipping future generations to dismantle prejudice and build inclusive communities.
Education	Anti-bullying protections: Nationally funded, community-led programs to protect trans and gender diverse students from harassment, centered on restorative practices rather than punitive measures.	Reduces school dropout rates by addressing the root causes of harm through support networks and education.
	School inclusion policies: Prohibitions on discrimination based on gender identity in schools and ability to use one's name regardless of legal name and gender.	Guarantees equitable access to education and affirms students' identities while rejecting exclusionary practices.

Category	Key Demand	Impact on Trans and Gender Diverse People
	Self-determination in gender identity laws: Laws that guarantee the right to change names and gender markers on official documents through a simple, affirming process, free from invasive medical, judicial, financial, or bureaucratic barriers.	Simplifies and humanizes the legal recognition process.
Legal Rights	Culturally relevant and inclusive gender markers: Recognition of diverse gender identities through the inclusion of non-binary, third-gender, and culturally specific terminology on official documents.	Affirms and uplifts identities beyond colonial, binary frameworks, and challenges State-imposed erasure of Indigenous and culturally significant gender systems.
	Amnesty and reparations: Comprehensive programs to provide reparations to individuals harmed by criminalization, forced sterilization, or other transphobic laws and policies.	Addresses systemic violence and historical injustices through tangible accountability measures.
	Employment quotas for trans and gender diverse people: Minimum percentage of trans people employed in public sector roles.	Expands access to stable, dignified employment while challenging exclusionary hiring practices.
Labor and economy	Employment protections: Anti-discrimination measures in employment targeting transphobia.	Reduces systemic barriers and enables equitable access to job opportunities.
	Inclusive employment programs: Job training workshops tailored to trans and gender diverse people.	Builds pathways to economic independence rooted in dignity and self-determination.
	Violence protections: Community-based safety networks and transformative justice frameworks prioritize the safety of trans and gender diverse people without relying on policing or punitive systems.	Focuses on preventing harm through mutual aid, restorative practices, and grassroots accountability without reliance on systems that perpetuate violence.
Justice and security	Alternatives to incarceration: Community-led diversion programs and harm reduction strategies for trans and gender diverse individuals, especially sex workers, drug users, and those most	Shifts from punishment to care, addressing root causes of systemic marginalization such as poverty, homelessness, and trauma.
	Conditions of confinement: Policies that uphold the dignity, safety, and agency of trans and gender diverse people in detention settings, while advocating for systemic decarceration.	Centers harm reduction by reducing violence, isolation, and systemic erasure in jails and prisons.
	Ban on arbitrary detentions: Legal safeguards against police abuse towards trans and gender diverse people, with a focus on protecting sex workers, drug users and those most targeted by policing systems.	Prevents unlawful actions against vulnerable populations, reducing harm and systemic targeting by policing systems.

Category	Key Demand	Impact on Trans and Gender Diverse People
Political participation	Mandatory gender quotas: Establishment of quotas requiring the inclusion of trans and gender diverse individuals on electoral lists, not just as token representation but as meaningful participants in governance.	Enhances representation and ensures diverse perspectives in governance.
	Promotion of trans leadership: Community-led programs and mentorship opportunities to equip trans and gender diverse individuals with the tools, networks, and resources needed to influence political systems.	Builds a sustainable pipeline of trans leaders rooted in collective power and resilience.
	Inclusive political agendas: Integration of trans-inclusive policies, manifestos, and intersectional frameworks into party platforms and governance strategies.	Ensures that political agendas reflect the needs of marginalized communities rather than perpetuating exclusionary systems.
	Safeguards against political violence: Comprehensive measures to combat disinformation, hate speech, and targeted attacks on trans and gender diverse individuals during political campaigns.	Creates safer, more equitable environments for political engagement, free from systemic violence.
Culture and society	National awareness campaigns: Community-led initiatives to challenge stigma, combat transphobia, and celebrate the diversity of trans and gender diverse lives.	Shifts public attitudes by centering trans voices and fostering a culture of inclusion, dignity, and respect.
	Honoring historical memory: Creation of monuments, archives, and educational programs to preserve the history, resilience, and struggles of trans communities.	Recognizes the contributions of trans people in shaping movements for justice and liberation.
	Equal access to public services: Mandatory training for public service providers to eliminate discrimination and ensure affirming, non-discriminatory access for trans individuals.	Promotes equity by holding institutions accountable to transinclusive practices.
	Decriminalization of gender expression: Abolition of laws and policies that criminalize cross-dressing, gender nonconformity, and other forms of self-expression, including anti-homosexuality laws.	Reduces State-sanctioned violence and protects individual freedom of expression.

From barriers to opportunities

Advocacy often begins by identifying the barriers we face — legal discrimination, social stigma, systemic underrepresentation — and transforming these challenges into opportunities for innovation and resistance. For example:

When laws demand to punish trans and gender diverse people for their identity, or exclude them from accessing healthcare or legal recognition, advocacy can unite affected communities with allies to demand systemic change.

The resilience of trans and gender diverse communities has shown time and again that even in the most adverse conditions, organizing and advocacy can spark transformative progress.

The following pages provide an analysis of the primary barriers faced by trans and gender diverse people in political participation. This resource describes how these barriers manifest their impacts, and strategies to address them. **Rather than an exhaustive list, this is an invitation to reflect, strengthen our collective action, and advance with determination and innovation.**

Table 2: Barriers to political participation of trans and gender diverse people.

Type of barrier	Manifestation	Example	Strategies to address it
Structural	Absence of inclusive laws and transphobic policies.	In many countries, trans and gender diverse people cannot change their gender on official documents without meeting invasive medical requirements.	Build coalitions to advocate for inclusive legislative reform. Mobilize visibility campaigns centering lived experiences. Engage with policymakers through targeted advocacy rooted in data and personal narratives.
Social and cultural	Stigma, prejudice, and transphobic narratives in media and public spaces.	Transphobic narratives perpetuate fear and misinformation, framing trans identities as threats to cultural norms.	Partner with allied media to amplify affirming narratives. Train media professionals on responsible, trans-inclusive reporting. Elevate personal stories and community-centered narratives via alternative channels such as social media and community radio.

Type of barrier	Manifestation	Example	Strategies to address it
Access to resources	Lack of funding, time and support networks.	Trans and gender diverse collectives struggle to sustain activism due to financial constraints and insufficient infrastructure.	Build community coalitions to share resources. Seek external funding from trans-inclusive organizations (e.g., International Trans Fund, Mama Cash, Urgent Action Fund, Frida, etc.).
Risks in repressive contexts	Criminalization of trans and gender diverse people and violence towards activists.	In repressive contexts, being trans, engaging in activism and even participating in demonstrations can lead to direct persecution by the State or anti-gender groups.	Partner with local and international allied networks. Utilize global protection mechanisms. Strategically approach activism through alternative routes (e.g., health/HIV work, gender equality frameworks) to avoid direct repression while driving change.
War and/or genocide	Targeting of marginalized communities, including trans and gender diverse people, during armed conflict or systemic violence.	During armed conflict, trans people may face compounded risks such as exclusion from refugee systems, lack of access to hormones or affirming healthcare, and direct targeting due to their gender identity. In extreme cases, genocide or ethnic cleansing efforts may intentionally seek to erase trans and gender diverse communities.	Collaborate with international human rights organizations to document abuses. Advocate for the inclusion of transspecific protections in refugee and humanitarian programs. Create safe channels for resource distribution, relocation, and community rebuilding in conflict zones.
Internal barriers	Internal struggles, burnout, and tensions within the community.	Leadership disputes, differences in privilege, and strategic divisions within collectives hinder cohesive action and sustainability of movements.	Foster spaces for healing and open dialogue to address internal tensions. Build shared decision-making structures that prioritize equity and collective leadership. Invest in community care practices to prevent burnout and sustain activism long-term.

From insight to action

Political participation and advocacy are not confined to formal spaces — they are integral to how we navigate and reshape our daily lives. Politics is inherently trans because every action, from asserting your identity to organizing collectively, challenges systems of oppression and opens pathways to justice. By harnessing collective power and purposeful advocacy, we can transform realities and reimagine systems that have excluded us for too long.

Achieving meaningful change requires not only understanding the barriers we face, but also the determination to navigate and dismantle them. These barriers, whether rooted in systemic violence, exclusionary policies, or resource limitations, are not insurmountable. Instead, they can become opportunities for innovation and strategic action. Through collective organization and shared goals, these challenges become catalysts for progress, paving the way toward a more equitable future for trans and gender diverse communities.

This chapter has provided you with foundational insights into reclaiming political power. To deepen your journey and translate this understanding into impactful strategies, we encourage you to explore the companion resource in the *Politics is Trans Toolkit: Workbook for advocacy and action.* This workbook provides a hands-on approach to advocacy and political engagement through actionable tools such as:

- **Mapping strengths into strategy:** Identify and build on personal and collective capacities to create a solid foundation for advocacy.
- **Developing impactful plans:** Craft targeted strategies that align with your vision for systemic transformation and justice.
- **Fostering collective momentum:** Strengthen solidarity and collaboration across diverse communities and movements.

Through its exercises, the workbook bridges understanding and action, empowering you to move from analyzing systems to actively reshaping them. It offers a step-by-step framework for turning reflection into strategy, and strategy into meaningful, transformative change.

Additional resources

To further support your efforts, the following resources offer invaluable insights and practical guidance. These materials are available in multiple languages and provide additional perspectives on resistance, advocacy, and collective action.



(English) Recognizing, Documenting and Addressing Anti-Gender Opposition

By: Global Action for Trans Equality (GATE)

A toolkit designed for organizations, collectives, activists, and trans, gender diverse, and intersex allies to strengthen their work in combating antigender opposition

Consult here:

https://gate.ngo/knowledge-portal/publication/anti-gender-opposition-toolkit-document/



(English - Spanish) ILGA Database

By: International Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans and Intersex Association (ILGA World)

A database created by ILGA World with information on laws, court rulings, and international decisions related to sexual orientation, gender identity and expression, and sex characteristics worldwide.

Consult here:

https://database.ilga.org



(English) The Impact of Anti-Gender Opposition: Global and Regional Reports

By: Global Action for Trans Equality (GATE)

These reports outline regional and global trends driven by anti-gender movements and their impact on human rights.

Consult here:

https://gate.ngo/knowledge-portal/news/anti-gender-opposition-impact-global-regional-reports/

Understand Step political systems and their power structures

Political systems determine how power is distributed, rights are recognized, and barriers are created or dismantled. For trans and gender diverse people, understanding these systems is essential to identifying where and how decisions affecting their lives are made — and to finding pathways for advocacy and transformation.

In this chapter, you will reflect on the dynamics of political systems and power structures, exploring how to:

- **Map power dynamics:** Learn how different systems function and identify the structures that influence decision-making.
- **Recognize key players:** Understand the roles of governments, civil society, and influential stakeholders in shaping policies and societal norms.
- **Spot opportunities for influence:** Discover where advocacy efforts can make the most impact whether through direct engagement, coalition-building, or leveraging public pressure.
- **Adapt strategies:** Tailor your advocacy approach to the unique political, cultural, and social contexts of your region.

By examining the systems and actors that shape your political landscape, you will gain the tools to navigate complex systems, anticipate challenges, and leverage opportunities for transformative change.

This chapter uncovers pathways to power and influence, and **Politics is Trans Toolkit: Workbook for advocacy and action** is your guide to impactful advocacy. This companion resource offers exercises to help you:

- **Map decision-making spaces:** Identify where and how key decisions are made, and who holds the power to act on them.
- **Pinpoint allies and obstacles:** Discover stakeholders who can support or hinder your efforts, and plan strategies accordingly.
- **Craft targeted strategies:** Align your advocacy actions with political opportunities and moments of influence to maximize impact.

The practical exercises go beyond theory, providing an interactive roadmap to deepen your understanding and refine your strategies. Use them to turn reflection into action and take meaningful steps toward systemic change.

Mapping your political system

Political systems are the frameworks that structure how power is exercised, decisions are made, and conflicts are resolved within a society. These systems define how resources are distributed, opportunities are accessed, and rights are either recognized or restricted. They encompass a complex network of rules, institutions, processes, and actors that shape the everyday lives of individuals and communities.¹

At their best, political systems can provide a foundation for equality, legal recognition, and protection against discrimination, fostering participation and inclusion in public life. However, these same systems can also act as mechanisms of exclusion and oppression, perpetuating discriminatory, stigmatizing, and transphobic attitudes that marginalize specific populations, particularly trans and gender diverse individuals.

Understanding the structure and dynamics of a political system is essential to identifying barriers and opportunities for advocacy. By analyzing how power operates, who the key actors are, and what processes shape decision-making, it becomes possible to pinpoint entry points where interventions can create lasting and meaningful change.

Characteristics of democratic systems _____

Democracies, with their emphasis on citizen participation, human rights, and political representation, tend to offer more advocacy opportunities for trans and gender diverse people compared to other political systems. However, these opportunities vary widely depending on the social, cultural, and political context of each democracy, which influences trans and gender diverse people's access to and exercise of rights.

While promising equality, democracies face persistent challenges: prioritizing the interests of the wealthy, enduring social prejudices, institutional discrimination, and insufficient resources for inclusive initiatives. Nevertheless, democracies also offer unique tools, such as free elections; certain freedoms, particularly in the areas of expression, association, and assembly; public platforms; strong and independent political institutions; and progressive legal frameworks — all of which can be leveraged to drive meaningful and lasting change.

The type and health of a democracy play a crucial role in determining the level of inclusion and access to rights for trans and gender diverse people. For example, in **shrinking democracies**, human rights and democratic institutions are weakened under populist or ultraconservative governments. This often puts trans and gender diverse people at serious risk due to laws and narratives that explicitly target sexual and gender minorities. On the other hand, **emerging democracies** may demonstrate a

¹ Inter-American Institute of Human Rights - Center for Electoral Assistance and Promotion, CAPEL & TEPJF. (2017). *Diccionario electoral*. https://www.iidh.ed.cr/images/Publicaciones/Democracia/Tercera%20Edicion%20Diccionario%20Electoral%20II%20Tomo.pdf

willingness to adopt and promote progressive policies; however, the implementation of these policies often faces significant barriers, including cultural resistance and a lack of institutional resources, which hinder their effective application.

Even in the most progressive democracies, external influences cannot be ignored. Democratic systems are interconnected and often shaped by global political trends. Conservative parties, for instance, are frequently linked to international anti-gender networks that exchange information, strategies, and resources. These connections can strengthen conservative tendencies within democracies, aligning them with the rise of similar movements in other countries, which may undermine efforts to advance trans and gender diverse rights.²

Table 3: Key actors in democratic systems

Key actor	Role and influence	Engagement strategies
Political parties	They shape legislation; progressive parties advance rights, while conservative parties may block progress and aim to restore old policies and structures.	Research parties' platforms and track records on LGBTQI rights to find allies. Join progressive parties or engage with their leadership to advocate for inclusive policies. Leverage media campaigns and public endorsements to push parties toward inclusivity.
Civil society and community based organizations	They advocate for reforms and raise awareness through campaigns and mobilizations.	Partner with organizations that share similar goals to amplify advocacy efforts. Collaborate with feminist, anti-racist, or disability justice movements to address intersecting oppressions. Use these networks to share practical tools for navigating legal and social systems.
Media	They shape public opinion and amplify either positive or discriminatory narratives.	Work with trans journalists or allies in media to promote trans-authored stories and narratives. Develop resources to counter transphobic media narratives with accurate, lived-experience stories.
International organizations	Monitor human rights violations, provide technical support, and highlight global progress on LGBTQI+ issues.	Collaborate with international bodies to spotlight systemic abuses (e.g., lack of healthcare access, anti-trans legislation, violence). Advocate for trans-specific inclusion in their programs. Seek funding or technical support for trans-led initiatives.

² GATE (2024) *Recognizing, Documenting, and Addressing Anti-gender Opposition: a Toolkit by GATE.* New York: GATE. https://gate.ngo/knowledge-portal/publication/anti-gender-opposition-toolkit-document/

Understanding authoritarian regimes ____

In authoritarian regimes, power is concentrated in one figure or an elite that controls all aspects of political and social life, eliminating fundamental rights such as citizen participation, freedom of expression, association, and assembly. These systems not only restrict general freedoms but also intensify exclusion and risk for trans and gender diverse people, who are often directly targeted by repressive policies, systematic discrimination, and institutional violence.

In some political systems, power is centralized under a **single political party** that controls all aspects of society, limiting individual and collective freedoms. In the case of **military dictatorships**, militarization accentuates structural violence against trans and gender diverse people, manifesting itself in practices such as arbitrary arrests, physical and sexual violence, conversion therapy, imprisonment, enforced disappearances, and other forms of repression. In authoritarian systems such as **theocracies**, authority is based on religious principles that criminalize diverse gender identities and expressions. In these contexts, religious laws impose severe punishments, which may include imprisonment, torture, or even the death penalty, forcing trans and gender diverse people to live in hiding to avoid persecution.

Importantly, State violence is not exclusive to authoritarian regimes. Democracies also perpetuate systemic harm through mechanisms like the death penalty, discriminatory laws, and the disproportionate targeting of marginalized groups. While authoritarian regimes often repress through overt control, democracies can enact harm through subtler forms of exclusion, highlighting a shared responsibility for addressing systemic violence.

Understanding these dynamics is essential for identifying pathways to resistance. In authoritarian contexts, advocacy may take the form of underground networks, international pressure, or leveraging global protections.

Table 4: Key actors in authoritarian regimes

Key actor	Role and influence	Engagement strategies
Central government	They control official narratives and enforce laws that marginalize trans and gender diverse people.	Engage through narratives that connect trans rights to broader public welfare issues like healthcare, or education or housing to minimize risk. Advocate for small, incremental policy changes such as removing unnecessary requirements (e.g., notarization or multiple witnesses) for name or gender marker changes on official documents. Identify allies within the government (e.g., reformist bureaucrats) who may quietly support LGBTQI issues.

Key actor	Role and influence	Engagement strategies
National security forces	They enforce repression through surveillance, violence, and arbitrary arrests.	Build community-led safety networks that include legal aid and emergency services for trans and gender diverse people at risk. Partner with trusted allies to safely record and report abuses, while protecting community members' anonymity. Use secure communication tools and anonymous organizing when visibility increases risks.
Non-governmental far-right/anti- gender groups	These groups, often unofficially connected to the State or police, act as enforcers of oppression. They engage in online and offline harassment, doxing, incitement of mob violence, and spread transphobic propaganda. They function as a tool for authoritarian regimes to punish dissent and marginalized communities unofficially and illegally.	Create secure mechanisms to monitor, document, and archive online and offline harassment to expose their actions. Train trans and gender diverse individuals in digital self-defense, including secure communication tools, identifying doxing risks, and countering misinformation. Establish rapid response networks with allied organizations to protect individuals targeted by far-right groups, including offering legal aid, relocation support, and emotional assistance. Collaborate with international organizations to spotlight the connections between these groups and authoritarian regimes, holding governments accountable for enabling their actions.
Religious Groups	They often wield significant influence, shaping public opinion and policy through moral authority. In theocracies, they may directly control laws, but even in secular authoritarian regimes, they can justify discrimination and reinforce stigmatizing narratives.	Identify and collaborate with religious figures or groups that support LGBTQI rights to challenge dominant narratives. Expose inconsistencies in religious arguments used to justify discrimination, emphasizing broader principles of compassion and justice. Work with trans and gender diverse people of faith to showcase inclusive interpretations of religious texts and practices. Highlight the complicity of certain religious groups in discrimination at global platforms to apply external pressure.
International organizations	They document human rights violations, provide technical support, and lobby governments through sanctions or advocacy campaigns. They play a crucial role in shaping global standards and pressuring States to uphold human rights.	Work with international organizations to explicitly name trans and gender diverse issues in their reports and campaigns, while being mindful of safety issues. Advocate for trans-specific protections in asylum and refugee programs, emphasizing unique risks. Seek out international platforms to highlight stories of trans resilience and advocacy under repressive regimes.

The complexities of hybrid regimes _____

Hybrid regimes combine features of democratic and authoritarian systems, creating an uncertain political environment where formal guarantees, such as elections and anti-discrimination laws, are undermined by practices such as corruption, State violence, and institutional co-optation. While these regimes often maintain the facade of democracy, they frequently employ authoritarian tactics to consolidate power. It has become increasingly uncommon for leaders to openly embrace authoritarianism. Instead, many dictators present themselves as reformers or defenders of democracy, seeking to gain legitimacy and approval on the global stage. This blurring of lines makes it difficult — even for experts — to classify regimes definitively, as perceptions can vary based on political, cultural, and historical contexts.

In hybrid regimes, trans and gender diverse rights, although sometimes recognized on paper, are often limited in practice, leaving individuals vulnerable to systemic exclusion and discrimination. In some cases, fundamental freedoms such as press, expression, and association are moderately restricted, and authoritarian leaders instrumentalize minorities, including trans communities, as scapegoats to consolidate their power.

In States with deep **clientelism**, characterized by weak institutions, corruption networks, and selective law enforcement, trans and gender diverse people face extreme disadvantages in accessing basic rights. Similarly, **regimes in transition** — marked by instability or democratization processes — often relegate trans rights to the background or use them as bargaining chips in fragile political negotiations.

Despite these challenges, hybrid regimes can present unique opportunities for political participation and advocacy. The volatility of these systems often creates openings for social movements, emerging political leaders, and international actors to push for change. Identifying these entry points and understanding power dynamics within hybrid regimes is crucial to designing effective strategies that navigate barriers and seize opportunities.

Table 5: Key actors in hybrid regimes.

Key actor	Role and influence	Engagement strategies
Social movements	They lead efforts for inclusion and defend rights during periods of political instability.	Partner with other social justice movements (e.g., labor, feminist, anti-racist) to amplify trans-specific demands in broader advocacy. Mobilize during moments of instability to push for legislative or institutional reforms. Ensure trans-led movements are at the forefront of advocacy to challenge exclusion where possible and safe. If in doubt, seek insights on best practices in relation to safety and security from local trans-led groups and organizations.
Emerging progressive political leadership	They are progressive leaders who can champion inclusive reforms during transitional periods.	Collaborate with emerging leaders to integrate trans rights into their political agendas from the outset. Offer technical expertise or community backing to ensure their initiatives are robust and inclusive. Hold them accountable for promises made, using public pressure or coalition-building where needed.

Key actor	Role and influence	Engagement strategies
International organizations	They support transitions by providing monitoring, technical assistance, and funding for advocacy efforts.	Frame trans-specific issues within broader human rights narratives to gain international traction. Seek financial and technical support for trans-led advocacy and capacity-building efforts. Use international platforms to document and expose systemic discrimination in hybrid regimes.

Monarchies:

Dynamics and influence _____

The political participation of trans and gender diverse people in monarchies varies significantly according to the type of monarchy, whether constitutional or absolute. These differences are also influenced by the level of respect for human rights and the weight of cultural and religious traditions in each country.

In **constitutional monarchies**, the monarch's influence is limited, with power primarily held by democratically elected representatives. This structure enables the development of progressive legal frameworks that support the visibility and political representation of trans and gender diverse people, including securing voting rights and advancing rights-based agendas. In contrast, **absolute monarchies** concentrate power solely in the hands of the monarch, who directly governs and shapes laws. This centralized authority often imposes severe restrictions on civil and political rights, effectively eliminating any opportunities for participation by trans and gender diverse people.

Table 6: Key actors in monarchies.

Key actor	Role and influence	Engagement strategies
Monarch or royal house	They shape policies, either directly in absolute monarchies or indirectly in constitutional ones, through public influence and symbolic power.	Engage indirectly by promoting petitions, campaigns, or letters appealing to the monarch's symbolic power to support trans and gender diverse rights. Work with influential individuals close to the royal house, such as advisors or family members, who may champion inclusive messages. Frame trans rights as aligned with cultural or national progress to gain royal support.
Governments and parliamentarians	They legislate and implement policies in constitutional monarchies, holding significant power to advance or block inclusive measures.	Map allies among parliamentarians and government officials who support trans and gender diverse rights. Work across party lines to gather broader support for inclusive policies. Use compelling data, lived experiences, and public support to influence legislative priorities.

Key actor	Role and influence	Engagement strategies
Political parties	They represent varying levels of support, with progressive parties typically advocating for trans and gender diverse rights, while conservative parties may resist.	Push for the inclusion of trans-specific issues, such as gender recognition laws, healthcare access, and anti-discrimination protections, in party platforms. Mobilize trans and gender diverse communities to show public backing for progressive party policies.
Civil society organizations	They amplify grassroots voices, drive advocacy campaigns, and increase visibility for trans and gender diverse issues in both absolute and constitutional monarchies.	Collaborate with civil society groups to combine resources and advocacy efforts. Ensure that trans-led organizations take the lead on framing issues and shaping campaigns. Work with civil society to organize protests, petitions, or cultural events to shift public opinion.
Religious institutions	They often act as barriers to inclusion, but some progressive religious leaders can facilitate social change and reduce stigma in their communities.	Partner with religious figures who support LGBTQI rights to foster acceptance within faith-based communities. Use trans-affirming interpretations of religious texts to counter discriminatory rhetoric. Facilitate discussions between religious leaders and trans communities to bridge gaps and foster mutual understanding.

Exploring other political systems _____

There are political systems that do not fit into the traditional categories of democracies, authoritarian, or hybrid regimes. These systems, although less common or not internationally recognized, operate under dynamics that may be influenced by local autonomy, cultural traditions, or the absence of a consolidated State framework. In these contexts, the participation of trans and gender diverse people is deeply conditioned by the degree of legal recognition and political structures. In some territories, such as communal States, where conservative customs and traditions predominate, social structures tend to exclude trans and gender diverse people, relegating them to the margins of political and social participation.

Moreover, in systems characterized by a lack of international recognition or limited access to basic resources, the visibility and guarantee of fundamental rights are severely compromised, reinforcing their situation of vulnerability and exclusion.

Table 7: Key actors in other political systems.

Key actor	Role and influence	Engagement strategies
Local local avale	They determine the rules and norms that affect trans and gender diverse	Engage with local councils or assemblies to advocate for trans-inclusive policies.
Local leadership	people. They adapt governance approaches to their communities' specific needs.	Frame inclusion within local traditions or values to make advocacy efforts more acceptable.
Community	They promote social change, raise	Provide resources and capacity-building for trans-led organizations.
Community-based organizations	awareness, and build support networks.	Collaborate with other marginalized groups to amplify voices and push for collective reforms in local governance systems.
International	They provide technical support, funding, and visibility in global	Collaborate to secure resources and international platforms for advocacy.
organizations	forums, connecting local struggles with international human rights frameworks.	Use international mechanisms to raise awareness of violations against trans and gender diverse people in non-traditional systems.
	They hold significant informal	Collaborate with religious figures who support inclusion to shift cultural perceptions.
Religious leaders	power by shaping cultural norms and community values, which can either reinforce stigma or promote acceptance.	Use trans-affirming interpretations of religious teachings to counter discriminatory narratives.
		Create spaces for discussion between religious leaders and trans communities.
Business leaders	They influence economic and social dynamics, often holding sway over	Partner with businesses to promote workplace policies that support trans employees and build broader acceptance.
	local decision-makers and policies.	Encourage business leaders to fund or support local initiatives for trans rights.
Influential	These may include elders, traditional leaders, or other respected	Identify community figures who may act as allies and engage them to promote inclusion.
community figures	individuals whose opinions shape community norms and behaviors.	Frame advocacy efforts in ways that align with their values and respect for community traditions.

Contexts of war and genocide ____

In contexts of war and genocide, the political participation of trans and gender diverse people is severely limited due to the high levels of violence and systematic human rights violations. These scenarios, characterized by internal or international armed conflicts, expose trans and gender diverse people in these communities to extreme risks such as torture, rape, forced disappearance and murder. The generalized insecurity is aggravated by authoritarian and repressive governments that tend to emerge in these contexts, and tend to criminalize diverse identities, presenting them as threats to traditional or religious norms. These are attempts to erase trans and gender diverse people, forcing us to live in hiding, increasing exclusion and vulnerability.

In failed States, the collapse of an effective central government creates a vacuum often filled by anarchy, extreme violence, and laws shaped by rigid religious interpretations that suppress diverse gender expressions, leaving trans and gender diverse communities exposed to constant persecution. Similarly, in occupied territories or regions affected by internal conflict, the focus on sovereignty and territorial control often takes precedence over human rights. In both scenarios, fundamental freedoms are gravely restricted, forcing trans and gender diverse people into conditions of extreme vulnerability and exclusion.

Table 8: Key actors in times of war and genocide.

Key actor	Role and influence	Engagement strategies
International human rights organizations	They document human rights abuses and provide resources, funding, and advocacy platforms for trans and gender diverse people, especially in crisis contexts.	Partner to document abuses and share data with global platforms. Advocate for trans-specific resources in humanitarian aid. Work with these organizations to identify and access safe zones or evacuation routes.
Community leaders	They are the ones who advocate for trans and gender diverse issues within affected communities. They adapt strategies to address the specific challenges faced by those most vulnerable.	Provide resources to amplify the voices of transinclusive community leaders. Collaborate to ensure local realities are reflected in humanitarian policies. Support leadership training for sustainable advocacy.
Independent media	They expose the conditions faced by trans and gender diverse people and mobilize resources by shaping narratives and countering misinformation.	Collaborate with independent media to highlight trans experiences during conflict. Provide accurate data and narratives to counter transphobic misinformation.
Military groups	They hold significant informal power by shaping cultural norms and community values, which can either reinforce stigma or promote acceptance. In some cases, they provide safe evacuation routes and advocate for trans rights through visibility, while in others, they may pose risks to trans communities.	Engage with military groups that offer protection or evacuation routes for trans refugees, but also assess potential risks and take precautions when facing hostile forces. Highlight the contributions of trans soldiers to advocate for broader LGBTQI rights and challenge discriminatory practices within the military. Partner with military allies to ensure safe passage and support for trans communities during crises, while developing contingency plans for navigating hostile environments.

Mapping spaces and power actors

Every advocacy demand corresponds to a specific space where decisions are made and a power actor responsible for addressing it. Identifying these spaces and individuals is the foundation of effective advocacy. By targeting the right actors in the appropriate contexts, you can avoid wasted efforts and significantly increase your chances of achieving transformative change.

Understanding the political and cultural context is key to navigating these spaces effectively. In democracies, opportunities for advocacy often include parliaments, government ministries, and public forums, where tools like public hearings, consultations, and petitions can be utilized. In contrast, in authoritarian regimes, the options may be more restricted. However, international networks, human rights organizations, and digital platforms can create critical avenues for advocacy and amplify marginalized voices.

This mapping process ensures that your strategies are grounded in the realities of the decision-making landscape, enabling you to channel your efforts where they are most likely to make an impact.

Understanding the decisionmaking spaces

Systems of power are made up of interconnected institutions, each with a distinct role in governance. Normally, the legislative branch drafts and debates laws, the executive branch and its ministries implement them, and the judiciary ensures they are enforced. Alongside these institutions, actors like political parties and electoral authorities are essential to democratic participation, shaping both access to and the outcomes of decision-making processes.

For example, if you are advocating for a gender identity law in a democracy, your strategy would likely begin with the legislative branch. Securing allies in key committees or among influential lawmakers would be crucial. At the same time, collaboration with ministries such as health and justice would ensure the law's practical implementation.

In contrast, in an authoritarian regime, where institutional access may be severely restricted, your approach might rely on building alliances with international networks and human rights organizations. These alliances can create external political pressure and amplify your demands through global advocacy platforms.

Understanding the roles and interactions of institutions within broader systems of power is key to identifying key spaces and relevant actors. The following section explores these roles in detail, showing how their competencies can be effectively leveraged to enhance your advocacy strategies.

National institutions:

An ecosystem _____

National institutions function as an interconnected system, with each playing a distinct and complementary role in governance. Understanding these relationships and their specific competencies is essential for crafting targeted and effective advocacy strategies. By identifying how institutions interact, you can better navigate the decision-making landscape to ensure your demands are both heard and addressed.

This section outlines the primary functions of key institutions and provides actionable strategies for engaging with them effectively.

The following tables break down the responsibilities of each institution and offer practical tools to help you engage strategically, ensuring your advocacy efforts are aligned with their areas of influence.

Table 9: National institutions and their competencies.

Institution	Primary role	Why it matters	Relevant demands
Executive branch	Designs and implements public policies and social programs.	Defines and implements national programs that directly impact the living conditions of trans and gender diverse people.	Create programs that provide free access to gender-affirming healthcare. Set up trans-inclusive policies in public services (e.g., name and gender changes, job training). Include trans voices in government advisory groups.
Key ministries (part of the executive branch)	They implement specific policies in their areas.	Areas such as Health, Education, Justice and Social Development are key to guaranteeing specific rights.	Make healthcare inclusive of trans people, including hormones and surgeries. Ensure schools have anti-bullying policies to protect trans students. Provide job training programs that help trans people find work.
Legislative branch	Drafts, debates and approves laws.	It creates the legal framework that regulates rights and responsibilities in society, and can guarantee legal equality for trans and gender diverse people.	Pass laws that allow trans people to update their gender on official identification documents without medical or court requirements. Approve laws that protect trans people from discrimination in work, schools, and housing.

Institution	Primary role	Why it matters	Relevant demands
Judiciary branch	Interprets and applies the law; resolves legal disputes.	It establishes legal precedents that can influence future public policies and ensure compliance with constitutional rights.	Make rulings that support trans rights, like allowing name and gender changes. Enforce laws that protect trans people from discrimination. Ban harmful practices like 'so-called conversion therapy.'
Electoral management body	They design and supervise electoral processes.	They can guarantee access to democratic processes as voters and candidates, ensuring equal opportunities.	Make sure voter identification rules are inclusive of trans and gender diverse people. Train election workers to treat trans voters and candidates fairly. Stop discrimination during elections.
Political parties	Define political platforms and select candidates.	It establishes legal precedents that can influence future public policies and ensure compliance with constitutional rights.	Include trans candidates in their candidate lists. Support policies that improve trans rights. Offer leadership programs to help trans people run for office.

Table 10: Strategies and tools for approaching national institutions.

Institution	How to approach	Key strategies	Key tools
Executive branch	Request meetings and participate in consultations.	Build trust by showing how your ideas solve real problems.	Clear data showing how policies help trans communities.
Key ministries (part of the executive branch)	Align your proposals with their goals and focus areas.	Provide examples of how similar ideas worked elsewhere.	Stories of success and evidence of social impact.
Legislative branch	Work with advisors or lawmakers who support your goals.	Speak at public hearings or meetings about new laws.	Proposals supported by facts, stories, and data.
Judiciary branch	Partner with lawyers to work on key court cases.	Use past rulings to argue for trans rights and inclusion.	Legal arguments, case studies, and international examples.
Electoral Management Body	Suggest changes to make elections fairer for trans people.	Partner with election monitors and share good practices.	Examples of inclusive election systems worldwide.
Political parties	Build relationships with party leaders who support equality.	Advocate for changes in their internal rules and platforms.	Clear proposals that align with the party's goals.

International and regional spaces _____

International and regional mechanisms are designed to monitor, evaluate, and promote the fulfillment of human rights. While they cannot directly implement changes in a country, they use tools such as reports, recommendations, judgments and resolutions to generate pressure and establish global or regional standards.

These spaces are especially useful when national mechanisms fall short due to a lack of political will, resources, or repressive contexts. They amplify demands, highlight structural issues, and create political pressure to drive reforms and accountability.

Accessing these mechanisms depends on a country's membership in specific treaties or regional systems. Advocates should verify which mechanisms are applicable to their country and align their strategies accordingly.

How do these spaces work?

- **1.** Governments, civil society, and independent experts (special rapporteurs) submit reports or cases to evaluate the state of human rights in member countries.
- 2. Mechanisms issue reports, recommendations, binding rulings, and non-binding guidelines to influence laws and practices.
- **3.** Courts and commissions resolve landmark cases, establishing precedents for addressing systemic violations.
- **4.** These spaces provide platforms for collaboration between governments, civil society, and international actors to influence national reforms.
- 5. Independent experts under special mandates (e.g., UN Independent Expert on sexual orientation and gender identity (IE SOGI)) investigate and report on specific human rights issues, visiting countries, issuing recommendations, and creating global visibility.

Table 11: International and regional mechanisms for the protection of human rights.

Platform	Main function	How it helps	
The United Nations Human Rights Council	Oversees global human rights through mechanisms such as the Universal Periodic Review (UPR) complaint procedures and Special Procedures.	Reviews State compliance, highlights issues like violence and legal discrimination, provides recommendations and adopts resolutions.	
The United Nations Human Rights Committee (ICCPR)	Monitors state compliance with the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) and hears individual complaints.	Ensures fundamental rights like access to justice, freedom from discrimination, and protection from arbitrary detention.	

Platform	Main function	How it helps
The Committee on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights (CESCR) Monitors compliance with the International Covenant on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights (ICESCR).		Promotes access to education, housing, healthcare, and labor protections, essential for addressing systemic barriers faced by trans and gender diverse individuals.
The Committee against Torture (CAT)	Investigates and monitors compliance with the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment	Documents and investigates abuses such as police violence, arbitrary detention, and mistreatment of trans people in custody, and provides recommendations for systemic reforms.
The Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW)	Reviews State compliance with the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW).	Reviews compliance with women's rights and, in some contexts, addresses gender identity issues by providing recommendations to improve protections for trans and gender diverse individuals.
Inter-American Commission on Human Rights & Inter-American Court of Human Rights	Protects rights in the Americas through monitoring, petitions, and binding rulings on structural discrimination and violence.	Sets legal precedents to protect LGBTQI rights and provides access to justice for trans and gender diverse individuals.
Council of Europe & European Court of Human Rights	The Council studies human rights situations in member States, promotes human rights, by issuing recomendations, and supports member States with technical resources to implement human rights based policies and systems. The Court resolves cases of violations, issuing binding judgments.	Provides accountability for discrimination and advances trans rights through enforceable decisions.
African Court on Human and Peoples' Rights & African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights	Monitors compliance with the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights. The Court issues binding judgments on State parties to its establishment protocol, carrying legal weight for all parties involved.	Promotes regional human rights, addresses cases of violence, and advocates for the inclusion of trans issues in broader rights frameworks.
Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) Intergovernmental Commission on Human Rights	Facilitates regional dialogue and promotes minimum human rights standards in Southeast Asia.	Facilitates dialogue and regional standards for human rights, encouraging protections for trans people despite limited enforcement powers.

Table 12: Key strategies for participating in international processes.

Strategy	First steps to implement it
Use treaties as an argument	Research your country's commitments to international treaties and mechanisms. Reference these obligations in advocacy efforts to strengthen demands for trans rights. Additionally, individuals can submit cases to certain treaty bodies, such as CEDAW, to seek accountability and reinforce legal arguments.
Prepare shadow reports	Collaborate with local organizations to document human rights violations and submit these reports to treaty bodies, the Universal Periodic Review (UPR) o or through Special Procedures like the one's directed by the Independent Expert on Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity (IE SOGI).
Engage with special rapporteurs	Contact relevant special procedures (e.g., Independent Expert on Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity [IE SOGI]) to share data, testimonies, or specific cases.
Attend hearings	Participate in sessions such as the Universal Periodic Review (UPR) or the Human Rights Council to draw attention to specific violations and make trans issues visible.
Request precautionary measures	If individuals or communities face immediate risks, work with organizations experienced in this process to request protective measures from regional or international mechanisms.

From insight to action

Political systems may feel distant or immovable, but they are shaped by the people who engage with them. Understanding where decisions are made, who holds power, and how systems interact is the first step toward strategically navigating and transforming them.

This chapter has provided an overview of political systems and how they shape rights, resources, and representation. Now, it's time to take what you've learned and apply it. The **Politics is Trans Toolkit: Workbook for advocacy and action** is designed to help you move from analysis to action. With its practical tools, you can:

- Map decision-making spaces and power actors to identify opportunities for influence.
- Analyze allies and obstacles to strategically align with supporters and mitigate resistance.
- Craft targeted advocacy plans that reflect your vision for systemic transformation.

As you reflect on the complexities of political systems and the unique challenges they present, we invite you to explore the workbook's interactive exercises. These tools will empower you to turn insights into strategies, navigate power structures effectively, and drive meaningful change in your context.

Additional resources

To further support your efforts, the following resources offer invaluable insights and practical guidance. These materials are available in multiple languages and provide additional perspectives on advocacy and transformation:



(English) Advocacy Toolkit: Advocating for Change

By: Asia Pacific Transgender Network (APTN)

A resource designed to support communities in their advocacy efforts for social change. It provides practical tools and tips for interacting with key actors such as legislators and human rights bodies.

Consult here:

https://www.weareaptn.org/resource/aptn-advocacy-toolkit-advocating-for-change/



(English) Anti-transgender Extremism: Identifying, preventing, and countering anti-transgender extremism

By: Gender Minorities Aotearoa

A resource focused on countering anti-trans narratives and organizing community responses. It offers practical tools for interacting with key actors such as legislators and human rights bodies.

Consult here:

https://genderminorities.com/2024/05/21/anti-transgender-extremism/



(English) LGBTQ LIVES IN CONFLICT AND CRISIS: A Queer Agenda for Peace, Security, and Accountability

By: Outright International

This report examines how ultra-conservatism intensifies threats against LGBTQI people and emphasizes the urgency of including their voices in peace and security agendas. It highlights the root causes of violence and advocates for transformative approaches to address armed conflict and humanitarian crises.

Consult here:

https://outrightinternational.org/sites/default/files/2023-12/12072023-LGBTQLivesConflictCrisis.pdf



(English) Laws On Us: A Global Overview of Legal Progress and Backtracking on Sexual Orientation, Gender Identity, Gender Expression, and Sex Characteristics.

By: International Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans and Intersex Association (ILGA World).

A comprehensive analysis of global legal trends impacting LGBTQI people, covering topics such as the criminalization of same-sex acts, hate crime laws, bans on hate speech, and 'so-called conversion therapies.'

Consult here:

https://ilga.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/05/Laws_On_Us_2024.pdf

Organizations and digital platforms for human rights advocacy

To expand your understanding and engagement with human rights on a global scale, the following organizations and platforms provide vital resources and opportunities for advocacy:



Amnesty International

Explore reports, campaigns, and tools for human rights advocacy across diverse regions and issues.

Consult here: https://www.amnesty.org/en/



Human Rights Watch

Access in-depth analyses and reports on human rights violations worldwide.

Consult here: https://www.hrw.org/previous-world-reports



Regional human rights mechanisms and agreements websites

Learn about regional frameworks and their role in monitoring and promoting human rights.

Consult here: https://www.ohchr.org/en/countries/nhri/websites-regional-human-rights-mechanisms-and-arrangements



Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR)

Discover training materials and guidelines for reporting to UN human rights treaty bodies.

Consult here: https://www.ohchr.org/en/publications/ohchr-training-package-reporting-united-nations-human-rights-treaty-bodies



United Nations Human Rights Council Special Procedures

Engage with thematic and country-specific mandates to address human rights challenges.

Consult here: https://www.ohchr.org/en/special-procedures-human-rights-council

Step | Engage in political processes

Political processes are engines of change, shaping how power is distributed, rights are recognized, and inclusion is achieved. For trans and gender diverse people, engaging in these systems means navigating structures often designed to exclude, while uncovering opportunities to drive progress and reclaim agency.

TThis chapter will guide you in strategically engaging in political processes by:

- **Understanding the dynamics:** Learn how elections, legislative debates, and international advocacy shape societal change.
- **Identifying barriers and opportunities:** Recognize systemic challenges like discriminatory policies and political violence, while spotting moments for transformative action.
- **Harnessing the power of mobilization:** Discover how social movements, alliances, and narratives can disrupt exclusion and build collective strength.
- **Prioritizing safety and adaptability:** Develop strategies to navigate risks, mitigate harm, and sustain resilience.

Political processes hold transformative potential. Whether through elections, legislative reforms, or grassroots mobilization, trans and gender diverse communities can turn exclusion into empowerment, creating systems grounded in equity and justice.

This chapter equips you with actionable tools to translate knowledge into impactful advocacy. The companion resource, *Politics is Trans Toolkit: Workbook for advocacy and action*, includes exercises to help you:

- Plan strategic interventions: Pinpoint critical political moments and craft effective action plans.
- **Strengthen coalitions:** Build partnerships and foster solidarity with movements that share your vision for transformation.
- **Amplify your message:** Leverage narratives and platforms to challenge stigma and inspire systemic change.

Through these exercises, you'll move from reflection to action, building strategies and alliances to transform political processes into platforms for justice and inclusion.

Introduction to political processes

Political processes are far more than administrative formalities or distant debates. They are the arenas where power is structured, fundamental rights are protected — or denied — and decisions are made about who is heard and who is silenced. For trans and gender diverse people, these processes hold profound significance. They present opportunities to not only challenge historical exclusion but also dismantle systems of oppression, reimagine structures of power, and affirm dignity in environments that too often render us invisible.

Engaging in these processes is not just about reforming what exists; it's about transforming systems to reflect equity and justice. This requires strategic action rooted in the belief that liberation is possible. Success depends on identifying key moments, leveraging collective power, and prioritizing safety to sustain advocacy and resilience, even in the face of adversity.

What are political processes and why do they matter?

Political processes encompass a wide range of activities, from elections and legislative debates to social mobilizations and international negotiations. What makes these processes essential is their tangible impact on our daily lives. They are spaces where:

- **Our visibility is defined:** Political decisions shape our ability to access rights such as legal name and gender changes or affirming healthcare.
- **Exclusion is confronted:** Representation and participation drive the fight for inclusion, challenging hatred, disinformation, and systemic barriers to build a more equitable society.
- **Collective power is built:** Beyond individual wins, political processes foster networks of mutual support, solidarity, and organizational capacity.

By engaging with these systems, trans and gender diverse communities can take steps not only to demand recognition but to reshape the very structures that perpetuate harm.

Acting strategically

Each political context presents unique opportunities, risks, and challenges. Acting strategically means understanding the environment, analyzing power relations, and adapting to ever-changing dynamics. This requires more than navigating existing systems; it involves imagining and enacting alternatives that center community power and liberation.

Key approaches for different contexts include:

• In **consolidated democratic systems**, advocacy may involve direct legislative work, public hearings, or leveraging platforms to increase visibility.

- In **authoritarian contexts**, advocacy often requires caution. International alliances, strategic litigation, and global pressure are critical, but local tactics like mutual support groups, underground networks, and media collaborations are equally vital. Closed-door meetings with sympathetic officials can also create pathways for progress.
- In **hybrid systems**, where restrictions and advances coexist, advocacy demands constant evaluation to identify openings to disrupt oppressive norms while building alternatives.

In all contexts, **prioritizing safety is essential**. Advocacy work must incorporate risk assessments and mitigation strategies, especially in hostile environments. Secure communication, solidarity networks, and trauma-informed approaches ensure that liberation work sustains those involved. Recognizing that not all moments are created equal is also critical. Elections, social crises, or economic shifts can expose openings to confront entrenched systems and envision alternatives. For example:



• **Elections** may be an opportunity to advocate for inclusive platforms or elect trans and gender diverse candidates.



• **Economic shifts or social upheavals** might create openings for broader coalitions to demand systemic reforms.



• **International or regional conferences** can amplify local struggles, connecting them to global human rights agendas.

By understanding the nuances of political systems, prioritizing safety, and aligning advocacy strategies across local, regional, and global levels, trans and gender diverse communities can navigate even the most challenging environments to drive meaningful change.

The power of narratives

In a world where hate speech and systemic violence seek to dehumanize us, narratives become critical tools of resistance. Reacting to attacks is not enough; we must proactively create narratives that dismantle stigma and project a positive vision of who we are and what we stand for.

This involves sharing authentic stories that connect deeply with diverse audiences, uplifting collective struggles, and rejecting frameworks that tokenize individuals. Storytelling becomes a tool not just to resist but to rebuild — emphasizing how networks of care, solidarity, and collective strategies challenge oppression and inspire radical hope.

What's Next?

The following sections delve into the main characteristics of political processes, the barriers and opportunities they present, and the key actors involved. These insights will help you identify priorities and shape strategies for effective advocacy.

Harnessing the power of social movements

Social mobilizations are not just acts of protest; they are tools of collective power and, in many cases, acts of survival. Mobilization is about more than making noise — it's about forcing systems to listen and respond. From demonstrations to community meetings, every action holds the potential to make demands visible, shift narratives, and open doors that once seemed closed. However, the truth is this: mobilizing without a strategy wastes time, energy, and — at times — puts lives at risk.

To achieve meaningful results, it's not enough to take to the streets. Mobilizations must fit into a broader puzzle that includes strategic litigation and advocacy, media campaigns, and international alliances. Without alignment with these processes, even the loudest movements risk being reduced to slogans with no lasting change.

Characteristics and dynamics of social mobilizations

Not all mobilizations are the same, but successful ones share a common truth: they know **where, when**, and **how** to act. Below are some common types of mobilizations and strategies to maximize their impact:



• **Protests and marches:** These are effective when immediate attention is needed but lose impact if not followed by sustained actions.



• **Strikes and walkouts:** Halting key activities can create leverage for negotiations, but without sufficient support, the risks may outweigh the rewards.



Community campaigns: These long-term efforts build power at the local level and lay
the foundation for larger movements. Never underestimate their importance — they're
often the backbone of broader strategies.



• **Solidarity networks:** Local, regional, and international platforms can amplify local struggles, but it's crucial to ensure that others don't speak for you or dilute your demands.

Table 13: Key actions, barriers and opportunities in social mobilization.

Phase 1: Preparation This phase focuses on organizing people, resources, and strategies to lay the groundwork for effective mobilization. It also involves identifying risks and mitigation strategies to navigate hostile environments.			
Key actions	Barriers to address	How you can take action	
Identify trusted allies: In high-risk contexts, consider working with external advocates who can amplify demands while minimizing direct threats to trans individuals. Set clear objectives: Define specific, achievable goals for the mobilization. Prepare safely: Ensure secure communication and planning to avoid repression.	Lack of coordination between local and broader strategies. Vague objectives reduce impact and dilute focus. Censorship and surveillance limit safe organizing in repressive contexts. Public visibility may increase risks for trans individuals, requiring alternative advocacy approaches.	Identify the root causes, key actors, and those most impacted to shape effective strategies. Map out local organizations and networks to align mobilizations with other advocacy processes (e.g., litigation, legislation). Engage community members to identify and prioritize objectives that reflect shared values and needs. Identify potential threats and develop safety protocols, including secure communication, relocation plans, and partnerships with protective allies.	
Phase 2: Execution This phase is about mobilizing people			
Key actions	Barriers to address	How you can take action	
Coordinate efforts: Ensure participants understand the goals and risks.	Marginalization of trans demands within broader movements.	Partner with movements that center trans voices, like feminist or anti-racist groups, to amplify inclusion.	
Use diverse tactics: Combine in-person actions with digital campaigns.	Limited reach due to lack of digital engagement.	Leverage social media to amplify narratives, share live updates, and connect mobilizations across geographies.	
Prioritize safety: Protect participants with clear physical and digital security protocols.	Risk of societal and/or political backlash; violence or repression against participants.	Establish legal aid and emergency response plans, and use secure tools for organizing and communications.	
Phase 3: Sustained impact This phase ensures the energy of mo	Phase 3: Sustained impact This phase ensures the energy of mobilization translates into tangible outcomes and systemic progress.		
Key actions	Barriers to address	How you can take action	
Document efforts: Record key actions and challenges to inform future advocacy. Evaluate progress: Identify successes and lessons learned.	Mobilization energy dissipates without follow-up plans. Lack of reflection weakens future mobilization strategies.	Use photos, videos, and testimonies to create a public record of demands and actions. Host debrief sessions with participants to discuss improvements for the next phase of advocacy.	
Sustain momentum: Build stronger networks and alliances for ongoing action.	Advocacy loses traction after the initial mobilization.	Strengthen trans-led coalitions and align with global movements to sustain visibility and impact.	

Table 14: Key actors in social mobilizations.

Key actor	Role and influence	Engagement strategies
Local leadership	Local leaders adapt strategies to meet community needs and articulate demands.	Build relationships with local leaders to ensure mobilizations align with community realities. Provide training on advocacy or communication to strengthen their ability to lead. Amplify their voices through media and events to highlight their impact.
Community collectives	Collectives organize workshops, meetings, and mobilizations to connect local struggles.	Attend their workshops or events to learn from their work and contribute to local organizing efforts. If you have access to funding, equipment, or materials, consider pooling resources to help these collectives grow. If not, explore ways to connect them with potential donors or resource networks. Use these spaces to build your own skills in advocacy, digital security, or community organizing while contributing your time and energy. Help increase their visibility by sharing their campaigns or stories on social media, or connecting them with platforms that reach broader audiences.
Allied social movements	Broader movements, such as those for racial justice, climate action, or labor rights, can strengthen trans advocacy by integrating these demands into their agendas.	Work collaboratively to align agendas, ensuring trans demands are integral, not secondary. Create mutual agreements to prevent sidelining of trans demands during collaborations. Use their established networks and reach to promote trans issues widely. Provide them with data, stories, and frameworks to effectively advocate for trans inclusion within their movements.
International networks	These networks amplify local struggles, offer funding, and provide global visibility.	Attend webinars, training sessions, or events hosted by international networks to gain skills in advocacy or access to global tools. If you're connected to grassroots work, share the challenges and successes of your community with these networks to inform their strategies. Use their reach to amplify your campaigns or mobilizations, connecting local efforts with global audiences. Identify ways these networks can support your work, such as funding applications, technical assistance, or international advocacy.

Key actor	Role and influence	Engagement strategies
Community and digital media	Media platforms shape public narratives, counter hate speech, and amplify visibility for marginalized groups.	Collaborate with community media to tell authentic narratives about your work or experiences. This helps counter misinformation and inspire others. Participate in training sessions on creating content, managing social media campaigns, or engaging with journalists. Use your own platforms to share content from community media or advocate for trans-inclusive narratives. Stay active in tracking online discussions. When harmful narratives arise, work with community media to counter them with facts and empowering messages.

Mobilizations are most powerful when they are strategic. Build alliances, protect your people, and ensure every action connects to a broader plan for systemic change. Stay grounded in your community's needs, and don't let the momentum fade—every step you take helps dismantle systems of harm and builds the foundations for justice.

Maximizing impact in electoral participation _____

Electoral processes are more than just voting or running for office; they are critical moments when power is redistributed, reshaped, and redefined. For trans and gender diverse people, these processes represent both barriers and opportunities. While challenges such as the lack of legal recognition, hate speech, and political underrepresentation persist, we have also reimagined electoral spaces as platforms to make our demands visible and advance the fight for justice.

Electoral processes do not operate in isolation. They are deeply connected to broader strategies, including legislative advocacy, social mobilization, and narrative-building efforts. When aligned strategically, these processes can become tools for fostering structural and cultural change.

Characteristics and dynamics of electoral processes

Electoral processes consist of interconnected stages that collectively ensure their legitimacy and effectiveness. Each stage provides opportunities to strengthen political participation:



• **Voter registration:** Ensuring trans and gender diverse people can access their democratic rights without barriers tied to outdated or discriminatory systems.



• **Candidate registration:** Creating pathways for inclusive leadership by breaking down the barriers that keep trans voices out of decision-making spaces.



• **Electoral campaigns:** Offering a platform where trans and gender diverse candidacies can highlight historically excluded agendas.



• **Voting:** Affirming the right to participate in shaping society.



• **Vote counting and scrutiny:** Verifies outcomes and ensures fairness, turning public will into political reality.



• **Electoral observation:** Safeguards democratic processes and holds systems accountable to inclusivity standards.



• **Post-electoral evaluation:** Transforms lessons learned into reforms, paving the way for sustained progress and justice.

By understanding and engaging strategically in each stage, trans and gender diverse communities can turn electoral processes into powerful levers for systemic change.

Table 15: Key actions, barriers and opportunities in electoral processes.

Phase 1: Pre-electoral phase This phase lays the foundation for participation by establishing electoral registration processes and candidate nomination frameworks. It is a crucial moment to advocate for reforms and inclusivity.		
Key actions	Barriers to address	How you can take action
Advocate for reforms: Push for inclusive legal changes, such as gender identity recognition in voter registration and candidate forms. Engage authorities: Collaborate with electoral authorities to implement inclusive protocols. Educate voters: Provide clear guidance on documentation and registration requirements. Work with political parties: Encourage progressive parties to adopt trans-inclusive platforms and actively support electable trans candidates.	Restrictive laws and frameworks that exclude trans and gender diverse people. Electoral frameworks that do not allow for inclusive registration. Limitations on voting rights due to outdated documentation requirements. Lack of political will to include trans candidates in party structures.	Partner with civil society and international bodies to pressure for systemic changes. Work with electoral bodies to implement inclusive voter registration protocols. Build momentum for reforms through public awareness campaigns. Engage progressive parties to adopt trans-inclusive policies and support trans candidates in elections.

Phase 2: Execution

This phase includes the electoral campaign, voting, and vote scrutiny. While dynamic and symbolic, it is also a time when systems of exclusion are reinforced or challenged.

Key actions	Barriers to address	How you can take action
Craft narratives: Develop campaign messages that center trans voices and demands.	Discrimination and violence against trans candidates and voters.	Collaborate with electoral authorities to implement protocols addressing political violence.
Train observers: Prepare election monitors to identify and report on trans-specific issues.	Campaign agendas often exclude trans issues.	Use digital platforms to amplify transinclusive narratives.
Monitor processes: Advocate for safety measures and equitable voting processes.	Limited mechanisms for reporting election-related discrimination.	Establish reporting mechanisms and train officials to handle discrimination and violence effectively.
Mobilize allied groups: Encourage LGB-TQI, feminist, and progressive movements to support candidates and parties with trans-inclusive agendas.	Lack of coordinated voter mobilization efforts for transinclusive candidates.	Build coalitions with LGBTQI and allied movements to mobilize voters for protrans candidates and policies.

Phase 3: Post-electoral phase

This phase focuses on assessing the process's outcomes and identifying areas for improvement. It provides a critical opportunity to document participation and advocate for future reforms.

Key actions	Barriers to address	How you can take action
Document data: Collect disaggregated data on trans participation to highlight gaps. Integrate leaders: Include trans leaders in evaluation discussions and committees. Publish reports: Share findings and recommendations to advocate for systemic reforms.	Discrimination and violence against trans candidates and voters. Campaign agendas often exclude trans issues. Limited mechanisms for reporting election-related discrimination. Lack of coordinated voter mobilization efforts for trans-	Advocate for trans representation in evaluation committees to influence systemic reforms. If direct inclusion is not possible, collaborate with allies within these committees to push trans-inclusive reforms. Share lessons learned with stakeholders to push for institutional changes. Use post-election reports as advocacy tools to highlight challenges and propose
reforms.	Lack of coordinated voter mobilization efforts for transinclusive candidates.	

Table 16: Key elements within electoral systems.

#1 Electoral formula: Rules for converting votes into elected seats or positions. The types of systems include

- Majority system: Candidate with the most votes wins. Common in presidential systems but tends to disadvantage minority candidates, such as trans and gender diverse individuals.
- **Proportional system:** Seats are distributed based on the percentage of votes received, providing better chances for minority representation.
- Mixed system: Combines majority and proportional systems, offering flexibility in representation.

Barriers to address	How you can take action
Majoritarian systems disadvantage minority candidates.	Identify electoral reforms that facilitate minority representation, like inclusive lists.
Traditional parties often exclude trans and gender diverse candidates.	Leverage proportional systems to increase trans representation through vote percentages.
and gender diverse candidates.	Work with allies to advocate for diverse and proportional electoral formulas in your region.

#2 Electoral lists: Methods for nominating and selecting candidates. Types of electoral lists include open or closed lists.

- **Open lists:** Voters select specific candidates within a party, but unequal funding often disadvantages transcandidates.
- **Closed lists:** Party leadership decides the ranking of candidates, and voters select the entire list. Representation depends on the party's willingness to include trans individuals.

Barriers to address	How you can take action
Closed lists rely on party decisions, limiting trans representation. Open lists without equitable funding create financial barriers.	Advocate for quotas or diversity measures to ensure trans inclusion in closed lists. Push for financial support mechanisms for trans candidates in open lists. Assess your organization's practices and advocate for changes that promote trans representation.

- **#3 Constituencies:** Territorial divisions determining how representatives are elected. Types of constituencies include:
- **Uninominal:** One representative per constituency, concentrating power and reducing opportunities for trans candidates.
- Plurinominal: Multiple representatives per constituency, increasing opportunities for minority representation.
- **National/local:** National elections cover presidential or unicameral governments, while local focuses on municipal representation.

Barriers to address	How you can take action
Uninominal systems concentrate power, disadvantaging minority candidates. Local constituencies often lack representation for trans and gender diverse voters.	In uninominal systems, consider organizing targeted campaigns to build local support for trans candidates. In plurinominal systems, develop strategies to secure spots on larger lists, increasing the chance of election. Review how your constituencies are structured to advocate for more inclusive systems where representation gaps exist.

#4 Requirements to vote and run for office: Rules defining who can vote and stand for office, including age, residency, and documentation:

Barriers to address	How you can take action
Identity how mismatches on documents exclude trans and gender diverse voters. Complex requirements for name and gender changes hinder participation.	Advocate for reforms to allow social names and eliminate document mismatches as barriers for voters and candidates. Work with electoral authorities to implement trans-inclusive voting protocols. Identify discriminatory rules in your region and collaborate with allies to reform them.

#5 Elected positions: Categories of positions available. The types of elected positions include:

- Executive positions: Presidents, governors, etc.
- Legislative positions: Senators, parliamenterians, representatives, etc.
- Supranational positions: Regional organizations like the European Parliament.

Barriers to address	How you can take action
Lack of trans and gender diverse representation in both national and	Assess which levels of government are most accessible in your context and target advocacy efforts there.
supranational elections.	Advocate for quotas and affirmative actions in electoral legislation to open opportunities for trans representation at all levels.
Limited access to executive or legislative positions.	Partner with regional or supranational allies to push for representation in broader political spaces.

#6 Campaign financing: Systems governing funding sources, spending limits, and access to media during campaigns.

Sources include public, private, or mixed funding, often with spending limits and additional requirements.

Barriers to address	How you can take action
Discrimination limits access to public and private funds. Security costs for trans and gender diverse candidates increase due to targeted violence.	Advocate for differentiated financing policies or public funds dedicated to minority candidacies, including trans candidates. Work with allies to identify and address gaps in access to campaign resources for trans candidates. Highlight security needs for trans candidates in your advocacy to ensure adequate protections are provided.
	n: Mechanisms and measures to ensure equitable representation. GBTIQI individuals, and funding for inclusive campaigns.
Barriers to address	How you can take action
Lack of quotas for trans representation in many contexts.	Push for LGBTQI quotas in your local or national context to improve representation. Advocate for State funding and training to support inclusive electoral processes. Evaluate existing measures and identify areas for improvement.
#8 Election logistics: Processes and materials, training, and security prot	d resources ensuring fair and accessible elections, including voting ocols.
Barriers to address	How you can take action
Protocols like the assignment of voting tables/lines based on legal sex expose trans voters to discrimination. Lack of security measures for trans	Advocate for security protocols protecting trans voters and candidates. Develop awareness campaigns to educate voters and officials on trans participation. Work with authorities to ensure inclusive voting procedures and materials.

Table 17: Key actors in electoral processes.

Key actor	Role and influence	Engagement strategies
Civil society organizations	Promote participation, monitor processes, and advocate for reforms.	Partner with them to co-design voter education programs tailored to trans and gender diverse communities. Share your experiences or insights with them to strengthen their advocacy for policy reforms. Offer to participate in or support their efforts to monitor electoral violence and discrimination.
Community collectives	Grassroots groups organize workshops, support networks, and voter mobilization efforts.	Join their meetings or events to learn about their priorities and align your work with community needs. Offer resources, training, or small grants to support their voter mobilization or educational activities. Involve them in your campaign planning by hosting focus groups to ensure alignment with grassroots realities. Provide political education on party platforms and candidates' positions, ensuring communities are informed about transinclusive policies. Mobilize participation by encouraging collective action and voter engagement to support candidates and policies that advance trans rights. Build trust by staying connected, regularly checking in, and supporting their initiatives over time.
Allied political parties	Support inclusive platforms and push trans candidacies into decisionmaking spaces.	Meet with party leaders to advocate for trans-inclusive platforms and commitments. Request concrete actions, such as quotas for trans candidates or funding for their campaigns, and suggest practical ways these can be implemented. Hold them accountable by tracking their actions and promises and providing public or private feedback. Build personal connections with supportive party members to sustain long-term collaboration.
Electoral management body	They oversee elections, from voter registration to vote counting, and have the power to ensure inclusive reforms and protocols are implemented.	Advocate for trans-inclusive voter registration and protocols that allow the use of social names. Share evidence of existing barriers, such as personal stories or case studies, to illustrate the need for reforms. Offer to collaborate with them to train election staff on inclusion and anti-discrimination practices. Engage them early in the electoral cycle to allow time for changes to be implemented.

Key actor	Role and influence	Engagement strategies
Media and digital networks	Media platforms shape public narratives about elections and candidates, amplifying or hindering trans and gender diverse representation.	Develop a strategy to highlight positive stories of trans candidates through personal interviews or community success stories. Work with journalists to provide accurate information and ensure respectful language in their coverage. Monitor narratives in traditional and digital media, and counter misinformation or transphobia with facts and advocacy. Create engaging, shareable content such as infographics, short videos, or testimonials for social media platforms. Maintain a database of supportive media outlets and journalists for ongoing collaboration. Regularly update media contacts and invite them to key events to foster stronger relationships and ensure continued coverage.
Election observation missions	Election observation missions aim to ensure transparency, fairness, and adherence to democratic standards, including monitoring trans and gender diverse participation.	Advocate for these missions to include gender and diversity training for their observers. Share your observations or evidence of barriers faced by trans individuals to influence their reports and recommendations. Partner with them to document instances of violence or exclusion during the election process. Suggest practical, actionable steps for more inclusive electoral reforms based on your knowledge or community needs.

Elections are tools for change when we engage fully. Organize, vote, and advocate for inclusive systems that represent us. Whether you're running for office, mobilizing your community, or holding leaders accountable, every action strengthens the fight for equity and justice.

Influencing change through legislative advocacy

Legislative processes are much more than political debates: they are spaces where our demands can be transformed into tangible rights. From gender identity laws to anti-discrimination reforms, these processes hold the power to change lives. However, significant barriers persist, including the exclusion of trans and gender diverse voices, transphobic narratives shaping debates, and restricted access to key spaces, particularly in repressive contexts.

Understanding how legislative processes work and designing strategies tailored to engage with them are crucial to advancing representation and equity. Whether it's lobbying parliamentarians or mobilizing communities, every action matters in the ongoing struggle to translate our demands into laws. For those navigating hostile or repressive environments, legislative advocacy often calls for discretion, creativity, and tapping into international networks to amplify our voices.

Characteristics and dynamics of legislative processes

Legislative processes follow structured stages, each offering unique opportunities for advocacy and intervention:



• **Drafting of laws:** The creation of legislative proposals, where the framework for debates and policies begins to take shape.



• **Parliamentary debate:** Proposals are discussed in legislative committees or plenary sessions, shaping public discourse and influencing decisions.



• **Public hearings:** Consultative spaces where citizens and stakeholders can present their opinions or propose changes.



• **Legislative approval:** A decisive stage where proposals are voted on and either adopted or rejected.



• **Regulation of laws:** The detailed process of defining how approved laws will be implemented in practice.



• **Legislative monitoring:** Ongoing follow-up to ensure laws are enforced and achieve their intended impact.

In repressive contexts, these stages may be opaque or deliberately inaccessible, requiring alternative approaches. Engaging informally with supportive legislators, organizing discreet advocacy efforts, and leveraging international networks can help overcome barriers and amplify demands for justice.

Table 18: Key actions, barriers and opportunities in the legislative process.

Phase 1: Preparation This phase focuses on setting the foundation for legislative change by preparing communities, engaging allies, and influencing early conversations.				
Key actions	Barriers to address	How you can take action		
Identify key allies: Find supportive legislators, civil society leaders, and other advocates who align with your goals. Frame the narrative: Shape public and political discussions about why laws need to address trans and gender diverse issues. Push for transparency: Advocate for inclusive consultations and open drafting processes that welcome trans voices. Assess risks: In hostile environments, consider whether drawing attention to an issue may cause backlash and strategize accordingly.	Decision-makers may not prioritize trans issues without pressure. Public misconceptions about trans rights and needs can weaken early advocacy efforts. Early stages of drafting are often closed to marginalized communities.	Schedule meetings or share concise, well-documented briefs that connect communit priorities to broader political goals. Use storytelling, social media campaigns, or op-eds to share personal stories and the community's priorities. Partner with community organizations to pressure for open consultations and ensure trans representation in the drafting process. Propose specific changes to draft legislation based on evidence, international law, and successful models from other countries. If needed, work discreetly to influence legislation behind the scenes when public advocacy may be counterproductive.		

Phase 2: Decision-makingThis phase includes formal debates, public hearings, and the decision-making process. It's a critical moment to challenge harmful narratives and build coalitions for inclusive legislation.

Key actions	Barriers to address	How you can take action		
Prepare allies for debate: Provide supportive legislators with data, stories, and clear arguments to counter transphobic narratives.	Transphobic rhetoric often dominates parliamentary debates, sidelining inclusive arguments.	Create a resource packet with talking points, real-life examples, and evidence-based data to strengthen ally interventions.		
Mobilize public support: Use campaigns or petitions to show widespread backing for trans-inclusive proposals.	Lack of visible public support can allow lawmakers to deprioritize trans and gender diverse issues.	Organize petitions, social media campaigns, or letter-writing drives targeting key legislators and decision-makers.		
Engage in hearings: Where possible, participate in or support others to testify in public hearings.	Fear of discrimination or tokenistic inclusion may prevent meaningful participation.	Partner with civil society groups to coach participants and provide a supportive environment for testimony.		
Assess risks: In hostile environments, consider whether public engagement could cause backlash and determine when strategic silence is the safer option.	In some contexts, public advocacy may escalate risks or hinder behind-the-scenes negotiations.	If necessary, use quieter advocacy strategies, such as working through allies behind the scenes or delaying public engagement until a safer moment.		
Phase 3: Implementation and accountability				

This stage focuses on translating laws into actionable, meaningful change through inclusive regulations, monitoring, and advocacy.

Key actions	Barriers to address	How you can take action
Advocate for inclusive	Implementation may dilute	Chara enacific recommendations and
implementation: Push for regulations that reflect the needs of trans and gender diverse communities.	Implementation may dilute or overlook the original intent of inclusive laws.	Share specific recommendations and examples of best practices to guide regulators in addressing trans-specific needs.
Monitor and report: Track how laws are	Weak enforcement	
being enforced and document successes, gaps, or instances of discrimination.	mechanisms or lack of accountability allow systemic barriers to persist.	Partner with civil society organizations or researchers to gather data and publish accessible reports or briefs.
Leverage findings for reform: Use	'	·
feedback from the community to push	Resistance from institutions	Provide training and resources for
for adjustments or new initiatives to address gaps.	to addressing systemic shortcomings or criticisms.	government agencies, law enforcement, and service providers to ensure inclusive enforcement.
Train and collaborate with	Lack of awareness or	
institutions: Work with relevant agencies to ensure proper implementation of laws through training and ongoing engagement.	training within institutions may hinder effective enforcement.	Use storytelling and data-driven advocacy to highlight gaps and mobilize further support for reform or enforcement.

Table 19: Key actors in the legislative process.

Key actor	Role and influence	Engagement strategies
Allied parliamentarians	They propose, debate, and support inclusive laws.	Identify and research potential allies who have a history of supporting LGBTQI rights. Schedule meetings with parliamentarians or their advisors to introduce legislative proposals, in private if necessary. Share clear, concise briefs with data and personal stories that highlight the urgency of trans-inclusive policies. Provide continuous updates to keep them informed of public support and related advocacy efforts. Arrange opportunities for them to meet directly with community members to understand their lived realities.
Civil society organizations	They draft legislative proposals, generate solid evidence and lobby parliamentarians to push for laws that benefit trans and gender diverse people.	Collaborate with experienced organizations to co-draft legislative proposals. Organize joint workshops to align advocacy goals and approaches. Share your community's specific needs to ensure proposals are inclusive and grounded in local realities. Collaborate on media campaigns to amplify visibility and mobilize broader support for legislative demands. Leverage their networks to arrange meetings with key decision-makers or allies in government.
Community collectives	They represent local needs, make trans struggles visible and mobilize support from the community.	Host community forums, private gatherings or use encrypted messaging to gather input on legislative priorities. Train collective members on legislative advocacy, such as public speaking or writing testimonies. Ensure their representatives are present at public hearings or consultation meetings. Partner with them to document and share personal stories that humanize trans-inclusive legislative efforts. Build solidarity across collectives to present a united front during advocacy efforts.

Key actor	Role and influence	Engagement strategies
Legislative committees	They review, modify and rule on bills before they reach the legislative plenary. They define the viability of the proposals and are often a crucial filter for their advancement.	Research committee members' stances on related issues and tailor your messaging to align with their priorities. Submit clear, evidence-backed briefs to committee members and staff. Request to attend or present at committee hearings to advocate for the proposal. Identify and engage with committee chairs or influential members who can champion your cause. Monitor committee discussions and be prepared to adjust your arguments or strategies in response to opposing narratives.
Media and digital networks	Shape public narratives and generate pressure for transinclusive laws.	Develop press kits with data, testimonials, and narratives tailored to media outlets. Engage with journalists who have covered LGBTQI issues positively in the past. Use social media to run awareness campaigns and break down complex legislative processes into simple, accessible content. Monitor and counter misinformation with accurate, easy-to-understand resources. Create engaging visuals, such as infographics and videos, to mobilize public support and highlight legislative priorities.

Advocacy turns demands into laws that create change. Work with allies, amplify community voices, and follow through to ensure laws are enforced. Stay focused, persistent, and collaborative.

Judicial pathways for justice

Judicial processes are more than spaces where laws are interpreted and applied—they are political arenas where systemic change can be advanced. For trans and gender diverse advocates, these pathways provide opportunities to challenge discrimination, enforce rights, and amplify community voices. Community leaders, grassroots organizers, and non-legal advocates are integral to shaping legal cases and ensuring their societal impact.

This section equips advocates with practical tools to navigate judicial processes, whether operating in supportive or restrictive environments. By engaging strategically, you can align judicial actions with broader advocacy efforts and drive systemic change.

Characteristics and dynamics of judicial processes

Judicial processes offer key opportunities for advocates to drive change. Here's how you can contribute:



• **Case selection:** Work with your community to identify strategic cases that reflect shared priorities and have the potential for systemic impact.



• **Building a compelling case:** Gather stories and evidence that highlight rights violations, helping to strengthen legal arguments and connect with broader audiences. Use relevant examples from other countries and international law to reinforce advocacy efforts and demonstrate global precedents for inclusive policies.



• **Bringing the community into the fight:** Use grassroots organizing, media, and storytelling to ensure the case resonates far beyond the courtroom.



• **Partnering for success:** Build strategic alliances with lawyers, journalists, and advocacy organizations to amplify the case's impact.



• **Ensuring follow-through:** Track judicial decisions and work with communities to push for implementation and accountability.

Table 20: Key actions, barriers and opportunities in the judicial process.

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Key actions	Barriers to address	How you can take action
Map the judicial system: Learn about your country's courts, procedures, and key decision-makers. Analyze court dynamics: Research judges' ideologies, past rulings, and biases to assess risks and potential outcomes. Engage the community: Identify issues that align with grassroots priorities. Adapt to risk: Assess whether visibility will help or harm the case, especially in hostile contexts. Learn from global examples: Study similar legal processes in other countries to identify best practices and successful strategies.	Lack of access to resources or understanding of judicial systems. Conservative or biased judges may issue rulings that set harmful precedents. Disconnect between grassroots needs and legal actions can weaken relevance. Public backlash or media hostility may escalate harm to trans and gender diverse advocates.	Partner with organizations that offer public education or legal training to demystify judicial systems. Focus on lower courts or regional tribunals that are more neutral or progressive. Host participatory workshops to gather input and align cases with lived experiences. Use low-visibility advocacy, such as anonymous testimonies or discreet partnerships, to reduce exposure. Apply lessons from international cases to strengthen legal arguments and advocacy strategies.

This phase emphasizes active participation in judicial proceedings, ensuring community needs are

represented and amplified during the process.

Key actions	Barriers to address	How you can take action
Collaborate with legal teams: Help legal experts translate community needs into actionable arguments.	Limited access to inclusive legal representation that reflects community realities.	Partner with legal clinics, pro bono lawyers, or law schools that support marginalized communities.
Counter negative narratives: Work with media allies to combat transphobic narratives and misinformation.	Transphobic narratives by opposing parties or judges may dominate public and legal discourse.	Build media literacy among advocates and leverage trusted outlets to amplify positive, factual messaging.
Build resilience: Offer psychological and logistical support for those involved in cases.	Lengthy legal processes can exhaust plaintiffs and supporters emotionally and	Create solidarity networks offering mental health resources, financial aid, and community care.
Engage international allies: Partner with organizations that can provide	financially. Lack of external legal support	Seek support from local and international organizations to provide
amicus curiae briefs to strengthen legal arguments.	may weaken advocacy efforts.	amicus curiae and advocacy backing.
amicus curiae briefs to strengthen legal arguments. Phase 3: Implementation and accommodate accommoda	ountability s are enforced and translated i	nto broader societal and policy-level
amicus curiae briefs to strengthen legal arguments. Phase 3: Implementation and acc This phase ensures judicial outcome	ountability	
amicus curiae briefs to strengthen legal arguments. Phase 3: Implementation and accommodate accommoda	ountability s are enforced and translated i	nto broader societal and policy-level
amicus curiae briefs to strengthen legal arguments. Phase 3: Implementation and acc This phase ensures judicial outcome changes. Key actions Monitor implementation: Track whether judicial decisions are enforced and	ountability s are enforced and translated i Barriers to address Weak enforcement mechanisms or lack of political will may hinder	How you can take action Collaborate with grassroots organizations to document and report violations to international human rights

Table 21: Key actors in the judicial process.

Key actor	Role and influence	Engagement strategies
Community leaders and advocates	Ground judicial cases in lived realities and provide legitimacy to advocacy efforts.	Work with individuals in your community to document and share their stories, ensuring safety and consent. Help organize safe spaces for collective discussions on judicial issues that align with community priorities. Build networks of mutual support to address emotional and logistical challenges faced by participants.

Key actor	Role and influence	Engagement strategies
Grassroots organizations	Mobilize communities and ensure judicial processes align with local priorities.	Partner with grassroots groups to co-host workshops explaining judicial processes in simple, accessible terms. Support efforts to collect testimonies, multimedia, or community data to strengthen cases and advocacy. Share your skills, resources, or connections to help grassroots organizations amplify their work and visibility.
Civil society and international organizations	Both local and international organizations, including UN Special Procedures, provide technical expertise, advocacy support, and legal resources for community-driven litigation.	Engage local civil society groups for guidance, access to resources like toolkits or legal templates, and support in navigating domestic legal systems. Collaborate with international organizations to strengthen cases through global advocacy, strategic litigation, and pressure on decision-makers. Seek amicus curiae support from both local and international allies to bolster legal arguments and provide comparative legal perspectives. Use their established networks to connect with media, funders, or legal experts who can amplify and sustain your judicial efforts.
Media and communications	Shape public opinion and generate pressure on judicial actors.	Share your perspective with trusted journalists or community media outlets to ensure accurate, respectful coverage. Use social media to share easy-to-understand content (e.g., infographics or videos) about the case's significance. Monitor media narratives and respond to harmful misinformation with factual and empowering messages.
Progressive legal advocates	Provide the legal framework for cases and ensure they reflect human rights standards.	Collaborate with legal advocates to ensure your priorities and experiences are reflected in legal arguments. Ask advocates to translate complex legal terms into accessible language for you and your community. Help organize or attend events where legal advocates and community members can meet and align on goals.
Policymakers and regulators	Translate judicial rulings into actionable laws and institutional changes.	Advocate for policies that enforce judicial rulings by drafting letters or petitions for policymakers. Organize or attend meetings with policymakers to discuss how judicial decisions impact your community's needs. Support community efforts to hold policymakers accountable by documenting gaps or delays in enforcement.
Constitutional and High Courts	Their rulings set precedents that can advance or hinder systemic change.	Research upcoming court cases and determine whether submitting public support or evidence is possible. Collaborate with civil society groups to submit amicus curiae briefs if you have relevant data or experiences. Focus on cases with high community impact while considering risks in hostile contexts to avoid harmful precedents.

Focus on what's within your reach: identify cases that align with your community's needs, partner with trusted legal advocates, and amplify voices through media or grassroots efforts. Work with your network to document violations, monitor rulings, and push for enforcement. Remember, every step — no matter how small — contributes to turning judicial spaces into tools for systemic change. Stay grounded, act strategically, and lean on collective strength to keep moving toward justice.

Transforming public policies into action

Administrative and public policy processes translate government decisions, legal commitments, and international agreements into tangible programs, services, and rights. For trans and gender diverse advocates, engaging in these processes ensures that public policies are inclusive, intersectional, and reflective of community needs.

Participation in these processes empowers advocates to influence policy design, implementation, and evaluation, guaranteeing transparency, accountability, and legitimacy. By strategically engaging in public consultations, hearings, and monitoring mechanisms, advocates can shape public policies to address systemic inequalities and achieve measurable outcomes.

Characteristics and dynamics of public policy processes

Administrative and public policy processes are iterative and interconnected, involving several critical stages:



• **Problem identification:** Analyzing the social context to identify priorities and propose solutions.



• **Policy design:** Developing programs and strategies with clear objectives that reflect affected communities' voices.



• **Implementation:** Putting policies into practice through services or programs, coordinating efforts among various stakeholders, including local governments and civil society organizations.



• **Monitoring:** Tracking progress to assess whether policies are meeting their goals and identifying gaps.



• **Evaluation:** Reviewing outcomes to measure success and recommend adjustments for greater impact.

In restrictive or resource-limited contexts, advocates can leverage creative strategies such as mobilizing grassroots support, engaging international networks, and utilizing media campaigns to influence public policy processes effectively.

Table 22: Key actions, barriers and opportunities in administrative and public policy processes.

Phase 1: Preparation This phase involves recognizing comm	nunity needs and creating inclu:	sive, actionable policies.
Key actions	Barriers to address	How you can take action
Promote research: Advocate for the collection of disaggregated data on trans and gender diverse communities.	Lack of disaggregated data makes trans and gender diverse needs invisible.	Partner with civil society organizations of academic institutions to conduct survey and include marginalized voices in data collection.
Engage communities: Involve grassroots organizations and affected individuals to define key priorities.	Exclusion from consultation spaces limits input and legitimacy.	Use participatory workshops, digital platforms, and informal networks to engage communities and gather feedback.
Collaborate on policy design: Work with civil society, technical experts, and affected groups to draft inclusive policies.	Decision-makers often exclude marginalized groups during policy creation.	Join technical working groups and advocate for the inclusion of intersection approaches in all discussions.
Phase 2: Implementation This phase focuses on executing police	cies through coordinated efforts	and resource allocation.
Key actions	Barriers to address	How you can take action
Monitor implementation: Track whether policy commitments are being translated into tangible actions.	Lack of political will or insufficient resources delay implementation.	Collaborate with independent monitoring bodies or grassroots groups to document unmet commitments and gaps in implementation.
Work with stakeholders: Partner with local governments, civil society organizations, and media to drive accountability.	Implementation processes may lack transparency, leading to inefficiency or corruption.	Use reports, public campaigns, and media advocacy to spotlight implementation successes and gaps.
Highlight community successes: Celebrate and amplify the benefits of mplemented policies.	Limited communication reduces public awareness and community engagement.	Organize events, storytelling campaigns, or media pieces that showcase successful programs to sustain momentum.
Phase 3: Monitoring and evalue. This phase ensures policies meet		to maximize their impact.
Key actions	Barriers to address	How you can take action
Establish monitoring mechanisms: Advocate for transparent processes that nclude affected communities.	Resistance from governments to being audited by external actors or communities.	Use accountability processes to demandaccess to data and reports, ensuring transparency and inclusivity.
Evaluate outcomes: Use participatory processes to assess successes and identify areas for improvement.	Communities are often excluded from evaluation processes, weakening accountability.	Facilitate evaluations that include feedback from affected groups and technical experts to co-develop recommendations.
Publish findings: Share accessible reports that highlight the impact of policies and advocate for adjustments.	Governments may resist making necessary adjustments or addressing identified gaps.	Use evidence-based advocacy and publ campaigns to push for adjustments and highlight successful practices.

Table 23: Key actors in administrative and public policy processes.

Key actor	Role and influence	Engagement strategies
Civil society organizations	Provide technical expertise, proposals, and monitoring of public policies.	Identify local and national organizations working on gender equity and human rights. Offer to share data, community priorities, and personal stories to inform their work. Attend their public events, workshops, or consultations to build relationships and alignment. Use their resources, such as toolkits or guides, to enhance your advocacy. Propose partnerships for co-developing or reviewing public policies.
Public and affected groups	Bring lived experiences to policy-making spaces, ensuring inclusivity.	Use storytelling workshops to help community members share their experiences effectively. Create safe spaces where members feel comfortable discussing their needs and aspirations. Organize transportation or offer online participation options for consultations or public hearings. Provide clear, accessible information about policy processes and how they can engage. Highlight their stories in media campaigns or advocacy briefs
Community- based organizations	Mobilize communities and ensure policies reflect lived realities.	Host informal meetings with local groups to discuss their priorities and challenges. Train grassroots leaders on how to collect testimonies and data for policy advocacy. Collaborate to organize town halls or focus groups to gather input from the community. Use social media and local events to amplify grassroots voices and align efforts. Help community - based organizations connect with civil society organizations or decision-makers for wider influence.
International organizations	Provide resources, technical assistance, and accountability frameworks.	Identify international organizations working on trans and gender diverse rights. Align your advocacy goals with international standards like the Yogyakarta Principles. Submit community reports or data to agencies such as the United Nations (UN) or international organizations to highlight policy gaps. Apply for grants or technical assistance programs they offer to support local efforts. Leverage their platforms to showcase success stories and advocate for systemic change.

Key actor	Role and influence	Engagement strategies
Political actors (elected officials or public servants)	Translate demands into policies and allocate resources for sustainability.	Research which policymakers or public servants have supported human rights initiatives in the past. Schedule meetings with their offices to present concise, data-driven policy briefs and proposals. Share community stories and visuals that highlight why action is urgent. Follow up regularly to maintain engagement and track progress. Invite them to community events or consultations to build trust and collaboration.
Media and communications	Raise awareness and hold stakeholders accountable through public pressure.	Build relationships with journalists who cover human rights or local issues. Develop press kits with community testimonials, data, and clear calls to action. Use social media platforms to launch campaigns that highlight policy needs or successes. Monitor and address inaccuracies in media coverage with fact-based responses. Create visually engaging content, such as infographics or videos, to simplify complex policy discussions.

Public policy processes are where community priorities transform into real-world impacts. Advocates can play a critical role by ensuring policies are informed by lived experiences, inclusive, and responsive to marginalized voices. Start by identifying allies, amplifying community narratives, and demanding transparency in decision-making. Each actor — civil society, communities, political leaders, and media — can be mobilized to ensure policies deliver tangible results.

Remember: every conversation, meeting, or campaign is a step toward systemic change and a more equitable future for trans and gender diverse communities.

Advocating for rights on the global stage _____

International processes, while often complex and bureaucratic, are critical for shaping global human rights standards and holding governments accountable. For trans and gender diverse advocates, these platforms provide opportunities to expose violations, demand systemic reforms, and amplify marginalized voices.

Though accessing and navigating these processes can be challenging due to limited resources, systemic exclusion, or lack of familiarity with international mechanisms, strategic engagement can lead to meaningful progress.

Characteristics and dynamics of international processes

International forums vary widely, each offering unique advocacy opportunities:



• **Framework development:** Global standards are set through multilateral agreements and frameworks (e.g., Sustainable Development Goals, Universal Declaration of Human Rights and treaties, Resolutions). These processes determine the priorities and language of international commitments.



• **Review mechanisms:** Processes like the Universal Periodic Review (UPR), Special Procedures or treaty body reviews assess countries' human rights practices. These offer structured opportunities for advocates to provide evidence and influence outcomes.



 Accountability platforms: Mechanisms like complaints through the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (IACHR) or European Court of Human Rights (ECHR) provide ways to address rights violations. They are technical but may offer opportunities for systemic change.



• **Implementation and monitoring:** Recommendations and decisions must be implemented domestically, but this often requires consistent pressure, monitoring, and follow-up from advocates and international allies.

Table 24: Key actions, barriers and opportunities in international processes.

	S.	
Key actions	Barriers to address	How you can take action
dentify forums: Research global mechanisms such as the Human Rights Council (HRC), treaty bodies, or regional mechanisms. Build networks: Partner with trans-led organizations and allies engaged in global and regional advocacy, such as GATE. Source resources: Advocate for funding or virtual access to participate in sessions.	Limited knowledge of international processes. Systemic exclusion from official delegations or negotiations. Limited financial resources for travel or connectivity.	Attend workshops, webinars, or training sessions to understand ke processes. Partner with international organizations to secure representation in State delegation or forums. Seek grants from global networks or, when available use digital platforms to attend open sessions
Phase 2: Advocacy and reporting This phase focuses on using internati to amplify issues and hold governme	onal mechanisms like human rights nts accountable.	reviews and complaints systems
Key actions	Barriers to address	How you can take action
Submit reports: Provide data and estimonies to highlight rights violations.	Lack of disaggregated data on trans and gender diverse communities.	Collaborate with research organizations to collect robust, community-centered data.
Engage in reviews: Participate in processes like the Universal Periodic Review (UPR) or treaty body reviews.	Minimal government focus on trans-specific issues.	Build coalitions with allies to ensure trans rights are included in advocacy statements.
Advocate for specific recommendations: Draft actionable proposals for governments to implement.	Governments may downplay or ignore trans issues in official forums.	Use partnerships with allies to lobby for adoption of your recommendations.
Phase 3: Accountability and follow This phase ensures that international drive systemic change. Key actions		e implemented and used to How you can take action
Monitor implementation: Track		Partner with local organizations to create accountability reports or community audits.
whether governments follow through on international recommendations. Build public pressure: Use media and	Weak mechanisms to enforce compliance. Resistance from governments to	Leverage international networks and special rapporteurs to highligh ongoing issues.
Advocate for reforms: Push for lignment between international	engage with follow-up processes. Lack of political will to adopt international standards.	Publish accessible reports to expose gaps and mobilize public and political support.
commitments and domestic policies.		Submit monitoring / mid- term review reports to the recommendation issuing entities.

Table 25: Key actors in international processes.

Key actor	Role and influence	Engagement strategies
Special rapporteurs	Independent experts who conduct country visits, prepare reports, and make recommendations on specific human rights issues.	Research the mandate of the Special Rapporteur related to your issue (e.g., gender identity, violence, freedom of expression, etc.). Submit written evidence reports and/or complaints detailing local violations and impacts on trans communities. Request a meeting or briefing with the Special Rapporteur during country visits or international forums. Amplify their published recommendations in national and international advocacy campaigns.
Treaty bodies	Committees that monitor State compliance with specific human rights treaties (e.g., Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, and the Committee against Torture).	Verify if your country has ratified the treaty and participates in its monitoring. Submit reports with actionable recommendations and, for some treaty bodie, cases, addressing trans-specific issues. Attend treaty body sessions, either in person or virtually, and participate in organizational briefings. Share treaty body recommendations widely with local organizations, media, and government officials to push for implementation.
Universal Periodic Review	They perform rotating reviews of Human Rights Council member States' human rights records.	Identify your country's Universal Periodic Review (UPR) cycle and deadlines for submissions (available on the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) website) Submit a stakeholder report focusing on trans-specific issues, backed by data and testimonies. Collaborate with international allies to attend UPR presession and lobby friendly governments to include your recommendations in their statements. Use their outcomes to hold your government accountable through follow-up advocacy and monitoring campaigns.
Regional commissions and Courts (e.g., Inter-American Commission on Human Rights)	Processes petitions on rights violations and conducts hearings.	Confirm if your country is under their jurisdiction. File a petition detailing human rights violations, supported by documentation and testimonies. Request precautionary measures for urgent cases to prevent further harm. Participate in hearings, and use these as opportunities to gain international attention for your cause. Use their recommendations to pressure governments for compliance and reform.

Key actor	Role and influence	Engagement strategies
International allies	Organizations, global networks, and funders that provide resources, training, and platforms for advocacy.	Identify organizations aligned with trans and gender diverse rights. Reach out with a clear ask, such as funding, technical support, or connections to advocacy opportunities. Share detailed proposals or evidence to demonstrate the importance of your cause. Build long-term partnerships by engaging regularly and providing updates on your progress.
State delegations and allied governments	Represent governments some of which may champion human rights and LGBTQI inclusion in international forums.	Research State delegations or ambassadors who have supported LGBTQI issues. Request a meeting to brief them on your advocacy priorities and share clear, actionable recommendations. Provide talking points or written materials for them to use during negotiations or public statements. Follow up with updates and thank them for their support to maintain strong relationships.
Multilateral organizations	They provide platforms for advocacy, monitor state compliance with commitments, and create mechanisms for accountability through their resolutions, treaties, and guidelines.	Align your advocacy goals with their mandates, such as the Sustainable Development Goals,UPR, Special Procedures or specific treaty bodies. Submit contributions to their reports, consultations, or thematic studies. Attend public sessions, side events, or briefings hosted by these organizations to raise trans-specific concerns. Use their recommendations or frameworks to demand accountability from local governments.

International processes offer trans and gender diverse advocates a powerful avenue to amplify demands, hold governments accountable, and drive systemic change. By engaging strategically with allies, leveraging global platforms, and centering community realities, you can transform international commitments into tangible, impactful reforms. Each action taken — whether submitting a report, engaging in a hearing, or amplifying recommendations — brings us closer to global justice.

From insight to action

The transformative power of political processes lies in their ability to connect individual actions to broader movements for systemic change. Whether mobilizing in the streets, advocating in legislative chambers, or amplifying voices through international forums, each contribution strengthens the collective fight for justice and inclusion.

Engaging in political processes is not about mastering every strategy — it's about collaboration and mutual reinforcement. A successful mobilization can elevate the impact of a court decision, while legislative advocacy can solidify the goals of grassroots actions. These strategies, while distinct, achieve their greatest potential when they converge and complement one another.

This step invites you to reflect on how your efforts align with those of others, emphasizing the importance of building coalitions, sharing knowledge, and strengthening networks. By working together, trans and gender diverse advocates can transform exclusionary systems into inclusive platforms for equity and justice.

Practical exercises

This chapter prepares you to navigate and influence political processes strategically. The companion resource, *Politics is Trans Toolkit: Workbook for advocacy and action*, offers tools to turn knowledge into impactful advocacy. Through these exercises, you can:

- **Analyze political processes:** Deepen your understanding of electoral systems, legislative pathways, and international mechanisms.
- Strategize interventions: Develop well-timed advocacy plans tailored to your political context.
- Expand your reach: Build coalitions and strengthen alliances to amplify your impact.

As you reflect on the strategies outlined in this chapter, we invite you to explore the workbook. Its tools will guide you in aligning your actions with your goals, enabling you to transform political processes into engines for justice and systemic change. By combining reflection with action, you can play a vital role in reshaping systems and creating lasting impact for trans and gender diverse communities.

Additional resources:

To further support your efforts, the following resources provide critical insights and actionable guidance. Available in multiple languages, these materials offer additional perspectives to strengthen your advocacy:



(English) Win with Pride: Assessing LGBTQI+ Inclusion in Political Parties for Civil Society Organizations, Researchers, and Advocates

By: LGBTQ+ Victory Institute

Tools and best practices for assessing LGBTQI inclusion in political parties and advancing greater accessibility for LGBTQI leadership.

Consult here:

https://victoryinstitute.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/11/WWP-2024-V1.pdf



(English) Building inclusive democracies: A guide to strengthening the participation of LGBTI+ persons in political and electoral processes

By: United Nations Development Program (UNDP)

Practical tools to promote human rights and inclusion throughout electoral and political processes

Consult here:

https://www.undp.org/publications/building-inclusive-democracies-guide-strengthening-participation-lgbti-persons-political-and-electoral-processes



(Spanish) Participación electoral y protección contra la violencia y la discriminación por motivos de orientación sexual e identidad de género

By: UN Independent Expert on sexual orientation and gender identity (IE SOGI)

A report addressing barriers to electoral participation for LGBTQI individuals and recommending measures to ensure their inclusion.

Consult here:

https://documents.un.org/doc/undoc/gen/n24/208/79/pdf/n2420879.pdf



(Spanish) Medidas para garantizar el derecho al voto de las personas Trans en los países de América Latina y el Caribe

By: Latin American and Caribbean Observatory on the political and electoral rights of trans people

Recommendations for protecting the voting rights of trans individuals in the Latin American and Caribbean region.

Consult here:

https://www.moe.org.co/wp-content/uploads/2022/08/medidas_para_garantizar_el_derecho_al_voto_trans.pdf



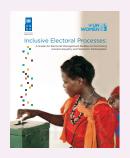
(English) GLIDE 2024 Landscape Analysis

By: The Global LGBTQI+ Inclusive Democracy and Empowerment (GLIDE)

This analysis provides a global overview of LGBTQI rights and civic participation, highlighting key factors that influence the ability of LGBTQI people to engage in political and democratic processes.

Consult here:

https://outrightinternational.org/sites/default/files/2024-10/GLIDE%20 Landscape%20Analysis%20Final%2010%3A28%3A24.pdf



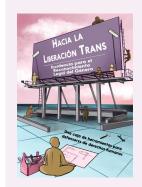
(English) Inclusive electoral processes: A Guide for Electoral Management Bodies on Promoting Gender Equality and Women's Participation

By: United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and UN Women

A guide for electoral authorities outlining strategies to adopt inclusive measures for gender equality. It provides tools for collecting gender-disaggregated data, training electoral staff, and designing inclusive action plans.

Consult here:

https://www.undp.org/arab-states/publications/inclusive-electoral-processes



(English and Spanish) Towards Trans Liberation: Advocacy for Legal Gender Recognition

By: International Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans and Intersex Association (ILGA World)

A toolkit for human rights advocates worldwide, offering strategies to advance legal gender recognition and meet the specific needs of trans and gender diverse communities.

Consult here:

https://ilga.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/11/TLMR_toolkit_Towards_Trans_Liberation_Advocacy_LGR.pdf



(English) Advancing the Human Rights and Inclusion of LGBTI People: A Handbook for Parliamentarians

By: United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and Parliamentarians for Global Action (PGA)

This handbook provides parliamentarians with practical tools and examples to promote LGBTQI rights and inclusion in legislative processes.

Consult here:

https://www.pgaction.org/inclusion/



(English) Election Guide

By: International Foundation for Electoral Systems (IFES)

A digital resource offering information on electoral mechanisms, voter participation, and election day processes, designed to enhance civic engagement.

Consult here:

https://www.electionguide.org/home/



(English) Electoral System Design Database

By: International IDEA

A comprehensive platform detailing electoral systems in over 200 countries and territories, enabling comparisons of key features like voting methods and constituency structures

Consult here:

https://www.idea.int/data-tools/data/country?country=49&database_theme=307



(English) Electoral System Design Database

By: International IDEA

A comprehensive platform detailing electoral systems in over 200 countries and territories, enabling comparisons of key features like voting methods and constituency structures

Consult here:

https://www.idea.int/data-tools/data/country?country=49&database_theme=307



(English and Spanish) SOGIESC UPR Advocacy toolkit. A guide for defenders working on sexual orientation, gender identity and expression and sex characteristics

By: International Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans and Intersex Association (ILGA World)

A step-by-step guide to help LGBTI activists engage with the Universal Periodic Review (UPR), a UN mechanism monitoring human rights records worldwide.

Consult here:

https://ilga.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/01/SOGIESC_UPR_Advocacy_ Toolkit.pdf



(English) Making the UN work for you: A toolkit on UN advocacy for trans activists

By: TGEU

This toolkit serves as a comprehensive guide for trans activists engaging in advocacy at the United Nations. Each chapter provides targeted strategies for effectively navigating various UN mechanisms and engaging with key actors to advance transgender rights.

Consult here:

https://arc-international.net/wp-content/uploads/2016/05/UNfortrans_toolkit_web.pdf



(English) Framing equality toolkit

By: ILGA Europe & Public Interest Research Centre

This toolkit serves as a strategic communication guide informed by the experiences of activists and communicators. Rather than offering definitive answers, it provides a framework for asking key questions to shape effective advocacy. While designed for LGBTI activists in Europe, its insights may also benefit others pursuing similar objectives.

Consult here:

https://www.ilga-europe.org/files/uploads/2022/06/Framing-Equality-Toolkit-1.pdf

(English) How Change Happens



By: Duncan Green

This book explores the dynamics of social and political change, bridging academic research with activist practice. Drawing from diverse disciplines and Oxfam's global experience, it examines effective strategies for advocacy and action. Designed for change agents, it provides practical insights on transforming policies, institutions, and social norms.

Consult here:

https://oxfamilibrary.openrepository.com/bitstream/ handle/10546/581366/bk-how-change-happens-211016-en. pdf;jsessionid=5D9851E312A2B24D23FDB85458BAD9D1?sequence=7



This section celebrates the resilience, creativity, and determination of trans and gender diverse communities across the globe in their fight for political inclusion and justice. Through a collection of case studies, it highlights the ways in which our communities have challenged systemic exclusion, navigated hostile environments, and reimagined political participation.

From mobilizing in the face of democratic backsliding to advocating for identity recognition and representation, these stories demonstrate how resistance and progress intersect to transform systems of power. They reveal not only the obstacles faced by trans and gender diverse people but also the innovative strategies and collective actions that have driven meaningful change.

By exploring diverse contexts — from democracies to authoritarian regimes and environments of criminalization — this section offers valuable lessons on how to build alliances, harness the power of narratives, and ensure that no voice is left unheard. Together, these stories remind us that every act of resistance, no matter how small, contributes to the broader movement for equality, justice, and democratic inclusion.

Democratic backsliding and resistance: Lessons from Argentina and Pakistan

On the global stage, trans and gender diverse rights have achieved historic advancements. Yet, these rights remain fragile, often under threat from political, cultural, and social backlash. The cases of Argentina and Pakistan illustrate two distinct yet interconnected narratives — one of democratic backsliding and another of legal and systemic exclusion. Together, they underscore the power of mobilization, resilience, and innovation in the face of adversity.

Argentina: ______ From a pioneer in rights to a context of active resistance

Argentina has long been a global model for human rights progress. The passage of the Gender Identity Law in 2012, championed by civil society in collaboration with progressive lawmakers, set a regional precedent by recognizing the self-affirmed gender identity of trans individuals. Organizations like the Argentine LGBT Federation (FALGBT) and the Argentine Association of Transvestites, Transsexuals, and Transgenders (ATTTA), alongside prominent activists such as Lohana Berkins and Marcela Romero, were instrumental in this achievement.

However, this progress has faced serious threats. The election of Javier Milei in the 2023 presidential election ushered in a period of significant regression. The Milei administration has employed anti-LGBTQI rhetoric, dismantled key institutions such as the National Institute Against Discrimination, Xenophobia, and Racism (INADI)³ and the Ministry of Women, Gender, and Diversity, and presided

³ Presentes. (2024). *Argentina 2024: el año de la destrucción de políticas públicas de géneros y diversidad.* https://agenciapresentes.org/2024/12/20/argentina-2024-el-ano-de-la-destruccion-de-políticas-publicas-de-genero-y-diversidad/

over an alarming rise in hate crimes.⁴ Official statements delegitimizing diverse sexual identities and explicitly targeting trans rights have further fueled public hostility.

In response, civil society has mounted active resistance, utilizing a range of strategies to combat these attacks on rights and dignity:

- **Mass mobilization:** In response to Milei's overtly LGBTQIphobic rhetoric, tens of thousands of Argentinians mobilized on February 1, 2025, staging mass protests across the country.⁵ Demonstrators demanded respect for LGBTQI rights and rejected the erosion of equality and inclusion. These powerful demonstrations not only amplified public pressure but also forced the government to confront widespread dissent.
- **Legislative advocacy:** Prominent advocates in Congress, including Esteban Paulón⁶ and Maximiliano Ferraro, used their platforms to challenge the administration's hate speech and harmful policies. By publicly condemning the government's rhetoric, they framed Milei's actions as a direct assault on security, dignity, and fundamental rights. Their advocacy elevated the visibility of trans and gender diverse issues within national debates.
- Media campaigns and storytelling: Civil society organizations and activists strategically
 leveraged media narratives to highlight the rollback of rights and the devastating human cost of
 discrimination. Through compelling storytelling, they drew upon Argentina's history of progress
 to remind both the public and the international community of the stakes involved in this
 moment of regression.
- **International advocacy:** Recognizing the global implications of Milei's actions, local groups have mobilized support from international human rights organizations to amplify their message. This has increased external pressure on the government to uphold its human rights obligations.
- **Grassroots organizing:** At the community level, activists have worked to sustain momentum despite the repression, ensuring that marginalized voices remain at the center of resistance efforts. This includes the documentation of hate crimes and the development of local support networks for affected individuals.

These strategies exemplify the resilience of Argentina's civil society, showcasing the importance of alliances, mobilization, and persistent advocacy in the fight against democratic backsliding.

⁴ Human Rights Watch. (2025). *Informe Mundial sobre Derechos Humanos*. https://www.hrw.org/es/world-report/2025/country-Steps/argentina#1f4d6f

⁵ Deutsche Welle, (2025). *Masiva protesta contra Milei en defensa de la diversidad.* https://www.dw.com/es/masiva-protesta-contra-milei-en-defensa-de-la-diversidad/a-71484186

⁶ Page 12. (2025). Esteban Paulón y un duro discurso contra los ataques de Milei. https://www.pagina12.com.ar/802067-esteban-paulon-y-un-duro-discurso-contra-los-ataques-de-mile.

While Argentina's struggle highlights the erosion of institutional rights, Pakistan offers another lens — one that centers on systemic exclusion and the ongoing battle for visibility and inclusion in democracy.

For Pakistan's trans and gender diverse community, the fight for dignity and equality has never been passive. It is a struggle forged in resilience, rooted in justice, and carried by a collective will to challenge systemic exclusion. The Transgender Persons (Protection of Rights) Act of 2018 was a moment of triumph — a promise that trans and gender diverse individuals could finally access their rightful place in Pakistan's democratic processes and society. But promises can be fragile, and the journey to uphold them requires vigilance, strength, and bold action.

A historic law under threat

The 2018 Act was a milestone, granting trans and gender diverse individuals the right to self-identity, legal recognition, and protection from discrimination. It was a beacon of progress in a region where trans lives have long been marginalized. Yet, in 2023, the Federal Shariat Court struck at its heart, ruling key provisions 'un-Islamic' and revoking rights that had empowered trans people to update their legal documents and claim their identities.⁷

This decision didn't just strip away legal protections; it silenced a promise. Without proper documentation, thousands of trans individuals were excluded from the 2024 elections, denied the right to vote, and subjected to systemic barriers that eroded their access to democracy.⁸

Political participation: A defiant response

But progress is never gifted — it is demanded. The trans community has refused to be erased, turning barriers into battlegrounds for justice:

- **Breaking barriers in local governance:** In 2023, the Sindh Cabinet reserved seats for trans representatives in local councils, marking a critical victory. Leaders like Shahzadi Rai and Chandni Shah stepped into these roles, symbolizing the power of inclusion at the local level.⁹
- **Independent candidacies:** Trans activists demonstrated their political courage in the 2024 general elections. Candidates like Nayyab Ali, Sobia Khan, and others ran independently, asserting their presence in a political sphere that often seeks to exclude them.¹⁰

⁷ Deutsche Welle (DW). (2023, May 20). *Pakistani trans activists to appeal Sharia court ruling. DW.* https://p.dw.com/p/4RcGu

⁸ The Daily Star. (2024). *Pakistan elections 2024: Widespread exclusion of the Trans community.* https://www.thedailystar.net/opinion/geopolitical-in-sights/news/pakistan-elections-2024-widespread-exclusion-the-trans-community-3538386

⁹ Dawn. (2023, June 5). With 155 members, PPP maintains top position in Karachi City Council after reserved seats allocation. https://www.dawn.com/news/1758012

¹⁰ Voice of America. (2023, July 19). *Transgender candidate hopes to make history at Pakistani polls. VOA News.* https://www.voanews.com/a/transgender-candidate-hopes-to-make-history-at-pakistani-polls/7469730.html

• **Voter mobilization:** Despite the challenges, grassroots efforts registered over 3,000 trans voters, a testament to the community's unyielding determination to be seen, counted, and included.¹¹

Leaders like Shahzadi Rai, Nayyab Ali, and others have become symbols of possibility, defying societal stereotypes and demonstrating that trans visibility is not just an act of resistance but a pathway to transformation.

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The cases of Argentina and Pakistan reveal that the fight for trans rights is fraught with challenges, from democratic backsliding to systemic exclusion. Yet, they also demonstrate the power of collective action, strategic alliances, and persistent advocacy in overcoming these barriers.

In Argentina, civil society's response to the erosion of rights highlights the importance of mobilization, legislative advocacy, and international solidarity. Meanwhile, Pakistan's trans community has shown how localized reforms, grassroots organizing, and electoral participation can create meaningful change, even in hostile environments.

These lessons are crucial as trans and gender diverse movements globally face growing opposition from well-funded anti-gender networks. Argentina and Pakistan offer hope, showing that progress is possible through resilience, innovation, and unwavering commitment to justice. Together, these narratives reaffirm that even in the darkest times, the fight for equality continues to advance.

Advancing rights: Identity, voting, and representation for trans and gender diverse people

Across the globe, trans and gender diverse people are at the forefront of battles for legal recognition, access to voting, and equitable political representation. These struggles are not isolated; they form a continuum of advocacy aimed at dismantling systemic barriers and achieving self-determination. By examining global examples of progress and resistance, this section highlights how trans and gender diverse communities challenge setbacks, achieve milestones, and reimagine power structures — often in the face of persistent challenges.

¹¹ The Daily Star, 2024.

Gender identity recognition and resistance

The fight for legal recognition of gender identity has been a cornerstone of advocacy led by trans and gender diverse activists and organizations. This ongoing struggle seeks to secure dignity, respect, and autonomy in societies that have historically marginalized and violated the rights of these communities. Achievements in this arena have involved a range of actions — from judicial rulings and public policy design to legislative advocacy and the eventual passage of laws. These advancements have occurred in diverse political landscapes, some characterized by criminalization and persecution, and others supported by democratic institutions committed to human rights.

Globally, over 50 countries now provide pathways for changing gender markers on legal documents, according to ILGA World's Trans Legal Mapping Report.¹² However, these processes vary widely, ranging from progressive self-determination laws to restrictive, invasive requirements. The strategies that have driven this progress highlight the diversity and adaptability of trans advocacy:

- **Judicial litigation:** Courts have played pivotal roles in advancing gender identity rights. For instance, the European Court of Human Rights ruled in 2023 that Hungary had violated the rights of a trans person by failing to provide accessible procedures for modifying sex/ gender on documents.¹³ This ruling set an important precedent, particularly in contexts where governments actively block legal recognition.¹⁴
- **Legislative advocacy:** Persistent engagement with lawmakers has secured transformative legislation, as seen in Germany. In 2024, the Self-Determination Act was passed after years of advocacy and legal precedents, including court rulings from 2016 and 2018.¹⁵ This law simplifies legal gender changes and eliminates invasive requirements, creating a model for progressive policy design.
- **Grassroots campaigns:** Local organizations, such as Colombia's GAAT Foundation (Fundación Grupo de Acción y Apoyo a personas Trans), have mobilized communities and provided direct support for legal document changes. Their Transidentifiquémonos project has helped countless individuals correct their identity documents, advancing legal recognition for trans and non-binary individuals.¹⁶
- **International pressure:** Advocacy at global forums has reinforced national efforts. Malta's Gender Identity, Gender Expression, and Sex Characteristics Act (2024)¹⁷ benefited from international dialogues that emphasized self-determination and the rights of non-binary individuals.

¹² ILGA World. (2020). Trans Legal Mapping Report: Recognition before the law. https://ilga.org/trans-legal-mapping-report/

¹³ European Court of Human Rights. (2023). Judgment in Hungary. Retrieved from https://hudoc.echr.coe.int/

¹⁴ Amnistía Internacional. (2023). *Hungría: Los tribunales europeos se mantienen firmes contra las políticas de asilo ilegales y las violaciones de los derechos de las personas transgénero*. https://www.amnesty.org/es/latest/news/2023/06/hungary-european-courts-stand-firm-against-authorities-unlawful-asylum-policies-and-violations-of-transgender-rights/.

¹⁵ Human Rights Watch. (2024, 12 de abril). *Germany's landmark vote on trans rights law.* https://www.hrw.org/news/2024/04/12/germany-landmark-vote-trans-rights-law

¹⁶GAAT. (2021). Transidentifiquémonos: Informe sobre barreras socioculturales e institucionales de personas trans en Bogotá, Medellín y Barranquilla: El derecho a la identidad como base fundamental de acceso a los derechos de las personas trans en Colombia. https://fundaciongaat.org/

¹⁷ Government of Malta. (2024). *Gender Identity, Gender Expression and Sex Characteristics (Amendment) Act, 2024 (Act No. XXV of 2024). Government Gazette of Malta*, No. 21,284, 12 July 2024. https://www.justiceservices.gov.mt/eli/act/2024/25

Mexico's National Electoral Institute (INE) also exemplifies progress. In 2023, the INE endorsed the recognition of non-binary people on voter ID cards and approved credentials for trans people based on self-perceived gender identity, removing bureaucratic barriers to political participation.¹⁸

These examples illustrate how targeted advocacy and strategic action can challenge systemic barriers and create pathways for the legal recognition of gender identity, serving as powerful tools for inclusion and justice.

Trans voting rights _____

The fight to secure voting rights for trans and gender diverse people has become a critical pillar of advocacy for political and social recognition. Historically excluded from democratic processes, this population has faced numerous barriers — ranging from discriminatory laws and mismatched identity documents to harassment and systemic prejudice at polling stations. In response, civil society organizations, grassroots activists, and electoral authorities have worked to eliminate these barriers, ensuring that trans individuals can exercise their democratic rights.

Efforts to secure voting rights for trans individuals have employed strategies such as direct collaboration with electoral authorities, pre-election monitoring, and grassroots mobilization:

- **Collaboration with electoral authorities:** Mexico's INE adopted a groundbreaking protocol in 2017 to ensure that trans and gender diverse individuals could vote without discrimination. Measures included training electoral officials, respecting individuals' names and pronouns, and placing informational materials at polling stations. ¹⁹ Colombia and Peru followed suit, implementing similar protocols in 2020²⁰ and 2021, ²¹ respectively.
- **Monitoring and documentation:** Organizations in countries like Peru, Colombia, and Guatemala²² have documented instances of violence and discrimination against trans voters during elections. These reports have strengthened the case for policy reforms and provided critical evidence to hold governments accountable for ensuring safe and inclusive elections.

¹⁸ Instituto Nacional Electoral (INE). (2023). Aprueba INE incorporación del dato que reconozca a las personas no binarias en la credencial para votar. Central Electoral INE. https://centralelectoral.ine.mx/2023/02/27/aprueba-ine-incorporacion-del-dato-que-reconozca-a-las-personas-no-binarias-en-la-credencial-para-votar/

¹⁹ INE. (2018). *Protocolo para adoptar las medidas tendientes a garantizar a las personas trans el ej*ercicio del voto en igualdad de condiciones y sin discriminación en todos los tipos de elección y mecanismos de participación ciudadana. https://www.ine.mx/wp-content/uploads/2018/06/DECEyEC-Protocolo-Trans.pdf

²⁰ Consejo Nacional Electoral. (2020). *Resolución No. 3480 de 2020, Protocolo para promover medidas que garanticen el derecho al voto de las personas trans (transgénero, transexuales y travestis) en igualdad de condiciones y libre de discriminación.* https://www.moe.org.co/wp-content/uploads/2020/12/moe.pdf

²¹ ONPE. (2022). *Resolución Jefatural Nº 000618-2023-JN/ONPE: Protocolo para garantizar el derecho al voto de las personas Trans y No-Binarias en la Jornada Electoral.* https://busquedas.elperuano.pe/dispositivo/NL/2185558-1

²² Observatorio para la Promoción del Voto de las Mujeres Trans Guatemaltecas. (2019). *Informe de observación de la violencia electoral y participación política de las personas trans guatemaltecas. Red Multicultural de Mujeres Trans de Guatemala*. http://www.redmmutransgt.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/01/2019-Informe-de-Observacio%CC%81n-de-la-Violencia-Electoral-y-Participacio%CC%81n-Poli%CC%81tica-de-las-Personas-Trans-Guatemaltecas.pdf

Inclusive electoral protocols highlight the importance of dismantling systemic barriers and ensuring that all citizens can exercise their right to vote. While progress has been made in some countries, the persistence of structural inequality and stigma demonstrates the ongoing need for advocacy and vigilance.

Political	representation
quotas ₋	

The implementation of quotas for political representation has become a powerful mechanism for reshaping traditional power structures and ensuring the inclusion of historically marginalized groups. These measures aim not only to address systemic inequalities but also to create opportunities for diverse voices to influence political decisions that shape societies as a whole.

The success of political quotas often relies on a combination of strategies tailored to specific national contexts:

- **Judicial litigation:** Legal action has been critical in enforcing quotas. In Mexico, activists and organizations successfully litigated for the implementation of "rainbow quotas" in the 2021 elections, guaranteeing LGBTQI participation in elected office.²³
- **Community mobilization:** Grassroots activism has pressured governments to adopt and enforce quotas. In Bangladesh, the visibility and organization of the hijra community enabled their inclusion in reserved parliamentary seats.²⁴
- **Collaboration with political parties:** In Brazil, gender quotas explicitly include trans women, while voluntary quotas in Australia²⁵ have further increased representation. These examples highlight the importance of party commitment to advancing LGBTQI inclusion.
- **Monitoring and Accountability:** Effective quota implementation requires robust oversight. In Mexico, civil society organizations monitored compliance and exposed fraudulent candidacies, ensuring that quotas genuinely benefited LGBTQI candidates.²⁶

While quotas are powerful tools for fostering representation, their success depends on their effective enforcement and the willingness of institutions to hold themselves accountable. Countries like Brazil and Mexico have demonstrated the transformative potential of inclusive quotas, proving that equitable political systems strengthen democracies and promote justice.

²³ Instituto Nacional Electoral (INE). (2023, 25 de noviembre). *Determina INE forma en que implementará acciones afirmativas en el registro de candidaturas del PEF 2023-2024*. https://centralelectoral.ine.mx/2023/11/25/determina-ine-forma-en-que-implementara-acciones-afirmativas-en-el-registro-de-candidaturas-del-pef-2023-2024/

²⁴ Anjum, S. (2019, 15 de febrero). *Por primera vez habrá candidaturas transgénero en las elecciones del Parlamento Nacional de Bangladesh.* Global Voices. https://es.globalvoices.org/2019/02/15/por-primera-vez-habra-candidatos-transgenero-en-las-elecciones-del-parlamento-nacional-de-bangladesh/

²⁵ United Nations Development Program (UNDP).(2023). Building Inclusive Democracies: LGBTI+ Political and Electoral Processes. https://www.undp.org/sites/g/files/zskgke326/files/2023-11/undp-building-inclusive-democracies-lgbti-political-electoral-processes_0.pdf

²⁶ El País. (2024, 27 de junio). *La autoridad electoral abre una investigación por fraude contra los ocho hombres que ganaron en Michoacán como mujeres transgénero.* https://elpais.com/mexico/2024-06-27/la-autoridad-electoral-abre-una-investigacion-por-fraude-contra-los-ocho-hombres-que-ganaron-en-michoacan-como-mujeres-transgenero.html

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Gender identity recognition, access to voting, and representation are foundational to the inclusion of trans and gender diverse people in political life. These struggles do more than empower individuals — they reinforce democratic systems by ensuring that all citizens have a voice. Global examples of resistance and progress demonstrate that meaningful change is possible when narratives, collective action, and political will converge. Political quotas, when combined with these elements, offer a vital pathway to a fairer and more representative future.

Trans Candidates: Advancing trans political representation

Running for office as a trans or gender diverse person is an act of courage and defiance in a world where systemic barriers, social prejudice, and outright violence often define the political landscape. Across the globe, trans individuals who step into the political arena confront threats, discrimination, and institutional hurdles, yet their participation is a powerful testament to resilience and the transformative potential of inclusion. For those considering running for office or seeking to understand what it means to run as a trans person, the experiences of trans and gender diverse candidates around the world reveal both the challenges and the impact of their journeys.

The realities of running as a trans candidate

Election campaigns can expose trans candidates to significant hostility, including hate speech, physical threats, and media scrutiny aimed at discrediting their gender identity. In Brazil, where trans politicians are increasingly visible, candidates like Benny Briolly have faced death threats and violence but have refused to back down, seeing their campaigns as acts of survival and resistance.²⁷ Similarly, in Peru, Gahela Cari, an Indigenous trans woman and former congressional candidate, shared how her campaign meant enduring societal stigma while advocating for LGBTQI rights and Indigenous issues. Reflecting on her experience, she stated, "I suffered, in my own flesh, the consequences of inequality, discrimination, violence, and corruption".²⁸

²⁷ AP News. (2023). *Trans candidates face violence and threats during campaigns in Brazil.* https://apnews.com/article/41e80c76edee7fea645bd6e859ee0143

²⁸ RFI. (2020). *Indigenous trans candidate in Peru highlights inequality and discrimination*. Retrieved from https://www.rfi.fr/en/wires/20200126-peru-they-teach-you-be-ashamed-indigenous-trans-candidate-says

Even in countries with strong democratic institutions, trans candidates are often forced to navigate legal and administrative hurdles, such as mismatched identity documents, that make authentic campaigning difficult. In the United States, Mel Manuel, a transgender and nonbinary candidate for Congress, ran despite slim chances of winning, explaining that their campaign was about "normalizing trans identities" and showing that trans people belong in all spaces of society.²⁹

Global progress and representation

Despite these challenges, trans and gender diverse individuals have made significant strides globally, holding positions of power that would have been unimaginable a few decades ago. In Japan, Tomoya Hosoda broke barriers in 2017 as the first openly transgender man to hold public office as a city councilor in Iruma,³⁰ demonstrating that trans leadership can thrive even in traditionally conservative societies. In Sri Lanka, Chanu Nimesha became the first openly transgender candidate for parliamentary elections in 2024, campaigning on a platform of inclusion and challenging deeply entrenched societal norms.³¹

In New Zealand, Georgina Beyer³² paved the way as the world's first openly transgender mayor in 1995 and later became the first openly transgender member of a national parliament in 1999. Her groundbreaking journey inspired generations of trans leaders, proving that political success is possible even in the face of widespread prejudice.

Latin America has also seen a surge in trans political participation. In Mexico, María San Clemente García and Salma Luevano were elected to Congress, ³³ championing LGBTQI rights in the legislature. Chile celebrated the election of Emilia Schneider as its first openly transgender national deputy. ³⁴ In Brazil, Duda Salabert and Ericka Hilton became trailblazers joining Congress in 2022, ³⁵ despite the country's staggering levels of anti-trans violence. Brazil's Voto Com Orgulho initiative identified over 350 LGBTQI candidates in the same year, highlighting the growing momentum for inclusion, though the country also continues to hold the grim distinction of leading the world in trans homicides. ³⁶

²⁹ Economic Times. (2023). *In U.S., transgender candidates enter political lion's den.* Retrieved from https://m.economictimes.com/news/international/world-news/in-us-transgender-candidates-enter-political-lions-den/articleshow/114834838.cms

³⁰ Out Japan. (2017). Tomoya Hosoda becomes Japan's first trans man to be elected in Iruma City. http://out-japan.com/tomoya-hosoda-becomes-japans-first-trans-man-to-be-elected-in-iruma-city/.

³¹ Reuters. (2024). *Sri Lanka's first transgender candidate hopes to break political, social barriers*. Retrieved from https://www.reuters.com/world/asia-pacific/sri-lankas-first-transgender-candidate-hopes-break-political-social-barriers-2024-11-13/

³² NZ History. (n.d.). *Georgina Beyer becomes first transgender woman elected to Parliament*. Retrieved from https://nzhistory.govt.nz/page/georgina-beyer-becomes-first-transgender-woman-elected-parliament

³³ El Financiero. (2021, August 30). *Salma Luévano y María Clemente, las primeras dos diputadas trans en la 65 Legislatura*. Retrieved from https://www.elfinanciero.com.mx/nacional/2021/08/30/salma-luevano-y-maria-clemente-las-primeras-dos-diputadas-trans-en-la-65-legislatura/

³⁴ Agencia Presentes. (2021, November 22). *Histórico: Emilia Schneider es la primera mujer trans electa como diputada en Chile*. Retrieved from https://agenciapresentes.org/2021/11/22/historico-emilia-schneider-es-la-primera-mujer-trans-electa-como-diputada-en-chile/

³⁵ Phillips, T. (2022, October 3). 'A victory for democracy': Brazil elections see historic wins for trans and Indigenous candidates. The Guardian. Retrieved from https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/oct/03/brazil-left-election-wins-trans-indigenous-candidates

³⁶ Transrespect versus Transphobia Worldwide. (n.d.). *About the TvT project.* Retrieved February 15, 2025, from https://transrespect.org/en/about/tvt-project/

Conclusion ____

Running for office as a trans person is bold, it's revolutionary — and it's about more than you. It's about carrying the dreams of your community into spaces that weren't built for us, breaking down walls so the next generation doesn't have to climb as high. When you run, you're saying, "We belong here," and that's a message the world needs to hear.

It won't be easy. You'll face ignorance, maybe even hate, and there will be moments that test you. But every conversation you have, every door you knock on, every person who sees you standing in your truth — that's a shift. That's change happening in real-time. Even if you don't win, your campaign will open minds, push boundaries, and make space for others to follow.

Running isn't just about politics; it's about showing up for your people, for yourself, for what's possible. It's about creating a future where someone like you running for office isn't revolutionary — it's just normal. So, if you're thinking about running, know this: you don't have to have all the answers, and you don't have to be perfect. What you bring — your perspective, your story, your courage — is already enough to spark change. The world needs you to show up — you might just surprise yourself.



For practical guidance and inspiration, explore the companion resource, **Politics** is Trans Toolkit: Workbook for advocacy and action.



This resource is designed to help you turn insight into action. It offers tools to refine your advocacy, craft strategic plans, and

connect your vision with transformative political participation. Dive into these exercises to activate your strengths, build alliances, and take concrete steps toward creating a more just and equitable future.

Remember that every political strategy begins with the unwavering conviction that your voice is essential and powerful. Being a trans and gender diverse person is not a limitation — it is a declaration of liberation and resilience. It is a unique starting point to dismantle unequal systems, envision new possibilities, and push for transformative change. Through the tools and exercises you have explored, you are equipped to approach your participation with clarity, strategy, and courage.

Your lived experience and vision hold the power to redefine political spaces, not only creating real impact for today but also laying the foundations for liberation and justice for those who follow. Liberation is not simply the absence of oppression; it is the presence of opportunity, representation, and community thriving. Trust in your capacity to drive change, lean on your networks, and build alliances with those who share the collective dream of justice and equity.

Liberation requires consistency, reflection, and a willingness to reimagine the path forward. Do not be afraid to adapt, persist, and create. The world needs trans voices — not just to strengthen democracy but to inspire the future we all deserve. Your advocacy is a powerful step toward liberation for all.



