INCLUSIVE PROGRESS

CENTERING LGBTI+ INCLUSION AND HUMAN RIGHTS IN THE 2030 AGENDA

LGBTI STAKEHOLDER GROUP

LEAVE NO ONE BEHIND

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY*

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development vows to leave no one behind, yet rising inequalities and rollbacks of rights disproportionately affect LGBTI+[1] people, especially transgender and non-binary individuals. Systemic discrimination is worsening barriers to healthcare and work worldwide. Extreme-right rhetoric denies some LGBTI+ identities and erases legal protections. Climate change, economic instability, conflicts, and health crises further harm vulnerable communities, with LGBTI+ individuals hit hardest.

The theme, "Advancing sustainable, inclusive, science- and evidence-based solutions for the 2030 Agenda and its SDGs," underscores the need for human-rights-based, intersectional, community-centered responses that include LGBTI+ people. We recommend:

SDG 3: Good Health and Well-being

LGBTI+ individuals, especially transgender and non-binary people, face systemic healthcare barriers like discrimination, denial of gender-affirming care, and exclusion from coverage.

- Universal public quality healthcare for all, including gender-affirming care and mental health services.
- Increased health financing and LGBTI+-inclusive health policies, particularly in developing countries, to close healthcare gaps.

SDG 5: Gender Equality

Gender equality requires fully including gender-diverse individuals. Patriarchal systems enforcing strict norms hinder progress.

- Full legal recognition and protections for transgender and non-binary people, safeguarding their rights amid growing attacks, as a prerequisite for gender equality.
- Meaningful engagement of LBTI communities in policies designed to improve the lives of all women and girls, ensuring no one is left behind in gender equity efforts.

SDG 8: Decent Work and Economic Growth

LGBTI+ people face economic marginalization from workplace discrimination, lack of legal gender recognition, and limited financial access.

- Workplace protections and inclusive labor policies to eliminate economic marginalization of LGBTI+ people and ensure equal employment opportunities.
- Strengthening financial inclusion mechanisms, including access to credit and entrepreneurship opportunities for LGBTI+ individuals.

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[1] The term LGBTI+ is used in this document as a shorthand for persons of diverse Sexual Orientations, Gender Identities, and Expressions, and Sex Characteristics (SOGIESC), recognizing the many words used in different cultures and by persons to reflect who they are.

SDG 14: Life Below Water

Climate justice must include LGBTI+ people, who face disproportionate displacement, migration, and livelihood loss from environmental degradation.

- Climate resilience strategies that prioritize vulnerable communities, ensuring their inclusion in environmental policymaking.
- Equitable coastal and marine resource management policies that integrate social equity and the needs of marginalized populations.

SDG 17: Partnerships for the Goals

- Stronger partnerships between governments, civil society, and the private sector to safeguard human rights and advance inclusive solutions.
- Strengthening asylum pathways: countries must adopt inclusive asylum policies that recognize LGBTI+ persecution as a legitimate ground for refugee protection, ensuring safety for those facing discrimination.

To fulfill the 2030 Agenda, governments and institutions must adopt interconnected, evidence-based solutions. Aligned with the 2025 HLPF theme, efforts must uphold everyone's rights, including LGBTI+ individuals. Fragmented solutions are not an option. Our crises are interconnected, as must be our responses. By breaking silos and championing human rights, we can build a more inclusive future.

INTRODUCTION

As the 2025 High-Level Political Forum convenes under the theme "*Advancing sustainable, inclusive, science‑ and evidence‑based solutions for the 2030 Agenda and its SDGs*," it is imperative that the voices and lived realities of LGBTI+ communities are centered in our collective efforts. This Position Paper by the LGBTI Stakeholder Group builds upon the Executive Summary's call for human-rights-based and intersectional action, laying out a clear roadmap for how Member States, UN agencies, civil society, and the private sector can align with the core promise of Agenda 2030: to leave no one behind. By unpacking the structural barriers faced by LGBTI+ people, especially by transgender and non-binary individuals, this document underscores why inclusive policy is not an optional add-on but a prerequisite for truly sustainable development.

Moreover, LGBTI+ inclusion is both a human rights imperative and a catalyst for sustainable development. Ensuring the dignity, safety, and full participation of LGBTI+ people not only upholds international human rights obligations but also strengthens the effectiveness of SDG implementation. Inclusive policies help dismantle structural barriers, reduce inequality, and unlock the social and economic potential of communities often left behind. When LGBTI+ individuals are empowered to contribute without fear of discrimination, societies become healthier, more resilient, and better equipped to achieve the ambitious targets of the 2030 Agenda.

This paper is divided in 6 main sections. The first section introduces the LGBTI Stakeholder Group: a globally networked coalition of grassroots activists, civil society organizations, and advocates united in ensuring that lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, intersex, and other gender-diverse peoples are neither invisible nor marginalized in sustainable development processes. After that, the SDG Assessment section provides an overview of each SDG and its relation to the LGBTI+ community; in this section we take a close look at the current state of affairs, while also highlighting examples of best practices from around the world, policy frameworks and grassroots initiatives that successfully uphold the SDGs without leaving LGBTI+ people behind. After the assessment, we provide detailed recommendations rooted in the SDGs under review this year: SDG 3 (Good Health and Well-Being), SDG 5 (Gender Equality), SDG 8 (Decent Work and Economic Growth), SDG 14 (Life Below Water), and SDG 17 (Partnerships for the Goals). Finally, the Conclusion calls upon Member States to redouble their commitments, resist regressive backlash, and enact policies that affirm the dignity and rights of all people. Together, these sections comprise this year's LGBTI Stakeholder Group Position Paper in the framework of the High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development.

The LGBTI Stakeholder Group

The LGBTI Stakeholder Group is one of the recognized constituencies within the Major Groups and Other Stakeholders (MGOS) Coordination Mechanism that actively contributes to shaping, reviewing, and implementing the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Since its inception, this collective has worked to ensure that the lived experiences and urgent needs of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and intersex people are fully visible and meaningfully addressed in global sustainable development efforts. Comprising a diverse network of civil society organizations, grassroots activists, and advocates from every region of the world, the LGBTI Stakeholder Group brings a united voice to the High-Level Political Forum (HLPF): the United Nations' central platform for reviewing global progress on the SDGs. Our presence in this forum is essential to push back against invisibility, ensure meaningful participation, and advocate for policy changes that reflect the realities of LGBTI+ people.

SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS (SDG) INDIVIDUAL ASSESSMENT

SDG 3

ENSURE HEALTHY LIVES AND PROMOTE WELL-BEING FOR ALL AT ALL AGES

Introduction

As civil society organizations committed to advancing human rights and inclusive development, we call on Member States to ensure that the review of Sustainable Development Goal 3, which commits to ensuring healthy lives and promoting well-being for all people, without exception, explicitly includes the health needs and rights of LGBTI+ individuals. Among its nine targets, several are particularly critical for advancing the rights and health of LGBTI+ people, who face disproportionately high barriers in healthcare. These include the targets to end epidemics such as AIDS, to guarantee universal access to sexual and reproductive health services, and to promote mental health and well-being across the life course[2]. Despite global commitments to universal health coverage, LGBTI+ populations continue to face significant barriers to healthcare access, stigma and discrimination within health systems[3]. A focused review on this topic, which takes into account the realities, stigma, discrimination and acts of violence faced by LGBTI+ people, will enable governments to identify policy gaps, strengthen inclusive practices, and fulfill the promise embedded in the 2030 Agenda to "leave no one behind."[4]

Overview of SDG 3 and the "leave no one behind" principle

SDG 3 is dedicated to ensuring healthy lives and promoting well-being for all at every stage of life. Integral to the 2030 Agenda is the commitment to "leave no one behind," which mandates that development efforts must prioritize those who are most marginalized, including LGBTI+ communities[5]. LGBTI+ people often endure systematic exclusion from national health strategies and are underserved by public health systems, thereby hindering the full realization of SDG 3[6]. Emphasizing the "leave no one behind" principle in the context of LGBTI+ health is essential for upholding national and international commitments to equity, dignity, and non-discrimination[7].

Why LGBTI+ inclusion is critical to global health equity

Stigma, discrimination, and systemic neglect continue to undermine the health and well-being of LGBTI+ people, but also to limit access to health services across many countries. Legal and

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[2] Ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages, targets https://sdgs.un.org/goals/goal3#targets_and_indicators

[3] Report of the Independent Expert on protection against violence and discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity. The right to the enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of physical and mental health of persons, communities and populations affected by discrimination and violence based on sexual orientation and gender identity in relation to the Sustainable Development Goals, A/HRC/50/27, para 18-23 https://docs.un.org/en/A/HRC/50/27

[4] United Nations, "2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development," https://sdgs.un.org/2030agenda.

[5] United Nations, "SDG 3: Good Health and Well-being Overview," https://sdgs.un.org/goals/goal3.

[6] Improving LGBTI+Q+ health and well-being with consideration for SOGIESC https://www.who.int/activities/improving-lgbtqi-health-and-well--being-with-consideration-for-sogiesc

[7] Logie, C. H. (2021). Sexual rights and sexual pleasure: Sustainable Development Goals and the omitted dimensions of the leave no one behind sexual health agenda. Global Public Health, 18(1). https://doi.org/10.1080/17441692.2021.1953559

policy frameworks often criminalize same-sex relations or fail to provide protections against discrimination, while national health strategies, SDG implementation plans, and Voluntary National Reviews frequently overlook the intersectional vulnerabilities of LGBTI+ people[8]. Within healthcare settings, provider bias, lack of adequate training, and unsafe or hostile environments further deter LGBTI+ individuals from accessing essential services[9]. Moreover, the absence of comprehensive health data disaggregated by sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression, and sex characteristics (SOGIESC) perpetuates invisibility and hinders effective policy responses[10].

We urge Member States to build on these lessons by committing to data inclusion, legal and policy reforms, healthcare provider training, equitable funding, and the meaningful participation of LGBTI+ communities. Strengthening these actions is essential to fully realizing SDG 3 and upholding the 2030 Agenda's promise to leave no one behind.

Evidence of Health Inequities

● <u>Disparities in mental health, HIV, violence, and healthcare access for the LGBTI+ community</u>

LGBTI+ people disproportionately experience a significant disease burden all over the world[11]. Data shows that sexual and gender minorities are at higher risk of suffering HIV, sexually transmitted infections (STIs), STI-related cancer, physical and sexual violence[12], as well as harassment[13]. LGBTI+ women and gender non-conforming people face routine denial of bodily autonomy[14]. Evidence also suggests LGBTI+ people face common experiences which harm their well-being and access to health services, which include human rights violations such as torture, criminalization, involuntary medical procedures, denial of care, discriminatory attitudes, and inappropriate pathologizing[15]

Compared to cisgender heterosexuals, LGBTI+ people are more likely to experience poor mental health, including more severe depressive symptoms, higher probabilities of substance use,

[8] Report of the Independent Expert on protection against violence and discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity The right to the enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of physical and mental health of persons, communities and populations affected by discrimination and violence based on sexual orientation and gender identity in relation to the Sustainable Development Goals, A/HRC/50/27, para 18-23 https://docs.un.org/en/A/HRC/50/27

[9] European Journal of Public Health, Volume 29, Issue 5, October 2019, Pages 974–980, https://doi.org/10.1093/eurpub/cky226

[10] Right to the highest attainable standard of health and access to healthcare for LGBTI+ people in Europe, 2024, p29 https://rm.coe.int/prems-124824-gbr-2575-right-to-the-highest-attainable-standard-of-heal/1680b1ba4d

[11] World Health Organization, Frequently asked questions on sexual and gender diversity, health and human rights - an introduction to key concepts, 2024, p.8, https://cdn.who.int/media/docs/default-source/documents/gender/sogie---faq-final-08.10.2024.pdf?sfvrsn=ef076e29_3&download=true

[12] *Ibid*.

[13] Independent Expert on protection against violence and discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity, A/HRC/35/36, UN Human Rights Council, 19 April 2017, para 34, https://docs.un.org/en/A/HRC/35/36

[14] UN Human Rights Council, Violence and its impact on the right to health, Report of the Special Rapporteur on the right of everyone to the enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of physical and mental health, Tlaleng Mofoken, A/HRC/50/28, 2022, para. 30, https://docs.un.org/en/A/HRC/50/28

[15] World Health Organization, Improving LGBTI+Q+ health and well-being with consideration for SOGIESC, https://www.who.int/activities/improving-lgbtqi-health-and-well--being-with-consideration-for-sogiesc

anxiety, suicidality, and general distress[16]. These disparities emerge in early adolescence and continue throughout life[17]. Suicidality has also been found at higher rates for LGBTI+ people, peaking at adolescence and early adulthood[18]. Among African sexual minority women, elevated rates of psychological distress, depression, and suicidal ideation were related to experiences of hate speech, sexual violence, religion-based stigma, and discrimination[19]. Childhood trauma and minority stress have been identified as important factors regarding higher use of substances[20] and substance abuse disorders compared to cisgender heterosexuals[21].

Specific subgroups within the LGBTI+ community are more intensely affected by HIV, including transgender women and other transfeminine people and men who have sex with men[22]. Higher risk of HIV has been tied to structural factors such as violence, stigma and discrimination, even when same-sex behavior is permitted in the country[23]. Social and legal protections ease some of the barriers derived from stigma and discrimination. For example, in South Africa, where sexual orientation is constitutionally protected, men who have sex with men were more likely to disclose their sexual orientation when seeking care[24].

- Marginalized subgroups (transgender people, youth, intersex individuals)

Transgender and gender non-conforming people face unique challenges that reduce their access to health services. Lack of access to correct identification, gender marker changes in legal documents, and gender related stigma and discrimination in clinical services can impact their access not only to healthcare but also to HIV testing, prevention, and treatment services[25]. Compared to both non-LGBTI+ people and cisgender LGBTI+ people, transgender individuals have been recorded to have higher risks of mental health problems, self-harm, suicidality, and eating disorders[26].

Among LGBTI+ people, minority stress has been found to contribute to the ability to cope with their mental health, and is associated with an increased risk of substance use[27]. Those who

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[16] Bränström, R., Hughes, T.L., Pachankis, J.E. (2024). Global LGBTQ Mental Health. In: Hwahng, S.J., Kaufman, M.R. (eds) Global LGBTQ Health. Global LGBTQ Health. Springer, Cham., p. 46 https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-031-36204-0_3

[17] Mimiaga, M.J. et al. (2024). Global Epidemiology and Social-Ecological Determinants of Substance Use Disparities, Consequences of Use, and Treatment Options Among Sexual and Gender Minority Populations. In: Hwahng, S.J., Kaufman, M.R. (eds) Global LGBTQ Health. Global LGBTQ Health. Springer, Cham., p.234, https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-031-36204-0_8

[18] Bränström, R., Hughes, T.L., Pachankis, J.E. (2024). Global LGBTQ Mental Health. In: Hwahng, S.J., Kaufman, M.R. (eds) Global LGBTQ Health. Global LGBTQ Health. Springer, Cham., p. 47 https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-031-36204-0_3

[19] *Ibid.,* p. 51

[20] Mimiaga, M.J. et al. (2024). Global Epidemiology and Social-Ecological Determinants of Substance Use Disparities, Consequences of Use, and Treatment Options Among Sexual and Gender Minority Populations. In: Hwahng, S.J., Kaufman, M.R. (eds) Global LGBTQ Health. Global LGBTQ Health. Springer, Cham., p.210, https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-031-36204-0_8

[21] *Ibid.,* p.224, https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-031-36204-0_8

[22] *Ibid.,* p.185, https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-031-36204-0_8

[23] *Ibid.,* p.186, https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-031-36204-0_8

[24] *Ibid.,* p.195, https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-031-36204-0_8

[25] *Ibid.,* p.196, https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-031-36204-0_8

[26] Bränström, R., Hughes, T.L., Pachankis, J.E. (2024). Global LGBTQ Mental Health. In: Hwahng, S.J., Kaufman, M.R. (eds) Global LGBTQ Health. Global LGBTQ Health. Springer, Cham., p. 48 https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-031-36204-0_3

[27] Mimiaga, M.J. et al. (2024). Global Epidemiology and Social-Ecological Determinants of Substance Use Disparities, Consequences of Use, and Treatment Options Among Sexual and Gender Minority Populations. In: Hwahng, S.J., Kaufman, M.R. (eds) Global LGBTQ Health. Global LGBTQ Health. Springer, Cham., p.234, https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-031-36204-0_8

experience discrimination based on race, gender, class, age, or disability suffer the harms of LGBTI+ stigma disproportionately[28].

Moreover, transgender men experience specific challenges when accessing healthcare related to sexual and reproductive rights, which include misgendering (inadvertently and intentionally), institutional violence[29], trauma, stigmatizing experiences, lack of gender-affirming health care environments, and limited health care practitioner knowledge[30]. The reproductive health needs of transgender people, including contraception, best practices for STI testing, emergency contraception, abortion, fertility treatments, and antenatal, intrapartum, and postpartum care have not been adequately studied, which directly impacts the quality of service.[31]

Protections regarding wellbeing and the health of intersex people are scarce. Only six UN Member States (Germany, Greece, Iceland, Malta, Portugal, and Spain) prohibit medical interventions without free, prior, and fully informed consent. Greece and Malta specifically established sanctions for violating the prohibition[32]. Intersex people subjected to genital mutilation or unnecessary, irreversible, and involuntary surgery experience effects on their psychological, physical, and sexual and reproductive health[33]. Available information and data regarding the health and well-being of intersex individuals is currently limited[34]. Up to 1.7 of people are born intersex[35], however practices like surgery to attempt to change their sex characteristics, and birth certificate registration as male or female, represent a barrier on data collection[36].

Pathologisation of transgender and intersex persons remains a key factor preventing their access to health care. Besides, even in countries with 'trans health' structures that are functional, the implementation of comprehensive and holistic approaches to the health and well-being of transgender people continues to be a global objective to be achieved. For example, transgender people usually get misgendered in health-related services, being in the constant need to repeatedly explain their identities and their bodies to health care providers.

Moreover, intersex and transgender people face significant barriers in accessing gender-affirming healthcare. In certain regions, health services for SOGIESC diverse persons are often lumped under HIV-related clinical services for "Key Populations" such as cisgender sex workers

[28] United Nations, Independent Expert on Protection Against Violence and Discrimination Based on Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity, Ensuring healthy lives for all, leaving no-one behind; Tackling discrimination and violence based on sexual orientation and gender identity through the Sustainable Development Goals, https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/2023-03/Reader-friendly-Summary-IESOGI_HealthReport-A-HRC-50-27_0.pdf

[29] Mendieta A, Vidal-Ortiz S. Administering gender: transgender men's sexual and reproductive challenges in Argentina. Int J trans end Health. 2021 Sep 25;22(1-2):54-64. doi: 10.1080/15532739.2020.1819506.

[30] Halpern SD, Ubel PA, Caplan AL, Marion DW, Palmer AM, Schiding JK, et al. Solid-organ transplantation in HIV-infected patients. N Engl J Med. 2002;347:284-7.

[31] *Ibid.*

[32] ILGA World: Eliana Rubashkyn and Ilia Savelev, Intersex Legal Mapping Report: Global Survey on Legal Protections for People Born with Variations in Sex Characteristics (Geneva: ILGA World, December 2023).

[33] Bauer, M., Truffer, D., & Crocetti, D. (2020). Intersex human rights. The International Journal of Human Rights, 24(6), 724-749.

[34] Medina, C. & Mahowald, L. (2021). "Key Issues Facing People With Intersex Traits", The Center for American Progress, https://www.americanprogress.org/article/key-issues-facing-people-intersex-traits/

[35] Frieder, A. (2025). "Intersex Intervention: A Health and Human Rights Perspective", Harvard Human Rights Journal, Vol.38, https://journals.law.harvard.edu/hrj/2022/06/intersex-intervention-a-health-and-human-rights-perspective/

[36] InterAct (2020), "Intersex Data Collection: Your Guide to Question Design", https://interactadvocates.org/intersex-data-collection/#:~:text=Limitations%20of%20"Sex%20Assigned%20at,section%20below%20on%20organ%20inventories.

and MSM, ignoring the needs of other groups, such as transgender, intersex and gender non-conforming persons[37].

● The role of stigma, discrimination, and systemic neglect of the LGBTI+ community

LGBTI+ people experience higher levels of stigma and discrimination based on their sexual orientation, gender identity and expression[38]. Stigma is associated with biological, psychological and behavioral responses that result in physical and mental stress. LGBTI+ people experience stigma in both acute and chronic ways, which undermines their health and leads to increased risks for mental health[39]. In medical sectors, stigma has been linked to pathologization, conversion therapy[40], non-consensual surgeries, and other forms of medically sanctioned torture[41]. As previously stated, LGBTI+ people are at an elevated risk of suffering poor mental health, evidence suggests that this can be attributed, at least in part, to stigma and stress derived from it[42].

Discrimination has been found to play a double role in limiting people's access to healthcare, being both a cause and consequence of poor mental health, and negatively impacts well-being[43]. For transgender people, stigma is associated with low rates of access to health services[44]. In other words, stigma and discrimination not only directly impact the health and well-being of LGBTI+ individuals, but they also represent an invisible barrier to accessing quality health services.

Legal, Policy, and Systemic Barriers

● Criminalization and lack of protections

Laws and policies that criminalize diverse sexual orientations and gender identities result in health-related discrimination and violence[45]. In places where same-sex consensual sexual relations are criminalized, fear of arrest or prosecution may deter LGBTI+ people from seeking

[37] Chivuli Ukwimi, East Africa Trans Health & Advocacy Network, (2020) Legal Gender Recognition and Access to Trans-Affirming HealthCare in East Africa. P. 10
[38] World Health Organization, Frequently asked questions on sexual and gender diversity, health and human rights: an introduction to key concepts, 2024, p.6, https://www.who.int/publications/m/item/frequently-asked-questions-on-sexual-and-gender-diversity--health-and-human-rights--an-introduction-to-key-concepts
[39] Earnshaw, V.A., Logie, C., Wickersham, J.A., Kamarulzaman, A. (2024). LGBTQ Stigma. In: Hwahng, S.J., Kaufman, M.R. (eds) Global LGBTQ Health. Global LGBTQ Health. Springer, Cham., p. 28-29 https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-031-36204-0_2
[40] Report of the Independent Expert on protection against violence and discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity, A/HRC/35/36, para. 58, https://documents.un.org/doc/undoc/gen/g17/095/53/pdf/g1709553.pdf
[41] United Nations, Independent Expert on Protection Against Violence and Discrimination Based on Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity, Ensuring healthy lives for all, leaving no-one behind; Tackling discrimination and violence based on sexual orientation and gender identity through the Sustainable Development Goals, https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/2023-03/Reader-friendly-Summary-IESOGI_HealthReport-A-HRC-50-27_0.pdf
[42] Earnshaw, V.A., Logie, C., Wickersham, J.A., Kamarulzaman, A. (2024). LGBTQ Stigma. In: Hwahng, S.J., Kaufman, M.R. (eds) Global LGBTQ Health. Global LGBTQ Health. Springer, Cham., p. 53 https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-031-36204-0_2
[43] UN Human Rights Council, Report of the Special Rapporteur on the right of everyone to the enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of physical and mental health, A/HRC/35/21, 2017, para. 46, https://documents.un.org/doc/undoc/gen/g17/076/04/pdf/g1707604.pdf
[44] World Health Organization, Global HIV, Hepatitis and STIs Programmes, https://www.who.int/teams/global-hiv-hepatitis-and-stis-programmes/populations/transgender-people
[45] United Nations, Independent Expert on Protection Against Violence and Discrimination Based on Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity, Ensuring healthy lives for all, leaving no-one behind; Tackling discrimination and violence based on sexual orientation and gender identity through the Sustainable Development Goals, https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/2023-03/Reader-friendly-Summary-IESOGI_HealthReport-A-HRC-50-27_0.pdf

health services[46]. This has been identified as a structural factor that drives up the risks for HIV among LGBTI+ people, reducing access to HIV services and prevention policies[47]. Overall, criminalization and lack of protections function as a form of state-sanctioned violence, which in turn increases social prejudice and violence[48], from which health providers are not exempt.

● <u>Exclusion from national health strategies, SDG planning, VNRS, and absence of data</u>

While it is clear that reaching SDG goals requires a framework built upon indicators and statistical data, not just to achieve and monitor goals, but especially to inform policy[49], data regarding LGBTI+ people is limited. Targets regarding SDG 3 must take into account not just LGBTI+ people, but the inequalities, stigma, discrimination, and violence they face[50]. As explained previously, LGBTI+ people are at special risk of HIV infections, suffering poor mental health, and violence, thus any goal seeking to better the overall population's well-being regarding these issues must take into account the realities and particularities of specific groups. Nonetheless, there is a shortage of disaggregated health data regarding SOGIESC[51].

● <u>Healthcare provider bias, lack of training, and unsafe environments in health settings</u>

Worldwide, healthcare workers are infrequently trained to meet the needs of LGBTI+ people regarding reproductive and sexual health[52]. Reports of discrimination by medical providers include refusal to make appointments, refusal to treat patients, treatment of patients with gross disrespect or inferior care, violation of medical privacy, shaming and public depreciation[53]. More alarmingly, there have been incidents of physical and psychological violence and torture in healthcare settings that have also been documented, as well as stigmatizing beliefs among healthcare workers[54]. Studies have suggested that healthcare providers' stigma also impacts their treatment of HIV, showing reluctance to prescribe HIV preventive medication[55]. The

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[46] UN Human Rights Council, Report of the Independent Expert on protection against violence and discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity, A/HRC/35/36, 2017, para. 34, https://docs.un.org/en/A/HRC/35/36

[47] Beckham, S.W., Glick, J., Malone, J., Rich, A.J., Wirtz, A., Baral, S. (2024). HIV/AIDS Among Sexual and Gender Minority Communities Globally. In: Hwahng, S.J., Kaufman, M.R. (eds) Global LGBTQ Health. Global LGBTQ Health. Springer, Cham., p.194 https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-031-36204-0_7

[48] Xavier Hall, C.D., Rider, G.N., Bradford, N., Areba, E.M., Miller, K. (2024). Victimization and Intentional Injury in Global LGBTQI Populations. In: Hwahng, S.J., Kaufman, M.R. (eds) Global LGBTQ Health. Global LGBTQ Health. Springer, Cham., p.277 https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-031-36204-0_9

[49] UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Statistics Division, Sustainable Development Goal Indicator, https://unstats.un.org/sdgs

[50] United Nations, Independent Expert on Protection Against Violence and Discrimination Based on Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity, Ensuring healthy lives for all, leaving no-one behind; Tackling discrimination and violence based on sexual orientation and gender identity through the Sustainable Development Goals, https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/2023-03/Reader-friendly-Summary-IESOGI_HealthReport-A-HRC-50-27_0.pdf

[51] Ibid.

[52] UN Human Rights Council, Violence and its impact on the right to health, Report of the Special Rapporteur on the right of everyone to the enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of physical and mental health, Tlaleng Mofokeng, A/HRC/50/28, 2022, https://docs.un.org/en/A/HRC/50/28

[53] Report of the Independent Expert on protection against violence and discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity The right to the enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of physical and mental health of persons, communities and populations affected by discrimination and violence based on sexual orientation and gender identity in relation to the Sustainable Development Goals, A/HRC/50/27, para 21 https://docs.un.org/en/A/HRC/50/27

[54] World Health Organization, Frequently asked questions on sexual and gender diversity, health and human rights: an introduction to key concepts, 2024, p.9, https://cdn.who.int/media/docs/default-source/documents/gender/sogie---faq-final-08.10.2024.pdf?sfvrsn=ef076e29_3&download=true

[55] Earnshaw, V.A., Logie, C., Wickersham, J.A., Kamarulzaman, A. (2024). LGBTQ Stigma. In: Hwahng, S.J., Kaufman, M.R. (eds) Global LGBTQ Health. Global LGBTQ Health. Springer, Cham., p.28 https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-031-36204-0_2

behaviours of health providers have been shown to make LGBTI+ people reluctant to share personal and medical information[56] as well as negatively impact health-seeking[57], delaying or avoiding care because of experiences of stigma[58].

Examples of best practices

The following country-level initiatives highlight best practices in advancing LGBTI+ health and rights through inclusive policies, community-led approaches, and integrated health service delivery:

1. **Malta stands** for its comprehensive and inclusive approach to LGBTI+ rights and health. The country's legal framework, including the Gender Identity, Gender Expression, and Sex Characteristics Act (2015) and the ban on conversion therapy, ensures robust protections for LGBTI+ people. Malta guarantees free gender-affirming healthcare through its national health service and has depathologized transgender identities, prioritizing self-determination and informed consent. Besides, Malta is planning to cover gender affirming surgeries[59]. Strategic frameworks, including the LGBTIQ Equality Strategy and Action Plan 2023–2027[60] and the forthcoming National Sexual Health Strategy 2025–2030[61], further embed inclusion across health, education, and social policy. Malta's model demonstrates how legal reforms, inclusive health services, and active community engagement can work together to advance equity and fulfill the SDG commitment to leave no one behind.

2. **South Africa** has taken notable steps toward addressing the health needs of LGBTI+ populations through policy and programmatic action. South Africa adopted a dedicated National LGBTI+ HIV Plan (2017–2022), developed in collaboration with civil society, which provided a framework for tailored HIV prevention, mental health support, and access to gender-affirming care for key populations, including men who have sex with men, transgender people, and intersex individuals[62]. The plan emphasized human rights protections, community engagement, and training of healthcare workers. South Africa's Constitution also explicitly prohibits discrimination based on sexual orientation, and the government has recognized the need to sensitize health providers and improve service

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[56] Report of the Independent Expert on protection against violence and discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity The right to the enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of physical and mental health of persons, communities and populations affected by discrimination and violence based on sexual orientation and gender identity in relation to the Sustainable Development Goals, A/HRC/50/27, para 22 https://docs.un.org/en/A/HRC/50/27

[57] World Health Organization, Frequently asked questions on sexual and gender diversity, health and human rights: an introduction to key concepts, 2024, p.9, https://cdn.who.int/media/docs/default-source/documents/gender/sogie---faq-final-08.10.2024.pdf?sfvrsn=ef076e29_3&download=true

[58] Earnshaw, V.A., Logie, C., Wickersham, J.A., Kamarulzaman, A. (2024). LGBTQ Stigma. In: Hwahng, S.J., Kaufman, M.R. (eds) Global LGBTQ Health. Global LGBTQ Health. Springer, Cham., p.28 https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-031-36204-0_2

[59] Malta Announces Plans to Cover the Cost of Gender-Affirming Surgeries https://www.gendergp.com/malta-offers-free-gender-affirming-surgeries/

[60] LGBTI+Q Equality Strategy and Action Plan 2023–2027 https://humanrights.gov.mt/wp-content/uploads/2024/04/LGBTI+Q-Equality-Strategy-and-Action-Plan-2023-%E2%80%93-2027-EN-1.pdf?utm_source=chatgpt.com

[61] National Sexual Health Strategy 2025–2030 https://health.gov.mt/wp-content/uploads/2024/12/National_Sexual_Health_Strategy_2025_2030.pdf

[62] National LGBTI+ HIV Plan (2017–2022) https://sanac.org.za/wp-content/uploads/2017/06/LGBTI+-HIV-Plan-Final.pdf

delivery through the integration of LGBTI+ health content in public health training[63]. Despite these progressive frameworks, implementation challenges persist, including stigma in clinical settings and limited national data disaggregated by sexual orientation and gender identity.

3. **Thailand's** Key Population-Led Health Services model is an internationally recognized example of effective, community-driven healthcare. Launched in 2015, the model empowers trained members of key populations, including transgender people, men who have sex with men, and sex workers, to deliver HIV prevention, testing, and treatment services within their own communities[64]. This approach has led to significantly increased HIV testing and early diagnosis, expanded access to PrEP and antiretroviral treatment, and reduced stigma in service delivery through culturally competent, peer-led care[65]. The success of KPLHS resulted in its formal adoption by the Thai Ministry of Public Health and has influenced similar models across the Asia-Pacific region. Studies also confirm that KPLHS is cost-effective and achieves better client retention compared to traditional health services.

4. **In India**, where LGBTI+ people continue to face widespread stigma and exclusion from public services, community-led health initiatives have been a lifeline. One standout example is the Pehchan program[66], led by the India HIV/AIDS Alliance, which empowered more than 200 grassroots organizations to provide HIV prevention, mental health support, and health referrals to over 450,000 transgender people, hijras, and men who have sex with men across 17 states[67]. These services were delivered by trained peer educators, LGBTI+ individuals themselves who understood firsthand the fear and discrimination their communities often face in public clinics.

[63] South Africa Constitution: https://www.concourt.org.za/index.php/gay-and-lesbian-rights
[64] Key Population-Led Health Services: https://ihri.org/key-population-led-health-services/
[65] Vannakit, Ravipa et al. "Give the community the tools and they will help finish the job: key population-led health services for ending AIDS in Thailand." Journal of the International AIDS Society vol. 23,6 (2020): e25535. doi:10.1002/jia2.25535
[66] Shaikh, Simran et al. "Empowering communities and strengthening systems to improve transgender health: outcomes from the Pehchan programme in India." *Journal of the International AIDS Society* vol. 19,3 Suppl. 2 20809. 17 Jul. 2016, doi:10.7448/IAS.19.3.20809
[67] Pehchan program: https://allianceindia.org/portfolio/pehchan/

SDG 5

5 GENDER EQUALITY

ACHIEVE GENDER EQUALITY AND EMPOWER
ALL WOMEN AND GIRLS

Introduction

We are in the last 5 years of the 2030 Agenda, but still today women and girls around the world face discrimination and violence based on their gender. Gender disparities remain deeply entrenched, with over half the countries in the world lacking legislation to safeguard gender equality. Women human rights defenders are initiating and leading campaigns to push for legislative change, to promote the equal rights of women and to resist the rollback of rights. However, institutional and governance structures continue to fail in formally and financially recognizing and integrating their critical insights and efforts, resulting in gaps that undermine the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals.[68]

LBTI and gender non-conforming women and people are left behind in national agendas in various countries, and they are invisible if not violated due to their gender identity. In contrast to the objectives of this goal, there is a growing trend to pass laws that specifically target transgender and gender non-conforming people, not only excluding them from the agenda but also reinforcing existing stigma and discrimination. At current rate, it will take 286 years to close gaps in legal protection and remove discriminatory laws worldwide. Based on data collected in 2022 in 120 countries, 55% lacked non-discrimination laws prohibiting direct and indirect discrimination[69]. Systemic and deep-rooted patriarchy still controls the destinies of women and girls, and LBTI people by ignoring and even encouraging gender-based violence, which is accompanied by heteronormative gender roles and harmful norms.

Furthermore, it is important to highlight the persistent and intersectional funding disparities within feminist and LGBTI+ movements, where LBTI organizations remain among the least funded. This underinvestment is not new, it just reflects a historical pattern of inadequate financing for LGBTI+ movements more broadly, with long-term consequences for the wellbeing, safety, and sustainability of our communities. The chronic lack of resources limits their ability to build infrastructure, respond to crises, and advocate for their rights effectively. These disparities are further exacerbated by recent global funding cuts to key institutions like the World Health Organization and HIV prevention programs, which disproportionately affect already under-resourced LGBTI+ communities. Without intentional and equitable funding strategies, we risk deepening existing inequalities and undermining the progress made towards justice and inclusion.

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[68] Report of the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights defenders: "the contributions made by human rights defenders to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals". A/79/123
[69] United Nations, The sustainable development goals report (2023): https://sdgs.un.org/goals/goal5#overview

Global picture: how the patriarchal system affects LBTI life in different parts of the world

In Europe[70] and parts of Asia[71], there has been significant progress in advocacy for gender rights, including LGBTI+ and SOGIESC. In contrast, in Africa[72], the Middle East[73], and Oceania[74], the situation remains difficult, with high levels of violence and discrimination. However, the main problem of the world in ensuring gender equality is still the power of the patriarchy, which manipulates the rights of LBTI and gender non-conforming women and people through the suppression of feminism and queer movements[75], the introduction of discriminatory legislation, promoting the idea of the existence of only two genders, ban of abortions, shifting the focus to cultural and religious restrictions and promoting the agenda of "moral values" in societies. Due to these barriers, LBTI and gender non-conforming women and people suffer from a lack of access to healthcare, education, and employment, which affects the quality of their lives.

Targeted human rights violations and harmful practices

Around the world, targeted violence manifests through various forms: physical assaults, sexual violence, psychological abuse, and "corrective" practices aimed at forcibly altering their sexual orientation or gender identity. A ruthless form of this violence, known as "corrective rape," disproportionately affects LBTI women. Transgender and gender non-conforming people experience similarly heightened risks of violence due to their visible rejection of traditional gender norms. The cases of femicide are not visible to governments and are not considered authentic. Nevertheless, in different countries, cases of murder and acts of violence are increasing worldwide. Below, we would like to highlight recent data on the multifaceted violence faced by LBTI women and gender-nonconforming people around the world:

- In El Salvador, the body of Camila Díaz Córdova, a transgender* woman and activist, was found in 2019 after she was brutally beaten and left to die. Despite evidence of transphobic motives, her murder was not initially classified as a hate crime.[76] Moreover, in Brazil, at least 131 transgender people were murdered in 2023 alone, making it the country with the highest rates of transgender femicides globally.[77]

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[70] DW, "LGBTQ+ rights in Europe: Malta tops most progressive list", (2024): https://www.dw.com/en/lgbtq-rights-in-europe-malta-tops-most-progressive-list/a-69102384
[71] IDEA, "Explainer: Advances in LGBTQIA+ rights across Asia and the Pacific", (2023): https://www.idea.int/blog/explainer-advances-lgbtqia-rights-across-asia-and-pacific
[72] Amnesty International, Africa: Barrage of discriminatory laws stoking hate against LGBTI persons", (2023): https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2024/01/africa-barrage-of-discriminatory-laws-stoking-hate-against-LGBTI+-persons/
[73] Human Rights Watch, "Middle East, North Africa: Digital Targeting of LGBT People", (2023): https://www.hrw.org/news/2023/02/21/middle-east-north-africa-digital-targeting-lgbt-people
[74] Equaldex, "LGBT Equality Index in Oceania": https://www.equaldex.com/equality-index?continent=Oceania
[75] Green, Duncan. From poverty to power, "Queer existence is resistance: Understanding the rising tide of COVID-related LGBTQIA+ discrimination as gender-based violence", (2021): https://frompoverty.oxfam.org.uk/queer-existence-is-resistance-understanding-the-rising-tide-of-covid-related-lgbtqia-discrimination-as-gender-based-violence/
[76] Human Rights Watch, "El Salvador: Police Officers Convicted for Transgender Murder", (2020): https://www.hrw.org/news/2020/07/31/el-salvador-police-officers-convicted-transgendergender-murder
[77] AP, "Gay pride revelers in Sao Paulo reclaim Brazil's national symbols": https://apnews.com/article/brazil-gay-pride-sao-paulo-27c64e4b89da74b371e5b33fb401103f

- Additionally, LBTI women and gender non-conforming people who engage in activism or visibility efforts, such as pride events or public advocacy, frequently become targets of organized violence by extremist groups, religious fundamentalists, and nationalist entities.

- During the 2022 Tbilisi Pride Festival in Georgia, participants were attacked by far-right groups who stormed the event, causing injuries and forcing the cancellation of many activities. Police largely failed to intervene effectively[78].

- In Southeast and South Asia, LBTI individuals report being subjected to forced marriages, family-imposed isolation, and so-called "conversion therapies" often supported by religious leaders or medical practitioners. The use of psychiatric institutionalization as a form of control remains a persistent threat in some contexts.

- In Malaysia, Human Rights Watch documented 2022 cases where families forced lesbian and bisexual women into religious "rehabilitation camps" aimed at "curing" homosexuality, often involving psychological abuse[79].

- Violence against women and girls, including LBTI and gender non-conforming women and people, is a serious public health and development problem in the Latin America and the Caribbean region. In 2021, 4,425 femicide cases were registered in 19 countries in the area; it is worth considering that there may still be unregistered cases.[80]

- Furthermore, ethnic and Indigenous LBTI women may face community-specific practices of forced marriage, exclusion, or violence, often with little access to protective resources due to geographic isolation or systemic marginalization. For instance, lesbian and bisexual women from nomadic or rural communities have reported being subjected to family-imposed punishment or "disciplinary" violence meant to realign them with expected gender roles. In Guatemala, Indigenous LBTI women face targeted community shunning and forced marriages, with limited access to legal support due to language barriers and systemic discrimination.[81]

- Transgender migrants, refugees, and asylum seekers, particularly those without legal status, are frequently targeted by both state and non-state actors. Many of them report sexual violence, forced labor, or trafficking, and are often excluded from state protection mechanisms due to legal or linguistic barriers.

[78] Al Bawaba. (2021, July 5). *Anti-LGBT protesters attack Pride office in Tbilisi*. https://www.albawaba.com/news/anti-lgbt-protesters-attack-pride-office-tbilisi-1437147

[79] Human Rights Watch. (2022, August 10). *Malaysia: State-backed discrimination harms LGBT people*. https://www.hrw.org/news/2022/08/10/malaysia-state-backed-discrimination-harms-lgbt-people

[80] Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC). (2022). *Addressing femicide in Latin America and the Caribbean*. https://repositorio.cepal.org/server/api/core/bitstreams/0e33eb95-81ca-4e0a-9e77-f87334ffaba0/content

[81] Astraea Lesbian Foundation for Justice. (n.d.). *Ciudad de Guatemala*. https://astraeafoundation.org/location/ciudad-de-guatemala/

- A 2023 report by ORAM described cases of transgender refugees in Kenya's Kakuma camp being subjected to repeated sexual assaults, with minimal response from authorities[82]. In Thailand, LBTI refugees are often rendered invisible. When LBTI refugees are arrested or investigated, there is no gender-appropriate search conducted by police officials. When placed in immigration detention centers, they are subjected to inhumane conditions. For example, transgender women who have not undergone gender-affirming surgery are frequently placed in male detention cells, where they endure violence and harassment.

- Disabled LBTI people also face compounded discrimination, where their autonomy and credibility are undermined, making them especially vulnerable to abuse and neglect in both private and institutional settings. A Disability Rights International 2023 study revealed cases where disabled transgender individuals in psychiatric facilities in Mexico were subjected to forced medical interventions under the pretext of "treatment"[83].

These cases, while not exhaustive, underscore how violence against LBTI and gender-nonconforming people is not random but deeply embedded in social, cultural, and institutional frameworks. From discriminatory laws and law-enforcement failures to entrenched patriarchal and heteronormative norms, these structures actively perpetuate and excuse abuse, thus highlighting an urgent need for systemic reform, accountability, and comprehensive protections worldwide.

Overcoming the underrepresentation of LBTI women and gender non-conforming people in achieving SDG 5

To achieve gender equality, including an inclusive agenda in all SDGs, the cooperation of LBTI women and gender non-conforming people is essential. Currently, due to limited access to education and the "glass ceiling" in the labor field, LBTI women and gender non-conforming people are being left behind, and there is a lack of representation at political level to make decisions and improve their lives. Globally, LBTI women and gender non-conforming people are afraid to speak openly about gender equality due to stigma and persecution.

In addition, political violence manifests in various forms, including physical, sexual, and digital. The digital space has become increasingly hostile. The recent rollback of protections, increase of hate speech, and suppression of marginalized voices online have allowed discrimination to flourish under the guise of free expression. Since Elon Musk acquired X (formerly Twitter) in October 2022, policy changes have facilitated a surge in hate speech, particularly targeting LGBTI+ individuals and racial minorities. Similarly, Meta's weakening of its diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) initiatives has left LGBTI+ employees and users without institutional support.

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[82] Rainbow Railroad & ORAM. (2021, October 20). *The challenges facing LGBTQI+ refugees in Kenya*. https://www.rainbowrailroad.org/news/rainbow-railroad-and-oram-release-report-on-lgbtqi-refugees-in-kakuma-refugee-camp-kenya

[83] Disability Rights International. (2023). *Twice Violated: Abuse and Denial of Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights of Women with Disabilities in Mexico*, pp. 38–39, link: https://www.driadvocacy.org/sites/default/files/2023-10/Mexico-report-English-web.pdf

Organizations like GLAAD[84] and the Human Rights Campaign[85] have raised concerns that the relaxation of content moderation policies enables the unchecked spread of harmful narratives, further marginalizing vulnerable communities.[86]

LGBTI+ individuals are predicted to account for 1 to 5 percent of the adult population globally, which means there are millions of people worldwide who are currently restricted from fully participating in the societies in which they live due to their sexual orientation and/or gender identity[87]. For this reason, platforms such as the LGBTI Stakeholder Group are essential in comprehensive advocacy for today's agenda.

Resilience of LBTI women and gender non-conforming people in a global crisis

The adoption of the UN resolution on intersex people represents a major step forward in today's development agenda, especially as we reach the halfway point to fulfilling the 2030 Agenda and the goal of gender equality.[88] Despite the global anti-transgender movement, some indicators in certain countries, such as the opportunity for transgender* women to change their names and the existence of legal gender recognition measures for transgender* and gender non-conforming people represent a great success for the global LGBTI+ community. [89] However, the Women, Peace, and Security Index summarizes the barriers to achieving worldwide progress in inclusion, safety, and justice for women and girls, including LBTI women and gender non-conforming people. These barriers include the climate emergency, the rise of authoritarian and anti-democratic forces, large-scale forced displacement, devastating armed conflicts, and the multiple consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic.[90] Women worldwide, except in some Nordic countries, remain financially excluded, which affects their lives and their ability to fight violence and abusive dependence. In addition, no country in the world has perfect conditions for access to justice and safety factors that are essential to exercising rights fairly and protecting individuals from unlawful actions, including physical, political, and digital threats, as well as exposure to armed conflicts.

[84] GLAAD. (2025, January 10). *GLAAD responds to Meta's latest anti-LGBTQ changes to content policy and DEI that will harm users*. https://glaad.org/releases/meta-anti-lgbtq-hate-speech-dei/

[85] Torek, B. (2025, January 15). *Meta's new policies: How they endanger LGBTQ+ communities and our tips for staying safe online*. Human Rights Campaign. https://www.hrc.org/news/metas-new-policies-how-they-endanger-lgbtq-communities-and-our-tips-for-staying-safe-online

[86] Amnesty International. (2023, February 9). *Hateful and abusive speech towards LGBTQ+ community surging on Twitter under Elon Musk*. https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2023/02/hateful-and-abusive-speech-towards-lgbtq-community-surging-on-twitter-surging-under-elon-musk

[87] Sustain:able. (2022, June 23). *How to include LGBTQIA+ communities in the UN Sustainable Development Goals*. https://www.esgable.com/post/how-to-include-lgbtqia-communities-in-the-un-sustainable-development-goals

[88] Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR). (2024, April). *A big victory for intersex people and their rights*. https://www.ohchr.org/en/stories/2024/04/big-victory-intersex-people-and-their-rights

[89] ILGA-Europe. (2025). *Rainbow Map: Legal gender recognition*. https://rainbowmap.ilga-europe.org/categories/legal-gender-recognition

[90] Georgetown Institute for Women, Peace and Security. (2023). *Women, Peace, and Security Index 2023/24: Executive Summary*. https://giwps.georgetown.edu/wp-content/uploads/2023/10/WPS-Index-executive-summary.pdf

Examples of best practices

Pioneering initiatives across multiple regions demonstrate that gender equality is possible when political will aligns with inclusive policy design:

1. Malta's Gender Identity, Gender Expression and Sex Characteristics Act (2015) created one of the most progressive legal frameworks in the world. It allows individuals to change their gender through a simple administrative process based on self-identification. Moreover, Malta became the first country in Europe to outlaw non-consensual surgeries on intersex children and backs this legislation with broad anti-discrimination protections in healthcare, education, and employment. These measures have placed Malta consistently at the top of ILGA-Europe's Rainbow Index.[91]

2. European countries such as Serbia, Albania, Montenegro, and Bosnia and Herzegovina have implemented a femicide data collection model based on collaboration between women's organizations and government agencies. This model allows to systematize information about femicide and develop evidence-based policies.[92]

3. On June 2, 2024, Claudia Sheinbaum Pardo, the first female president in the country's history, was elected President of Mexico in the general election. She won a record 61.18% of the vote. She took office on October 1, 2024. Women's rights activists claim that this is a feminist's dream, given the current situation of women's rights in Mexico.[93]

4. In 2021, Nepal made a significant stride toward inclusivity by officially incorporating a "third gender" category in its national census, allowing citizens to identify as "other" alongside "male" and "female" options. This move was aimed at better representing the LGBTI+ community in national statistics and facilitating the development of more inclusive policies. While the 2011 census had introduced a third gender option, challenges such as discrimination and fear of being outed led to unreliable data. The 2021 census sought to address these issues by providing a more inclusive framework. However, some activists argued that the categorization of "other" was still limiting and did not fully capture the diversity within the LGBTI+ community. Despite Nepal's progressive stance on LGBTI+ rights, social acceptance remains limited, and discrimination persists. Advocates hope that the inclusion of the third gender in the census will aid in lobbying for legal rights and protections, and that future comprehensive surveys will better understand and represent the LGBTI+ population.[94]

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[91] Human Rights Watch. (2015, April 1). *Dispatches: Malta's inspiring gender recognition law*.
https://www.hrw.org/news/2015/04/01/dispatches-maltas-inspiring-gender-recognition-law

[92] UN Women. (2023). *Countries across Europe take first steps to address femicide*.
https://eca.unwomen.org/en/stories/news/2023/05/countries-across-europe-take-first-steps-to-address-femicide

[93] Gordon, A. (2023). *How Mexico became a gender equality leader in government*. TIME. https://time.com/6311687/mexico-female-presidency-sheinbaum-galvez/

[94] Haug, O. (2021, September 30). *Nepal will include third gender in census for first time in history*. *Them*.
https://www.them.us/story/nepal-includes-third-gender-census

SDG 8

PROMOTE SUSTAINED, INCLUSIVE, AND
SUSTAINABLE ECONOMIC GROWTH, FULL
AND PRODUCTIVE EMPLOYMENT, AND
DECENT WORK FOR ALL

The persistent economic exclusion of LGBTI+ communities

A decade into the 2030 Agenda, LGBTI+ individuals continue to face systemic barriers that undermine their fundamental right to decent work and economic security. These challenges manifest across three interconnected dimensions.

LGBTI+ people continue to face discrimination, violence, and social and economic exclusion worldwide, particularly in underdeveloped and developing countries of the EECA region, Asian and African countries. Recent geopolitical shifts, escalating conflicts, and the adoption of repressive and discriminatory legislation, such as Russia's restrictive laws, Georgia's foreign agent law, and policy reversals following the U.S. government changes, have further exacerbated the challenges faced by LGBTI+ individuals. These developments have made it even more difficult for them to live safely, access quality education, and secure stable employment and economic opportunities.

Legal and policy exclusion remains the most daunting barrier. In 37 countries, outdated legal frameworks still impose invasive medical requirements for gender recognition[95], effectively denying transgender and gender-diverse individuals' access to formal employment, social protections, and financial services. This institutionalized discrimination contradicts the essence of SDG 8 and perpetuates cycles of poverty. For example, in Armenia, while homosexuality and transgender identities are not explicitly criminalized, there's a practice of classifying gay men as "mentally ill" to avoid mandatory military service, effectively barring them from service. Transgender individuals also face barriers, though the specific legal situation regarding military service and transgender rights are not explicitly detailed in the provided context.[96] This exemption creates significant challenges for individuals, including being unable to pursue certain educational paths or work in specific professions. For instance, individuals may be unable to join law enforcement, emergency services, or military careers, as these sectors require proof of mental health status, often verified through documentation from a mental health center.

Financial discrimination compounds these challenges. Recent studies reveal that LGBTI+ entrepreneurs face disproportionate rejection rates for business loans, as high as 72% in some jurisdictions.[97] Digital financial systems, often touted as tools for inclusion, frequently embed

[95] ILGA World. (n.d.). *Legal gender recognition*. ILGA World Database. https://database.ilga.org/legal-gender-recognition
[96] United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR). (2014, September 29). *Armenia: Treatment of sexual minorities in the military, including whether they are admitted (2012-September 2014)*. Refworld. https://webarchive.archive.unhcr.org/20230518143428/https:/www.refworld.org/docid/543ba5a54.html
[97] LGBTI Stakeholder Group. (2021). *HLPF 2021 position paper: Sustainable and resilient recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic that promotes the economic, social and environmental dimensions of sustainable development: building an*

algorithmic biases that exclude gender non-conforming applicants through rigid identity verification protocols.

Workplace discrimination persists across all sectors and regions. The CIPD's landmark 2021 study found that 68% of transgender workers experience harassment or bias in hiring and promotion decisions. These patterns are particularly acute in industries undergoing rapid transformation, where LGBTI+ workers are often the first to be displaced by automation and restructuring.

Educational exclusion as a barrier to economic inclusion

LGBTI+ individuals are also subjected to discrimination and bullying in educational institutions, including schools, colleges, and universities. This hostile environment hinders their right to education and contributes to long-term socioeconomic disadvantages. According to a UNESCO report, over half (54%) of LGBTI+ students in Europe have experienced bullying in school due to their sexual orientation, gender identity, or expression[98]. Furthermore, 83% reported hearing negative remarks directed at LGBTI+ individuals, and 67% had been the target of such comments at least once. Alarmingly, 58% of students never reported these incidents to school staff, and fewer than 15% did so systematically[99]. This lack of reporting is often due to a lack of confidence in the support systems available.

In the UK, a 2024 survey by Theirworld found that 47% of LGBTI+ youth have been bullied or discriminated against in educational settings because of their sexual orientation, and 25% due to their gender identity.[100] Of those affected, half did not report the incidents, and among those who did, 72% felt that staff responded inadequately. Such experiences can lead to severe mental health issues, including increased rates of depression and suicidal ideation among LGBTI+ youth.

In Armenia, the domestic legislation lacks the necessary legal mechanisms to protect LGBTI+ students from discrimination and violence in educational institutions. This absence of protective measures perpetuates a cycle of exclusion and marginalization, limiting educational attainment and future employment opportunities for LGBTI+ individuals.[101]

In the Latin American and Caribbean region, regulatory frameworks and school practices still operate under binary, rigid and exclusive structures that deny legal, administrative, and symbolic recognition of transgender and non-binary students. This denial translates into the impossibility for students to be named according to their identity, to wear uniforms in accordance with their

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inclusive and effective path for the achievement of the 2030 Agenda in the context of the decade of action and delivery for sustainable development. https://www.lgbtistakeholdergroup.com/publications/hlpfpositionpaper2021-rp9cp-tsnnn

[98] United Nations. (2021, May 17). *Over half of LGBTQI students in Europe bullied in school: UNESCO,* UN News. https://news.un.org/en/story/2021/05/1092112

[99] United Nations. (2021, May 17). *Over half of LGBTQI students in Europe bullied in school: UNESCO,* UN News. https://news.un.org/en/story/2021/05/1092112

[100] Theirworld. (2024, June 27). *Survey reveals widespread unreported bullying and discrimination among LGBTQ+ youth in schools.* https://theirworld.org/news/survey-reveals-widespread-unreported-bullying-and-discrimination-among-lgbtq-youth-in-schools/

[101] Hovhannisyan, N. (2020, September 8). *Life of LGBTI+ people in Armenian schools. Part 1.* New Generation Humanitarian NGO. https://ngngo.net/en/2020/09/08/life-of-LGBTI+-people-in-armenian-schools-part-1/

gender expression, or to have access to facilities (bathrooms, locker rooms) in conditions of dignity.

Challenges in accessing the labour market

LGBTI+ individuals face significant obstacles in accessing the labour market, stemming from discrimination and systemic biases. Recent data confirm that LGBTI+ individuals continue to face higher unemployment and pervasive discrimination compared to their cis-heterosexual peers. In 2022, in the EU, people in same-sex partnerships report unemployment rates around 5.9 %, versus 4.6 % among those in different-sex partnerships[102]. Self-reported discrimination at work or when job-seeking affects roughly one in five LGBTI+ people in the EU annually[103], and everyday discrimination remains high (36 % in 2023) despite modest improvements since 2019.[104] Finally, recent cuts to global HIV-prevention budgets—from WHO-documented funding reductions to proposed eliminations of nearly $1 billion in U.S. CDC prevention grants—threaten to worsen economic and health vulnerabilities in already under-resourced LGBTI+ communities.[105]

Furthermore, the experience of social and economic inequity for LBTQ women is often shaped by labor market discrimination. LBTQ women are discriminated against in seeking employment, in wages, and in career progression,[106] Employment discrimination also places a particularly heavy burden on trans women. The ILO has highlighted that due to discrimination, trans women are sometimes excluded entirely from formal employment and pushed into survival sex work, including in dangerous conditions[107]. In addition to increased rates of poverty and labour market disadvantage, LBTQ women often have reduced access to social and employment benefits. In the workplace, lesbian couples can be denied access to health insurance for their partner and leaves of absence to provide care. In the event that one partner dies, a lack of legal recognition for lesbian couples can result in the exclusion from benefits for the surviving partner, such as access to the deceased's pension and death benefit[108].

Transgender individuals encounter even more pronounced challenges. They often face discrimination related to gender-specific facilities, uniforms, and documentation, which can hinder both hiring and retention. Moreover, many LGBTI+ individuals choose not to disclose their

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[102] Schraepen, T. (2022, September 26). *Do LGBTQIA+ people face EU labour market discrimination?* Bruegel. https://www.bruegel.org/blog-post/do-lgbtqia-people-face-eu-labour-market-discrimination

[103] European Commission. (2023). *Special Eurobarometer 525: Discrimination in the EU*. https://europa.eu/eurobarometer/surveys/detail/2972

[104] European Commission. (2024, September 25). *Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions: Implementation of the 2020-2025 LGBTIQ equality strategy* (COM(2024) 420 final). https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/HTML/?uri=CELEX%3A52024DC0420&

[105] World Health Organization. (2025, March 26). *New study highlights the potential impact of funding cuts on the HIV response*. https://www.who.int/news/item/26-03-2025-new-study-highlights-the-potential-impact-of-funding-cuts-on-the-hiv-response

[106] Movement Advancement Project and Center for American Progress. March 2015. Paying an Unfair Price: The Financial Penalty for LGBT Women in America. https://www.lgbtmap.org/unfair-price-lgbt-women

[107] International Labour Organisation, *Discrimination at work on the basis of sexual orientation and gender identity,* 2015. https://www.ilo.org/gender/Informationresources/Publications/WCMS_368962/lang--en/index.htm

[108] Jenkins, C. L., Edmundson, A., Averett, P., & Yoon, I. (2014). Older lesbians and bereavement: Experiencing the loss of a partner. *Journal of Gerontological Social Work*, 57(2–4), 273–287. https://doi.org/10.1080/01634372.2013.850583

identities at work due to fears of harassment or job loss, leading to increased stress and decreased job satisfaction.

Moreover, LGBTI+ individuals are disproportionately represented in informal and precarious employment sectors, a disparity that was starkly highlighted during the COVID-19 pandemic. Systemic discrimination and occupational segregation have historically funneled many LGBTI+ people into insecure jobs lacking formal protections. Consequently, when the pandemic struck, those in informal employment, including sex workers and gig economy participants, were largely excluded from government stimulus packages and unemployment benefits, which were often contingent upon formal employment status. This exclusion exacerbated financial instability and heightened vulnerability to poverty, food insecurity, and homelessness. Furthermore, workers in non-unionized, informal sectors face significant barriers to reporting discrimination or unfair termination, perpetuating cycles of economic insecurity. The pandemic has thus underscored the urgent need for inclusive social protection measures that address the unique challenges faced by LGBTI+ individuals in the labor market.[109]

These barriers not only violate the principles of equal opportunities but also result in economic inefficiencies by underutilizing the talents and skills of LGBTI+ individuals. Addressing these challenges requires comprehensive anti-discrimination policies, inclusive workplace practices, and targeted support programs to ensure that LGBTI+ individuals can fully participate in the labour market and contribute to economic growth.

Examples of best practices

Pioneering initiatives across multiple regions demonstrate that transformative change is possible when political will aligns with inclusive policy design:

1. **Mexico City's** Employment Equity Certification program provides a replicable model for private sector engagement. By requiring participating firms to implement transparent hiring practices, conduct regular pay equity audits, and establish third-party monitoring mechanisms, the program achieved a 22% improvement in LGBTI+ employee retention.[110] These results prove that accountability mechanisms can overcome entrenched workplace biases.

2. **Kenya's** Unga Collective exemplifies community-driven economic empowerment. This LGBTI+-led agricultural cooperative not only created over 300 jobs but also developed innovative solutions to circumvent financial exclusion, including alternative credit systems and direct-to-consumer supply chains[111]. Such initiatives demonstrate how

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[109] LGBTI Stakeholder Group. (2021, October 22). *The LGBTI SG Position Paper for HLPF 2021*. https://www.lgbtistakeholdergroup.com/publications/hlpfpositionpaper2021-rp9cp-tsnnn

[110] RFSL. (2023). *A brief on the inclusion of LGBTQI and gender non-conforming people in the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals: SDG 8 – Decent work and economic growth*. https://www.rfsl.se/wp-content/uploads/2023/01/RFSL_8_Decent-work-and-economic-growth.pdf

[111] The Danish Institute for Human Rights. (n.d.). *Leveraging human rights and the 2030 agenda to improve SDG follow-up and review*. https://www.humanrights.dk/files/media/document/Leveraging%20Human%20Rights_ENG_web.pdf

targeted support for marginalized entrepreneurs can catalyze broader economic transformation.

3. **Spain's** Royal Decree 1026/2024, of 9 October 2024, requires all companies with more than fifty employees to implement a mandatory, negotiated LGBTI+ equality plan and an anti-harassment protocol to guarantee non-discrimination, equal treatment, and safe working environments for LGBTI+ persons in line with SDG 8's targets on decent work and inclusive growth. The decree specifies minimum content, such as explicit non-discrimination clauses covering sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression, and sexual characteristics; inclusive recruitment and promotion criteria; targeted training modules; and mechanisms for reporting and redressing harassment or violence that must be integrated into each company's equality plan. These measures, mandated by Law 4/2023 of 28 February 2023, were to be in place by 2 March 2024, marking the successful translation of legislative intent into corporate action. Through collective bargaining, companies and employee representatives collaboratively tailor these plans to their organizational contexts, ensuring both legal compliance and cultural buy-in. By embedding LGBTI+ inclusion into existing equality plans and institutionalizing dedicated resources for prevention, detection, and response to discrimination, Spain's approach exemplifies how targeted regulation can drive sustainable, inclusive business practices that enhance productivity, reduce turnover, and promote the well-being of all workers.[112]

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[112] Garrigues. (2024, October 9). *Spain: Approval of the royal decree that develops measures to guarantee equality and non-discrimination of LGTBI people in companies*. https://www.garrigues.com/en_GB/new/spain-approval-royal-decree-develops-measures-guarantee-equality-and-non-discrimination-lgtbi
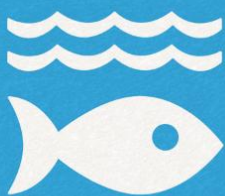
SDG 14

14 LIFE BELOW WATER

CONSERVE AND SUSTAINABLY USE THE
OCEANS, SEAS, AND MARINE RESOURCES
FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

Introduction

Oceans and coastal ecosystems are essential to life on Earth, sustaining biodiversity, cultural heritage, and the livelihoods of billions. Yet as marine degradation accelerates due to climate change, pollution, and overexploitation, its impacts are not equally felt. LGBTI+ people are often among the most vulnerable, facing heightened risks of displacement, exclusion from ocean-based livelihoods, and invisibility in marine governance and disaster response systems. Achieving the goals of SDG 14 (Life Below Water) requires more than environmental action; it demands a justice-based approach that actively includes the voices and leadership of LGBTI+ communities.

The intersection of SDG 14 and LGBTI+ inclusion underscores the necessity of integrating social equity into marine conservation efforts. LGBTI+ individuals often reside in coastal areas where they depend on marine resources for their livelihoods. However, due to systemic discrimination, they may lack access to decision-making processes, resources, and support systems, making them more susceptible to the adverse effects of marine degradation and climate change. Inclusive policies that recognize and address these disparities are crucial for the effective implementation of SDG 14, ensuring that conservation efforts are equitable and that the benefits of healthy marine ecosystems are accessible to all, regardless of sexual orientation or gender identity.

Key Areas of Concern and Progress

Displacement and Ocean-Based Livelihoods

Climate-induced sea-level rise, marine ecosystem degradation, and overfishing have led to widespread displacement and loss of livelihoods in coastal regions. These effects are not equally felt. LGBTI+ individuals and communities face disproportionate risks due to structural marginalization, economic exclusion, and inadequate protection during climate relocation or disaster response.

LGBTI+ individuals engaged in traditional livelihoods such as small-scale fishing or tourism often face dual exclusion: from formal labor protections and from disaster support systems that fail to account for diverse gender identities and family structures. Where forced migration or planned relocation occurs, they are also less likely to be consulted or included in community resettlement processes.

These dynamics intersect directly with:

- SDG 1 (No Poverty): Loss of livelihoods increases the precarity of already economically vulnerable queer communities, especially in informal economies.
- SDG 13 (Climate Action): Adaptation measures often neglect intersectionality, leaving LGBTI+ people at the margins of climate preparedness.
  SDG 8 (Decent Work): Structural discrimination restricts access to decent jobs in blue economies, aquaculture, and fisheries, especially for transgender and gender-diverse persons.

Ocean Governance and Participatory Rights.

Despite their proximity to impacted zones, LGBTI+ individuals are largely excluded from decision-making spaces concerning coastal and marine policy. Formal ocean governance structures, ranging from marine spatial planning to disaster preparedness, rarely include provisions or outreach for gender-diverse voices, despite commitments to inclusion in multilateral frameworks. Inclusive ocean governance must move beyond tokenistic representation to ensure that LGBTI+ people are co-designers of policy, particularly in the development of climate adaptation strategies, marine biodiversity conservation plans, and coastal land tenure and relocation programs. Intersectional climate resilience frameworks, those that center race, gender identity, class, and migration status, can better integrate the realities of LGBTI+ individuals and ensure their safety and dignity in climate-vulnerable coastal areas.

Blue Economy, Tourism and Social Inclusion

The blue economy has become a driving force of global economic growth, shaping livelihoods and industries across the world. Yet, beneath its promise lies a stark reality: deep-rooted social and economic disparities continue to define who benefits and who is left behind. Despite its growing influence, the ocean-based economy remains marked by widespread social imbalances. Evidence suggests that many historically excluded groups, such as Indigenous communities, women, artisanal fishers, low-income workers, racial and ethnic minorities, the LGBTI+ community, and residents of isolated coastal areas, are disproportionately exposed to environmental harm and left vulnerable by unsustainable development practices and limited infrastructure.[113] In this context, several risks can already be identified for the LGBTI+ community if the blue economy is not developed through an intersectional and inclusive approach:

- Exclusion from decision-making and employment opportunities: Blue economy initiatives, like coastal tourism, aquaculture, or marine conservation, are frequently designed without consulting LGBTI+ groups. This exclusion can result in policies or practices that fail to address the unique needs and risks faced by LGBTI+ individuals, such as discrimination in hiring, unsafe work environments, or a lack of protection under labor laws.

- Increased vulnerability in informal or precarious work: As we have seen in the assessment of SDG 8, the LGBTI+ community already faces obstacles and challenges to

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[113] Issifu, I., Dahmouni, I., & Deffor, E. W. (2023). Diversity, equity, and inclusion in the Blue Economy: Why they matter and how do we achieve them? *Frontiers in Political Science, 4,* Article 1067481. https://doi.org/10.3389/fpos.2022.1067481

access the labour market due to social stigma or legal discrimination. In the blue economy, where informal labor (like artisanal fishing or beach vending) is common, these workers often lack legal protections, health benefits, or recourse if they face abuse or exploitation.

● Lack of tailored social protections in climate-affected zones: Coastal and island communities, many of which are on the frontlines of climate change, are also the focus of blue economy projects. However, LGBTI+ people in these regions may face compounded risks from climate-induced displacement, with shelters and aid programs often failing to provide safe, inclusive spaces. For example, transgender individuals may be denied access to gender-appropriate housing in climate emergencies.

Moreover, in the specific case of tourism, LGBTI+ travelers are a major driver of coastal tourism, contributing significantly to local economies across island and shoreline regions. Yet their safety, visibility, and rights are often overlooked in destination planning, climate resilience strategies, and disaster preparedness. Building truly sustainable ocean economies requires tourism models that are not only environmentally sound but socially inclusive, respecting both marine ecosystems and the dignity of queer visitors and workers.

At the same time, LGBTI+ individuals are not only travelers but also stewards of the ocean. Across the world, queer communities are leading grassroots conservation efforts, managing marine protected areas, advancing environmental research, and organizing for coastal justice. Their contributions, often unrecognized, are essential to the resilience of local ecosystems and communities and therefore need to be better identified, replicated, and scaled up. Any vision of ocean sustainability that claims to be equitable must celebrate and support the leadership of LGBTI+ people in shaping a more just, inclusive, and ecologically sound blue future.

Adaptation: Prioritizing LGBTI+ Inclusion in National Adaptation Plans[114]

In recent years, there has been notable progress in integrating sexual and gender minorities (SGM) into National Adaptation Plans (NAPs), marking a shift towards more inclusive climate resilience strategies. As of 2024, 24 countries have acknowledged the specific vulnerabilities of SGM communities within their adaptation frameworks. Notably, nations such as Fiji, Mexico, and Bangladesh have initiated approaches that incorporate references to LGBTI+ communities in national climate policies and projects.

This emerging trend reflects a growing recognition that effective adaptation planning must embrace intersectional climate justice principles. By ensuring that diverse community identities are considered in the design, implementation, and evaluation of resilience measures, these efforts lay the groundwork for the meaningful participation of LGBTI+ individuals in building resilient, inclusive coastal societies.

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[114] Dazé, A & Hunter, C. (2024) SYNTHESIS REPORT 2023–2024. Advancing Gender-Responsive

Loss and Damage: Advancing Intersectional Approaches under the UNFCCC[115]

The 2024 UNFCCC Task Force on Displacement Report acknowledges the need for intersectional approaches in addressing human mobility in the context of climate change. While the report does not explicitly reference LGBTI+ populations, it emphasizes:

- The importance of considering overlapping factors of vulnerability (e.g., gender, socio-economic status, disability, and migration status) when planning relocation and disaster responses.
- The necessity of rights-based, people-centered approaches that anticipate and prevent discrimination in planned relocation and post-disaster recovery efforts.

This intersectional framing provides a strategic opening for advancing LGBTI+ inclusion in future discussions around climate-induced displacement, especially as coastal degradation accelerates forced migration patterns.

Multilateral Finance: Moving Towards Inclusive Implementation Models

Multilateral climate finance institutions, including the World Bank, the Global Environment Facility, the Adaptation Fund, and the Green Climate Fund, are adopting more inclusive design and implementation models that recognize the diversity of communities most affected by climate change. They've strengthened social and gender safeguards to open pathways for historically marginalized groups, including sexual and gender minorities, by promoting community-led project design through enhanced direct access mechanisms, refining Environmental and Social Management Systems to explicitly address gender identity and sexual orientation, and broadening stakeholder consultations to center underrepresented voices in coastal resilience programs. Although dedicated funding streams for LGBTI+-inclusive coastal resilience are not yet formalized, ongoing efforts to embed LGBTI+ leadership and priorities in project development and decision-making must be sustained and expanded to ensure future resilience finance truly reflects their needs.

Examples of best practices

1. Caribbean Community Organizations: Addressing the Gaps in Evacuation and Environmental Migration Policies

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[115] UNFCCC. (2024). *Technical guide on integrating human mobility and climate change linkages into relevant national climate change planning processes*. Executive Committee of the Warsaw International Mechanism for Loss and Damage. https://unfccc.int/process-and-meetings/bodies/constituted-bodies/executive-committee-of-the-warsaw-international-mechanism-for-loss-and-damage/technical-guide-on-integrating-human-mobility-and-climate-change-linkages-into-relevant-national

Across the Caribbean, LGBTI+ communities face heightened risks from climate-induced displacement and disasters, yet remain largely invisible in national and regional evacuation policies. A 2024 policy paper by AnchorBridge Environmental, supported by the International Organization for Migration (IOM) and the French Development Agency (AFD), finds that while the region is highly vulnerable to hurricanes, sea-level rise, and environmental migration, legal and policy frameworks fail to recognize the specific needs of LGBTI+ individuals before, during, and after evacuation.[116]

Evacuation shelters often lack protections for non-normative family structures, do not provide gender-affirming spaces, and can expose transgender and queer people to discrimination or violence. In some cases, religious or state-run services actively exclude LGBTI+ individuals. Meanwhile, laws in several countries criminalize same-sex relationships or deny entry to individuals based on sexual orientation, further compounding risks during cross-border climate mobility.

Despite these gaps, LGBTI+ organizations such as J-FLAG, Equal Rights SVG, CAISO, and ECADE are working to integrate queer-inclusive approaches into disaster planning. Their efforts emphasize intersectionality, safe shelter access, inclusive health services, and the need for training emergency responders in cultural competency.

2. Fiji: Inclusive Climate Action for LGBTI+ Communities

a) Oxfam Report: Down By The River (2018)

Oxfam's *Down By The River* report, developed with Edge Effect and the Rainbow Pride Foundation, offers one of the first in-depth examinations of how disasters in Fiji affect sexual and gender minorities. Conducted after Tropical Cyclone Winston in 2016, the report reveals that pre-existing discrimination magnified LGBTI+ people's vulnerability throughout the disaster cycle.[117]

Key findings include:

● Exclusion from Livelihood Recovery: Discrimination in education, employment, and family networks deepened economic precarity post-cyclone.
● Unsafe Shelter Access: Many were denied or felt unsafe in emergency shelters due to stigma around gender identity or sexual orientation.
● Scapegoating and Violence: Some faced increased violence and were blamed for the disaster by religious leaders.
● Reliance on Informal Support Networks: Chosen families and peer-led mutual aid were critical to survival and recovery.

b) DIVA for Equality: Community-Led Climate Resilience and Advocacy[118]

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[116] AnchorBridge Environmental. (2024). *Policy brief: Addressing LGBTQI+ inclusion in Caribbean climate migration and disaster response*. French Agency for Development (AFD) & International Organization for Migration (IOM).

[117] Dwyer, E. & Woolf, L. (2018). Down By the River: Addressing LGBTQ+ inclusion in disaster risk reduction in Fiji. Oxfam

[118] DIVA for Equality. (n.d.). *DIVA for Equality*. https://divafiji.org/

DIVA for Equality, a Fijian feminist LBT-led organization, complements these findings by modeling what inclusive, rights-based climate action looks like in practice. DIVA works to ensure LGBTI+ communities are not only protected but also actively shape the climate agenda in Fiji and the Pacific. Their efforts focus on:

- Inclusive Relocation Planning: Advocating for adaptation strategies that preserve queer kinship networks and prioritize safety in resettlement.
- Economic Empowerment: Providing training that builds leadership and livelihoods among LBT individuals, linking resilience with economic justice.
- Global Advocacy: Elevating Pacific queer voices at UNFCCC, HLPF, and feminist forums to push for SOGIESC-inclusive language in global climate agreements. Intersectional Frameworks: Integrating climate, gender, and decolonial justice into a unified Pacific feminist vision.

DIVA's leadership shows how community-based and feminist approaches can redefine resilience, making ocean governance, relocation, and adaptation truly inclusive.

3. Queer Disaster Response in Coastal Zones: Policy Innovations Across Borders

a) California: Protecting LGBTI+ Communities in Climate-Driven Disasters[119]

In 2024, California took a pioneering step toward inclusive disaster preparedness with the passage of Senate Bill 990. This legislation mandates that the state's emergency management system integrate the specific needs of LGBTI+ individuals into all phases of emergency planning and response, including hurricanes and wildfires.

Key elements of the law include:

- Inclusive Emergency Planning: State and local agencies must assess vulnerabilities and needs specific to LGBTI+ populations in evacuation, shelter, and recovery plans.
- Training Requirements: Emergency personnel are required to undergo training on LGBTI+ cultural competency, including the distinct needs of transgender and nonbinary evacuees.
- Data and Accountability: Agencies must collect voluntary, confidential data on sexual orientation and gender identity to improve services during climate emergencies, while protecting privacy.

California's approach serves as a leading model for integrating sexual and gender diversity into broader climate resilience policies, setting a benchmark for coastal disaster planning globally.

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[119] California State Legislature. (2024, September 20). *Senate Bill No. 990: Office of Emergency Services: State Emergency Plan: LGBTQ+ individuals*. https://leginfo.legislature.ca.gov/faces/billTextClient.xhtml?bill_id=202320240SB990

b) Mexico: Integrating Equity into the National Climate Change Strategy[120]

Mexico's updated National Climate Change Strategy (ENCC) of 2024 represents a landmark shift: for the first time, it explicitly includes LGBTI+ populations within its climate adaptation vision. It commits to promoting inclusive policies that consider sexual orientation and gender identity across key areas such as territorial adaptation, coastal risk management, and sustainable energy transitions. Specifically, the ENCC:

- Recognizes that LGBTI+ individuals face differentiated vulnerabilities to climate impacts.
- Encourages their participation in national technological, innovation and energy projects, including those focused on community resilience in coastal areas.
- Calls for strengthening the institutional capacity of public bodies to deliver adaptation measures that are both gender-responsive and SOGIESC-inclusive.

This integration sets a strong policy precedent for embedding LGBTI+ equity across Mexico's coastal and marine adaptation efforts, offering a replicable model for other countries in the Global South.

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[120] Diario Oficial de la Federación. (2024). *Decreto por el que se reforman y adicionan diversas disposiciones del Código Penal Federal y de la Ley General para la Igualdad entre Mujeres y Hombres*. https://www.dof.gob.mx/nota_detalle.php?codigo=5739992&fecha=30/09/2024#gsc.tab=0

SDG 17

17 PARTNERSHIPS FOR THE GOALS

STRENGTHEN THE MEANS OF IMPLEMENTATION AND REVITALIZE THE GLOBAL PARTNERSHIP FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

Introduction

The convergence of global crises, including public health emergencies, armed conflict, democratic backsliding, economic instability, and climate breakdown, has severely disrupted progress toward the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Marginalized populations, particularly LGBTI+ people and especially transgender women and girls, have borne a disproportionate share of these impacts, facing heightened violence, exclusion, and systemic inequalities.

In this context, SDG 17: Partnerships for the Goals is more critical than ever. Revitalizing global partnerships grounded in human rights, equity, and inclusion is a prerequisite to achieving the ambitions of the 2030 Agenda. For LGBTI+ communities, meaningful participation in these partnerships is not merely desirable, it is essential for sustainable development.

LGBTI+ Inclusion: At the Core of Effective Partnerships

The LGBTI Stakeholder Group emphasizes that LGBTI+ organizations, particularly at the grassroots level, play a crucial role in delivering services, advocating for legal reform, and amplifying marginalized voices. Yet they are often excluded from formal partnerships and underrepresented in decision-making bodies at local, national, regional, and global levels.

Moreover, we would like to highlight that barriers to formal participation in UN processes persist for many regions and especially for Global South LGBTI+ organizations, undermining inclusive partnerships and equitable engagement. Many grassroots and regional groups face challenges such as the lack of ECOSOC consultative status, which restricts their access to key UN forums. Additionally, systemic issues like visa refusals and limited financial resources further hinder their ability to attend and participate in international meetings. These barriers perpetuate unequal power dynamics and marginalize critical voices from development dialogues, contrary to the spirit of SDG 17's emphasis on inclusive, multi-stakeholder partnerships.

True progress on SDG 17 demands more than symbolic gestures. It requires the establishment of structured mechanisms that ensure LGBTI+ communities are engaged as equal partners, with access to resources, political space, and institutional support. Strengthening partnerships involves actively dismantling the legal, social, and political barriers that prevent LGBTI+ organizations from participating safely and effectively in sustainable development initiatives.

Following the SDG Summit and Financing for the Future

The LGBTI Stakeholder Group has actively engaged in follow-up processes to the 2023 SDG Summit and preparations for the 2024 Summit of the Future. These summits have reaffirmed that marginalized groups continue to be sidelined in global development discussions, underlining the need for stronger, more inclusive partnerships.

Civil Society Driving Change

In Kenya, the National Gay and Lesbian Human Rights Commission (NGLHRC) successfully challenged colonial-era laws criminalizing same-sex conduct. Their victory exemplifies the transformative potential of civil society organizations when supported through sustained financing and international partnerships[121]. Without such support, these historic gains remain precarious.

In Colombia, Caribe Afirmativo collaborates with local governments to integrate LGBTI+ rights into post-conflict peacebuilding processes, demonstrating how structured cooperation leads to tangible SDG progress, particularly in reducing inequalities and building inclusive societies[122].

Financing the Future

Despite their critical contributions, LGBTI+ organizations remain drastically underfunded. According to the Global Philanthropy Project, less than 0.31% of international development assistance targets LGBTI+ issues[123]. Organizations like J-FLAG in Jamaica, which provide life-saving services for LGBTI+ youth, struggle to secure sustainable resources. Global financing mechanisms must establish dedicated funding streams for marginalized communities to ensure their strategic and sustainable participation in development.

A Vision for Future Summits

Preparation for any future SDG-related Summits must include binding commitments to marginalized groups' representation. In Nepal, the Blue Diamond Society's engagement in official consultations has successfully influenced national health and rights policies for LGBTI+ people[124]. Their example illustrates that direct participation produces better outcomes and must become the norm in global governance.

Urgency of Inclusive Asylum Systems

For many LGBTI+ individuals, migration is not a choice but a survival strategy. Yet existing asylum systems often expose them to further violence and discrimination.

Facing Double Marginalization

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[121] NGLHRC Kenya, "Court Victory on Decriminalization," 2019.
[122] Caribe Afirmativo, "LGBTI+ Rights and Peacebuilding," 2022.
[123] Global Philanthropy Project, "The State of Global LGBTI+ Funding," 2021.
[124] Blue Diamond Society, "National Policy Influence Report," 2020.

In Kenya's Kakuma Refugee Camp, LGBTI+ refugees have faced repeated violence, including reported attacks in 2021 and 2022[125]. Individuals like "Amina," a lesbian woman from Uganda who suffered abuse even after fleeing persecution, exemplify the compounded vulnerabilities that LGBTI+ refugees endure.

Building Protective Systems

Countries such as Canada have developed LGBTI+-sensitive asylum pathways, offering expedited procedures and specialized support. Organizations like Rainbow Railroad have successfully relocated hundreds of LGBTI+ individuals to safer environments[126]. Their successes prove that safe pathways are both possible and life-saving.

Strengthening Local Partnerships

Civil society groups on the ground are vital in supporting LGBTI+ refugees. In Turkey, KAOS GL assists LGBTI+ asylum seekers in navigating legal challenges and accessing health services[127]. Strengthening partnerships with such organizations through funding, technical support, and political recognition is essential for creating truly inclusive asylum systems.

Examples of best practices

Achieving the SDGs remains primarily the responsibility of UN Member States (UNMS). However, the scale and complexity of the challenges at hand require collective action across public institutions, the private sector, and civil society organizations, including LGBTI+ organizations.

Partnerships with LGBTI+ groups not only strengthen SDG 17 but also drive progress across multiple goals. Concrete examples from the ground illustrate this interconnectedness:

1. **Case Study A: Advancing Health Access (SDG 3 – Good Health and Well-being)**

   Access to healthcare is a fundamental right, yet LGBTI+ communities often encounter systemic barriers. In Thailand, the Rainbow Sky Association partnered with national health agencies to expand access to HIV prevention and gender-affirming care through initiatives like "PrEP for All," targeting men who have sex with men and transgender women.[128]

   Similarly, in Argentina, ATTTA (*Asociación de Travestis, transgenderexuales y transgendergéneros de Argentina)* collaborated with the Ministry of Health to integrate gender-affirming healthcare services into public hospitals.[129]

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[125] Human Rights Watch, "No Place for Us: LGBTI+ Refugees in Kakuma," 2022.
[126] Rainbow Railroad, "Annual Report," 2023.
[127] KAOS GL, "Support Services for LGBTI+ Asylum Seekers," 2022.
[128] UNAIDS, "Thailand's Community-led HIV Programmes," 2022.
[129] ILGA World, "Gender Identity Law and Health Access in Argentina," 2021.

These partnerships demonstrate that when LGBTI+ groups are empowered as health partners, services become more inclusive, barriers are dismantled, and public health outcomes are strengthened.

2. **Case Study B: Inclusive Workplaces and Gender Equality (SDG 5 – Gender Equality)**

   Advancing gender equality demands a focus on all individuals facing gender-based discrimination, including LGBTI+ people. In India, after the 2018 decriminalization of same-sex relations, the Humsafar Trust partnered with corporations to implement LGBTI+-inclusive workplace policies. Companies such as Tata Steel and Godrej Industries developed diversity and inclusion frameworks.[130]

   In South Africa, OUT LGBT Well-being collaborated with public institutions to enshrine SOGIESC protections in government workplace guidelines.[131] These initiatives directly advance SDG 5 by promoting non-discrimination and fostering environments where all genders can thrive.

3. **Case Study C: Economic Empowerment (SDG 8 – Decent Work and Economic Growth)**

   Economic empowerment is critical for sustainable development. In the Philippines, Galang Philippines partnered with local governments to create entrepreneurship programs for lesbian and bisexual women in low-income communities.[132]

   In the Netherlands, Workplace Pride partnered with multinationals and the Dutch government to benchmark and improve workplace inclusion globally.[133]

   Such partnerships not only empower marginalized individuals but also contribute to inclusive, sustained economic growth in line with SDG 8.

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[130] The Humsafar Trust, "Corporate Inclusion Report," 2019.
[131] OUT LGBT Well-being, "Policy Brief on SOGIESC Workplace Protections," 2020.
[132] Galang Philippines, "Economic Empowerment Initiatives," 2021.
[133] Workplace Pride, "Global Benchmark Survey," 2023.

KEY
RECOMMENDATIONS

The full realization of the 2030 Agenda depends on inclusive, equitable, and human rights-based development strategies. Including LGBTI+ communities as equal partners is not just a moral imperative—it is a development necessity. Therefore, we urge Member States to implement the following actions:

SDG 3: Ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages

1. **Ensure inclusivity in data collection** by collecting and reporting health data disaggregated by sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression, and sex characteristics (SOGIESC), to inform responsive and evidence-based policies;
2. **Remove all forms of criminalization** based on consensual same-sex conduct, gender identity or expression, and bodily diversity, which continue to prevent access to healthcare and violate basic human rights;
3. **End the pathologization of LGBTI+ identities**, by removing unnecessary medical or psychiatric classifications for transgender and intersex individuals, and adopting affirming, rights-based healthcare approaches;
4. **Implement legal and policy reforms** that prohibit discrimination and guarantee the right to health for LGBT+ individuals across all settings.
5. **Secure dedicated and sustainable funding** for inclusive public health services and community-led programs that directly serve LGBTI+ communities;
6. **Ensure that Universal Health Coverage (UHC) compacts and national health strategies explicitly include SOGIESC indicators** to identify and address health disparities faced by LGBTI+ populations. Member States must collaborate with LGBTI+ organizations to develop inclusive metrics that guide the design, implementation, and monitoring of equitable health systems;
7. **Implement human rights and patient-centred approaches** in national health programmes that consider the particularities of intersex people variations, avoiding rigid stereotypical sex and gender norms;
8. **Invest in healthcare provider training** to promote safe, competent, and non-discriminatory services that address the specific needs of LGBTI+ populations;
9. **Design targeted campaigns** on the specific needs of LGBTI+ persons health with the direct involvement of civil society organisations;
10. **Ensure meaningful participation and representation** of LGBTI+ people in the development, implementation, and monitoring of health and SDG-related policies at all levels;
11. **Ensure that national health development actions focus on the barriers in healthcare access** for LGBTI+ persons as well as the health disparities these populations face.

SDG 5: Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls

1. **Ensure that national gender equality strategies explicitly recognize and integrate the rights of LBTI women and gender non-conforming people and Sexual Orientation, Gender Identity and Expression, and Sex Characteristics (SOGIESC)**, in line with obligations under international human rights law;
2. **Repeal all the laws that criminalize** gender non-conformity or related identities and refrain from enacting discriminatory legislation. Governments must ensure that LBTI women and gender non-conforming people are not excluded from laws, policies, and programs that aim to promote gender equality;
3. **Adopt and enforce comprehensive anti-discrimination laws** that explicitly include sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression, and sex characteristics as protected grounds;
4. **Provide training** for law enforcement, judicial actors, and healthcare professionals on SOGIESC inclusion and anti-discrimination, emphasizing survivor-centered approaches to violence and trauma;
5. **Provide funding and support** for community-led services and safe spaces for LBTI women and gender non-conforming people, especially in rural or marginalized areas, including emergencies such as armed conflicts and crises. These types of services would include shelters, mental health services, and legal aid;
6. **Promote inclusive education and public awareness campaigns** to challenge gender stereotypes, harmful cultural taboos, and anti-LGBTI+ rhetoric, because we believe that social transformation is not possible without reshaping public narratives;
7. **State decision makers should involve LBTI women and gender non-conforming experts** to discuss and make certain decisions;
8. **Invest in the development of state data collection and research methods** that include LBTI women and gender non-conforming people.

SDG 8: Promote sustained, inclusive, and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment, and decent work for all

1. **Enact explicit legal prohibitions** against workplace discrimination based on sexual orientation, gender identity and expression (SOGIESC).
2. **Eliminate invasive and medically unnecessary requirements** for legal gender recognition.
3. **Ratify and fully implement ILO Convention 190**, with the inclusion of SOGIESC-specific provisions to address violence and harassment in the workplace.
4. **Audit and eliminate algorithmic bias** in digital credit scoring and financial technologies.
5. **Commit to allocating at least 5%** of SME (small and medium-sized enterprise) financing to LGBTI+-led businesses.
6. **Develop alternative identity verification protocols** that respect gender diversity and ensure access to financial services for gender-diverse individuals.
7. **Include SOGIESC indicators** in labor force and household surveys.

8. **Disaggregate SDG 8 reporting** by sexual orientation and gender identity to monitor disparities.
9. **Partner with LGBTI+ civil society organizations** to ensure community-informed, ethical, and accurate data collection.
10. **Extend social protection floors** (e.g., unemployment benefits, healthcare, pensions) to cover informal and precarious workers.
11. **Establish mobile health units and outreach services** for street-based or vulnerable populations.
12. **Create inclusive pathways** for the formalization and support of LGBTI+-led microenterprises and cooperatives.
13. **Develop and implement mandatory training programs** for teachers and school counsellors on addressing discrimination based on SOGIESC and other intersecting grounds.
14. **Ensure adequate resources** for human rights education, including comprehensive training on sexual diversity and gender equality.
15. **Provide access to inclusive and comprehensive sexuality education**, as well as sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR) commodities such as condoms, lubricants, and menstrual hygiene products.

SDG 14: Conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas, and marine resources for sustainable development

1. **Integrate LGBTI+ people into coastal climate resilience strategies and disaster preparedness frameworks**, ensuring their leadership and participation in early warning systems, relocation planning, and climate adaptation programs, particularly in island and coastal regions.
2. **Guarantee equitable access to livelihoods in the blue economy**, by removing legal, financial, and social barriers that disproportionately exclude LGBTI+ individuals from sectors such as fisheries, coastal tourism, aquaculture, and marine conservation entrepreneurship.
3. **Mainstream LGBTI+ inclusion across marine and coastal governance mechanisms**, including in marine protected area management, national adaptation planning (NAPs), ocean spatial planning, and international climate negotiations, building on emerging best practices from California, Mexico, and Pacific Island nations.
4. **Invest in research and data collection on the intersection of ocean degradation, coastal displacement, and LGBTI+ rights**, by supporting studies, participatory mapping, and data disaggregation initiatives that capture SOGIESC-specific vulnerabilities and resilience strategies in marine contexts.
5. **Strengthen cross-SDG linkages and financial frameworks** by embedding LGBTI+-responsive approaches into efforts connecting SDG 1 (No Poverty), SDG 8 (Decent Work), SDG 10 (Reduced Inequalities), SDG 13 (Climate Action), and SDG 14 (Life Below Water), including within loss and damage mechanisms and climate adaptation financing.

SDG 17: Strengthen the means of implementation and revitalize the Global Partnership for Sustainable Development

1. **Center human rights and equality:** The Declaration must affirm that LGBTI+ rights are human rights. Argentina's integration of gender identity protections into national human rights frameworks has resulted in more effective policies on education, health, and employment, directly supporting SDG implementation[134].

2. **Operationalize inclusive partnerships:** True inclusion means power-sharing. In the Philippines, Galang Philippines' partnerships with local governments have transformed community development programs into inclusive, rights-based initiatives[135].

3. **Resource marginalized communities:** Organizations such as Transgender Europe (TGEU) demonstrate how strategic investments can drive major legal and policy changes[136]. Dedicated funding streams for marginalized groups must be created and made accessible without undue bureaucratic barriers.

4. **Integrate LGBTI+ protections across all goals:** Every SDG must be assessed for its impact on marginalized groups. In South Africa, inclusive employment initiatives led by OUT LGBT Well-being have shown that targeted programs effectively promote equality and decent work[137].

5. **Establish transparent and disaggregated funding tracking** mechanisms for LGBTI+- specific allocations within UN development frameworks to ensure accountability, visibility, and effective resource allocation

6. **Commit to disaggregated data collection:** Reliable data is essential. Uruguay's inclusion of sexual orientation and gender identity indicators in national surveys has allowed for more targeted and effective policymaking[138].

7. **Guarantee safe civic spaces:** Civic spaces must be protected. In Poland, organizations like Campaign Against Homophobia (KPH) continue their advocacy despite facing increased hostility, underlining the urgent need for international solidarity and protections for civil society[139].

[134] Argentina National Human Rights Secretariat, "Progress Report," 2021.
[135] Galang Philippines, "Economic Empowerment Initiatives," 2021.
[136] TGEU, "Strategic Impact Report," 2023.
[137] OUT LGBT Well-being, "Policy Brief on SOGIESC Workplace Protections," 2020.
[138] Uruguay National Statistics Office, "Inclusive Data Collection Initiatives," 2022.
[139] Campaign Against Homophobia (KPH), "Annual Advocacy Report," 2023.

CONCLUSION

As we stand at the midpoint of Agenda 2030, the clock is ticking, and the stakes could not be higher. Member States must confront the rising tide of exclusionary rhetoric and regressive legislation with unwavering resolve. Now is the moment to translate pledges into action: to enact and enforce anti-discrimination laws; to fund and mainstream gender-affirming health and social services; to recognize all gender identities in legal documents; and to ensure that LGBTI+ voices shape every phase of SDG implementation. We cannot, and must not, allow the basic humanity of our communities to be erased or denied.

Achieving SDG 3 requires that Member States deliberately integrate LGBTI+ inclusion into every facet of health policy and practice. This means dismantling legal and social barriers that fuel stigma and discrimination, investing in comprehensive data systems disaggregated by SOGIESC, and equipping healthcare providers with the knowledge and resources to deliver safe, respectful, affirming care. It calls for targeted funding for community-led interventions, legal reforms to decriminalize diverse sexual orientations and gender identities, and genuine engagement with LGBTI+ organizations in the design, implementation, and monitoring of national health strategies. Only through such coordinated, rights-based action can we realize the bold vision of SDG 3: to guarantee healthy lives and well-being for all at all ages and for every person.

As this position paper highlights, the lack of access to inclusive healthcare and social support systems frequently exacerbates mental health consequences for the LGBTI+ community. Targeted violence further reinforces the systemic exclusion of LBTI women and gender non-conforming people from social, economic, and political life, undermining the very foundation of SDG 5's goals on gender equality and empowerment for all. Gender equality cannot be achieved without fully embracing and protecting the rights, identities, and voices of all women and people of diverse gender experiences.

Simultaneously, the economic exclusion of LGBTI+ communities represents both a moral failure and a structural obstacle to sustainable development. It undermines not only the dignity and rights of individuals, but also the economic potential of entire societies. As nations work to rebuild from pandemic disruptions and accelerate progress toward the 2030 Agenda, we cannot afford to perpetuate systems that marginalize entire populations or ignore the immense human capital within LGBTI+ communities. When LGBTI+ individuals are denied access to quality education, fair employment, and financial services, the consequences reverberate through families, communities, and economies. Discrimination in one sector—such as education or healthcare—inevitably impacts outcomes in others, including labor force participation and productivity. This interconnectedness underscores the need for a holistic, rights-based approach to policymaking.

Moreover, as the world strives to meet the ambitions of SDG 14, it is essential to recognize that ocean sustainability cannot be separated from social equity. The dual crises of marine degradation and systemic exclusion disproportionately affect LGBTI+ people, compounding vulnerabilities through displacement, livelihood loss, and invisibility in policymaking. Building intersectional ocean stewardship means affirming that LGBTI+ individuals have the right to live, work, and thrive safely along coastlines and within ocean-based economies. It requires that they are not merely considered vulnerable populations, but also leaders, innovators, and agents of change in the fight for a just and sustainable future. As multilateral financing institutions begin to

acknowledge the need for more inclusive project design and governance models, these efforts must be strengthened. The path forward demands intentional adherence to principles of equality, participation, and justice in all ocean governance processes. By weaving LGBTI+ inclusion into the fabric of marine conservation, disaster risk reduction, and climate adaptation finance, the global community can ensure that ocean justice truly leaves no one behind, safeguarding both the vitality of our oceans and the dignity of all people.

Finally, as emphasized throughout this review of the SDGs, multilateralism and strong partnerships are more critical than ever to confront today's intersecting global crises. The inclusion of marginalized communities, particularly LGBTI+ individuals, is not just a matter of equity, but a necessity for effective and sustainable development. However, the persistent underfunding and exclusion of LGBTI+ groups from formal decision-making processes highlight systemic barriers that must be dismantled. To fulfill the promise of SDG 17, it is imperative to establish structured mechanisms that ensure meaningful participation, adequate resourcing, and institutional support for LGBTI+ communities.

We call on governments to uphold their international human rights obligations by embedding SOGIESC-inclusive targets into national SDG roadmaps. As Member States prepare their Voluntary National Reviews (VNRs) in the coming years, we urge them to mainstream LGBTI+ inclusion across all chapters and SDGs, rather than confining it to any singular SDG. The realities, contributions, and needs of LGBTI+ people must be reflected in education, employment, housing, climate resilience, peacebuilding, and beyond. True inclusion cannot be siloed. It must be integrated into the very fabric of development planning and accountability frameworks. In doing so, governments not only advance the 2030 Agenda, they also strengthen the global defense of democracy, peace, and climate justice. LGBTI+ rights are not peripheral, they are foundational to a just and sustainable world for all.

We also urge multilateral institutions to strengthen partnerships with LGBTI+ organizations, ensuring that financing, technical assistance, and governance structures are accessible and accountable. And we challenge civil society and the private sector to champion inclusive workplaces, health systems, and community resilience initiatives that protect the most marginalized. Denying the existence of transgender and non-binary people is, in itself, a form of exclusion that violates the very essence of "leaving no one behind."

Today, we stand united in demanding tangible action.

We are safeguarding the rights of all gender-diverse individuals and affirming that true sustainability can only be achieved when every person is recognized, respected, and included on the path to 2030.