

The Sustainable Development Goals & Trans Engagement

An Updated Guide
SDGs 1, 3 & 5



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About GATE

GATE works to advance global justice for trans and gender diverse communities. Our vision is a future where trans and gender diverse communities live freely, safely, and with dignity. We are community-led and community-centered, working with integrity and innovation to create opportunities for shared learning and resource equity in order to advance global solidarity across borders and movements.

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

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Acronyms

CEDAW – Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women

CSE – Comprehensive Sexuality Education

CSO – Civil Society Organizations

CSW – Commission on the Status of Women

DOCO – Development Operations Coordinating Office

DSD – Division of Sustainable Development

ECOSOC – Economic and Social Council

GDP – Gross Domestic Product

HDI – Human Development Index

HLPF – High Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development

LGBTI – Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, and Intersex

LGBTI SG – LGBTI Stakeholder Group

LGR – Legal Gender Recognition

MDGs – Millennium Development Goals

MGoS – Major Groups and other Stakeholders

NGO – Non-governmental organization

NHRI – National Human Rights Institution

ODA – Overseas Development Assistance

OECD – Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development

SDGs – Sustainable Development Goals

SOGIESC – Sexual orientation, gender identity and expression, and sex characteristics

SRHR – Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights

UN – United Nations

UNCTAD – United Nations Conference on Trade and Development

UNDESA – UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs

UNDG – United Nations Development Group

UNDP – United Nations Development Programme

UNESCO – United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization

UNGA – United Nations General Assembly

UPR – Universal Periodic Reviews

USAID – US Agency for International Development

WHO – World Health Organization

VNR – Voluntary National Review

→ Preface

What is the purpose of this guide?

The majority of trans and gender diverse activists and organizations devote an extensive amount of time and effort in their daily schedules and work tasks to the thematic areas captured in the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Many of us frame our work purely through human rights language and frameworks, and rarely position it through the lens of the SDGs. However, human rights are inseparable from the SDGs, as they are grounded in the [Universal Declaration of Human Rights](#).

[UN guidance emphasizes that people “left furthest behind” must be prioritized](#) in analysis, data, and policy recommendations throughout the SDGs processes, including Voluntary National Reviews (VNRs). Civil society inputs should actively encourage governments to integrate human rights language and commitments across SDG reporting. There are multiple connection points and linkages to be made that can directly and indirectly connect organizational work to the SDGs to better ensure that no one is left behind.

This guide will provide a broad introduction to the SDGs, with particular focus on [SDG 1 \(No Poverty\)](#), [SDG 3 \(Good Health and Well-being\)](#), and [SDG 5 \(Gender Equality\)](#) and their links to trans and gender diverse populations and advocacy.

For whom is it intended?

This guide can benefit individual activists as well as organizations engaged with trans and gender diverse advocacy.

Share this guide:

- With organizational staff responsible for advocacy and research, and those who attend advocacy meetings, nationally and regionally
- With board members before the next annual or strategic planning process
- At relevant national and regional meetings, specifically those with advocacy on the agenda



What are the Sustainable Development Goals?

→ History

[In 2015, the world leaders at the United Nations adopted the Sustainable Development Goals](#) to transform the world into a better place and leave no one behind. As the [UN website for the Sustainable Development Goals](#) reads:

"The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, adopted by all United Nations Member States in 2015, provides a shared blueprint for peace and prosperity for people and the planet, now and into the future. At its heart are the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), which are an urgent call for action by all countries – developed and developing – in a global partnership. They recognize that ending poverty and other deprivations must go hand-in-hand with strategies that improve health and education, reduce inequality, and spur economic growth – all while tackling climate change and working to preserve our oceans and forests."

According to the UN, after more than 10 years of the SDGs process, the world is far behind in achieving the goals by 2030. In the foreword of the [latest \(2025\) SDG progress report](#), the UN Secretary-General, António Guterres, states:

"[...] only 35 per cent of SDG targets are on track or making moderate progress. Nearly half are moving too slowly and, alarmingly, 18 per cent are in reverse."

With fewer than 5 years remaining to achieve the goals, there is an urgency to increase efforts and act responsibly. [Read the SDG progress reports since 2016.](#)

Leave no one behind

“Leave no one behind” is the overarching theme of the SDGs, but some people are left so far behind that those in decision-making and planning positions do not even consider them. Often, as trans and gender diverse people, we find ourselves in this position – our challenges are diverse, and we face multiple compounding and intersectional issues.

A key issue that we face globally is the invisibilization of our community and our challenges. Generally, international development is measured through a heteronormative and cisnormative lens. This means that the data is collected in such a way that trans and gender diverse communities are excluded from statistics, most often with assumptions of binary gender and heterosexual family units. To address this data gap, more intentional inclusion of trans and gender diverse communities in research and national statistics is essential. This requires Member States to prioritize collecting meaningful, high-quality data disaggregated by SOGIESC status. However, this will only happen through intentional advocacy to governments and research and statistics bodies to request that they change how they gather and report data. A good source for understanding key indicators of SOGIESC economic inclusion is the UNDP [LGBTI Index](#), which “serves as a global benchmark and guide for countries to assess their progress towards achieving full inclusion of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and intersex people according to 51 indicators across five strategic areas.”

Another critical issue faced by trans and gender diverse communities is criminalizing and discriminatory laws that restrict the right to freedom of expression in relation to gender identity and sexual orientation issues. Such laws include sodomy and anti-homosexuality laws, buggery laws, and other similar types of laws and regulations. These prevent trans and gender diverse communities from accessing essential services and acquiring equality and access to better health and well-being.

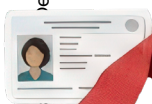
[Trans and gender diverse people, especially trans women, are disproportionately targeted by institutions of authority in almost every country in the world](#), most predominantly through discriminatory and criminalizing laws that lead to arrest and detention. A research report written in 2024 that used large-scale survey data from over 138,000 respondents across 30 European countries found that trans people experience significantly higher levels of discrimination and violence than cisgender lesbian, gay, and bisexual individuals across all national contexts. These disparities are further intensified by intersectional factors such as disability and ethnic minority status, with notable variation across gender identities, such as [higher violence reported by trans women and nonbinary people](#).

Another barrier faced in every region of the world is the denial of the right to change gender markers in legal documentation. This right to legal gender recognition is restricted or denied in all but 18 countries (as of February 2026) and is responsible for excluding countless trans and gender diverse people from engaging in civic life. Without legally accepted documentation, an individual’s life is placed on hold, often indefinitely, with impacts ranging from economic exclusion to refusal of access to health care, housing and education, with every area of life being dependent on access to identity documents.

The principle ‘leave no one behind’ is indeed vital for trans and gender diverse individuals and communities, who have been constantly left behind by policymakers and program design, nationally and internationally.

With sufficient knowledge of the SDGs and how this human rights instrument works, the principle “Leave no one behind” can become one of the most powerful advocacy tools trans and gender diverse organizations can use!

Without legally accepted documentation, an individual’s life is placed on hold, often indefinitely, with impacts ranging from economic exclusion to refusal of access to health care, housing and education, with every area of life being dependent on access to identity documents.



The 17 Sustainable Development Goals

There are 17 Sustainable Development Goals, summarised below:

1 NO POVERTY 	2 ZERO HUNGER 	3 GOOD HEALTH AND WELL-BEING 	4 QUALITY EDUCATION 
5 GENDER EQUALITY 	6 CLEAN WATER AND SANITATION 	7 AFFORDABLE AND CLEAN ENERGY 	8 DECENT WORK AND ECONOMIC GROWTH 
9 INDUSTRY, INNOVATION AND INFRASTRUCTURE 	10 REDUCED INEQUALITIES 	11 SUSTAINABLE CITIES AND COMMUNITIES 	12 RESPONSIBLE CONSUMPTION AND PRODUCTION 
13 CLIMATE ACTION 	14 LIFE BELOW WATER 	15 LIFE ON LAND 	16 PEACE, JUSTICE AND STRONG INSTITUTIONS 
17 PARTNERSHIPS FOR THE GOALS 	<p>This Guide will focus on SDG 1 - No Poverty, SDG 3 - Good Health and Well-being, and SDG 5 - Gender Equality. However, all the SDGs have a direct or indirect impact on trans and gender diverse communities and depending on each organization's own mission and vision, there might be a broader range of SDGs to link to your organizational strategic plan's goals and targets.</p>		

SDG 1

No Poverty



→ Introduction

Sustainable Development Goal 1: No Poverty aims to end poverty in all its forms everywhere.

Stigmatization, rejection and discrimination form part of the poverty cycle, creating a downward spiral that can be almost impossible to escape from. People living in poverty, experiencing homelessness or other forms of structural marginalization are faced with State-sanctioned and societal discrimination that can keep them trapped in the poverty cycle. Likewise, individuals who are unable to secure employment, lack identity documents for any reason, or fall outside of State-led socio-economic systems face similar barriers to engaging in civil life. This situation is all too familiar for many trans and gender diverse people.



Below is the list of targets and indicators regarding no poverty. Being familiar with these points provides the language that governments speak in relation to the SDGs. Knowing this language is important for engaging the government.

Target	Indicator		
1.1	By 2030, eradicate extreme poverty for all people everywhere, currently measured as people living on less than \$1.25 a day	1.1.1	Proportion of the population living below the international poverty line by sex, age, employment status and geographic location (urban/rural)
1.2	By 2030, reduce at least by half the proportion of men, women and children of all ages living in poverty in all its dimensions according to national definitions	1.2.1	Proportion of population living below the national poverty line, by sex and age
		1.2.2	Proportion of men, women and children of all ages living in poverty in all its dimensions according to national definitions
1.3	Implement nationally appropriate social protection systems and measures for all, including floors, and by 2030 achieve substantial coverage of the poor and the vulnerable	1.3.1	Proportion of population covered by social protection floors/systems, by sex, distinguishing children, unemployed persons, older persons, persons with disabilities, pregnant women, newborns, work-injury victims and the poor and the vulnerable
1.4	By 2030, ensure that all men and women, in particular the poor and the vulnerable, have equal rights to economic resources, as well as access to basic services, ownership and control over land and other forms of property, inheritance, natural resources, appropriate new technology and financial services, including microfinance	1.4.1	Proportion of population living in households with access to basic services
		1.4.2	Proportion of total adult population with secure tenure rights to land, (a) with legally recognized documentation, and (b) who perceive their rights to land as secure, by sex and type of tenure

1.5	By 2030, build the resilience of the poor and those in vulnerable situations and reduce their exposure and vulnerability to climate-related extreme events and other economic, social and environmental shocks and disasters	1.5.1	Number of deaths, missing persons and directly affected persons attributed to disasters per 100,000 population
		1.5.2	Direct economic loss attributed to disasters in relation to global gross domestic product (GDP)
		1.5.3	Number of countries that adopt and implement national disaster risk reduction strategies in line with the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015–2030
		1.5.4	Proportion of local governments that adopt and implement local disaster risk reduction strategies in line with national disaster risk reduction strategies
1.a	Ensure significant mobilization of resources from a variety of sources, including through enhanced development cooperation, in order to provide adequate and predictable means for developing countries, in particular least developed countries, to implement programmes and policies to end poverty in all its dimensions	1.a.1	Total official development assistance grants that focus on poverty reduction as a share of the recipient country's gross national income
		1.a.2	Proportion of total government spending on essential services (education, health and social protection)
1.b	Create sound policy frameworks at the national, regional and international levels, based on pro-poor and gender-sensitive development strategies, to support accelerated investment in poverty eradication actions	1.b.1	Pro-poor public social spending

→ Entry points to address

There are a substantial number of targets and subsequently indicators listed by SDG 1 for the effort to eradicate poverty by 2030. The recommendations we provide here are primarily focused on Target 1.4 (Equal rights to economic resources) and Indicator 1.4.2: Legally recognized secure tenure rights to land, while considering SDG 4 – Education, SDG 8 – Employment, and the right to housing, among others, through a trans and gender diverse lens.

Below is a list of opportunities for activists and organizations to submit information through various UN processes and mechanisms. Please note that this list is not exhaustive, and you are encouraged to consider the type of engagement that would best suit your situation.

You could submit information:

- In a spotlight report on the implementation of SDG 1 on Ending poverty and other related SDGs. [See more under Spotlight Reports.](#)
- To the Committee on Social, Economic and Cultural Rights on the disproportionately high rates of poverty and socio-economic marginalization of trans and gender diverse people within the LGBT community.
- To the Working Group of Experts on People of African Descent and the Special Rapporteur on contemporary forms of racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance, for instance, on the disproportionate rates of poverty among black trans people and trans people of color;
- To the Special Rapporteur on the rights of persons with disabilities, for instance, on the high rates of poverty among trans people with disabilities.
- To the Special Rapporteur on extreme poverty on the particular vulnerability of trans people to poverty.
- As part of your country's UPR review.

SDG 3

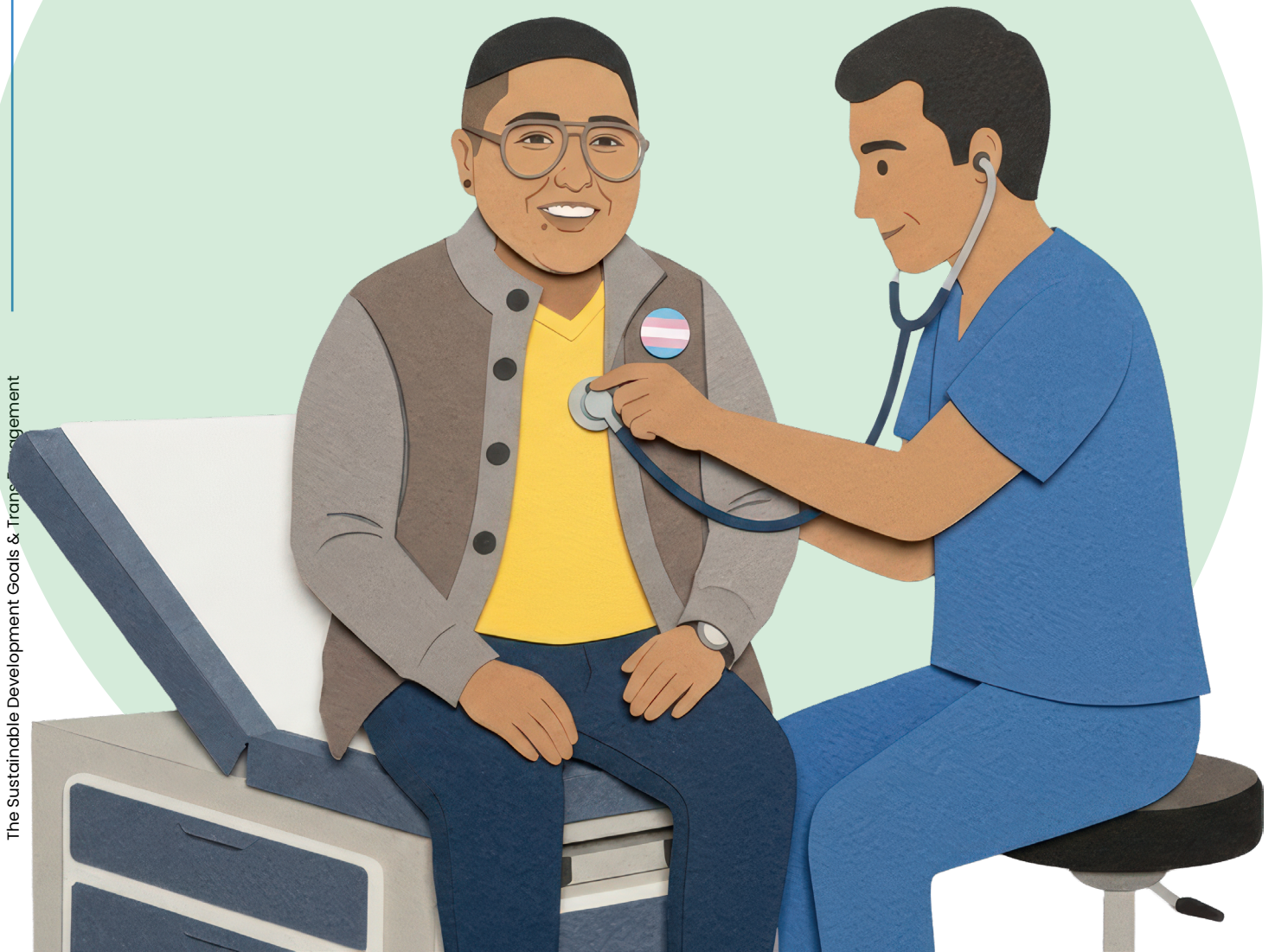
Good Health and Well-Being



→ Introduction

Sustainable Development Goal 3: Good health and well-being aims to ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages.

With the emphasis on 'leaving no one behind', SDG 3 examines the intersection of poverty, discrimination, health issues, and key and vulnerable populations. Trans and gender diverse people face multiple health challenges daily. Therefore, SDG 3 has an increased importance for our communities. These issues range from accessing hormones and other gender-affirming healthcare, failure to uphold sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR), and access to general health care. Healthcare access is often denied due to issues with or lack of identity documentation, and stigma within the medical profession across service providers, with uninformed healthcare providers leading to mistreatment or refusal to treatment in healthcare facilities.



Below is the list of targets and indicators regarding good health and well-being.

Target	Indicator		
3.1	By 2030, reduce the global maternal mortality ratio to less than 70 per 100,000 live births	3.1.1	Maternal mortality ratio
		3.1.2	Proportion of births attended by skilled health personnel
3.2	By 2030, end preventable deaths of newborns and children under 5 years of age, with all countries aiming to reduce neonatal mortality to at least as low as 12 per 1,000 live births and under-5 mortality to at least as low as 25 per 1,000 live births	3.2.1	Under-five mortality rate
		3.2.2	Neonatal mortality rate
3.3	By 2030, end the epidemics of AIDS, tuberculosis, malaria and neglected tropical diseases and combat hepatitis, water-borne diseases and other communicable diseases	3.3.1	Number of new HIV infections per 1,000 uninfected population, by sex, age and key populations
		3.3.2	Tuberculosis incidence per 100,000 population
		3.3.3	Malaria incidence per 1,000 population
		3.3.4	Hepatitis B incidence per 100,000 population
		3.3.5	Number of people requiring interventions against neglected tropical diseases
3.4	By 2030, reduce by one third premature mortality from non-communicable diseases through prevention and treatment and promote mental health and well-being	3.4.1	Mortality rate attributed to cardiovascular disease, cancer, diabetes or chronic respiratory disease
		3.4.2	Suicide mortality rate
3.5	Strengthen the prevention and treatment of substance abuse, including narcotic drug abuse and harmful use of alcohol	3.5.1	Coverage of treatment interventions (pharmacological, psychosocial and rehabilitation and aftercare services) for substance use disorders
		3.5.2	Alcohol per capita consumption (aged 15 years and older) within a calendar year in litres of pure alcohol

3.6	By 2020, halve the number of global deaths and injuries from road traffic accidents	3.6.1	Death rate due to road traffic injuries
3.7	By 2030, ensure universal access to sexual and reproductive health-care services, including for family planning, information and education, and the integration of reproductive health into national strategies and programmes	3.7.1	Proportion of women of reproductive age (aged 15-49 years) who have their need for family planning satisfied with modern methods
		3.7.2	Adolescent birth rate (aged 10-14 years; aged 15-19 years) per 1,000 women in that age group
3.8	Achieve universal health coverage, including financial risk protection, access to quality essential health-care services and access to safe, effective, quality and affordable essential medicines and vaccines for all	3.8.1	Coverage of essential health services
		3.8.2	Proportion of population with large household expenditures on health as a share of total household expenditure or income
3.9	By 2030, substantially reduce the number of deaths and illnesses from hazardous chemicals and air, water and soil pollution and contamination	3.9.1	Mortality rate attributed to household and ambient air pollution
		3.9.2	Mortality rate attributed to unsafe water, unsafe sanitation and lack of hygiene (exposure to unsafe Water, Sanitation and Hygiene for All (WASH) services)
		3.9.3	Mortality rate attributed to unintentional poisoning
3.a	Strengthen the implementation of the World Health Organization Framework Convention on Tobacco Control in all countries, as appropriate	3.a.1	Age-standardized prevalence of current tobacco use among persons aged 15 years and older

3.b	Support the research and development of vaccines and medicines for the communicable and non-communicable diseases that primarily affect developing countries, provide access to affordable essential medicines and vaccines, in accordance with the Doha Declaration on the TRIPS Agreement and Public Health, which affirms the right of developing countries to use to the full the provisions in the Agreement on Trade-Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights regarding flexibilities to protect public health, and, in particular, provide access to medicines for all	3.b.1	Proportion of the target population covered by all vaccines included in their national programme
		3.b.2	Total net official development assistance to medical research and basic health sectors
		3.b.3	Health product access index
3.c	Substantially increase health financing and the recruitment, development, training and retention of the health workforce in developing countries, especially in least developed countries and small island developing States	3.c.1	Health worker density and distribution
3.d	Strengthen the capacity of all countries, in particular developing countries, for early warning, risk reduction and management of national and global health risks	3.d.1	International Health Regulations (IHR) capacity and health emergency preparedness
		3.d.2	Percentage of bloodstream infections due to selected antimicrobial-resistant organisms

→ Entry points to address

As we have seen above, the main threats to the health and well-being of trans and gender diverse populations are stigma and discrimination, a lack of data on trans and gender diverse people, and institutionalized stigma and discrimination in the form of lack of access to basic and gender-affirming health care. The recommendations we provide here are primarily focused on targets: 3.3. (end the epidemics of AIDS, tuberculosis, malaria and other communicable diseases), 3.4. (reduce premature mortality from non-communicable diseases through prevention and treatment, and promote mental health and well-being), 3.5. (strengthen the prevention and treatment of substance abuse, including narcotic drug abuse and harmful use of alcohol), 3.7. (access to sexual and reproductive health-care services, including for family planning, information and education, and the integration of reproductive health into national strategies and programmes), and 3.8. (universal health coverage, access to quality essential health-care services and access to safe, effective, quality and affordable essential medicines and vaccines for all).

Below is a list of opportunities for activists and organizations to submit information through various UN processes and mechanisms. Please note that this list is not exhaustive, and you are encouraged to consider the type of engagement that would best suit your situation.

You could submit information:

- In a spotlight report on the implementation of SDG 3 on Health and well-being and other related SDGs. See [more](#) under [Spotlight Reports](#).
- To the Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD), for instance, on the lack of access of trans people with disabilities to gender-affirming healthcare, and its consequences.
- To the Special Rapporteur on Health, for instance, on the prohibitively high costs of trans healthcare and the toll of mandatory medical requirements for legal gender recognition.
- As part of your country's UPR review.



SDG 5

Gender Equality



→ Introduction

While SDG 5 aims to achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls, the promise of true gender equality remains unfulfilled thirty years after the Beijing Declaration. Adopted in 1995 at the Fourth World Conference on Women, the [Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action](#) is the world's most comprehensive global policy framework and blueprint for advancing gender equality. It was signed by 189 countries and established the defining principle that women's rights are human rights, identifying 12 "critical areas of concern" such as poverty, education, violence, and political representation. By setting specific strategic objectives to remove the systemic barriers that hold women and girls back, the Declaration serves as a permanent roadmap for governments and activists to track progress and hold leaders accountable for creating a more just and equitable world.

Between 2019 and 2024, 99 positive legal reforms were enacted globally, focused largely on economic empowerment and safety. However, 2024 UN data from 131 countries indicate that no nation has achieved a perfect legal framework across the key areas of public life, violence against women, employment and economic benefits, and marriage and family. Over half of the countries have gaps in each area (United Nations, 2025). In addition, systemic and deep-rooted patriarchy continues to control the destinies of LGBTI people by ignoring and even encouraging gender-based violence, accompanied by heteronormative gender roles and harmful socio-behavioral norms (LGBTI Stakeholder Group, 2025).

Trans and gender diverse people are increasingly vulnerable to targeted attacks from the anti-gender movement, which has gained significant influence in governance and online spaces. This has led to deteriorating mental health of trans individuals due to hostile political rhetoric and shrinking funding that undermines the capacity of trans-led organizations to provide essential services such as healthcare, legal support, and community building (GATE, 2023). These multifaceted challenges not only exclude trans and gender diverse people from development agendas and gender equality efforts, but also heighten the barrier to true gender equality.



Below is the list of targets and indicators regarding gender equality.

Target	Indicator		
5.1	End all forms of discrimination against all women and girls everywhere	5.1.1	Whether or not legal frameworks are in place to promote, enforce and monitor equality and non-discrimination on the basis of sex
5.2	Eliminate all forms of violence against all women and girls in the public and private spheres, including trafficking and sexual and other types of exploitation	5.2.1	Proportion of ever-partnered women and girls aged 15 years and older subjected to physical, sexual or psychological violence by a current or former intimate partner in the previous 12 months, by form of violence and by age
		5.2.2	Proportion of women and girls aged 15 years and older subjected to sexual violence by persons other than an intimate partner in the previous 12 months, by age and place of occurrence
5.3	Eliminate all harmful practices, such as child, early and forced marriage and female genital mutilation	5.3.1	Proportion of women aged 20-24 years who were married or in a union before age 15 and before age 18
		5.3.2	Proportion of girls and women aged 15-49 years who have undergone female genital mutilation/cutting, by age
5.4	Recognize and value unpaid care and domestic work through the provision of public services, infrastructure and social protection policies and the promotion of shared responsibility within the household and the family as nationally appropriate	5.4.1	Proportion of time spent on unpaid domestic and care work, by sex, age and location
5.5	Ensure women's full and effective participation and equal opportunities for leadership at all levels of decision-making in political, economic and public life	5.5.1	Proportion of seats held by women in (a) national parliaments and (b) local governments
		5.5.2	Proportion of women in managerial positions

5.6	Ensure universal access to sexual and reproductive health and reproductive rights as agreed in accordance with the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development and the Beijing Platform for Action and the outcome documents of their review conferences	5.6.1	Proportion of women aged 15-49 years who make their own informed decisions regarding sexual relations, contraceptive use and reproductive health care
		5.6.2	Number of countries with laws and regulations that guarantee full and equal access to women and men aged 15 years and older to sexual and reproductive health care, information and education
5.a	Undertake reforms to give women equal rights to economic resources, as well as access to ownership and control over land and other forms of property, financial services, inheritance and natural resources, in accordance with national laws	5.a.1	(a) Proportion of total agricultural population with ownership or secure rights over agricultural land, by sex; and (b) share of women among owners or rights-bearers of agricultural land, by type of tenure
		5.a.2	Proportion of countries where the legal framework (including customary law) guarantees women's equal rights to land ownership and/or control
5.b	Enhance the use of enabling technology, in particular information and communications technology, to promote the empowerment of women	5.b.1	Proportion of individuals who own a mobile telephone, by sex
5.c	Adopt and strengthen sound policies and enforceable legislation for the promotion of gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls at all levels	5.c.1	Proportion of countries with systems to track and make public allocations for gender equality and women's empowerment

→ Entry points to address

Gender equality cannot be achieved without the inclusion of all persons with diverse gender identities and expressions. Empowering women and girls is not successful and sustainable without trans and gender diverse people, in particular trans and gender diverse women and girls. We are less than 4 years from reaching the 2030 Agenda, but gender disparities remain deeply entrenched, with over half the countries in the world lacking legislation to safeguard gender equality.

For SDG 5, the recommended entry points for advocacy on the rights of trans and gender diverse persons are primarily focused on Targets 5.1 (end all forms of discrimination against women and girls), 5.2 (eliminate all forms of violence against all women and girls), and 5.c (adopt and strengthen sound policies for gender equality). The criminalization of homosexuality or trans identity and discriminatory laws create barriers that prevent trans people from fully participating in society and accessing fundamental rights. In other contexts, the lack of legal gender recognition, along with legal frameworks that narrowly define protections for only heteronormative gender identities and expressions, fails to safeguard trans people from violence and discrimination.

SDG targets are interlinkable. We must consider intersections with SDGs 1 - Poverty, 3 - Health, 4 - Education, and 8 - Decent Work from a trans perspective. Recommended focus areas include Targets 5.5 (ensure women's full and effective participation and equal opportunities for leadership at all levels of decision-making in political, economic, and public life) and 5.a (undertake reforms to give women equal rights to economic resources, including access to ownership and control over land, property, financial services, inheritance, and natural resources). Trans and gender diverse people experience systemic discrimination across employment, education, healthcare, housing, leadership positions, and legal protection due to the lack of legal gender recognition or due to discriminatory laws.

Below is a list of opportunities for activists and organizations to submit information through various UN processes and mechanisms. Please note that this list is not exhaustive, and you are encouraged to consider the type of engagement that would best suit your situation.



You could submit information:

- In a spotlight report on the implementation of SDG 5 on Gender Equality and related SDGs, documenting how trans and gender diverse people are excluded from gender equality programming and gender budgetary tracking, and emphasizing the need for meaningful engagement with trans-specific experiences in all policies designed to improve the lives of women and girls, and the need for disaggregated SDG implementation data that captures gender identity. [See more under Spotlight Reports.](#)
- To the UN Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) on barriers to legal gender recognition based on self-determination and on the critical need for identification documents that align with gender identity, which also affects access to education (SDG 4), decent work (SDG 8), and healthcare (SDG 3).
- To the UN Working Group on discrimination against women and girls (WG VAWG) on the lived realities of trans and gender diverse persons due to the lack of legal gender recognition, the impact of criminalization laws or the lack of legal protection under heteronormative anti-discrimination laws, and the life-threatening consequences of these gaps that exclude trans people from protection from violence and discrimination, including technology-facilitated gender-based violence.
- As part of their country's UPR review.

An Overview of Sustainable Development Goal Processes

→ High-Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development

Established at the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development (Rio+20) in 2012, the annual High-Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development (HLPF) serves as the central platform for the follow-up and review of the SDGs. This is the space where negotiated declarations are adopted, and commitments and the progress of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development are reviewed.

The HLPF convenes for over eight days annually, including [Voluntary National Reviews \(VNRs\)](#) and a ministerial segment for in-depth reviews of progress on selected SDGs aligned with each year's theme. It brings together ministerial and high-level government representatives alongside a diverse array of expertise and stakeholders, including heads of UN entities, academics, experts, and representatives of major groups and other stakeholders (MGoS).

The [High-Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development's](#) website has a visual roadmap clearly outlining the various processes that take place at this annual event, including upcoming themes and SDG reviews. We encourage you to monitor the HLPF's annual theme, reviewing goals and the [Voluntary National Reviews' upcoming inputs](#) and agenda to plan your engagement and advocacy with [Major Groups and Other Stakeholders](#) - specifically the [LGBTI Stakeholder Group \(LGBTI SG\)](#) - several months before the HLPF. View the roadmap for the [2026 HLPF](#).

Example: How GATE engaged in the HLPF

During the 2025 High-Level Political Forum, when SDG 5 - Gender Equality was under review, GATE engaged with the LGBTI Stakeholder Group, supporting the drafting of the position paper and delivering a collective statement during the official session "[SDG 5 and interlinkages with other SDGs – Gender equality](#)." We used this opportunity to highlight a significant gap in current gender equality approaches that fail to protect LGBTI individuals from gender-based violence and discrimination across the globe. [Find out more about GATE's engagement at the HLPF 2025](#).

→ Voluntary National Reviews (VNRs)

VNRs are country-led processes for reporting on the Sustainable Development Goals progress. As part of its follow-up and review mechanisms, the 2030 Agenda encourages Member States to "conduct regular and inclusive reviews of progress at the national and sub-national levels, which is country-led and country-driven". The Voluntary National Reviews aim to facilitate the sharing of experiences, including successes, challenges, and lessons learned, to accelerate the implementation of the 2030 Agenda. They also seek to strengthen governments' policies and institutions and to mobilize multi-stakeholder support and partnerships for the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals.



→ Engagement in the VNR cycle

The UN Voluntary National Review (VNR) Handbook and guidelines outline how governments prepare VNRs, including multi-stakeholder engagement plans, participatory mechanisms, and stakeholder consultations. This guide can be used to understand the process for identifying how your organization can engage in each phase (preparation, drafting, presentation, and follow-up).

[Access the VNR Handbook](#) - updated in 2024.

Civil society participation in the VNRs country-led processes for reporting on the Sustainable Development Goals progress is essential to ensure transparency, accountability, and inclusive development. This engagement is coordinated by the [Major Groups and Other Stakeholders \(MGoS\)](#) (see more below). Trans and gender diverse organizations can engage by:

- Contributing data and policy analysis.
- Participating in national SDG consultations.
- Producing spotlight reports.
- Drafting CSOs' collective statement for VNR session.
- Nominating and electing a speaker/statement deliverer.
- Advocating for inclusive indicators and monitoring frameworks.
- Monitoring implementation of commitments following VNR presentations.

→ Regional Sustainable Development Forums

UN regional commissions are invited to share regional perspectives on sustainable development to inform the HLPF in the same year. The UN regional offices in Africa, Asia-Pacific, Europe, Latin America, and Western Asia organize annual regional forums that bring together government representatives, UN agencies, diverse stakeholders, and Civil Society Organizations (CSOs), serving as preparatory sessions held several months before the HLPF. These forums offer important opportunities to raise regional concerns and perspectives that inform global discussions.

More information and dates for the Regional Forums on Sustainable Development can be found on the websites of the five UN regional commissions:

UN Economic Commission for Africa (ECA)

- Africa Regional Forum on Sustainable Development <https://www.uneca.org/eca-events/arfsd>

UN Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP)

- Asia-Pacific Forum on Sustainable Development <https://www.unescap.org/2030-agenda/regional-processes-and-dialogue>

UN Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA)

- Arab Forum for Sustainable Development <https://www.unescwa.org/2030-afsd>

UN Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC)

- Forum of the Countries of Latin America and the Caribbean on Sustainable Development <https://foroalc2030.cepal.org/2026/en>

UN Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE)

- Regional Forum on Sustainable Development for the UNECE Region <https://regionalforum.unece.org/>

→ HLPF Side Events and Exhibitions

Side events and exhibitions are organized during the HLPF by Member States, the UN system, organizations with ECOSOC consultative status or MGoS constituencies. These events, held outside the official programme, provide valuable opportunities to discuss themes, Voluntary National Reviews, and Sustainable Development Goals under review at the HLPF in greater depth.

For Civil Society Organizations, organizing or participating in side events is a valuable opportunity to amplify the voices and concerns of a diverse and marginalized group, particularly those who may not be able to participate in the official session or for whom presenting on the official UN platform poses safety concerns due to the sensitive nature of their work in certain contexts.

Example: HLPF 2025 Side Event

In July 2025, the LGBTI Stakeholder Group and representatives from Member States organized a side event titled "Sustainable Futures: Navigating LGBTI+ Financing" during the 2025 High-Level Political Forum (HLPF). Organized in collaboration with the UNDP, OHCHR, Spain, and the Netherlands, the session directly addressed the critical intersection of economic stability and human rights. The discussion was centered on the rising challenges posed by global anti-rights movements and the severe financial constraints that disproportionately hinder the progress of LGBTI communities globally. The event also amplified the voices of LGBTI grassroots activists from countries undergoing Voluntary National Reviews (VNRs), providing a perspective on how systemic exclusion manifests in local contexts such as the Philippines and Nigeria. By linking high-level discussion on SDGs to the lived experiences of activists, the session served as a call to action for Member States to treat LGBTI inclusion not as an elective priority but as a prerequisite for sustainable development.

Civil Society Participation in SDG Processes

→ Major Groups and Other Stakeholders (MGoS)

The Major Groups and Other Stakeholders (MGoS) serves as the official coordination network of volunteers recognized by the United Nations for civil society and stakeholder participation in UN processes. It currently comprises 21 constituencies, including the [LGBTI Stakeholders Group](#) (see more below), and continues to grow.

Civil society participates in the High-Level Political Forum primarily through the Major Groups and other Stakeholders Coordination Mechanism, which allows input into ministerial declarations, participation in side events, and the submission of [Spotlight Reports](#) (see more below). This engagement aims to ensure accountability, facilitate expert contributions, and advocate for marginalized voices in the 2030 Agenda review process, although participation opportunities can be limited during official sessions. The MGoS also coordinates civil society engagement in the [Voluntary National Review](#) preparatory process. This includes facilitating the drafting of a collective civil society statement by CSOs in the country and organizing the election of a civil society speaker to deliver the statement during the HLPF review session.

If trans and gender diverse organizations are aware that their country will be reviewed at the HLPF, they are strongly encouraged to engage with the MGoS well in advance of the HLPF (civil society organizations should engage in the VNR process as early as possible, ideally starting August to October of the year before the VNR is presented at the HLPF in July). Early engagement is important, as the drafting process and speaker selection require coordination with a wide range of civil society organizations operating in the same country, not just those focused on similar thematic areas. Proactive participation helps ensure that trans and gender diverse issues are reflected in the collective statement and creates opportunities to advocate for a trans or gender diverse representative to be elected as the civil society speaker.



Key Stages for NGO Engagement:

- **October (Pre-VNR Year):** The final list of countries presenting VNRs is usually available by October. NGOs should immediately identify their government's focal point.
- **August–December (Early Planning):** NGOs should push for a transparent, public roadmap of the VNR process and demand that consultation processes include civil society from the beginning.
- **January–April (Preparation and Consultation):** This is the key period to provide inputs to the government, attend national consultations, and review drafts of the VNR report.
- **April–May (Main Messages):** Governments submit "Main Messages" to the UN, usually by late April or early May. This is a critical checkpoint for NGOs to verify if their input was considered.
- **Pre-HLPF (June):** This is the time to finalize parallel reports ("spotlight reports") if the official process is not inclusive, and to prepare for meetings during the HLPF in July.
- **Post-VNR (Immediate six months after):** Engage in follow-up processes to turn VNR findings into national policy actions

→ LGBTI Stakeholder Group (LGBTI SG)

[The LGBTI Stakeholder Group](#) is a self-organized coalition of civil society organizations and volunteers within the UN Major Groups and Other Stakeholders (MGOS) mechanism. It serves as a primary platform advocating for the rights of LGBTI+ people within the 2030 Agenda and the HLPF, focusing on sustainable development, policy, and inclusivity. The group organizes monthly virtual meetings, listserv communications, and in-person meetings at the HLPF.

Most importantly, the group produces an annual position paper designed to ensure that Member States, UN agencies, and global stakeholders remain cognizant of the specific LGBTI dimensions within each year's HLPF themes and its SDG targets. [Read the position papers of the LGBTI Stakeholder Group.](#)

Trans and gender diverse individuals and organizations are strongly encouraged to become members of the LGBTI Stakeholder Group and engage in drafting position papers to ensure their stories and realities are reflected, thereby helping to shape HLPF discussions and the implementation of the 2030 Agenda. [Apply to join the LGBTI Stakeholder Group.](#)

For more information on how to participate in the **HLPF**, you can read this [Handbook for the Participation of Major Groups and Other Stakeholders in the High-Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development](#), developed by the LGBTI Stakeholder Group.

Engagement with the LGBTI Stakeholder group can include:

- [Joining the LGBTI Stakeholder Group](#) - apply through the form at the bottom of their website.
- Contributing to joint civil society position papers.
- Organizing side events highlighting community priorities - this is possible if your organization holds ECOSOC status, or with the support of another ECOSOC-accredited organization.
- Delivering oral statements during official sessions.
- Following up with national governments after HLPF participation to support implementation. There is a generally decentralized point of contact within most national governments to reach out to regarding SDG implementation and follow-up after the High-Level Political Forum (HLPF). The primary point of contact is the National Focal Point or Lead Coordinating Body for the 2030 Agenda/SDGs, typically located within a ministry responsible for planning, foreign affairs, or the Prime Minister's office.

→ Spotlight Reports

A Spotlight report is a voluntary submission from civil society organizations (CSOs) and stakeholders that provides evidence that challenges official State data, highlights data gaps, and provides a comprehensive, grounded assessment of SDG progress.

Unlike civil society organizations' Parallel reports to the Universal Periodic Review (UPR) or Shadow reports to the review of treaty bodies, Spotlight reports are not official submissions to UN review processes and are not available on UN official sites. The reports have fewer restrictions, with no strict word limits, and aim to provide an alternative perspective and draw attention to particular concerns, communities, or implementation gaps that may be overlooked in official country reporting during the [Voluntary National Reviews](#).

To maximize the impact of spotlight reports, trans organizations should build coalitions of civil society organizations and other stakeholders working on specific SDG targets to document evidence of exclusion or discrimination and present data-driven analyses of the 2030 Agenda's implementation to policymakers and UN bodies.

Importantly, organizations do not need to start from scratch. The [UNDP LGBTI Index](#) and other examples of spotlight reports available on the LGBTI Stakeholder Group website already provide indicators and data-collection frameworks that can inform report development. For example, when addressing SDG 3 - Good health and Wellbeing, relevant indicators may include:

- The presence of non-discrimination laws and policies by providers that specifically include SOGIESC, e.g., preventing denial of care and recognizing the right to care for all regardless of SOGIESC.

- The percentage of people who feel discriminated against based on SOGIESC in health care settings.
- The presence of gender-affirming care for trans and gender diverse people.

Collaboration with other civil society organizations working on related issues and SDG targets is strongly encouraged. Joint spotlight reports carry greater credibility and demonstrate broad aspects of priority concerns.

Although spotlight reports can be released or submitted at any time, strategic timing significantly increases their impact, especially in advance of a country's Voluntary National Review for meaningful engagement and advocacy with international organizations, donors, and Member States. Ultimately, spotlight reports should not end with their publication. Ongoing follow-up is essential; you should monitor the national SDG progress report, tracking the impact of the government's SDG projects, or engage with relevant government ministries and UN agencies responsible for SDG implementation.

If you are interested in developing a spotlight report, we recommend that you familiarize yourself with **MPact Global Action for Gay Men's Health and Rights'** [How to engage with the 2030 Agenda on LGBTI issues](#).

[Read Spotlight Reports on the LGBTI Stakeholder Group website](#).



→ Other ways of engaging with the SDGs

In addition to the official SDG processes, various UN mechanisms and processes connect with the Sustainable Development goals through their mandates, which can provide alternative routes to advocating for trans and gender diverse rights through the lens of the SDGs.

Please note that the information below is a brief and introductory overview.

Special Procedures (Special Rapporteurs, Independent Experts and Working Groups)

Special Procedures are independent human rights experts appointed by the UN Human Rights Council. They are:

- **Special Rapporteurs:** Usually one individual focusing on a specific theme (like Health or SOGI) or a specific country.
- **Independent Experts:** Similar to SRs, often appointed for newer or more specialized mandates.
- **Working Groups:** A team of five experts (one from each global region) who tackle systemic issues like Arbitrary Detention or Discrimination against Women and Girls.

They aren't UN staff or government officials - they serve in their personal capacity, which gives them the freedom to critique governments and report independently with high objectivity. They hold specific Mandates to investigate issues, such as the right to health, freedom of expression, or sexual orientation and gender identity.

The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) are often seen as 'soft law', in other words, aspirational targets for governments. Special Rapporteurs bridge the gap by connecting these goals to binding human rights legal standards.

Your organization can influence the UN by providing the experts with 'on-the-ground' data they wouldn't otherwise see. When Special Procedures issues a 'Call for Input,' or visits countries to assess the situation, you can send a brief submission detailing how the topic affects the trans community in your region. This is important, as the data you provided might be cited in their final report to the UN General Assembly and will inform the UN and Member States on how to address the issues outlined in your report.

Your organization should regularly monitor the Special Procedures website for 'Calls for Input.' These are windows of opportunity where experts explicitly ask for evidence to include in their next report. If you aren't checking the site, you might miss the deadline to get your community's specific challenges on the UN's official record.

For more information, you can visit the [Special Procedures website](#).

→ UN Treaty Bodies (Committees)

While Special Procedures act as flexible ‘watchdogs,’ Treaty Bodies are the formal ‘judges’ of the UN system. These are committees of independent experts that monitor how countries are actually following the specific human rights treaties they signed (such as CEDAW for women’s rights or CRPD for disability rights). Unlike the broader SDG goals, these treaties are legally binding contracts; when a government fails to meet them, it is in breach of international law.

For trans organizations, these bodies are a powerful tool for accountability because they operate on a fixed, predictable schedule. Every few years, your government must submit a report to the Committee explaining its progress. This is your ‘Shadow Report’ moment: you can submit your own evidence to provide an alternative the government’s narrative. If you can prove that trans people are being excluded, for example, from healthcare or legal recognition, the Committee can issue formal ‘Concluding Observations’ - official instructions that your government is then pressured to implement to meet both their treaty obligations and the SDGs.

For more information, visit the [Treaty Bodies website](#).

→ UPR Reviews

Every 4.5 years, each country’s entire human rights record is put under the microscope by other countries. Because it is a peer-to-peer process, it can often be quite political, but it is also one of the few times your government is forced to publicly answer for its treatment of trans citizens on a global stage. The UPR is a huge advocacy opportunity because it relies on three reports: one from the government, one from the UN, and a ‘Summary of Stakeholders’ - which is where you can come in. You can submit a brief ‘Parallel Report’ (often as part of a coalition) highlighting where the government is failing on trans rights. Other ‘friendly’ countries can then read your report and use it to ask your government tough questions or issue formal recommendations during the review.

Since governments love to highlight their SDGs progress, you can use the UPR to point out that they won’t achieve SDGs 1, 3 and 5 in situations where trans people are still facing legal barriers or violence. If your government ‘accepts’ a recommendation (e.g., to pass a non-discrimination law), you can hold them responsible for their commitment for the next four years as an official promise they made to the world.

For more information, visit the [UPR webpage](#).

→ Further resources

In case you are interested in working further with any of these mechanisms, you can familiarize yourself by reading the following guides:

[SOGIESC UPR Advocacy Toolkit](#) - ILGA World

[The Human Rights of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender People: A primer to working with the United Nations Treaty Monitoring Bodies and the Special Procedures of the United Nations Commission on Human Rights](#) - Amnesty International

Recommendations

→ Organizational level

Trans and gender diverse organizations play a critical role in ensuring that Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) implementation reflects lived realities and prioritizes those who are left furthest behind.

- Familiarize yourself with Agenda 2030, particularly the Goals that overlap with your current initiatives and work.
- Raise awareness in the organization, with staff, volunteers, constituency, trans and gender diverse community and board members – to start demonstrating the links between the work the organization already does, that falls in line with some of the SDGs. Cultivate an organizational awareness, use examples of such links between organizational mission, vision, programs in reporting, fundraising, and projects.
- Integrate SDG language and targets into advocacy strategies, funding proposals, monitoring frameworks, and organizational reporting to demonstrate the development relevance of trans and gender diverse advocacy.
- Advocacy focused on legal gender recognition based on self-determination at the country level is important. It can help alleviate multiple challenges to achieve better economic outcomes (including access to health services, education, employment, and social grants, among others).
- Closely follow the government SDGs process (changing laws and policies in accordance with the SDGs, the development of the VNRs) to determine what has been done and what has not, what impact do these reforms have on trans and gender diverse communities, as well as identify data gaps, and the level of inclusion of trans and gender diverse communities in the policy development processes. Based on this data, expand organizational knowledge through research and direct engagement with communities to continue identifying the needs of the most marginalized to inform relevant decision-makers who can address the problems.
- Ensure that organizations pay particular attention to the impact of intersectional oppression on the socio-economic well-being of trans and gender diverse people of color, trans and gender diverse migrants, sex workers, drug users, trans and gender diverse people with disabilities, those living with HIV, and others.
- Develop and raise funds for projects that support community members who want to set up their own business or self-sustainable projects. Including community programs that provide financial literacy, planning and seed resources.

- ↘ Include regular discussion points at the organizational level through platforms such as AGMs, organizational newsletters, the website, and the strategic plan to connect the organization's mission, vision, and projects to the SDGs relevant to the organization.

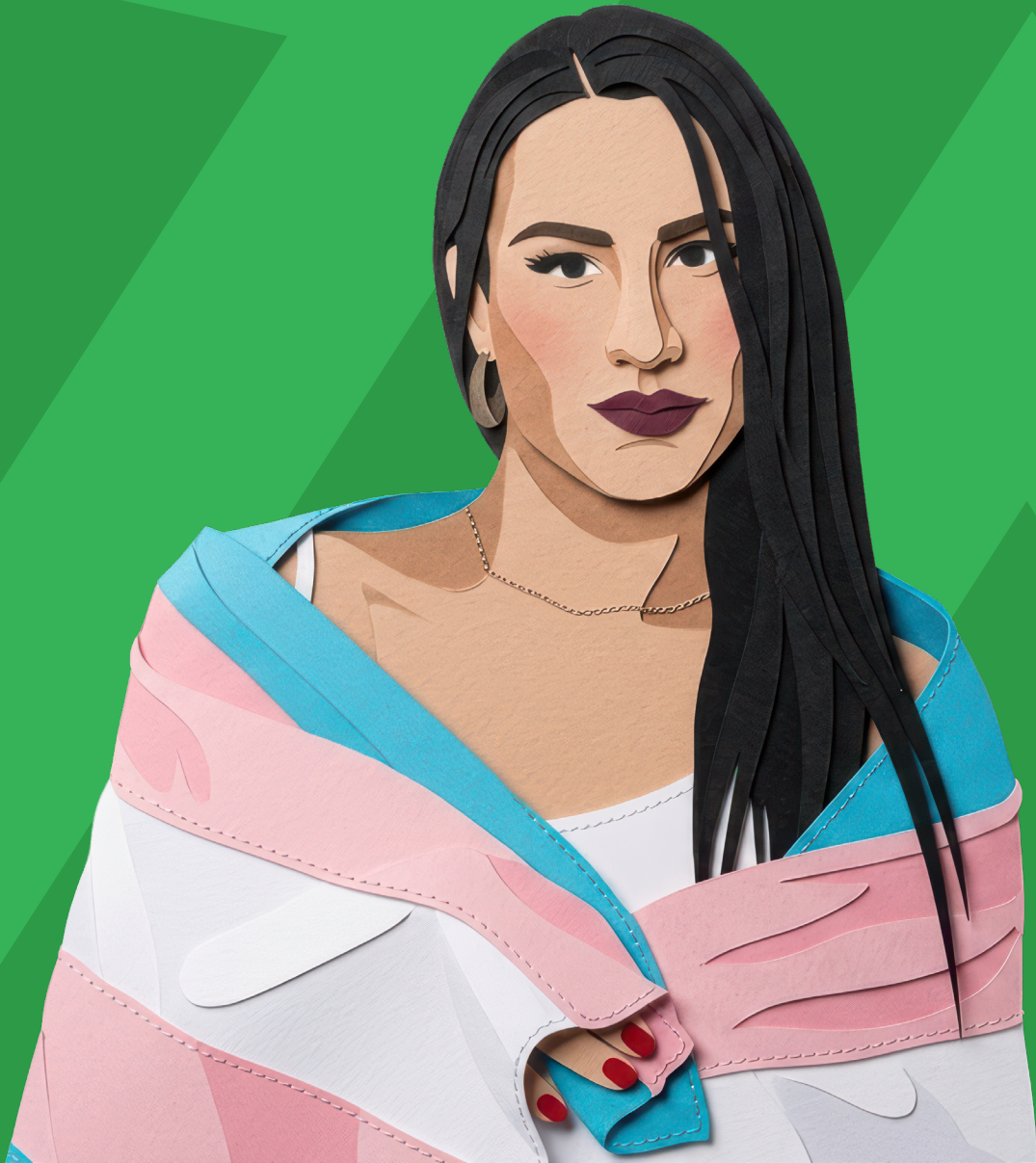
→ Country or regional level

- ↘ Identify which organizations in your country are already addressing the SDGs, even if they are not your typical colleagues and allies. Start working within these existing networks to bring trans issues to the table.
- ↘ Familiarize yourself with the national processes and main actors related to the SDGs. Identify national SDG coordination bodies, focal points, and relevant government ministries responsible for implementing Agenda 2030. Communicate with government ministries, HIV and AIDS bureaus (National AIDS Council/NAC), and other key government partners about the opportunities outlined regarding Agenda 2030 and HIV. Request participation in national SDG consultations, stakeholder engagement mechanisms, and data collection processes.
- ↘ Form alliances with other trans and gender diverse, LGBTQI, feminist and other relevant allied organizations in your country and region and join regional and global networks.
- ↘ Communicate with UNAIDS and its UN agency co-sponsors working on HIV about the necessity to participate actively in the SDGs and collect robust data on HIV.
- ↘ Get informed about national (and regional) scheduled dates for UN processes - such as VNRs, UPRs, and Shadow Reports - and join other organizations to draft submissions collectively.
- ↘ Engage with Regional Sustainable Development Forums organized by UN regional commissions (such as ESCAP, ECA, ECLAC, ESCWA, or ECE) as preparatory spaces to elevate regional priorities and inform global discussions at the High-Level Political Forum (HLPF).

→ International – at the UN

- ↘ Engage with the High-Level Political Forum (HLPF) through the Major Groups and Other Stakeholders (MGoS) mechanism.
- ↘ Engage in VNR coordination processes facilitated by MGoS to contribute to collective civil society statements and speaker elections.
- ↘ Engage actively with the LGBTI Stakeholder Group by contributing to annual position papers, participating in meetings, and supporting coordinated advocacy.

- Organizing or participating in side events and exhibitions during the HLPF to amplify voices that may not be able to access official platforms safely.
- Collect data and publish spotlight reports.
- Submit reports and submissions to United Nations mechanisms and processes, including the UPR, CEDAW, CRPD, and Special Procedures.
- Build relationships with UN Member States, UN agencies, and development partners to advance SOGIESC-inclusive implementation of the SDGs.
- Lobby for greater SOGIE inclusion in international development frameworks, using SDG commitments as a primary justification. In doing so, emphasize that gender identity and expression rights are not ‘special rights’: all human beings are entitled to be treated equally without discrimination.
- Collaboratively with other trans and gender diverse organizations or strong allies, attend the UN meetings to increase trans and gender diverse representation.



Additional resources for trans and gender diverse activists and organizations

- RFSL's [Rainbow Advocacy Program](#) (RAP), implemented with the support of ILGA World, Sida, and OutRight Action International, is a 13-month-long fellowship for LGBTIQ+ activists from the Global South and East to affect change at home through UN advocacy.
- Outright International's [Advocacy Week](#) program aims to empower LGBTIQ activists by facilitating their engagement with the New York-based UN system, allowing them to strengthen global networks, and building the technical capacity to address human rights issues related to sexual orientation, gender identity, and sex characteristics worldwide.
- The [UN Young Leaders for the SDGs](#) is a UN biennial program that selects diverse global change-makers to accelerate the SDGs through youth-led advocacy and strategic collaboration. Throughout the two-year term, selected leaders will utilize storytelling and innovative community mobilization to amplify youth perspectives within high-level international forums.
- The UN Foundation [Next Generation Fellows](#) program aims to bridge the representation gap by transforming young leaders into influential agents of change within global policy spheres by providing specialized training, mentorship, and direct access to international institutions to lead advocacy efforts on critical issues like climate action and social justice.
- The UN Women [Training Centre eLearning Campus](#) is a global and innovative online platform that is open to everybody interested in using training or learning as a means to advance gender equality, women's empowerment, and women's rights. Available in English, Arabic, French, and Spanish, the online campus features specialized modules focused on the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and its intersection with gender equality.
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