



**#WeBelongAfrica**  
Inclusive Governance Initiative

## **LEAVING NO ONE BEHIND: THE SDGS AND LGBTI INCLUSION WEBINAR SERIES**

### **WEBINAR 2: BUILDING FORWARD BETTER THROUGH INCLUSIVE GOVERNANCE: WORKING WITH SEXUAL AND GENDER MINORITIES**

#### Introduction

The webinar was co-sponsored by CIVICUS, Pan Africa ILGA, Positive Vibes, and UNDP Regional team for HIV, health, and development. It was held as a Side Event at the Seventh Session of the Africa Regional Forum on Sustainable Development on Friday, 26 February 2021 from 10:00am to 11:30am South Africa Time. This was the very first time that a forum tackling Sustainable Development in the region had a session specifically dealing with issues around sexual and gender minorities. It was held on Zoom and was moderated by Anthony Oluoch.

The panelists were,

- Steve Letsike – Founding Director, Access Chapter 2 and Co-Chair, South Africa Task Team on Hate Crimes
- Hon. Dr. Ruth Labode – Member of Parliament, Zimbabwe
- Yvonne Muthoni – Kenya Country Director, Open for Business
- Dr. Hilaire Mbwolie Nsabala – National Coordinator and Founder of the NGO Progrès Santé sans Prix in the Democratic Republic of Congo

As the event was part of a larger conference, The side event organizing team had little control over the logistics and the Zoom functionalities. However, the conference organizers worked closely with the team to provide login links and support throughout the webinar. Through a separate registration form, the team managed to get a total of 235 individuals to register for the webinar. The webinar itself had 95 participants, 73 of whom attended from African countries. Most of these participants coming from Eastern and Southern Africa. 22 participants attended from regions outside of Africa. A recording of the webinar was provided and has been published on YouTube and on We Belong Africa's Facebook page where it has reached a further 84 views on YouTube. To make the proceedings accessible to as wide an audience as possible in Sub-Saharan Africa, the webinar was simultaneously interpreted into English, French and Portuguese.

The webinar recording is available on the link below.

[Building forward better through inclusive governance: Working with sexual and gender minorities - YouTube](#)

### Target audience, focus and discussion

The webinar was held as a side event for the Seventh Session of the Africa Regional Forum on Sustainable development. The theme for the session was “Building Forward Better: Towards a resilient and green Africa to achieve the 2030 Agenda and Agenda 2063”. It was envisioned that the audience for the webinar would consist mostly of the forum attendees who were individuals and organizations working on the SDGs but not necessarily on LGBTI issues. It was however noted that this audience could be small, and promotion was done across all the co-sponsor networks.

Building on the forum’s theme, the webinar was designed to show the range of good practice emerging in different countries of the continent, showing how inclusion of sexual and gender minorities in development policy and planning can improve outcomes related to poverty, health, economic growth, and inequality. Given the depth and breadth of discrimination against these populations, good practices related to sexual and gender minorities can almost certainly also contribute to innovative thinking about inclusion of other marginalized populations as well. These experiences will contribute to the Forum’s focus on “building forward better”.

The webinar was in the form of a moderated discussion with participants engagement in different polls interspersed throughout the session. Yvonne Muthoni discussed the economic benefits of corporate inclusion of sexual and gender minorities, Hon. Dr. Ruth Labode discussed inclusion of sexual and gender diversity issues in politics and governance, Dr. Hilaire Mbwolie discussed poverty and employment creation for LGBTI people, and Steve Letsike discussed inclusion of LGBTI people in responding to COVID-19.

In her contribution to the discussion, Yvonne stated that more and more businesses are beginning to engage with LGBTI people because they recognize that that is where they get a section of their pool of employees. She stated that businesses need to leverage the power they have to push for a change in laws and more political engagement. Inclusion in the workplace does not only stop there, but companies should also ensure that their supply chains are supportive of LGBTI issues. Economic leverage makes a huge difference in advocacy. She concluded by encouraging civil society organizations to work with other messengers of impact including the private sector to advocate for equality.

Building up on that, Dr. Hilaire stated that it would be difficult to engage in any political process if one is not able to pay their rent or buy food for their families. He stated that that unless the community gets out of poverty, there would be no difference in the lives of marginalized communities. Quoting a stigma index in the DRC that showed that more than 77% of LGBTI people are face discrimination, Dr. Hilaire explained how his organization and other civil society organizations have provided credit facilities and loans to the community. They have also provided psychological support for those in need of it. He concluded by stating that equitable resource mobilization and distribution nationally without discrimination of vulnerable groups including LGBTI people would help us achieve the SDGs.

Hon. Dr. Ruth stated that the SDGs have helped place the agenda of equality and leaving no-one behind, including LGBTI people in conversations. She stated that in her experience, RECs like SADC have an important role to play in showing what the best practices are in countries where political structures, laws and legislation are in line with the equality agenda. She concluded by encouraging civil society organizations to actively seek out and work closer with politicians, not only to build their capacity to speak on their behalf but also to change their attitudes towards LGBTI people.

Steve Letsike noted that discrimination has existed even prior to COVID-19. She noted that there is a lack of political leadership and willingness to target marginalized communities. While she agreed that our health is a good entry point in beginning conversations around non-discrimination and inclusion, she also stated that our lives do not only revolve around health. There are other intersectionalities including our confidence in living as citizens and our ability to contribute to the society all of which need to be taken into consideration in conversations about inclusion of LGBTI people.

The panelists were also asked what the most important SDGs were to move the conversations into action and the one they all stated was SDG 3 on good health and well-being. The other goals mentioned were SDG 1 on poverty, SDG 10 on reduced inequality and SDG 17 on partnerships to achieve the goals.

During the session, participants were asked what the most important reasons were for LGBTI people and issues to be excluded or marginalized in efforts to achieve the SDGs and the top 2 reasons were negative public attitudes about LGBTI people, and punitive and oppressive laws. They were also asked what they see as the two most important actions to increase and improve LGBTI inclusion in SDG efforts in Africa. The two they selected were 'disaggregate data on how LGBTI people are being left behind, and provide LGBTI-related technical support to specific sectors including but not limited to health, social protection, and education'. They were finally asked how they can most effectively promote attention to LGBTI people in SDG work in Africa. They agreed that a mixed approach, including both focused LGBTI advocacy and broader "leave no-one behind" advocacy would be most effective.

#### Feedback and Debrief

A post webinar survey was conducted on SurveyMonkey which had 37 responses. The overall responses were positive, and the overall experience of the webinar was rated at 4.3 out of 5. Participants working primarily on LGBTI issues were inspired by the webinar to engage more on SDGs. Those working primarily on SDG issues were similarly inspired by the webinar to engage more on LGBTI issues. The respondents felt that the use of polls during the webinar was good as it encouraged them to participate and engage more with the content of the webinar. However, they felt that the lack of the chat function did not give them an ample space to engage with other participants. They suggested that this would ensure that all questions are given proper attention. The technical issues faced by bad connectivity in Zimbabwe and DRC also came up in the survey and the respondents suggested that pre-recorded presentations or presentations should be considered in the future. A suggestion was made to make the webinar more accessible to persons with disabilities and different impairments. The respondents also said that it is important to discuss the intersectionality of the lived realities of LGBTI communities within an SDG framework and its pillars, and to intentionally target policy makers who need this information more rather than targeting those who are already converted.

The co-sponsors and the panelists had an opportunity to debrief after the webinar. They agreed that the polls worked well, and the chat function works better than the Q and A function which would not let the participants engage with each other. They also agreed that there was a great mix of panelists although the technical issues were unfortunate. A suggestion was made that we might need to ask our future panelists to use the UNDP offices for better connection. It was suggested that for future webinars, we have a WhatsApp administrator group that includes the interpreters.

It was also suggested that a preparation meeting with the interpreters around the content of the webinar would help improve the quality of interpretation.