



#WeBelongAfrica
Inclusive Governance Initiative

LEAVING NO ONE BEHIND: THE SDGS AND LGBTI INCLUSION WEBINAR SERIES
WEBINAR 3: INTEGRATING LGBTI REALITIES INTO SDG REVIEWS: A DISCUSSION FOR LGBTI
ACTIVISTS AT THE 5TH PAN AFRICA ILGA REGIONAL CONFERENCE

Introduction

This event was held on the auspices of the 5th Pan Africa ILGA Regional Conference. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic and the uncertainty brought on by the clamping down of LGBTI individuals and organizations in Ghana, where the conference was initially intended to be hosted, this conference was held as a hybrid convening with a limited number of sessions held in Johannesburg, South Africa, and most sessions held online.

The webinar which was held as a live Zoom workshop took place on 30 August 2021 from 13:00pm to 14:00pm South Africa Time. It was moderated by Anthony Oluoch and had 4 expert contributors.

- Micah Grsywnowicz
- Monica Tabengwa (UNDP)
- Richard Lusimbo (Pan Africa ILGA)
- Melanie Judge (Consultant – UNDP)

This event took place as a satellite workshop at the same time as 2 other PAI Conference workshops. The audience was shared across the sessions that were taking place at that time. With 135 registrations from around the world, there were 60 people who participated in the session. The participants were mostly from Southern and East Africa with several French speakers from West and Central Africa. To cater to the different language needs, the entire session was simultaneously interpreted into French and Portuguese. The session was recorded, and it is available on PAI's Vimeo page and through the link below.

<https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/105N0igsfDYuBmXCEXbcl83vwDORVSv1m?usp=sharing>.

Target audience, focus and discussion

The target audience for the PAI conference participants in general, but with heavy outreach to LGBTI activists in the six priority IGI countries and in the 17 countries identified by PAI for SDG-related work.

The objective of the session was to provide guidance to PAI conference participants on how to use SDG Voluntary National Reviews (VNRs) and Universal Periodic Reviews (UPRs) to advocate for LGBTI rights and inclusion.

1. To give a substantive overview of how LGBTI issues relate to the SDGs, human rights obligations, and member state accountability.
2. To give a concise explanation of the SDG Voluntary National Reviews – Purpose, process, how to get involved when the government is open to activist involvement, how to write shadow

reviews or other advocacy when government excludes activist involvement and learning from countries where LGBTI people have participated in the VNRs.

3. To show the relationship between the UPRs and the VNRs using similar content for both processes, substantive links, lessons from LGBTI participation in the UPR processes and how to follow up VNRs and UPRs with further advocacy and accountability work.

Monica Tabengwa gave a brief introduction on the relevance of LGBTI issues to the SDGs and the relevance of the SDGs to LGBTI activists. The SDGs having been adopted by UN member states in 2015, they were a “blueprint to achieve a better and more sustainable future for all”. The pledge to leave no one behind in “Agenda 2030”, a UN resolution which includes the SDG’s, commits countries to not only reach the poorest of the poor, but also to combatting discrimination, marginalisation and exclusion. While there is no explicit attention to LGBTI people in the official SDG declaration, there is ample room to include them (or to read in other factors such as sexual orientation, gender identity and expression) in SDG related actions, given the attention to “sex”, “other status” and the “marginalised”.

In her presentation, Monica Tabengwa highlighted how LGBTI issues are relevant to some specific SDGs and targets. Particularly, SDG 1 on Poverty, SDG 8 on Work, and SDG 11 on Housing given the evidence from across Africa and around the world that LGBTI people are more likely than others to suffer from poverty and to be excluded from decent work and economic opportunities. SDG 3 on health is also key due to discrimination and/or fear of discrimination from health service providers by LGBTI people. SDG 4 on quality education is relevant due to the vulnerability of children who do not conform to the norm in school.

The SDGs are the most important policy framework internationally shaping development assistance right now and for the next decade. Every country in Africa has committed to achieving the SDGs as well as the African Union’s own regional version, “Agenda 2063”. As countries implement activities to evaluate their progress, it is essential that LGBTI persons are on the table, sharing our case and advancing inclusion.

Micah Grsywnowicz highlighted that even though the SDGs are a voluntary framework and that they may not have obligations attached to them, it is one of the most inclusive documents to ever come out of the UN. They highlighted the need to focus on the language of the document. The guiding principle of the Agenda 2030 is our entry point: Leaving No One Behind.

The main space for engagement is the High-Level Political Forum (HLPF). This is the space where member states meet annually to provide political leadership, to give guidance and recommendations for engaging with the SDGs, provide follow ups and reviews on the implementation. This political forum meets annually in New York and every four years at the General Assembly in Geneva.

There is a space for civil society to engage and contribute at the HLPF. This is referred the Major Groups and Other Stakeholders (MGoS). This is a collection of community interest groups, expert groups, and groups that focus on specific development issues for instance financing for development. Apart from member states and governments, these are the groups that contribute to the sustainable development of our countries and states. There are 9 major groups and 11 “other stakeholder” groups. In the other stakeholder groups is the LGBTI Stakeholder Group which was formally recognized by the UN in 2019 and is a way for LGBTI people to engage with the High-Level Political Forum. It gives us access to the UN and allows us an ability to collaborate with the other MGoS to mainstream LGBTI issues in the process.

The Voluntary National Reviews are a way for member states to report on their work on the national level around the SDGs. This is a voluntary process therefore every year, member states choose to report in a robust, effective, participatory, integrated, and transparent way. The process is state led and accountability is on member states. Governments are supposed to consult and take input from relevant stakeholders at national levels. The VNRs invite civil society to share best practices and ongoing challenges in realizing Agenda 2030.

There are 3 levels of engagement with the VNRs.

1. National Level – Working with the government on how the implementation is on the ground. This is where the reporting happens on the work being done.
2. Regional Level – Each of the UN regions have forums on sustainable development which are organized by the economic commission in the region. The United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (ECA) convenes these forums in Africa.
3. Global Level – Engagement with the High-Level Political Forum.

Ways in which to engage would be writing a “Spotlight Report” which includes recommendations to the state under review. Making statements at the VNR session, cooperation with the different MGoS and being active in the LGBTI stakeholder group.

At the global level, one of the tools that the LGBTI Stakeholder Group does is deliver the position paper. This is obligatory condition every year and its executive summary is part of the formal documentation for the HLPF. This is an opportunity for the LGBTI community to include concerns and challenges faced by everyone. It does not have a page or character limit and is therefore a key tool in engaging with the HLPF. It is possible to use the information that has been gathered from other human rights mechanisms, including the CEDAW or the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child to in the VNR report.

Information about the HLPF can be found on this website: <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/>

Melanie Judge drew attention to the resources that already exist on engagement in the VNR processes and broader SDG processes. Some examples of these are;

1. [Handbook for the Preparation of Voluntary National Reviews \(2020 Edition\)](#) – This is a handbook with practical information on how countries can prepare and present VNRs.
2. [SDG Human Rights Data Explorer](#) – This is a searchable database from the Danish Institute for Human Rights that links monitoring information from the international human rights system to the goals and targets of the Agenda 2030 for Sustainable Development.
3. [Approaches and Methodologies for Civil Society Reporting on the SDGs and the 2030 Agenda: TAP Network Spotlight Reporting Guidelines](#) – This is a drafting framework for CSOs to use when putting together a civil society report on SDG implementation in their country.

Pan Africa ILGA and UNDP under its Inclusive Governance Initiative will be providing support to LGBTI activists 17 countries to develop reports for inclusion in the SDG processes. Richard Lusimbo stated that Pan Africa ILGA will be reaching out to organizations in these countries to develop work and have the community more involved in these processes.

Feedback and Debrief

While many of the participants had previously engaged with the UPR review process, most participants had not engaged with VNRs and were keen on getting more information and follow up with their

organisations on ways in which to engage with the SDG processes. 94% of those who participated in the in-session poll indicated an interest in learning more beyond the content of the session and in knowing how to further engage with the VNRs and the broader SDG processes.

Participant response in the post session survey was incredibly positive with the participant finding the discussions extremely helpful for their work on the ground. The participants found the need to integrate LGBTI issues into the SDG goals to help achieve equality as the most useful takeaway from the discussions. Learning about the MGoS and in particular, the LGBTI Stakeholder Group was of added interest to the participants.

The participants were happy with the quality of interpretation in the session however, some of them noted that all the speakers were English speaking and they encouraged the organisers to explore non-English speaking presenters to give a different perspective on the issues faced in the continent.