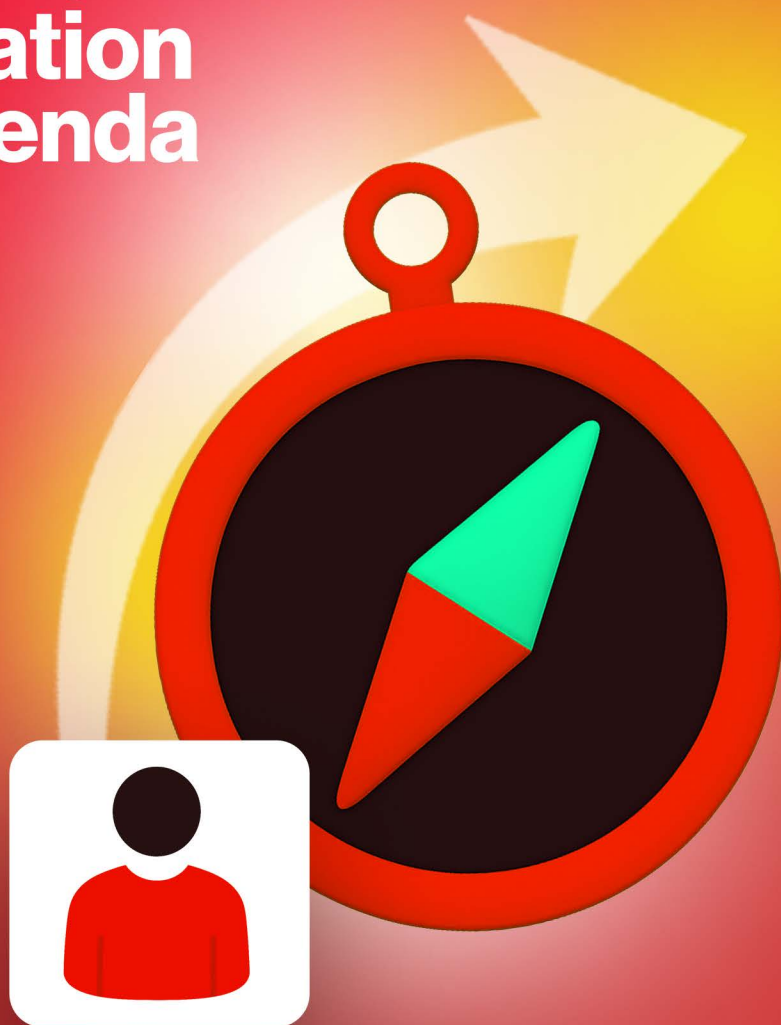


*Joint submission to the
report of the Office of the
High Commissioner for
Human Rights on*

Integrated Approaches to the Promotion and Protection of Human rights and the Implementation of the 2030 Agenda



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Report submitted by:

ILGA Asia

With support from:

One Future Collective, India



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Introduction

1

The disproportionate economic and social marginalization of LGBTIQ individuals across Asia-Pacific is driven by various forms of violence and discrimination, presenting challenges to the full and inclusive achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), and inclusive sustainable development more broadly. Without addressing and implementing laws and policies to eliminate the root causes of violence and discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation, gender identity, expression, and sex characteristics (SOGIESC), LGBTIQ individuals and communities will systematically be excluded from SDG implementation and nationalization plans, and barred from enjoying from the benefits of sustainable development.

All efforts aimed at realizing the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development must recognise that human rights-based approaches are indispensable pillars of the agenda, meant to ensure that no one is left behind in sustainable development policy design and implementation. This is why SDG nationalization plans—as well as follow-up and review processes at all levels—must include the voices and perspectives of LGBTIQ individuals and communities, and recognize them as stakeholders in sustainable development.

ILGA Asia welcomes the opportunity to make a submission to the UN OHCHR, presenting information that can inform assessments of whether or not the needs of LGBTIQ individuals and communities are meaningfully included in sustainable development plans and policies.

Key Considerations for advancing an integrated approach to human rights and sustainable development for all by 2030

Global Funding Crisis

Global initiatives, particularly those aimed at financing for development, have seen a disruption in recent times with the defunding of USAID and the retrenchment of Western donors, despite a variety of other financing initiatives that remain robust and in operation around the world¹ A study by ASEAN SOGIE Caucus detailed how the funding freeze has had devastating long-term and short-term impacts on LGBTIQ organizations in Southeast Asia, impacting not only their programs but the sustainability of the movement itself.² The rise of far-right populist leadership in many countries raises the question of continued government funding for LGBTIQ movement globally, as seen in recent trends across the Netherlands, the UK, Switzerland, Belgium and France.³

Sustainable development can only be achieved by the protection and fulfillment of human rights, continued engagement, and financing of inclusive policies for all communities, rights holders and stakeholders, and organizations that are central to its realization. To this end, it must be the imperative of Asia-Pacific governments to support and collaborate with LGBTIQ organizations and communities in the region in the design and implementation of sustainable development policy, as well as its follow up and review.

¹ The Lancet, 'The demise of USAID: time to rethink foreign aid?', The Lancet, Volume 405, Issue 10483, 951, [https://www.thelancet.com/journals/lancet/article/PIIS0140-6736\(25\)00556-2/fulltext](https://www.thelancet.com/journals/lancet/article/PIIS0140-6736(25)00556-2/fulltext).

² ASEAN SOGIE Caucus, The Impact of the U.S. Foreign Aid Freeze on LGBTQIAN+ Organizations in Southeast Asia, 2025. <https://aseansogiecaucus.org/latest/asc-news/306-report-the-impact-of-the-u-s-foreign-aid-freeze-on-lgbtqian-organizations-in-southeast-asia>

³ ILGA World, Our LGBTI Movements are being choked. Here's how we can survive, 2025. <https://ilga.org/news/our-lgbti-movements-are-being-choked-heres-how-we-can-survive/>

Inclusive plans and policies to leave no one behind tackling the root causes of gender and other inequalities

India

In India, the SMILE scheme is one of the most prominent examples of a dedicated budgetary intervention for transgender individuals.⁴ It aims to uplift trans persons in poverty by providing them legal gender recognition and offering opportunities and services such as educational scholarships, healthcare coverage, skill development training, and access to shelter homes (Garima Greh). However, this scheme has become subject to widespread scrutiny and criticism, as it has been accused of subjecting trans individuals to humiliating and extensive bureaucratic procedures to verify identity, and suffers from other systemic hurdles including inconsistent funding and poor management.

Other notable policies include the Ayushman Bharat TG Plus scheme which provides a health insurance cover of ₹5 lakh annually for transgender persons, including coverage for gender-affirming surgeries.⁵ Smaller schemes also provide free transport services, such as free bus services in Delhi.⁶

⁴ Government of India, Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment, Support for Marginalized Individuals for Livelihood and Enterprise (SMILE), <https://socialjustice.gov.in/schemes/99>

⁵ ET Government, 'Ayushman Bharat TG Plus card to be issued to transgender persons for healthcare facilities', Economic Times, 2022, <https://government.economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/governance/ayushman-bharat-tg-plus-card-to-be-issued-to-transgender-persons-for-healthcare-facilities/93771100>

⁶ Sahil Pradhan, 'Free DTC Bus Service For Trans Persons: A Farrago Of A Policy', Feminism in India, 2024. <https://feminisminindia.com/2024/05/17/free-dtc-bus-service-for-trans-persons-a-farrago-of-a-policy/>

Nepal

The Sixteen Plan, the national periodic plan that guides policy priorities and developmental activities of Nepal for the next five years, includes a clear focus on the sexual and gender minority community.⁷ This plan incorporates specific planning and programs aimed at addressing the needs and challenges of the LGBTI community. By doing so, it marks a significant step towards inclusivity and recognition of the rights and well-being of sexual and gender minorities in national policy planning.⁸ Similarly, the Bagmati Province Government is set to empower the sexual and gender minority communities, as announced by the Ministry of Economic Affairs and Planning. For the fiscal year 2024/25, Rs. 116 million (approx. 840k USD) has been allocated to implement various programs to support and uplift these communities.⁹

Pakistan

In April 2025, the Punjab Government's Chief Minister launched a comprehensive skills training programme for transgender individuals, also known as the Pehchan Programme, to provide them with various technical and vocational skills as a means of economic independence.¹⁰ The programme aims to equip 2200 transgender persons over the next two years with specialised training through the Punjab Skills Development Fund programme in skills related to IT, freelancing, healthcare assistant skills, tailoring, fashion designing, electrical work, solar technology, beauty services and culinary arts. The skill training programme aims to address the “social boycott and lack of employment opportunities” which can lead trans individuals and hijra/khawaja sira into houselessness, begging, and sex work—the latter still criminalised in Pakistan. Hijra and/or khawaja sira refers to the cultural and historical “third gender” community in Pakistan, who have consistently reported on the forms of violence and discrimination they experience in Pakistani society.

⁷ Nepal Planning Commission, The Sixteenth Plan (Fiscal Year 2024/25 - 2028/29), 2024. <https://www.npc.gov.np/content/6462/the-sixteenth-plan--fiscal-year-2024-25-2028-29-/>

⁸ Blue Diamond Society and Mitini Nepal, LGBTIQ Spotlight Report 2024: Are the Sustainable Development Goals Delivering for LGBTIQ Communities in Nepal?, 2024, <https://www.lgbtstakeholdergroup.com/publications/spotlight-report-nepal>

⁹ Ibid

¹⁰ ILGA Asia, Pakistan: Punjab provincial government launches a comprehensive skill training programme for transgender individuals, 2025, <https://ilgaasia.org/news/pakistanstatement2025/>.

South Korea

In July 2024, the Supreme Court of South Korea ruled that the National Health Insurance Service (NHIS) should extend state benefits to same-sex partners. South Korea recognizes the dependent status under the NHIS for all heterosexual couples, including unmarried ones.¹¹ The Supreme Court held that denying the same benefits to same-sex couples constituted discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation. This landmark decision, ensuring equal access to social security and healthcare for all citizens, is a testament to the relentless efforts and dedication of the advocates who led the campaign. This decision sets a precedent that lack of legal recognition of same-sex unions cannot exempt the state from ensuring equal welfare benefits for same-sex couples, as any such exemption would constitute discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation or gender identity.

Measures adopted resulting in stronger alignment of economic policies with human rights norms and standards

Several countries in Asia have started to integrate the human rights and needs of LGBTIQ individuals, particularly transgender people, into national and subnational budgets as part of their efforts to align economic policies with human rights norms under the 2030 Agenda. Most policy and budgetary frameworks focus on transgender populations, as their needs are often more visible and prevalent, particularly with respect to accessing inclusive and affirming health and identity documentation services. Broader LGBTIQ inclusion in budgets is still emerging and often occurs through indirect measures such as anti-discrimination legislation, inclusive education policies, and general social protection programs. Having constitutional protection for LGBTIQ individuals, for example in Nepal, makes it easier for LGBTIQ advocacy groups to appeal for other human rights budget lines to also be allocated for LGBTIQ specific needs, though the scope and scale of these efforts remain uneven.¹²

¹¹ ILGA Asia, South Korea: Supreme Court extends state health benefits to same-sex partners, 2024.

<https://ilgaasia.org/news/south-korea-supreme-court-extends-state-health-benefits-to-same-sex-partners-2/>

¹² Blue Diamond Society and Mitini Nepal, LGBTIQ Spotlight Report 2024: Are the Sustainable Development Goals Delivering for LGBTIQ Communities in Nepal?, 2024, <https://drive.google.com/drive/u/0/folders/1PMffTFxRMGqOmFnjhYmJWolAuHs3fkj1>

Thailand

In 2025, the Thai government allocated approximately USD 4.3 million to support gender-affirming care for transgender individuals.¹³ This includes hormone therapy and related medical services through the public healthcare system. This move is part of a broader national agenda to institutionalise rights-based healthcare for LGBTIQ populations and reflects Thailand's regional leadership in legal recognition and inclusion of gender diversity.

India

There has been an increased commitment for LGBTIQ funding at state level budgeting in India. In Tamil Nadu, the state budget for 2024 made provisions to fully cover the cost of higher education for transgender students and allocated approximately 230,000 USD to strengthen the state's Transgender Welfare Board.¹⁴ These financial commitments reflect a growing institutional recognition of the systemic barriers transgender people face. In Kerala, gender-responsive budgeting has been in practice for over a decade and includes specific allocations for transgender persons. The 2022–23 state budget allocated around 680,000 USD for transgender welfare, and approximately 35,000 USD was earmarked in the cooperative sector to improve employment opportunities.¹⁵ These funds are used for livelihood support, education grants, and community awareness programs.

¹³ them, Thailand's Public Health Ministry Will Allocate More Than \$4 Million for Trans Health Care, 2025.
<https://www.them.us/story/thailand-gender-affirming-care-funding-government>

¹⁴ Economic Times, Special schemes being implemented for welfare of transgender people: Tamil Nadu govt, 2025,
<https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/india/special-schemes-being-implemented-for-welfare-of-transgender-people-tamil-nadu-govt/articleshow/121393037.cms>.

¹⁵ Government of Kerala, Budget Speech 2022-2023,
https://cm.kerala.gov.in/wp-content/uploads/2022/03/BudgetSpeech-2022-23-English_12.pdf; Government of Kerala, Gender Budget 2022-2023, https://www.beta.budget.kerala.gov.in/keralabudgetdoc/2022_23/GenderBudget.pdf

Efforts to integrate the right to a clean, healthy and sustainable environment and related human rights in the endeavours to implement the 2030 Agenda

Several Asian countries have made strides in integrating the right to a clean, healthy and safe environment within development policies. For example, a Supreme Court judgment has included the right to a clean environment under the right to life in India.¹⁶ In the Philippines, novel green courts have been established for litigating cases pertaining to environmental matters.¹⁷ Unfortunately, analyses of how SOGIESC and climate policies interplay or intersect, including the impacts of environmental crises and instability on LGBTIQ individuals and communities, are largely missing.

Nepal

Under the Constitution of Nepal 2015, the Disaster Risk Reduction and Management (DRRM) Act 2017, and the Local Government Operation Act, 2017, Nepal has made significant strides in establishing a robust legal framework, policy instruments, and institutional arrangements for disaster risk management across all tiers of government. However, local units often lack comprehensive data and information about the specific needs and vulnerabilities of LGBTIQ communities, creating barriers in accessing relief and recovery assistance during and after disasters. Trans individuals, in particular, have experienced significant discrimination while accessing humanitarian aid and other relief services, as their gender assigned at birth did not correspond with their current gender identity and expression.¹⁸ The difficulties LGBTIQ individuals and communities face in receiving essential support during times of crisis highlights the systemic barriers that need to be addressed to ensure equitable access to relief efforts for all individuals regardless of their SOGIESC.

¹⁶ The Statesman, Supreme Court recognises right to clean environment as fundamental right, 2024, https://www.thestatesman.com/supplements/science_supplements/supreme-court-recognises-right-to-clean-environment-as-fundamental-right-1503301382.html.

¹⁷ Gonzalez, Eduardo T. "Judicialized governance in the Philippines: toward new environmental judicial principles that translate into effective "green" policies and citizen empowerment". *Philippine Political Science Journal* 38.2 (2017): 81-103. <https://doi.org/10.1080/01154451.2017.1371907>.

¹⁸ Blue Diamond Society and Mitini Nepal, LGBTIQ Spotlight Report 2024: Are the Sustainable Development Goals Delivering for LGBTIQ Communities in Nepal?, 2024, <https://drive.google.com/drive/u/0/folders/1PMffTFxRMGqOmFnjhYmJWolAuHs3fkj1>

Realization of SDG 16 through protection of civic space and human rights defenders and meaningful participation of LGBTIQ organizations

The realisation of SDG 16 has not only been uneven, but also often regressive, evidenced by shrinking civic spaces, rise of anti-rights and anti-gender policies, and populist regimes across Asia and the globe. LGBTIQ advocacy and activism has been integral in pushing for reforms as indicated by legislative and judicial victories regarding SOGIESC recognition, including through decriminalization of same-sex relationships in India, marriage equality in Taiwan and Thailand, as well as constitutional protections enshrined in Nepal. These measures, however, when placed in the context of shrinking civic space for LGBTIQ advocacy, lay bare the gaps that exists between the developmental agenda on paper and in practice. Activists in Nepal have stated that the government only incorporates them into their plans as tokens and that LGBTIQ communities in Nepal lack proper representation and opportunities to voice their concerns.¹⁹ Lack of accountability and due diligence to include all stakeholders in SDG follow up and review processes further exacerbates the systematic exclusion LGBTIQ organizations and communities from policy spaces and conversations.

It's also important to note that LGBTIQ organisations operating in national and local contexts, and who are directly addressing the needs of LGBTIQ communities through service provision, are often invisibilized by or couched under larger, more well funded movements. Their voices and perspectives must be heard by relevant entities so that issues pertaining to LGBTIQ-phobia and hostility, shrinking civic space, and funding crises can be framed as impediments to sustainable development, and addressed and ameliorated through development agenda policy. The lack of comprehensive anti-discrimination laws in most Asian countries also further weakens the potential for SDG 16 to act as an enabler for other goals, such as SDG 3 (health), SDG 4 (education), and SDG 10 (reduced inequalities). To realise SDG 16 fully, stronger institutional safeguards and genuine inclusion of marginalised voices in SDG follow up and review processes at all levels is urgently needed.

¹⁹ Ibid

Recommendations for States

- 1** Repeal and eliminate discriminatory laws, policies, and social practices, and adopt anti-SOGIESC discrimination legislation and policy across employment, education, health, and other relevant public sectors for LGBTIQ individuals and communities, in order to create an enabling environment for their upward socio-economic mobility and empowerment. Prioritize funding for LGBTIQ upliftment in the national budget.
- 2** Develop and utilize robust qualitative indicators and measures of economic and social inclusion, wellbeing, and capabilities, including those already used by civil society for participatory data collection through community consultations and focused group discussions.
- 3** Consistently ensure that human rights based approaches to sustainable development inform the nationalization and implementation of the SDGs, and that all national implementation and review bodies are fully informed of their obligations to include and uphold the rights of all stakeholders in sustainable development, including LGBTIQ organizations and communities.

Recommendations for Donor Organizations

- 1** Donor organizations, including government aid agencies, private sector and philanthropy, and civil society intermediaries should identify and scope out alternative sources of funding for LGBTIQ movements and civil society organizations, in order to eliminate the movement's historic reliance on government foreign aid and to reduce the severity and impacts of sudden funding cuts and crises.





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