



#WeBelongAfrica: The Inclusive Governance Initiative

Promoting an inclusive approach to sexual and gender diversity that advances the SDGs and Agenda 2063 in Sub-Saharan Africa

The #WeBelongAfrica: Inclusive Governance Initiative supports state entities in Sub-Saharan Africa to become increasingly accountable to, and inclusive of, their entire populations, including sexual and gender minorities. That in turn will contribute to better laws, more responsive public sector services, and social norms that affirm rights and inclusion for all.

Context

Upon adopting the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, United Nations Member States committed to ensuring that “no one will be left behind.” Similarly, the African Union’s Agenda 2063 prioritizes the inclusion of the poorest and most marginalized in development initiatives.

Inclusive societies lead to more sustainable human development outcomes, as every member recognizes their valuable contributions and understands that no one should be excluded. Inclusivity is therefore essential for fostering peace, harmony, and social cohesion.

DONOR: Government of Sweden and UNDP core resources that come from a broad range of donors

IMPLEMENTER: UNDP, Positive Vibes (regional) and country partners

PERIOD: 2020-2024

COUNTRIES COVERED: Angola, Côte d’Ivoire, Democratic Republic of Congo, Kenya, Namibia, Zimbabwe and others

However, sexual and gender minorities in many countries continue to face exclusion and human rights violations. Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex (LGBTI+) individuals and their allies advocating for their human rights and inclusion encounter significant challenges, including violence, abuse, and stigma, often institutionalized in national laws and policies.

UNDP’s work on health focuses on reducing inequalities and social exclusion that contribute to HIV and poor health more broadly, as well as promoting effective and inclusive governance for health. Both globally and within Africa, this work emphasizes support for marginalized populations due to their sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, or sex characteristics.

Focus on results

A broad range of actions and actors are required if we are to achieve human rights and inclusion for all, including for LGBTI+ people in Africa. It is important to reinforce and broaden positive and inclusive social norms, strengthen social movements, build and use evidence, make public sector services more responsive, and more. Within this overall effort, the Inclusive Governance Initiative focuses on including LGBTI+ people and issues in governance processes and outcomes – an essential component of this work. The Initiative focuses on five sets of results:

Strengthening the commitment and capacity of African decision makers to include and respond to sexual and gender diversity issues in their work. This includes initiatives to increase the capacity, commitment and action of those decision-makers who are already supportive of inclusion and rights for sexual and gender minorities, as well as efforts to increase the number of supportive decision makers and key influencers.

- ✓ The Initiative has convened many of the most senior judges and justices in the region who have made key decisions supporting human rights for LGBTI+ people, and facilitated dialogue with peers who will consider such issues in the years to come.

Strengthening the capacity of sexual and gender diversity activists and allies from other SDG-focused social movements to understand and work with each other and to influence decision makers. This includes encouraging African civil society allies – involved in issues such as HIV, gender equality, poverty alleviation and health for all – to become more inclusive of, and responsive to, gender and sexual diversity issues in their work.

- ✓ In its first two years, the Initiative worked with over 1,000 activists to increase their understanding of the role of parliamentarians in responding to LGBTI+ issues and to build their skills in influencing public policy.

Including sexual and gender diversity issues and activists in the development and implementation of laws, policies and programmes. This includes focused support to groups of stakeholders in specific countries where there are windows of opportunity for positive change, and engagement as appropriate with regional economic communities and other relevant sub-regional and regional institutions and networks.

- ✓ Working with partners, the Inclusive Governance Initiative has convened two official events on LGBTI+ issues and the SDGs within the African Regional Forum on Sustainable Development – the first such events at regional forums anywhere in the world.

Stimulating demand for and use of relevant ideas, evidence and innovations. The Initiative promotes the use of existing tools, resources and evidence that can help support positive change. In particular, strategic products are developed in Portuguese, French and English to reach wider audiences. The project also includes robust monitoring and evaluation, of the broader context of inclusion/exclusion as well as of project achievements and setbacks.

- ✓ The [#WeBelongAfrica Community on SparkBlue](#) is a home for both key resources and for peer conversations among key stakeholders.

Sustaining and expanding international donor funding for evidence- and community-informed regional work in Africa that addresses sexual and gender diversity and/or key populations affected by HIV. The Initiative advocates with international donors for appropriate investment in organizations and projects that are addressing priority aspects of the broader change agenda in the region. The Initiative also seeks additional resources, based on its own learning and in line with its capacity, to expand to additional focus countries and to extend its duration.

- ✓ The African Key Populations Expert Group worked with the Inclusive Governance Initiative to consult widely and to develop [“An advocacy agenda with and for key populations in Sub-Saharan Africa”](#), which in turn influenced new strategies from key global institutions and bilateral donors.

How we work

As a regional project, the Inclusive Governance Initiative works with regional institutions and cross-country networks of key stakeholders, as well as by facilitating the sharing of lessons from one country to another. For example, the Initiative works with the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights and its various sub-committees; with other UN organizations to support the West African Health Organization to develop and roll out a 'key population' strategy as part of its HIV response, which is a key entry point to LGBTI+ issues; and with the Parliamentary Forum of the Southern African Development Community to convene and sensitize their members. Networks are supported that bring together judges, parliamentarians, key population activists and NGOs working on the SDGs. South-South learning opportunities are leveraged both among countries that are making important progress on LGBTI+ inclusion and among those who are working in particularly challenging political environments.

At a country level, the Initiative supports intensive, ongoing engagement in several countries, including Angola, Cote d'Ivoire, Democratic Republic of Congo, Kenya, Namibia and Zimbabwe. In each of these countries, UNDP convenes a cross-section of stakeholders from government, civil society and other institutions to develop a shared vision for progress at the national level, to identify strategic windows of opportunity for positive change, and to identify short- to medium-term priorities for action. The Initiative also engages in a more focused or short-term manner in other countries, in response to specific opportunities and challenges, such as supporting the development of medical management protocols for intersex children in Zambia or facilitating responses to draconian, anti-LGBTI+ legislation being introduced in multiple other countries.

The project is managed by a secretariat team at UNDP's country office in South Africa, under the guidance of UNDP's HIV and Health Group and UNDP's Regional Bureau for Africa. Initial funding for the Initiative was provided by Sweden and by the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation. The Initiative is one of two UNDP-led projects under the #WeBelongAfrica programme umbrella, the other being the Southern Africa Young Key Populations Inclusion Initiative supported by the Embassy of the Kingdom of the Netherlands in Mozambique.

CONTACT US



inclusive.governance.initiative@undp.org



webelongafrica

Visit our website:



Visit our online community:



Subscribe to our mailing list:

