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# **Social inclusion and human rights for sexual or gender minorities in Sub-Saharan Africa**

**A strategic framework for Agenda 2030**





**From 2-4 April 2019, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) convened a workshop in Johannesburg, South Africa, to discuss and develop a strategic framework for advancing social inclusion and human rights for sexual and gender minorities in Sub-Saharan Africa, as part of the broader effort to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals by 2030. Thirty-six stakeholders took part in the meeting, coming from African universities, research institutions, civil society groups, parliaments, regional organizations, the private sector and donor organizations. This document summarizes the vision and strategic pathways developed at the workshop.**

## VISION:

By 2030, the countries of Sub-Saharan Africa will enable equal, inclusive, just, affirming, safe, productive and fulfilling lives for all their people, irrespective of sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression or sex characteristics. This vision will be driven by African values of dignity, fairness, acceptance of diversity, and respect for privacy, underpinned by the concept of Ubuntu – the universal bond of a shared humanity.

## CONTEXT:

There is nothing new about diversity in sexuality, gender identity, gender expression and sex characteristics – in Africa or elsewhere. Many African languages have a variety of words and expressions for such diversity.<sup>1</sup> Scholarship has highlighted a wide range of long-standing cultural norms and practices that accommodate or celebrate sexual and gender diversities in numerous African societies. Such inclusion is typically reinforced by cultural traditions, including protection of community members and respect for the dignity of all persons. However, colonial rule imposed legal and religious frameworks onto African identities and practices that have contributed to today's widespread intolerance and exclusion of people in Africa who identify as LGBTI+ or who are seen as sexual or gender non-conforming.<sup>2</sup>

A growing number of Africans have been challenging such social exclusion and associated human rights violations, in recent years, often with considerable success. There is a rapidly growing and increasingly diverse set of civil society actors promoting acceptance of sexual and gender non-conforming

people, often working with parliamentarians, members of the judiciary, media influencers and others who are committed to a broader vision of a developed, inclusive, just and diverse Africa. The disproportionate impact of the HIV epidemic on gay men, bisexual men and trans women has also raised awareness of sexual and gender diversity in Africa, as has the movement against gender-based violence.

From the promulgation of South Africa's first democratic constitution in 1996 to the repeal of punitive laws and adoption of protective measures in Angola in early 2019, legal equality, recognition and protection are making slow but steady progress across the continent, driven by parliamentary processes, strategic litigation and persistent advocacy of the LGBTI+ movement and allied actors. Health services, particularly related to HIV, are increasingly designed to recognize and respond to sexual diversity. Multiple court decisions, including in Botswana in 2017, have afforded legal gender recognition for transgender persons. Social and cultural inclusion, visibility and acceptance of sexual and gender minorities, and abrogation or reading down of legal and penal provisions criminalising adult, consensual same-sex relationships have also increased in many Sub-Saharan African countries, albeit unevenly and slowly.

While the scale and pace of progress has been impressive, there has also been considerable resistance and notable setbacks. Thirty-three Sub-Saharan African countries still criminalise some form of same-sex contact or minority gender expression and only 21 Sub-Saharan African countries offer some form of protective laws.<sup>3</sup> Surveys of social attitudes show that LGBTI+ people are still unwelcome as neighbours by a large proportion of Africans in most countries.<sup>4</sup> A sub-set of conservative religious leaders actively promote the denial or hatred of sexual and gender

1 For a discussion of different pre-colonial attitudes and language about sexual and gender diversity, as well as the limitations of Western/ English concepts, see Tamale, S. (ed.), 2011, *African sexualities: A reader*, Pambazuka, Oxford, UK.

2 This framework uses the phrase "sexual and gender non-conforming people" and "LGBTI+ people" (or lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans and intersex people) inter-changeably, while recognizing that these concepts are not exactly the same, and while acknowledging that different individuals and cultures choose different words and phrases to describe these phenomena.

3 [https://ilga.org/downloads/ILGA\\_State\\_Sponsored\\_Homophobia\\_2019.pdf](https://ilga.org/downloads/ILGA_State_Sponsored_Homophobia_2019.pdf)

4 Dulani, B. et al. AD74: Good neighbours? Africans express high levels of tolerance for many, but not for all. *Afrobarometer*, 2016. <http://afrobarometer.org/publications/tolerance-in-africa>.

minorities, as do many opportunistic political elites. Further, there is a rising trend amongst conservative and populist governments in some countries to actively initiate law reform to criminalise adult same-sex relationships or make environments more oppressive for LGBTI+ organisations to continue to function and to support their communities. Opponents of LGBTI+ rights and inclusion are well-funded and well-organised, and they have scored some notable successes with so-called “anti-homosexuality” or “anti-propaganda” legislation.<sup>5</sup> For most sexual or gender non-conforming people in Sub-Saharan Africa, day to day reality continues to include family and community exclusion, vulnerability to multiple forms of violence, lack of access to appropriate public services, and economic and political marginalization. For all the progress of the past twenty years, much more remains to be done to achieve inclusion and equality by the 2030 deadline for the Sustainable Development Goals.

## STRATEGIC PATHWAYS:

### The social pathway

*Unequal power relations lie at the heart of prejudice. The attitudes and actions of friends, family members, community members, community leaders and cultural influencers all play important roles in challenging (or perpetuating) prejudice, stigma and marginalisation. At a minimum, we must move a significant number of these social actors towards understanding and accepting sexual and gender diversity. We will strive to go beyond mere tolerance towards affirming, advancing and celebrating diversity among a critical mass of people.*

#### Objectives

- Learn from widespread research and practice about what works in shifting social norms – for example, from initiatives to prohibit female genital mutilation or child labour – and adapt these lessons for work on sexual and gender minorities. Ensure continuous learning, feedback and adaptation as the work to change social norms expand.
- Shift dominant frames and narratives in which LGBTI+ people are stigmatised, dehumanised and excluded, towards those that are inclusive, non-discriminatory and affirming.
- Widely and regularly disseminate positive and inclusive messaging from both traditional and contemporary African cultural influencers (including through a range of cultural and media outlets and

products, traditional leaders, religious leaders, social media influencers, cultural celebrities and other public figures).

- Enable members of the LGBTI+ community to walk in their power, with a strong and positive sense of self-worth and identity, visible in all our glory and glitter.
- Positively reinforce and build synergies between improving social norms and improving legal and policy environments.

#### Sample of possible tactics

- Identify, support and learn from LGBTI+ influencers and allies in journalism, media houses, social media, creative staff in the entertainment sector, and advertising companies. Facilitate horizontal learning and support amongst such influencers and allies.
- Learn from existing products and initiatives designed to positively influence relevant social norms; widely disseminate (and/or further adapt and disseminate) the most effective existing radio spots, videos, print products, images, etc.
- Identify, support and learn from LGBTI+ influencers and allies amongst traditional leaders, spiritual/religious leaders, political leaders, and their influencers. Facilitate horizontal learning and support amongst such influencers and allies.
- Build alliance and partnerships with activists and others working on gender equality and the status of girls and women, to develop joint initiatives and narratives that reinforce non-discriminatory and inclusive cultural practices, as well as an appreciation of the diversity gender, and of women, girls, men and boys, including those that are not LGBTI+ identified.
- Identify, share and promote good practice in supporting sexual or gender non-conforming people to “come out” while protecting personal safety and security, in order to increase visibility and people’s sense of individual empowerment, while enabling people to play positive leadership roles in their communities and circles of influence, including within families.
- Develop evidence base about how to facilitate synergies between social norms and laws/policies.

5 O'Malley, J. et al, Sexual and gender minorities and the sustainable development goals, UNDP, 2018. Pp 81 -83. [https://www.undp.org/content/dam/undp/library/HIV-AIDS/Key%20populations/SDGs\\_SexualAndGenderMinorities.pdf](https://www.undp.org/content/dam/undp/library/HIV-AIDS/Key%20populations/SDGs_SexualAndGenderMinorities.pdf)

## Stakeholders

- Key targets, allies and potential allies: media, cultural and other public discourse influencers, political, religious and traditional leadership networks, advertising companies, women's movement/ gender equality movement, private sector industry associations (e.g. tourism, multinational firms, etc.).
- Key actors: NGOs with communication for social change expertise, private sector companies with communication for social change expertise; LGBTI+ civil society organisations; UN organizations.

## The legal pathway

*Laws matter. Laws that punish consensual same sex relationships between adults or that deny or curtail rights to gender non-conforming people, lead directly to harassment, state homophobia, extortion and violence. They reinforce and are used to rationalise wider social discrimination and stigma. Repeal of such laws is important in itself, while also leading to improvements in access to health, education, labour, social protection and other government services. Legal recognition of sexual or gender non-conforming people is the foundation of actions against discrimination. On a personal level, recognition of an individual's gender identity and expression is a fundamental element of full citizenship. Protective laws – prohibiting discrimination based on real or perceived sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression or sex characteristics – send a strong message against discrimination and in support of acceptance and inclusion while helping to drive positive changes in social attitudes. Finally, enacting legal recognition and protection is not enough – such laws must also be enforced, and states must be held accountable for their human rights commitments and obligations.*

## Objectives

- Remove legal and policy barriers that prevent sexual or gender non-conforming people, and women, from holding and exercising equal rights.
- Enact protective laws where they don't exist to prohibit discrimination in public services, housing and workplaces.
- Support the development and implementation of legislation intended to prevent and respond effectively to hate crimes, including hate crimes related to sexuality and gender.

- Put in place concrete mechanisms to enforce protective laws and policies.
- Increase legal literacy across multiple sectors and constituencies, including for the public at large, LGBTI+ people, service providers, judiciary, police, parliamentarians and others.

## Sample of possible tactics

- Regionally, convene an inclusive process to build an understanding of the pros and cons of different approaches to LGBTI+ related laws and to develop a range of legislative strategies and draft laws, recognizing that different national contexts will require different legislative approaches.
- Regionally, continue sensitisation and dialogue with the judiciary, police and parliamentarians, working with existing allies to widen the circle of support and to share reflections on how to advance LGBTI+ rights and recognition.
- Regionally, document and analyse both parliamentary processes and strategic litigation that have driven recent progress, identifying recommendations for which approaches to be considered in which circumstances or contexts.
- Country by country, build on recent legal environment assessments to further audit laws at national level, going beyond laws that criminalise same-sex relations to identify all relevant punitive and protective laws.
- Country by country, identify and support opportunities for parliamentary / legislative progress (including through wider law reform initiatives) as well as for strategic litigation.

## Stakeholders

- Key targets, allies and potential allies: members of the judiciary, police, parliamentary committees on human rights, law reform commissions, National Human Rights Institutions, regional economic and political bodies like SADC, EAC, ECOWAS, African Union, African Commission on Human and People's Rights including follow up on resolutions 275 and 345.<sup>6</sup>
- Key actors: LGBTI+ civil society organisations; organisations working on sexual and reproductive health and rights; human rights organizations, specifically mandated organizations like UNDP, allies in the International Parliamentary Union, allies

<sup>6</sup> ACHPR Resolution 275 of 2014 is the "Resolution on Protection against Violence and other Human Rights Violations against Persons on the basis of their real or imputed Sexual Orientation or Gender Identity" and Resolution 365 is the "Resolution on the Situation of Human Rights Defenders in Africa".

in the Pan African Parliament, SADC's parliamentary forum, academia working on human rights, inclusive religious networks and CSOs with specific legal expertise like SALC.

## The public sector services pathway

*Both the Sustainable Development Goals and the African Union's Vision 2063 are multi-sectoral and cross-sectoral. They recognize the importance of simultaneously driving progress in poverty reduction, health promotion, education, sustainable and inclusive cities, decent work, environmental sustainability, good governance and more. Similarly, the agenda for inclusion of sexual and gender minorities, as well as for other marginalized and excluded populations, must be multi-sectoral and cross-sectoral. The health sector in many African countries is progressively becoming inclusive and responsive of LGBTI+ people, in association with the response to HIV. That said, more progress is still needed in health services for sexual and gender minorities, including development of appropriate mental health services, suicide prevention, support to gender transition and more. Beyond health, very little has been done so far in other sectors. Priorities include designing social protection programmes to respond to LGBTI+ families and households; challenging bullying and stigma of gender non-conforming children in schools; addressing the disproportionate poverty and unemployment levels of LGBTI+ people who have been driven out of schools and/or rendered homeless or suffered violence; and so on.*

### Objectives

- Regionally, build evidence and understanding of how LGBTI+ people experience structural marginalisation in a wide range of sectors and service delivery initiatives, as well as how lack of access to one sector (such as education) contributes to other challenges (such as economic deprivation).
- Regionally, identify promising practice about inclusion of sexual or gender non-conforming people in specific sectors and services, documenting results, sharing experiences, and advocating for further action across countries.
- Work with supportive justice ministries and national human rights commissions to pilot and refine a system to promote responsiveness and accountability in relevant line ministries to ensure services are acceptable, high quality and non-discriminatory.
- Rapidly advance inclusion and sensitivity to diversity in the education sector, given its contribution to prosperity (or lack thereof), as well as in justice or gender ministry responses to gender-based

violence and in the promotion of sexual and reproductive health and rights.

### Sample of possible tactics

- Continue to build, document and share experience from health ministries and HIV responses – to further strengthen inclusiveness of health sectors and to transfer those lessons to other sectors. Conduct a similar exercise related to prevention and responses to gender-based violence.
- Convene periodic dialogue with ministries and departments of government that are strategic entry points for an inclusion and diversity agenda at country level from across the region (e.g. health, labour, social protection, justice, gender equality, education).
- Convene cross-country meetings and exchanges among allies in specific sectors – to understand their gaps and successes in ensuring inclusiveness and to promote promising practice.
- Work with the private sector and trade unions to build support for non-discrimination and inclusion in workplaces.
- Develop and disseminate a first generation of guidelines on how each sector can become more accessible and inclusive; monitor and evaluate the use and impact of the guidelines to further refine over time.
- Identify strategic opportunities to include sexual and gender minority issues and concerns in broader sectoral initiatives, such as curriculum review exercises or anti-violence initiatives for schools, evaluations of social protection programmes, development of employment and anti-poverty strategies.

### Stakeholders

- Key targets, allies and potential allies: line ministries (particularly education, social protection, gender equality/family, justice); Economic Commission for Africa; trade unions; private sector trade associations; sectoral/service networks (education, health, etc.)
- Key actors: NGOs specializing in different sectors; LGBTI+ civil society organisations; UNESCO, UNICEF, ILO, UNDP, UN Women, and other multilaterals; allies in parliaments, allies in media.

## The democracy and governance pathway

*The role of the state goes beyond enacting and enforcing laws and includes public access to basic services in different sectors. In human right terms, the state is the most important “duty bearer” with an obligation to respond to “rights holders”. Political leadership sets the tone for inclusion – or exclusion. Strong democratic processes and institutions must include and protect minorities while simultaneously being accountable to the public with reference to, and the inclusion (wherever possible) of the the right to state protection and principles of ‘do no harm’ as enshrined in the Yogyakarta Principles +10.<sup>7</sup>*

### Objectives

- Strengthen ties between and mutual support of movements for sexual or gender non-conforming people and movements promoting democracy, state accountability and rule of law.
- Defend, and where necessary, expand, space for a broad range of civil society actors (including those focused on sexual and gender minorities) to organize and to contribute to political processes, both formally and informally.
- Reinforce commitments to full and equal citizenship and rights for all, including sexual and gender minorities.
- Defend and expand freedom of expression that does not fuel hatred, including, but not limited to cultural and political expressions related to sexual and gender diversity.

### Sample of possible tactics

- Work with multi-country civil society organizations to identify and promote tactics to improve state responsiveness and accountability to sexual and gender minority issues, for example through support to drafting and endorsement of shadow reports, appointments of in-country rapporteurs.
- Regionally, identify and utilise opportunities to dialogue with political candidates about sexual and gender minority issues and their relationship to broader principles of inclusion, democracy, rights and development; work with allies to advance such work.

- Continue and expand campaign for the independence of the African Commission on Human and Peoples’ Rights.
- Country by country, identify and support appropriate LGBTI+ allies and champions, and appropriate LGBTI+ people, to join political parties and run for elected office at various levels of government.
- Develop in-country processes to monitor and advocate for inclusion and for strengthening of links between sexual and gender minority movements and issues and democracy and civil society movements and issues.
- Defend and expand freedom of expression through sensitization of members of censorship / media boards, training of editors/journalists, development and use of comprehensive reporting guidelines.

### Stakeholders

- Key targets, allies and potential allies: political parties, political party leadership, women’s caucuses and youth leagues of political parties, members of relevant boards and commissions, National and African Human Rights Institutions, Pan African Parliament, democracy and good governance campaigners and specialists.
- Key actors: LGBTI+ civil society organisations; good governance campaigners and specialists, human rights campaigners and specialists, UNDP, allies in parliaments, allies in media, allies in the development cooperation sector.

## The movement pathway

*Social movements play central roles in driving social change. In order to do so, it is essential to increase their strength, diversity, geographic/linguistic coverage, intersectional approaches, and shared support and respect. Organized civil society groups, activists working alone and with others, and networks of such people and groups are all important actors to drive and influence other pathways as well. Many different social movements are relevant: those working across the spectrum of LGBTI+ (or sexual and gender minority) issues; those working for rights and inclusion of individual components of that broader movement (such as for trans people or lesbian/bi/queer women); and the many other movements that intersect with LGBTI+ issues including: the feminist movement, movements for decolonization young people’s movements, linguistic or ethnic minorities, differently*

<sup>7</sup> The Yogyakarta Principles Plus 10 (YP+10) aims to document and elaborate these developments through a set of Additional Principles and State Obligations.

abled people, the poor and landless, migrants and so on.

#### Objectives

- Create a safe and enabling environment within which LGBTI+ groups can organize and advocate for inclusion, rights, equality and dignity.
- Continue to broaden and strengthen the organizing and advocacy capacity of the movement for inclusion and rights of sexual or gender non-conforming people (and its component parts), with attention to sub-regions, countries and linguistic groups where the movement is currently at its weakest. Continue to cultivate and leverage the overlapping agendas of the LGBTI+ movement and the movement to address HIV & AIDS among key populations<sup>8</sup>, together with the movement to advance sexual and reproductive rights, democracy and human rights more broadly.
- Strengthen the intersections among different components of the LGBTI+ movement as well as between LGBTI+ actors, the HIV response and Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights (SRHR) movements, and other social justice movements.
- Strengthen leadership skills of movement leaders and related transition planning.
- Protect movement leaders and actors from violence, intimidation and harassment, as well as from burn-out and stress.
- Actively support allies who speak out publicly to support sexual and gender minority (and related) movements and social change objectives.
- Increase and diversify financial support for movement actors, including for the financing of activism, well-being and advocacy.
- Increase the inclusion of LGBTI+ issues within the agenda of other social justice movements, and vice versa.

#### Sample of possible tactics

- Periodically convene an in-person gathering of key African movement actors with allies from other sectors (parliaments, judiciary, police, private sector, multilaterals, NGOs, etc.) to learn from each other, to identify opportunities for synergies and complementary action, and to update strategies.

- Widen the network of key actors, both by inviting emerging leaders to the in-person gathering described above and by building cost-effective digital platforms for organizing, sharing and collaborating.
- Continue to invest in long-term and flexible capacity strengthening, organizing and advocacy/activism of key movement organizations and networks.
- Recognize and respond to the needs of individuals in the movement, supporting people to avoid (and deal with) burn-out, cultivating emerging leaders, supporting leadership transition, building skills and networks.
- Continue the process already underway to develop safety and security protocols for movement actors in different political and legal contexts.
- Build and share lessons among supportive funders of how to best support and resource movements and widen the pool of financial support, including by enlisting African philanthropists and corporates.

#### Stakeholders

- Key targets, allies and potential allies are also the key actors in this work: LGBTI+ civil society organisations and leaders; organizations and leaders working on component elements of the LGBTI+ movement; LGBTI+ networks and coalitions; actors and organizations addressing key issues that intersect with the inclusion and rights agenda of sexual or gender non-conforming people (eg SRHR, youth, women and girls, gender equality, social justice, rights, anti-racism, anti-poverty, HIV, etc.); donors.

### The knowledge pathway

*Knowledge is power. Each of the pathways described above should build on existing knowledge systems and evidence on sexuality and gender in Africa, as well as generating new action oriented and policy relevant evidence that it is required to become more effective at scale. In addition, there is a need for both cross-cutting evidence and a critical mass of public intellectuals and academic influencers who deepen and disseminate knowledge about sexual and gender diversity in Sub-Saharan Africa. In turn, this will enable the movement to challenge those who claim that sexual or gender non-conforming people are somehow 'un-African' – by drawing on both local histories and traditions of inclusion as well as*

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<sup>8</sup> HIV policies and programmes increasingly recognize that some LGBTI+ people in Africa, particularly men who have sex with men and trans women, have disproportionately high rates of HIV infection and disproportionately poor access to treatment. At the same time, most LGBTI+ people are not living with HIV and are not disproportionately vulnerable to infection – which means attention to HIV must be balanced with attention to other health and social issues and priorities.



*contemporary evidence about what works - to shift laws, policies, services and social norms.*

#### Objectives

- Develop and advance action on shared research priorities that are aligned to the ten-year change agenda outlined in this strategic framework.
- Improve the involvement of multiple stakeholders in all steps of knowledge generation in order to better understand what research/evidence is needed and in what form, increase the uptake and use of evidence by key stakeholders (politicians, policy leaders, activists, service delivery actors, etc.).
- Develop and respect new rules of play that recognize sexual or gender non-conforming people as full partners in shaping priorities, conducting research and utilizing research results.
- Promote data collection and analysis that counts the most marginalized (and data transparency more broadly) as tools for advancing accountability towards LGBTI+ people and communities.
- Develop and promote a new politics of evidence that is locally owned and generated, and that builds on identified social change agendas.

#### Sample of possible tactics

- Establish a continental collaboration on sexual & gender minority research that is driven by local actors in the field.
- Develop research protocols that ensure knowledge development and dissemination is non-extractive and supportive of African needs and priorities.
- Develop, keep up-to-date, and promote use of a repository of existing and ongoing research.
- Establish a community of practice/network for both researchers and for those looking for evidence to inform their actions.
- Invest in training and capacity development for institutional ethics committees and statutory research approval bodies.
- Fund research priorities and where possible, support a cohort of LGBTI-actors to pursue PhDs.
- Conduct evidence and data literacy for LGBTI+ civil society groups so that they can more effectively use knowledge to advance LGBTI+ inclusion and to hold others accountable.

#### Stakeholders

- Key targets, allies and potential allies: universities, research institutions, leading intellectuals.
- Key actors: existing researchers and research teams/institutions working on sexual and gender minority issues in Africa; researchers in allied / related fields (racism, social inclusion, development, human rights etc); research funders; LGBTI+ civil society organisations.

### **Cross-cutting approaches**

*Each of the pathways described above interacts with and supports the others, for the whole to be greater than the sum of its parts. Similarly, there is a range of cross-cutting approaches and tactics that will advance progress across the strategic framework. These include:*

- Develop guiding principles for all work, including how to operationalize principles of inclusion while simultaneously recognizing that different actors have different roles and functions and access to different spaces.
- Joint mapping and analysis of influencers in key countries and at regional level, including those influencers who oppose LGBTI+ inclusion and rights.
- Country to country learning and peer review and peer support processes.
- Develop, maintain, share a matrix of information on who is doing what on the continent (positively and negatively), including up-to-date information on security risks and mitigation measures.
- Recognize that as in the women's movement, the personal is political: understand and leverage the role of each pathway in supporting and empowering individuals
- Convene cross-country forums for progressive leaders in different cross-cutting sectors to mentor / influence peers (judiciary, parliamentarians, media leaders, etc.)
- Develop collaboration mechanisms that also reach out to new players
- Develop and implement a deliberate support plan for leaders and champions
- Develop a way to monitor progress and make a deliberate effort to celebrate and communicate progress and success as a way to contribute to shifting the narrative and reinforce momentum.

## ASSUMPTIONS AND RISK MITIGATION:

Our vision requires commitment and change at many levels: individual, family, community, country, regional, continental and global. Nevertheless, we assume that not all individuals, groups and institutions need to change at the same time or the same pace. There are sexual or gender non-conforming people living in families and communities across Africa, in all regions, social classes, languages and religious traditions. Increased acceptance and inclusion in a critical mass of families, communities and institutions can create a “tipping point” whereby positive change will be accelerated throughout the sub-continent.

There will be individuals who resist equality, inclusivity and diversity, powerful politicians and cultural leaders who promote intolerance and violence, and countries that seek to thwart more inclusive development pathways. Our work therefore requires ongoing attention to safety and security, defence of community leaders and allies – including the development and implementation/activation of a safety protocol, and support and refuge for individuals who are ostracized or who face discrimination in their struggles to advance rights and justice.

We assume that work at a regional or multi-country level can contribute significantly to progress. At the same time, we recognize that this will require effective mechanisms to connect regional level work to country level work; to connect country efforts to each other; and to strengthen policy and inclusive service delivery systems, country by country.

Individual activists and organized civil society groups will play a key role in driving progressive change. We therefore need to contribute to the broader movement in Africa to defend civil society space for action on human rights and development, while concurrently developing effective tactics to continue work in those contexts where civil society space is shrinking. We also need to support individuals and organizations within the social movement that is advancing equality, rights and inclusion – preventing and mitigating burn-out, nurturing the emergence of new leaders, supporting leadership transition, and strengthening organisational systems and capacity.

Progressive change will also require ongoing support from current allies and an ever-widening set of partners. Much progress in Africa in the past decade has been driven by leaders in the health sector, in response to the role of key populations (including sexual minorities) in responding to HIV. We must support these leaders in their ongoing efforts as well as learn from them as we reach out to new sectors

and actors. We need to deliberately build informal networks and alliances between different types of actors (government officials, MPs, public servants, researchers, UN and CSO), and increasingly recognize the different, complementary roles and responsibility that different actors can contribute to our shared vision.

Simultaneously, we need to broaden the number and diversify the profile of academics and researchers dedicated to deepening the evidence base related to sexual and gender minority inclusion. Similarly, private sector allies in advertising, cultural production and a range of other businesses are increasingly supporting and celebrating diversity. Their efforts must be supported and leveraged to widen their impact.

Finally, while most of the resources for this change process will come from individuals and communities themselves, outside investment is required – at a significant scale, over a medium- to long-term horizon, and with sufficient flexibility to respond to unanticipated crises and opportunities.

**Figure 1. Strategic Framework Pathways**





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Resilient nations.*

**UNDP HIV, Health & Development team, Africa**