

# Summary of Consultations on LBQ Advocacy and Research Priorities

July 2024



Redes de Organizaciones de Lesbianas y Mujeres Bisexuales de Latinoamérica y el Caribe



SOUTHERN AFRICAN LBQ WOMEN'S NETWORK

# Introduction

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On 13 March 2024, over 60 lesbian, bisexual, and queer (LBQ)<sup>1</sup> activists from around the world participated in a strategic conversation on LBQ Advocacy and Research Priorities on the sidelines of the Commission on the Status of Women in New York. The event was co-hosted by Outright International, ILGA World, and the Global Lesbian\* Coalition, a network comprising the Asia Feminist LBQ Network, Central Asian Feminist LBQT Network, EuroCentralAsian Lesbian\* Community (EL\*C), the Network of Lesbian and Bisexual Women’s Organizations in Latin America and the Caribbean (LESLAC), and the Southern African LBQ Women’s Network.

The conversation in New York was the culmination of a consultative process initiated in December 2023 by Outright International, ILGA World, and the Global Lesbian\* Coalition that included:

- A survey distributed in English, French, Spanish, and Russian among LBQ activists globally that received 58 responses.
- Two online consultation meetings that took place on 5 February 2024 in English, French, and Spanish, which included more than 80 participants in total.

The objectives of the consultations and the event were to foster cross-regional advocacy connections and provide LBQ advocates with a guidance document on global advocacy and research priorities identified by LBQ activists from all regions. The consultations resulted in a stronger focus on advocacy within United Nations (UN) spaces and mechanisms.

## Footnotes

<sup>1</sup> In this document, we use LBQ women as a term inclusive of lesbian, bisexual and queer women, including cisgender, trans and intersex women, and all non-binary or genderqueer people on the gender spectrum who relate to an LBQ identity.

This document does not do justice to the rich conversations activists engaged in throughout the consultation process. In particular, it does not report in detail the discussions regarding advocacy at the regional and national levels. The following four chapters highlight the main priorities, trends, approaches, and good practices that emerged from the consultations and the in-person meetings.

## I. PRIORITY THEMES

The participants, in both the online consultation and in-person meeting, identified some of the key thematic issues that LBQ activists prioritize through international advocacy and research.

### ECONOMIC JUSTICE

Participants raised various issues related to economic justice and equitable access to economic resources for LBQ women. Some emphasized discrimination in **access to employment**, including during hiring, which is exacerbated by intersectional identities. They drew connections between **discrimination and violence in the education sector** and challenges experienced by LBQ women who work in low-paid positions and don't have the opportunity to develop their careers. Exclusion of LBQ women from benefits such as pensions and social security further deepens the economic injustice they experience.

Participants identified **sexual harassment in the workplace** as an economic justice issue, noting that SOGI-based workplace sexual harassment forces closeting and limits freedom of expression, affecting bisexual and pansexual women in unique ways.

Participants also called attention **tax challenges**, uniquely faced by LBQ women who are not recognized as legal couples.

**Deepening economic crises** in many parts of the world were said to be making it difficult for LBQ women to meet their basic needs, especially LBQ women living in rural areas and LBQ migrants.

Participants mentioned the need to gather data regarding the **cost of excluding and discriminating against LBQ people**.

### CLIMATE JUSTICE

Participants mentioned the urgent need to address the climate crisis from an inclusive perspective, recognizing that it is not only a problem that affects the Global North, but an issue intrinsically linked to LBQ women and local experience from the most marginalized contexts.

### GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE

**Gender-based violence against LBQ women in digital spaces** emerges as a significant concern, exacerbated by the growing presence of anti-gender actors invading feminist spaces and influencing public discourse.

The **inclusion of female and intersex genital mutilation as forms of gender-based violence affecting LBQ individuals** is necessary for a comprehensive approach to address gender-based violence in all its manifestations.

### DISMANTLING GENDER NORMS

Participants emphasized that gender norms affect all areas of LBQ women’s social, economic, and political participation. For example, some participants highlighted that **gender norms and poverty were correlated for LBQ women**: masculine-presenting women often find it harder to find work as a result of their gender expression, which exposes them to a greater risk of violence and **poverty**.

More **comprehensive sexuality and gender identity education** is needed to dismantle gender norms. The general public requires social awareness about sexual orientation and gender identity, including on the unique ways transmasculine people experience violence, and LBQ communities themselves lack sufficient information about their own experiences.

### IMPROVED ACCESS TO HEALTH

Participants mentioned that **health policies and services exclude LBQ women** and are tailored for heterosexual married women. Misinformation in relation to LBQ experiences is common within public sexual and reproductive health services. An example was provided in relation to access to HPV vaccines.

LBQ women are not counted in most data regarding health, which has a negative impact on the promotion of inclusive policies.

Another health concern raised was on **bias-motivated and conversion practices**, which several respondents emphasized because of their tangible impact on the rights to health and well-being and lack of support services to survivors.

**Mental health** difficulties were raised in multiple responses, with references made to depression and anxiety stemming from discrimination in the workplace and education. One participant suggested that empowering mental health initiatives were needed to address this.

### OVERCOMING STATUTORY AND LEGAL BARRIERS TO EQUALITY

Some participants emphasized the importance of being more vocal about **decriminalization, marriage equality, and family rights**.

Inadequate legal and policy responses to **bias-motivated rape** and other forms of **sexual violence against LBQ women** are barriers to equality. Online gender-based violence against LBQ people should be addressed through specific policies.

## 2. UN MECHANISMS

LBQ activists have limited access to UN spaces. It is critical to equip those in the national and regional context, who may be outside the UN sphere, with the tools to engage effectively with the UN. This necessitates comprehensive training and strategic alignment to move away from gatekeeping towards a model of shared knowledge, learning, and opening space for others. LBQ activists have asked for training on a comprehensive understanding of UN systems, processes, and strategic engagement methods, specifically for LBQ women.

While some activists are well-versed in UN dynamics, bridging generational knowledge gaps is a significant challenge. Empowering LBQ, especially gender non-conforming LBQ youth with UN knowledge, from grassroots to global levels, demands deliberate efforts, continuous training, and knowledge-sharing within and across the community.

LBQ advocacy draws strength from collaborative efforts with other movements, such as sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR) and comprehensive sexuality education (CSE). Embracing inclusive language like SOGIESC (sexual orientation, gender identity, expression, and sex characteristics) can enhance advocacy impact and foster greater unity.

An imperative emerges to integrate with broader movements, including disability justice, environmental, and feminist movements. Moving beyond mere solidarity to substantive movement building, this intersectional approach holds promise for transformative change within UN spaces.

Reflecting on historical roots, LBQ activists draw inspiration from past successes, like the vibrant lesbian feminist movement at the Beijing Platform 30 years ago. This introspection fuels a call to reclaim spaces, engage regional mechanisms, and resist anti-rights forces infiltrating the UN. It prompts envisioning alternative systems that genuinely serve everyone, marking a shift towards visionary activism beyond conventional reformist approaches.

## Examples of UN Mechanisms that LBQ Advocates Could Explore

PROCESS/ MECHANISM	DESCRIPTION	HOW TO ENGAGE
Universal Periodic Review (UPR)	Comprehensive review of states' human rights records, including gender-related issues.	Any organization can submit an NGO report for their country's review, every 4-5 years.
Human Rights Council (HRC)	Addresses human rights violations globally, including gender-based discrimination.	Organizations can apply for ECOSOC status or use another organization's status to request speaking slots on specific country or thematic issues. Organizations and activists can also submit input for reports written by Special Mandate Holders, human rights experts appointed by the HRC on a variety of topics (e.g., the Independent Expert on Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity).
Commission on the Status of Women (CSW)	Dedicated to gender equality and women's empowerment issues.	Organizations and activists can join the LGBTI Caucus and / or the Women's Rights Caucus, both of which engage with the Commission on the Status of Women through advocacy, monitoring, events, and capacity building.

<p>Security Council (UNSC)</p>	<p>Deals with peace and security, including Women, Peace, and Security agenda.</p>	<p>Organizations and activists can send recommendations to member states to influence statements and discussions taking place at the Security Council.</p>
<p>United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN Women)</p>	<p>Dedicated to gender equality and women's empowerment initiatives.</p>	<p>Organizations can join the LGBTI Caucus and / or the Women's Rights Caucus, which work on gender-related processes at the UN and engage with UN Women.</p>
<p>Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) Review Processes through the High Level Political Forum (HLPF)</p>	<p>Periodic reviews and assessments of progress on SDGs, including gender equality goals.</p>	<p>Organizations can join the LGBTI Stakeholder group, which engages with the SDGs and the HLPF. Activists can also get involved with VNR and VLR processes when their countries are up for review.</p>

### 3. REGIONAL DISCUSSIONS

LBQ activists experience a variety of challenges at a regional level related to the exclusion of LBQ women from mainstream feminist spaces as well as from LGBTIQ organizations often dominated by cis gay men. In addition, activists struggle to connect and build networks that could serve to develop strong actions at a regional level.

Participants observed that, at a regional level, some actors in the LGBTIQ community were perceived to use the presence of trans-exclusionary or gender-critical feminists to criticize and deny space to all feminists, including, in particular, LBQ women. Such LGBTIQ regional and national organizations, often male-led and male-dominated, sometimes act as gatekeepers, making it more difficult to access regional advocacy, donors, and policy-makers.



Intra and interregional connections are an important priority for overcoming challenges and creating opportunities. Participants expressed a need for more exchanges with activists from other regions to tap into each other's strengths, including via peer learning.

Collaborations and unions with those working in other social justice movements at a regional level are key to achieving a stronger presence of LBQ activists in regional advocacy. Working intersectionally can also help LBQ movements broaden their perspective and allow them to participate by "disrupting and not destroying" the work done at a more mainstream level.

## 4. RESEARCH

From a cross-cutting and global perspective, the emerging research agenda derived from the consultation with LBQ women across the globe reveals a vast and complex picture that demands detailed and multidimensional attention.

The above-mentioned priority themes require further research looking in particular into the impact on LBQ women's lived experience.

In terms of research methodology, there is a need to question and challenge the traditional and heteronormative approaches that have dominated the academic field for too long. The adoption of feminist and queer methodologies, which value the diversity of experiences and perspectives, is critical to ensure that research reflects the complexity and richness of LBQ experience. An intersectional approach in research requires that data collection is inclusive of the experiences of rural lesbians and older LBQ people as well as racialised LBQ women and LBQ people of colour.

Activists highlighted the importance of advocating with universities, research centers and academia with a view to create more opportunities for LBQ-focused research.

Ultimately, the challenge lies in transforming research into concrete political action that promotes systemic change and social justice. Activists must use research as a foundation for concrete, and more impactful evidence-based policy advocacy. This requires a collaborative and participatory approach involving LBQ communities in all process stages, from problem identification to solution implementation.



We created collectively a [Bibliography for LBQ Research](#). This is a living document. Everyone can use [this form](#) to contribute information regarding published research on LBQ people's lived realities, human rights, social and economic inclusion, and movement building in any country or region.

## 5. GOOD PRACTICES

Both during the consultation phase and in the group discussion at the New York event, we identified some trends in terms of approaches to work, practices and methodologies to prioritize in LBQ Advocacy and Research. Here are some good practices to apply within the movement, highlighted by LBQ activists that contributed to this process:

- Demonstrate allyship with other aligned movements, such as those on indigenous rights, disability, racial, trans, and climate justice, in which LBQ women are present, but often silent.
- Mainstream LBQ priorities and strengthen LBQ decision-making within mainstream feminist organizations spaces;
- Ensure that LBQ voices are heard and LBQ issues are centered within LGBTIQ movements;
- Build on the work already done at the UN level by human rights, feminist, and social justice organizations to advance inclusion and equality;
- Get a seat at other social justice and human rights movements' tables;
- Build stronger alliances with feminist and anti-racist organizations;
- Connect LBQ and disability justice movement, including in relation to SRHR;
- Define the scope and boundaries of alliances and strategically decline or accept proposals of collaboration;
- Maintain an intersectional approach both in advocacy and research;
- Make the perspectives of marginalized and under-represented LBQ communities visible, relevant and key in LBQ advocacy and research;
- Strengthen intergenerational perspectives and create opportunities for transferring knowledge across generations of activists;
- Strengthen regional perspectives through more regional and cross-regional cooperation;
- Support the organizing of community groups to improve their ability to develop political advocacy;
- Center the experience of local communities when identifying needs, skills gaps and strengths of the LBQ movements;
- Center collective care and well-being and sensitize funders on this topic.





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