



HIGH-LEVEL POLITICAL FORUM ON SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

Expert Group Meeting on 2021 HLPF Thematic Review on SDG 2

Nadira Masiumova (PA “Kyrgyz Indigo”) – answers to guiding questions:

1. What is the current status of the Goal or target, in terms of actual measured progress and trends?

LGBTI persons face multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination due to their sexual orientation, gender identity and expression, and sex characteristics, impacting their access to development and their overall human capital. These barriers contribute to higher experiences of poverty among these communities and increased food insecurity and experiences of hunger.

Cross-cutting issues and experiences of increased vulnerability and barriers to accessing education, employment, quality and sensitized healthcare, gender-based violence and discrimination, all contribute to hunger and food insecurity in these communities.

Specifically, this could include:

- 1. Lack of access to quality education and high drop out rates because of harassment and bullying;*
- 2. Lack of access to decent work because of discrimination;*
- 3. High levels of the poverty;*
- 4. Increased marginalisation due to exclusion from governmental aid support and barriers to accessing social and public services.*

At the same time COVID-19 negatively impacted to queer community, as many of us are living in daily earnings without financial savings and family support. State sponsored homophobia make LGBTI+ community left behind and left out of aid support, contributing to increases in the level of hunger among this group. The Independent Expert on SOGI has been monitoring the ways in which the pandemic is affecting persons of diverse of SOGIESC¹. The conclusion of the monitoring is that COVID-19 has had a disproportionate impact on LGBT persons². Reports, information, and experiences globally have shown that the Covid-19 pandemic has led to job loss and higher food and shelter insecurity among LGBTI communities.

Case:

Specifically, In Kyrgyzstan, a needs assessment done in 2020 by civil society organization, Kyrgyz Indigo, indicated that 68% of LGBT+ people surveyed did not have a paid job and needed food³.

LGBT migrants and trans* women sex-workers are most vulnerable to the negative effects of COVID-19. Queer migrants could face double discrimination based on their economic status, race, nationality and SOGIESC. They often have been left behind and left out of governmental aid support due to their intersecting vulnerable identities.

¹ Sexual orientation, gender identity, expression, sex characteristics.

² An LGBT inclusive COVID-19 response, OHCHR. Available at:

<https://www.ohchr.org/EN/Issues/SexualOrientationGender/Pages/COVID19LGBTInclusiveResponse.aspx>

³ Needs Assessment, Kyrgyz Indigo 2020, 52 people participated. Available at, p5:

<https://indigo.kg/uploads/File/2021/01/14/Spotlight-Review.-Kyrgyz-Indigo.docx.pdf>

In many countries sex work is criminalized in different ways. Trans* women sex workers do not qualify for economic assistance, as they are left out of social protection schemes. Lack of legal gender recognition, or the difficulty, discrimination during changing gender marker also negatively affects the trans* community. This contributed to being unable to access government supported food programs and social assistance services, as well as increases discrimination in accessing employment, leading to financial insecurity and hunger. Data from around the world show that LGBTI persons are overrepresented in the informal labour market, due to discrimination in employment, and are also over-represented in jobs and industries that have been severely impacted by Covid-19. Informal and insecure labor contributes to insecurities among this population as well as hampers their rights to benefits such as unemployment and other social assistance programs tied to the formal economy. These insecurities all lead to higher rates of hunger and food scarcity among this population.

Some of the community solutions as a result of the pandemic are centered on organizing fundraising initiatives. One such fundraising example aims to support at least one month's rent for some of the members of trans sex workers community, so that they are able to stay at home and not work. Such initiatives, however, are not sustainable in the long run and are hardly enough to cover the immediate living costs. In countries where LGBTI communities are highly stigmatized or criminalized, crowdfunding may only be possible among the community at large and among allies. This pool of supporters is generally limited and at the moment are also financially compromised.

In order to continue supporting the needs of the LGBTI community and reach individuals in such confined situations, and LGBTI and other organizations have responded by ensuring that the shifting the provision of psychological and legal consultations are available online. Cases of violence and discrimination are also monitored alongside emerging needs reported by the community members. In some cases volunteers and staff members help deliver food, medicine and other basic supplies to those who are under high risk of contracting COVID -19 with grave health consequences⁴.

2. What has changed since the last time this Goal was reviewed at the HLPF?

Positive change:

- Many international and national organizations were able to integrate the strategy to mitigate the negative impact of COVID-19 into their work. However, due to LGBTI persons being left out of Covid response and recovery initiatives, the burden of providing for LGBTI communities have fallen on civil society and community based organizations, which have historically been underfunded and further impacted by the pandemic;

Case:

Since March 2020, SEED has provided 3000 package of essential provisions (rice, flour, oil, eggs, sardines, biscuits, instant noodles) to 3000 Transgender persons and families all over Malaysia. This was done as SEED realize that the assistance that the government provided will not reach the community because:

- 1. They are afraid of the repercussions if and when the government finds out where they stay and*
- 2. They do not trust the government will help them⁵.*

- Building back better: the focus of the work is not only on eliminating the consequences of COVID-19, but also on the reasons why some groups were found to be more vulnerable. Addressing root causes which perpetuate vulnerabilities and marginalization are imperative to achieving the SDGs, as well as insuring that all populations are included in response programs and initiatives.

⁴ From RFSL report.

⁵ SEED, Malaysia. Information available at: <https://web.facebook.com/SEEDFMalaysia/?rdc=1&rdrr>.

Negative change:

Increased poverty, loss of employment, and strict restrictive measures has contributed to animosity in society. In some countries, there are political, economic and social crises that have exacerbated already worsened conditions for LGBTI persons and other marginalized groups. This leads to the fact that vulnerable groups become more vulnerable to hunger and experiences of violence.

o Any deviations in progress from what was expected (including due to COVID-19)?

A lot of people lost their jobs and access to income, and at the same time, basic products have risen in price and inflation on goods is rising. In many ways, this is due to COVID-19: closed borders do not allow full trade turnover, restrictive measures affect harvesting, as well as climactic changes. Rising prices for basic products is increasing poverty and leading to food and income insecurity, meaning vulnerable groups can no longer afford basic needs including food and especially higher quality foods needed to fuel proper nutrition. Food that is accessible or affordable for communities impacted by financial insecurity is mainly composed of quickly digestible carbohydrates; this negatively affects health and leads to long-term poor health outcomes and chronic diseases.

o Additional obstacles or opportunities in implementation including through interlinkages with other Goals, and connections to related processes?

As long as there is bullying in schools and universities, discrimination in employment, hate crimes, hate speech based on SOGIESC, insufficient access to justice, punitive laws and policies targeting LGBTI persons, and state sponsored homophobia, LGBTI communities will continue to be left behind. Eradicating hunger for vulnerable communities requires a cross-cutting and intersectional approach to achieving the SDGs. It requires taking an inclusive approach to development policies and programs and tackling root causes of exclusion.

Additionally, inclusive policies during a state of emergency, comprehensive anti-discrimination legislation, including in workplace settings, anti-bullying policy in educational institutions, and protective laws and policies, such as enacting legal gender recognition laws, will help reduce the vulnerability of LGBTI+ people and other vulnerable groups.

It is important to provide support to informal workers and migrants. Since they remain the most vulnerable during a pandemic.

o New/promising openings for tracking progress, including from additional data sources?

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- More and more civil society organizations have the knowledge and the means to invest in research and data collection initiatives. LGBTI communities and organizations around the world have recognized the value of collecting quality data, disaggregated by SOGIESC, as well as are working with partners across sectors to report on the achievement of the SDGs. Every year more and more Spotlight reports are produced and submitted by LGBTI organizations across the world on the achievement of the SDGs.

- However, data continues to be scarce and there is still a need for collecting disaggregated data across all institutions which is focused on the experiences of the LGBTI+ community and how we are being left behind;

- Promoting the human rights of LGBTI+ people, including increasing the participation of LGBTI+ people in decision-making processes at all levels;

3. What are promising strategies to accelerate action (by UN and partners) and to mobilize other stakeholders to advance implementation?

To achieve SDG 2, several pillars need to be covered:

- Ensuring the availability of quality food and assistance programs to all vulnerable communities. Currently, many UN agencies have taken a stand and implemented policies which recognize the vulnerability and needs of LGBTI persons. In some countries, governments have included LGBTI persons in Covid response programs and increased assistance to communities experiencing higher impacts of the pandemic. Institutional donors have increased flexibility in how CSOs use funding to provide for and service vulnerable communities, including by increasing access to emergency response funding, recognizing the unique role CSOs play in reaching traditionally hard to reach communities. These actions, among others, must be replicated and scaled up to mobilize and accelerate the achievement of the SDGs;
- Implementing inclusive policies to eradicate inequality;
- Support for vulnerable communities, specially in Global South and East countries;
- Community-based organizations must be involved in the design and implementation of policies and programs related to SDG2, to ensure that the needs of different populations are sufficiently considered and that measures will not exacerbate already existing inequalities and marginalization;
- As governments invest in food security, economic stimulus and relief packages against the impacts of COVID-19, it is vital to ensure that these efforts will first reach marginalized and vulnerable populations working and living under precarious conditions;
- It is imperative that as this crisis ensues, governments and multilateral institutions maintain transparency, live up to their obligations, do not side-line civil society involvement, and ensure access to national, regional and international systems of accountability.

4. How would one monitor action for implementing these?

There is a need to increase data collection and focus on the collection of disaggregated data across the implementation of all SDGs. Additionally, there is a need for promoting collaboration and dialogue between governments, increasing multilateral responses, working with statistical institutions, and implementing private-public responses, while centering the needs of vulnerable groups and focusing on the need to create synergies for implementing common inclusive strategies. Taking a transparency-based approach and avoiding duplication will help to monitor and measure the success of actions. Furthermore, there needs to be greater trust and legitimacy placed on civil society organizations and data collected by civil society on vulnerable populations and on the achievement of the SDGs.