



20

Annual Report

23

**UN Free & Equal
Campaign**



UNITED NATIONS
HUMAN RIGHTS
OFFICE OF THE HIGH COMMISSIONER



FREE & EQUAL
UNITED NATIONS FOR LGBTQ+ EQUALITY



Introduction

Since our launch in Cape Town, South Africa in July 2013, UN Free & Equal has been on a mission to educate and advocate for the human rights of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, intersex, and queer (LGBTIQ+) people. At the global level, we have produced more than 100 impactful videos and hundreds of shareable images that have garnered hundreds of millions of views and interactions across social media platforms, solidifying our position as a leading resource on LGBTIQ+ human rights. We started new campaigns in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Guyana, Lesotho, and Liberia, bringing our total to over 40 national campaigns and events advocating for LGBTIQ+ equality in countries around the world.

In 2023, we celebrated our 10th anniversary, in addition to the 75th anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, with brand new content featuring influencers and human rights defenders from around the globe. We reached millions of people with messages celebrating equality and diversity.

National campaigns were implemented in 15 countries, including Albania, Brazil, Cabo Verde, Democratic Republic of the Congo, the Dominican Republic, Guyana, Lesotho, Liberia, Mongolia, Panama, Peru, Serbia, Timor-Leste, Venezuela, and Viet Nam. Our campaigns at the national level are implemented in close collaboration with local decision makers and activists and tailored to national discussions and contexts. We have equipped journalists in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Dominican Republic, Guyana, Lesotho, Liberia, and Viet Nam with the knowledge to report sensitively on LGBTIQ+ issues. In Panama, Serbia, and Timor Leste, we have stood shoulder to-shoulder with the community, supporting their Pride marches as powerful displays of unity and visibility. We have worked closely with the trans community in Brazil to facilitate access to the labour market. In Albania, Peru, and Venezuela, we have championed workplace inclusion, paving the way for a more welcoming and equitable environment for LGBTIQ+ employees. We have facilitated trainings for legal professionals in Mongolia and health professionals in Cabo Verde,

providing them with enhanced skills to effectively cater to the needs of the LGBTIQ+ community, and much more.

Taking an intersectional approach, our work recognises the unique challenges faced by diverse groups within the LGBTIQ+ community. This includes, women, youth, migrants, and people with disabilities. Through our campaigns we ensure the specific challenges they face are made visible.

The UN Free & Equal campaign is led by the United Nations Human Rights Office with support from UN partners, including UN Resident Coordinators and UN country teams, as well as national and municipal governments and civil society organisations. At the national level, UN partners include the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV and AIDS (UNAIDS), the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), United Nations Information Centres (UNIC), the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), the United Nations Volunteers Programme (UNV), UN Women, the World Health Organization (WHO), and the United Nations Independent Expert on protection from violence and discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity.



2023

What we do:

Support UN-system public advocacy on the human rights of LGBTIQ+ people at the national and global level.

Contribute to increasing public support for diverse societies that are inclusive of LGBTIQ+ people, and for stronger legal protections against violence and discrimination based on sexual orientation, gender identity and expression, and sex characteristics.

In 2023 the UN Free & Equal campaign:

- **Implemented national-level campaigns** in Albania, Brazil, Cabo Verde, the Dominican Republic, Mongolia, Panama, Peru, Serbia, Timor-Leste, Venezuela, and Viet Nam. Brand new campaigns were also launched in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Guyana, Lesotho, and Liberia. Each was carefully designed to fit national discussions and contexts, supporting important conversations and creating change.
- **Marked the International Day Against Homophobia, Biphobia and Transphobia** with the #SolidarityMeansALLOfUs campaign that celebrated the incredible power of solidarity and featured influencers and human rights defenders from around the globe. The campaign received **27.7 million video views and 14.8 million post engagements**.
- Embarked on a retrospective journey in **commemoration of our 10th anniversary**, revisiting our most impactful videos from the past decade. This initiative gathered over **6 million views and 6 million post engagements**, highlighting the enduring resonance of the campaign's work.
- **Maintained a robust social media presence** throughout the year with a steady stream of content advocating for human rights, resulting in **44.5 million video views and over 46.2 million interactions**. Campaign content was produced in Arabic, Chinese, English, French, Portuguese, Russian, and Spanish.
- **Transformed our website into a hub for LGBTIQ+ human rights knowledge**. In addition to a complete redesign, we developed a variety of fresh content, such as up-to-date factsheets, compelling human-interest stories from across the globe, a glossary of key terminology, frequently asked questions, and interactive maps. We significantly improved the usability of the website, ensuring a richer and more informative experience.

UN Free & Equal on Social Media

 Followers

230k 

 Impressions

601.8M 

 Total Actions

150M 

 Video Views

44.5M 

 Post Engagements

46.2M 

Facebook Audience

Age & Gender

👤 Followers

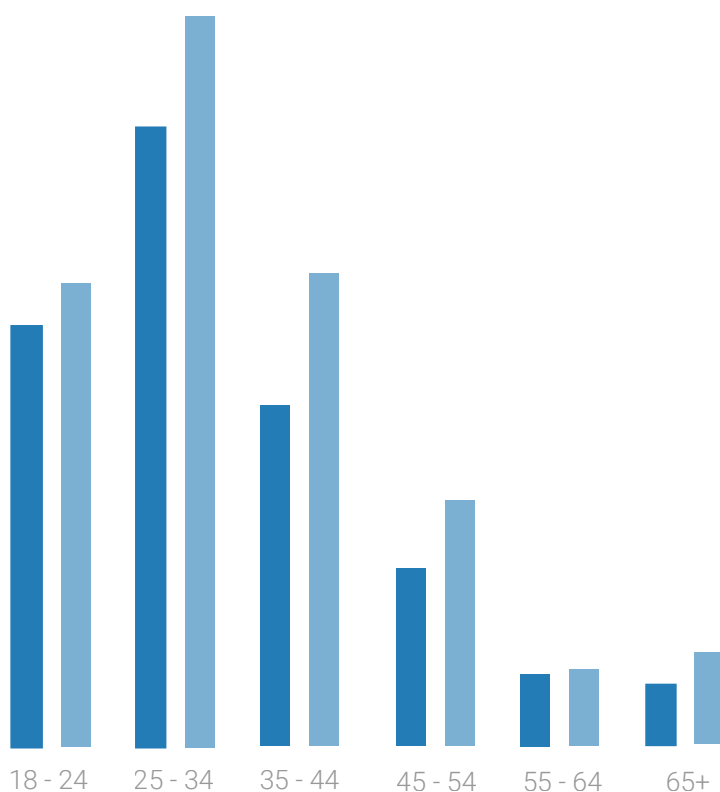
122k+

♂ Women

43.6%

♀ Men

56.4%



Top Countries

India

12.4%

Nepal

9%

Cambodia

6.1%

United States

6.1%

Indonesia

5.9%

Instagram Audience

Age & Gender

👤 Followers

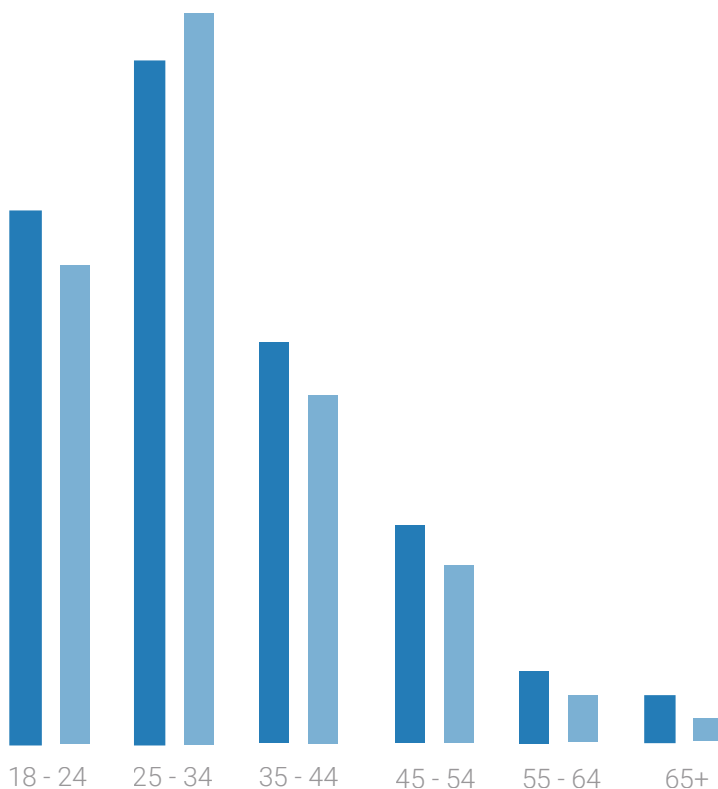
37.7k+

♂ Women

51.8%

♀ Men

48.2%



Top Countries

India

13%

United States

12.7%

Brazil

7.2%

United Kingdom

2.9%

Venezuela

2.9%

Twitter Audience

Age & Gender

👤 Followers

122k+

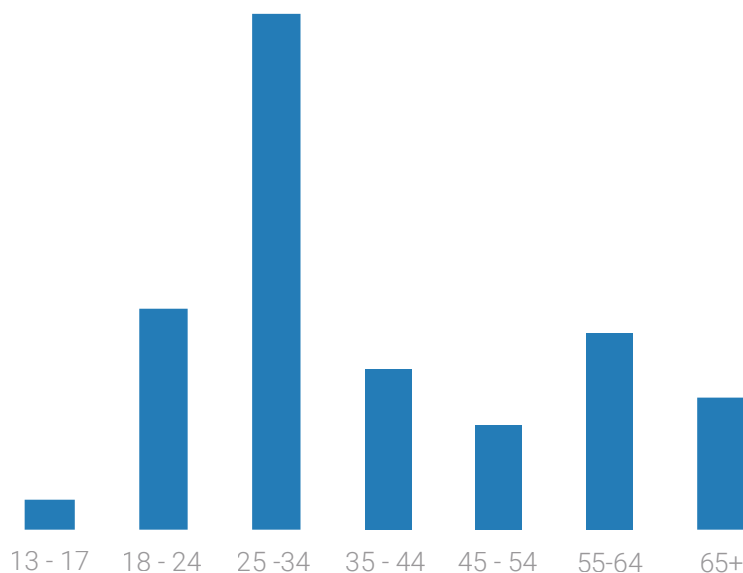
On Twitter, our account was mentioned over 84 thousand times by more than 48 thousand Twitter users, these interactions reached an audience of more than 173 million people, garnering over 500 million impressions.

♂ Women

56.5%

♀ Men

43.5%



Top Countries

United States

9.49k

United Kingdom

5.69k

Canada

1.6k

Australia

1.21k

India

1.19k

"YOU DON'T GET
WHAT YOU DON'T
FIGHT FOR."

Article 2

AS A TRANS MAN
LIVING IN INDIA, IT'S
CRUCIAL FOR ME TO
STAND IN SOLIDARITY
WITH OTHER
MARGINALISED
COMMUNITIES.

#Solidarity Means ALL of Us

Thematic Campaigns

In 2023, the UN Free & Equal campaign commemorated the 75th anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights with a brand-new thematic campaign celebrating the incredible power of solidarity, featuring influencers and human rights defenders from around the world. Later in the year, we celebrated our 10th anniversary, revisiting our most popular and widely-reaching content through the years.

Article 5

UDHR

"YOU DON'T GET
WHAT YOU DON'T
FIGHT FOR."

ELIZABETH WARREN

Article 9

UDHR

ELIZABETH WARREN

QUOTE

"YOU DON'T GET
WHAT YOU DON'T
FIGHT FOR."

ELIZABETH WARREN

Article 6

UDHR

BRANDON KYLE GOODMAN

DARKWAH

Article 12

UDHR

QUOTE

I THINK SOLIDARITY
IS ANOTHER WAY OF
SAYING COMMUNITY.

BRANDON GOODMAN - ACTIVIST

Article 3

UDHR

Article 14

ON A PERSONAL
LEVEL, SOLIDARITY
HELPED ME TO BUILD
COUNTLESS
FRIENDSHIPS AND
ALWAYS PUSH
FORWARD.

QUOTE

NJERI GATERU

SOLIDARIDAD,
SONORIDAD, EMPATÍA
Y COMODIDAD
SON PALABRAS MUY
IMPORTANTES
PARA MÍ.

QUOTE

Video Views



27.7M

Post Engagements



14.8M

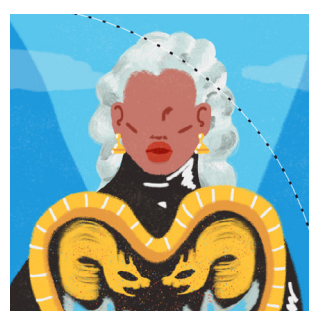
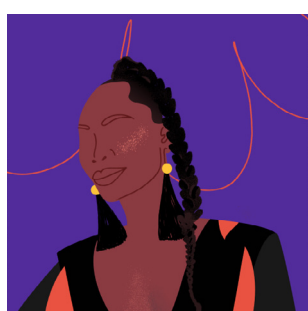
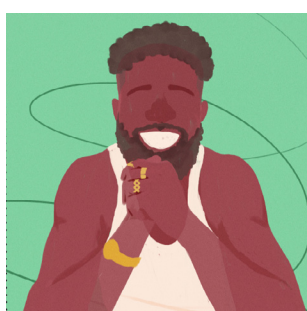
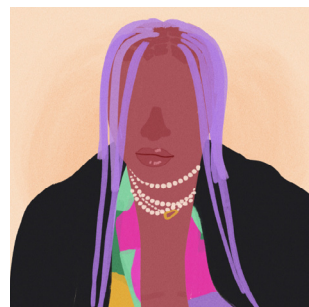
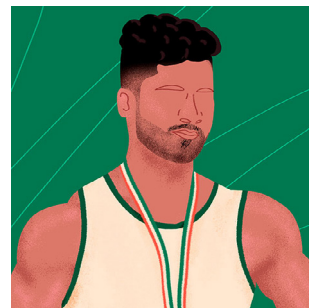
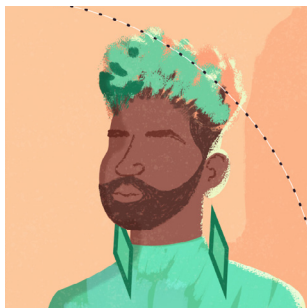
Impressions



40M

Marking the International Day Against Homophobia, Biphobia and Transphobia in May, UN Free & Equal launched a thematic campaign highlighting the strength that comes from standing together as a global community. LGBTIQ+ human rights defenders and influencers lent their voices to share their personal stories, emphasizing the transformative effect of unity and support.

The campaign received overwhelming support from entities both within and outside the United Nations, achieving 27.7 million video views and 14.8 million post engagements. Thanks to the invaluable contributions of prominent LGBTIQ+ advocates, the message was effectively communicated to a diverse and extensive audience, fostering an atmosphere of understanding and acceptance. Campaign assets were produced in Arabic, Chinese, English, French, Russian, Spanish, and Portuguese.



#UNFE10Rewind

Celebrating Our 10th Anniversary

Video Views



6M

Post Engagements



6M

Impressions



10.8M

Celebrating a decade of advocacy for LGBTIQ+ equality, UN Free & Equal launched a retrospective campaign, revisiting our most popular and widely-reaching videos. Familiar favourites like [“The Welcome”](#) and [“Be There”](#) were shown alongside newer pieces such as [“Safe Home”](#) and [“Love makes](#)

[a family”](#). This retrospective journey underscored the campaign’s evolution, from its early steps to what it is today and resonated with its audiences garnering over **6 million views** and **6 million post engagements**, a testament to the campaign’s enduring impact.

#UNFE10Rewind



UNFE.ORG

An LGBTIQ+ Resource Hub



In recognition of our expanding audience, the UN Free & Equal campaign undertook a comprehensive website redesign. The update ensures increased user-friendliness in seven languages: Arabic, Chinese, English, French, Portuguese, Russian, and Spanish.

The [UN Free & Equal website](#) now incorporates a variety of fresh resources to facilitate easy access to key information about the human rights of LGBTIQ+ people. This includes [factsheets](#), a [glossary of key terminology](#), [frequently asked questions](#), and interactive maps.

We introduced a new [Stories](#) section featuring compelling human-interest stories about LGBTIQ+ people, families, human rights defenders, allies, and communities worldwide. This initiative aims to foster connection and understanding with a wider audience.

UN Free & Equal Stories

Empowering the Trans Community in Brazil



[Read More](#) ↗

Nepal: Supporting LGBTIQ+ Writers to Tell Their Own Story



[Read More](#) ↗

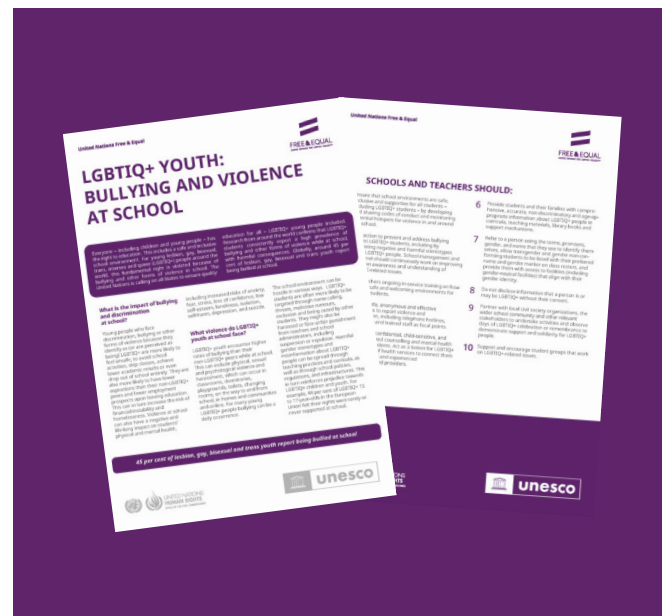
Belgrade Pride: Massive Participation and Increasing Allies for the Rights of LGBTIQ+ People



[Read More](#) ↗

Updated Factsheets

LGBTIQ+ Youth: Bullying and Violence at School



Read More [↗](#)

Bisexuality



Read More [↗](#)

Refuge and Asylum



Read More [↗](#)

National Campaigns

Since 2013, UN Free & Equal's national-level campaigns have taken place in dozens of countries around the world and have achieved some remarkable impact in the advancement of LGBTIQ+ equality.

In 2023 alone, there were national campaigns in 15 countries, including Albania, Brazil, Cabo Verde, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Dominican Republic, Guyana, Lesotho, Liberia, Mongolia, Panama, Peru, Serbia, Timor-Leste, Venezuela, and Viet Nam. Our campaigns at the national level are created and run by UN entities on the ground in close collaboration with local decision makers, activists, and civil society organisations. Each national campaign is carefully designed to fit national discussions and contexts to support important conversations and create change.



Albania

The private sector can play a pivotal role in championing the rights of LGBTIQ+ people. The Free & Equal campaign in Albania has, through strategic advocacy, made remarkable progress in garnering support for LGBTIQ+ equality among private sector partners in the country.

Working with Albania's Ministry of Health and Social Protection, Ministry of Finance and Economy, and civil society partner PINK Embassy, Free & Equal Albania led a national conversation on workplace diversity and the implementation of the [UN Standards of Conduct for Business Tackling Discrimination against Lesbian, Gay, Bi, Trans, and Intersex People](#).

This pivotal event attracted more than 60 stakeholders, including 40 businesses from various sectors. Notable participants included government officials such as the Ombudsman, representatives from the Office of the Anti-discrimination Commissioner and the Deputy Minister for Health and Social Protection, parliamentary members, and human rights advocates. The event concluded with a set of practical recommendations, laying the foundation for future efforts and signalling a shift towards more inclusive corporate cultures and practices.

Following the event, Free & Equal Albania organised more than a dozen meetings with top executives from leading national companies, such as Raiffeisen Bank, Deloitte Group Albania, and Intesa San Paolo Bank. Additionally, a targeted campaign highlighting the standards and calling on businesses to implement them in their workplace reached more than 180 businesses. As a result of this work, 16 Albanian businesses have formally endorsed the standards, with chambers of commerce such as the Albanian Chamber of Commerce, International Chamber of Commerce, Tirana Chamber of



400,000

Free & Equal Albania launched a robust social media campaign, reaching over 400,000 people.

Commerce, Austrian Chamber of Commerce, and the Union of Producers of Albania pledging to spread these standards among their members.

Beyond the corporate realm, Free & Equal Albania's support for the Queer Film Festival in Tirana also played a vital role in raising awareness and engaging a broader audience. With more than 400 attendees, the festival sparked new connections and partnerships, illustrating the impact of cultural events in promoting inclusivity alongside business practices.

Despite these advances, challenges remain, especially in addressing discrimination and hate speech both online and offline. To contribute to a safer, more inclusive digital environment for the LGBTQ+ community in the country, Free & Equal Albania launched a robust social media campaign, sharing 40 assets across UN channels and reaching over 400,000 people.

“The campaign is imperative for us not only to learn about the UN Standards but also to integrate them into our operations to foster inclusive and respectful workplaces.”

Albana Laknori, Secretary General at the Chamber of Commerce and Industry of Tirana



Brazil

The campaign in Brazil is led by the human rights adviser to the Office of the Resident Coordinator, in close collaboration with local civil society. In 2023, a key initiative was the fourth edition of *Trans-formação*, a six-month capacity-building program organised in collaboration with Casa Neon Cunha. The program focuses on empowering trans, *travesti*, and non-binary people through in-depth training in human rights and advocacy strategies, along with providing skills and support to enter the formal labour market. The program's inclusive approach, involving participants in planning and implementation, has proven highly effective. Feedback highlighted a supportive learning environment that fostered peer exchange and community building.

This year's course included 30 participants from North and South-East Brazil, bringing the total to 109 graduates over four years. Former participants in the program have an impressive track record of turning what they have learnt into effective human rights advocacy. They have built civil society coalitions, participated in key committees for addressing public policies, and taken positions in local and national government with a platform of human rights advancement. The campaign also intensified its advocacy for LGBTIQ+ equality through targeted public awareness campaigns on social media. The team shared nine videos and six posts with messages of equality across UN Brazil's social media channels, reaching 331,000 people—a 200 percent increase from the previous year.

Another focus was supporting non-binary individuals within the UN system. A training on inclusive language was conducted for UN agency staff in Brasília, in partnership with the [SSEX BBOX] Institute and a consultant from [DIVERSITY BBOX]. The workshop emphasised the importance of inclusive language in workplace communication.

Contributing to national and international political advocacy processes was another focus area for the campaign in 2023. The team joined forces with



331,000

Free & Equal Brazil reached 331,000 people through social media — a 200% increase from the previous year.

the national intersex movement through active support of and participation in key events, such as the seminar “Rooting Intersex Politics in Brazil”. In collaboration with the National Network of Intersex People and the Ministry of Human Rights and Citizenship, this seminar helped accelerate the protection and promotion of human rights for intersex people, particularly addressing the urgent issue of genital mutilation in the country. Collaborating with UN agencies such as UN Women and UNAIDS, the team also supported the formulation of the Technical Note of the National Secretariat of LGBTQIA+ People’s Rights on Transphobia by providing inputs on human rights norms and standards concerning transphobia.

At an international level, the campaign took part in a hearing conducted by the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights about the protection of transgender children and adolescents, contributing to discussions that aimed to protect their rights and well-being. The campaign also supported data gathering on violence against LGBTIQ+ people in favelas in collaboration with the Conexão G Group. This led to the First Annual Dossier on LGBTI+ Violence in Favelas, which included recommendations for government and international bodies.

“For me, the most important moment was seeing other trans people from my city and being able to make friends. Learning about so many other experiences made me feel like I’m not alone.”

Gabriela from São Bernardo do Campo, *Trans-formação* participant.



Cabo Verde

The UN Free & Equal campaign in Cabo Verde, led by the UNDP-UNFPA-UNICEF Joint Office and supported by the Resident Coordinator's Office, launched several initiatives aimed at improving healthcare access for LGBTIQ+ people and ending discrimination in the healthcare sector. Collaborating with the Ministry of Health and local civil society organisations, the campaign led a national training program that improved the skills of 62 doctors, nurses, psychologists, and social workers, including participants based in remote areas and on smaller islands. Post-training interviews showed a significant increase in knowledge about the healthcare needs of lesbian, gay, bi, and trans people. Addressing mental health challenges prevalent within the community was another key component of this initiative. The Free & Equal campaign and civil society partner VERDEFAM organised a two-day training for 23 community members, focused on self-care tools and held discussions on the importance of support from family and the community.

To promote equality beyond the capital, community discussions were organised in Fogo and São Nicolau. Fifty-six people took part in conversations about violence, discrimination, and human rights, led by local nurses and activists. According to participant testimonies, the initiative successfully increased community understanding of and support for human rights.

Enhancing the capacity of public servants to support lesbian, gay, bi, and trans people effectively was another campaign goal. The Training Conference on Gender and Human Rights of LGBTIQ+ People, organised with the National Commission for Human Rights and Citizenship, equipped 64 professionals from the law enforcement, health, justice, education, and civil society sectors with essential skills to counter discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity. The campaign also focused on improving employment opportunities with a two-day workshop for 20 community members, offering insights into employment access and skill development. The workshop,



62

The campaign led a national training program that helped 62 medical professionals and social workers understand the healthcare needs of lesbian, gay, bi, and trans people.

organised in partnership with civil society group MORABI, provided practical business knowledge and empowered participants to pursue sustainable employment.

A highlight of the year was supporting the Cabo Verde Pride Parade, which saw record participation and featured appearances by Free & Equal champion Mayra Andrade and the UN Resident Coordinator. The campaign's annual festival in Praia, this year marking the 75th anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, featured a concert with artists like Batchart, Elly Paris, and Maya Andrade, drawing 800 attendees. The event celebrated peace, tolerance, and solidarity, underscoring the importance of respecting all human rights, including those of LGBTIQ+ people, and notably included participation from Prime Minister Ulisses Correia e Silva.

“During the workshop, I learned important concepts about sexual orientation and gender identity that will help me to treat my patients better.”

Luciano Veiga, general practitioner and training participant



Democratic Republic of the Congo

UN Free & Equal launched a new campaign in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) in 2023, spearheaded by UNDP and undertaken in partnership with the Ministry of Justice, the National Human Rights Commission, *Centre d'Expertise en Droits Humains et Criminologie* (CEDHUC) Legal Clinic and various civil society organisations. The campaign focused on strengthening support for the human rights of LGBTIQ+ people among the public and with a specific focus on law enforcement and journalists. The campaign also offered psychological and legal assistance to community members who suffered human rights abuses.

To counteract negative stereotypes in the media, the campaign organised training for 52 journalists from 30 media outlets in collaboration with the CEDHUC Legal Clinic and the Media RCP Journalists' Network. The training emphasised respectful and objective reporting, the media's role in combatting violence, and avoiding negative prejudices and generalisations. As a result, 15 TV stations, seven private radio stations, and three print media outlets committed to producing content that respectfully addresses the rights of LGBTIQ+ people. In Kinshasa, the campaign also enhanced the understanding of law enforcement officials through tailored training sessions for 51 senior police officers. This initiative, which is part of the UNDP's Inclusive Governance Initiative project, led to commitments from the officers to ensure equal and respectful treatment of lesbian, gay, bi and trans people and to ensure their protection without discrimination. The officers exchanged contact details with community representatives during the event, fostering dialogue and mutual support. Testimonies from transgender people during these sessions educated officers about past incidents, prompting immediate protective actions, including the re-examination of relevant cases.



45

The campaign provided legal aid and counselling support to 45 community members, including psychological support and medical help.

The campaign also supported the CEDHUC Legal Clinic in providing legal aid and counseling to 45 people. These efforts included psychological support, reparation requests, and addressed the harm experienced by victims of human rights violations, significantly bolstering community resilience and improving medication adherence among those living with HIV.

The more targeted initiatives were accompanied by activities aimed at fostering support for equality among the population at large. Alongside a vigorous social media initiative, the UN team organised interactive public events, including open forums, press gatherings, and interviews with a diverse range of people including community leaders, religious figures, and traditional chiefs. During one notable event, the Ministry of Human Rights and the National Human Rights Commission issued strong public statements on the importance of protecting the human rights of LGBTIQ+ people. A social media campaign, in collaboration with civil society partners *Jeunialissime*, *Kitumayini*, and *Oasis*, produced six videos and twelve visual assets, accompanied by 300 printed leaflets distributed in local languages. The campaign significantly increased awareness and advocacy for the human rights of LGBTIQ+ people in the DRC. The campaign reached more than 260,000 people across the country.

“I have been the victim of several arrests and tortures in this city. In collaboration with the UN Free & Equal and UNDP, the CEDHUC Legal Clinic assisted me and supported my complaint.”

Daniela K, Congolese transgender woman



Dominican Republic

In 2023, the UN Free & Equal campaign in the Dominican Republic, coordinated by the Resident Coordinator's Office and implemented in collaboration with UN agencies and civil society organisations, engaged with more than 60 international, national, and local institutions, private sector companies and universities. The campaign advocated for LGBTIQ+ equality on social media reaching over 32,000 people. The team also equipped journalists, opinion leaders, and influencers with human rights-based communication skills and supported the first-ever march against violence and discrimination faced by LGBTIQ+ people in the Dominican Republic.

The campaign addressed a range of issues including LGBTIQ+ inclusion in the workplace and built strong working relationships with private, public, and international entities, such as the Santo Domingo Institute of Technology, the National LGBTI Chamber of Commerce and the United States Agency for International Development (USAID).

The team also advocated for LGBTIQ+ equality through social media. Assets, including seven testimonial videos from LGBTIQ+ people, were seen by more than 32,000 people. This included two powerful videos, made in collaboration with UNDP, that shed light on the challenges faced by the LGBTIQ+ community along with a compelling call for equality in the workplace. The videos included testimonies by influencers from the community, who spoke about their experiences and challenges. The videos were distributed through social media and in collaboration with partners. Close collaboration with influential civil society organisations, such as *Amigas Siempre Amigas*, *RD es de Todes*, *Diversidad Dominicana*, and *Trans Unidas Dominicanas*, helped amplify the campaign's impact.



The team supported the first ever march to protest and shed light on the violence and discrimination faced by LGBTIQ+ people in the Dominican Republic.

Along with civil society partner *Dominicana Diversa*, the UN team also supported a march to protest and shed light on the hatred and prejudice faced by LGBTIQ+ people in the Dominican Republic. The historic march took place on the International Day Against Homophobia, Biphobia and Transphobia (IDAHOBIT) in May and was the first march of its kind in the country. At the end point of the march, candles were lit at dusk to commemorate all the people lost to homophobic, biphobic, and transphobic violence and discrimination. In the two months leading up to the event, volunteers distributed information kits to passers-by, including newsletters on hate speech, violence and discrimination, and silicone bracelets in rainbow colours that people could wear to indicate their allyship with the LGBTIQ+ community.

Another priority was enhancing media support for the LGBTIQ+ community by combating hate speech and discrimination in social and traditional media. The campaign equipped journalists, opinion

leaders, and influencers with human rights-based communication skills through targeted interventions. This included a toolkit on hate speech prevention containing resources, links, and action proposals, which was shared online and in hard copies at workshops and a launch event that hosted 51 communications professionals from various government institutions and civil society organisations, demonstrating a broad commitment to promoting diversity and respect.

Added to these efforts, the Free & Equal campaign and 11 UN agencies supported data collection through two “social listening” studies on hate speech in the Dominican Republic. Data analysis of 2021 and 2022 revealed a significant surge in online conversations targeting the LGBTIQ+ community. This data will be used in 2024 to create an informed advocacy strategy to counter hate speech.



Guyana

This year marked the debut of the UN Free & Equal campaign in Guyana. Spearheaded by UNDP, the campaign focused on promoting respect for the rights of LGBTIQ+ people in the workplace and enhancing media support for the community.

A key goal was to foster collaboration with the private sector to increase their support for rights of LGBTIQ+ people. Through dedicated outreach, public and private entities such as chambers of commerce, business associations, and private sector groups were encouraged to implement [the UN Standards of Conduct for Business Tackling Discrimination against Lesbian, Gay, Bi, Trans, and Intersex People](#) or otherwise commit to creating safe and inclusive work environments for LGBTIQ+ employees. This effort significantly raised awareness about rights of LGBTIQ+ people and highlighted the critical need to eliminate discriminatory practices to ensure secure and inclusive workplaces.

Addressing negative stereotypes of LGBTIQ+ people in the media, the Free & Equal team organised a workshop to enhance journalists' understanding and encourage fair coverage of the human rights issues facing the community. Attended by nine journalists and four representatives from UNDP and civil society organisations, the workshop focused on appropriate language and reporting standards. Pre- and post-training surveys showed that participants came away with an increased understanding of terminology and language used in reporting on LGBTIQ+ issues. A notable achievement from this event was the enhanced collaboration between civil society and journalists, which led to the development of proposed guidelines for the Guyana Press Association, a proactive step towards combating harmful stereotypes and fostering more inclusive media representations in the future.



The team hosted a training session for the media to encourage fair coverage of the human rights issues facing LGBTIQ+ people.



Lesotho

This year marked the launch of the UN Free & Equal campaign in Lesotho. The campaign, led by the human rights adviser to the Resident Coordinator's Office in close partnership with civil society organisation The People's Matrix, focused on garnering support for LGBTIQ+ equality from parliamentarians and the media, as well as strengthening civil society organisations.

Thanks to the collaboration with the National University of Lesotho and the University of Lesotho Faculty of Law Legal Clinic, the campaign successfully engaged Members of Parliament (MPs) to champion the rights of LGBTIQ+ individuals. The MPs pledged continuous legislative support and advocacy where Bills that are discriminatory or those that could impact the community arise. A pivotal one-day event at the Parliament introduced the campaign to MPs, and provided them with insights into legal frameworks, national human rights commitments, and Parliament's important role in promoting equality.

Addressing stereotypes and promoting positive portrayals of LGBTIQ+ people in the media was another critical objective for the Free & Equal team in 2023. A roundtable event with media representatives from print and radio was organised to deepen their understanding of the societal and legislative context for the LGBTIQ+ community in Lesotho, culminating in the formation of a working group to foster a more inclusive society by encouraging more positive stories about and enhancing representation of LGBTIQ+ people in the media.

Free & Equal Lesotho also organised a workshop with more than ten organisations serving the LGBTIQ+ community to bolster the collective strength and impact of these civil society groups through social media advocacy while maintaining online safety. Discussions revolved around access to health, social services, and justice. Participants found this part of the campaign helpful as they not only included information to which they would have



A one-day event with MPs led to significant support to address potentially discriminatory bills in the future.



not usually have access, but also created a setting where they can meet and share experiences and support each other.

Liberia

UN Free & Equal made its debut in Liberia in 2023. Led by the UN Human Rights country office, the aim of the campaign was to promote respect for diversity and increase understanding of and allyship towards lesbian, gay, bi and trans people, despite the country's criminalisation of consensual same-sex relations. Target audiences included media professionals, government officials, and civil society organisations, both in the capital city and rural areas.

A pivotal event was the Diversity + Equality training in Monrovia, organised in collaboration with civil society partners LIPRIDE and LEGAL. The two-day workshop brought together 37 media representatives, civil society members, and government officials from the Independent National Commission on Human Rights and the human rights protection division of the Ministry of Justice. The training fostered awareness of and support for equality and non-discrimination, including in relation to lesbian, gay, bi and trans people. Practical exercises, presentations, and interactive sessions facilitated knowledge sharing and skill development among participants. Importantly, participants agreed to set up a communication group for prompt intervention in case of human rights violations, and to organise quarterly meetings for ongoing monitoring and advocacy.

The initiative led to a noticeable increase in positive media coverage, with stories in major newspapers and local outlets, such as *Frontpage Africa*, *The News*, and *Daily Observer*, promoting respect and highlighting security issues lesbian, gay, bi and trans people face. Monitoring of the participating journalists after the training also showed a reduction in negative stories and derogatory language in news coverage, indicating a shift towards more inclusive and respectful media narratives. Additionally, the distribution of 500 flyers and stickers in rural areas helped spread messages of diversity and equality further, amplifying the campaign's reach and impact. The campaign also made strides beyond Monrovia by conducting joint monitoring and



A man who had been convicted on the basis of his sexual orientation received a presidential pardon and was released from prison.



engagement missions in Grand Bassa and Margibi Counties, where the team facilitated one-on-one dialogues on diversity, safety, and security of marginalised groups, specifically lesbian, gay, bi, and trans people, with more than 40 doctors, law enforcement, students, school administrators, teachers, faith leaders, and media personnel. These conversations provided clarity on the risks and threats experienced by the community in different parts of the country. It was also an opportunity to address some of the myths and misinformation that act as drivers of discrimination. People involved promised to share their knowledge with family and other community members. It was recommended that dialogues continued

and involved religious and traditional leaders. In the future, the campaign will aim to include young people who had been involved in bullying based on sexual orientation or gender identity.

The team also monitored police detention facilities and prisons to establish the status of people in detention, including LGBTIQ+ people. Where human rights concerns were identified, the team engaged with relevant authorities. As a result, some cases were re-examined. A man who had been convicted on the basis of his sexual orientation received a presidential pardon and was released from prison in December 2023.

“I am confident people will accept me more after this education and engagement provided by the campaign in my village.”

Gay man in Margibi County



Mongolia

Supporting civil society in Mongolia is crucial for advancing the rights of lesbian, gay, bi, and trans people. Under the leadership of the UN Resident Coordinator's Office, Free & Equal Mongolia has continued their robust partnership with the LGBT Centre in Ulaanbaatar to rally support for equality.

A central goal of the national campaign is to tackle discrimination within the legal system. Together with representatives from the Human Rights Defenders Committee under the National Human Rights Commission, and the LGBT Centre, the Free & Equal team and experienced attorneys from the LGBT Centre trained 20 lawyers on sexual orientation and gender identity, as well as offering guidance on employing Article 14 of the criminal code, which addresses discrimination. The training was praised on social media by the Mongolian Bar Association and various civil society groups. Pre-training assessments and post-training evaluations revealed a notable increase in awareness and support for the human rights of lesbian, gay, bi, and trans people among participants, enhancing the collaboration between human rights advocates and the National Human Rights Commission—a positive step towards combating discrimination.

The Free & Equal team also brought human rights messaging to a broader audience by supporting the 11th Equality and Pride Days in Ulaanbaatar, which featured concerts, a groundbreaking queer theatre production, and a captivating film festival. The event showcased powerful messages on digital screens, promoting inclusivity and solidarity. During the eleven-day celebration, which attracted more than 2,000 participants, the team also facilitated the spread of messages of equality at 22 bus stops across ten locations throughout the capital, reaching approximately 100,000 people, further amplifying the event's impact.



100,000

The campaign spread messages of equality on 22 bus stops across the capital, reaching 100,000 people.

“I am proud to be part of the LGBTQI+ community as an ally, it was my great pleasure to share my nearly 10 years of knowledge and experience of providing legal aid to the LGBTQI+ community with my fellow attorneys in this training.”

Otgondorj, attorney and training participant



Panama

In Panama, the UN Free & Equal campaign, coordinated by the UN Human Rights Regional Office for Central America and implemented with the support of UNDP, UNAIDS, UN Women, and the National Human Rights Institution, along with several civil society organisations, has seen significant progress in support for LGBTIQ+ people.

Despite a February 2023 Supreme Court ruling against marriage equality for same-sex couples, public sentiment in Panama has shifted positively due to campaigns like *Si, Acepto* and *Yo Soy como Tú*, which were supported by the UN Free & Equal campaign and a coalition of civil society organisations. A large scale survey conducted in 2023 by Fundación Iguales and Borges y Asociados—part of a series started in previous years—showed a 17 percent increase in support for marriage equality for same-sex couples since 2020. Understanding and empathy towards transgender people have also grown, with 63.2 percent of Panamanians now supporting the right for transgender people to update their identity documents to reflect their gender, up from 40 percent in 2016.

Continuing this work, the campaign in 2023 focused on producing advocacy materials, including a four-minute video and 10 digital assets for the *Si, Acepto* campaign, due to be released in 2024, which advocates for marriage equality for same-sex couples. The team also supported five organisations from the National Table on the Rights of Trans People during the Pride march in June, enhancing trans visibility and laying the groundwork for inclusive legislation, including a law on gender identity and the need for recognition of gender markers in official identification documents. To further support this aim, Free & Equal Panama provided 100 t-shirts and a banner with human rights messaging to participants in the march, which was attended by about 3,000 people.



63.2%

Empathy towards transgender people has grown, with 63.2% of Panamanians now supporting the right for transgender people to update their identity documents to reflect their gender, up from 40% in 2016.

Creating meaningful dialogue between government and LGBTIQ+ civil society organisations was a key objective of the campaign. Over the past three years, the UN Free & Equal campaign in Panama has given continuous support to LGBTIQ+ organisations, which contributed to the launch, in February 2023, of a National Observatory of LGBTIQ+ People within the Ombudsman's Office (*Defensoría del Pueblo*). This is the first time that the Ombudsman's Office has established an institutional setting like this to monitor the human rights of LGBTIQ+ people. The Observatory also acts as a space for dialogue among LGBTIQ+ groups to advocate for the adoption of inclusive legislation and policies for LGBTIQ+ equality. During its first year, the Observatory has made significant strides, holding meetings focused on operational structure, capacity-building workshops, and strategic planning, with involvement from 14 LGBTIQ+ groups.

Furthermore, the UN Free & Equal team helped run four public forums aimed at promoting LGBTIQ+ equality among the general public, private companies, and State authorities from public institutions in Panama. These included discussions on Panama's compliance with UN human rights recommendations, advocacy during the June Pride Parade, commemorating 15 years since the decriminalisation of homosexuality, and enhancing private sector awareness of the rights of LGBTIQ+ people in business contexts. These forums strengthened the campaign's impact on both societal and legislative levels.



Peru

Free & Equal Peru, led by the UN Human Rights Office and the Resident Coordinator's Office, played a key role in leading and supporting Lima Pride in 2023. More than 300 UN staff members joined the 40,000 people taking part in the festivities, distributing Free & Equal materials and merchandise with messaging celebrating love and hope. The event concluded with powerful closing remarks from UN Human Rights, UNHCR, IOM, and UNAIDS, emphasising their collective dedication to equality and human rights.

In parallel to the main celebration, the UN Free & Equal team organised four workshops that brought together community representatives, civil society organisations, businesses and chambers of commerce, and government entities. These sessions brought the different groups together and helped them recognise ways they could work in partnership to advance justice and reparations for LGBTIQ+ people. The workshops laid the groundwork for a roundtable discussion attended by representatives of multiple sectors. The roundtable addressed discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity and its impact on the human rights of those affected.

To further their advocacy efforts, the team also developed a first-of-its-kind study on the status of LGBTIQ+ people's inclusion in the workplace. Key insights were gained from engaging with stakeholders and analysing responses from over 100 community members through an online survey. The study encouraged equal employment opportunities for LGBTIQ+ people in both the public and private sectors and will serve as the basis for collaborative work to combat discrimination and violence. State institutions, civil society organisations, and private sector companies have all committed to participate in the work.



24,000

Free & Equal Peru's messages of equality on social media were seen by more than 24,000 people.

The results will be used to develop a roadmap that encourages LGTBIQ+ people's inclusion in the labour market, promoting decent employment.

Free & Equal Peru also had an impact through social media, where ten posts with messages of inclusion and equality received over 24,000 views, resonating with audiences across the country.



Serbia

The UN Free & Equal campaign in the Republic of Serbia is led by the Human Rights Adviser and carried out in collaboration with the UN Country Team, civil society organisations, and the Ministry for Human and Minority Rights and Social Dialogue. In 2023, the team worked to implement and support the UN Human Rights Office's Human Rights 75 Initiative in the country. Under the slogan "75 days for 75 years of UDHR", the team helped organise more than 60 events, including on the rights of LGBTIQ+ people.

One key milestone was Serbia's ratification of the Optional Protocol to the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, which was one of its core pledges during the UN team's HR75 work. Human rights defenders celebrated the victory and noted that this step forward also offers LGBTIQ+ people a new level of protection of their economic, social, and cultural rights which are often reported among those most violated in Serbia.

Another major achievement was the active involvement of civil society organisations working on the rights of LGBTIQ+ people, such as *Da Se Zna* and IDEAS, in the development process of the National Human Rights Strategy (NHRAP) and the Action Plan on Anti-Discrimination Strategy. The process is being led by the Ministry for Human and Minority Rights, with strong participation from the UN Team, which is basing its focus on the Leave No One Behind tool developed last year. The involvement of civil society meant LGBTIQ+ needs and protections were included throughout the process and discussions.

The UN Free & Equal campaign continued to support freedom of assembly in the country. In collaboration with civil society organisations Civil Rights Defenders, *Izadji, Da se Zna*, Geten, and the Minister for Human Rights, the team provided support for the organisation of a human rights conference during Belgrade Pride Week, as well as to the Pride march itself. This year's march was



Serbia's ratification of the Optional Protocol to the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights is a major step forward for LGBTIQ+ equality in the country.

the most attended in Belgrade's history, drawing an estimated 15,000 participants. The Human Rights Conference's topic this year was "The need for the legal protection of the trans, intersex and gender-variant communities". The march focused on same-sex unions and associated equal rights. In a display of solidarity and unity, civil society organisations rallied together, asking for the passage of the

Same-Sex Union Law, and addressing other pivotal demands of the Belgrade Pride movement.

In addition, the United Nations Country Team in Serbia continued to actively and publicly advocate for the rights of LGBTIQ+ people, including through social media, and commemorating LGBTIQ+ awareness days.



Timor-Leste

In 2023, UN Free & Equal Timor-Leste continued its commitment to the fight for equality in schools and at universities, building on the significant work of last year's ground-breaking report on discrimination and access to education for LGBTIQ+ people. Led by the human rights adviser unit of the Resident Coordinator's Office, the UN team organised the workshop "Inclusive Schools: Raising Awareness on the Rights of LGBTIQ+ Students in Timor-Leste" throughout the year. An impressive 800 students and staff from high schools, universities, and technical schools from across the country took part in the discussions, including the National University of Timor-Leste, Instituto Superior de Cristal, Universidade Oriental, and Dili Institute of Technology. The workshops provided strategies to tackle harassment and bullying, and printed materials in Tetum to increase access to information.

The team also organised a training session on challenges and solutions for LGBTIQ+ students at the National University of Timor-Leste in collaboration with the Ombudsman for Human Rights and Justice and the LGBTIQ+ community group Arco-Iris. Thirteen university lecturers from the faculty of Social Science and Politics took part in the event, which covered international education standards, the Ombudsman's complaints mechanism, and how to create a supportive environment for LGBTIQ+ students.

Outside of the workshops and trainings, the Free & Equal team collaborated informally to help university lecturers and high school directors implement recommendations from the report, such as allowing trans students to choose a school uniform based on their gender identity. Suggestions for fostering a more inclusive school environment were also made, leading to an increased demand for workshops and plans for more activities in 2024, including by the Ministry of Higher Education. The campaign also supported and attended Pride celebrations in both rural Oecussi and the capital, Dili. The Pride Parade in Dili attracted over 3,000 attendees and featured traditional dance, fireworks, music, and live concerts, showcasing support of LGBTIQ+ people from various sectors of society.



Anti-bullying work with students showed a dramatic shift in attitudes to LGBTIQ+ issues and deeper understanding of how to support LGBTIQ+ peers in the classroom.

“After participating in this seminar, I realised I was the one bullying and discriminating my LGBTIQ+ classmates. I will now respect my friends regardless of their identity.”

Student from Nicolau Lobato
High School



Venezuela

In its second year, the Free & Equal team in Venezuela focused on advocating for inclusion, equality, and the rights of LGBTIQ+ people in the workplace. The national campaign is led by the Resident Coordinator's Office and UN Human Rights presence in Venezuela, and supported by various UN agencies and civil society organisations, including Nunca Dejes de Soñar and País Narrado, focused on advocating for inclusion, equality, and the rights of LGBTIQ+ people in the workplace.

The campaign conducted two workshops to increase awareness and support for LGBTIQ+ equality in the workplace. These workshops, centered around [the UN Standards of Conduct for Business Tackling Discrimination against Lesbian, Gay, Bi, Trans, and Intersex People](#), saw participation from 14 people representing 10 private companies. As a follow-up from the workshop, the 10 companies pledged to issue a joint declaration against workplace discrimination against LGBTIQ+ people, form a network to foster inclusion, and launch internal communications campaigns celebrating diversity in 2024 showing the beneficial impact on their organisations.

Additionally, the team in Venezuela used social media to increase visibility and support for LGBTIQ+ people, creating social media assets about LGBTIQ+ equality that reached 70,000 people. Social media posts specifically targeting the private sector reached 21,000 people. The campaign's content was uniquely tailored to the Venezuelan cultural context to ensure connection and relevance.

Internally, the UN team conducted four workshops for 64 UN staff members in Venezuela to promote equal rights and fair treatment of LGBTIQ+ people. Impact was measured through pre- and post-workshop evaluations, assessing attendance and engagement levels. Participants gained clarity on LGBTIQ+ related issues, learned to integrate inclusive approaches into technical processes, and developed communication strategies to address.



70,000

**Social media assets
advocating for LGBTIQ+
equality reached 70,000
people.**



Viet Nam

Led by UNDP and the UN Resident Coordinator Office in partnership with UNAIDS and UN Women, the Free & Equal team in Viet Nam launched the advocacy campaign Stepping up on the Rights and Health of Transgender People in 2023. The initiative aligned with the government's drafting of a new gender affirmation law. The primary goal of the campaign was to raise awareness and support among the general public and mass media for legislation that would legally recognise the gender identity of transgender people.

In collaboration with the civil society organisations, It's T Time and the Institute for Studies of Society, Economics, and Environment (iSEE), the campaign created a series of events and a robust social media campaign to reshape public perceptions of transgender people. The social media campaign, titled The A4 Sheet—Happy Beginnings featured 33 personal stories from a diverse group of transgender people and reached half a million people. Partnerships with four prominent Vietnamese transgender influencers significantly boosted engagement. The consultation process leading to the campaign also resulted in 43 legal recommendations to help shape the new draft law.

To address offensive and misleading media portrayals of transgender people, the UN team hosted the "Human Library—Trans Living Books" event, which brought together 50 participants, including 14 journalists and 36 members of the transgender community. This event combined a photo exhibition with discussions and personal storytelling, leading to a marked improvement in media representation. Following the event, 86 percent of the participating journalists reported a more accurate understanding of gender identity and expression. Continuing these efforts, the UN Team organised the "GALA event:



The UN team hosted the "Human Library — Trans Living Books" event, which brought together 50 participants and led to more accurate reporting on transgender issues in the media.

the Journey of Free & Equal” during Hanoi Pride in September. This event reviewed the impact of the different initiatives and hosted discussions among policymakers, transgender community members, and academics about the gender affirmation law draft. National Assembly Deputy Nguyen Anh Tri, head of the drafting committee, participated in critical discussions that helped shape the draft law. The campaign also attracted substantial media attention, with 21 journalists attending the event and 14 news articles and reports subsequently published by 12 leading news agencies.

“The name is something that has haunted me for many years. Having a name that matches my appearance was truly essential to me. My hope is that when the Gender Affirmation Law is enacted, it will ensure convenience for me and others in the community who genuinely need it”.

Duong, a transgender man, The A4 Sheet–Happy Beginnings participant



 **Private Sector
Partnerships**

H&M

A partner of UN Free & Equal since 2019, H&M continued their financial support in 2023. Their Pride celebration also extended their awareness raising campaign on chosen families from 2022, featuring interviews with LGBTIQ+ individuals speaking about why chosen families are so important in the community on social media and the web.

**H&M**

Kenneth Cole

Kenneth Cole supported UN Free & Equal for the sixth year running in 2023 with an exclusive LOVE RULES WITHOUT RULES bracelet set, designed in partnership with Little Word Project. Each sale of the unisex bracelets raised \$10 for UN Free & Equal.

**KENNETH COLE**

SoftwareONE

A new partner in 2023, SoftwareOne ran an employee giving campaign to raise funds for UN Free & Equal. This was a part of the organisation's Pride celebration which also featured a round-table event on allyship and inclusivity in the workplace, alongside other awareness raising initiatives.





THANK YOU!

UN Free & Equal is profoundly grateful to our partners at the UN Foundation and ElcanoData for their invaluable assistance. We also extend a heartfelt thanks to the activists and civil society partners whose insightful feedback and innovative ideas have been instrumental throughout the year, with a special thanks to Alok Menon, Dominique Jackson, Inti, Marwan Ustaz, Njeri Gateru, Kristian Randjelovic, Aryan Pasha, Darkwah Kyei and Brandon Kyle Goodman for celebrating

International Day against Homophobia, Biphobia and Transphobia with us.

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UNITED NATIONS
HUMAN RIGHTS
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