



# REPORT

**SUPPORTING THE DIVERSITY  
OF THE TRANS COMMUNITY  
IN UKRAINE**

## PROJECT BACKGROUND

The core principle guiding the initiation, planning, and implementation of these efforts is the support of initiatives developed and led by key or vulnerable communities. These initiatives aim to enhance the experiences of working with trans people, including intersectional groups such as sex workers, people who use drugs, those engaged in chemsex, users of new psychoactive substances, and other multiply marginalized groups.

Some of these initiatives have been carried out under the ongoing Flexible Community-Led Fund program, made possible through the generous support of international financial donors. In 2025, some initiatives are being partially or fully implemented within the framework of the project Supporting the Diversity of the Trans Community in Ukraine, primarily funded by Gilead Sciences, Inc.

## BRIEF INFORMATION ABOUT COMMUNITY-LED ORGANIZATION

HPLGBT is a national community-led organization. Its primary areas of activity include promoting the comprehensive development of key populations—particularly those from intersectional groups—reducing discrimination and violence against them, and strengthening the influence of LGBTIQ+ communities on human rights policies. Together with its partners, HPLGBT works to unite representatives of key and other priority populations, including people living with HIV, to protect and promote human rights and fundamental freedoms in Ukraine and the Eastern Partnership (EaP) region. You can find more information about us and our activities on our website: [www.HPLGBT.org](http://www.HPLGBT.org)

## RECOGNITION & ACCEPTANCE

HPLGBT is a non-profit organization registered in Ukraine (USREOU code 39282723)

HPLGBT

Flexible  
Community-Led  
Fund

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# REPORT

**SUPPORTING THE DIVERSITY  
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# CONTENTS

<b>1.</b>	<b>SUMMARY</b>	<b>05</b>
<b>2.</b>	<b>IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGY</b>	<b>09</b>
<b>3.</b>	<b>PROJECT ACTIVITIES, ACHIEVEMENTS AND PROGRESS</b>	<b>13</b>
<b>4.</b>	<b>CHALLENGES AND LESSONS LEARNED</b>	<b>32</b>
<b>5.</b>	<b>COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT AND EMPOWERMENT</b>	<b>35</b>
<b>6.</b>	<b>SUSTAINABILITY AND IMPACT</b>	<b>38</b>
<b>7.</b>	<b>PARTNERSHIPS AND COLLABORATION</b>	<b>43</b>
<b>8.</b>	<b>SUCCESS AND PERSONAL STORIES</b>	<b>48</b>
<b>9.</b>	<b>KEY RECOMMENDATIONS FOR STAKEHOLDERS</b>	<b>54</b>

**SEX WORK IS WORK**

**MY BODY, MY CHOICE**

## SUMMARY

IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGY

PROJECT ACTIVITIES,  
ACHIEVEMENTS  
AND PROGRESS

CHALLENGES AND  
LESSONS LEARNED

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT  
AND EMPOWERMENT

SUSTAINABILITY  
AND IMPACT

PARTNERSHIPS AND  
COLLABORATION

SUCCESS AND  
PERSONAL STORIES

KEY RECOMMENDATIONS  
FOR STAKEHOLDERS

# SUMMARY

We established a community-led granting mechanism to strengthen Community-Based/Led Organizations (CBOs/CBLOs) and Key Population (KP) initiatives. The mechanism was guided by inclusivity, flexibility, and sustainability and used a tested mini-grant template adapted from HPLGBT. An external sub-granting expert, working with HPLGBT management, issued the call, applied clear selection criteria, and provided coaching and technical assistance to beneficiaries. Funding prioritized innovative and community-rooted approaches, including interventions that addressed the daily realities of trans sex workers and efforts with potential legislative impact. We used an iterative approach that accepted and strengthened Concept Notes even when strategies were still developing, through targeted questions and mentoring. Sub-grants specifically targeted hard-to-reach and intersectional groups, including trans people and their associations, and supported actors who could reach those still invisible to HIV prevention services. The mechanism allowed rapid reallocation of priorities and resources in response to war, displacement, migration, and emergent health needs while maintaining programmatic and financial accountability through standard reporting. Sub-grants amplified diverse trans community voices, connected KP organizations with policymakers and service providers, and built the capacity and sustainability of young and initiative-led groups.

**Key results delivered:** Accessible financial support for CB(L)Os; Community participation in funding decisions; Improved resilience and crisis response for trans sex workers; Stronger and more influential KP initiatives focused on innovation, advocacy, and inclusivity.

### Outcomes:

- Community based/led organisations/initiatives are supported through established granting mechanisms.
- Communities co-decide on funding decisions.



## SUMMARY cont.

Through the Flexible Community-Led Fund, we applied a Community-to-Community model to ensure that key populations (KPs) in Ukraine had access to services identified and prioritized by their own communities. The approach was designed to remain effective and adaptive under conditions of war, displacement, and migration.

### KEY COMPONENTS IMPLEMENTED:

**Needs Assessment:** A tailored form captured urgent community priorities, including conflict-related vulnerabilities such as displacement, loss of income, and disrupted access to healthcare.

**Financial Support Mechanism:** A structured system distributed resources equitably using a transparent formula. This ensured sustainability and fairness while providing direct support to trans sex workers and other KP beneficiaries across Ukraine.

**Flexible and Fast Response:** The mechanism was able to adapt quickly to emergency needs, including relocation support, shelter, and essential medical services, demonstrating resilience during crisis conditions.

**Digital and Peer Networks:** With mobility restricted by war, digital tools and peer representatives from trans and sex worker communities maintained service accessibility and enabled timely outreach.

**Awareness and Engagement:** Community representatives actively promoted available services and encouraged participation, strengthening trust and expanding reach.

This integrated model—combining structured needs assessment, financial support, digital outreach, and peer-driven engagement—proved that services for KPs can remain accessible, inclusive, and responsive even in the most challenging circumstances.

### Outcomes:

- Broad, community-identified and prioritized services for KPs are provided.
- Adapted services in new realities of active conflict and migration/displacement are established.



## SUMMARY cont.

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We implemented a comprehensive advocacy campaign to amplify the voices of sex workers, ensuring their specific needs, challenges, and rights were recognized at both community and policy levels. The campaign strengthened the capacity of trans sex workers to participate in advocacy and mobilized other key populations, allies, and civil society organizations to support more inclusive laws and policies.

A central element of the initiative was leveraging our existing relationships with initiative groups of HPLGBT and other key decision-makers to bring trans sex workers' issues into policy discussions. Our advocacy sought to establish direct dialogue with policymakers, human rights bodies, and healthcare stakeholders to press for legal reforms, policy adjustments, and structural changes that promote a safer and more equitable environment.

Our objective was to advance positive and lasting legislative changes that would directly improve the lives and wellbeing of trans sex workers. We maintained that explicit legal recognition and protection for marginalized groups creates a foundation for a more supportive and sustainable environment, benefiting all key populations by strengthening healthcare access, labor rights, and social protections.

In addition to policy engagement, our advocacy included awareness campaigns, public forums, and strategic partnerships to ensure the lived experiences of trans sex workers were central to decision-making. We collaborated closely with grassroots organizations, activists, and community leaders to ensure efforts were community-led and aligned with needs on the ground.

By pursuing policy changes that were legally supported and socially embraced, we aimed to establish an inclusive, rights-based approach that enhances protections, promotes dignity, and expands equal opportunities for trans sex workers and other key populations.

- Outcomes:**
- Key populations advocate for inclusive laws and policies.
  - Policies/laws/strategies are implemented to meet the needs of key populations as a result of program contribution.
  - A more supportive and enabling environment for KPs.



## SUMMARY cont.

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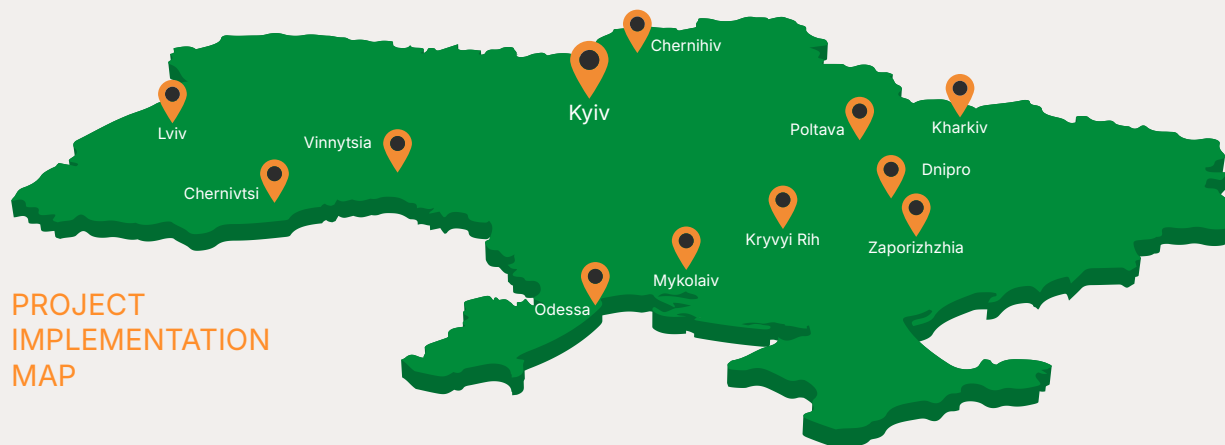
### **The Goal of the Project: To support and promote the diversity of the transgender (trans) community in Ukraine.**

This project seeks to support the diversity of the trans community in Ukraine by promoting inclusion, visibility, and equitable access to resources and opportunities for all trans individuals, regardless of their background or identity. Supporting the diversity of the trans community in Ukraine is essential to ensuring that all trans individuals, regardless of their socio-economic status, gender expression, drug use, or professional identity (current trans sex workers and former trans sex workers), are meaningfully included in public life and have equitable access to resources, services, and opportunities. The trans community in Ukraine is highly diverse. It includes a wide range of lived experiences, intersecting identities, and levels of vulnerability. Marginalized subgroups, such as trans sex workers, trans people living with HIV, migrants, and those affected by armed conflict, often face compounded forms of discrimination and are systematically excluded from existing support systems. Approaches used in this project, aligns with broader democratic values and contributes to the creation of a society where every individual can participate fully, safely, and equally, especially during periods of crisis, displacement, and structural transformation.

The most effective and timely outreach to project beneficiaries was achieved in Kyiv, Dnipro, Odesa, and Zaporizhzhia. This success is attributed to the presence of active trans leaders affiliated with HPLGBT, who assumed proactive roles within their local communities. Their engagement significantly contributed to advancing local responses to the HIV epidemic, while also addressing context-specific humanitarian needs. Through their involvement in the project, these trans activists demonstrated exceptional resilience and dedication in combating stigma and discrimination, and in advocating for affordable, locally accessible sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR) services. Nevertheless, web-outreach efforts extended beyond these core cities. Through the humanitarian component of the project and the use of digital outreach tools, new connections were established with individuals previously not reached. To address immediate needs, supermarket vouchers redeemable for food were distributed in cities such as Lviv, Kharkiv, Mykolaiv, Chernivtsi, Vinnytsia, and Kryvyi Rih. Of particular note, the highest volume of humanitarian assistance requests originated from Odesa. This trend coincided with increased seasonal labor migration of sex workers to the city, which, as a popular resort destination, offers a range of income-generating opportunities for trans sex workers during the summer months.

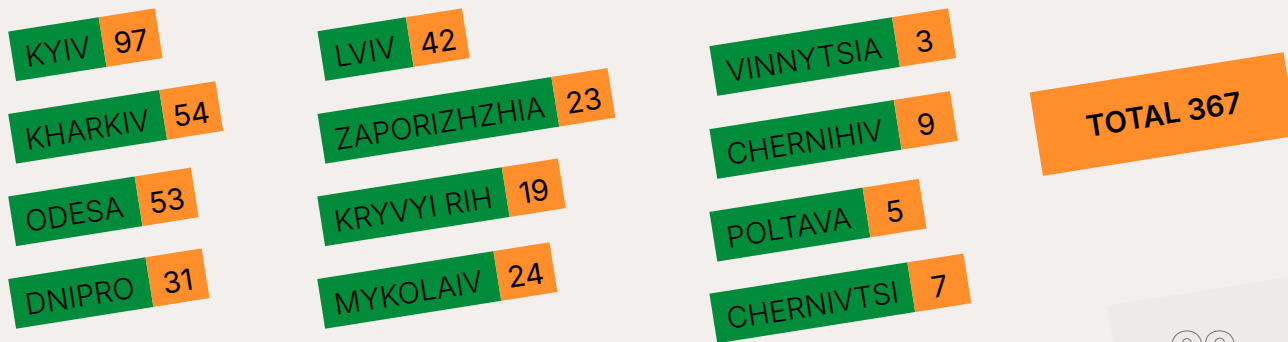


# IMPLMTN. STRATEGY



PROJECT  
IMPLEMENTATION  
MAP

Distribution of humanitarian aid and food vouchers via request form:  
[bit.ly/HPLGBT\\_Aid-2025](https://bit.ly/HPLGBT_Aid-2025)



SUMMARY

IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGY

PROJECT ACTIVITIES,  
ACHIEVEMENTS  
AND PROGRESS

CHALLENGES AND  
LESSONS LEARNED

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT  
AND EMPOWERMENT

SUSTAINABILITY  
AND IMPACT

PARTNERSHIPS AND  
COLLABORATION

SUCCESS AND  
PERSONAL STORIES

KEY RECOMMENDATIONS  
FOR STAKEHOLDERS



## IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGY cont.

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Our most fundamental principle also serves as the cornerstone of our overall strategy: a community-to-community approach. This means that we prioritize and support grassroots initiatives in a way that enables community members to play a leading role in shaping and implementing interventions. Specifically, we ensure that those who are directly affected by the HIV epidemic and who understand the challenges of unequal access to resources within their local context are also the ones responsible for technically executing the interventions. This approach not only enhances the relevance and effectiveness of the response, but also ensures that it is rooted in lived experience and community expertise. By supporting initiatives at the grassroots level, we foster ownership, sustainability, and empowerment within the communities themselves. The result is a more inclusive and context-sensitive response to HIV that addresses structural inequalities while strengthening the capacity of local actors to drive long-term change.

The project was designed and implemented based on a thorough understanding of the unique social, economic, and structural challenges faced by trans communities across different regions of Ukraine. A key strength of the intervention was its community-led nature, which ensured that all activities were shaped by those most affected, and therefore directly responded to real, localized needs. In regions significantly impacted by conflict, economic hardship, and internal displacement, the project provided flexible and rapid humanitarian assistance, including food vouchers and emergency support, particularly for trans sex workers and other vulnerable subgroups. In cities such as Kyiv, Dnipro and Odesa, where strong networks of trans activists were already present, the project leveraged existing community leadership to deliver workshops and peer-led outreach that addressed stigma, HIV prevention. Recognizing that regional differences require tailored approaches, the project applied a flexible model that allowed for both in-person and online formats, localized content, and differentiated support mechanisms. This adaptability was especially important in ensuring SRHR service continuity in hard-to-reach or newly engaged regions such as Mykolaiv, Chernivtsi, Vinnytsia, and Kryvyi Rih.

Furthermore, the project addressed systemic gaps by engaging trans activists in the design and delivery of interventions, thereby empowering local leadership and fostering sustainable advocacy efforts. The emphasis on intersectionality also ensured that underrepresented voices, including trans men and migrants, were included through dedicated outreach and partnerships with relevant organizations. In summary, the project effectively responded to regional challenges by being flexible, inclusive, and rooted in the lived realities of trans sex workers on the ground.



## IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGY cont.

Despite Ukraine's steps toward democratization, most proposed legislation—particularly draft laws on hate crimes/discrimination and on civil partnerships—remains under review, pending either sufficient political will or fulfillment of EU accession requirements. At the international level, Ukraine's candidacy for EU membership has indirectly stimulated reforms (such as the extension of hate crime legislation) and integrated LGBTIQ standards into the EU accession criteria. Sociological data over recent years consistently indicate that public attitudes in Kyiv are becoming more neutral toward issues affecting trans people. Nevertheless, strong pockets of resistance and hostility persist in specific regions and smaller towns. Influential religious and political figures continue to promote transphobic views, while far-right groups have become more visible in response to the growth of LGBTIQ+ activism. These dynamics demonstrate that although overall public acceptance is increasing, polarization and social tensions remain, particularly in western regions, where trends toward greater acceptance of trans people are more conservative.

Trans sex workers participating in our workshops in western Ukraine reported a rise in offenses ranging from verbal harassment and violations of privacy to physical and even sexual violence. Many of these cases remain unpunished, as police and prosecutors often refuse to classify attacks against trans people as hate-motivated crimes or violations of equality, disregarding recommendations of the European Court of Human Rights.

Inclusion of LGBTIQ+ individuals in Ukraine's armed forces and public life shows mixed progress. While the armed forces have formally adopted non-discrimination policies, our monitoring continues to reveal numerous violations related to SOGI issues within the military.

**This clearly demonstrates the need to apply strategies and approaches that take into account the ongoing war in Ukraine, particularly given that trans people are being conscripted into the army while the state fails to recognize their gender markers, as well as their legal and medical documents.**



I ♥ КИЕВСКИЙ РЕЖИМ

“

**Why was Sarah Ashton-Cirillo suspended from her position in the Territorial Defense Forces of the Armed Forces of Ukraine? Why are trans people constantly attacked by the media in connection with their transgender identity? Don't we, trans people, defend Ukraine the same way as everyone else does?**

BENEFICIARY OF THE PROJECT  
WHO WISHED TO REMAIN ANONYMOUS

”

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AND PROGRESS

CHALLENGES AND  
LESSONS LEARNED

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT  
AND EMPOWERMENT

SUSTAINABILITY  
AND IMPACT

PARTNERSHIPS AND  
COLLABORATION

SUCCESS AND  
PERSONAL STORIES

KEY RECOMMENDATIONS  
FOR STAKEHOLDERS

# PROJECT ACTIVITIES, ACHIEVEMENTS & PROGRESS

Assessing clear and measurable progress in supporting, protecting the rights, and promoting the interests of the diverse trans community within a single project remains challenging. Nevertheless, we are proud that issues such as the right to health, HIV prevention, and SRHR in the context of public health have reached a qualitatively new level among trans sex workers.

When addressing these topics, we concluded that they must be introduced gently, tactfully, and with sensitivity in order to achieve stronger results and positive engagement from the transgender community itself. Given the sensitivity of HIV and SRHR issues among trans people, we approached them with prudence and respect for the feelings of individuals from different intersectional groups, especially in group settings.

Throughout the project, we worked to foster and maintain a supportive environment where trans people could feel comfortable, express their needs, and openly discuss their challenges without fear of judgment or misunderstanding.



# PROJECT ACTIVITIES, ACHIEVEMENTS AND PROGRESS **cont.**



[www.FCLF.HPLGBT.org/res-01](http://www.FCLF.HPLGBT.org/res-01)

## MINI-GRANTS

This activity was implemented within the framework of HPLGBT's ongoing flagship initiative, the Flexible Community-Led Fund (FCLF). As part of this program, resources are allocated to support community-driven priorities, strengthen grassroots leadership, and ensure that responses remain adaptable to the evolving needs and realities of local populations.

In 2025, this mini-grant round is dedicated to fostering tangible progress in HIV and Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights (SRHR). Its primary focus is on amplifying community-driven innovations that enhance overall well-being and improve health outcomes within trans and allied communities.

## Target Communities and Inclusion Goals

The mini-grants were explicitly targeted at transgender individuals and intersectional subgroups who often faced multiple marginalizations – for example, trans sex workers, trans people who use drugs (including chemsex communities), users of new psychoactive substances, and others experiencing compounded stigma. HPLGBT funded projects developed and implemented by members of these communities themselves, with the purpose of strengthening their capacity to support and engage their peers. In particular, priority was given to projects that addressed innovative and under-served community needs. Grantees successfully reached diverse trans communities across Ukraine in all their diversity, with special emphasis on empowering initiatives that were newly established or had limited prior experience working with trans populations.

Eligible applicants included trans individuals, NGOs, research institutes, civil society groups, as well as informal community initiatives with a fiscal host authorized to receive funds and implement project activities. Proposals were assessed on creativity, innovation, and the inclusion and empowerment of key and marginalized groups. All activities were required to be trans community-led, developed with significant local involvement, and implemented by the communities themselves, ensuring alignment with real local needs.

The budget for mini-grants ranged from **€1,000 to €2,000**, providing flexible financial support tailored to the scale and scope of each project.



# PROJECT ACTIVITIES, ACHIEVEMENTS AND PROGRESS **cont.**

## **Flexible Community-Led Fund**

Supporting and Investing  
in Key Populations

[www.FCLF.HPLGBT.org/about](http://www.FCLF.HPLGBT.org/about)

### **FLEXIBLE COMMUNITY-LED FUND**

Our network of trans sex workers was mobilized to provide community-based, peer-to-peer support and to ensure a timely and coordinated response to humanitarian challenges that affected trans sex workers. The initiative was grounded in principles of solidarity, equality, and mutual aid, allowing members of the community to support one another directly and effectively. The activities carried out under this initiative included the procurement and distribution of food vouchers redeemable at local supermarkets, which enabled beneficiaries to independently select and purchase essential food items (excluding alcohol and tobacco products).

In addition, the HPLGBT team organized direct purchases of food, essential goods and hygiene products to meet the urgent needs of those experiencing severe hardship. The process involved careful selection, packaging, and dispatch of humanitarian parcels through trusted logistics and express delivery companies, ensuring fast, reliable, and safe delivery of assistance to community members across different regions, including those in hard-to-reach areas. Through this coordinated effort, the network strengthened mutual trust and solidarity within the trans sex worker community, improved access to essential resources, and ensured that no one was left behind during the crisis<sup>[1]</sup> caused by the war in Ukraine.

### **How the Process Worked**

For the first time, the peer driven intervention (PDI) model of public health has shown exceptionally strong and sustainable results. Throughout its implementation by HPLGBT activists, the breakdown of community connections has been minimal. This stability reflects the unique social conditions created by the ongoing war in Ukraine. The experience of shared danger and the presence of a common enemy have strengthened solidarity within the trans community, even among trans people who previously had unresolved conflicts or personal tensions. Peer recruiters, known as primary seeds, note that in the context of a severe humanitarian crisis and a deep economic collapse with high unemployment across the country, community led initiatives have become a critical mechanism for survival. Access to food, hygiene products, warm clothing, and other essential resources provided by self organized community networks often represents the only way to meet basic physiological needs. These include satisfying hunger and thirst, staying warm, reducing pain, and ensuring at least minimal rest in the face of nightly missile and drone (UAV) attacks<sup>[2]</sup>. The success of the PDI model in these extreme conditions demonstrates the vital importance of community cohesion and peer involvement as stabilizing factors in times of war, crisis, and social disintegration.

<sup>[1]</sup> Official website about the war in Ukraine and documented war crimes committed by Russia: <https://war.ukraine.ua/>

<sup>[2]</sup> Database on civilian casualties and damage in Ukraine, collected based on the Berkeley Protocol on Digital Open Source Investigations: <https://ukraine.bellingcat.com/>



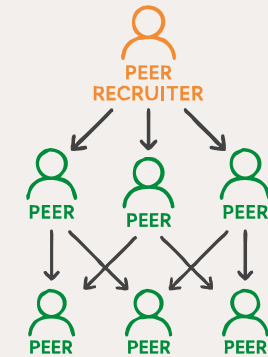
## PROJECT ACTIVITIES, ACHIEVEMENTS AND PROGRESS **cont.**

The outreach to hard-to-reach groups within the trans community, including trans sex workers, trans people who use drugs, and trans individuals who engage in chemsex or use new psychoactive substances, began with the dissemination of information about the possibility of receiving humanitarian support. This information was shared through social networks and specialized online platforms, including targeted email newsletters. As the activity developed, the most effective communication channels became closed groups in messengers such as Signal, WhatsApp, and Telegram, as well as targeted web outreach work. These channels ensured confidentiality and security for participants who often face multiple forms of stigma and discrimination.

Potential beneficiaries were directed to a structured online request form for humanitarian aid at [https://bit.ly/HPLGBT\\_Aid-2025](https://bit.ly/HPLGBT_Aid-2025). By completing the form, individuals were added to a queue based on specific eligibility and vulnerability criteria. The project and its complementary initiatives focus on trans people and intersectional communities who experience overlapping risks, including heightened vulnerability to HIV infection and limited access to healthcare, employment, and social protection. To ensure the relevance of assistance, it was necessary to verify that applicants identified as members of these target groups and were facing actual need.

Priority attention was given to trans people living with HIV, those experiencing social and economic hardship, and individuals who lacked stable housing, including residents of dormitories, temporary shelters, or people experiencing homelessness. Special focus was also placed on trans sex workers who operate in high-risk environments such as parks, public restrooms, or train stations. Beneficiaries whose average monthly income did not exceed 10,000 Ukrainian hryvnias were classified as highly vulnerable and prioritized for aid distribution.

The Humanitarian Aid Administrator was responsible for evaluating each request and coordinating the next stages of support. After establishing direct communication with applicants, the Administrator clarified individual circumstances and identified specific needs such as food, hygiene supplies, warm clothing, and medical or psychological support. Based on this assessment, tailored solutions were provided to each person. After receiving assistance, beneficiaries were encouraged to share feedback through an online form at [https://bit.ly/HPLGBT\\_Feedback](https://bit.ly/HPLGBT_Feedback).



**In this difficult time,  
the support from the community  
became not just assistance,  
but a feeling that  
I was not left alone.**

AMALIA, KYIV  
42 years old



## PROJECT ACTIVITIES, ACHIEVEMENTS AND PROGRESS **cont.**

They were also invited to contribute anonymized quotes or personal testimonies about their experience, submitted confidentially via a secure upload form at <https://bit.ly/HPLGBT>Loading>. Informed consent was always obtained before collecting any personal or sensitive data.

The gathered feedback and anonymized information allowed the team to monitor the effectiveness of the intervention, evaluate satisfaction with the provided services, and identify areas for improvement. These insights informed evidence-based decisions regarding the scaling, adaptation, and refinement of humanitarian efforts. Over time, this process strengthened the organization's ability to respond flexibly to emerging challenges faced by trans and intersectional communities in Ukraine, ensuring that aid remains inclusive, targeted, and grounded in the real needs of people living through crisis conditions.



**Throughout the war in Ukraine, the trans community's unwavering solidarity and strength have been a beacon of hope. Through HPLGBT's peer-driven initiative, you ensured that no one was left behind, delivering essential resources such as food, warm clothing, and hygiene supplies with compassion and dignity. Your courage and mutual support not only provided life-saving aid but also restored hope and dignity when it was needed most. We are profoundly grateful for this community-led humanitarian work and for your compassion and resilience. You have shown the city of Odesa the power of a united community in the darkest of times?**

MARIA, ODESA  
LEADER OF THE INITIATIVE GROUP OF TRANS PEOPLE  
IN ODESA AND THE ODESA REGION





## PROJECT ACTIVITIES, ACHIEVEMENTS AND PROGRESS **cont.**

This approach fostered trust, empathy, and emotional resilience within the group, allowing participants to address complex health and social topics without fear of judgment or stigma. Art activities such as painting, creative writing, or performance, served as powerful tools for reflection and self-expression, helping trans sex workers explore their identities, articulate their challenges, and envision pathways to empowerment and community solidarity. By blending educational discussions with artistic expression and peer-to-peer connection, these workshops not only raised awareness of HIV-related issues but also contributed to the psychological well-being and social integration of trans sex workers, reinforcing the broader goals in the context of advocacy.



## PROJECT ACTIVITIES, ACHIEVEMENTS AND PROGRESS **cont.**

Participation in the workshops was open to adult trans sex workers, who made up at least 60% of all participants. The remaining 40% of places were prioritized for trans individuals who identified as belonging to other key populations[3] or who considered themselves part of vulnerable groups[4].

For example, in practice, an average of four to six out of every ten participants were trans sex workers, one was a trans person who used drugs, and three to five were trans people living with disabilities. It is important to note that a single participant could belong to two or even three of these categories simultaneously. This composition not only reflected the diversity within the trans community but also played a crucial role in facilitating the exchange of a wide range of experiences, perspectives, and coping strategies. Participants shared valuable knowledge and practical approaches to overcoming the daily challenges they face. Such intersectional participation enriched the workshops, ensuring that discussions were grounded in lived realities and that solutions were informed by the collective strength and wisdom of those most affected. It also underscored the principle that diversity within the community is not a challenge to be managed but a powerful resource for solidarity and progress.

This inclusive approach ensured representation across different intersections of vulnerability within the trans community. It allowed the workshops to reflect the real diversity of lived experiences and to address the multiple forms of stigma and marginalization that trans people face. By including participants from overlapping key and vulnerable populations, the program fostered a deeper understanding of how factors such as substance use, disability, and social exclusion intersect with gender identity and sex work. Such diversity enriched discussions, strengthened mutual empathy, and encouraged the development of more holistic and intersectional advocacy strategies. It also demonstrated HPLGBT's commitment to building an inclusive movement that leaves no one behind, ensuring that community responses to health and human rights challenges are informed by a full spectrum of trans voices and experiences.



[3] General information on the interpretation of the term “key groups” is available at this web link: <https://www.unaids.org/en/topic/key-populations> (HPLGBT also follows UNAIDS terminology: [https://www.unaids.org/sites/default/files/media\\_asset/2024-terminology-guidelines\\_en.pdf](https://www.unaids.org/sites/default/files/media_asset/2024-terminology-guidelines_en.pdf))

[4] General information on the interpretation of the term “vulnerable groups” is available at this web link: <https://wkc.who.int/our-work/health-emergencies/knowledge-hub/community-disaster-risk-management/vulnerability-and-vulnerable-populations>



## PROJECT ACTIVITIES, ACHIEVEMENTS AND PROGRESS **cont.**

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**In total, three workshop formats were developed and implemented, each designed to ensure accessibility, flexibility, and inclusivity for all participants:**

- **Online Format** - This format provided real-time audio/video communication among workshop participants. The choice of communication platforms or messengers was left to the participants themselves, while the organizers handled all technical aspects and coordination. HPLGBT team ensured that every participant received timely reminders about the dates and times of sessions, along with practical recommendations — such as keeping devices fully charged and checking internet stability in advance. Organizers also provided clear instructions on how to connect and participate, reducing potential barriers to engagement. The online format proved particularly effective for participants from remote regions or those who preferred to join from the privacy of their homes, ensuring that no one was excluded due to geographical or mobility constraints.
- **Offline Format** - This format involved in-person interaction, fostering deeper interpersonal connection and trust within the group. These sessions were held in accessible and friendly locations such as community offices, lofts, cultural centers, or creative spaces proposed by participants themselves. Each venue was selected through mutual agreement, ensuring safety, comfort, and respect for every participant's preferences. Organizers worked carefully to maintain a healthy and non-confrontational atmosphere throughout the workshops. The group collectively established internal rules — such as the “raised hand” rule for taking turns to speak, keeping phones silent, and the “if you criticize, propose” principle — to promote constructive dialogue and mutual respect. The in-person meetings became not only educational but also therapeutic spaces for community connection and empowerment.
- **Hybrid Format** - The hybrid model combined both online and offline participation simultaneously. This format allowed participants to choose the mode of engagement that best suited their circumstances while remaining part of a unified workshop experience. To ensure inclusivity, a specially adapted hybrid program was developed. The content and activities were adjusted for both in-person and remote participants, acknowledging that different settings may require different approaches. For example, while offline participants could engage in hands-on group exercises, online participants were provided with digital alternatives that offered comparable learning outcomes and opportunities for interaction. This flexible approach maximized accessibility, strengthened community cohesion across distances, and embodied the HPLGBT method's commitment to ensuring that every trans person, regardless of location or physical ability, could meaningfully participate and contribute to the collective process of empowerment and learning.



## PROJECT ACTIVITIES, ACHIEVEMENTS AND PROGRESS **cont.**

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The duration of the workshops ranged from 2 to 4 hours for online sessions and from 2 to 6 hours for offline events. However, participants were often inspired to extend the sessions informally to continue discussions and socialize in a relaxed atmosphere. The organizers deliberately refrained from attending these informal extensions to avoid exerting “authority pressure” and to allow participants to build social connections independently. While such extended gatherings were encouraged, any additional, unplanned expenses incurred were not always covered by HPLGBT. In other words, participants were free to decide on the length, format, and composition of these informal sessions, but any costs associated with them were to be covered personally, and participants bore full responsibility for their safety in the event of a location change.

In several workshops, we also experimented with an “equal participation” approach, where participants themselves voted to select a facilitator and/or moderator from among the invited group. This approach helped HPLGBT identify emerging leaders and individuals who naturally earned the group’s trust, which in turn strengthened collaboration when tackling more complex tasks such as brainstorming, idea ranking, planning, and strategic development. To support such participatory formats, organizers carefully selected participants based on their motivation, indicated in the registration form available at [bit.ly/HPLGBT\\_Workshops-2025](https://bit.ly/HPLGBT_Workshops-2025). Participants were also encouraged to propose their own workshop ideas—such as nominating experienced facilitators or moderators, conducting case studies (analysis of real-life situations), role-playing exercises and simulations, creative small-group work, concept generation through group interaction and shared experiences, and other interactive or creative methods agreed upon collectively. The only requirement for implementing such ideas was that they should contribute to improving participants’ knowledge of health and legal support, strengthen self-protection and human rights skills, enhance self-esteem, foster a sense of belonging to the community, and promote the creation of local initiatives or peer-support groups.

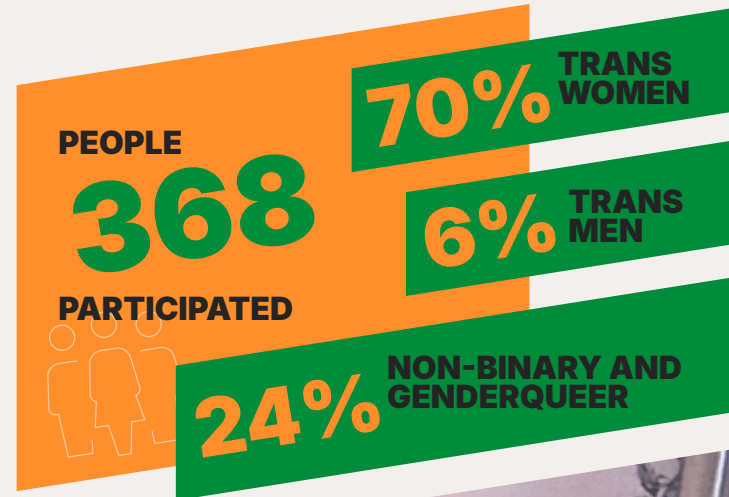
Pre-approved expenses related to workshop participation were covered through HPLGBT’s logistical partners. These expenses included transportation (economy-class transfers by train or bus), accommodation (budget-class hotels), venue and conference room rentals, as well as meals, snacks, and beverages. For participants joining in online or hybrid formats, funds could alternatively be allocated for internet connectivity, mobile data or telephony, device or headset rental, workspace rental in an internet café, or other necessary expenses to remove barriers to participation. Some participants chose to cover part or all of their costs independently, which positively impacted overall participation—allowing organizers to invite more attendees when self-funded participants freed up additional resources.

Participants and organizers maintained close communication throughout the process, promptly responding to suggestions, requests, and complaints submitted through the feedback form available at [bit.ly/HPLGBT\\_WorkshopFeedback](https://bit.ly/HPLGBT_WorkshopFeedback).



# PROJECT ACTIVITIES, ACHIEVEMENTS AND PROGRESS **cont.**

## Statistics and Infographics

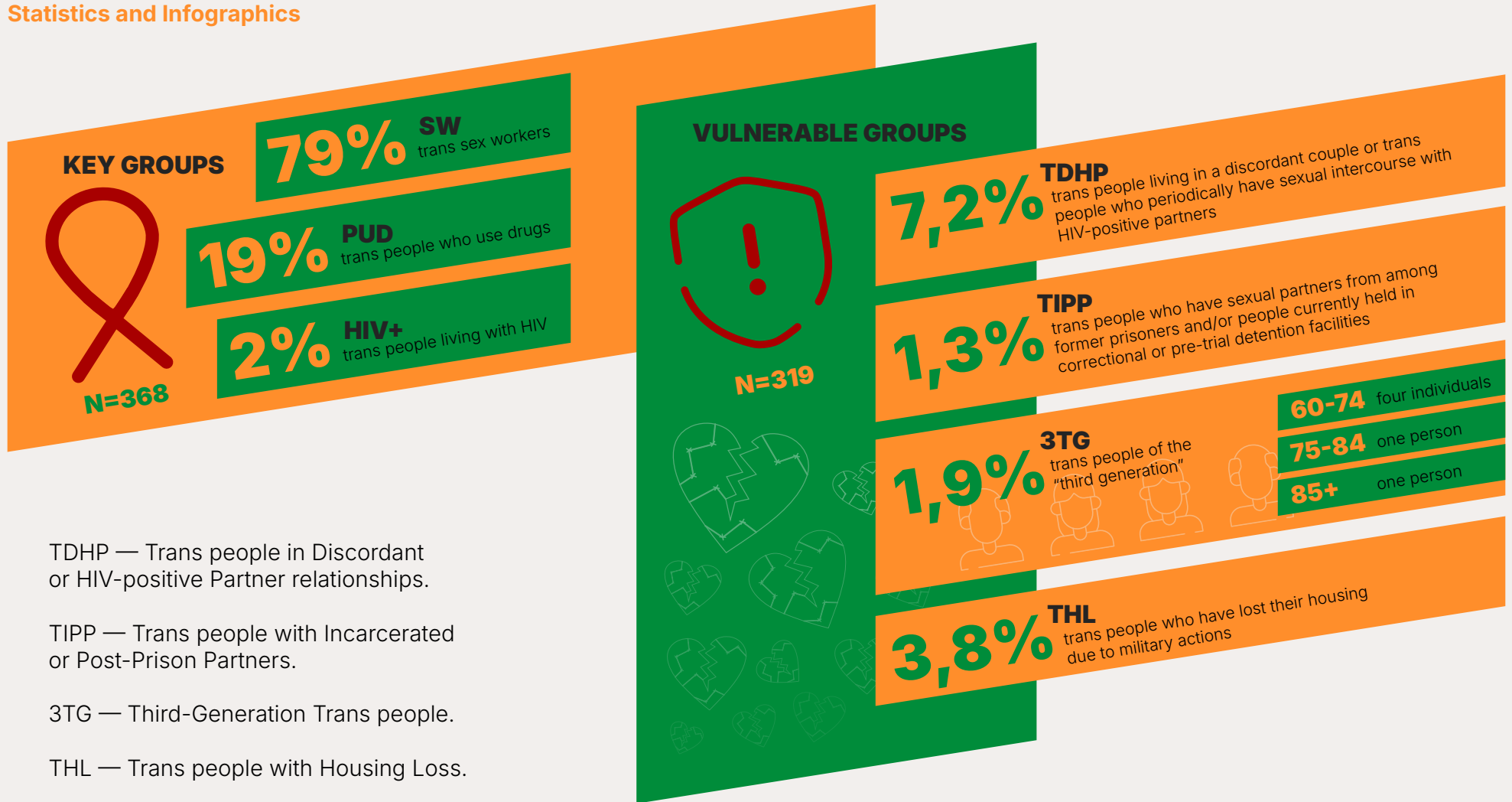


Preparation for working in a small group involves understanding the group's goals, reviewing the necessary materials, and being open to cooperation, communication, and shared problem-solving



# PROJECT ACTIVITIES, ACHIEVEMENTS AND PROGRESS **cont.**

## Statistics and Infographics



TDHP — Trans people in Discordant or HIV-positive Partner relationships.

TIPP — Trans people with Incarcerated or Post-Prison Partners.

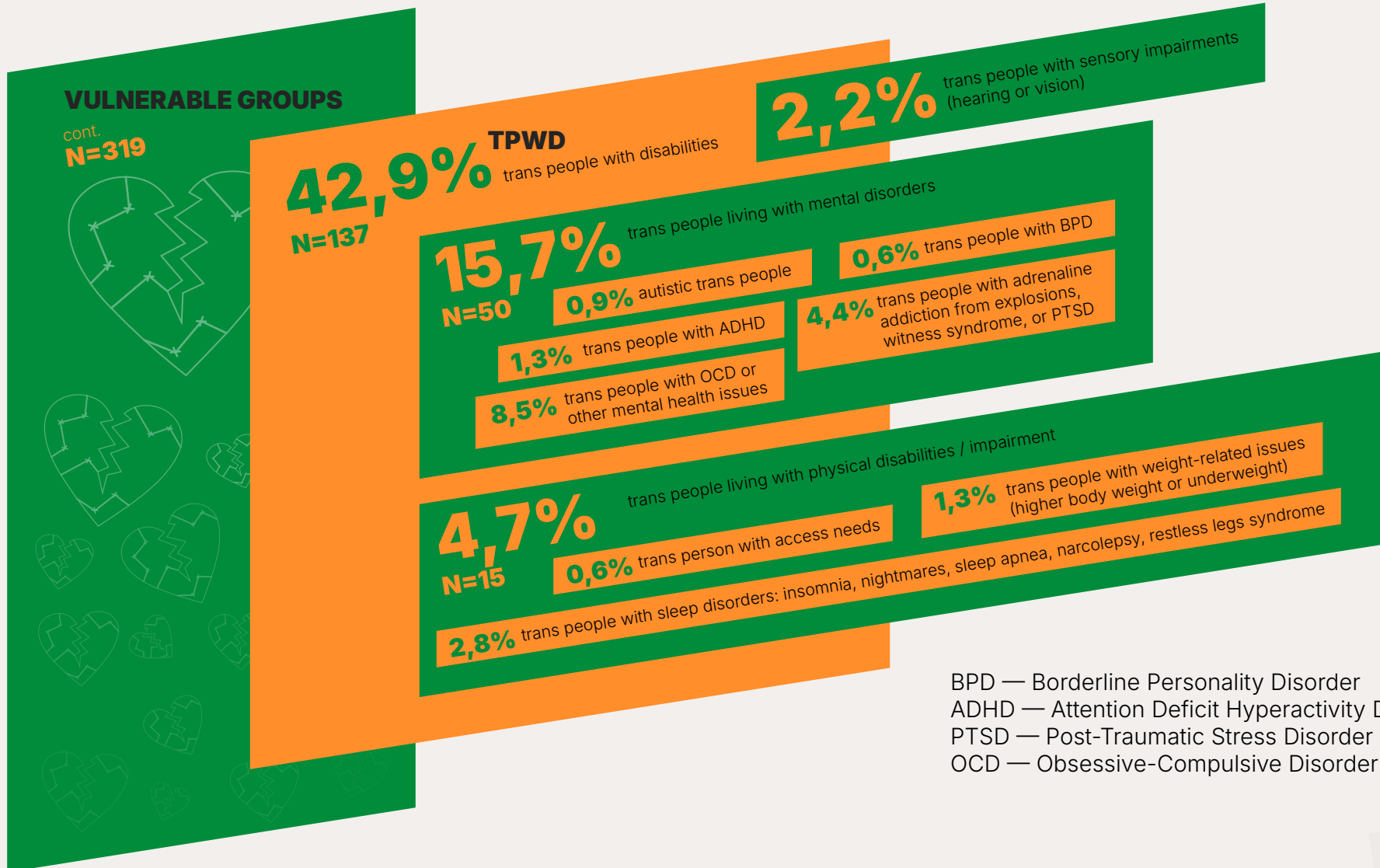
3TG — Third-Generation Trans people.

THL — Trans people with Housing Loss.



# PROJECT ACTIVITIES, ACHIEVEMENTS AND PROGRESS **cont.**

## Statistics and Infographics



# PROJECT ACTIVITIES, ACHIEVEMENTS AND PROGRESS **cont.**

## Statistics and Infographics



OF THE  
**368**  
PARTICIPANTS



We are planning the community's growth together with the Head of HPLGBT Department of Development



## PROJECT ACTIVITIES, ACHIEVEMENTS AND PROGRESS **cont.**



### STOP-181.1 INTERNET CAMPAIGN

Outdated Soviet-era laws continue to criminalize sex work in Ukraine, more than three decades after the fall of the USSR. These remnants of the Soviet legal system still punish adults engaged in sex work through fines, administrative charges, and police persecution. Despite Ukraine's progress toward democracy and European integration, this relic of the Soviet legal system still treats sex workers as offenders rather than as individuals deserving of rights, protection, and dignity.

An antiquated legal provision continues to target sex workers in Ukraine. Article 181-1 of the Code of Ukraine on Administrative Offenses – a remnant of Soviet-era legislation introduced in the 1980s – remains in force today. This article, originally adopted in 1984 under the Ukrainian SSR, imposes penalties for “practice of prostitution”.

Even after Ukraine gained independence in 1991, no reforms were made to repeal this punitive measure. For over 40 years, the law has allowed authorities to fine individuals (and issue official warnings) simply for consensual adult sex work. In essence, a Soviet-era approach to sex work is still being applied in modern Ukraine – a vestige of the totalitarian past that persists in the legal code. Under Article 181-1, those found to be engaging in sex work can receive a fine, and repeat “offenders” within a year face higher fines. The mere existence of this law legitimizes routine police harassment of sex workers and cements stigma. Sex workers continue to be subjected to these punishments today, as Article 181-1 is actively enforced as an administrative offense. Yet, the Ukrainian state has been reluctant to acknowledge the need for change – to date, it has not moved to decriminalize sex work, despite the fact that most European countries decriminalized individual adult sex work long ago. The prolonged enforcement of Article 181-1 epitomizes a repressive approach toward sex work. Instead of protecting a key and vulnerable population, the state's policy has centered on punishment. Law enforcement officers and even criminal elements have exploited this punitive law: the threat of administrative prosecution under Article 181-1 is often used as a tool for extortion, intimidation, and abuse of trans sex workers. Because trans sex workers can be legally penalized, corrupt police and other actors hold power over them – leading to frequent cases of physical and mental abuse that trans sex workers have little recourse to challenge.

Stigma against trans sex workers is reinforced by this legal status. In Ukraine, an estimated 80,000 people earn a living through sex work. Fear of being outed as a “prostitute” – and then fined or detained – means many sex workers do not report crimes committed against them. As a result, violence (including hate-motivated violence, particularly against trans sex workers) often goes unpunished, perpetuating a cycle of abuse. Moreover, sex workers have inadequate access to healthcare services, especially reproductive health care, HIV prevention, and treatment, since seeking help can mean revealing one's work and risking legal consequences.



# PROJECT ACTIVITIES, ACHIEVEMENTS AND PROGRESS cont.

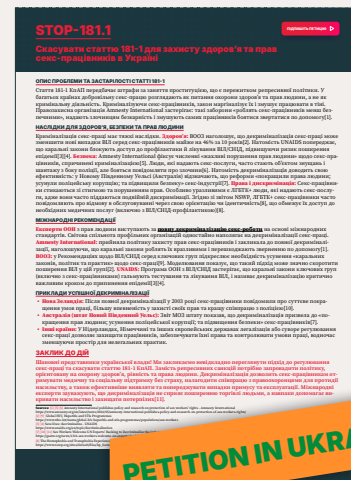
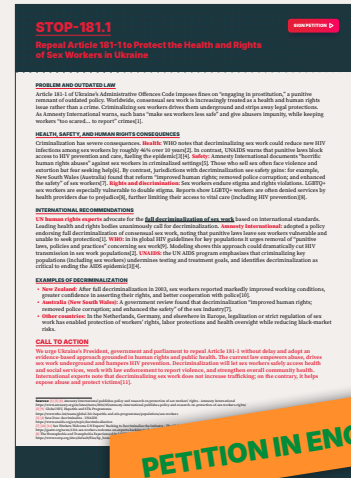
Calls by civil society to repeal Article 181-1 have so far been ignored, indicating that authorities still do not recognize the necessity of decriminalizing sex work. This disconnect persists even as Ukraine aspires to align with European democratic values. In the lead-up to international events, for example, crackdowns on trans sex workers have been known to intensify in an effort to “clean up” cities – a clear sign that punitive mindsets prevail. The continued existence of Article 181-1 in Ukraine’s law books, unchanged since Soviet times, underscores a policy that prioritizes moralistic punishment over public health and human rights.

Punishing consenting adults for sex work does not protect society – instead, it causes significant harm. Criminalization of sex work has well-documented negative consequences on health, safety, and human rights. In Ukraine’s case, Article 181-1 has created an environment where trans sex workers operate in the shadows, without legal protections. This underground status makes them easy targets for violence and exploitation, and it pushes vital health issues out of sight. Below are key impacts of maintaining this punitive law.

## Barriers to Healthcare and HIV Prevention

Fear of legal consequences drives sex workers away from health services. Many avoid carrying condoms or visiting clinics, worrying that these could be used as “evidence” of prostitution during police checks. This undermines HIV prevention efforts – a known phenomenon in criminalized settings. According to HPLGBT, laws that criminalize sex work directly impede sex workers’ ability to access and benefit from HIV prevention, testing, and treatment services. The criminalization of sex work in Ukraine has implications for the country’s HIV epidemic. Ukraine has a concentrated HIV epidemic, and sex workers are one of the key affected populations. Yet punitive laws like Article 181-1 hinder effective HIV responses by driving sex workers away from prevention programs. Thus, the continuation of Article 181-1 directly contributes to an environment where HIV and other STIs can spread more easily, counter to public health goals.

The “STOP-181.1” petition is the centerpiece of our current advocacy. Developed jointly with partner organizations, it is addressed to representatives of the Ukrainian government and calls for immediate action to repeal Article 181-1. In this petition, we outline the urgent need to end the administrative punishment of consensual sex work and replace it with a modern approach grounded in public health and human rights. Article 181-1 is described in the petition as an outdated and harmful law – one that criminalizes consensual adult sex work and thereby puts thousands of people at risk of violence, stigma, and ill health.



## PROJECT ACTIVITIES, ACHIEVEMENTS AND PROGRESS **cont.**

We emphasize that repealing this law is not a radical step, but rather a long-overdue reform that would bring Ukraine's practices in line with evidence-based policies. By signing the petition, supporters join us in urging the government to adopt a humane, effective approach: one that views sex workers not as "offenders" to be punished, but as citizens deserving of safety and access to health services.

**SIGN PETITION**

### **The petition makes several key arguments**

Protect Public Health - It calls attention to how criminalization drives sex workers away from HIV prevention and care, exacerbating public health challenges. Repealing Article 181-1 would remove a major barrier to healthcare access, allowing sex workers to seek HIV testing, carry condoms, and access treatment without fear. This change could significantly aid Ukraine's efforts to combat HIV/AIDS. We invoke international public health recommendations, noting that agencies like UNAIDS have observed that punitive laws against sex workers impede HIV responses and should be reformed. An evidence-based approach – as our petition urges – would treat sex workers as partners in preventing disease, rather than as scapegoats. The petition reminds authorities that Ukraine has committed to upholding human rights standards, and that persecuting individuals for their occupation is incompatible with those commitments. We stress that sex workers, including transgender sex workers, are entitled to the same fundamental rights as everyone else – the rights to personal security, health, non-discrimination, and freedom from degrading treatment. Punishing someone for doing sex work violates these rights and undermines human dignity. By decriminalizing sex work, Ukraine would affirm the basic rights of some of its most marginalized citizens, reducing stigma and enabling them to live without constant fear of arrest or abuse. This step would also send a powerful signal that the country values inclusion and compassion over outdated moralism. Importantly, the petition argues that removing this law will enhance safety. When sex workers are not threatened with arrest, they can more freely cooperate with law enforcement to report crimes, such as trafficking rings or violent perpetrators.

The petition "STOP-181.1" has been disseminated widely, including through social media, community networks, and with the help of international allies such as the TGEU - Trans Europe and Central Asia. Early responses have been encouraging – we have seen support not only from within Ukraine but also from human rights supporters abroad who understand the significance of this issue. Each signature adds weight to our demand that Ukraine's leaders must prioritize public health and human rights over prejudice and punitive tradition.

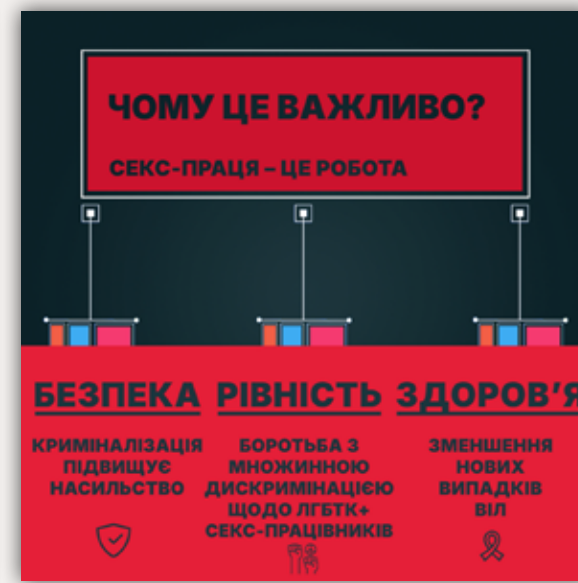
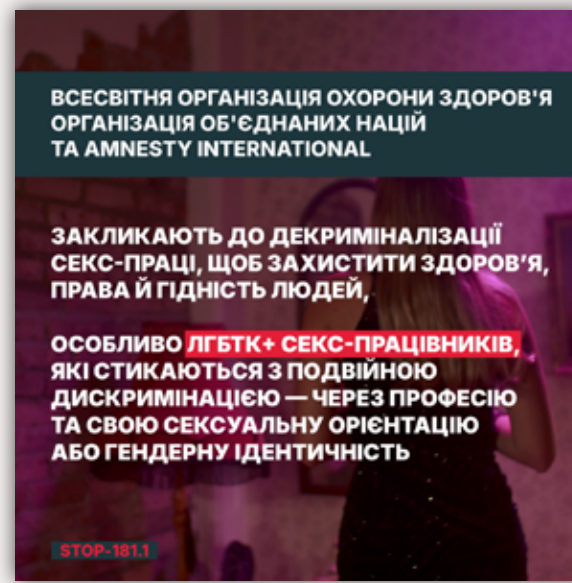
**ПІДПИШІТЬ ПЕТИЦІЮ**



## PROJECT ACTIVITIES, ACHIEVEMENTS AND PROGRESS **cont.**

This advocacy campaign, while focused on a specific legal change, carries a larger message, that the wellbeing of trans sex workers is integral to the wellbeing of the community. When trans sex workers are no longer treated as criminals, they can access health services, live without fear, and contribute to society more openly. This creates a positive ripple effect – for instance, HIV prevention becomes more effective, and fewer people are victimized by unchecked violence. Our petition thus appeals to the government’s responsibility to protect all citizens, including those at society’s margins, and to craft laws based on evidence and compassion rather than moral panic.

The push to repeal Article 181-1 is only the first step in a broader effort to reform Ukraine’s approach to sex work and public health. Through this initiative, we have aimed to build momentum and awareness, but we recognize that lasting change will require continued advocacy, engagement with policymakers, and community empowerment. Moving forward, we are committed to several key next steps.



CLICK ON THE IMAGE TO VIEW THE VIDEO

To enhance promotion and increase audience engagement, a series of audio-visual materials was produced and disseminated across various social media platforms



# PROJECT ACTIVITIES, ACHIEVEMENTS AND PROGRESS **cont.**

## Next Steps and Actions

We will follow up on the petition by seeking dialogue with lawmakers and government officials. Our goal is to translate the public support and evidence we've gathered into concrete legislative action. We will highlight that decriminalization is in line with Ukraine's obligations under international agreements on human rights and health – for example, the right to health (as per the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights) and the commitments under the Sustainable Development Goals to end AIDS by 2030. By presenting decriminalization as a rational policy choice backed by data, we hope to gain champions within the government who will move the issue forward. The involvement of trans sex workers in advocacy will remain central. We will continue to hold community consultations and capacity-building sessions so that sex workers can engage with authorities and media confidently and safely. Empowering the community to tell their stories – how punitive laws have affected their lives – can powerfully sway public opinion and policy. We also plan to expand our network, reaching sex workers in different regions of Ukraine, to ensure their voices are heard and their specific concerns (which might vary by locale) are addressed. We will ramp up public education efforts to combat myths about sex work. This may involve media campaigns or events highlighting research – for instance, sharing facts like “criminalizing sex work has not eliminated prostitution anywhere in the world; instead, it often makes sex work less safe”. We will spotlight success stories from countries that have decriminalized or adopted harm-reduction approaches, demonstrating positive outcomes (such as New Zealand's decriminalization leading to better health and safety for sex workers). Our advocacy will underline that protecting sex workers is intertwined with combating gender-based violence, reducing HIV, and advancing LGBTIQ+ rights. In conclusion, our advocacy to abolish Article 181-1 is driven by a clear vision: a Ukraine where sex workers – including transgender sex workers – are no longer treated as criminals, but as equal members of society with rights to health and safety. By overturning this outdated law, Ukraine can remove a significant roadblock that has hindered efforts to control the HIV epidemic and address human rights concerns. It would open the door to new, progressive approaches such as harm reduction programs, voluntary health check-ups, and collaboration between sex worker communities and law enforcement to tackle real crimes (like trafficking and sexual violence).

This initiative has already made history as a bold step by the trans sex worker community to demand their rights. It has sent a message that Ukrainian civil society will not tolerate policies that sacrifice marginalized people under the guise of “public order.” Instead, we insist on policies that are grounded in evidence, effectiveness, and empathy.

We are grateful for the support of our partners and donors who understand that investing in human rights and public health yields profound benefits for society. With their continued support, we will strive to turn the commitments in our petition into reality. Ending the punishment of sex work is not an end in itself, but a means to a healthier, safer, and more just society. Together, by removing antiquated punitive laws and replacing them with humane solutions, we can make lasting progress in the fight against HIV/AIDS and in upholding the dignity and rights of all individuals.



# CHALLENGES AND LESSONS LEARNED

The petition "STOP-181.1" received a limited number of signatures due to several factors. Overall visibility was low, as the petition did not reach a wide enough audience through targeted communication channels. The messaging may not have been sufficiently clear or compelling to motivate broader participation. Additionally, limited outreach resources and the absence of sustained promotional activities contributed to weaker engagement. These challenges highlight the need for stronger communications planning, broader stakeholder involvement, and more consistent awareness-raising efforts in future initiatives.

As our online campaign advanced, we observed a growing number of negative comments from the general public, many of which framed sex workers as "dirty," "immoral," "indecent," or even "criminal." These reactions underscore the urgent challenge of widespread public stigma, as well as the deeply entrenched institutional discrimination that continues to affect the community. This includes instances of police violence against trans sex workers, revealing the severity and persistence of the issue.

SUMMARY

IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGY

PROJECT ACTIVITIES,  
ACHIEVEMENTS  
AND PROGRESS

CHALLENGES AND  
LESSONS LEARNED

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT  
AND EMPOWERMENT

SUSTAINABILITY  
AND IMPACT

PARTNERSHIPS AND  
COLLABORATION

SUCCESS AND  
PERSONAL STORIES

KEY RECOMMENDATIONS  
FOR STAKEHOLDERS



## CHALLENGES AND LESSONS LEARNED cont.

For instance, one participant in our workshops reported that her mother received a letter from the Tax Service at the participant's registered address, demanding repayment of tax arrears for 2020 and 2021. These claims—related to earnings from an adult paid-content platform—concern activities that occurred five years earlier. The request followed the State Tax Service's acquisition of data on 5,435 Ukrainian citizens operating 7,036 OnlyFans accounts. In an effort to avoid court proceedings, the participant paid the full amount. Nevertheless, shortly afterward, police officers arrived and used the tax payment receipt itself as the primary "evidence" of her alleged "criminal" activity. For example, an audio recording of a conversation between police officers and an OnlyFans creator, in which the officers demanded a bribe in exchange for not initiating criminal charges, provides clear evidence of the vulnerable position in which sex workers find themselves. This incident illustrates how easily law enforcement can exploit their authority and reinforces the broader pattern of coercion and abuse described in this report.

This case is not isolated. Another trans sex worker who attended our Ukrainian-language improvement workshop described being subjected to extortion and having all of her professional equipment confiscated, including a high-value computer, webcam, microphone, and other adult-work tools, which the police arbitrarily classified as "material evidence". Officers also seized her color printer, justifying the action on the basis that they could take whatever they deemed appropriate from a "morally corrupt" individual "shaming Ukraine".

Participants in our digital literacy and project-development workshops similarly reported that, prior to police raids, officers approached them with lists of their full names and demanded bribes. When these extortion attempts were unsuccessful, the police escalated to harassment, intimidation, and, in many cases, unlawful prosecution. These cases demonstrate how readily pre-trial actions can lead to the seizure of equipment and other personal belongings in the absence of verified or legitimate grounds. This pattern indicates significant procedural vulnerabilities that enable undue interference in individuals' lives and work.

Collectively, these accounts point to a systemic pattern in which state authorities not only enable violence and discrimination but actively deploy institutional power against some of the most vulnerable members of society. In the past three years, police authorities have spent an estimated 5 million UAH on so-called expert examinations of content created by consenting adults, including materials used to promote their online sex-work platforms. This expenditure raises concerns about the misuse of public resources.

Within this project, HPLGBT was assigned a dedicated point of contact who not only ensured a comfortable and efficient collaboration in project management, but also provided prompt mentoring support to the organization's leadership. This proved to be an invaluable asset, significantly facilitating the operational coordination and regulatory processes essential for the project's success.

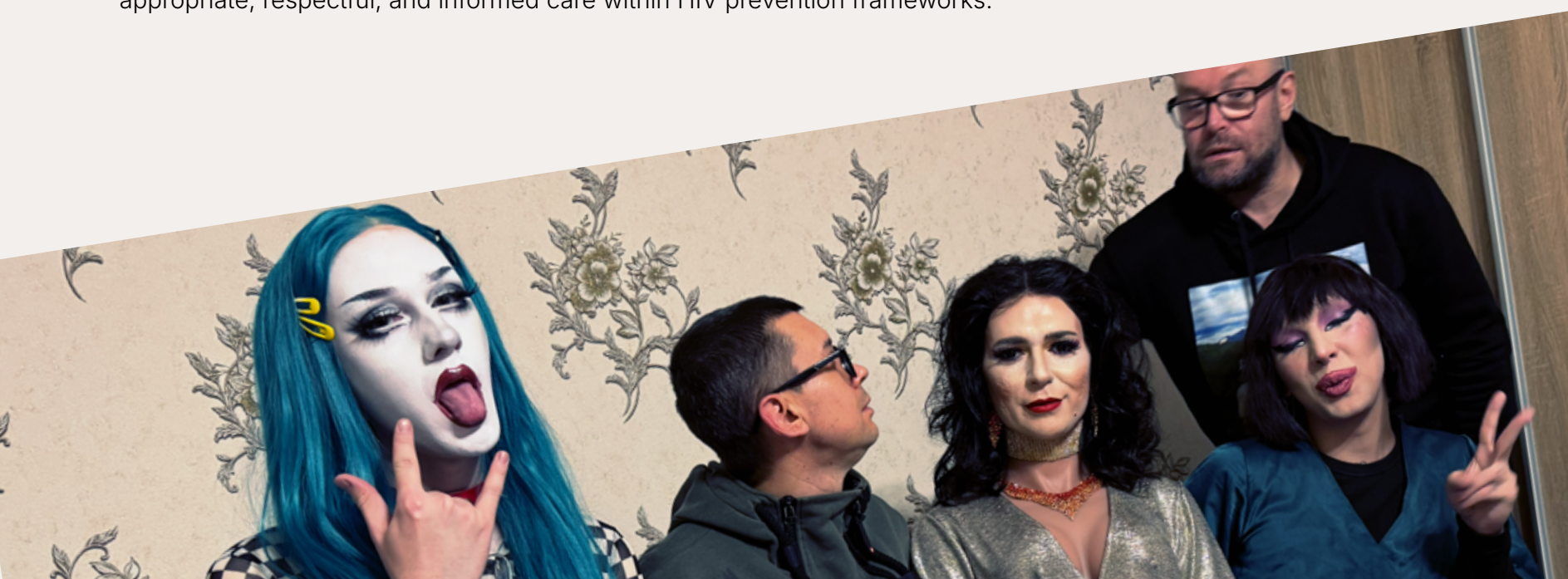


## CHALLENGES AND LESSONS LEARNED **cont.**

### Specific Circumstances of the Trans Community

The HIV prevention needs of trans women at the local level vary significantly and require a highly individualized approach. These differences are particularly evident in how sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR) services must be adapted, depending on whether a trans woman has undergone hormone therapy or gender-affirming surgical procedures. Such factors influence the extent to which the reproductive system is preserved and, accordingly, affect the types of HIV prevention strategies that are medically appropriate and accessible. Similarly, for trans men who have not undergone extensive masculinizing interventions, including hysterectomy or oophorectomy, fertility preservation and related reproductive health needs must be carefully considered. Key factors include the presence or absence of regular ovulation, the condition and patency of the fallopian tubes, the structural integrity of the endometrial lining, and the level of ovarian reserve. These biological and medical considerations directly influence both the risk of HIV transmission and the suitability of certain prevention tools, such as PrEP or reproductive planning services.

Recognizing this complexity, the project emphasized the need for differentiated HIV prevention services that are inclusive of diverse bodies, medical histories, and reproductive goals. In doing so, we aimed to bridge critical gaps in service provision and ensure that trans individuals—regardless of their transition path—have access to appropriate, respectful, and informed care within HIV prevention frameworks.



Time allocated for informal interaction, community building, and collaborative planning of the next activity for community leaders, ensuring space for relationship-building, reflection, and collective decision-making

SUMMARY

IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGY

PROJECT ACTIVITIES,  
ACHIEVEMENTS  
AND PROGRESS

CHALLENGES AND  
LESSONS LEARNED

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT  
AND EMPOWERMENT

SUSTAINABILITY  
AND IMPACT

PARTNERSHIPS AND  
COLLABORATION

SUCCESS AND  
PERSONAL STORIES

KEY RECOMMENDATIONS  
FOR STAKEHOLDERS

# COMMUNITY ENGMT. AND EMPOW.

Active participation of the trans community is fundamental to the long-term success and sustainability of our work. Guided by this principle, we place increasing emphasis on engaging community leaders who can inspire, guide, motivate, and support their peers. The initiatives developed with their involvement focus on establishing peer-support groups for trans people and building the skills and capacities needed to initiate lasting change and pursue broader strategic goals.

This community-centered approach ensures that project resources are directed toward solutions identified by those most affected. It empowers trans people to design, lead, and implement activities that directly address their lived needs and priorities. By nurturing these initiatives and creating dedicated spaces for trans sex workers, we contribute to establishing safe, inclusive, and supportive environments for regular meetings, capacity-building workshops, and advocacy planning sessions. At the same time, this strengthens leadership from within the community and promotes collective ownership of the process.

In practical terms, trans community members play an active role in decision-making processes. They help define priorities, shape the structure of mutual-support meetings, select advocacy themes, and co-create workshop agendas.



## COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT AND EMPOWERMENT cont.

Trans sex workers also participate directly in the design and delivery of activities, including event planning, facilitating group discussions, and coordinating outreach and awareness efforts to ensure inclusivity and broad community engagement.

Our advocacy efforts are built on a “community-to-community” model, using the workshop space as a platform for developing strategies and coordinating campaigns that address systemic discrimination, strengthen legal protections, and promote the rights of trans people in Ukraine. This model reinforces a sense of shared responsibility, enhances community resilience, and creates a strong foundation for both current and future initiatives. It does so by centering the lived experience, knowledge, and leadership of the trans community in all its diversity, ensuring that the direction of the project remains rooted in the realities and aspirations of the people it serves.

A group of participants engaged in collaborative planning, discussing upcoming activities, refining priorities, and mapping out concrete steps for the next phase of their work.

The setting reflects active teamwork, shared decision-making, and a collective focus on achieving common goals



## COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT AND EMPOWERMENT cont.

Planning and coordination of community-level initiatives scheduled for implementation in 2025–2026



# SUSTAINABILITY. AND IMPACT

The core principle of the project, the “community to community” approach, means that priorities and the technical implementation of interventions are determined by trans people themselves who are directly affected by the HIV epidemic. For example, key trans activists from Kyiv, Dnipro, Odesa, and other locations take responsibility for organizing training sessions and peer outreach activities. This strengthens HPLGBT’s local response networks and ensures rapid and targeted responses to the community’s urgent needs. Such an approach not only enhances the quality of HIV services and support for the community in the face of discrimination but also fosters the development of leaders from within the community, laying the foundation for long-term sustainability and community ownership.

The project demonstrates a high level of adaptability to regional conditions. In areas affected by conflict, economic crisis, and internal migration, humanitarian assistance such as food vouchers and emergency aid was provided promptly to the most vulnerable trans people. This made it possible to meet the community’s basic needs and maintain trust in the HPLGBT’s support system during periods of critical challenges. Such adaptability has ensured uninterrupted access to HIV services even under resource constraints and logistical difficulties.

The project integrates the principles of human rights and accountability at every stage. Training topics have included legal literacy and rights protection in areas such as HIV/AIDS, reproductive rights, and sex workers’ rights. Based on the outcomes of the project, a forward-looking Tactical Plan was developed in the form of a concept note using a “one-page” structure. This Tactical Plan, along with its key ideas, was subsequently shared with strategic partners for further consideration.

SUMMARY

IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGY

PROJECT ACTIVITIES,  
ACHIEVEMENTS  
AND PROGRESS

CHALLENGES AND  
LESSONS LEARNED

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT  
AND EMPOWERMENT

SUSTAINABILITY  
AND IMPACT

PARTNERSHIPS AND  
COLLABORATION

SUCCESS AND  
PERSONAL STORIES

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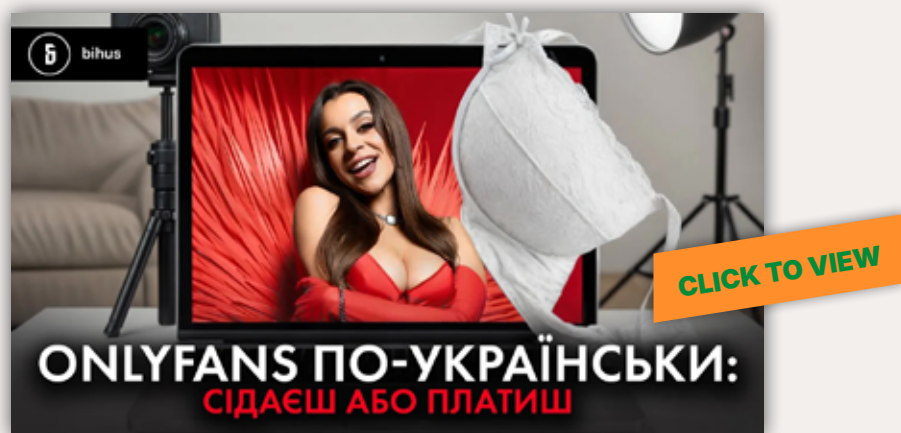


## SUSTAINABILITY AND IMPACT **cont.**

Following these workshops, participants have reported increased confidence and a better understanding of their rights, which encourages their active engagement in advocacy and quality oversight of services. The project underscores the importance of decentralizing funding, noting that a significant portion of donor resources is still not managed by key communities. It calls for redirecting part of these funds to local initiatives. Systematic support ensures that decision-making takes place at the grassroots level and is accompanied by greater accountability to vulnerable groups.

Mechanisms such as sub-grants and partnerships with local organizations are a vital foundation for sustainability. Established cooperation with ChemBrothers has enabled the project to extend its reach to trans men. This form of collaboration has allowed different trans groups to pool resources and expertise, thereby strengthening the support system and making it more decentralized.

Based on the outcomes of the all phases of the project, it can be confidently stated that a strong foundation has been established for subsequent phases, ensuring the expansion, continuity, and long-term sustainability of trans community responses to HIV. The growing participation of trans people in advocacy, leadership initiatives, and peer-based services demonstrates that the community is becoming increasingly capable of organizing assistance and defending its rights independently. The “community to community” approach consolidates expertise and leadership within the community, which is critical in conditions of ongoing discrimination and resource scarcity. All planned activities and mechanisms of the project, including The Flexible Community-Led Fund, educational and adaptive formats, and partnership platforms, together form a long-term support system that makes the HIV response more sustainable and resilient.



**HPLGBT, acting as an independent informant, contributed to the production of a journalistic video that clearly illustrates the realities faced by sex workers in the country, thereby enhancing the project's sustainability and impact by raising awareness of sex workers' issues.**

## SUSTAINABILITY AND IMPACT cont.

### Kharkiv is the capital of resilience and the art of drag queens

Thanks to the project's support, we strengthened and empowered the drag queen community in Kharkiv, generating increased visibility and engagement from media outlets, additional partners, and local allies. The workshops conducted in Kharkiv played a critical role in mobilizing trans and queer participants, creating a safe environment for artistic expression, peer support, and community building. These activities not only addressed immediate needs but also fostered long term capacity and leadership within the community.

A key indicator of sustainability is the community's initiative to continue developing creative and advocacy-driven activities beyond the project's timeframe. The drag queen community has already planned a photo exhibition titled "A Miracle in the Middle of War," which will document lived experiences and amplify queer visibility during wartime. In addition, community leaders are preparing two further workshops in the form of intimate apartment concerts, demonstrating their ability to independently organize cultural events, sustain momentum, and expand outreach to new audiences.

Collectively, these outcomes illustrate that the project catalyzed sustainable structures of support, artistic expression, and civic engagement that will continue to have a meaningful impact beyond the grant period.



PREPARING PARTICIPANTS FOR  
THE DRAG CULTURE FESTIVAL



**SUSTAINABILITY AND IMPACT cont.**



CARING FOR AND SUPPORTING EACH OTHER LOOKS LIKE THIS



## SUSTAINABILITY AND IMPACT cont.

WITH SUPPORT FROM A **FCLF**-SUBGRANT, THE KHARKIV DRAG COMMUNITY ORGANIZED THE DRAG CULTURE FESTIVAL "DYVO ZHORZHYNOVE"

The event featured **7** queer performers and engaged more than **70** participants from the LGBTIQ+ community, strengthening visibility, cultural expression, and community cohesion.



DRAG IS OUR  
ART, OUR VOICE,  
AND OUR POWER

[CLICK TO VIEW](#)



SUMMARY

IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGY

PROJECT ACTIVITIES,  
ACHIEVEMENTS  
AND PROGRESS

CHALLENGES AND  
LESSONS LEARNED

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT  
AND EMPOWERMENT

SUSTAINABILITY  
AND IMPACT

PARTNERSHIPS AND  
COLLABORATION

SUCCESS AND  
PERSONAL STORIES

KEY RECOMMENDATIONS  
FOR STAKEHOLDERS

# PART AND COLLAB

Thanks to the strong humanitarian component embedded in this project, we successfully broadened the scope of our activities and engaged new partners to support the further development of the Flexible Community-Led Fund. The deeper involvement of stakeholders allowed us to scale our humanitarian interventions more efficiently, resulting in a notable increase in both the number of beneficiaries and the value of each humanitarian assistance package.

Importantly, this progress enabled the meaningful participation of sex workers, who played a critical role by offering practical recommendations on procurement processes essential for delivering a more effective and higher-quality humanitarian response. Their involvement strengthened community ownership and ensured that the assistance provided better reflected the realities and priorities of key and vulnerable groups.

These achievements contributed to reinforcing the Flexible Community-Led Fund's long-term sustainability, expanding community participation in decision-making, and ensuring that resources were allocated according to the most urgent and locally identified needs. As a result, the initiative generated broader, more sustainable impact and enhanced the overall resilience of the trans communities involved.



## **PARTNERSHIPS AND COLLABORATION** cont.

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### **HPLGBT – KYIV**

One of the most impactful areas of collaboration and shared engagement was the active involvement of a new generation of trans activists within the “HPLGBT – KYIV” Initiative Group. These young leaders introduced innovative perspectives, bold ideas, and creative approaches that strengthened and diversified the development of the trans movement in Kyiv.

Their participation became possible through targeted mobilization activities and a series of creative workshops designed to bring together trans sex workers who demonstrated strong leadership potential. These gatherings created a safe and inspiring environment where participants could explore advocacy tools, build skills, and shape collective strategies for community empowerment.

Throughout these sessions, proactive activists carefully documented their insights, discussions, and outcomes. As a result, the leadership of HPLGBT received a set of unconventional, thoughtfully written meeting protocols that reflected both the dynamic energy of the group and the evolving vision of the emerging activist community.

**PROTOCOL  
EVENT: “WORKSHOP ON THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE DRAG  
QUEEN COMMUNITY IN KYIV AND THE KYIV REGION”**

**CLICK TO VIEW**



## **PARTNERSHIPS AND COLLABORATION cont.**

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### **Strong Communities Create Strong Partnerships**

The project and the experience gained through its humanitarian component helped attract an additional financial donor and, through the efforts of the trans community, expanded and strengthened on-the-ground support for the entire LGBTIQ+ community. This support grew to include areas such as food security, provided through supermarket vouchers for purchasing groceries or through the direct procurement and distribution of food packages for those who prefer to receive assistance in this form. This approach is especially important for beneficiaries who require social support due to disability or other barriers.

The community also provided pharmacy vouchers, as well as vouchers for purchasing essential household items such as budget-friendly soap, shampoo, and laundry detergent. In addition, the assistance addressed the urgent needs of LGBTIQ+ individuals by ensuring access to warm clothing, helping them obtain life-saving medications such as those used for HIV treatment, providing mobile phone top-ups, and offering relocation support, with particular attention given to beneficiaries living in frontline towns and settlements.

### **Together We Are Stronger**

An equally important partnership was the collaboration with the national sex workers' self-organization "Legalife-Ukraine." Throughout the development of the petition text for "STOP-181.1," we worked in close communication with the organization's leadership and representatives. This cooperation provided a deeper understanding of the broader context surrounding the full decriminalization of sex work in Ukraine.

Our online meetings made it possible not only to refine and finalize the wording of the petition but also to define shared strategic objectives and identify key areas for potential long-term cooperation. This dialogue strengthened mutual trust, helped align advocacy approaches, and laid the foundation for future joint initiatives aimed at protecting human rights, improving access to services, and ensuring the safety and dignity of sex workers across the country.

### **Expanding Scope and International Partnerships**

We established an excellent partnership and collaboration with the European Sex Workers' Rights Alliance (ESWA, formerly ICRSE). Such a high-caliber partnership — unmatched even at the national level — created uniquely favourable conditions for joint engagement.

Event participation — 2 June 2025: As a result of this cooperation, HPLGBT participated in the joint event on 2 June 2025, International Sex Workers' Day — a day dedicated to recognising the rights, struggles, and voices of sex workers worldwide. This year marks the 50th anniversary of the historic occupation of the Church of Saint-Nizier in Lyon, the protest that gave rise to the International Sex Workers' Day observed on 2 June.



## PARTNERSHIPS AND COLLABORATION cont.

The activities within this project were significantly enriched through the support of our partners at ESWA. As a result, the workshops originally planned under the project were expanded to include tailored art-therapy sessions designed specifically for trans sex workers in Ukraine. Art therapy, combined with the sharing of personal stories, played an essential role in preserving meaningful memories and, importantly, in passing on knowledge and inspiration to other sex workers. This approach strengthened community resilience, promoted emotional well-being, and supported participants in expressing their experiences in a safe and empowering environment.

Trans sex workers were invited to express their personal experiences through art. The initiative created a safe, welcoming space for telling and listening to the stories of trans sex workers. The resulting artworks served as a powerful medium for expression and healing on the day of the event. During group sessions participants reported that personal storytelling not only helps individuals recognise and claim their rights but also inspires and empowers other community members. One of the first participants, "Polina" (name changed for safety), chose to share both her story and painting in exchange for a small donation; other participants soon followed suit.



**HPLGBT | Kyiv, Ukraine**

**ALIVE ART WORKSHOP**

- **Voices and Healing Through Expression: Art Therapy Supporting Trans Sex Workers Amidst the Realities of War**
- **Telling Their Truth: Stories of Trans Sex Workers Revealed Through Powerful Artwork**

**HPLGBT**

**OSWA**

**12 COUNTRIES, 15+ ORGANISATIONS**

**HPLGBT** **OSWA** **THE OPEN** **LET'S WORK**

**WORLDWORK** **COOP** **Xtalk project** **UTS OPT**

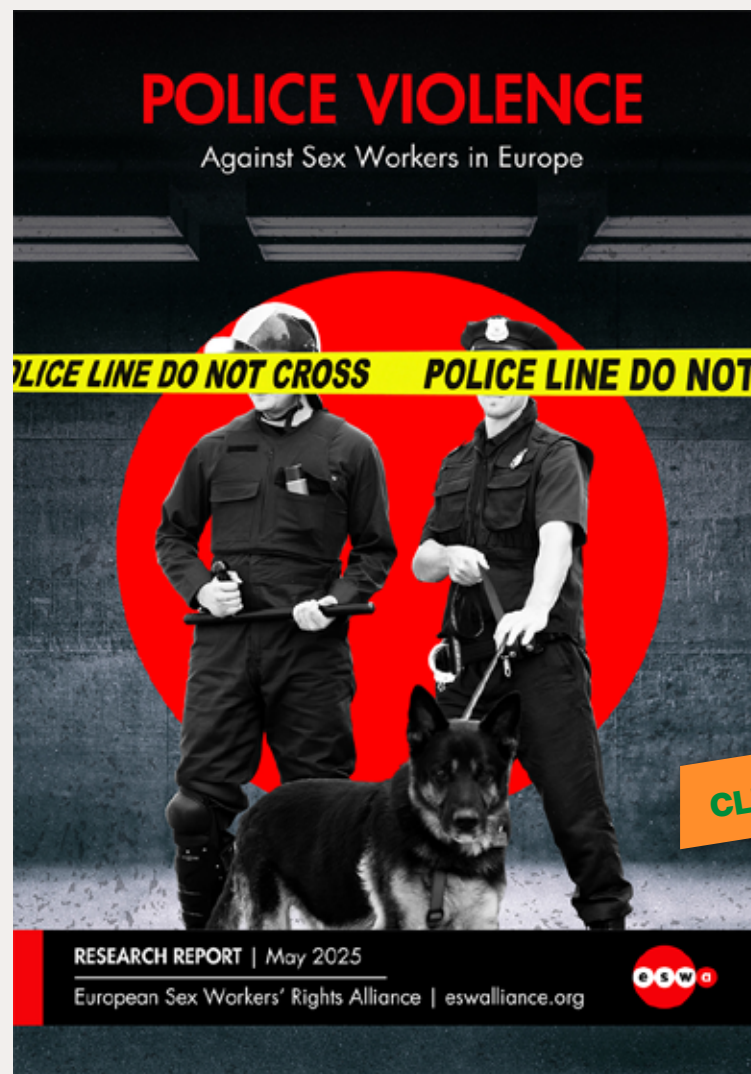
**FIZ** **STRASS** **XENIA**



## PARTNERSHIPS AND COLLABORATION cont.

An additional outcome of this collaboration was the comprehensive adaptation, contextualization, and integration of research findings on police violence against sex workers across multiple European countries. This process involved reviewing comparative data, identifying recurring patterns of abuse and structural discrimination, and translating these insights into practical, accessible formats for diverse audiences. The findings were incorporated not only into our project materials and training modules but also into strategic advocacy plans, public awareness campaigns, and stakeholder briefings.

By embedding this evidence into our broader programmatic framework, we strengthened our capacity to articulate the systemic nature of police violence, demonstrate its human rights implications, and support the development of informed, rights-based policy recommendations. This allowed us to engage more effectively with civil society partners, and international bodies, ensuring that the lived experiences of sex workers and the documented harms they face were central to our dialogue. As a result, the research served not only as an informative resource but also as a critical foundation for advancing accountability, improving protective mechanisms, and fostering meaningful policy reform across the region.



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# SUCCESS AND PERSONAL STORIES

The success of this project is clearly reflected in the fact that, thanks to its strong quantitative and qualitative indicators, HPLGBT was able to attract an additional international partner to scale up its ongoing Flexible Community-Led Fund (FCLF) program. This partnership not only strengthens the sustainability of the initiative, but also expands our ability to support community-led solutions at the national level.

A significant added value of the project was the enhancement of our human resources: as a result of active proposal submissions and subsequent approvals, three new members joined HPLGBT, contributing new expertise and reinforcing the organization's capacity.

Additionally, because sub-granting was an integral part of the project, the HPLGBT team gained valuable hands-on experience and significantly strengthened its internal policies and procedures for managing mini-grants. This institutional strengthening will have a long-term impact, ensuring more effective and transparent support for community-driven initiatives in the future.

SUMMARY

IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGY

PROJECT ACTIVITIES,  
ACHIEVEMENTS  
AND PROGRESS

CHALLENGES AND  
LESSONS LEARNED

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT  
AND EMPOWERMENT

SUSTAINABILITY  
AND IMPACT

PARTNERSHIPS AND  
COLLABORATION

SUCCESS AND  
PERSONAL STORIES

KEY RECOMMENDATIONS  
FOR STAKEHOLDERS



## SUCCESS AND PERSONAL STORIES **cont.**

I spent years struggling to explain who I was, always feeling that my words were too small for the truth I carried. Everything shifted when I began expressing myself through art. A single painting, a performance, even a brief sketch allowed me to say what my voice could not: my fears, my strength, my identity. Through art, I finally saw myself clearly—and others did too. That is why speaking about ourselves through creativity matters: it gives shape to what is hidden and lets our inner world become visible, understood, and valued.



## SUCCESS AND PERSONAL STORIES **cont.**



I never truly understood what it meant to be myself until the first time I stepped on stage. I often felt watched, questioned, or asked to shrink parts of who I was. But under the lights, everything changed. The moment the music started, I felt my body, my voice, and my identity align in a way the world rarely allowed. On stage, I wasn't defending my existence. I was living it!

I was seen the way I saw myself. And in that brief, brilliant space, I realized something powerful: a trans person onstage is not performing who they are; they are finally allowed to be who they are.



## SUCCESS AND PERSONAL STORIES **cont.**

I spent many years believing that no matter how hard I worked, people would see my gender identity before they saw my talent. Every condemnation, every censure, every criticism carried the same quiet fear: that I would be measured by something other than my skills. Yet I kept creating, kept training, hoping that one day my work would speak louder than the assumptions surrounding me.

The first time someone recognized my talent without questioning who I was, it felt like a door opening into a world I had been trying to reach for so long. In that moment, I understood how powerful it is to be valued for what you bring, not for how you are labeled.

Everyone deserves to have their abilities judged on merit, not identity. And when that happens, it doesn't just affirm your work—it affirms your humanity.



JUDGES EVALUATE THE RESULTS AND MAKE THEIR DIFFICULT CHOICE TO DETERMINE THE WINNER



## SUCCESS AND PERSONAL STORIES **cont.**

THE WINNER AWAITS THEIR AWARD,  
ALONG WITH INSPIRING SPEECHES FOR  
ALL PARTICIPANTS AND GUESTS

There was a time when I thought I had to face everything alone, carrying my fears and hopes quietly, afraid to burden anyone. But the moment I found myself surrounded by people who understood me, something shifted.

We shared our struggles, lifted each other up, and celebrated even the smallest victories together. In that warmth, I realized how powerful it is to gather as a community and how much strength we gain simply by standing side by side.

When we support one another, we do more than survive, we grow, we heal, and we become braver than we ever could be alone.



## SUCCESS AND PERSONAL STORIES **cont.**

**MEDIA ABOUT THE  
FESTIVAL'S ORGANIZERS  
AND PARTICIPANTS**

Гвардія Медіа®

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**When one wins  
—  
we all win**

**HPLGBT AND OTHER PARTNERS CONGRATULATE THE WINNER, MONIKA**



# KEY RECS. FOR SH'S

## SUMMARY AND DIGEST OVERVIEW

The strategic assessment identifies a set of priority interventions essential for strengthening community-led systems and improving the efficiency and equity of humanitarian and advocacy responses in Ukraine. Strengthening trans organizational capacity is a core structural investment. Stable funding and leadership development within trans-led organizations directly increase the sector's ability to influence policy environments and sustain long-term systemic change.

Transitioning to meaningful participation by key populations improves accountability and relevance of interventions. Community-led implementation and direct resource allocation enhance precision, reduce inefficiencies, and strengthen localized ownership. Prioritizing community-led organizations, including HPLGBT, within donor proposals increases the strategic value of investments by centering expertise closest to the needs, reducing fragmentation, and reinforcing locally anchored leadership.

Collectively, these actions form a targeted strategy that enhances resilience, maximizes donor impact, and strengthens community-driven systems capable of sustaining long-term structural change.

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# KEY RECOMMENDATIONS FOR STAKEHOLDERS **cont.**



## INVESTING IN TRANS CAPACITY

To build a more resilient trans movement capable of driving meaningful and long-term structural change, it is essential to ensure stable and sustained funding for trans-led self-organizations. Such support should include investments in the development of trans organizational structures, the preparation and empowerment of trans leaders, and the overall strengthening of the advocacy capacity of the broader LGBTIQ+ community.



## ENSURING STABILITY IN CRISIS CONDITIONS

To ensure organizational stability amid the uncertainties associated with wartime conditions, it is essential to establish contingency or emergency funding mechanisms. Such financial reserves help maintain the continuity of the organization's operations and support its key personnel during crises or force majeure situations.



## INCLUSIVE APPROACHES TO HUMANITARIAN WORK

To create conditions that foster a more equitable and effective humanitarian response in Ukraine, as well as to advance inclusive humanitarian practices, it is essential to draw upon the expertise and outputs of the LGBTIQ+ Communities Technical Working Group. This includes applying up-to-date strategic and practical recommendations developed by the group.



## STRENGTHENING COMMUNITY-LED PROJECT ROLES

It is essential to shift from nominal to meaningful and influential participation of key populations. This can be achieved by engaging key groups as direct implementers of project activities and by enabling members of vulnerable and key communities to serve as funding recipients and technical contributors.



## PRIORITIZING COMMUNITY-LED PARTNERS

Self-organizations, including HPLGBT, should be included among the priority partners in project proposals submitted for funding to major donors operating at the global level. This approach strengthens locally led initiatives and ensures that community-driven expertise is integrated into large-scale funding mechanisms.



## PRIORITIZING COMMUNITY-LED PARTNERS

It is important to continue supporting the activities of the Flexible Community-Led Fund through targeted additional sub-grants. The mechanism has proven effective by providing flexible, needs-based mini-grants that respond to local priorities—for example, HIV prevention efforts among adolescents and affected youth in frontline communities, as well as other pilot initiatives that strengthen local partnerships.





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HPLGBT

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