



SOAR SPOTLIGHT 2022

About This Resource

The SOAR Spotlight is a resource intended to demonstrate how civil society organizations (CSOs) across the globe have used security, opportunity, advocacy and rapid response (SOAR) grants from Dignity for All to advance LGBTQI+ rights. The following grants were administered between 2020-2022, and the resource was put together during the summer of 2022.

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SUB-SAHARAN AFRICA

An Organization in Uganda

The NGO Act of 2016, the Covid-19 pandemic, and the Sexual Offences Bill of 2021 all contributed to shrinking civil society space and increasing persecution and violence against LGBTQI+ communities in Uganda. The Sexual Offences Bill of 2021 reinforced anti-gender, religious fundamentalist, and homophobic sentiments in Uganda, which led to unprecedented violence against and persecution of LGBTQI+ communities. In late 2021, Uganda's NGO Bureau announced the closure of 50 organizations for failure to comply with the NGO Act, which requires organizations to share information about where their funds come from and what they use for. The NGO Act has been used by the Ugandan government to censor civil society organizations (CSOs), particularly those working on human rights, social justice, democracy, or political freedom who challenge the government. An organization in Uganda used SOAR funding to reflect on milestones and challenges in LGBTQI+ organizing in the country, map out the capacity of organizations to comply with the NGO Act's regulatory framework, and demystify the registration process. With this strengthened legal capacity, some organizations are more confident to engage the registration process and challenge the NGO Bureau thanks to cooperation and learnings across LGBTQI+ communities and organizations.

An Organization in Tanzania

In 2021, LGBTQI+ communities in Tanzania faced increasing human rights violations, stigma, and discrimination, including arbitrary arrests and targeted violence based on perceived or actual sexual orientation and gender identity. An organization in Tanzania used SOAR funding to convene an annual meeting that brought together key stakeholders, including 13 LGBTQI+ organizations. Participants discussed LGBTQI+ safety and security and developed a road map for addressing stigma and discrimination through security response mechanisms, including training on documenting human rights violations. They also walked through the Tanzanian Constitution and its Human Rights and Criminal Law provisions, working with a paralegal to better understand legal issues. The meeting fostered greater cohesion, communication, trust, and visibility among LGBTQI+ HRDs and CSOs in Tanzania.

An Organization in Kenya

Kenya's General Elections in August 2022 precipitated increased violence, stigma, and discrimination against LGBTQI+ communities. An organization in Kenya used SOAR support to hold a four-day convening. In this activity, they coordinated safety and security responses at regional and grassroots levels through monitoring of and response to incident reports and mapping threat zones for LGBTQI+ communities. Participants in the meeting then disseminated their knowledge, skills, and information across grassroots LGBTQI+ organizations to ensure that communities across the country were well-informed, connected, and prepared for the general elections.

ASIA

Ondede - India



Ondede distributes information on the importance of vaccination among vulnerable communities.

The Covid-19 pandemic brought new challenges to vulnerable populations in India, including sex workers, trans people and trans youth. Ondede used SOAR funding to hold a free vaccination campaign for members of vulnerable groups alongside educational initiatives to teach the importance of vaccination against Covid-19. Ondede provided vulnerable communities access to psychosocial services in coordination with a variety of hospitals and healthcare officials, raising awareness about the importance of mental health and gender-inclusive curriculum under mental health policy. The organization met with public and private hospitals to discuss the importance of gender-affirming surgery and facilitated the launch of a committee across multiple hospitals to create guidelines for medical care for trans people. Ondede engaged in advocacy work for the implementation of a 2021 order of the Karnataka High Court for welfare measures supporting trans people. Ondede researched the impact of Covid-19 on vulnerable communities and met with government officials to discuss community struggles and the inclusion of sexual minorities under its state education policy. The organization also organized a civil society gathering to discuss the challenges of vulnerable communities during the pandemic.



Ondede staff meeting in Bombay with his Excellency the Governor of Maharashtra and the Minister of Education.

ASIA (continued)

Bandhu Welfare Society - Bangladesh

Online presence and social media usage in Bangladesh increased dramatically with the outbreak of Covid-19. Gender-diverse populations who use online spaces to express themselves and conduct advocacy and awareness campaigns were met with opposing forces, including religious extremists, who have targeted them with abuse, hate speech, threats, and violence, jeopardizing their mental health and overall well-being. As reliance on digital spaces increased with the Covid-19 pandemic, rising hostility brought new safety and security threats to gender-diverse populations. Bandhu Welfare Society received SOAR funding to develop a common safety mechanism for grassroots level frontline gender rights activists and gender-diverse populations. After conducting a risk assessment to analyze the situation of LGBTQI+ populations, the organization found that the majority of LGBTQI+ people in Bangladesh use social media, with 93% of respondents having experienced online violence. The organization used SOAR support to raise awareness of different risks and vulnerabilities regarding well-being while using digital platforms. Bandhu Welfare Society created a module on combating digital violence to assist in capacity-building for grassroots community advocates alongside an animated video on gender diversity and digital well-being to circulate in trainings and on social media.

Best Practices Foundation - India

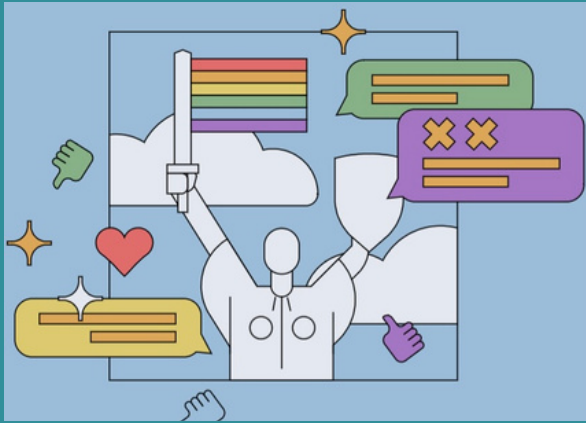


The Covid-19 pandemic and consequent lockdowns in India disproportionately impacted vulnerable groups, including sex workers and gender and sexual minorities, particularly in rural areas. Vulnerable populations faced increased incidents of homelessness, shrinking livelihood options, difficulty accessing gender-affirmative care, and higher amounts of stigma and discrimination. The Community Based Organizations (CBOs) that work within vulnerable communities at the grassroots level were severely compromised by the Covid-19 pandemic. The Best Practices Foundation used SOAR funding to develop a training manual on human rights focusing on domestic violence, abuse, criminal procedures, and fundamental rights in the Indian Constitution. The Foundation strengthened their crisis intervention documentation format and translated the resource to strengthen the visibility of violence. The Foundation also held legal trainings in three states of

South India to discuss the training manual and crisis documentation format. The Foundation's efforts increased understanding of human rights and the importance of evidence gathering of human rights violations among vulnerable populations and built networks with key stakeholders such as lawyers, healthcare providers, and government officials.

EUROPE AND EURASIA

Insight Public Organization - Ukraine



Insight Public Organization – Ukraine - Insight Public Organization used SOAR funding to equip LGBTQ+ activists with tools and strategies to protect against online harassment in the form of hate speech and threats. The project included research on the roots and prevalence of anti-LGBTQ+ hate speech in Ukraine, along with a detailed guide for activists on how to respond to online harassment on different social media platforms. The comprehensive guide on digital safety includes information on what to do about inappropriate messages and comments, how to protect access to your accounts and personal information,

how to respond to other forms of online attacks such as phishing and "zoombombing," and how to preserve psychological well-being in the face of online harassment. Insight's findings from their review of LGBTQ+-related Ukrainian social media activity can be found here: <https://www.insight-ukraine.org/special/commentsLGBT/>. Their guide for digital security can be found at <https://www.insight-ukraine.org/special/online-security-guide/>.

NGO LGBTI Forum Progress - Montenegro

Montenegrin NGO LGBTI Forum Progress used SOAR funding to cover crucial costs of its LGBTI Shelter program. Montenegro's Ministry of Human and Minority Rights unexpectedly discontinued funding to the program due to a change of government. The short notice of this substantial loss threatened to close the entire program during a time at which the pandemic had rendered the LGBTIQ+ community particularly vulnerable. NGO LGBTI Forum Progress used SOAR support for minimal shelter expenses as well as an on-site social worker, who assessed the social circumstances of each of the shelter's beneficiaries and provided mediation services when beneficiaries encountered violent, unwelcoming environments.

Bilitis Resource Centre - Bulgaria

The Bilitis Resource Center used SOAR support to respond to an increase in anti-LGBTQI+ actions in summer 2021 which was exacerbated by national elections. Nationalist parties that failed to qualify for elections were looking to gain electoral votes by attacking LGBTQI+ activists and organizations. The Center used funding to provide emergency security protection at 25 events during June alongside the installation of security cameras and a panic button at Rainbow Hub, an LGBTQI+ community center. The Center also used funding to launch a public campaign called "Vote with Love" featuring prominent Bulgarian personalities and influencers aimed to create an understanding among the LGBTQI+ community and progressive Bulgarians of the importance of voting in the upcoming elections.

LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN

Movimiento Trans Feminista - Bolivia

Movimiento Trans Feminista used SOAR funding to hold workshops and produce materials surrounding Bill 348 on "Guaranteeing a life free of violence for women" in Bolivia. In December 2020, the Bolivian government invited civil society organizations to provide input over the bill's modification. Movimiento Trans Feminista engaged with LGBTQI+ communities through meetings and webinars to promote the inclusion of trans women in the ongoing debate. The organization capitalized on public events and social networking, advocating for research-based evidence and securing commitments from key political figures. The project strengthened institutional capabilities and leadership skills within the organization. Movimiento Trans Feminista has achieved greater visibility within the trans community and on a national level, receiving requests for collaboration from elected officials, human rights advocacy organizations, and others.



Impulso Trans - México



The Xochihua - Collective Care and Dissidences: Collective Care and Sexual Dissidences Program was carried out to promote safety and self-care in response to a rise in violence against trans people in Jalisco during the Covid-19 pandemic. The program included a workshop comprised of five sessions dedicated to various topics, including care and safety as political tools of resistance, resilience, and awareness of mistreatment. Impulso Trans updated the safety measures of

its physical space and held a separate workshop focused on security protocols as a collective tool for LGBTQI+ organizations. With the help of the project's participants and collaborators, Impulso Trans created new strategies and tools to improve care within their community, organization, and on an individual level.