



TOGETHER

A 2030 AGENDA
APPROACH TO
VULNERABLE GROUPS IN
THE BASQUE COUNTRY



UNESCO ETXEA

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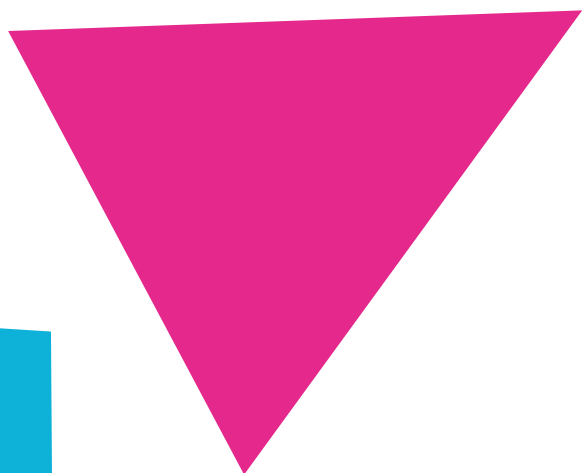
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FOREWORD

UNESCO Etxea is an association of people and organisations who are committed to the principles of the United Nations and of UNESCO. We want to develop individual and collective attitudes to make Basque society internalise the values of human rights, and to make us participants in the global challenge of communities' sustainable development.

UNESCO Etxea is a Basque organisation that has been working to build the 2030 Agenda since 2011 and, since its adoption in 2015, we have been committed to the Agenda as a tool for the attainment and defence of human rights, both in the Basque Country and internationally.

When the Agenda was announced, in 2015, it stated that the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and the 169 targets aim to make all people's human rights a reality, to achieve equality between the genders, and to empower all women and girls.

Therefore, at UNESCO Etxea we support public, private and social organisations and Basque society to participate actively in building, developing and evaluating the 2030 Agenda and to incorporate the human rights perspective. This is because the Agenda will only be transformative if it considers the contexts, needs and peculiarities of each group, both in the Basque Country and anywhere in the world.

With this conviction, in 2019 we launched the Todas Juntas – Guztiok Batera (“All Together”) work group. It emerged from the fact that, although the 2030 Agenda is increasingly well-known and has been adopted by public bodies and social stakeholders, there is still a long way to go in order to fulfil the commitment to place all people's rights at the centre, and those of vulnerable groups in particular.

The Todas Juntas – Guztiok Batera group is, at this early stage, made up of UNESCO Etxea, AMUGE, the Basque Youth Council, the World Rural Forum, Mujeres en la Diversidad and GEHITU. Through this project based on deepening knowledge, training

and shared reflection, Todas Juntas – Guztiok Batera aspires to identify vulnerable groups in the Basque Country, understand them in depth and strengthen them as active citizens, so that their voices may be heard, and that Basque society and all social stakeholders include these voices in our processes, thereby realising the aim of “leave no one behind”.

One of the major actions by this core group is the production of this report: “All Together. A 2030 Agenda approach to vulnerable groups in the Basque Country.”

We ask the question, who is being left behind in the Basque Country? Or rather, who are we leaving behind in the Basque Country? Answering this question is particularly complex if we understand that we are talking about heterogeneous and diverse social groups which have no reason to remain fixed over time.

Through this report, we will break down how the participating groups perceive the 2030 Agenda as a guide with which to work in a single direction. In this regard, it is particularly important to acknowledge the need for a tool that is not devised on the basis of privileges. The participants have emphasised the importance of continuously reviewing the gaps that are created which leave people in unequal situations from which to participate in sustainable development.

From a critical and proactive perspective, this report aims to contribute to designing, implementing and evaluating a genuinely transformative 2030 Agenda which, by placing the focus on the real situations of vulnerable groups, contributes to putting these people at the centre.

At UNESCO Etxea, the UNESCO Centre in the Basque Country, we would like to thank the five participating organisations for their commitment, participation and vision, as well as the five people who, through their life stories, have given testimony and a human face to the experiences of vulnerable groups in the Basque Country.

Arantza Acha de la Presa, Director of UNESCO Etxea – UNESCO Centre in the Basque Country

INTRODUCTION

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) pose a new challenge for the international community to eradicate poverty, extend access to human rights, fight against inequality based on gender and other factors (social or economic status etc.), and achieve development that respects the planet and its resources. Although the 2030 Agenda is increasingly well-known and has been adopted by many social stakeholders, especially public bodies and companies, there is still a long way to go in order to fulfil the commitment to “place all people at the centre”, given that institutional discourses and government plans still fail to put vulnerable groups at the centre, when they are the people to whom special attention and resources should be given.



This is the context in which the **“All Together”** project arose, driven by UNESCO Etxea in partnership with **AMUGE (the Romani Women’s Association of the Basque Country), EGK (the Basque Youth Council), WRF (the World Rural Forum), Mujeres en la Diversidad and GEHITU (the Lesbian, Gay, Bi, Trans and Intersex Association of the Basque Country)**, and with the support of the **Basque Development Cooperation Agency**. With this project, we intend to identify vulnerable groups in the Basque Country (groups whose rights are violated), understand them in depth and strengthen them as active citizens, so that their voices may be heard and to put pressure on Basque society, and decision-makers in particular, to fulfil their promises. In addition, this project has been created with a view to contributing an intersectional perspective to the implementation of a transformative sustainable development agenda, in both its local dimension and its global repercussions.

To achieve our aims, we propose a qualitative research project based on theoretical and practical investigation through five specific case studies. Through them, we will deepen our understanding of five specific groups in the Basque Country: the LGBT+ community, Romani women, migrant women, young people and day labourers. These groups are represented by the bodies mentioned above which are participating in the core group of the framework project.



Given the diversity of groups and communities in the Basque Country, the process of building the work group was based on a set of criteria related to how the project's aims are devised and achieved: the need to include groups made up of women, organisations with knowledge or previous experience of working with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, geographically located in the three Basque provinces and, in general, for the group to reflect diversity of various types, including sexual orientation, gender, culture, age etc.

Finally, on completing the research into the five case studies, the group created the **1st "All Together" Multi-Stakeholder Virtual Conference: A 2030 Agenda approach to vulnerable groups in the Basque Country**. This has enabled us to discuss and reflect on the key lines of research with a view to including new approaches and perspectives, propose policies and actions, and continue the work that "All Together" has been carrying out, through new organisations and social groups that have shown an interest in joining the work group: UNICEF Basque Country Committee, Amesten Elkarte, Koop SF 34 and Oscarte.



First meeting of the "All Together" work group, 3rd March 2020

DISCUSSION OF TERMINOLOGY

We consider it important to share with readers of these studies the exchange of opinion that took place regarding the terminology at the heart of "All Together". The starting point was the concept of "groups in vulnerable situations", given that the circumstances and situations surrounding people are what cause their vulnerability (as analysed in the theoretical framework). Then, the concept of "vulnerable groups" was debated, on the understanding that the rights of the people who belong to these groups are vulnerable to violation. There is an overall preference for the latter term when making direct reference to people as holders of rights. Therefore, we can discuss vulnerability situations or vulnerable groups/individuals.

Similarly, we began with the idea of talking about "groups" within society, and concluded that, in many cases, we are not talking about organised groups but rather communities. Therefore, we use the generic term "social groups" to refer to all cases.



THE 2030 AGENDA FOR TRANSFORMATION WITH A FOCUS ON RIGHTS

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development proposes 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), which were set out in the closing statement of the development summit “Transforming Our World: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development” by the General Assembly of the United Nations. It **addresses all the countries in the world, regardless of their economic standing and development.** In fact, one of its key characteristics is the recognition that problems occur everywhere in the world, and that unsustainable lifestyles in some countries affect social, environmental and economic matters in other countries.

The Agenda is broad in its scope, consisting of complex and interlinked issues, and it requires equally broad, complex and interlinked collective actions. Therefore, it foresees the establishment of partnerships between traditional and non-traditional actors, including all levels of government (national, regional and local), civil society, academia, the private sector, trade unions and the United Nations system.

In the process of building the Agenda and the SDGs, both civil society and the UN Secretary-General's panel of experts insisted on **human rights sitting at the centre of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development**, and addressing its goals from the basis of the integrity, universality, indivisibility and interdependence of human rights. In other words, they considered that the SDGs should sit within the international framework of human rights. The preamble to the Agenda states that the SDGs: “*seek to realize the human rights of all.*” In addition, in paragraph 8, it proposes a vision of the future which aims to achieve “*a world of universal respect for human rights and human dignity, the rule of law, justice, equality and non-discrimination*” between countries and within them, also including gender equality.

The Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) considers that great efforts have been made for the Agenda in the framework of human rights. Nevertheless, this inclusion of human rights in the 2030 Agenda has been a com-



plex path, composed of various stages in which several nations were reluctant to use the language of human rights (UNESCO Etxea, 2019).

However, it is considered that the SDGs will be particularly significant for the human rights agenda in the next few years, as they acquire more influence over public policy than international treaties with regard to human rights. At the same time, as it is a two-way relationship, it is also clear that the effective implementation of the 2030 Agenda relies heavily on its commitment to human rights. In other words, they are interlinked and they reinforce one another, contributing **an international legal framework by means of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, and an action plan through the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs for sustainable human development and transformation** into more inclusive, equitable and sustainable societies.

In particular, the 2030 Agenda is designed to be a tool for transforming people and the planet, as well as a key part of sustainable human development. In this regard, it is essential for all countries to be involved on a multi-level scale for it to be implemented and then monitored. Although it is largely the responsibility of governments to implement the 2030 Agenda, **the involvement of a critical and committed public, who are aware of the social, cultural, environmental and economic contexts, particularly favours the achievement of the SDGs.**

The **role of organised civil society** is crucial for the genuinely transformative development of societies, in order to position all people at the centre. In other words, the 2030 Agenda presents an opportunity to place people's rights and caring for the planet at the centre of political action, in which organised civil society must provide the vision, knowledge and link to society, and to the most affected groups in particular. In fact, all the SDGs include specific targets that refer to civil society organisations, as this can focus the goals in a more pragmatic way and align the Agenda with local action (Futuro en Común, 2019).

To achieve this collaboration between stakeholders, the Agenda states that **traditional mechanisms must be complemented by new participatory mechanisms in which all people's voices can be heard** (UNESCO Etxea, 2019). In this way, transformation will only be achieved through work for and by the community, creating partnerships between civil society, companies and institutions, public authorities, the third sector etc. *"All countries and all stakeholders, acting in collaborative partnership, will implement this plan,"* states the 2030 Agenda preamble, on the importance of **involving stakeholder groups** in the processes of implementation, monitoring and revision.



SOCIAL GROUPS FROM AN INTERSECTIONAL PERSPECTIVE

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights states that all people are born free and equal in dignity and rights. And yet, **millions of people around the world experience discrimination** on the basis of age, sex, disability, ethnicity, origin, religion, economic status or other reasons. The context for this discrimination is the **phenomenon of inequality**. Inequality comes in many forms: there is inequality in the distribution of wealth, inequality of opportunity, unequal access to resources, multi-dimensional poverty, the digital divide, energy inequality and more, not to mention the infinite ways in which they affect many people on the planet whose rights are violated.

At the same time, that social vulnerability entails deprivation of resources, which may lead to material, emotional and relational risks as a result of the various forms of inequality and how they interact, including economic status, work conditions, migration, gender, ethnicity, sexual diversity, different abilities and so on. In other words, **inequality in all its forms causes a lack of recognition of people's fundamental rights**.

However, the origin of these inequalities does not lie in the individual or their own characteristics, but rather in the structure of the system, that produces them. Discrimination emerges from the injustices that are rooted in the structure of nations and markets, through standards, prejudices and stereotypes that are not necessarily evident (Barrière and Morondo, 2011).

Discrimination is, therefore, a social construct and it occurs in relation to a system of values, ideas, beliefs and customs. In addition, the complexity of the social context leads us to simplify people's behaviour and align with the ideas of our own groups, rejecting the rest (Oswald, 2020). This is an unconscious process and it **creates obstacles for those who decide to take a different path to the established or normative one, as it produces prejudices and stereotypes** towards them.

All discriminatory behaviours, whether group, individual or systemic, reinforce situations of social vulnerability. This entails exposure to social and natural risks that may have **negative effects in various material and non-material aspects, from economic income to access to health, education or social services** (Busso, 2002).



Therefore, given the principles of “leave no one behind” and “place people at the centre”, both of which are key elements of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, **we must work from a broad, multi-dimensional and intersectional understanding of social groups**, as they are both complex and dynamic.

Intersectionality is a term coined in the United States in the 1980s to reflect the interaction between race and gender. It is defined as *“the interaction of multiple identities and experiences of exclusion and subordination”* (UN Women, 2018). That is, we understand that social categories are constructed, and also that they interlink and overlap in ways that may increase the risk of discrimination.

Intersectionality as an approach requires a deep consideration of power, and a rejection of the assumption that an individual must belong to a particular social group. This approach is needed as an analytical tool in order to understand the interaction between the various systems of oppression and discrimination (AMUGE Association, 2021).

In addition, **the intersections inherent in the system mean that groups that experience discrimination and are in vulnerable situations are not fixed or homogeneous**. Nevertheless, the social categories that entail these vulnerable situations do not disappear, giving rise to an infinite number of vulnerable groups which lose their group political identity to dissolve into individuality (Barrère and Morondo, 2011).

Likewise, the intersectional approach allows us to understand the situations of groups and individuals as part of a broader social dynamic. In this regard, we are reminded of Urie Bronfenbrenner's concept of the ecology of human development (1987), which contributes significantly to research into human development and the interaction between people and their surroundings. To understand behaviours and relationships, and therefore discriminatory situations and situations of inequality, we need to understand the role played by the surroundings and the environmental systems around us, such as the **microsystem** (immediate surroundings), the **mesosystem** (relationships between microsystems) and the **macrosystem** (culture and subcultures). In fact, Bronfenbrenner asserts that development is a change in how we perceive environmental systems and how they relate to each other.

“Just as genetic expression depends on the epigenetic context, so intellectual expression is conditioned by the characteristics of the ecological environment and by access to and enjoyment of physical and immaterial goods. In effect, if Human Rights are inalienable, there is a supreme right: the right to life, as it is an essential requirement in order to exercise any other right” (Federico Mayor Zaragoza, 2011).

In short, considering the complexity and variants in vulnerable situations, we can affirm that vulnerability is dynamic and multi-dimensional in that it affects different people and groups in different aspects of their lives, in diverse ways and to different extents (Busso, 2002).



CHALLENGES TO THE AGENDA



The year **2020 marks the start of the Decade of Action to achieve the SDGs** for the year 2030. Therefore, the next 10 years are particularly significant when accelerating our responses to the global challenges of eradicating poverty, achieving true equity between the genders and reversing the effects of climate change.

In 2020, we have found ourselves immersed in an unprecedented international crisis: the COVID-19 pandemic. Without a doubt, COVID-19 has had an impact on the 2030 Agenda and the achievement of its goals. According to the Spanish Global Compact Network (2020), the pandemic has had a positive impact on the Agenda and the SDGs in the case of climate change, but a very negative one in other cases, such as the detriment caused to public health, the increase in inequality and the global economic slow-down, which may endanger the implementation of national sustainable development programmes and the Paris Agreement on climate change.

However, **we must now more than ever work together on a local and global level to reverse the effects of the crisis.** In particular, in this regard, the 2030 Agenda and the 17 SDGs are designed to act as a shared roadmap with which to address and respond to these challenges:



CHALLENGES IN OUR WORLD TODAY

Billions of our citizens continue to live in poverty and are denied a life of dignity.

There are rising inequalities within and between countries.

There are enormous disparities of opportunity, wealth and power.

Gender inequality remains a key challenge.

Unemployment, particularly youth unemployment, is a major concern.

Global health threats, more frequent and intense natural disasters, spiralling conflict, violent extremism, terrorism and related humanitarian crises and forced displacement of people threaten to reverse much of the development progress made in recent decades.

Natural resource depletion and adverse impacts of environmental degradation, including desertification, drought, land degradation, fresh water scarcity and loss of biodiversity add to and exacerbate the list of challenges which humanity faces.

Climate change is one of the greatest challenges of our time and its adverse impacts undermine the ability of all countries to achieve sustainable development.

Increases in global temperature, rising sea levels, ocean acidification and other climate change impacts are seriously affecting coastal areas and low-lying coastal countries, including many least developed countries and developing small island nations.

The survival of many societies, and of the biological support systems of the planet, is at risk.

Extracted from: Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (United Nations, 2015).

Turning now to the specific case of the Basque Country, in line with these global challenges the Basque Government has produced the "Basque Programme of Priorities for the 2030 Agenda". It is the legislature's action plan which sets out the General Secretary for Social Transition and the 2030 Agenda's 2021-2024 work plan.

This work plan establishes four key pillars, in response to the United Nations Decade of Action:

- Outreach, to promote a Basque 2030 Agenda Social Contract culture and a line of action with that aim.
- Coordination, to update interdepartmental, inter-agency and social governance mechanisms in accordance with the Decade of Action goals.
- Evaluation, to adapt mechanisms for alignment, monitoring and evaluation of the Basque contribution to fulfilment of the SDGs, to meet the new priorities.
- Prioritisation, to define seven driving commitments and seven key projects that represent the Basque Government's determination in relation to the SDGs.



WHO IS BEING LEFT BEHIND IN THE BASQUE COUNTRY?

Bearing all of the above in mind, answering this question is particularly complex if we understand that we are talking about heterogeneous and diverse social groups which have no reason to remain fixed over time.

To focus on the Basque Country's specific profile, the **Foessa Report 2019 on Social Exclusion and Development in the Basque Country** offers some guidelines, bearing in mind that it reflects the particular case of the Basque Country, prior to the pandemic. In addition, it is an analysis that focuses on people experiencing social exclusion. However, not all vulnerable people or groups are in this situation.

On the one hand, there are three main areas of social risk that have a strong impact in the Basque Country: **housing** (22.2% of the Basque population is affected by difficulties in this area), **health** (15.5%) and **employment** (14.5%).

On the other hand, the sociodemographic profile of the households and the main breadwinners in social exclusion comprises **women** aged 45 to 56 years, of whom **48% work**. This means that employment alone does not guarantee social inclusion, but rather that working conditions need to be improved. **Nine out of 10 are of Spanish nationality** and half are in **cities with more than 100,000 inhabitants**.

This is a snapshot of the distribution of social exclusion in the Basque Country, but if we consider the profiles at highest risk of exclusion, the main breadwinners are **under 30 or migrants from outside of the EU**.

In addition, as a result of the COVID-19 crisis, many social groups and people are at increased risk of vulnerability, including some who we did not identify as vulnerable before the pandemic. For example, during the pandemic, self-employed people running small local businesses have experienced a particularly difficult situation, along with staff in the hospitality sector who have had no choice but to stop working and, as a consequence, lose their source of income. Furthermore, for people and groups in society who were already experiencing vulnerability, their situation has worsened.

In many cases, epidemiological vulnerability is closely linked to social vulnerability. A study by the Basque Government Department for Health has concluded that there is



a link between health and social inequality. More specifically, place of residence is a determining factor for health:

On the one hand, there are the residents' individual socio-economic and demographic factors which, along with social class, gender and country of origin, determine their living and working conditions. The health of an area's population is therefore conditioned by this "compositional" effect, the result of the sum of those individual characteristics. On the other hand, there are contextual or area effects, which are the characteristics of the geographical area that determine the population's health beyond the individual characteristics of the inhabitants. These contextual or area effects include the physical environment, socio-economic and cultural characteristics, urban design, the labour market, availability of public and private services and leisure facilities. (Basque Government, 2015).

In other words, situations of inequality and rights violations are closely linked not only to the specific characteristics related to social exclusion and vulnerability, but also health and place of residence.

Returning to the Foessa Report 2019, we find another very significant key for the study in hand: *"Effective participation in the decision-making process is one of the key elements on which we have built our model of integration in society."* However, the figures are as follows: the rate of **political participation** for households experiencing social exclusion (11%) is lower than that of households experiencing integration (26.9%).

Giving voice to people who are experiencing vulnerability is the key to preventing and reversing such situations. Therefore, this investigation not only aims to discuss vulnerable groups in the Basque Country and understand in depth the situations of a few of them, but also to demonstrate their demands and specific proposals for action.

In the case studies, we will address the questions raised through five vulnerable groups in the Basque Country: **Romani women, young people, day labourers, the LGBT+ community and migrant women.**



WHO WILL MAKE THESE RIGHTS A REALITY?

A PERSPECTIVE ON DUTY BEARERS

Maidier Maraña

Director of Baketik Foundation.

Throughout this project, we discuss readings of the current situation that indicate that inequalities exist, and that they are the result of a structural system that not only fails to combat them, but in fact sometimes fosters inequality and discrimination towards certain people and groups. We also consider how our protection systems, especially human rights, as well as policies on international and other levels such as the 2030 Agenda, may indicate a way forward. But **who really has the duty to fight for this? Who has to do the work?**

Human rights are a universal legal guarantee, which protect the human values of freedom and dignity and which belong to all people from birth. In addition, human rights are a historical construct, because they have emerged gradually and **they are in a constant process of construction and reconstruction. They are tools with which to challenge injustice and, as they are the result of social struggles,** they are often seen as a victory.

We know that they exist and that we can demand them if they are violated, because they are recognised in international laws and standards. But **who ensures these rights are met?**

In general, the “classic” approach centres on **nation states** as the *duty bearers*: the governments of countries throughout the world are obliged, through human rights legislation, **to do certain things and refrain from others.** This is what is known as the obligations to respect, protect and implement human rights:



OBLIGATIONS	WHAT DOES IT MEAN?	FOR EXAMPLE?
RESPECT	The obligation to respect human rights entails not interfering or impeding their implementation.	A State would be violating this obligation to respect if it decided to prevent Romani children from attending school.
PROTECT	Public bodies have the responsibility to ensure that third parties do not violate our rights.	States must protect the labour rights of day labourers and prevent contracting companies or individuals from flouting the approved standards or violating their dignity, and must ensure payment of the minimum wage.
IMPLEMENT	This third concept obliges public bodies to adopt and action the policies, measures, budgets and programmes that ensure the full implementation of rights.	Public institutions should implement policies that promote paying due attention to diversity in public health systems, including attention to people in the LGBTQI+ community, with staff training, specific programmes and budgets that ensure a satisfactory, non-discriminatory service.

In addition, it is often said that States cannot implement everything we request due to lack of funds. However, the concept of progressive realisation exists. It forms a fundamental duty for organisations to adopt appropriate measures designed to achieve the full implementation and effectiveness of economic, social and cultural rights, to the maximum extent that their resources allow. However, this situation does not release governments from the duty and responsibility to immediately launch certain key measures relating to rights, such as repealing all discriminatory laws, taking measures to ensure the minimum essential obligations and a commitment not to take “backward steps” in areas where progress has already been achieved, which is known as the prohibition of regressive measures.

Of course, among the groups identified in this paper (Romani women, young people, day labourers, the LGBTQI+ community and migrant women), there is **a clear group of duty bearers made up of the various levels of Spanish administration, from national government, to the autonomous communities, provinces and municipalities.** In addition, all the bodies and institutions that depend on those authorities may also be involved as part of those stakeholders with responsibilities to fulfil human rights.

We can find an example of our public bodies’ duties in relation to rights when we observe the Romani community: the international community has indicated that one of the main problems faced by Romani people is a **clear lack of political will to combat xenophobia** against them. According to the United Nations, “although much progress has been made on an international and regional level, there are many shortcomings in national and local plans, which remain crucial if we are to achieve substantial change for communities. Unfortunately, the measures adopted to correct the disadvantage experienced by Roma peoples still depend to a great extent on the personal determination of the specific political leader in power” (UN, 2015).



ACCOUNTABILITY: DUTIES OF STATE STAKEHOLDERS AND BODIES:

The various levels of administration must be transparent and provide the understanding and information needed to demonstrate that they are developing policies and launching programmes to implement human rights. They must:

- Ensure that national laws align with the terms of international treaties on human rights.
- Inform and educate people about our rights, to create broad partnerships for social change in society.
- Promote transparency in how proposals are developed and increase the capacity for budget analysis.
- Support channels to have the information and statistics needed to provide data.
- Increase the capacity for policy analysis and evaluation of social impact among technical staff.
- Support freedom in the media (based on OHCHR, 2006).



Subsequently, as we have seen, those original human rights laws have gradually become broader and more specific, to eventually form a **set of standards for action**, which give rise to the **responsibilities of duty bearers**, which no longer comprise just the **various State bodies** but rather **all levels of society** (OCHCR, 2006). In this way, **on an individual level, we must respect the human rights of others just as we expect our own human rights to be respected.**

Nevertheless, although we may all consider ourselves partly responsible for not violating other people's rights, it is evident that some stakeholders have a significantly greater role to play in strictly upholding the standards of rights protection. A clear example is the role of private companies and economic stakeholders. For many years, it has proved difficult to demand that corporations respect human rights, but today, through the United Nations, we have instruments that raise awareness of the fact that **companies, as well as the countries with which those companies do business, have a duty to fulfil our rights.**

In situations where companies have violated the rights of specific communities, such as indigenous communities, or have generated waste that violates several communities' rights to a healthy environment, the State has the duty to protect us from those rights violations. This may entail adopting measures that prevent such violations, such as anti-discrimination laws in access to work or regulating against the lack of information when a company decides to take an action that has an impact on our land and that affects us. States must also ensure there are investigation, sanction and reparation mechanisms in place when rights have been violated.

Human rights violations by companies – and multinational corporations in particular – have been and continue to be very significant, therefore it is important to demand ever stricter monitoring, especially in all companies that receive money from the public purse. There are countless documented examples in which “companies take advantage of inefficient and poorly applied national laws, with devastating consequences for people and communities” (Amnesty International). In this regard, there are barely effective mechanisms to prevent companies from continuing to commit human rights abuses or to make them accountable for their actions.

According to the United Nations (OHCHR, 2011), the responsibility to respect human rights requires companies to:

- Ensure that their own actions do not provoke or contribute to provoking negative consequences for human rights, and face those consequences when they do occur;
- Try to prevent or mitigate the negative consequences for human rights that are directly related to operations, products or services provided by their commercial relationships, including when they have not contributed to their creation.

These responsibilities apply to **both actions and omissions** on the part of these companies – that is, to both what they actually produce and what they do not do to avoid potential violations.

But, considering the issue of vulnerable groups, one of the most pertinent matters is for **all companies to have the duty to address any possible discrimination they may produce:**



COMPANIES: NON-DISCRIMINATION DUTIES

Companies must work in a non-discriminatory way, **with particular attention paid to the rights, needs and problems of people who belong to groups or communities at greater risk of having their rights violated or being marginalised.**

In addition, this applies **whether the discrimination occurs actively** (for example, if a company decides not to hire women), **or whether it is an involuntary consequence** of the organisation's structure or operation (OHCHR, 2011).

For example, the United Nations emphatically affirms that "women suffer the adverse effects of business activity in a different and disproportionate way" (UN, 2019), including girls as well as transgender and intersex women. Women's contribution to the economy is not recognised (for example, in domestic work) or underestimated (for example, in female-dominated occupations and industries). Women undertake the majority of caring work for dependent people (such as caring for children, the elderly or sick and family members with disabilities), but the majority receive no payment for it (UN, 2019). This is also reflected in the professional ambit and in companies. In addition, **the situation is more acute when it overlaps with other variables that are subject to discrimination, as in the case of migrant women or women of Romani ethnicity.**

It is important to understand that these rules do not only apply to large multinational corporations: **small and medium-sized companies** operating in this country, for example, must also ensure that they do not violate the human rights of their staff or the people who live in the places where they operate. The size of a company does not exempt it from ensuring appropriate treatment of people and does not exonerate it from its responsibilities.

Another significant stakeholder in the world of work and the economy is **trade unions**, whose purpose is to defend the rights of working people in vulnerable situations and to report wrongdoing that occurs in the economic space.

A specific example can be found in relation to the **right to housing**: various groups, including migrants, people of Romani ethnicity and LGBTQI+ people, are systematically denied the right to rent or purchase a home. They may experience discrimination in access to housing because of **unfair treatment on the part of private landlords, housing agencies or credit providers** (banks, for example, which may reject a mortgage or rental support application). Therefore, these stakeholders are also responsible for possible human rights violations.

In short, despite the advances that have been made in recent decades in human rights, **we need to turn the enjoyment of those rights into a practical reality**, using political will and human and economic resources that ensure other parties cannot violate them. Discrimination is unfortunately still a daily reality for many people and groups, and new challenges such as climate change, global pandemics and ongoing financial globalisation may aggravate the situation.

It is important to remember that economic difficulties do not exempt public authorities from meeting their obligations, nor do they give them the right to prioritise other matters over human rights. **It is vital that we empower ourselves as people and groups to drive vigilance and remind duty bearers of their responsibilities.**

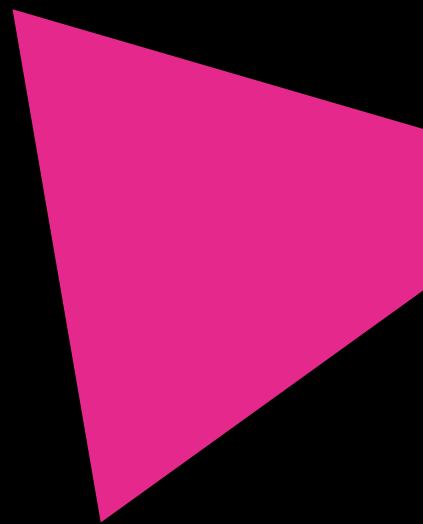
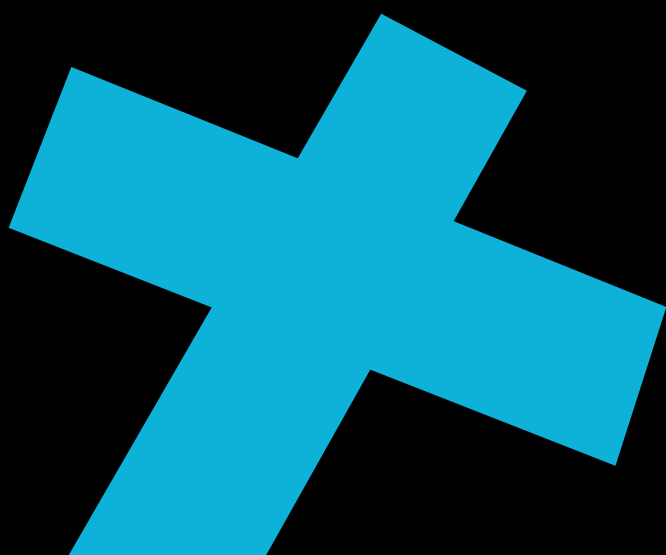




Photo by Tingey Injury Law Firm on Unsplash



CASE STUDIES





1 AMUGE, THE CASE OF ROMANI WOMEN

"Collectivism over individuality"

(Tamara Clavería Jiménez, president of AMUGE).

AMUGE, the Basque Country Romani Women's Association, has the mission to defend and promote the rights and integrated development of the Romani community in general and, in particular, to serve, promote and empower Romani women in the Basque Country Autonomous Community without losing their ethnic and cultural identity.

AMUGE was founded on 18 July 2003 by a group of Romani and non-Romani women, who were pioneers in the Basque Country. In the association's early history, the governing board focused its voice and action on representing Romani women, on the understanding that Romani women themselves have to be the ones to express their own needs. In April 2012, Tamara Clavería Jiménez, a Romani woman with training and experience in the socio-educational field took the organisation's driving seat, together with two other women who were well-regarded in their community. She became the new President of AMUGE. It is now made up of 117 partners.



Image provided by AMUGE.



Situation of the Romani community, and Romani women in particular, in the Basque Country:

- 43% of the Basque Country Romani community live in extreme poverty.
- Two in three Basque Romani families cannot cover their basic needs.
- Life expectancy for Basque Romani women is 20 years less than the rest of Basque society, and even lower than for Romani men.
- The Romani community has a school failure rate of 64% compared to 13% for Basque society; there is a curricular gap of two years compared to non-Romani school pupils.
- Only 6% of Romani women successfully complete secondary education in the Basque Country.
- Just 0.29% of the Basque Romani population enter higher education.
- The employment rate for women in the Basque Country is 57.10%, compared to 33.6% of Romani women. The majority of working Romani women are self-employed. It is calculated that the employment rate is under 5% if the self-employed are excluded.
- There were 14,000 people of Romani ethnicity in the Basque Country in 2006.

In this context, AMUGE has documented the invisibility of Romani feminist culture, history, language and materials, as well as the lack of public recognition of important dates in the Romani calendar, such as 8th April, International Roma Day, or 16th November, Day of the Basque Romani Community.

In addition, as a consequence to historic and structural "anti-gypsism", there is evidence of a shortage of training among the Romani community in the Basque Country, a lack of role models for Romani women and young people, and limited access to employment and housing. In fact, for Romani individuals to get a job or rent a home, they may have to conceal their cultural identity.

Racism exists in all areas of life, and it also has an impact on the geographical distribution of ethnic groups. In particular, the Basque Romani population is subject to direct and indirect segregation, resulting in ghettoisation and the creation of marginalised enclaves where many rights are not met. A clear example is the neighbourhood of Otxarkoaga in Bilbao, the only neighbourhood where schools do not offer models B and D, which effectively denies pupils access to quality Basque-language education.

In addition, the data gathered reflects the situation prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, but the shortfall in meeting basic needs has worsened. Furthermore, at the start of the pandemic, racist attacks towards the Romani community increased as a result of the generalisation and criminalisation of a whole community for transmitting the virus: it was first directed at Asian communities, and later the Romani community.

The digital divide has become more evident than ever before, bringing serious consequences, especially in education. In many cases, Romani families with scarce resources have found it difficult or impossible to ensure their children's education, with major repercussions for their acquisition of knowledge.

The association has had an extra workload to cover the needs that have emerged, from distributing food and school materials to helping with online administrative processes.

To respond to the inequality experienced by the Basque Romani community, AMUGE has two broad aims: for the Romani community to become educated and to construct real equality between men and women and between Romani and non-Romani people. Its projects have a dual perspective – feminist and anti-racist – in order to accurately reflect its mission and values. AMUGE's overriding



principle is Romani feminism, which is a form of feminism that does not exclude men. It proposes that Romani men, as well as mainstream society, have a role to play in questioning their privileges, supportively and without paternalism.

"Collectivism over individuality" (Romani feminism).

To be precise, one of the fundamental principles of the Romani community, which is also upheld in Romani feminism, is to work collectively to combat latent individualism. In this way, it is considered that partnership is the only way to resist and to fight, *"on a collective basis, not through hierarchy, and with respect, with love, with good practice"*, according to the President of AMUGE.

Finally, AMUGE does not overlook other important matters such as caring for the environment. It works on the basis of the community's ancestral relationship with nature, as reflected in its flag which is divided into two bands: a blue band to represent the sky, the ceiling of our homes, and a green band to represent the grass, our floor. However, as Romani people have become more urbanised, they have gradually lost some of this connection along with their celebrations that revolve around nature and rivers.

In particular, AMUGE supports the *Plastic-Free Market* project to reduce the use of plastic in markets. It is difficult to respond to these challenges when the community's most basic needs, such as housing or access to work, are not being met. Nevertheless, progress is being made in this regard to ensure that awareness-raising campaigns reach all parts of society.

Key demands:

- Proceed with analysis and diagnosis of the Basque Romani community's situation.
- Develop reparation policies and guarantees against repetition.
- Guarantee the right to work, which historically has been denied.
- Guarantee that a percentage of services and resources is allocated to Romani people and groups which the system excludes.
- Understand and recognise Romani culture in public systems, institutions and mainstream society.
- Professional training in intercultural and feminist methods in public spheres such as education and health.
- Awareness-raising campaigns on the identity of Romani women, breaking down stereotypes and the mythology around Romani women.
- In policy, change the concept of integration to inclusion.
- Greater representation of Romani women in positions of power and decision-making roles.



Imagen cedida por AMUGE



LIFE STORY: MARI MAR CLAVERÍA

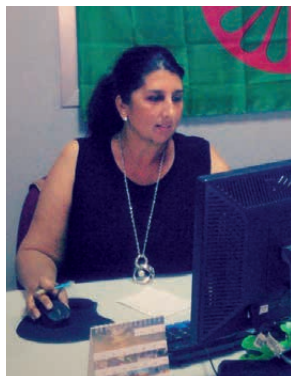


Image provided by AMUGE.

Mari Mar Clavería Jiménez is a Romani woman, a volunteer and a board member for AMUGE, the Basque Country Romani Women's Association. She feels happy about the way her life has panned out, especially when she remembers her childhood and adolescence, which she believes were great stages in her life thanks to the values instilled in her and the support from her family.

"We are like this because we were lucky enough to be born into a family where we were loved and our decisions supported."

She married young and later separated, and today enjoys her relationship with her two sons. She is experiencing adulthood as a wonderful stage of life in which she has returned to her vocation and her fight for Romani women.

For Mari Mar, the greatest challenge is equality between Romani and non-Romani women, given that she has observed that equality of opportunity does not exist in society for the Romani community and she feels she is treated differently because she is Romani. For example, she describes working as a mediator with Romani women training for careers in hair and beauty and how, despite the women's excellent qualifications, it was very difficult for them to complete the relevant work placements: most hair and beauty salons, when told that the applicant was a Romani woman, happened to no longer have a position available. If this occurred when seeking trainee placements, imagine their chances when seeking employment.

"I am a woman, I am Romani and I am Basque," she affirms with pride.

Mari Mar explains the difficulties she experienced during the pandemic as a result of the digital divide between the Romani community and mainstream society. In fact, she offered her support and knowledge to help other women access public administration online, as it was the only form of access available.

There were also difficulties in their sources of income, as they work in street markets which were closed earlier than large supermarkets and then reopened with stricter measures in place than those applied to supermarkets.

Finally, with reference to future possibilities, Mari Mar dreams of a future in which the Romani community is recognised in society and by public bodies, and in which the right to employment and equality of opportunity are not a challenge.



2 THE BASQUE YOUTH COUNCIL (EGK), THE CASE OF YOUNG PEOPLE

"We are the much-discussed future, but we are the present too"
 (Maialen Olabe, President and Coordinator of EGK).

The Youth Council of the Basque Country (EGK) is an independent organisation that was created in 1986. Its function is to gather the opinions, suggestions, ideas and needs of young people in order to convey them to the public authorities in the Basque Country Autonomous Community and influence the plans and projects that affect young people.

Another of EGK's main functions is to monitor whether public policies match the reality in which young people live in the Basque Country.



Image provided by EGK.



To do this, they organise meetings and create work groups in their various fields of work: employment and housing, education, participation, equality, peace and living together, and communication.

Any young person can participate in these events.

Situation of young people in the Basque Country:

- 68.1% of young people are employed on temporary contracts, and 30.3% of young people are employed part-time.
- The average monthly salary of young people is €1,093 (€1,025 for women and €1,158 for men).
- The youth unemployment rate is 19.7%, compared to the overall rate of 10.2%.
- The average age at which young people leave the parental household is 29.6 years, 6 years later than the European average. Only 37.9% of young people live independently.
- Young people in the Basque Country spend on average 69.3% of their income on housing (77.1% for women, 64.4% for men). Spending 30% is recommended at a European level.

There are many different interests and needs among young people as it is a very diverse group. However, since the 2008 financial crisis, creating the life people want has been the most challenging part. At EGK, creating the life you want is understood as the chance to move out of the parental household and set out along a new path, for which employment and housing are fundamental and closely linked.

One of the main challenges that young people face is entering the labour market. As various indicators show, the employability statistics for young people are particularly alarming.

Young women experience the challenges faced by any young person, in addition to the specific challenges of the gender gap that is particularly salient in the world of work. In fact, most young women are on temporary contracts and are subject to greater instability when building the life they want.

Unemployment and precarious employment have increased with the COVID-19 pandemic. For young people, this situation has been compounded, in many cases, by unawareness and lack of experience of employment rights, ERTes (temporary redundancy plans implemented by many Spanish companies during the pandemic), etc.

The housing situation for young people is not much better. As we can see from the indicators, young people living independently in the Basque Country are in the minority, with an average age of 29.6 years, when EGK considers that 30 is the upper age limit between young people and adults.

Finally, with regard to the environment, young people identify themselves as one of the more aware sectors of society because it is ingrained in education for the younger generations.



Key demands:

- Learn from previous crises and avoid repeating patterns of precarious work and reductions in quality. Resolve both matters: precarious work and the unemployment rate.
- Commit to social rental housing. Take into account vacant housing in order to create a register and pass them to public administrations for management.
- Claim spaces for young people and other groups to meet and participate.
- Move away from paternalism towards young people.



Image provided by EGK.

LIFE STORY: AINHOA AZKARATE



Image provided by Ainhoa Azkarate.

"Make policies for the future, today."

Ainhoa Azkarate is a young woman of 23 who recently graduated with a degree in Political Philosophy and Economics. She currently lives in Deba, the town where she grew up and which she left when she went to university.

One of the first challenges she faced as a young person was deciding what to study and what to aim for professionally in an uncertain future, whilst leaving her city of origin behind to go and live in a city. Today, the idea of creating the life she wants seems a long way off, given that she has not yet joined the world of work and depends economically on her family.

Another challenge that Ainhoa considers relevant to young people is awareness of the resources available to them as a group: knowing about scholarship programmes, existing participation spaces and other resources aimed at young people. Young people need to know about them and learn to request them in order to make the most of them.

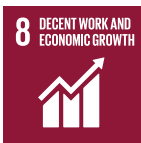
In fact, what matters most to Ainhoa as a young person is having spaces where she can participate and exchange opinions with other people, share her perspective as a young woman on a range of matters, spaces for debate, and in particular, spaces that public bodies can consult in order to include the whole group's opinions and needs in their policies.

During the pandemic, she says that, just like everyone else, "she had to stop", and she recognises her fortune in being able to return to the family home and not need to pay for housing.

She also told us about her experience as a student in Belgium, and her surprise at an educational system in which caring for the planet and sustainability are considered a common theme in every academic subject, on the basis of responsibility and commitment. Even so, she believes that there is a long way to go still at a global level although, in general terms, she perceives a widespread awareness among young people.

She thinks that public policies should focus on the future, but act in the present. She also believes that these actions should not only be individual, but also collective: *"The relationship between oil companies, which want to live for today, and those who believe we also have to consider tomorrow. Make policies for the future, today."*





3

WORLD RURAL FORUM AND ENDAA, THE CASE OF DAY LABOURERS

"The Basque Country in the 21st century has to have certain working conditions, certain minimum conditions that all groups and individuals can access. I believe that is imperative"

(Auxtin Ortiz, President of ENDAA, ex-director of the WRF).



Image provided by WRF and ENDAA.



The World Rural Forum (WRF) is a pluralistic network that promotes family farming and sustainable rural development. It comprises family farming associations and organisations, rural development bodies, cooperatives and agricultural research centres.

The WRF brings together bodies that represent more than 35 million farmers and family farms in more than 90 countries across 5 continents. In addition, it has collaborative relationships with hundreds of external stakeholders around the world.



Image provided by WRF and ENDAA.

Within the framework of these collaborations, the WRF works with the ENDAA association (whose name translates as “The Basque Country Leaves No One Behind”), to improve conditions for day labourers. This association emerged as a citizen response to the serious impact that COVID-19 had on thousands of people and families. As with any crisis, although the whole population has been affected, the people who were already in a vulnerable situation have borne the brunt of those effects. ENDAA contributes to social and economic recovery by a combination of practical action on the ground to create opportunities for people in vulnerable situations, and work to analyse and propose improvements to existing social policies.

Situation of the sector and day labourers:

- The agriculture sector is the world’s biggest employer and provides a living for 40% of the world population.
- Since the early 1990s, around 75% of crop diversity has disappeared from farmland.
- A better use of agricultural biodiversity can contribute to more nutritional diets, better lifestyles in farming communities and more resistant and sustainable agricultural systems.



- If women farmers had the same access to resources as men, the number of people who suffer from hunger in the world would drop by up to 150 million.
- Of the 7,209 people employed as day labourers in the Basque Country, just 839 are women and 61% are resident outside of the Autonomous Community of the Basque Country.

Managed properly, agriculture, dairy farming, forestry and fisheries can provide nutritional and culturally appropriate food for the whole planet, as well as generate a decent income, support development that focuses on rural people and protect the environment.

However, far-reaching reforms of the global farming and food system are needed to ensure access for all people to healthy, quality food, especially for the 815 million people who suffer from hunger.

With regard to the gender gap and the role of women in the sector, in a report by the WRF based on the Basque Country Farming Census, we calculated that the proportion of women farm owners in the Basque Country is around 30%. Progress has been made, such as the Basque Parliament's approval of the Statute on Women Farmers in 2015, which regulates the working conditions of female workers in the primary sector and the rural environment. Nevertheless, we still consider equality of opportunity between men and women and the sector's revitalisation to be fundamental factors in ensuring the sustainability of the rural environment's social and economic model.

Women farmers around the world play a vital role in production, as well as in the provision of food for their families and communities. They are at the centre of the construction of local economies, and they are the guardians of food security in a diverse range of countries and regions. However, their contributions to agriculture and to society are underestimated and the majority of farming policies and programmes are insensitive to the specific needs of women farmers. Many women have little access to land and water, or control over such natural resources; nor do they have free access to markets or education. They often lack a political voice in their countries' farming organisations and/or governmental bodies. They face gender discrimination at home and in society every day.

The gender gap is also clearly visible in the specific case of day labourers. The indicators reveal a significant inequality with relation to people employed as day labourers, in that the majority of day labourers in the Basque Country are men.

In general terms, the situation of day labourers in the Basque Country is complex. This vulnerable group is relatively invisible in studies and statistical data, to such an extent that finding specific indicators about this group is quite difficult. Therefore, the majority of indicators we can use relate to farmers and the farming sector in general.

In addition, this is not an organised group in the Basque Country, which makes it considerably more difficult to establish their demands and defend their rights through shared proposals.

It is common for day labourers to be subject to extremely precarious working conditions, which leads them to encounter barriers to access contribution-based benefits, for example, as their work



is temporary and seasonal. In fact, employability and working conditions are considered the key factor in improving the situation of day labourers.

As a result of the precarious nature of this work, it is rare to find a day labourer resident in the Basque Country who only works in agriculture: the conditions of this work mean people have to seek other jobs to cover their needs. This also makes it difficult for day labourers to identify with the job, and as a result, the group is less likely to self-organise.

A large part of the day labourer community is not resident in the Basque Country, as they come from other countries for the specific duration of the job and then return to their country of origin. This group of people faces a double challenge: that of working as a day labourer (a job that in itself is valued very poorly in society) and that of any migrant person (they often do not speak the language or know how the system works, understand their rights as workers etc.). In addition, this difference is significant in terms of housing, because residents of other countries tend not to have housing in the Basque Country, and are subject to further vulnerability in their living conditions.

Finally, with regard to the COVID-19 pandemic, the inequalities that already existed in society have become more visible. However, in the case of agriculture and day labourers, given that food is considered a key sector, its often-overlooked importance has been highlighted.

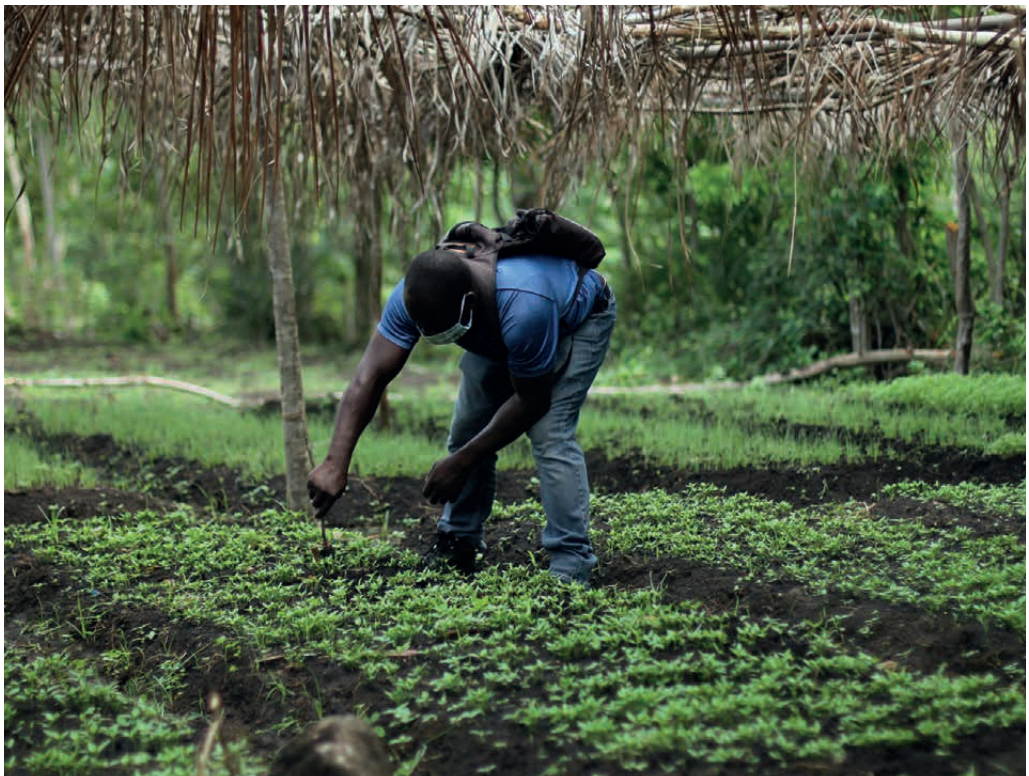


Photo by Mansado Louis on Unsplash



Key demands:

- Place value on the rural world in general and farm work in particular, given that it is an essential sector that is not recognised in society.
- Incorporate equality of opportunity between men and women, and revitalise the sector through farming policies that ensure the sustainability of the rural environment's social and economic model.
- Gather data, with a focus on day labourers: who are they, how many are there, what is their level of wellbeing, how can their situation improve etc.
- Greater self-organisation among day labourers, whether through their own organisations or through existing trade unions.
- Encourage stable employment of day labourers with better conditions, and enable them to carry out different agricultural work at different farms.



Photo by Markus Spiske on Unsplash

LIFE STORY: JUAN CARLOS HERNÁNDEZ



Image provided by Juan Carlos Hernández

Juan Carlos Hernández is a middle-aged man from Bilbao, who currently lives in Oyón, a municipality in rural Álava.

He got his first job at the age of 16 and has worked in various fields: courier and parcel services, catering distribution, driving tractors in vineyards and as a day labourer with functions including pruning, trimming and harvesting.

Today, Juan Carlos lives at his family home and is looking for work – a much more difficult task due to the pandemic. He explains that limits on travel have made it much harder for him to find a new job, as he finds it effective to deliver his CV in person as well as sending it electronically.

In addition, he has been volunteering with women who have experienced gender-based violence for the last 18 years, and this has heightened his awareness of the existing gender gap and inequality. From his experience, he thinks it is important to work on a basis of co-education and to raise public awareness of the inequalities between women and men in all areas of life.

He also thinks it is vital that we gain greater awareness of caring for the countryside and the environment, as well as improving conditions for the people who work there. He explains that he has enjoyed working in the sector, but he thinks farm labouring is hard work, and sometimes his wages depend on external factors such as the weather.

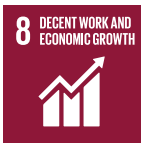
In fact, Juan Carlos sees employability as a great challenge, because the work of day labourers is closely tied to the grape harvesting seasons and this leads to severe instability of employment.

In his experience, he has noticed that more and more migrants work as day labourers in the Basque Country, and he has met many temporary workers in irregular situations. Many of them are highly educated, and even so they are in very precarious situations in terms of both work and housing. He generalises this situation to the whole group: *“Grape harvesters have had to sleep in the car after a day of work in the vineyard [...]. I've been through hard times and occasionally working in the field has worked out for me at €1 an hour, and it's hard work. But needs must.”*

He talks specifically about working on a “piece work” basis, which is a form of employment where the worker is paid for the unit of work, regardless of the time taken. *“I don't think it's fair, because some years there are a lot of grapes but other years there are not so many, or they weigh less, so you can work yourself into the ground and what you take home is peanuts.”* In addition, Juan Carlos explains that he hadn't seen this employment model for many years, but in 2020 it returned.

Finally, with a view to future possibilities, he calls for greater employability in the rural environment, and better working conditions in the sector. In particular he wants to see greater stability of employment and economic stability.





4

WOMEN IN DIVERSITY, THE CASE OF MIGRANT WOMEN

"Social participation is fundamental, but it can only happen when you feel like you're part of something, when you feel that what's there affects you as a citizen and it belongs to you too"

(Francy Fonseca, Mujeres en la Diversidad association).

Mujeres en la Diversidad ("Women in Diversity") is a group of women of different nationalities, which formed in 2007 with a view to creating a meeting place where the relationships they left behind when they began their migrations could start to form once more.



Image provided by Mujeres en la Diversidad.



They work to defend women's rights, no matter the colour of their skin, their religion or where they were born, through six constantly renewed lines of action: commitment to empowerment, belief in training as a means of personal and professional improvement, challenging prejudices and stereotypes, fighting to eradicate gender-based violence, networking and recognising the importance of leisure.

Situation of migrant women:

- 241,724 people of foreign origin live in the Basque Country Autonomous Community (BCAC), making up 10.9% of the province's population: 119,576 people in Biscay, 119,576 in Gipuzkoa and 42,671 Álava.
- Morocco, Colombia and Romania are the three main countries of origin for migrant people residing in the BCAC.
- Migrant women (52.4%) outnumber migrant men proportionally, the majority of whom are from the Americas (75,900, or 59.8% of the total).
- The population of foreign nationals residing in the Basque Country has an unemployment rate of 28.1%, compared to 7.6% for Spanish nationals.
- 26.7% of the migrant population with experience of employment in the BCAC indicate that their role is at a lower level than their qualifications.
- Discrimination is perceived and recognised in the Basque Country, with unequal treatment and opportunities for access to rental housing.
- One in two Basque people consider that having a different ethnic or cultural origin is a common reason for discrimination.
- With regard to discrimination by ethnic origin, the most affected people are those who are unemployed, the majority of whom come from Romania, sub-Saharan Africa and North Africa.



Image provided by Mujeres en la Diversidad.



Image provided by Mujeres en la Diversidad.

Migration not only contributes to maintaining the total population of the BCAC and partially rejuvenating an ageing population, but also brings broader cultural diversity which adds value to society.

Today, migrants' rights are not guaranteed, largely due to the Immigration Law which imposes structural restrictions which are rooted in collective thinking, and which lead to another series of spheres in which prejudices and stereotypes strengthen the existing inequalities between people.

There are many reasons for migration. Some of them relate directly to the irresponsible exploitation of natural resources in some countries, almost always by large multinationals. In other cases, war, political conflict, geopolitics, international agreements that affect national production, poverty and corruption can all lead to internal migration from small towns to big cities, as well as international migration. In some cases, migration takes place using money lent by family or by loan sharks and, in the case of women, it can also occur through human trafficking networks.

But migration is not random. In the case of the BCAC, it is not by chance that the majority of migrants are women and from South and Central America. The precarious global care chain has captured women from the South who continue to arrive today to work in caring and domestic roles, regardless of their qualifications and/or skills.

Regarding the **official situation** of migrant people according to the law, there is a serious lack of protection and stability for those who are in, or end up in, irregular situations. This, together with the process of dislocation from their country of origin, often with little knowledge of the language or awareness of the new cultural framework, obstacles to accessing the labour market, prejudices and stereotypes, creates a complex path to tread for those who come from other places of origin. For migrant women, these general circumstances add to the existing gender inequalities. They experience a cumulation of discrimination: as women, as migrants and as people in irregular immigration situations.

With regard to **work**, according to Iksupegi (2020), migrants are positioned at the lower levels of the labour structure and in the most precarious sectors, where they experience a high level of

instability and unemployment. There are significant differences, depending on the migrants' legal situation, origin, sex, length of stay and level of education.

Data analysis by Ikuspegi (2020) indicates that the participation of the foreign population in the labour market varies according to the place of origin. The following pattern emerges:

- The North and sub-Saharan African population have extremely concerning levels of unemployment, reaching over 50% for the sub-Saharan group, in addition to a precarious employment rate of 60%.
- People of Latin American nationality have a lower unemployment rate due to greater opportunities for access to the labour market, although it is largely through precarious employment (with a high percentage of employment without contracts), mainly in domestic service.
- Finally, the EU population has a high level of unemployment but a low level of precarious employment, while the Chinese population achieves nearly full employment with an unemployment rate of 5.3%.

Difficulties accessing regular employment are shaped by the Immigration Law, but it is true that many migrants take on informal work which is often linked to caring and domestic work.

In addition, many migrant women have taken on the social burden of private caring roles, sometimes at the cost of leaving the care of their own children or dependent relatives in the hands of other women. The lack of employment protection and recognition of rights in this sector has become even more clear as a consequence of COVID-19.

The pandemic has disproportionately affected migrant men and women, and those who are in regular or irregular situations. The data on entering the labour market and social security shows that migrant people occupy the most vulnerable jobs, therefore they were the first to be affected by the COVID-19 crisis. This is even more true of migrant women employed in domestic work, given that many of them, despite having the correct documentation, do not have contracts of employment, and therefore had no protection when they lost their jobs and no access to government support aimed at relieving the effects of the global pandemic.

In addition, the precarious nature of care work has worsened, as a huge number of migrant women have been employed without offering them the minimum rights and protections.

It is also important to mention the difficulty of access to PPE and protection when planning safe ways to tackle work under COVID-19. There have been cases of women who worked outdoors and were invited to work indoors to protect the health of the person they cared for, but with no option to negotiate: they either accepted the condition, or lost their jobs.

In this regard, another area in which migrants' rights are violated is in the **health** sphere, at a global level. In 2016, reports such as *Migration and Health in Spain*, written by researchers at the Epidemiology and Public Health Network Biomedical Research Centre (CIBERESP), recommended improvements to healthcare, occupational health, mental health, chronic and infectious diseases, and sexual and reproductive health.



Nevertheless, with regulations such as those established by Royal Decree 16/2012 (which has not been completely reversed by Royal Decree Law 7/2018), thousands of people were excluded from public health provision. Many still are, including those who have authorised residence on the basis of family reunification or as family members of EU citizens, after the Supreme Court of Justice delivered its judgement against healthcare for reunified families.

This judgement *"represents acknowledgement that the current legislation on universality does not guarantee the protection of all foreign people who reside in Spain in absolute terms [...]. This decision furthers the healthcare exclusion of people who are legally reunited in Spain, and turns its back on the international protection mechanisms recommended by the United Nations and the Council of Europe,"* states Marta Mendiola (2019), head of economic, social and cultural rights at Amnesty International Spain.

Finally, we must not forget migrants' exclusion from housing. It is perhaps one of the fiercest inequalities that exists, and one that is based on prejudices of origin. In the main, we must consider access to rented accommodation. This is because the migrant population is affected by evictions and difficulties keeping up housing payments (whether as owners or tenants), but they also face obstacles and discrimination in relation to the market of rental housing offered by letting agencies. These issues are linked to the crisis and to prejudices, and they add a layer of complexity to the precarious housing situation already experienced by migrants.

Migrants also face a greater number of requirements in order to access housing, and in many cases, they are required to provide unnecessary documents and information in order to rent a flat, such as their criminal record, information about the nationalities of all the people who would live there, marital status, children etc. All this stems from stereotypical images that are often associated with the migrant population and their use of living spaces. These requirements are not made of Spanish nationals.

This situation leads to residential segregation, with migrants moving towards the outskirts, towns surrounding regional capitals and the most rundown neighbourhoods. Reports by SOS Racism also confirm the existence of a segmented housing stock in which substandard housing is largely offered to the non-EU foreign population.

Key demands:

- Repeal the Law on Immigration.
- Ensure the basic needs of all people are met, regardless of their legal situation.
- Facilitate entry into the labour market under equal conditions.
- Facilitate the process of validating academic qualifications achieved outside of the European Union.
- Improve policies against discrimination and xenophobia, including public institutions and the general public as key aims.
- Eradicate paternalistic and assistance-based relationships between countries.



LIFE STORY: CLEMENTINE POUATOU



Image provided by Clementine Pouatou.

Clementine Pouatou is a middle-aged woman, originally from Cameroon. She has two children and has lived in the Basque Country for over 10 years.

On arrival in the Basque Country, she delivered talks to raise awareness of Cameroon and its culture. Through this, she observed ignorance about the African continent in the Basque population. So, she decided to launch her own project: the Solidaridad Euskalmon association, which aims to raise public awareness of Africa, and Cameroon in particular. *"We're going to try to bring Africa, and Cameroon in particular, closer to the Basque Country."*

One of the things that surprised Clementine the most was to discover that some Basque people think Africa is a single country. *"It hurts to think that I, as a student in my country, studied European history and education, and if I know the history and geography of Europe, why doesn't Europe know the history or geography of Africa?"* This is why she thought it was so important to use awareness-raising as the means with which to break down generalisations, prejudices and stereotypes towards migrant people.

These stereotypes affect the lives of migrants in general terms, but Clementine explains how they affect work in particular. She believes that each person should be valued for their qualities and abilities, without being swayed by prejudices or stereotypes: *"you don't have to be limited by the face of being a woman, a mother, a black person etc."* She stresses not judging people on the basis of their origin, gender or physical abilities, because what matters most is those people's minds, and understanding before judging.

She also brings to the table another point which is very relevant when entering the labour market: recognition of foreign qualifications. Clementine believes we need to *"take that step from theory to practice."* At present, tough legislation is what hinders recognition of migrant people's calibre and talents. *"It is practically impossible to validate a degree from an African university or institution. That causes discrimination too,"* she adds.

Although Clementine considers herself to have a positive mental attitude, she admits that the pandemic has had a severe social impact and has destroyed the little we had. However, she still has hope that things will improve, that we will learn from our experiences and start to appreciate life in a different way: *"another of life's learning curves, just like migration."*

Caring for the environment is extremely important to Clementine. She believes that the environment gives us life and, if we don't take care of it together, excess consumption will mean we end up "suffocating ourselves". She thinks we should value what nature gives us, and avoid excessive consumption and exploitation.

Finally, Clementine advocates for diversity, seeing it as an opportunity that makes contemporary society richer. She considers that society should continue along the path toward equity and the fair distribution of resources between countries.





5 GEHITU, THE CASE OF THE LGBT+ COMMUNITY

"You can get used to a situation, adapt and not fight it, or you can fight and not adapt [...]. Everyone should have the same options."

(Maitane Arzalluz, technical officer at GEHITU).

GEHITU, the Basque Country Gay, Lesbian, Trans, Bisexual and Intersex Association is a group of people united by the aim to achieve full recognition of the fundamental rights to dignity, equality and free sexual-affective relationships for people in the LGBT+ community, as well as the end of all legal and social discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation or gender identity.

GEHITU runs activities and initiatives in key spaces that determine the protection of the LGBT+ community's rights, particularly in the media, political institutions and education.



Image provided by GEHITU



Situation of the community:

- 69 member states of the UN still penalise sexual acts between consenting adults of the same sex.
- In 2019, sexual orientation and gender identity were the third most common motive for hate crimes in Spain, with 259 incidents reported.
- It is estimated that 60 to 80% of violence towards the LGBT+ community goes unreported.
- There has been a considerable increase in the number of schools that have consulted Berdindu, the Basque public information and support service for issues relating to sexual and gender diversity.
- In the Basque Country in 2020, there was a spike in demands relating to sexual and/or gender identity, especially among young trans* people.

The LGBT+ community is broad and diverse, and the different groups within it have different needs and demands.

There is still a lot of ignorance and prejudice surrounding the diverse situations that the community experiences. Therefore, SDG 4 on education is particularly relevant, given that education can raise awareness of sexual-affective and gender diversity.

It is estimated that LGBT+ communities have fewer opportunities than heterosexual, cisgender people, ranging from opportunities for access to work, housing and the health system, to the risk of experiencing violence and discrimination. It is likely that, within the community, rights violations are most evident with people who come under the trans* umbrella. For example, the lesbian, gay and bisexual sector of the community may find it relatively easy to access work, while trans* people experience greater difficulties in both employability and acceptance.

In addition, discrimination towards the LGBT+ community can take many different forms and may be framed by different types of violence: symbolic, structural, direct etc. (García, 2020).

Within the group, those most affected by lockdown at home as a measure against the COVID-19 pandemic are probably children whose sexual or gender identity is not accepted at home, as they have had to live with and only see people who do not recognise their identity.

Although the pandemic has exposed and raised the visibility of the difficulties and discrimination that this community faces, as the indicators from 2019 above reveal, gender identity and sexual orientation were already among the main motives for hate crime in Spain even before the COVID-19 crisis.

GEHITU works to break down these situations of discrimination, so that all people in the community have the same opportunities, so that differences and diversity are accepted and respected.



Key demands:

- We need to fight for the aim of equality between all people, with our differences and in diversity, but with the same rights.
- It is vital that we continue to make hate crime visible.
- Gender equality is fundamental, based on the identification of more than two genders.
- To demand a pluralistic, feminist society.
- We need to work with young people. It is essential to educate young people about sexual diversity so that they understand the situation and can choose with freedom and awareness.



Image provided by GEHITU

LIFE STORY: MIKEL LOPEZ



Image provided by Mikel Lopez

Mikel Lopez is an administrative assistant at a school in Donostia. He lives in Ordizia and his interests include visiting the forest and listening to classical music. He describes himself as a happy person who has always clearly known his sexual orientation.

"I knew it would be a, let's say, slightly more complicated path than for the people around me, but it was clear to me and I felt so comfortable in my skin that I saw it as a matter of fighting for and defending my life."

He recognises that he has generally felt included in his personal and professional environment, with a few isolated incidents in his childhood and teenage years. Nevertheless, he is aware that many people in the LGBT+ community have experienced a lot of problems in their lives as a result of belonging to the community. He believes it is necessary to break down the barriers the community experiences, and for the general public to respect all people, whatever their sexual orientation or gender identity.

He considers himself aware of the responsibility we all have to care for and protect the planet, and therefore considers it an extremely important matter:

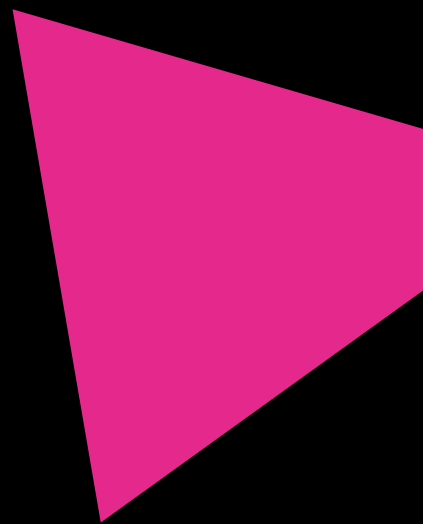
"It's the legacy we'll leave behind and I think the world has largely been forgotten, but there is still time to rethink the whole environment, to think about what we do every day with our actions and, above all, to realise that this is the only environment we have, that we live in and that we're going to leave behind."

Finally, with regard to future possibilities, Mikel thinks positively and dreams of egalitarian modern societies in which people respect one another and do not discriminate for any reason, whether the colour of our skin or our sexual orientation: *"where men and women are equal, because we are the same, whether we are straight, gay, bi, trans, inter; we'll be equal because we are the same. And I think what defines us, in the end, is how we feel towards other people, and that's where respect lies."*





RESULTS OF THE STUDY



The following section develops the results of conversations with the people who participated in the case studies, as well as data provided by the organisations. We summarise and compare that information with the 2030 Agenda and the most relevant goals for each group or community.

The 2030 Agenda is based on five key pillars known as the **"5 Ps": people, planet, prosperity, peace and partnership**. These five areas have particular relevance to sustainable development at every level. In particular it is important to strengthen and conserve the relationship between people and planet in order to meet the goals and targets that the Agenda proposes.

THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN PEOPLE AND PLANET

The 2030 Agenda has **7 goals that are linked to environmental sustainability**: water, energy, climate change, sustainable cities and communities, responsible consumption and production, and sea and land ecosystems. In addition, one of its central tenets is the connection between development issues and environment issues. This convergence is positive because it prevents the goals from becoming fragmented and efforts scattered, which would entail two parallel agendas. It also facilitates joint progress by recognising the link between the two.

Although each group or community has its own particular approach, when we asked about the relationship between people in the group and the environment, we found certain similarities:

- The younger generations recognise their own awareness of caring for the planet and the environment, as it is an issue that is integrated gradually into the education system in the Basque Country.
- People in vulnerable situations, and especially those who do not feel identified or reflected in normative society, **challenge established ways of thinking and produce alternative reflections** that may open up pathways towards greater social or environmental awareness.
- The **food and farming sector** in general **offers key solutions** for sustainable development in rural areas, and is vital not only to eradicate hunger and poverty in the world, but also to preserve biodiversity and fight climate change.
- There is a general consensus around the need for **greater awareness of the relationship between people and planet**, which is perceived as a matter of defending human rights.
- **Education for social transformation** is needed to continue working towards responsible consumption and to ensure a sustainable future, today.



INEQUALITIES. A PERSPECTIVE BASED ON INTERSECTIONALITY AND DIVERSITIES.

Through **SDG 10 (Reduce inequalities)**, the 2030 Agenda focuses on reducing inequalities caused by sex, age, disability, race, ethnicity or religion. To achieve this, it promotes adopting the relevant policies and laws. The targets in this goal include ensuring equal opportunities (10.3) and facilitating migration and mobility through migration policies (10.7).

To make sure this goal is achieved, as we saw above, it is important to understand that **social groups and communities are not uniform. They are made up of diverse, overlapping identities** that may vary over the course of a person's life and can expose people to discrimination on the basis of gender, origin, ethnicity, age, socio-economic status etc. As such, it is important to understand intersectionality with regard to each person or group.

When asked about the intersectionality of each group and community, all the conversations **focus on gender and origin or ethnicity**, viewing these two as the main factors in discrimination against vulnerable groups. Second, **socio-economic status** was raised in most of the conversations with reference to barriers and causes of discrimination. Third, other factors specific to each group were identified, such as age, sexual and gender identity, religion, language and disability, which are also considered key characteristics, and which are added to membership of one or more vulnerable groups.

These inequalities both produce and reinforce **prejudices and stereotypes** that, as analysed below, limit access to resources, the extent to which needs are met and people's development.

However, intersectionality reveals the **plurality and diversity of contemporary society**, in terms of culture, sex, age, language, ability and more. All of these factors are present and should be seen and understood in order for us to unlearn preconceived ideas and deconstruct our prejudices and stereotypes.

In particular, to ensure and maintain that (un)learning process, the interviewees provide several key questions. First, they identify the need to talk about diversity in social and political circles, and to raise awareness, with the understanding that all people are diverse and we all have a range of characteristics that, to greater or lesser extents, may bring up preconceived ideas that give way to discrimination. To do this, it is essential that **people who experience the greatest levels of prejudice are present in public spheres and participation spaces** where they can raise awareness of their experiences and their proposals.

In addition, **vulnerable groups must genuinely be included.** The network of associations, institutions and public authorities has the capacity to support and foster education and re-education programmes, awareness-raising campaigns (organised and delivered by people who belong to the vulnerable groups in question), studies of the real situations of Basque groups and communities



and non-segregated activities, aiming to encourage all of society to take part. On an individual level, the ability to self-criticise, question and report discriminatory situations that may occur on a day-to-day basis is also significant. In this regard, the interviewees speak of the importance of political will. They understand individual responsibilities, but also their integration with public policies, which are produced on the basis of people's needs and proposals, with particular attention to people and groups whose rights are at risk of violation by the system.

GENDER EQUALITY

In the section above on inequalities, **gender was detected as one of the key factors in achieving real equality of opportunity for all people.**

Given that gender inequality is manifested in all areas of sustainable development, **specific and integrated efforts must be made in all spheres to make gender equality a reality.** In this category, we consider this issue in greater depth whilst bearing in mind that it is a cross-cutting factor that can also be approached from other aspects of the investigation.

Gender equality is a fundamental human right, and it is also considered vital in order to achieve a peaceful society that is capable of sustainable development.

"Gender equality is a shared vision of social justice and human rights. All of humanity has the responsibility to act, and in particular governments as the principal guarantors of rights. We must make the most of the opportunities that exist on a national, regional and global level and give a new impulse to the goal of gender equality, women's empowerment and women and girls' ability to exercise their human rights" (UN Women, 2014).

The 2030 Agenda drives international society's commitment to achieve gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls, through **SDG 5 (Gender equality)** directly, and also in other targets that are broken down by sex.

All of the groups that participated in this study identify gender inequality as a **global challenge** that involves every country in the world and that must be tackled on a local and global level.

In particular, the women's groups AMUGE and Mujeres en la Diversidad both emphasise achieving equality on the basis of their work responding to the needs and demands of Romani and migrant women, and they agree on the importance of each person experiencing feminism in their own way, developing their own awareness and going through their own process of empowerment from their position and their culture. They also highlight the importance of not judging and of respecting each individual's processes.

At the same time, **one of the greatest challenges** in gender inequality is **precisely the development of awareness and recognition of situations of inequality.** This is identified as one of the first steps towards the transformation into a more feminist, inclusive and anti-racist society. In this regard, it



is also important to include a significant point made by the LGBT+ community, who reflect on the (de)construction of a binary gender system that contemplates just two absolute gender identities, male and female. In reality, non-binary people and other genders do exist, and they too experience gender-based inequality.

Finally, with regard to gender inequality, several conversations place particular emphasis on the **gender gap at work**. The case studies go into greater depth using specific indicators, but it is significant that the vulnerable groups mention two particular concepts. First, what is known as the “glass ceiling”, a concept that refers to the limitation on women’s professional progress, directly linked to the scarce representation of women in high-level decision-making roles. Then, the community of migrant women bring to the table the concept of the “sticky floor”, which relates to the impossibility of even starting to progress, given the limitations imposed by society that prevent women from leaving the home or domestic and caring work in order to develop professionally.

Some of the women who took part in the study identify a clear limitation to progressing in their professional lives, and others directly identify a limitation to starting their careers.

QUALITY EDUCATION

One of the most relevant SDGs for vulnerable groups and communities is **SDG 4 (Quality education)**: guarantee inclusive, fair, quality education and promote opportunities for lifelong learning for all people.

Education is the key to achieving the other goals. Among the goals, we draw particular attention to goal 4.7: ensure all learners acquire knowledge and skills needed to promote sustainable development, including among others through education for sustainable development and sustainable lifestyles, human rights, gender equality, promotion of a culture of peace and non-violence, global citizenship, and appreciation of cultural diversity and of culture’s contribution to sustainable development.

When asked if they think people in their group or community have access to inclusive, fair and quality education, the interviewees indicate in general terms that formal, state-funded education in the Basque Country is accessible at least at the compulsory stages: pre-school, primary and secondary. However, **the focus goes beyond access, specifically towards quality and the capacity for inclusion in the education system.**

In addition, with regard to higher levels of formal education such as university, access is perceived as more difficult, given that tuition fees are more expensive and, in some cases, especially for people living in rural areas, accessing university also poses difficulties in terms of housing and transport. In other words, access becomes more difficult at the higher levels of formal education, especially for people with lower economic status.



"Honestly, I think our education in the Basque Country is decent, it's fairly universal, it's of reasonable quality, but I think the quality is insufficient in general. Not only for day labourers: in general, I think that the Basque Country needs to take a leap in education. I think we teach many old patterns that are obsolete and don't bring the quality that our society needs" (Auxtin Ortiz, ENDAA).

As indicated, when discussing education, it is important to analyse the issues that offer a deeper understanding of the education system's capacity for inclusion. The interviewees talk about obstacles, whether visible or invisible, linked to situations of vulnerability and, in some cases, social exclusion situations. On the one hand, they identify obstacles linked directly to the person or family's economic status, which may lead to poor food, less access to extra-curricular activities and private academic support etc.

On the other hand, the interviewees identify the need to raise the visibility of the real situations of social groups that are subject to stereotypes and discrimination. To do this, it is essential to **use anti-racist, intercultural and feminist methods in the classroom**, which value the diversity that exists in schools. It is also important for the younger generations to have access to and awareness of sexual-affective, cultural and linguistic diversity. They must see and understand the full spectrum of possibilities, in order to choose, respect and reflect from a multi-dimensional perspective.

Finally, the contribution made through awareness-raising and transformation actions by the organisations taking part in the study are also significant. Actions that contribute to generating **inclusive, quality education, education based on values and human rights**: from working on the gaps in the education system regarding sexual-affective education, cultural diversity or feminism, to creating partnerships to improve conditions for students at public universities and in professional training. In addition, future proposals for ongoing work in this regard were set out: to include the coeducational perspective in teaching methods in a cross-disciplinary way, to teach children about zero tolerance for violent, sexist or racist attitudes, to continue to foster active pupil participation in the school space, to influence the restructure of scholarships and so on. In this way, the past, present and future work of social organisations in the Basque Country and their contribution to inclusive, fair and sustainable development are reflected.

WORK AND HOUSING: KEY FACTORS TO MEET NEEDS

Work and housing are interlinked and they are both key factors in meeting people's basic needs and improving their quality of life, as well as in their relationship with sustainable human development.

First, **SDG 8 (Decent work and economic growth)** in the 2030 Agenda refers to promoting inclusive, sustainable and sustained economic growth, full productive employment and decent work for all people. It aims to reduce the unemployment rate and improve working conditions, along with oth-



er issues. Its targets include the global strategy for youth employment and protection of labour rights, and promoting a safe workplace for all people (especially migrant women and people in precarious employment). Second, **SDG 11 (Sustainable cities and communities)** aims to achieve inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable cities, and its first target refers to access to housing to ensure all people can access adequate, safe and affordable homes and services.

The groups and communities represented in the study identify access to employment and housing, together with the quality of working and living conditions, as **essential factors** to meet their needs. However, the general feeling is one of concern and uncertainty, in part aggravated by the current pandemic situation, which we will address below.

Since its peak in Spain's financial crisis in 2008, the Basque Country's unemployment rate has gradually reduced. Nevertheless, the focus is on the quality of working conditions in the jobs that have been created. In this regard, it is important to note that the improvement in working conditions should not focus only on remuneration, but rather on a range of factors, including stability of employment and work-life balance.

In terms of housing, the general perception of social housing is positive, but access to private, rented housing is a very different story: in many cases, reference was made to **prejudices and/or stereotypes** that lead to difficulties to having that access.

All the groups and communities speak of the greater barriers and limitations they face when seeking housing and employment:

- Young people today, when **creating the life they want**, face several difficulties. Access to the labour market and then becoming independent are the main challenges at present. From the outset, they assume that they will have to enter the world of work under more precarious conditions in order to start accumulating experience. Similarly, their difficulties becoming independent and finding housing are directly connected to precarious work and the economic situation. As a consequence, the average age at which young people leave the parental home in the Basque Country is 30 years, and yet 30 is the age at which EGK considers people go from being young people to being adults. *"We are the much-discussed future, but we are the present too"* (Maialen Olabe, EGK).
- For day labourers, employability is the key factor in improving their situation, and they consider good self-organisation to be essential in pursuing proposals for better general working conditions. And, as indicated above, the focus is not just on the economic capacity for employment, but rather on the need for better conditions such as improvements regarding the seasonality of the job. With regard to housing, there is a difference between day labourers with residence in the Basque Country and those with residence outside. Residents of the Basque Country may be affected by the urban-rural divide, but they generally have access to housing. However, overseas residents may experience situations of greater vulnerability which are difficult to generalise.
- In the LGBT+ community, there are differences according to the diverse groups within the community. Lesbian, gay and bisexual people tend to find it relatively easy to access work and



housing. However, **trans people*** have greater difficulties with regard to employability and access to housing. People in the community are aware that belonging to this group can constitute a barrier to accessing rental housing because of the prejudices and stereotypes that may arise around them.

- **Romani women** speak of the **systemic barriers** to accessing the labour market, reflected in the indicators mentioned in their case study. *"We are unemployable because the system has made us so"* (Tamara Clavería, AMUGE). They point to cases in which Romani women have had to conceal their identity in order to get a job or access to housing, so that they can meet their own basic needs. They explain how, historically, the Romani community has been denied the right to work, and they have been relegated to jobs such as street trading.
- **Migrant women** point to the **legal barriers** they face, deriving from immigration laws, which directly block their employment. As a consequence of this legislation, migrant people in irregular situations have no choice but to work illegally and accept very precarious positions, as they have to meet their basic needs for food and housing. Women in irregular situations are largely employed in domestic and caring work, a sector that is notorious for its precarious conditions. In addition, it is worth noting that many migrant women have greater difficulty achieving a work-life balance, as they are more likely to lack support networks. To address this, the women's social movement works to facilitate the creation of partnerships to create that essential support network for people arriving in the area. Likewise, migrant women raise a range of situations. On the one hand, they experience difficulty proving their income and therefore accessing housing programmes regulated by the Basque Government. On the other hand, groups of certain origins face discrimination even when trying to rent a room. Any administrative irregularity of their situation aggravates this discrimination further, but even when their documents are in order, accessing housing is one of the most difficult basic situations that migrants face.

In this regard, the support of the social movement is fundamental, above all in supporting and reporting situations where people's rights have been violated. .

HEALTH AND INEQUALITY: THE COVID-19 CRISIS AS AN ADDED RISK FACTOR

SDG 3 (Health and wellbeing) aims to ensure a healthy life and promote wellbeing at all ages, as it is an essential factor in sustainable development. It is particularly relevant to study the social, economic and cultural factors that may affect health and wellbeing. All these matters need to be addressed on an individual and a contextual level when analysing inequalities and developing policies to tackle them. Therefore, in this category, our focus is on the inequalities that directly or indirectly affect health.



On the one hand, as in the education system, there is a need to include intercultural, feminist and inclusive viewpoints in the health system, given that social and economic factors also have an impact here. To address these issues, it is important to address cultural, social and economic components within the health system, in order to make diagnoses that match people's situations.

In addition to that intercultural, feminist perspective, there is also a need to include diversity in the health system's perspectives, in order to care for people within their context, especially with regard to sexual-affective diversity.

THE COVID-19 CRISIS

All of the above reflects the needs that were detected prior to the COVID-19 pandemic. However, on 11 March 2020, the World Health Organisation (WHO) declared a global COVID-19 pandemic, and this led to a series of restrictive measures that affected everyone in society, but highlighted even more starkly, if that were possible, **inequalities at every level**. Given the situation, Basque society is currently facing a healthcare crisis, as well as a social and economic one.

In different ways, the **COVID-19 pandemic has exposed the vulnerability of all people, but especially those who were already at risk beforehand**. The consequences of this crisis affect the whole public, but they have a greater impact on the social groups that were already living in vulnerable situations.

One of the **most visible aspects of this crisis, and one that has been heavily impacted by it, is employment**. Given the restrictions on movement and the closure of all non-essential activity, many people have found themselves unemployed and without an income.

The other side of the coin is that some sectors have not been able to stop even for a moment, as they are considered essential services. In particular, the crisis has highlighted the fundamental importance of the farming and food sectors. In other words, in part this crisis has served to make society value and change its view on those who work in the primary sector, especially their nearby local producers.

Similarly, the organisations who have participated in this research have not had the chance to stop along with the rest of the world; rather, their work has intensified. In many cases, demand has increased for meeting basic needs such as food or needs linked to the digital gap such as access to educational materials or bureaucratic processes. This continuation of their work entailed greater risk of exposure to the virus, especially in the early months of the pandemic, and therefore greater vulnerability.

In short, the social, economic and healthcare crisis caused by COVID-19 has exposed the inequalities that already existed, and in many cases, exacerbated them. However, it is significant that several groups indicate a reflection that turns this situation in its head, namely that the crisis serves to change matters that they had already identified, but faster. In other words, we can **use the evidence of inequalities to generate transformation in society**.



PARTNERSHIPS TO ACHIEVE THE SDGS

SDG 17 (Partnerships for the goals) aims to strengthen the methods of implementation needed to reinforce the Global Partnership for Sustainable Development. In the process of undertaking and analysing this research project, this has been one of the most relevant goals, given that the investigation's own framework project emerges from a partnership between the participating bodies.

In general, the creation of partnerships and networking between different stakeholders in a diverse and varied landscape is considered valuable and enriching. There are some issues, such as the complexity of reaching firm conclusions and agreements in partnerships comprising groups with different goals, given that differences of opinion may arise. At the same time, that is where the potential lies: to value, reflect, agree and act on a single issue, from a range of viewpoints.

Mari Mar Clavería: *"Partnership is strength."*

Another issue is the importance of finding common ground for work, reaching agreements without erasing the distinct identities of each agent or group present in the partnership. That is the greatest challenge of partnership.

Furthermore, to work from the basis of partnerships and networks, the **active participation** of all people is vital. In this case, on the issue of human rights, it is essential to raise the voices of those people and groups whose rights are at risk.

Some of the key conclusions from the participants in this study are the value of partnerships produced from horizontal relationships and from the community, fostering participation in public spaces and fostering greater representation of the community in social, political and cultural networks, from a two-way approach involving the person and society, in order to transform society.



CHALLENGES TO IMPLEMENTING THE 2030 AGENDA FROM THE PERSPECTIVE OF VULNERABLE GROUPS

The 2030 Agenda acts as a guide with which to work towards a common aim. A **navigation instrument**, which is not perfect and which should be approached from a critical perspective. In particular, one of the critical issues that is highly relevant is the need for **greater participation** of the groups and communities represented in this report in the process of creating, achieving and monitoring the SDGs. In other words, the Agenda is seen as an opportunity, in that it has the capacity to include proposals by the groups and communities in vulnerable situations.

In fact, it is considered essential that all the interested groups participate in building global and local solutions, and even more so, that they form part of those solutions and contribute to achieving the goals.

Therefore, one of the main challenges facing the Agenda is its capacity to **include all the viewpoints of today's diverse and heterogeneous societies**, and in particular the viewpoints of communities whose rights are at risk. In other words, its ability to put "all people at the centre".

A tool is needed that is not designed on the basis of privilege, and that does not relegate the role of "non-privileged" people to mere spectators. The migrant women's community raises the importance of continually checking the gaps that emerge in the processes of construction, implementation and monitoring, which mean that people are not all in equal conditions.

Another one of the major challenges that arose from this investigation is the Agenda's ability to **convert the SDGs into a reality for ordinary members of the public**. On the one hand, the public needs to be aware of them, and on the other, they need to become a reality for all people. It can be said that, in general terms, beyond some specific professional and academic spheres, the Agenda is not well-known among young people, the Romani community etc. In fact, there is a general concern among the interviewees regarding the Agenda and the SDGs' capacity for transformation, and a fear that they will remain in the theory stages without leading to real, perceivable changes in practice. To avoid this outcome, they consider it essential that the campaigns aimed at the public have a specific focus on vulnerable groups.

Finally, a reflection arises regarding the Agenda's principle to "**leave no one behind**", which entails a challenge of including all viewpoints in the process. The groups consider that the motto may entail a concept of otherness, with some people ahead and others behind. They suggest that it should instead be "*let no one move on without me or progress on their own*" (Francy Fonseca, Mujeres en la Diversidad). In other words, all people should advance together, and no one be separated. That should be the guiding principle.



GENERAL CONCLUSIONS

Contemporary societies are made up of diverse and heterogeneous groups with shared characteristics and demands: cultural, historical, generational, relating to work etc. Nevertheless, each person who belongs to one or more social groups has their own life story, experiences and reality. Therefore, **preconceived ideas about people based on their membership of a group do not match contemporary social reality.**

To reach this conclusion, we need to understand groups and communities from an intersectional perspective, **considering whether there are diverse identities, which may also interact with one another, creating multiple situations of inequality.** In other words, we understand groups as a broad social dynamic, comprising various levels: micro, meso, macro and chrono.

In addition, preconceived ideas may provoke **informal or structural discrimination situations which, in turn, exist in the context of inequalities or social gaps** (such as unequal wealth distribution, unequal opportunities, the gender gap, the digital divide, fuel inequality and multi-dimensional poverty). This context means that the **people who belong to groups that suffer these discriminatory ideas and inequalities see their fundamental rights violated, and this is what is meant when we talk about vulnerable groups.**

In fact, as this study has identified, people who belong to vulnerable groups often find themselves obliged to conceal their cultural or sexual-affective identity in order to meet their basic needs, such as housing or work.

If we consider specific characteristics or factors, we discover that, even though the concept of intersectionality dates back to the 1980s, with a focus on origin and gender, **even today vulnerable groups in the Basque Country identify those same two factors as the main targets for discrimination.**

We may consider that feminist and anti-racist movements have gone from strength to strength in the Basque Country in recent years, especially in civil society and partnerships, but **equality of opportunity is still a pending challenge.** The gender gap, especially in the areas of work and care, as well as discrimination by origin and ethnicity, continue to increase and produce some of the most significant forms of inequality in modern societies.

Furthermore, at times of crisis like this, reflection and thinking about inequalities and how to produce change is fundamental. The COVID-19 pandemic has exposed how, now more than ever, people may be exposed to vulnerable situations and even social exclusion. However, the people and groups whose rights were already at risk of viola-



tion are particularly affected and suffer the effects of the crisis to a greater extent. **In other words, the COVID-19 pandemic has affected everyone, but not all with the same severity.**

In fact, in Spain and in the Basque Country in particular, the 2008 crisis had already left a lot of people in extremely vulnerable situations. Although the situation was gradually improving, there are some groups and people in society who had not altogether recovered from the previous crisis before being struck by another one.

The COVID-19 pandemic has highlighted forms of inequality that existed previously, but that have become more visible and, in some cases, increased, such as the digital divide. Technology has been a salvation for many, allowing us to stay in touch with friends and family, stay connected to culture and our favourite artists and so on. But what about the people who do not have access to that technology? They have become more invisible than ever. What is more, the digital divide has exposed other forms of inequality too, with impacts in the areas of health and education (lack of resources) and access to the local authorities (lack of access), given that all these services have only been available from home, by digital means.

In addition to an unprecedented, social, economic and healthcare crisis, we must not forget that we are also facing an environmental crisis right now. In the same way, damage to the planet and the excessive exploitation of resources also have more significant consequences for vulnerable groups and people, given that they further increase inequality gap, especially in countries where exploitation takes place, creating extremely precarious situations.

As such, bearing in mind that one of the key features of the 2030 Agenda is its recognition of inequalities everywhere in the world, it is considered essential that all countries participate, on multiple levels, in the Agenda's implementation and monitoring.

In particular, in the Basque Country, having analysed the five vulnerable groups' situations, **we strongly conclude that it is necessary to approach the Agenda's processes by including the diversity of Basque society and, in particular, giving voice to people and groups whose rights have historically been violated on the basis of gender, ethnicity, origin, age etc.** In addition, we consider that it is essential to work in partnership with traditional and non-traditional stakeholders, including public authorities at various levels, civil society organisations, academia, the private sector etc., to share proposals and common lines of action.

Making demands for one group or community does not detract from the proposals or fights of any other group. We all exist within the same system and structure that produces inequality and discrimination and, therefore, violations of fundamental rights. That is why **our strategy is framed within SDG 17**, to seek partnerships and agreements with which to add weight to our demands.

In the same way, we believe **one of the greatest tools we have with which to tackle prejudice and discrimination, by raising the visibility of and giving voice to diversity, is education.** Education in its broadest sense, an education that aims to transform, with a focus on rights and that is developed through its formal and informal aspects.



In fact, we also consider that **the effective and transformative implementation of the 2030 Agenda depends on it being consistent with the general commitment to human rights.** The 2030 Agenda and human rights are linked and reinforce one another. Human rights provide the Agenda with its cohesive thread, approach and oversight and accountability mechanisms, while the 2030 Agenda contributes to the realisation of human rights by raising their visibility and highlighting their indivisible nature.

However, we must take into account the fact that the formulation of the 2030 Agenda, the SDGs, **the means of implementation and the monitoring mechanisms produce significant uncertainty regarding their real potential to transform and their viability.** Although at the virtual multi-stakeholder conference the participants identified the SDGs as a meaningful summary of the challenges our societies face today, there is still a lot to improve, change and transform. These challenges must be considered as a list of shared priorities and responsibilities, given that everyone can do something from wherever they are.

As such, we conclude that if our aim is to make the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs a reality and “put people at the centre”, then **we must all proceed at the same pace. We cannot think of “leaving someone behind”, and we must foster horizontal relationships, without paternalism, and with the active participation of civil society in the construction of public policies.** This is the only way in which vulnerable groups will be able to see the Agenda as a truly effective tool in the fight against inequality.

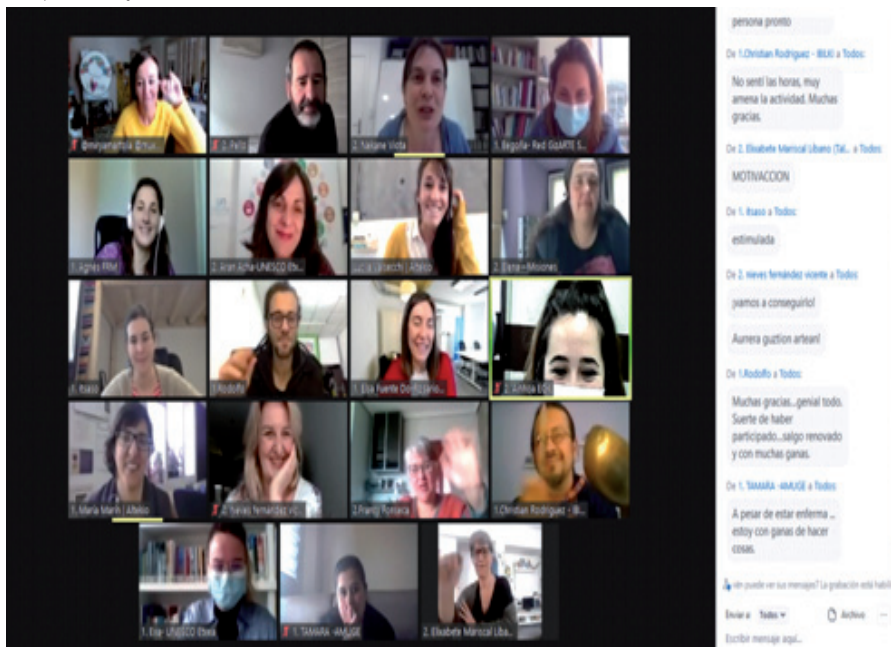




CLOSING PROPOSALS



1st "All Together" Virtual Multi-Stakeholder Conference: A 2030 Agenda approach to vulnerable groups in the Basque Country



On 25 May 2021, the **1st "All Together" Virtual Multi-Stakeholder Conference: A 2030 Agenda approach to vulnerable groups in the Basque Country** took place, in which we had the opportunity to discuss and reflect on the themes of interest throughout the study, with diverse people and organisations:

BBK Kuna | Altekio | World Rural Forum | Asociación AMUGE | Gehitu Elkartea | Euskadiko Gazteriar-en Kontseilua Egk | Mujeres En la Diversidad | UNICEF Basque Country Committee | Alokclub | IBILKI | Red GizARTE | Euskal Fondoa | Misiok – Basque Diocesan Missions | Retinosis Retina Begisare | Amesten Elkartea | Talent Gune | Mujeres Tejiendo Red | Pello Sarasua

Thanks to this virtual event, we were able to compare the main lines of action as well as rethink new proposals that can be applied to public policies in the Basque Country, as well as proposals for action.

POLICY PROPOSALS

Civil society has a lot to say and do in order to transform the world we live in. Therefore it is vital that this has an impact on public policies, to ensure their quality and so that they offer guarantees to all people and groups.

In general, the multi-stakeholder forum detected a need to generate public policies that are achievable and measurable, based on good diagnoses, with people at the centre, with presence and with shared responsibilities.

These are some of the specific proposals that were identified:

- Public policies must be **based on good diagnoses of the situation**. They must take into account the current contexts and real situations of the people, in order to act coherently.
- It is vital to **listen to the different stakeholders who will take part**. Public policies must not be detached from society: they must take it into account in all its diversity. To do this, it is important to include people from civil society, public authorities and the private sphere.
- We consider that our political representatives should reflect social diversity. **People's different identities should be represented first-hand among decision-makers**.
- The inclusive approach should substitute that of integration, in practice as well as theory, given that **integration entails disintegrating a part of ourselves**. Even so, we are aware that many people can be left behind by rigid inclusion measures. Diversity is much more diverse than we imagine it to be.
- It is important to decentralise economic policies so that they focus on people and the planet. In addition, **public policies should have a universal vision for all people**, starting with the principle of equity (people with fewer opportunities or experiencing exclusion).
- **Public reparation policies** are needed to repair the damage that has been inflicted on some groups, communities and people.



- **Civil society organisations have a very important role to play** in the construction of public policies, by participating and being present in spaces for dialogue, representing and bringing in other voices.

PROPOSALS FOR ACTION – INVOLVE SOCIETY IN ORDER TO TRANSFORM

Another matter that became very prominent in the course of the conversation was the need to move into action and reach all of society. To transform public policies, society too needs to transform as that is who establishes those priorities.

In addition, it is important to involve the whole of the public in the actions. We believe it is important to go beyond our traditional audiences.

What transforms us? What makes us open our eyes?

These are some of the specific proposals for action that arose:

- Translate the language of the 2030 Agenda so that it can be understood by all of society.
- Seek social impact through allied organisations and networks.
- Raise awareness and communicate using a shared language.
- Use levers with an intersectional and intergenerational viewpoint.
- Communicate more, using attractive and effective forms of communication.
- Include the human rights and cultural rights perspectives.
- Have role models who inspire and challenge us.
- Music, art and culture to communicate, connect and raise awareness of the issues around which we want to create critical reflection and transformation. For example, through a festival.
- ARTivism.
- Add the emotional dimension, which produces a physical response.
- Education and movement.
- Make use of public spaces to communicate more effectively.

In short, these are some of the proposals that arose from this first rich and diverse space for dialogue that was created. A space that we will return to, with the aim of fostering, at every level, an involvement that is conscious, critical and committed to people and planet.





Photo by Shane Rounce on Unsplash

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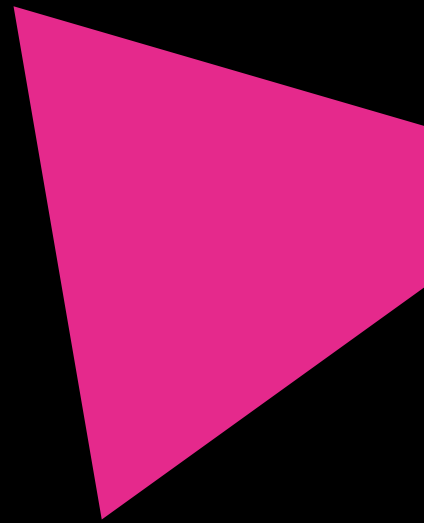
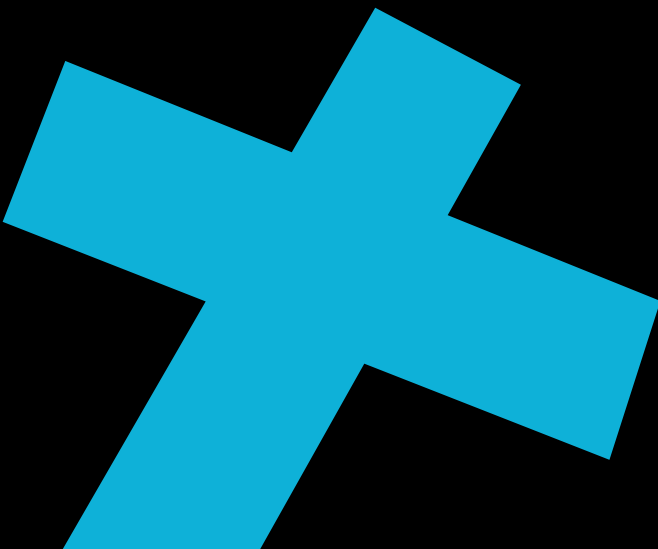
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ANNEX I

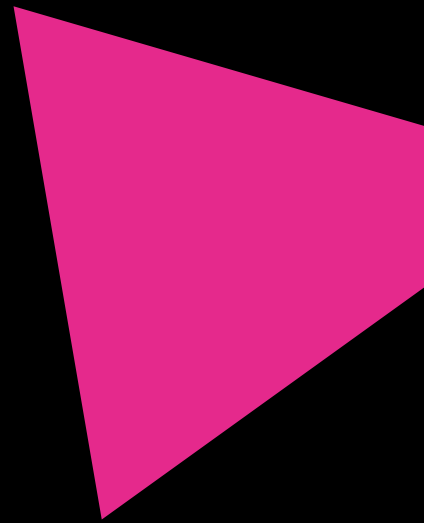


INTERVIEW SCRIPT

- 1.** What role do young people / Romani people / migrant women / the LGBTQI+ community / day labourers play in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development? Do you think that the Agenda offers a relevant plan for this group / community? Which are the most relevant SDGs for this group / community?
- 2.** What relationship does your group / community have with the environment? What do you consider to be the main environmental challenges? To what extent do you think that this group / community can contribute to environmental sustainability?
- 3.** Access to resources. Do you think that this community's access to public resources (health, work, social resources etc.) is similar or different to that of "the average"?
- 4.** How do you view the employability of young people / Romani people / migrant women / LGBTQI+ people / day labourers? To what extent do you think the employment factor affects the development of people who belong to this community / group? What do you think might provide the tools or facilities to increase employability?
- 5.** Considering housing as a safe, peaceful and dignified space, do you think that young people / Romani people / migrant women / LGBTQI+ people / day labourers have this space? If not, how would you improve the situation?
- 6.** Gender inequality exists in all social groups and spaces. In the case of young people / Romani people / migrant women / LGBTQI+ people / day labourers, does gender inequality have any particular characteristics? If your organisation works on equality, you can tell us about these projects.
- 7.** Do you think that young people / Romani people / migrant women / LGBTQI+ people / day labourers generally have access to inclusive, equitable and quality education? If not, how would you improve the situation?
- 8.** How has the COVID-19 pandemic affected young people / Romani people / migrant women / LGBTQI+ people / day labourers? What do you think will happen in the future?
- 9.** Intersectionality is a concept that covers multiple forms of discrimination. Do you think it occurs within this community or group? In what way? Could you give us a specific example of multiple forms of discrimination? What can we do to break such situations (people who do not belong to the group or community)?
- 10.** How is your community or group represented in social, cultural and political life? Have you taken part in any participation process / public consultation to assert the rights of the community or group? What perception do you have of those spaces? What are your main demands?
- 11.** What does the 2030 Agenda principle of "leave no one behind" mean to your group?
- 12.** This final section is a space for you to tell us the extent to which you think the partnerships between groups / communities / organisations whose rights are violated are positive, and if you are linked with other social movements in the Basque Country. And looking beyond the Basque Country, are there links between global movements / situations? What are they?



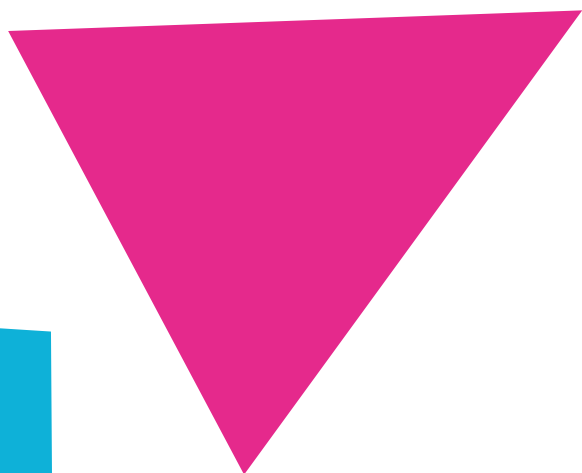
ANNEX II



LIFE STORIES SCRIPT

- 1. Presentation:** Who are you, and what do you do with most of your time?
2. General descriptive summary of the **stages of your life:** childhood, adolescence, youth, adulthood etc.
- 3. Life challenges:** What are the greatest challenges you have faced in your life as a Romani woman / migrant woman / young person / LGBTI+ person / day labourer?
 - Do you think employability is challenging for Romani women / migrant women / young people / LGBTI+ people / day labourers?
 - Do you think access to public resources is challenging for Romani women / migrant women / young people / LGBTI+ people / day labourers?
 - Do you think getting housing is challenging for Romani women / migrant women / young people / LGBTI+ people / day labourers?
 - Do you think quality education is challenging for Romani women / migrant women / young people / LGBTI+ people / day labourers?
 - Do you think gender equality is challenging for Romani women / migrant women / young people / LGBTI+ people / day labourers?
4. Can you tell us how the **COVID-19** pandemic has affected your personal and professional life?
- 5. Intersectionality** is a term that refers to the experience of multiple forms of discrimination, such as race, gender and age. Have you experienced that sort of situation in your life?
6. What relationship do Romani women / migrant women / young people / LGBTI+ people / day labourers have with the **environment**? Are you aware of the **2030 Agenda** for Sustainable Development?
7. We believe civil society has, or should have, a key role in social and political decisions. What would your demands be as a Romani woman / migrant woman / young person / LGBTI+ person / day labourer? What are your views on forming **partnerships** to make our voices heard? Have you ever worked as part of a network to make your voice heard?
- 8. Future possibilities:** If you had to imagine two possible futures, one positive and one negative, what would they be like?
9. Other things you think are important that you have not already mentioned.







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