Society of Gender Professionals

SAEDI CONSULTING BARBADOS INC

# SGPxSAEDI @ CSW 69

# Countering Anti-Gender Movements: Intersectional Solutions for Gender Equity

Date: March 21, 2025

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## Overview:

On March 21, 2025, the Society of Gender Professionals (SGP) and SAEDI Consulting (Barbados) Inc. (SAEDI). organized a hybrid session at the 69th session of the NGO Committee on the Status of Women (CSW69) on ***"Countering Anti-Gender Movements: Intersectional Solutions for Gender Equity."*** As anti-gender movements gain global traction, gender professionals, activists, and scholars must mobilize transnational resistance. This session at CSW69 brought together experts to analyze these threats and strategize effective countermeasures.

Presented by ***Leisa Perch*** (Founder/CEO of SAEDI Consulting (Barbados) Inc.) and moderated by ***Aparna Arora*** (Co-President of SGP and Co-lead of the SGP Breaking Binaries Circle), the panel consisted of the following speakers:

- ***Dr. Angelique V. Nixon*** Senior Lecturer at the Institute for Gender & Development Studies (University of the West Indies; Director of CAISO: Sex and Gender Justice (Trinidad & Tobago)
- ***Yemi Knight*** Co-founder of Anchor Bridge Environmental Inc.
- ***Violeta Colman*** Lawyer; Gender and Policy Specialist and Co-lead of the SGP Employment and Peer Support Circle
- ***Bren Miaira Kutch*** Advisory Council Member of SGP and Co-lead of the SGP Breaking Binaries Circle

- ***Sreevidya Varma*** Lawyer and Co-lead of SGP Ending Workplace Harassment Circle and Employment

This hybrid event examined the growing influence of anti-gender movements and their impact on **SOGIESC rights, climate justice, and labor conditions**. Panelists analyzed the narratives, strategies, and power structures used by these movements at international, regional, and national levels, **particularly in the context of gender professionals**. Discussions focused on feminist response strategies - ranging from **individual and community-level actions to institutional interventions** - and explored emerging opportunities for advocacy. The session also highlighted ways to strengthen efforts toward **Beijing+30 and the 2030 Agenda**, fostering a more **inclusive and equitable future**.

The session saw ***over 90 participants from 22 different countries*** including Armenia, Bangladesh, Belgium, Canada, France, Germany, India, Ireland, Italy, Kenya, Kyrgyzstan, Lebanon, Netherlands, Nigeria, Peru, Philippines, Poland, Spain, Uganda, Ukraine, U.S.A and the United Kingdom.

## Part I : Takeaways from the Panel

➔ ***Dr. Angelique V. Nixon***

Dr. Angelique V. Nixon's presentation unpacked the deep entanglement of anti-gender movements within broader anti-rights narratives. She illustrated how **homophobic and transphobic rhetoric** fuels fear-based discourses, portraying gender justice as a direct threat to societal norms. These narratives, she argued, are not isolated but **strategically deployed** by the dominant global order, leveraging **division, fear-mongering, and free-market ideologies** to sustain systemic inequalities.

Right-wing actors worldwide are actively working to **criminalize gender rights, defund feminist movements, and expand extractivist industries** - a multi-pronged assault that intensifies the marginalization of already vulnerable communities. These forces are not just about resisting gender equity but about **consolidating power through economic and political repression**, often backed by **well-funded international networks** that weaponize gender and sexuality as cultural battlegrounds.

Dr. Nixon outlined several strategic responses to counter these threats:

- **Follow the money** – Many anti-gender and men's rights movements are propped up by funding from the Global North. Scrutinizing and exposing these financial networks can weaken their influence.
- **Deepen intersectional education** – Building awareness about the connections between gender justice, racial justice, climate justice, and economic justice is crucial. These movements must not work in silos.
- **Strengthen cross-movement collaborations** – Feminist, LGBTQ+, disability justice, and labor rights groups must work together to mount a unified resistance.
- **Support evidence-based counter-narratives** – Campaigns like Inclusive Futures push back against misinformation by grounding advocacy in local and regional research rather than reactionary responses.
- **Prioritize disability justice** – Gender justice must move beyond mainstream feminist frameworks to fully integrate issues of accessibility, ableism, and economic precarity that disproportionately affect disabled communities.

By adopting these strategies, movements for gender justice can disrupt the mechanisms of fear and control, ensuring that the fight for equity is not just about resistance but about building alternative, inclusive futures grounded in justice and solidarity.

➔ ***Yemi Knight***

Yemi Knight highlighted how Barbados' gender protections, though enshrined in the Constitution, are facing strong opposition from anti-gender movements influenced by the Global North. These well-funded actors **manufacture backlash** against gender neutrality, comprehensive sexual education, and LGBTQ+ protections, despite these topics having little relevance to the Barbadian context. Their strategy mirrors global anti-rights efforts - **framing gender justice as a foreign threat to cultural identity** to stall progress. However, despite this opposition, Barbados is on the verge of a historic shift: **by the end of the year, gender and sexual orientation protections may be fully integrated into the Constitution**.

Beyond gender rights, **climate justice is also under attack**. Anti-gender movements, emboldened by economic power, **actively exclude LGBTQ+ and other marginalized groups from disaster relief and emergency management efforts**. This systematic

exclusion underscores how **gender and climate justice are deeply interconnected** – both threatened by the same forces seeking to **sustain inequality and roll back human rights progress**. Additionally, **NGOs struggle to secure funding** as climate change awareness is increasingly undermined by these powerful anti-rights actors, demonstrating how their influence extends beyond gender politics into global sustainability efforts.

To push back against these intersecting challenges, advocates are advancing the following strategies:

- **Simplifying national advocacy processes** – Ensuring that legal and policy engagement is more accessible, allowing marginalized communities to participate more effectively.
- **Strengthening funding and support for grassroots groups** – Since anti-gender movements operate with vast financial backing, gender and climate justice groups need sustained investment to resist these forces.
- **Building capacities beyond digital advocacy** – Expanding beyond online activism by conducting research, designing surveys, and gathering local data to strengthen policy advocacy.
- **Treating grassroots movements as equal knowledge partners** – Dismantling hierarchical approaches in advocacy ensures that those on the ground shape policies directly.
- **Effectively engaging youth in meaningful activism** – Youth-led movements are critical for long-term resistance, making their leadership essential in both gender and climate justice efforts.

By securing sustainable funding, amplifying grassroots leadership, and strengthening the intersection between gender and climate justice, Barbados can resist imported anti-gender narratives and build a more inclusive, resilient future.

➔ ***Violeta Colman***

Violeta Colman examined how anti-gender movements in Paraguay and beyond strategically weaponize national identity, child protection, and family values to oppose gender justice. These groups, operating at both national and international levels, **frame gender equality as a direct threat to democracy and social stability**, a tactic that has

proven effective in dismantling progressive policies. In Paraguay, **the deliberate omission of the term "gender" from legal texts creates a legal vacuum**, making it easier for anti-gender actors to argue that any policy promoting gender equity is an overreach or an imported ideological threat.

These tactics are not new - **they predate the Trump administration and have been replicated globally, reinforcing the idea that gender justice is a destabilizing force.** By exploiting fear, misinformation, and legal loopholes, anti-gender movements continue to roll back rights and suppress feminist activism. Their influence extends beyond policy, shaping public perception through **coordinated misinformation campaigns that depict gender equality as an attack on family structures and national sovereignty**.

To effectively challenge these well-orchestrated attacks, feminist advocates are implementing the following strategies:

- **Strengthening feminist movements beyond capital cities** – Anti-gender forces often thrive outside urban centers, making it crucial to ensure representation and activism across entire nations, not just in major cities.
- **Anticipating and countering organized attacks** – Misinformation campaigns are a core tactic of anti-gender movements, so proactive, fact-based responses are essential.
- **Diversifying decision-making spaces** – Increasing representation of women, LGBTQ+ people, and other marginalized groups in policy making ensures that gender-inclusive policies have strong institutional backing.
- **Building strategic alliances** – While working with moderate conservatives may be challenging, it can be a necessary strategy to break the influence of extreme anti-gender actors and advance key policy changes.
- **Fostering peer support networks** – Sustaining long-term feminist activism requires community care, collective resilience, and spaces for joy and rest. Initiatives like the SGP Employment and Peer Support Circle create systems of care that help activists sustain their efforts despite ongoing challenges.

By broadening feminist activism, anticipating attacks, and reinforcing collective resilience, gender justice advocates can push back against the well-funded, strategically organized anti-gender movement and create lasting change.

➔ ***Bren Miaira Kutch***

Bren Miaira Kutch shed light on how anti-gender movements disproportionately harm queer and trans communities by restricting access to essential services and reinforcing social stigma. These movements, fueled by conservative ideologies and well-funded disinformation campaigns, **severely limit LGBTQ+ individuals' access to medical care, shelter, and legal protections**. In hostile environments, this structural exclusion creates **life-threatening conditions**, forcing many to navigate systems that are designed to deny their existence and rights.

Beyond institutional barriers, **the rise of anti-gender rhetoric amplifies social stigma, emboldening discrimination, violence, and exclusion.** The compounded marginalization of queer and trans individuals underscores the **urgent need for intersectional approaches to advocacy** that do not isolate LGBTQ+ issues from broader gender justice work.

To effectively push back against these exclusionary forces, Kutch proposed a **three-pronged approach to activism, drawing inspiration from Palestinian advocacy models**:

- **Center intersectionality in gender discussions** – Advocacy must move beyond a binary focus on women and girls and fully integrate the experiences of queer, trans, and nonbinary individuals in gender justice efforts.
- **Push for institutional protections** – Legal frameworks, healthcare policies, and social welfare programs must explicitly safeguard LGBTQ+ individuals from systemic discrimination and violence.
- **Strengthen international solidarity networks** – Transnational resistance is crucial in countering globally coordinated anti-gender movements. Collaborations across regions ensure collective power and resource-sharing to sustain activism.

By building intersectional advocacy, securing institutional protections, and reinforcing global solidarity, LGBTQ+ activists can effectively challenge the deep-seated marginalization perpetuated by anti-gender movements.

➔ ***Sreevidya Varma***

Sreevidya Varma unpacked the alarming global attack on Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) programs and workplace protections for women, revealing how these rollbacks increase vulnerabilities for marginalized communities. Drawing from insights gained in the SGP End Sexual Harassment Circle Consultation, she emphasized how anti-gender movements have fueled **a strategic dismantling of policies designed to promote workplace safety and gender equity.**

This regression is **not confined to specific regions but is part of a larger, globally coordinated effort.** Examples include **the UK slashing £4 billion in aid and Sweden dismantling its feminist foreign policy** - both part of a broader trend of deprioritizing gender justice at the policy level. These actions embolden conservative actors to **erode workplace protections, leaving women and other marginalized groups at greater risk of harassment and exploitation.**

To resist these rollbacks, Varma called for **a proactive, multi-faceted approach to countering anti-gender narratives**:

- **Foster coordinated responses to anti-gender attacks** – Rather than reacting in isolation, movements must unite across sectors and regions to push back strategically.
- **Engage men and masculinities in gender justice** – Addressing gender inequities requires disrupting patriarchal norms at their root, which includes engaging men as allies in the fight for workplace protections.
- **Collaborate with inclusive faith leaders** – Harmful religious interpretations are often weaponized against gender justice efforts; engaging progressive faith leaders can help counteract these narratives from within religious communities.
- **Adopt an unwavering, proactive commitment to gender rights** – The pushback against gender justice is calculated and aggressive; advocates must be equally relentless, ensuring that activism is proactive rather than merely reactive.

By mobilizing across regions, engaging men in gender justice, and forging alliances with inclusive faith leaders, Varma emphasized the need for steadfast commitment to protecting workplace rights against the ongoing global backlash.

## Part II - Q & A Highlights

The Q&A session provided a space for attendees to engage deeply with the panelists on strategies for countering anti-gender movements, the role of academia, and the challenges of advocacy in restrictive institutional environments.

1. **Teaching Gender Studies in a Time of Backlash**

One of the key questions asked how educators in gender studies can teach students—particularly those outside the discipline—about the importance of learning about and combating anti-gender movements. In response, a panelist emphasized the need to **bridge activism and academia**, arguing that **scholarship must be rooted in on-the-ground realities rather than existing in isolation.** They highlighted how Global South feminist movements have long resisted the artificial separation of theory and activism, underscoring the importance of **integrating grassroots knowledge into teaching.** Academia, they argued, must actively **challenge institutional pressures that discourage engagement with feminist and social justice movements.**

2. **Data and Reports on LGBTQ+ Students and Academic Achievement**

Another attendee inquired about the availability of research on the impact of anti-gender movements on **LGBTQ+, particularly trans and gender-nonconforming students' literacy and longevity.** A panelist noted that while **existing research often focuses on binary gender experiences**, there is an urgent need to **incorporate LGBTQ+ perspectives into broader literacy and education studies.** They encouraged researchers to **push for inclusive data collection** in mainstream education research and to **collaborate with activists and civil society organizations** to ensure that studies reflect the lived realities of LGBTQ+ communities.

3. **Advocacy in the Face of Institutional Suppression**

A participant raised concerns about how students and educators can continue advocating for gender justice in institutions that are under fire for activism. A panelist responded by **urging activists not to compromise on core principles**, arguing that **concessions only embolden anti-gender forces to push further restrictions.** They emphasized the need to **understand the legal and political forces driving these attacks** and to develop **counter-strategies that challenge the narratives used to justify institutional crackdowns.** Another panelist encouraged students to **learn from Global South movements**, where resistance to state and institutional repression has long been a reality.

4. **Intersectionality in Advocacy: Workplaces and Labor Movements**

A panelist working on sexual harassment in private-sector workplaces highlighted the **urgent need to support those who file complaints against workplace abuses**, as retaliation and economic insecurity often silence victims. They called for **greater strategic interventions to protect workers' rights** and emphasized the importance of **building solidarity between gender justice movements and labor organizing efforts.** Another speaker reinforced this point, arguing that **engagement with labor movements is critical to strengthening feminist advocacy.**

5. **Building Global Networks and Resisting in Solidarity**

Throughout the discussion, panelists stressed that **no one should fight these battles alone.** They encouraged attendees to **seek international solidarity, tap into global ecosystems of support, and collaborate beyond borders.** Organizations like the **SGP network were highlighted as spaces for collective learning, strategy-sharing, and action.** Panelists closed with a reminder that **activism must be sustainable**—feminist joy, peer support, and community care are just as essential as direct action in resisting oppression.

## Part III - Audience Discussions

The Zoom chat function during this hybrid event provided rich insights into the complexities of anti-gender movements, their global reach, and the strategies needed to counter them. Participants explored historical and contemporary influences, the role of economic inequality in fueling reactionary narratives, and the urgent need for intersectional and

context-specific resistance. Key discussions also highlighted the influence of colonial-era laws, the strategic use of social media, and the importance of decolonizing gender discourse. The following summary captures the key themes that emerged from the conversation.

1. **The Global Rise of Anti-Gender Movements & Strategic Resistance**
    - Participants highlighted how anti-gender movements are gaining momentum and actively undermining long-standing efforts in gender justice.
    - This backlash is not isolated but globally connected, with similar strategies appearing across different regions.
    - There was a call for critical self-reflection within gender advocacy spaces, asking whether current strategies need reassessment to be more effective.
2. **The Role of Social Media in Amplifying Anti-Gender Narratives**
    - Social media is a major battleground where anti-gender discourse spreads rapidly, influencing political policies and public perception.
    - Researchers noted the impact of these narratives in countries like Spain, while others emphasized the need for counter-strategies to fight misinformation online.
3. **U.S. Evangelical Influence & the Globalization of Conservative Agendas**
    - U.S. Evangelical groups have played a direct role in shaping anti-LGBTQ+ legislation in the Global South, particularly in Uganda.
    - This is part of a larger conservative strategy—as right-wing groups lost influence in the West, they redirected efforts toward the Global South and Eastern Europe.
    - The movement is now returning to the West with renewed aggression, making it critical to address these transnational connections.
4. **Economic Inequality Fuels Anti-Gender Backlash**
    - Anti-gender movements are often rooted in economic anxiety, with conservative forces exploiting people's struggles to shift blame onto marginalized groups.
    - Rather than addressing wealth inequality, right-wing actors push racist, sexist, and anti-LGBTQ+ myths to distract people from the real causes of their suffering.
5. **The Colonial Legacy of Anti-LGBTQ+ & Patriarchal Laws**

- Many laws criminalizing LGBTQ+ identities and enforcing patriarchal norms are not indigenous to the Global South but were imposed by colonial rulers—especially the British.
- Participants emphasized the importance of decolonizing gender discourse, reclaiming pre-colonial gender norms, and resisting the framing of gender equality as a "Western import."

6. **The Weaponization of Trans Rights as a Distraction**
    - Conservative forces selectively attack trans people, particularly trans women, in bad faith, pretending to care about women's rights while ignoring real gender-based violence.
    - Participants noted that these actors have never supported women's rights before, making their sudden concern about "protecting women's spaces" deeply hypocritical.
    - The instrumentalization of trans issues serves to divide social movements and distract from larger structural oppressions.
7. **The Need for Research, Education & Counter-Propaganda**
    - Educators in gender studies discussed how to effectively teach students (especially those outside gender studies) about anti-gender movements.
    - There was an emphasis on building stronger educational tools, reports, and research-backed resources to counteract the misinformation spread by conservative actors.
    - Several reports, including a 2023 UNRISD literature review on anti-gender movements, were shared as key sources for movement building.
8. **The Importance of Global Solidarity & Intersectional Resistance**
    - Participants from Africa, Latin America, Middle-East, and India shared how anti-gender narratives operate in their regions, showing clear cross-regional connections in these tactics.
    - There was strong appreciation for hearing diverse perspectives and a call for greater global feminist solidarity to resist the backlash.
    - Solidarity between gender justice movements, economic justice movements, and decolonial movements is essential for sustained resistance.

## Part IV. Conclusion

This hybrid session underscored the global nature of anti-gender movements and the urgent need for coordinated resistance across regions. Discussions highlighted how these movements are deeply intertwined with economic inequality, social division, and the preservation of existing power structures. Key takeaways from the session included:

- **Cross-regional learning is essential** – Anti-gender actors collaborate globally, and feminists must strengthen transnational networks to counter them.
- **Funding and power dynamics shape the landscape** – Grassroots organizations require sustained, strategic investment to continue their advocacy efforts.
- **Intersectionality is crucial** – Disability justice, LGBTQ+ rights, and climate action must be integrated into broader gender equity movements.
- **Sustained advocacy requires resilience** – Peer support networks, feminist joy, and mental well-being are vital for long-term activism.

Meanwhile, the **parallel discussion among attendees** reinforced that anti-gender, anti-LGBTQ+, and patriarchal forces are not isolated but part of a well-funded, globally coordinated effort that thrives on economic inequality and social division. Participants emphasized the need for activists, educators, and researchers to refine strategies, build transnational networks and develop stronger counter-narratives that expose these movements as tools of oppression designed to uphold existing power structures. Strengthening collective action and sharing strategies will be key to sustaining gender justice movements and countering these regressive forces with resilience and impact.

## Part V. Resources shared


- MacDonald, Alex. 2025. "Turkey draft bill could write 'biological sex' into law and criminalise & ;promotion& of LGBTQ."
- SPL Centre. 2023. "Introduction: Helping navigate the pitfalls of anti-LGBTQ+ junk science."
- Stoeckl, Kristina, and Ayoub, Phillip M. 2024. "The Global Fight Against LGBTI Rights."

- McEwen, Haley, and Narayanaswamy, Lata. 2023. "The international anti-gender movement: Understanding the rise of anti-gender discourses in the context of development, human rights and social protection", UNRISD Working Paper.
- Political Research Associates. 2016. "Press Release: Case in Defense of LGBTQI Human Rights Moves Forward with Critical Support from Political Research Associates' Ground Breaking Research."
- Documentary by Género Bajo Ataque / Gender Under Attack, shows how systematically the anti-"gender ideology" movement was rolled out across Latin America.