

Erika van Kerkwijk-Castellanos

Published professionally as Erika Castellanos

GLOBAL HEALTH GOVERNANCE & ORGANISATIONAL LEADERSHIP EXECUTIVE

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EXECUTIVE PROFILE

Global health governance and organisational leadership executive with 15+ years of progressively senior experience, informed by lived experience as a trans woman and person living with HIV. Executive Director of GATE, with responsibility for a 10-person international team, five direct reports and an annual organisational budget of approximately USD 2.5-3.5 million. Brings a distinctive combination of executive management, institutional reform, board governance, technical funding review, UN engagement, patient and community partnerships, policy development, resource mobilisation, grantmaking and evidence translation. Selected for leadership, governance and advisory roles with UNAIDS, WHO, the Global Fund, PEPFAR, WPATH and the International AIDS Society, and published as a contributor to peer-reviewed research and major global health commissions.

USD 2.5-3.5m
annual budget

10-person team
5 direct reports

~80 countries
organisational reach

USD 700k
25 grantees in 2025

CORE EXPERTISE

Executive leadership and organisational growth • Strategy, change and institutional strengthening • Governance and board engagement • Global health policy and technical review • Equity, human rights and gender • Resource mobilisation and donor stewardship • Grantmaking, compliance and risk • UN, government and multilateral engagement • Community and patient engagement • Cross-cultural team leadership • Evidence translation and research partnerships • High-level representation and public speaking

PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE

GATE (Global Action for Trans Equality) | *Global / Remote*

Apr 2017 - Present

Executive Director

Jan 2023 - Present

- Provide executive leadership across strategy, programmes, fundraising, operations, governance and external representation for a global civil society organisation advancing health, rights and equality.
- Lead a 10-person international team, including five direct reports, and oversee an annual organisational budget of approximately USD 2.5-3.5 million.
- Steered organisational growth that increased GATE's annual budget by approximately USD 1.5-2.0 million since becoming Executive Director.
- Led the participatory development of GATE's Board-approved 2026-2030 organisational strategy with the Board, staff, members and external stakeholders.
- Strengthened board reporting and governance procedures, clarified management structures and decision rights, and upgraded grant compliance, donor reporting, safeguarding, risk, human resources and performance-management systems.
- Improved staff accountability and enabled faster, more consistent internal decision-making through clearer roles, performance expectations and operating processes.
- Oversee work reaching approximately 80 countries through GATE's membership network, community grants and regranting, technical assistance and capacity strengthening.
- Directed approximately USD 700,000 in grants and regranting to 25 community-led organisations in 2025, with responsibility for strategic oversight, compliance and organisational accountability.
- Maintain relationships with donors, community organisations, researchers, governments and multilateral institutions, supporting funding continuity, programme quality and policy influence.
- Represent GATE in high-level processes involving UNAIDS, WHO, the Global Fund, PEPFAR, WPATH and other partners, translating community evidence and priorities into policy, funding and institutional-reform discussions.

Interim Executive Director

2022

- Led GATE through an executive transition while maintaining donor confidence, staff continuity, operational stability and strategic momentum.
- Held organisation-wide decision-making responsibility across programmes, operations, partnerships and institutional development during the transition period.

Director of Programs

Apr 2017 - 2022

- Expanded and strengthened GATE's global health portfolio and diversified its funding base by cultivating and onboarding new donors.
- Deepened GATE's technical engagement with WHO, UNAIDS, the Global Fund and other multilateral institutions.
- Helped integrate evidence and priorities from trans and gender-diverse communities into global health policy, guideline-development and funding discussions.
- Designed and led programmes focused on health, HIV, community leadership, inclusion, technical capacity and accountability.

- Built partnerships with researchers, donors, community networks and global institutions to connect lived experience with evidence generation and policy influence.

REDLACTRANS / Trans in Action Belize | Belize

Apr 2016 - Jan 2017

National Coordinator

- Co-founded Belize's first trans advocacy network and connected national organising with regional initiatives across Latin America and the Caribbean.
- Secured and managed grant funding, including Global Fund-supported resources, with responsibility for implementation, compliance and donor reporting.
- Led advocacy and stakeholder engagement to strengthen the visibility and participation of trans and gender-diverse communities in national health and human-rights discussions.

C-NET+ (Collaborative Network of People Living with HIV of Belize) | Belize

2010 - 2016

Co-Founder (2010) and Executive Director

Jul 2011 - 2016

- Co-founded and built Belize's first national network of people living with HIV, leading organisational development, strategy, governance, partnerships, external relations and policy advocacy.
- Secured formal representation for people living with HIV in national HIV decision-making structures and expanded meaningful community participation in policy and service discussions.
- Contributed to the formal revision of Belize's national HIV treatment guidelines, advocating for broader treatment options and more current regimens aligned with WHO guidance.
- Advanced access to HIV testing, treatment and care and promoted stronger referral and community-support pathways.
- Established community data-collection and feedback processes to strengthen evidence-informed decision-making and improve the responsiveness of HIV services.
- Represented community priorities with government, health providers, donors and regional partners while building organisational visibility and credibility.

Ministry of Health of Belize | Belize

Jul 2014 - Aug 2014

Consultant

- Developed Belize's National Positive Health, Dignity and Prevention Plan, centring the rights, priorities and service needs of people living with HIV.
- Consulted community and institutional stakeholders and translated their input into a national planning framework.

Regional Stigma and Discrimination Unit | Belize

Jan 2011 - Jun 2011

Researcher

- Conducted research on stigma and discrimination affecting people living with HIV and key populations.
- Supported the use of findings in a regional human-rights campaign and community advocacy.

SELECTED GLOBAL GOVERNANCE, OVERSIGHT & TECHNICAL APPOINTMENTS

Appointments are listed separately from employment to show the breadth and progression of formal governance, technical-review and multilateral responsibilities.

Current and recent appointments

2026 | NGO Expert, UNAIDS PCB Working Group on Further Transition and Integration into the UN System and Beyond - Selected to contribute civil-society expertise to institutional transition, governance and integration discussions.

2026 | Co-Chair, Multi-Stakeholder Task Force for the 2026 UN High-Level Meeting on HIV/AIDS - Co-lead civil-society and community coordination, advocacy preparation and engagement with the UN process.

2026 | Member, AIDS 2026 International Organizing Committee, International AIDS Society - Contribute to the international conference's organising and community-engagement architecture.

Dec 2024 - Present | Member, PEPFAR Scientific Advisory Board - Bring community-informed HIV, health-equity and policy perspectives to a scientific advisory setting.

2024 - Present | Focal Point, Equity, Human Rights and Gender, Technical Review Panel, The Global Fund - Lead and coordinate assessment of equity, human rights, gender and community considerations across funding requests reviewed by the Panel.

2024 - 2026 | WPATH Organization Representative, Board of Directors, World Professional Association for Transgender Health - Serve in a formal board-governance role within an international professional health association.

2024 - 2025 | Co-Chair, High-Level Panel on a Resilient and Fit-for-Purpose UNAIDS Joint Programme - Co-chaired an international panel considering the future positioning, resilience and institutional design of the UNAIDS Joint Programme.

2024 | NGO Delegate representing Europe, UNAIDS Programme Coordinating Board - Represented the European NGO constituency in the governing body of the UNAIDS Joint Programme.

2024 | Co-Chair, WHO Guideline Development Group on the Health of Trans and Gender-Diverse People - Co-chaired a global guideline-development process bringing technical evidence and lived-experience perspectives into WHO work.

2024 | Member, UNAIDS Global Task Team on 2030 HIV Targets - Contributed to development of global HIV targets and later to the writing group for the 2025 Lancet roadmap.

2023 - 2024 | Member, UNAIDS Global Council on Inequality, AIDS and Pandemics - Contributed community and equity perspectives to international discussion of inequality, HIV and pandemic preparedness.

2022 | Co-Chair, WHO Guideline Development Group for Consolidated HIV, Viral Hepatitis and STI Guidelines for Key Populations - Co-chaired a multidisciplinary guideline group supporting evidence-based, rights-affirming recommendations.

2020 | Member, WHO Guideline Development Group on HIV Service Delivery - Contributed community and key-population perspectives to updated service-delivery recommendations for HIV treatment and care.

2019 | Member, WHO Director-General's Advisory Group of Women Living with HIV - Participated in an advisory mechanism designed to bring the priorities and experiences of women living with HIV into WHO policy and programming.

Earlier board and constituency leadership

2020 - 2021 | Board Member, Communities Delegation to the Global Fund Board - Represented communities living with and affected by HIV, tuberculosis and malaria in Global Fund governance.

2018 - 2020 | Alternate Board Member, Communities Delegation to the Global Fund Board - Appointed in 2018 as the first openly trans advocate appointed to the Global Fund Board.

2016 - 2018 | Vice-Chair, Global Network of People Living with HIV (GNP+) - Provided international network governance and leadership focused on the rights, health and meaningful involvement of people living with HIV.

2015 - 2017 | NGO Delegate representing Latin America and the Caribbean, UNAIDS Programme Coordinating Board - Represented regional civil-society priorities in UNAIDS governance and policy discussions.

2011 - 2017 | Executive Member, National AIDS Commission Belize - Contributed community leadership and lived-experience expertise to national HIV coordination and decision-making.

SELECTED PATIENT, RESEARCH & PHARMACEUTICAL-SECTOR ENGAGEMENT

2019 | Member, Positive Action Strategic Advisory Council, ViiV Healthcare - Appointed as an external global HIV and community expert to advise the programme's longer-term strategic direction.

Positive Perspectives 2 study cycle | Member, Positive Perspectives 2 Advisory Committee, ViiV Healthcare - Contributed patient and community insight to a 25-country study on treatment experience, adherence, quality of life, shared decision-making and treatment priorities.

2021 | Contributor, Positive Perspectives 2 Policy Manifesto - Helped translate international patient evidence into recommendations for person-centred HIV care and quality of life.

2024 | Commission Co-Author, IAPAC-Lancet HIV Commission on the Future of Urban HIV Responses - Contributed to a major international commission addressing the future of urban HIV policy and service responses.

2020 - 2025 | Research and writing collaborations - Co-authored analyses and policy papers spanning treatment adherence, treatment aspirations, patient-provider shared decision-making, U=U, quality of life, health equity, community-led programme science and global HIV targets.

SELECTED MULTILATERAL LEADERSHIP, SPEAKING & PUBLIC REPRESENTATION

2026 | Moderator, UN Interactive Multi-Stakeholder Hearing for the High-Level Meeting on HIV/AIDS - Facilitated high-level dialogue among community, civil-society and institutional stakeholders.

2025 | Panel Contributor, 58th Session of the United Nations Human Rights Council - Addressed health, rights and equality concerns affecting trans and gender-diverse people.

2025 | Featured Speaker, IAS 'Women Know What Works' Global Session - Contributed lived-experience and community leadership perspectives on women living with HIV and collective action.

2025 | Civil-Society Intervention, Consultation on the Global AIDS Strategy 2026-2031 - Advanced recommendations on community leadership, social contracting, protected financing and community-led organisations as health infrastructure.

2024 | Speaker, Council of Europe - Addressed discrimination, violence, health inequities and equality affecting trans people.

2024 | Public Q&A / Interview, UNAIDS - Discussed leadership, community priorities and the future of the global HIV response.

2023 | Moderator and Opening Speaker, UNAIDS Programme Coordinating Board Thematic Segment - Led discussion on inequalities and the HIV response for priority and key populations.

2022 | Interviewee, AIDS 2022 - Discussed community engagement, trans health and participation in the international AIDS response.

2021 | Moderator, Graduate Institute Global Health Discussion - Moderated a senior-level conversation on preparing the world for future pandemics.

2018 | Interviewee, UNAIDS 'Voices of Activists' - Featured in public communication on trans leadership, visibility, HIV and human rights.

2017 | Guest Contributor, PANCAP - Published a first-person contribution on empowering people living with HIV in Belize.

SELECTED POLICY, ADVOCACY & THOUGHT-LEADERSHIP OUTPUTS

2026 | Co-author, advocacy brief on influencing the UN High-Level Meeting on HIV/AIDS - Practical guidance for communities and civil society on engaging governments, embassies and UN negotiations.

2024 | Author, 'Addressing discrimination and violence against transgender people at the Council of Europe' - GATE article translating a high-level intervention into accessible policy and advocacy messages.

2023 | Bylined contribution, UNAIDS World AIDS Day Report 2023 - Focused on partnership rather than paternalism, trust and the leadership of trans and gender-diverse communities.

2021 | Contributor, 'Optimising Quality of Life for All People Living with HIV' manifesto - Patient-informed policy recommendations developed from Positive Perspectives 2 evidence.

Ongoing | Executive and organisational thought leadership - Public writing and speaking on community authority, global health financing, donor practice, institutional power, multilateral reform and organisational resilience.

PEER-REVIEWED PUBLICATIONS & MAJOR COMMISSIONS

Published as Erika Castellanos. Individual contribution is stated conservatively as co-author, commission co-author or writing-group contributor.

2025. Writing-group contributor. "Global HIV targets: a roadmap to 2030 and beyond." *The Lancet* DOI: [10.1016/S0140-6736\(25\)01449-7](https://doi.org/10.1016/S0140-6736(25)01449-7)

2024. Co-author. "Ending AIDS as a public health threat: the imperative for clear messaging on U=U, viral suppression, and zero risk." *The Lancet HIV* 11(11):e783-e790. DOI: [10.1016/S2352-3018\(24\)00241-8](https://doi.org/10.1016/S2352-3018(24)00241-8)

2024. Commission co-author. "IAPAC-Lancet HIV Commission on the future of urban HIV responses." *The Lancet HIV* 11(9):e607-e648. DOI: [10.1016/S2352-3018\(24\)00124-3](https://doi.org/10.1016/S2352-3018(24)00124-3)

2024. Co-author. "Community contexts and knowledge: accountability, leadership and meaningful involvement of communities in Programme Science." *Journal of the International AIDS Society* 27(Suppl 2):e26281. DOI: [10.1002/jia2.26281](https://doi.org/10.1002/jia2.26281)

2024. Co-author. "Breaking barriers: addressing transphobia and advancing transgender rights in the Asia-Pacific and beyond." *Journal of the International AIDS Society* 27(5):e26273. DOI: [10.1002/jia2.26273](https://doi.org/10.1002/jia2.26273)

2022. Co-author. "Innovations, adaptations, and accelerations in the delivery of HIV services during COVID-19." *The Lancet HIV* 9(12):e884-e886. DOI: [10.1016/S2352-3018\(22\)00268-5](https://doi.org/10.1016/S2352-3018(22)00268-5)

2022. Co-author. "Stronger Together: Coalitions as Interventions Against Intersectional Stigma." *American Journal of Public Health* 112(S4):S384-S386. DOI: [10.2105/AJPH.2021.306694](https://doi.org/10.2105/AJPH.2021.306694)

2021. Co-author. "Assessing inclusion of trans people in HIV national strategic plans: a review of 60 high HIV prevalence countries." *Journal of the International AIDS Society* 24(11):e25837. DOI: [10.1002/jia2.25837](https://doi.org/10.1002/jia2.25837)

2021. Co-author. "Physical, Emotional, and Psychosocial Challenges Associated with Daily Dosing of HIV Medications and Their Impact on Indicators of Quality of Life: Findings from the Positive Perspectives Study." *AIDS and Behavior* 25(3):961-972. DOI: [10.1007/s10461-020-03055-1](https://doi.org/10.1007/s10461-020-03055-1)

2021. Co-author. "Shared Decision Making Between Patients and Healthcare Providers and its Association with Favorable Health Outcomes Among People Living with HIV." *AIDS and Behavior* 25(5):1384-1395. DOI: [10.1007/s10461-020-02973-4](https://doi.org/10.1007/s10461-020-02973-4)

2021. Co-author. "Undetectable equals untransmittable: awareness and associations with health outcomes among people living with HIV in 25 countries." *Sexually Transmitted Infections* 97(1):18-26. DOI: [10.1136/sextrans-2020-054551](https://doi.org/10.1136/sextrans-2020-054551)

2021. Co-author. "Regional differences in perceived treatment needs and priorities in relation to antiretroviral therapy among people living with HIV in 25 countries." *Preventive Medicine* 142:106372. DOI: [10.1016/j.ypmed.2020.106372](https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ypmed.2020.106372)

2020. Co-author. "Prevalence, determinants, and impact of suboptimal adherence to HIV medication in 25 countries." *Preventive Medicine* 139:106182. DOI: [10.1016/j.ypmed.2020.106182](https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ypmed.2020.106182)

2020. Co-author. "Treatment aspirations and attitudes towards innovative medications among people living with HIV in 25 countries." *Population Medicine* 2:23. DOI: [10.18332/popmed/124781](https://doi.org/10.18332/popmed/124781)

2020. Co-author. "Differences in HIV treatment experiences, perceptions, and behaviors by gender and sexual orientation in 25 middle-income and high-income countries: Findings from the 2019 Positive Perspectives Survey." *Population Medicine* 2:42. DOI: [10.18332/popmed/128600](https://doi.org/10.18332/popmed/128600)

2020. Co-author. "Barriers and facilitators to past six-month HIV testing among men who have sex with men in Belize." *International Journal of STD & AIDS* 31(13):1300-1307. DOI: [10.1177/0956462420947574](https://doi.org/10.1177/0956462420947574)

Other scholarly record

2020. Conference abstract co-author. "Physical, emotional, and psychosocial challenges associated with daily dosing of HIV medications and their impact on indicators of quality of life." *Open Forum Infectious Diseases* 7(Suppl 1):S552. DOI: [10.1093/ofid/ofaa439.1231](https://doi.org/10.1093/ofid/ofaa439.1231)

2021. Published correction. "Correction to: Physical, Emotional, and Psychosocial Challenges Associated with Daily Dosing of HIV Medications and Their Impact on Indicators of Quality of Life." *AIDS and Behavior* DOI: [10.1007/s10461-021-03206-y](https://doi.org/10.1007/s10461-021-03206-y)

EDUCATION & PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Expected Dec 2026 | Bachelor of Health Science, University of the People - In progress.

2015 | Certificate in LGBT Health Research, University of Pittsburgh

2016 | Selected Coursework in Social Work, University of Belize - Non-degree coursework; no degree, diploma or certificate awarded.

Selected professional development

2025 | Unethical Decision Making in Organizations, University of Lausanne

2024 | Negotiation, Mediation and Conflict Resolution, ESSEC Business School

2018 | Initiating and Planning Projects, University of California, Irvine / Coursera

LANGUAGES

English: Fluent | **Spanish:** Fluent | **Dutch:** Conversational

PROFESSIONAL POSITIONING

Best aligned to senior roles in global health policy and strategy, organisational and programme leadership, governance, institutional reform, community and patient engagement, health equity and access, partnerships, external affairs, resource mobilisation and grantmaking across UN and multilateral institutions, international NGOs, foundations, global health partnerships and the pharmaceutical sector.

SELECTED TECHNICAL & POLICY THEMES

HIV treatment policy and service delivery - National treatment guidelines, differentiated service delivery, treatment access, adherence, treatment preferences, U=U and quality of life.

Trans and gender-diverse health - WHO guideline development, gender-affirming care, health equity, violence and discrimination, and meaningful community involvement.

Equity, human rights and gender in financing - Cross-cutting assessment of funding requests and integration of community, rights and gender considerations into programme design.

Community-led systems and accountability - Community representation, feedback and data mechanisms, participatory governance, capacity strengthening and community-led grantmaking.

Institutional reform and organisational change - Strategy development, executive transition, governance strengthening, management structures, safeguarding, risk and performance systems.

Patient and community engagement - Translation of lived experience into research questions, evidence interpretation, policy recommendations and external stakeholder strategy.

Partnerships and external affairs - Engagement with UN entities, governments, donors, pharmaceutical-sector partners, researchers, boards and international community networks.

Grantmaking and donor accountability - Programme oversight, regranting, compliance, donor reporting, risk management and support to community-led organisations.

STAKEHOLDER & GEOGRAPHIC EXPERIENCE

- Global and regional engagement spanning approximately 80 countries through grants, technical assistance, capacity strengthening and GATE's international membership network.
- Substantive governance and policy experience across global, European, Latin American and Caribbean constituencies, with national leadership experience in Belize.
- Regular collaboration with boards, senior UN and government officials, donors, technical experts, researchers, advocates, patient representatives and community-led organisations.
- Experienced operating across politically sensitive and cross-cultural environments, building consensus while maintaining an explicit focus on equity, rights and community accountability.