

Increasing Support and Resources for LGBT Rights

BERLIN CONFERENCE, 5-6 December 2013

Conference Report

(Public Version)

Background, aim and objective of the conference

The conference, held on 5-6 December 2013, was a follow-up to the Stockholm meeting, which took place on 15-16 March 2010. It was a working conference and is part of an ongoing process to find ways to strengthen international LGBT rights work by increasing resources and ensuring better coordination of financial and other support for LGBT human rights activists in the Global South and East. To achieve this aim, the conference brought together around 60 participants representing bilateral agencies, donor organisations, national LGBT organisations and local activists from 21 countries.

Participants discussed progress made towards implementing the recommendations¹ on advancing the human rights of LGBT people adopted at the Stockholm conference, hurdles encountered and best practices developed. The participants worked together to formulate the next steps to be taken and made specific recommendations, also with a view to the next follow-up conference in Washington DC in 2014.

The conference was held under the **Chatham House Rule**.

Day 1

In the introductory sessions the importance of applying a human rights-based approach (HRBA) to LGBT rights work was highlighted, as it focuses on the most discriminated individuals and groups and aims at empowering them. In addition, structural solutions were emphasised as being essential for increasing support and resources for LGBT rights, also in view of the budget cuts governments are facing as a result of the financial crisis. Particular attention should also be paid to trans, intersex and LBT women's issues, as well as LGBT rights work in middle and higher-income countries, such as Russia and South Africa.

In the panel discussion that followed, NGO representatives from the Global South and East shared their experience with and expectations of support for LGBT rights work. During the discussion, the limitations of integrating LGBT issues into HIV/AIDS programming were emphasised, along with the fact that HIV/AIDS prevention/treatment is not the only thing LGBT people need. Donors should focus on empowering local LGBT communities to claim and exercise their rights, develop long-term goals and targets (e.g. applying the HRBA to development programming) and adapt their funding modalities accordingly. More attention should also be paid to the funding needs of LGBT organisations, their operational capacity development, the provision of more long-term funding and the role of intermediaries in increasing accessibility to funding for smaller LGBT organisations. As far as aid cuts are concerned, LGBT activists reiterated that, while public pressure is welcome, cutting aid does not help to advance the cause of LGBT issues, as LGBT groups are often scapegoated for the cuts. Media coverage of the disregard of LGBT rights without prior consultation with the LGBT communities in the countries concerned should be avoided at all costs.

The next session focused on the following themes:

1. Poverty reduction
2. Religious/traditional leaders
3. Capacity building
4. Human rights defenders and emergency funds
5. Coordination among donors
6. Guidelines on LGBT

Donor organisation and governments provided examples of their work and participants discussed existing gaps within these themes both in terms of issues and regions. Issues raised included involving religious and traditional leaders in efforts to advance LGBT rights; provision of safety for LGBT activists and development of long-term safety strategies to protect them; capacity building for grassroots LGBT organisations/activists in areas such as project implementation and strategic coordination; strengthening

¹ The Stockholm recommendations include: **1. Mapping/documentation** – Track and analyse information (who is doing what, where and how much) among bilateral agencies and donor NGOs, and link the analysis to implementation strategies in the Global South; work in a more coordinated way, document, share and learn from best/worst place/case practices for bilaterals; **2. Integration/mainstreaming** - Research effective mechanisms to integrate/mainstream LGBT rights into development assistance programming (e.g. health, poverty reduction, gender); **3. National advocacy/training** – strengthening national LGBT NGOs to be more involved in national level advocacy for increasing funding/support; train staff of development agencies and the diplomatic corps on LGBT issues.

the dialogue between public and private donors and building up coordination infrastructures for donors within intergovernmental organisations (e.g. UN and World Bank); and the importance of developing guidelines on LGBT for embassy staff to encourage engagement with LGBT issues and communities.

In the last session of the day, mapping tools and instruments for tracking donor funding for LGBT issues were presented. The only source currently available on global LGBT funding is the 2010 Global Gaze Report, which includes information on top funders of LGBT issues and on the focus of funding by region and country, issue (e.g. homophobia, economic rights etc.) and population (e.g. lesbian, transgender). The participants discussed the potential benefits (e.g. better donor coordination of resources) and challenges (e.g. LGBT funding may be intentionally disguised to avoid any backlash against local LGBT groups) of developing more consistent and comprehensive mapping of bilateral LGBT support.

Day 2

The second day started with three brief presentations of recent research conducted on possible ways to effectively integrate LGBT rights into development programming. The first presentation outlined the results of collaborative research on sexuality, poverty and LGBT issues conducted in China, India, South Africa, the Philippines and Brazil. Common research findings included: invisibility of sexuality in national development policies; inadequate involvement of LGBT in policy-making processes; and dissonance between law, policy and lived realities. Based on these findings, a number of actions were recommended to donors, including the integration of sexuality and poverty into ongoing work and programming; capacity development of LGBT grantees; and bringing forward the voices of economically-marginalised sections of communities as well as trans and intersex people.

The second presentation focused on the economic cost of homophobia, and in particular on the discrimination of LGBT people in the Indian labour market and health sector (e.g. HIV disparities) and the resulting economic costs for the Indian society. The idea behind this research is that both human rights and economic development have a value and by linking the two an even stronger case can be made for development actors to integrate LGBT issues into development policies and programmes.

The final presentation summarised the preliminary results of field research conducted in Malawi and Cameroon on how development cooperation, especially programme-based approaches, can effectively support civil society groups working on SOGI issues. Possible entry points for supporting LGBT rights were identified, including law enforcement, education and gender-based violence, as these are areas that have considerable impact on the lives of LGBT people. LGBT activists interviewed also identified the public health approach (HIV/AIDS) as a way to support LGBT rights, despite the challenges that currently exist (e.g. strong focus on MSM, exclusion of lesbians, stigmatisation).

In the session that followed additional ways of advancing LGBT rights through other, non-financial, means, especially through embassies, were discussed. Suggestions made included: approaching LGBT issues through a human rights lens; using strategic litigation to enforce LGBT rights; employing the 'do no harm' principle in any type of activity/intervention; providing 'safe spaces' for LGBT activists to meet; considering the role of multinational companies in raising issues with governments that restrict LGBT rights in the workplace, for example; including LGBT issues in other measures, such as in police training, and in sector reforms; providing support for LGBT rights in multilateral settings and by engaging with relevant special procedures within the UN Human Rights Council; using successful national legal reforms as a model for other countries (e.g. laws on equality marriage and gender identity in Argentina).

Based on the discussions and presentations, two groups held separate sessions to discuss preferred ways forward to achieve more resources and support for international LGBT rights work. At the end of the conference, the different perspectives were brought together and recommendations were formulated.

RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSIONS

Recommendations specifically directed to bilateral agencies and their work:

1. Focus more on intersex and transsex issues and integrate these into development programming.
2. Encourage embassies to collect and provide country-specific information on LGBT issues. This would include identifying who are the people affected and what specific challenges do they face.
3. Develop and implement policies to ensure that staff on the ground (e.g. in embassies) know how to best engage with local LGBT communities and provide safety for LGBT activists.
4. Consider the role of intermediaries in making funding more accessible for LGBT organisations.
5. Develop long-term strategies for supporting LGBT rights.

Based on the Stockholm recommendations the following was agreed:

1. Mapping/documentation

Bilateral agencies and IGOs will share information on their structure and focal points. Existing reports, mappings and recommendations on funding, including information on impact/outcome of funding, should also be shared on a confidential basis. Pilot studies on better coordination of funding activities among donors should be carried out. In addition, all bilateral agencies will share available information on best/worst case practices. A multi-stakeholder platform containing this information and information on how to access funding, for example, should be considered in the future.

2. Integration/mainstreaming (research on effective mechanisms to integrate/mainstream LGBT rights into development programming)

Existing research should be gathered and analysed for its usefulness and opportunities for new research to close existing gaps should be identified. All research outcomes and mechanisms should be shared with bilateral agencies and donor organisations. Existing research and data on specific topics, such as poverty reduction, should be compiled and presented at the next conference.

3. National advocacy/training for development agencies and diplomatic corps staff

Staff of development agencies and the diplomatic corps need to be trained on LGBT issues. As bilateral agencies have different organisational structures, they should support one another by sharing information on ongoing training sessions and best practices and by working together to set up training models.

Recommendations for the next follow-up conference in Washington DC in 2014:

The conference should:

- Encourage participation by other donor governments, by governments that have dropped out of the process and by governments that can provide other, non-financial, support. Civil society organisations are encouraged to lobby their governments to participate in the conference.
- Bring in a high number of participants from communities in the Global South and East, as well as participants working in the health sector/health organisations to get practical expertise on how to integrate LGBT issues in areas such as reproductive rights.
- Cover LGBT issues specific to certain regions and countries (e.g. experiences, challenges).
- Include presentations by donor governments on LGBTI rights projects they have implemented/funded.
- Deal in more detail with specific issues.