

INCLUDING LGBTQI+ GROUPS IN THE SDGS

Recommendations for UK-based INGOs



In February 2022, the SWIDN Network heard from AmplifyChange in an informal Working Group to better understand issues facing the LGBTQI communities in some of the countries where SWIDN members work. One of the 5 areas of work for AmplifyChange is in eliminating stigma or discrimination on the grounds of gender or sexual orientation. This session explored how UK-based organisations can be part of a global movement for change towards achieving Sexual and Reproductive Health Rights (SRHR) for all and improving queer-safe practice in international development.

This paper is based on notes from the group discussion and we hope will act as a starting point for further discussions in our sector, where LGBTQI+ groups continue to be excluded from work towards achieving the SDGs. SWIDN are grateful to Liz Tremlett and Emese Kovacs for sharing their time and expertise so generously with the SWIDN community.

UNDERSTANDING THE KEY CHALLENGES FACING LGBTQI+ GROUPS

Data relating to the rights and experiences of the LGBTQI+ community is hard to find. IPSOS (2021) surveyed 27 high or middle-income countries and found that 21% of adults identify themselves as gay, lesbian or homosexual, bisexual, pansexual or omnisexual, asexual, 'other' or 'won't say'. If we assume this to be a universal experience, this is a significant number of people in communities affected by our programmes, as colleagues working in our partner organisations, and as colleagues in our UK organisations.

The [Human Dignity Trust](#) lists the countries that 'criminalise LGBT people'. There are 32 in Africa, 22 in Asia, 7 in the Pacific and 6 in the Caribbean and the Americas. They offer an interactive map that allows you to search which countries also criminalise consensual sexual activity between males, between females, the gender expression of trans people, and the maximum punishment under law. For 11 countries in Asia and Africa, this is the death penalty. [The Kaleidoscope Trust](#) highlight that in half of these countries, homophobic laws originated during Britain's colonial rule. They also offer [an interactive map](#) showing the CEDAW Committee's approach towards LGBTI rights in State Parties from the Commonwealth, although many of the Committee's recommendations are over a decade old.

Thanks to [the Global Resources Report](#), we are able to quantify the very minimal levels of funding available for support for LGBTI communities. AmplifyChange were set up in 2014 and the demand for LGBTQI grants has been far greater than expected. Supporting LGBTI communities is just one fifth of their work and their £18m budget and yet, they are the 10th largest donor of LGBTQI support globally and the 3rd in Africa. They highlight the shocking lack of funding that results in their prominence on the global funding landscape. Until the funding exists for more targeted support, inclusive programmes at a community level remain a critical part of ensuring queer people are not left behind from achieving the SDGs as a result of their gender or sexuality. This is where UK INGOs can have a significant impact.

WHAT CAN UK INGOS DO?

UK-based INGOs can be part of a global movement for change, improving the access of LGBTQI community members to rights by ensuring general programming is inclusive at a community level. From the group discussion, several key recommendations emerged. These are:

1

Understand the legal framework in the country context in which you implement, partner or fund. Every country context is different and it is vital to know what legal framework exists where you work. We cannot draw parallels between neighbouring countries, or across continents. An understanding of the legal framework relating to all human rights should form a key part of your context analysis, your team induction and your engagement with partners.

2

Understand the extent to which the national legal framework is relied on by local authorities and how it is implemented. In many country contexts a discriminatory legal framework may exist but there is an increasing public attitude of support and inclusion towards LGBTQI community members. We can support our knowledge of the law with an understanding of the practice. Where more inclusive policies may exist, seek to understand how these are implemented too. Policy frameworks may exist but implementation in practice varies considerably between country contexts. We urge our members to understand the reality affecting the lives of queer people in the communities in which they work.

3

Actively seek opportunities to partner with existing local networks. Partnerships with local networks and organisations supporting LGBTQI people can help to gauge existing political will and provide local guidance on effective, meaningful action. This may require a creative, adaptable approach where many networks are informal, unregistered or hidden. It may be that organisational strengthening is a core part of your support. There is scope for advocacy to funders to reduce bureaucracy, fund flexibly and fund networks. These partnerships can support individual awareness and shifts in attitudes within our own organisations as well. As a funder of grassroots networks working for LGBTQI justice, AmplifyChange are a great starting point for identifying existing national networks in different country contexts in which you work. Please connect with Liz or Emese for more information.

4

Include indicators in your context analysis to better understand the specific issues faced by the LGBTIQ community. Until greater, targeted funding exists for the LGBTI community, inclusion in general programmes is the most effective means of overcoming barriers to human rights for all. In your assessment of community vulnerabilities, include measures or means to better understand the specific issues that the LGBTIQ community face in the contexts where you work. Stonewall UK give clear indicators of the experience of people in LGBT groups in the UK relating to health, education, access to employment, and more. How can you improve your own and your organisational understanding of the specific issues facing LGBT groups in the communities where your organisation works?

5

Ensure your programmes include people who are otherwise excluded. An intersectional approach to inclusive programming is key to ensuring programme design is fully accessible for all groups, including LGBTQI community members. The fear of facing penalties is a realistic one for us as organisations, but we can be creative about continuing to champion the rights of all in ways that are meaningful and effective, including taking a localisation approach through partnering with national networks (see recommendation 3). Using inclusive language can be a key part of including all people in all programmes.

6

Be an Ally. Use opportunities in your work and world to inspire respectful conversations, challenge attitudes and prompt self-reflection. This can be in small ways for example using inclusive language, and in larger ways, such as driving local partnerships on behalf of your organisation.

CHANGE IS HAPPENING

The need to make changes to achieve greater justice and equity for all is fundamental to the work we all do; this is the motivation for overcoming the obstacles that face queer inclusion and for continuing to challenge discrimination, stigma and hostility towards LGBTQI+ groups in all our countries of work.

It is not all negative; positive change is happening. Public attitudes are shifting and there is growing space for people to live openly as their whole selves. Globally, people born after 1997 (Gen Z) are much more likely to identify as bisexual (IPSOS). There are positive changes being made in lower and middle income countries as well. Consensual same-sex sexual activity is not a crime in Lesotho, Mozambique, Rwanda and India (HumanDignityTrust). In Nepal, the constitution of 2015 recognises LGBTQI rights as fundamental rights, provides legal redress for discrimination on the grounds of sexuality and legal access to public services including government pensions and other social support (AmplifyChange). In 2023, there is a movement to seek the legalisation of same-sex marriage.

FURTHER RESOURCES

We've put together a list of organisations we know of who are working on LGBTQI inclusion relating to achieving the SDGs in lower income countries. We'd love to hear from you if you know of others to add to our list.

[AMPLIFYCHANGE](#)

[ILGA - The International Lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans and intersex association](#)

[THE KALEIDOSCOPE TRUST](#)

[ASTRAEA LESBIAN FOUNDATION](#)

[THE GLOBAL PHILANTHROPY PROJECT](#)

[EDGE EFFECT](#)

[FRIDA - The Young Feminist Fund](#)

[The Railbow Railroad](#)

[The Equality Network \(Glossary of Terms\)](#)

[Let's Walk Uganda](#)



If you would like to continue this conversation for your personal or organisational learning and would welcome the support of SWIDN in this process, please let us know.

You can email hannah@swidn.org.uk