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Funding Gay Rights in the Global South? Only If You Do It Straight!

Wednesday, July 13, 2011, 2:45 – 4:45 pm

Session Organizers:

Teyo van der Schoot and Paul Jansen, Hivos

Facilitator:

Kate Kroger, Director of Grants, American Jewish World Service

Teyo van der Schoot, Programmer Specialist, Rights and Citizenship Programme, Hivos

Panelists:

Paul Jansen, Program Officer, LGBT Rights/MSM & HIV Programme, Hivos

Maria Sjodin, Executive Director of the Swedish Federation for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender Rights

Carla Sutherland, Director, International Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity Program, Arcus Foundation

Sponsor:

Hivos

Teyo introduced the session by hallmarking LBGTIQ rights, new niche in global south for funding. He explained the abbreviation and acknowledged the diversity and emphasized the necessity of a third gender to break the dichotomy.

He highlighted the rise of biological issues in the past 20 years with respect to sexual orientation and gender identity. He also brought up the issue of AIDS and men having sex with men as a high risk group.

Bringing to the forefront the need for a development agency rights based approach, Teyo explained how human rights system needs to contain these rights and how in the last five years he has been funding these issues.

- Group of funders is very small particularly considering 10%+ of worlds population.

Drawing an analogy with women's rights he explained how LGBTQI issues are taking a long time to be recognized. He asked in anticipation for when these issues will become mainstream:

Is the world ready for these emancipation agendas?

Funders:

There are significant difficulties in giving funds on these issues and in these movements. Momentum must be effectively used. They are staging this session so that funders can avoid potential pitfalls when funding in this field and so that funders and their grantees can capitalize on the momentum. We need to learn how to make this a mainstream human rights issues

Three Strategies:

1) Transnational capacity buildings – send in volunteer workers to build capacity, in a concept similar to peace corps. We see it in Eastern Europe, training people in the east. In Spain activists working with Latin American film festivals. There needs to be new initiatives to break silences in the countries. Lessons to be learned from stonewall or movements in Eastern Europe.

There is an issue of ownership. Are we imposing a Western model or definition on this struggle when we go in there? There can be backlash as seen in Uganda when these groups emerge with campaigns or advocacy efforts on the ground. There is resulting repression and governmental issues.

It is hard to go into the international circus and undoubtedly there is sometimes a brain drain by the international NGOs internationally.

2) International rights mechanisms, emancipation

There is already a framework but what is the use of international standards and bodies to push along projects?

- Declaration of Montreal.
- Jakarta principles initiative
- Human rights council.

See human rights council adopt new clause..??

Push local explorations for those that are really behind by having this international policy world reacting to these issues.

There can be backlash with this approach as well. There might be counter resolutions in the UN that could make divisions on these issues. Personal issue – decriminalize LGBT in India and people were happy but the next morning there was a media circus and so that might result in a loss of ownership and credit for their own victories

3) Grassroots movement building and partnerships

What needs to be done:

- Claim recognition
- Authentic
- Rooted in the societies
- Sustainable giving and movements
- More respectful sometimes,

Negative: terribly slow, sometimes too scary or too dangerous on the ground so we must be patient. There is the risk of uneven development.

Teyo explains the parameters of the session:

- Simplistic panelists will defend each position. Funders must choose which strategy they might want to follow in the future.
- Pick one of the three.
- Introduce the set-up of the section.
- Vote on the strategy at the beginning but can only spend your money once.
- Strategic in one case.
- Each group will critique another group after the thirty minutes.
- Start a Debate.
- Kroeger will deal with the debate.

Strategy 1: Sjordin: Capacity Building

Swedish Federation for LGBT Rights.

- Six years after decriminalization in Sweden and on increasingly international levels.
- They are not against the grassroots.
- They are still in Sweden.
- The rights holders need to be involved in the change. This is the starting principle for their work internationally.

I rarely see us as funders but they work in close partnerships with the grassroots organizations. We do partnerships where capacity building is a component. They sent a survey to orgs that they are working with to get their input on how they are funded.

For funders:

Hard to work with funders who they don't feel equal to.

Go further with skills development, administering and how to use funds to develop the movement is necessary to build a strong movement.

Need capacity building that is designed with the grassroots organisations interests at heart.

Sometimes consultants are great and necessary to aid them in their best potential.

They work in Uganda: they get funding from the Swedish government and that was hard. It took 2 years to plan without funding. At that time, they planned the planning and application process before formal funding. Their moral support and relationships with advocates on the ground was awesome during this period. Capacity building is not the most important part. I think the advocacy and international support that we can generate internationally which is the most important reason for funding in this way.

In Uganda, there was a lot of international reactions to the bills in Uganda. These reactions were generated because of the connections that the activists in Uganda had with groups around the world. They evacuated one of the activists after a murder but also generated reactions and support from the Swedish government.

In Malawi, it was criminal for same-sex behavior in men. Now it is illegal for women to have same-sex relationships—to make things equal. International reactions occurred after the law was enacted. She attributes this problem to the minimal number of connections between the activists in the global south and the rest of the world.

Need informed decisions that you can feed to governments and others in north so that you can convince and Advocate for funding from governments. Sweden is a big funder of human rights initiative. Relatively big funding with lgbt funding although still small. Grow with lots of info.

Org. in turkey, significant improvements in the last decades but still see difficulties. Hear about it from the partners.

Strategy 2: Sutherland: International

Why LGBTQI work is going nowhere.

- Because of the pity vote for the international, hard decisions but very low numbers, no feel-good factors but took real analysis.

She shows a map of global situations of gender non-conformity. Criminalization. Ex- British colonies and death penalties in Islamic countries. Then group of countries where they deserve protection. Divisions. Large parts of world with no legislation but lots of hate crime.

Little stars causing a ruffle, generations for change in the issues with grassroots programs. 250 million in US invested. No scope for not being completely strategic with minimal resources on this issue. High levels of poverty receive much of this funding.

She looks specifically at Kenya. She includes a list of the violation of basic rights. Don't want to be sitting in a grassroots struggle with a lot of people with no voice at that moment. She highlights the social stigma and how difficult it is for LGBT people to become vocal and come out where its hard to be safe there. Legally hostile areas, governments and Saudi government and Islamic fundamentalists. Identifies enemies like the catholic church

We are going to wait forever. Can barely do it IN US, how can w, e in locations like Uganda, Kenya etc.? It is necessary for us to leverage. Get power, powerful partners, resources, influences

- Clinton called leaders and got rid of bill in Uganda, not grassroots.

The UN by the white men is no longer the world order in charge of those institutions Brazil, Russia, China, India, need to get diverse voices at technical orgs from these countries. As they will be the next leaders.

Oh its too complicated in these bureaucratic areas. We need to engage because its used as a wedge issue. We need to defend ourselves in these spaces.

Strategy: Jansen: Bottom-Up strategy

He shows a clip about criminalization, harassment, human rights violations, abuse, death penalties. Belgrade, Serbia, Croatia, Moscow showing all this violence and marches. Russia will not be in the lead on this issue. The leaders will not go on these issues, they don't care about rights for these issues. Talking with politicians won't work so they need to fund the grassroots.

Local activists know best. I.e.: projects in the Middle East, 20 Arabic speaking countries. When he began meeting with people in this part of the world, he was called another white imperialist pig at first. Conversation and people want to change their situation and they wanted to do it themselves. They did not want to hear from us. They lack critical mass and infrastructure that can be provided by international donors but with it they can do it. They have the vocabulary and legitimacy to convince the people around them.

We need to build it from the bottom up. It needs to be embedded in the civil society movements occurring at the same time. They fund the movements that cover the entire country even in areas that are limited but areas where people are still denied rights, education services etc. Cultural sensitivity is so necessary. Sex is a taboo subject so it needs to be approached by people in the area who deeply understand how to talk about these issues most appropriately. We need to foster the stars and leaders in the community to reach out to their fellow citizens. We need to empower LGBT people so that they can fight in their own ways.

They broke for group discussions. The overwhelming majority of participants have chosen grassroots funding. A very small group picked the other two groups, international approaches was the smallest group.

Presentations from the Sub-Groups:

- Critiquing Strategy 2:
 - It's the powerful that deal with the powerful – who has access to the powerful? That is the grassroots movements. Need to organize those in the countries of the powerful – uses the Hilary Clinton analysis
 - EU pressured eastern Europe on legislative reforms backlash because they weren't prepared.
 - You can change policies but unless its authentic and relevant to people on the ground, it's not going to change practices, minds, behavior on the ground
 - The Geneva process is so complicated that nobody can understand it. Ergo ineffective.
 - If you have only limited funds, it could go a lot further on the grassroots level than at the international level
- Critiquing strategy2:
 - Isn't it true that international orders and mechanisms seem to be dominated by regional blocs, country in west votes with west, etc. Politics there are complicated. Emerging powers BRICs could make it even more complicated, possibly conservative. Won't this only be a slow, painful process on the international level. Can it be effective?
 - If you did succeed what will the local groups do with the international jargon and policy when trying to change local culture, norms, behavior and issues.
- Critiquing strategy capacity builders:

- We don't want you to stop, significant role for international support and solidarity. How can we raise your consciousness in ways that it can support your activities and bases? How can you do a better job with providing? How do you mitigate value of support and capacity building with the international support with taking away the local autonomy? How do you move beyond identifying the elites of a country and reinforcing the power of elites rather than building the base behind these elites? How to build sustainable local capacity.
- Critiquing the grassroots movement:
 - Funder has responsibility to do a good job of funding at the grassroots level, how many countries can you visit, so few people who are working. How do you actually know what's going on. How to you not get your people killed on the ground. Precautions being taken. How do you know if you are being effective?
 - 30% of your time on this would be necessary but not enough.
 - Larger society, LGBT rights are human rights. Transitional time to get local consensus on this issue. Morocco, Tunisia, Egypt etc. right now or some places in Latin America, zero support from colleagues in human rights support. Go to international activism to gain this support and continue this. How do you advance your activism if the whole grassroots groups you are working with might want to stop you? Is gay a choice or being born? Equality or expression? Is marriage a desirable institution? Military. Should trans people be listed or de-pathologized? How do groups not be destructive of others in other countries rather than fueling opponents in other countries without international support?
- **Rebuttal Sjodin**
 - Power relations, can never ignore them. When you have money and can decide who gets it → power. Need to be mindful, reflect on your position. Who decides what capacity building is needed. Its not for us. Its for groups we are working with to decide what they should do. We expect our partners to help as well. Ie: Uganda, she was there for a week. Asks contact people to invite all relevant groups for workshop. Ended up working with all of those groups except one. Go through logical framework approach. She led it and she was stressed. Split in group on whats most important to them. Capacity building., developing a next generation of leaders, poverty reduction. Going to Swedish government better to suggest capacity building, content of capacity building had to be postponed due to event. Planned with Ugandan steering committee. Using logical approaches, consultants from the region, content, capacity building being done by people from the region. Lessons to be learned from the north in whatever you do. But must be mindful of power relations.
- **Rebuttal Sutherland**
 - Powerful deal with powerful, happens in a bubble behind closed doors, no grassroots groups in America have access to Clinton, real strategy brings around real change. Eastern Europe unprepared heard from conservative gatekeepers. 377 would not have happened if it had been left to groups in India but HIV groups and women and sex workers really pushed it. Effective leap forwards court cases can make causes be listened to. Grassroots movements don't want to take up the strategy others outside of the movement. who sets agenda,

- Egg-chicken debate about attitudes vs. policy which should change first? Uses South African constitution to argue this. It helps people important policy even as its first
- Bringing about change because leveraging more money pool money.
- Squabbling groups, never get agreement, sometimes you have to discuss difficult issues!
- So what? Should they wait until things have been sorted out, in countries where that is presented are in countries where people survive because of their families churches and communities and that's where they have no safety nets if LGBT in those countries, you're sick, etc. influential powerful people need to stand up and say were on your side.
- No one can understand Geneva? A little effort?
- Rebuttal Jansen
 - You can't sit with them all the time. Have trust in what's going on in the grassroots. You have to monitor a little bit. But have to let go a bit although have conversations. Give the power to the people
 - It needs to be done in coordination with civil society organizations. Often LGBT orgs lack critical keystones, like: not an African issue, not enough research. Need to give money for groups to do research then win argument and win human rights orgs to their cause. Let them pose their questions. What are the priority issues for them.

Kroeger concluded by talking about mass migration in this group , grassroots. She likes the idea of combining all of these approaches, particularly capacity building if cultural sensitivity if driven by activists themselves.

Partnerships around capacity building used with advocacy opportunity focusing on international mechanisms in ways that does not supplant their voices on the ground. Engage in responsible advocacy.

Uganda: needed grassroots for Clinton to make the call. Because we all believe it's the way to go: be mindful of pitfalls and mitigate.

There is a possibility of putting activists in danger. Avoid more risks. Systems developed and ready before funding risky activists.

As funders, we need to be smart about how to apply our dollars so not redundant so we are not over-sourcing one voice in the debate. Build up international NGOs but don't supplant wisdom of the peoples' movements.