

NEW YORK PRE-CONFERENCE INSTITUTE JULY 14, 2014

What Work is Happening on SOGI Issues Globally? Where's the Money For It?

July 14, 2014
11:00 am-12:00 pm

First panel:

- **Adrian Coman**, International Human Rights Program Director, Arcus Foundation
- **Gabriel Foster**, Co-Organizer, Trans Justice Funding Project
- **David Mattingly**, Fund for Global Human Rights
- **Wanja Muguongo**, Executive Director, UHAI-East African Sexual Health and Rights Initiative

Second panel:

- **J. Bob Alotta**, Executive Director, Astraea Lesbian Foundation for Justice
- **Christen Dobson**, Research and Policy Program Director, IHRFG
- **Lyle Matthew Kan**, Director of Communications and Education, Funders for LGBTQ Issues

First panel: Where has there been progress and what are challenges?

Adrian Coman explained that the goal of sexual orientation and gender identity (SOGI) work is to have SOGI issues recognized as human rights by international law. The SOGI community has made great progress getting these rights recognized in United Nations bodies, but have faced increasing opposition from governments at the same time.

SOGI civil society groups have increased documentation on the ground and collaboration with other movements, such as women's groups and sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR). Conservative backlash has also sprung up in civil society, especially in the U.S. Funding is key to support Global South organizations so they can be heard in their region as well as in front of international bodies.

Wanja Muguongo discussed how quickly the landscape can change: it can be hard to tell if the community is making progress or fighting backlash. But there is a growing, vibrant movement in the Global South. Funders must recognize that—as SOGI communities grow and gain visibility—they will face more backlash, which is a sign that they are gaining ground. Backlash extends beyond SOGI issues to include civil society and human rights issues, such as laws criminalizing sexual identity, sexual expression, or limiting civil society space.

Gabriel Foster explained the Trans Justice Funding Project's community-led funding model, which asks grantees to share what they're doing and gives a unique perspective on trans* justice work around the U.S. Trans* justice work can range from reproductive services to legal policies and reform, and community-building and organizing are key elements of community survival. Trans* issues globally and in the U.S. share a lot of similarities, including increased episodes of violence at all levels, especially against women of color.

Gabriel noted that it is key to have trans* voices in the decision-making process. There have been major gains in international policies. The task now is to implement them on the ground, understand the sources of backlash, and join with broader social movements to work for these rights.

Question-and-Answer Period

One participant asked if international human rights law is sufficient to protect SOGI rights. Human rights are supposedly universal, but they are largely gendered towards men, and we now recognize women's rights as separate. Who is (or isn't) protected by international human rights law?

Adrian said that the law will guide but will never be sufficient on its own. Changing the culture is a longer struggle. Wanja noted that, in many countries, legitimate rule of law – with democratic laws rather than despots – makes it easier to perpetrate violations.

Returning to the idea that "SOGI" is often too narrow a frame on the ground, a participant asked how a funder like UHAI deals with issues of broader civil society oppression.

Wanja explained that UHAI deals exclusively with LGBTI and SRHR but recognizes that oppression is cross-cutting. More LGBTI communities are engaging in broader human rights conversations (for example, instability and insecurity issues in Kenya). The Ugandan Ministry of Health recognized that discrimination makes it harder to provide health services to the community. It is important for LGBTI communities to broaden the movement and join in advocacy campaigns about broader human rights.

Second Panel: What does the data say?

Lyle Matthew Kan provided an overview of LGBT grantmaking from Funders for LGBTQ Issues' data, which was derived from U.S. foundations' grantmaking in 2011-2012. Over the past few decades, LGBT grantmaking has soared from a few hundred thousand dollars to over \$120 million. However, only .24% of foundation spending goes to LGBT issues.

Almost half of LGBT funding goes to human rights (including marriage equality). Health is the second-most funded area, at about 25%, and 80% of health funding outside the U.S. goes to HIV/AIDS. From U.S. foundations, 80% of funding is domestic and 20% goes to LGBT communities outside the U.S.

In terms of communities, funding supports:

- Lesbians and trans*: 4%
- Gay men: 7%

- Bi/intersex: <1%
- 84% goes to LGBTQ in general
- About 17% goes to children and youth, which is about even with rest of philanthropy

Christen Dobson then spoke about rights-specific LGBTI funding in the Global South and East. In 2011, 170 funders in 14 countries made over 1200 grants totaling \$80.7 million for LGBTI rights. 67% of funding supported LGBTI rights in the Global North. Of the remaining 33%, about 94% of grants went directly to organizations based in going to the Global South and East, most of which were small grants. Over half of LGBT grants support equality rights/freedom from discrimination, while about 25% supports health and well-being rights.

Top funders by dollars in this area include Hivos, American Jewish World Service (AJWS), Nationale Postcode Loterij, Open Society Foundations, and an anonymous funder. By number of grants, top funders include UHAI, Astraea Lesbian Foundation for Justice, Hivos, AJWS, and Global Fund for Women.

Reflecting on the data and how funders are effecting long-term change, J. Bob Alotta noted that it is important to consider power dynamics and civil society ownership when looking at funds going into a rights frame. Some of the community's progress is a result of putting LGBTI issues on a platform to consolidate power. The Astraea Lesbian Foundation for Justice funds LGBTI rights globally but positions itself within the racial, social, and economic justice movements. It would behoove this funding community to tackle issues holistically and take an intersectional approach to amplify its work.

Data also reveals that economically disadvantaged communities are often neglected within this work. LGBT funders should be mindful of which communities they may neglect in their own funding. It would be interesting to map areas of expertise among funders in the room and see where our work might intersect.

Question-and-Answer Period

A participant asked if this data can track work in areas that may include (but not be primarily directed towards) LGBT communities, citing a broad coalition fighting stop-and-frisk policies in NYC as an example.

The panelists explained that the data only shows as much as the funder shares, so it can be difficult to capture these nuances. The data set, for example, would capture funding to the Girl Scouts for an LGBTI-specific project but not general support for the Girl Scouts, who might be working with young lesbian girls. If the grant description mentioned the role of LGBTI activists in a broader coalition, the research would recognize the grant as supporting LGBTI populations.

There are also differences in the ways foundations code their grants: for example, grants to support gay men specifically may be coded as "LGBT" more generally. The statistic that 84% of LGBT funding worldwide supports LGBT work more generally is misleading, as many grants support gay men and neglect the LGBTQI aspects. It is incumbent upon funders to track these nuances in their own work.