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***Rising Through the Challenge: Documenting and Analysing Best Practices for Advancing Human Rights based on Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity***

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**Final Report**

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  - The Foreign Affairs Ministry of the Government of Norway
  - The Arcus Foundation
- Our dedicated team of volunteers, for their amazing logistical support, hard work, cheerfulness and commitment.
- Our translators and interpreters, for giving their time and energy to enable the conference to take place simultaneously in English, Spanish, and French.
- All those who submitted inspiring examples of best practices, and all participants for their enthusiasm, courage, and tireless advocacy in pursuit of justice and equality.

## **Overall Goals of the Project:**

1. *To understand and promote “best practice” principles as an approach or tool in global human rights advocacy based on sexual orientation and gender identity/expression.*
2. *To strengthen regional and international networks and identify cross-regional linkages, strategies and programmes of action.*
3. *To enhance overall capacity of all participating global North and South organizations.*

## **Specific Objectives of the Project:**

- *To use guided narratives as a tool for organizational self-reflection regarding best practice*
- *To create an opportunity for presentation of selected narratives (and complementary visual information) in a multi-language setting (English, French, Spanish and Portuguese)*
- *To develop and implement a dynamic and creative cross-regional dialogue (among 60-70 peers) focusing on the effectiveness and usefulness of best practice in various settings*
- *To create formal and informal networking opportunities and facilitate focused discussions on strategies and programmes of work*
- *To publish a cross-regional collection and analysis of best-practices for advancing human rights based on sexual orientation and gender identity.*

## **Background**

In March 2008, ARC International<sup>1</sup> began initial planning for its next International Dialogue, a quasi-annual opportunity for organizations from various movements to discuss issues and strategies pertaining to human rights from a gender and sexuality perspective. A respected colleague from Mulabi<sup>2</sup> queried whether it was time to move the event back to Latin America, where the first such dialogue had been held in 2003. That event was in response to a global needs assessment that ARC was conducting at the time, as well as Brazil’s announcement that it was

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<sup>1</sup> ARC International ([www.arc-international.net](http://www.arc-international.net)) is an organization based in Switzerland and Canada, using a community leadership development model to work cooperatively with domestic and international organisations active on LGBT and related issues. It fosters the development of networks, positive communications and access to international human rights mechanisms through the development of resources and tools for advocacy.

<sup>2</sup> Mulabi ([www.mulabi.org](http://www.mulabi.org)) is a non-governmental organization bringing together activists from the Global South to work on issues related to sexualities and rights from critical and celebratory perspectives, as well as to circulate Latin American perspectives on these issues. It uses the shared building of transformative knowledge as its main strategy.

tabling a resolution on sexual orientation at the United Nations Commission on Human Rights (now reformed as the UN Human Rights Council).

The option of Latin America had already been considered by ARC, but because one of the goals of previous Dialogues was “realizing organizational capacity”, we questioned the need for such an event in Latin America at this time, as there seemed to be so many success stories and strong movement work within the region. While agreeing with this analysis, our colleague commented, “why not view it as an opportunity to highlight what organizations can learn about best practice, particularly from this region?”

It is certainly clear that there is a wealth of best practice from the Latin American region, the most current examples of which resulted in the consensus passage of a Brazilian resolution on sexual orientation, gender identity and human rights at the 39th OAS Assembly in June 2009<sup>3</sup>. And there is a growing consensus that significant advances in human rights based on sexual orientation and gender identity have occurred in relatively short periods of time in many regions. However, at the same time, some regions face more restrictions than in other periods of history. Organisations are currently demanding some reflection and analysis about their own practice in advancing human rights based on sexual orientation and gender identity (SOGI).



Not long after this discussion between ARC International and Mulabi, a number of funding surveys and scans were conducted that also identified documentation around “best practice” as a gap and need area within the global LGBT movement.

In July 2008, the movement advancement project (MAP) conducted a scan of international LGBT advocacy organizations and programs, and identified “Best Practices” as one of the biggest needs (for the funding community to take note of):

*“Best Practices. Respondents indicated that the global LGBT field needs information on a range of best practices, including litigation strategies; LGBT organizing; building stronger LGBT groups, outreach, and service programs (especially for under-served populations, such as transgender and intersex people, or women in conservative*

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<sup>3</sup> On June 3, 2009, the Organization of American States (OAS) approved a resolution on human rights, sexual orientation and gender identity in the countries of the Americas at its 39th General Assembly session in San Pedro Sula, Honduras. This resolution is the result of three years of advocacy work by a Coalition of 24 LGBTTTI groups from 17 countries in Latin America and the Caribbean. This Coalition meets every year before the General Assembly to coordinate its advocacy efforts within the OAS. (<http://www.iglhrc.org/cgi-bin/iowa/article/takeaction/resourcecenter/920.html>). A similar resolution has now been adopted at the 2010 OAS General Assembly.

*societies); and documentation of successful non-LGBT human rights work at national and regional levels.”*

Around the same time, the Open Society Institute (OSI) also conducted a study on the needs and priorities facing the LGBTI communities, entitled “Out from the Margins”. In its examination of patterns of abuse, it comments that, “(G)iven this climate of both serious human rights challenges and significant opportunity, it is a timely and strategic moment to reflect upon how best to enhance the global struggle for LGBTI equality.” The report goes on to address some of the tools and approaches to carry forward the work effectively. Under the “Research, resources and information” section, it states that:

*“the development of materials and guides outlining best practices, models for working in coalition, toolkits for documenting human rights violations, or for accessing regional and international human rights mechanisms, etc would enable many organizations to avoid ‘reinventing the wheel’ as they seek to become established.”*

Some preliminary work has been done to capture these practices on a global level, such as a recent “Copenhagen Catalogue of Good Practices” produced in conjunction with the World Outgames International Conference on LGBT Human Rights and the Danish Institute for Human Rights. However, despite a well documented need, there has not been comprehensive and participatory action research in this area.



Therefore, from 2008 to 2010, ARC International and Mulabi cooperatively engaged in a large scale project (“Rising Through the Challenge”) to document and analyse global best practices, noting ARC’s history of facilitating global dialogue processes and producing valuable tools for advocacy, and highlighting Mulabi’s strength in Global South movement building and focus on building of knowledge.

In addition, the fact that ARC’s Co-Director, Kim Vance, was a graduate student in Adult Education allowed for a successful collaboration with Saint Francis Xavier University, and ensured a strong theoretical and research focus to this work.

## **Theoretical Context**

This particular initiative and the analysis contained in the report are produced from an adult education context. It is well established in adult education literature that social movements are an

important site of informal learning, with the capacity to affect societal transformation. This extends to the so-called “new” social movements which include the lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgendered (LGBT) movements.

We already know that there have been recent global advancements or “transformations” in human rights based on sexual orientation and gender identity that have occurred in relatively short periods of time. Certain adult education literature has proposed that learning within social movements can be assessed by its ability to transform frameworks of thinking and action. Inviting organizations to reflect on their promising practice around these transformations adds to what is known about social movement learning.

The International Dialogue therefore fit within a broader research project, which documents how civil society organizations working to advance human rights based on sexual orientation and gender identity define and evaluate promising practice in their work. In a global context, cross-regional differences in how groups define promising practice are also discussed.

It is important to note that there is not always a clear relationship between “organizations” and “movements”. This project does not attempt to map those relationships, but rather assumes that, at the very least, a relationship exists between these organizations and the movements that work on these issues. It is also important to note that those organizations do not always identify as “LGBT organizations” or part of an “LGBT movement”, but may locate their work primarily within other specific movements or broader social movements.

This project gives voice to marginalized communities, and therefore serves an emancipatory function. The research also emphasizes the importance of reflective practice, meaning practitioners conducting systematic research in their workplace, as well as academically-based researchers working in close collaboration with practitioners to understand promising practices in their work.

We also use a guided narrative process and cross-regional peer analysis, to address some of the critiques of pure “self-evaluation”. Although some literature expresses the view that there is a need for caution in accepting social movements’ evaluations of themselves, this research and the methodological approach emphasize that being creative and critical are not oppositional. This work also acknowledges the appreciative intelligence present in these marginalized communities which demonstrate irrepressible resilience.

Other researchers have specifically examined the lack of expert and independent evaluation within specific gay community organizations. While there were not independent “experts” (as traditionally defined) associated with this research, the expertise of all participants was acknowledged and valued, and participants were asked to think critically about their work in a way that was optimistic about success, and their peers were encouraged to provide critical feedback and analysis. Many adult educators have affirmed that a critical analysis can also foster a sense of optimism and hopefulness in practice.

## Methodology

First of all, we took an appreciative methodological approach. This new approach to reflecting and acting on practice is called participatory and appreciative action and reflection (PAAR). It explores the potential to enable individuals and groups in civil society and advocacy contexts, to understand their strengths and capacities and to move forward (through informal learning and reflection) to improve their working practices and lives in their particular communities and contexts. This research used the PAAR approach to enable those involved in the study to reflect on their current practice with a view to sustaining and/or amplifying success in their working practices.

In June 2009, a “Call for Submissions” was issued in four languages (English, French, Spanish and Portuguese) to four large international electronic listserves, targeting LGBT organizations, but also groups that work on issues of sexual orientation and gender identity from the lens of sexual and reproductive rights and health, the human rights of women, and HIV/AIDS. In addition, a broad cross-section of organizations who maintain large membership databases, were encouraged to distribute the call widely.

Organizations were invited to submit brief proposals regarding “best practices” for advancing human rights based on sexual orientation and gender identity. Using defined criteria (outlined below), 15 organizations were selected from those proposals and asked to self-author a “guided narrative” of 7-10 pages in length. (One narrative was discovered to contain fraudulent information and was subsequently dropped from the project.) The narratives focused on the participants’ experiences in practice related to advocacy and human rights based on sexual orientation and gender identity. They were “guided” in the sense that the organizers crafted a set of appreciative questions which organizations were encouraged to reflect on as they were writing their narratives.



The criteria for narrative selection included:

- A strong representation of best practices from various regions
- A diversity of organizations, for instance, general human rights groups, LGBTI groups, women’s organizations, etc.
- A variety of best practice experiences
- The ability to produce a strong written narrative in either English, French, Spanish or Portuguese and a short reflection piece within the project timelines
- The availability to present this narrative, with supplemental visual material, at an International Dialogue to be held in Buenos Aires, Argentina in October 2009.

Once selected, the organizations wrote “guided narratives” about their best practice experiences. The reflection questions for these guided narratives included:

1. Describe the best practice.
2. What was or is the political and/or organizational context when the best practice began? In other words, why did it happen or what caused it to be developed?
3. Outline how this idea or practice developed or emerged.
4. Why do you view this as a success or why do you prefer it as a way to do your work?
5. What factors, intentional or non-intentional, external or internal contributed to its success?
6. What individuals and leaders had an impact on the outcome, if at all?
7. Was there some measure to evaluate the practice and what was it?
8. Were there intended or unplanned outcomes, and what were they?
9. Were there challenges and if so, how were they overcome?
10. Were alliances or linkages forged to ensure success?
11. Did the practice contribute to a broader movement or cross-movement goals?
12. What skills, lessons, etc. were learned in the process (formal or informal, intentional or unintentional)?

Selected narratives were shared in plenary at the International Dialogue in Buenos Aires, Argentina (January 2010), and then analysed in cross-regional peer settings (videotaped small groups). The open ended questions for facilitation of the small cross-regional analysis groups included:

1. Did you notice common themes to these presentations/narratives?
2. Are some of those themes consistent with how you would define promising practice in your own work? If not, what is different?
3. Were there presentations/narratives that made you think... “we could try that approach in our work or our region and it might be successful”?
4. Were there presentations/narratives that made you think... “that approach would not be successful in our work or our region”?
5. Were there presentations/narratives that were similar to work that you’ve done in the past?
6. Did you experience a different outcome, or face different challenges and barriers?
7. Was there analysis or information missing from the presentations/narratives that you might have found helpful?

There were 57 International Dialogue participants (including those who wrote the guided narratives). Facilitated discussion allowed organizations to reflect on best practice experiences, and their own priorities and needs, to develop some concrete regional and international strategies and programmes of work.

The criteria for selection for the Dialogue participants includes:

- A strong representation from various regions
- A diversity of organizations, for instance, general human rights groups, LGBTI groups, women's organizations, etc.
- The ability to communicate in either English, French, Spanish or Portuguese
- A willingness to participate openly in the research process and have their discussions video-taped
- The availability to attend the International Dialogue in Buenos Aires, Argentina
- Previous participation in either ARC International or other Dialogue processes was regarded as an asset
- Demonstrated experience in advocacy work beyond the local level.

All Dialogue participants were asked to complete an evaluation form about the Dialogue itself, including a comparison of expectations and outcomes. This is documented in the evaluation section of this report.

## **Results and Outcomes**

Over 100 organizations from 47 different countries submitted proposals for this research project. The diversity and level of response indicates that many organizations reflect appreciatively on their work. This was true even in parts of the world where issues of sexual orientation and gender identity are extremely controversial, and working in this area is very challenging. The majority of submissions were from Global South organizations, but focused from regions and countries that have experienced recent success stories. For instance, within Asia, the bulk of submissions came from India, and in Latin America, the majority of submissions were from Argentina.

The call for submissions also generated interesting regional differences in defining promising practice, which can be explained by the geo-political realities of specific regions. In the majority of Global North submissions (North America, Western Europe, and some parts of Asia and the Pacific) the promising practices were predominantly focused on addressing school-based discrimination, assisting refugees, developing Global South partnerships, international advocacy or securing same-sex relationship benefits. Virtually no Global South submissions addressed these areas of practice, but rather focused more on service delivery, political and policy advocacy in response to criminal sanctions, community and leadership development, protection of human rights defenders, and general public education, for example.

We also received submissions and requests from non-civil society actors, such as funders, government bodies, media and academics. While the narratives focused on the practice of non-governmental organizations, we accommodated the requests of others, and hosted two separate panels examining best practices outside of civil society and the intersections with non-governmental advocacy. These panels were extremely popular and well-received by participants.

We had originally intended to issue an open Call for Participation to recruit other participants to the Dialogue, but given the overwhelming response to the Call for Submissions, our priority was to invite most of these engaged activists who already were thinking about concepts of best practice, but had not made it through the selection process to the narrative writing stage. This ensured a depth of discussion and debate during the plenaries and small groups. Those participants were also invited to chair and facilitate some of the plenary sessions.

The fourteen chosen narratives for this research represented a diversity of regions and themes. The titles are listed below (full copies of narratives are available in an attachment to this report and will be available on-line at [www.arc-international.net](http://www.arc-international.net)):

1. *“Campaign for social change in Eastern Europe”*, Euroregional Center for Public Initiatives (Romania)
2. *“Grassroots community working model for organizing with lesbians in poverty”*, Gay and Lesbian Activist Network for Gender Equality Inc. (Philippines)
3. *“Four practices of integration within government programs targeting women, children and youth”*, Organización de Transexuales por la Dignidad de la Diversidad (Chil )
4. *“Empowering LGBT people through implementation of mental health programming”*, OUT Wellbeing (South Africa)
5. *“Addressing the needs of transgender and Hijra communities in India through a collaborative approach”*, Solidarity and Action Against The HIV Infection in India (India)
6. *“Learning and exchange for LGTBI activists of Latin America and Caribbean through an institute on strategies against religious fundamentalisms”*, IGLHRC (Paraguay)
7. *“Combatting homophobia in Dutch schools”*, COC (Netherlands)
8. *“Engaging with international instruments and collaborating with international organizations to transform local realities”*, GayJapan News (Japan)
9. *“Political debate, photo-exhibition and Pride campaign focused on “Sex Workers Rights = Human Rights”*, Prostitutes Interest Organisation/Skeivt Forum - Queer Student Organization (Norway)
10. *“Public media campaign targeting homophobic lyrics of dance hall artists”*, Suriname Men United (Suriname)
11. *“An initiative to build the capacity of grassroots LGBT organizations in the Global South and East in countries that are particularly oppressive or dangerous for LGBT activists and individuals”*, Heartland Alliance (U.S.A.)
12. *“A diplomatic campaign to combat criminalization in Burundi”*, Humure (Burundi)
13. *“Changing discriminatory policies that impact travestis, transsexuals, and transgendered people in Argentina”*, Movimiento Antidiscriminatorio de Liberaci n (Argentina)
14. *“Training manual for the protection of LGBTI defenders”*, Protection International (U.K./Nepal)

Thirteen of the fourteen narratives were presented by the research participants/authors at the International Dialogue in Buenos Aires, Argentina in January, 2010. One author from Africa (Burundi) was unable to secure a visa to travel to Argentina, but was able to give an oral presentation via Skype to Dialogue participants. All fourteen narratives were translated and made available to Dialogue participants in advance. After presentations, all cases studies were

considered in the small groups, even though some authors were not able to present in-person and answer questions.

The small group discussions generated lively dialogue about the presentations and the practices of other participants in attendance. They were cross-regional and multi-lingual and involved differing participants from session to session. They had questions for consideration, with general facilitation by organizers, to allow for maximum dialogue among participants.

The stage for the entire Dialogue was set by an opening night that included a panel of local politicians and activists from Argentina, noting the incredible achievements in the city and country. It is interesting to note that only months after the Dialogue, Argentina has legalized same-sex marriage, an indication of the importance of the choice of location for a Dialogue highlighting Best Practices. In addition, it is a tradition at these Dialogues that there be an international gift exchange along with



introductions at the opening. This is always a lively and popular exercise and sets a tone of cooperation and sharing from the outset.

And finally, what event in Argentina could be complete without a drag performance of selected tunes from Evita, along with an inspired round of tango? Mulabi did a wonderful job in ensuring the success of this event, and we are very thankful to the wonderful performers.

## Defining Success

Organizations were asked how they defined success through describing a best practice in their work. The responses in the narratives were as follows:

1. Significant political power in determining policy around sexual and reproductive rights and health. Developing strategies to address complicated issues such as religious-based intolerance. Developing tools for human rights activists on this topic. (Romania)
2. Innovative and creative models of working. Indigenous leadership development. Effective articulation of the issues directly relevant to their community (poor lesbians). (Philippines)
3. Access to medical services and training of professionals. Strategic integration into society through government agencies targeted at specific groups (women and youth, for instance). Development of community networks and visibility. (Chile)
4. Empowerment of individuals and communities through provision of health services. Advocacy for access to mainstream health services through training of professionals. (South Africa)
5. National network building and an articulation of needs and concerns. (India)
6. Unique opportunities for learning and exchange. Ability to tackle complex and challenging subjects like religious intolerance. Successful networking and strong linkages. (Paraguay)

7. Creating an empowered community of youth (gay and straight) to work within the school system to address homophobia. (Netherlands)
8. Developing skills and leadership to engage with international human rights instruments. Policy change at the local level as a result of advocacy. (Japan)
9. Developing new and unique partnerships/collaborations. Creating space for debate/discussion on controversial topics. Using a human rights framework in creative ways. (Norway)
10. Using media and allies to engage in mass public awareness. Changing corporate practices through public pressure. (Suriname)
11. Building sustainable civil society organizations in the Global South and reducing reliance on North-based funding intermediaries. (U.S.A.)
12. Successful advocacy strategies for countries heavily dependant on foreign aid, which link that funding to the protection of human rights. (Burundi)
13. Inclusion within the primary and secondary education and access to health systems. (Argentina)
14. Engagement with the LGBT community to develop practical tools for human rights defenders. (UK/Nepal)

## Factors for Evaluating Success

### *Differences*

One of the goals of this initiative was to examine regional differences in defining and evaluating success, but it is important to note that there is not a homogeneous movement that works on issues such as sexual orientation and gender identity. Often the narratives demonstrated that the specific community, or the issue of focus within particular organizations, also contributed to different definitions of success. For instance, youth, transgender communities, and poor lesbians identified “visibility” and “articulation of their issues” as key to defining success. These populations work at the margins of most LGBT movements.



It was interesting to note that two of the groups from Africa emphasized a service delivery approach as a vehicle for empowerment and success in their work. This was consistent with other submissions from Africa, some of which used HIV/AIDS delivery programs, which have legitimacy and funding support on the continent, to develop successful practices for empowerment and rights based advocacy. This

emphasis on service delivery, or rather lack of access to mainstream services, emerged in the narratives from transgender-specific organizations, as well.

In countries where there are some levels of human rights protection, political power, policy change, access to educational institutions, supporting work in other regions and engaging with international instruments were identified as success. However, small group discussions noted the huge disparity between these narratives (mostly from the Global North) and those from Global South regions. It was a struggle for the small groups to identify strategies that could be replicated or were applicable in other countries. In addition, there was critique that in some cases those groups discussing community empowerment and service delivery models were not able to demonstrate the clear connections with successful advocacy work.

### *Commonalities*

There were many common elements of success emerging from the narratives and small group discussions. These are consistent with best practices research conducted within other movements.

*linkages/alliances.* It was consistently noted throughout the narratives and discussions that success is highly correlated with establishing strategic alliances. For groups with very little economic or political power, alliances are extremely important. It was also clear that forming alliances has to be holistic in approach, recognizing the common elements that may oppress a number of people, such as restrictions on sexual and reproductive rights or laws on prostitution and trafficking.

*leadership development.* All groups were asked to think about leadership and commented on the importance of this to their work. One group specifically addressed this from an interesting cost-benefit analysis and noted that developing a leader, who is endemic to the community being organized, does away with the time and resources necessary to immerse the organizer in the context and culture of the community. This also does away with the need for the organizer to gain the trust and confidence of the community.

*processes for working.* A number of groups across a variety of regions highlighted their unique processes for working or organizational models. For some, this was a multi-pronged approach. Some identified the design of their working processes as equal to the development of leaders and their alliance building.

*training/skills building.* Almost all narratives discussed success in this area. For some groups this was as fundamental as providing opportunities for primary and secondary education and ensuring rights to life through protection strategies.

*engagement and empowerment of community.* This was expressed as an area of challenge but immensely powerful when strategies are successful. Some groups worked hard to counter sentiments of apathy within specific communities, and measured success in various ways. This presented more of a challenge in regions where there are not specific laws targeting LGBT

people, but discrimination continues. Service delivery was also discussed as a tool for empowering individuals and communities.

*development of strategies and agenda.* Some communities discussed in the narratives had never come together until very recently to develop strategies and agendas. Many felt that until they engaged in an active process to do this, energy was consumed in an endless cycle of responding to violations without a clear goal of where they could go as a movement to stop the violations. Taking the time to develop a strategic agenda was therefore identified as critical.

*practical tools.* Many groups noted the importance of translating knowledge and success into tools that can assist other groups or individuals. In many cases, the development of these tools contributed to other areas of success, such as engagement and empowerment.

*reflective practice and evaluation.* Obviously all participating organizations engage in some level of reflective practice, given their self-referral to this research project. However, the narratives make specific references to methods of reflection, evaluation, and analysis, as a factor in their success.

## Concluding Observations

Several individuals commented in the group discussions, that the process of writing the narrative and participating in the peer analysis was very useful for them, and will change how they do their work. They obviously knew their project was a success, but the process of engaging in this participatory and appreciative action and reflection research will allow them to amplify their success in ways they had not anticipated. This represents a strong affirmation for this methodological approach for working within social movements.

While there are many models and frameworks for evaluating success that are available for social movement organizations, it was helpful to do a preliminary comparison of the results of this project with literature available from other social movements. Valerie Miller, currently senior advisor and co-founder of JASS, through her efforts to promote women's empowerment and political participation has presented 6 strategies for countering mechanisms of power that marginalize certain sectors of society:



- INFLUENCING and LOBBYING visible structures of power to resolve issues and conflicts through such measures as specific legislation, policy, elections, budgets, litigation;
- BUILDING, STRENGTHENING, MOBILIZING constituency groups, their leadership and alliances to gain: (i) visibility and legitimacy for their grievances and demands, (ii)

participation in decision-making structures, and (iii) power to hold government accountable;

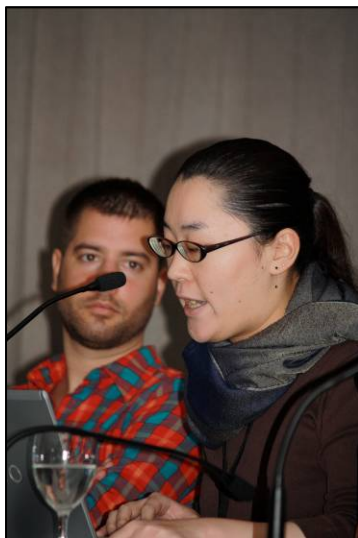
- FORTIFYING other civil society organizations to join in alliances and coalitions;
- EDUCATING and ACTIVATING media and public opinion;
- INVESTIGATING and DISSEMINATING relevant data, as well as uncovering and publicizing concealed information such as the scope of a country's human rights violations, domestic abuse, cancer causing products, or practices by corporations, etc;
- STRENGTHENING people's self worth, analytical capacities, collaboration skills, awareness of rights, and identity as citizens and protagonists.

If we map these against the case studies in this project there is a clear correlation, except in the area of investigating and disseminating. One of the unique aspects of this movement, compared to others, is its relative "newness" and relationship to new technologies such as the internet. It is possible that investigation and dissemination are so integral to the global sharing of information inherent in the work of many of these organizations, that it does not appear as a distinct area of work. It is also possible that it may reflect a weakness in this movement compared to others. Further research on investigation and documentation within the LGBT movement is likely needed.

It is interesting to note that Monitoring and Documentation were also identified in the OSI report as a gap area:

"There is a significant gap when it comes to monitoring and documenting human rights violations. Although some, primarily mainstream, organizations focus their work in this area, many LGBTI groups lack the time, resources or capacity to do this work effectively, and as a result many violations go unreported. Yet all agree that such documentation is critical to demonstrating the scope of the problems and needs facing the LGBTI communities, and providing a basis for successful campaigning. Much of this information would also be invaluable to strengthening international responses."

There was some feedback in the evaluation forms and during the project that the concept of best practice was not clearly defined. This was intentional on the part of the organisers. An important



piece of the research was to collect examples of how groups themselves define and evaluate best practice. While we recognize that this contributed to a diversity of case studies that may have appeared vastly different in approach, especially with regard to evaluation and definitions of success, this was consistent with the project goals.

We felt that it was very important to highlight that there are many models of success, some even contentious within the movements that advance human rights based on sexual orientation and gender identity. There was considerable debate, for instance, on the strategy of responding to rights violations with denials (or threatened denials) of foreign aid. This Dialogue presented a platform to have this debate within the movement, and while there

was by no means any consensus reached, having the opportunity to raise these points was critical.

By allowing groups to define their own success, we hope that the international community, especially the funding community, may be assisted in their approaches to supporting domestic, regional and international work in this area. It is clear that no single matrix or approach to evaluating success will not have global relevance. We do regret that we were not able to include many more of the proposals in this initiative. Some participants who had submitted proposals, which were not selected to become narratives, were invited to share some of their work in the small groups and at the closing of the Dialogue. We hope to be able to document the range of those applications when we are able to acquire funding to produce a Best Practices Toolkit with the results of this research. And we also hope that this will become an ongoing initiative to capture and highlight these best practices case studies within our movements.

## ***Evaluation***

At the end of the Dialogue, participants were asked to complete an evaluation form. In total, we received responses from **37** participants representing all geographic regions. They are summarized below.

**1.** Participants were asked to rate (on a scale of 1-10 where 10=excellent and 1=very poor) how they evaluated the following:

***Conference Site:*** Participants were uniformly impressed with the conference site itself (NH City Hotel – Buenos Aires), and the fact that the Dialogue took place in a central and accessible location. (**9** - average response)

***Accommodation:*** Generally, people found the hotel rooms comfortable. There were some minor issues with roommate choices, but we were able to accommodate those who requested changes.  
(**9.14** - average response)

***Food:*** Participants felt that the food was quite wonderful, especially some of the desserts! The hotel was good at providing a selection of options and labelling food contents. (**8.73** – average response)

***Background Documents:*** It was clear that participants were impressed with the documents provided in the registration kits. Some noted that receiving them earlier would have been helpful, given the length of the collection of narratives. (**8.73** - average response)

***Facilitation:*** It was noted throughout the evaluation forms that the facilitation, which was shared between organizers and selected participants, was excellent. There were some who felt that the panels were better facilitated than the small group discussions, which needed more clear focus and direction. (**8.57** – average response)

**Interpretation and translation:** People felt that the services provided were professional and assisted in the conduct of the Dialogue in three languages. There were some minor problems noted with the new and unique translation system, which were directly attributed to the fact that this was the first time using a new system. (8.59 – average response)

**Social and cultural events:** Everyone enjoyed the activities put together by the hosts on both the opening night, and the site visit to the travesti-run garment facility and school. They offered a nice blend of socializing, information sharing and cultural exchange. The main criticism was that there was not enough planned in the free evenings and some participants wanted more guidance in exploring the Buenos Aires nightlife. (7.88 – average response)

**Overall Coordination:** People seemed genuinely impressed with the overall coordination, both by ARC and Mulabi. (8.96 – average response)

*“It was a huge task done extremely well particularly given the barriers faced by many participants. (Pacific)”*

2. Participants were asked an open-ended question about what **expectations they had for this Dialogue**. The responses can be summarized in the following categories:

- To learn/research best practices and challenges to defend LGBT rights and adopt what might work;
- To build relationships with funders in order to improve capacity to carry out work;
- To learn about and experience this (Dialogue) practice itself;
- To meet other organizations, network, and build relationships cross-regionally;
- To get inspired and foster hope;
- To highlight the work/good practices of their own particular organization/institution and receive feedback from other organizations.

*“I wanted to learn about diverse strategies and ways of working on LGBT issues and also more importantly learn about the kinds of challenges and backlash activists face in their countries. (Asia)”*

3. Participants were then asked to rate (on a scale of 1-10 where 10=excellent and 1=very poor) **how well this Dialogue met their expectations** and explain their answer.

Most participants commented that the Dialogue met or exceeded their expectations. A few participants commented in this question or others, that the concept of “best practice” was not clearly defined and this led to some unevenness in the presentations. The average response was **8.52** out of 10.

*“We have been enriched by the presentations and expositions of best practices from different geographic regions and the participation of activists from different continents and languages.” (Africa-translated from French)*

*“Would have liked to hear more on innovative problem-solving.” (Asia)*

*“Sharing experiences like this re-energizes me and gives me the strength to continue my work.” (Latin America – translated from Spanish)*

4. Using the same 1-10 scale above, participants were asked the following questions:

**a) Did this Dialogue increase your knowledge and understanding of Best Practices for advancing human rights based on sexual orientation and gender identity/expression?**

Participants definitely felt their knowledge and understanding increased.. The average response was **8.24** out of 10.

*“The background papers are a great resource and the discussions teased out the complexities/tensions that need to be balanced in our work – the essence of a human rights approach.” (Pacific)*

*“It contributed to a new understanding of politics and organisational development with trans communities, and I was able to see strategies that we may be able to replicate.” (Latin America – translated from Spanish)*

*“As someone without much experience internationally, it really gave me the opportunity to reflect on not just the best practices presented but also on our own work, which gave new insights and perspectives on different matters.” (Europe)*

*“Although there is no perfect model, all the presentations made me think and explore our own possibilities at home. Next week is our strategic planning and this Dialogue prepared me 100% for it.” (Africa)*

As mentioned above, a few participants questioned what they were supposed to learn about “best practice” when the concept wasn’t clearly defined.

*“I found this more an exposition of work that people have been carrying out. I personally am quite skeptical about the term “best practices” - where evaluations and monitoring with sufficient benchmarks are not really being carried out.” (Asia/Europe)*

**b) How successful was this Dialogue in enabling you to share and discuss these issues?**

Overall, participants felt that there was success in sharing and discussing issues. The average response was **8.44** out of 10. The majority of responses acknowledged that the schedule of presentations and then small group work worked well for fostering an opportunity to share and discuss. Some raised the concern noted earlier that the small groups needed tighter facilitation.

*“The discussion groups were very good.” (Latin America – translated from Spanish)*

*“There was enough time in the group discussions and plenary.” (Africa)*

*“I liked that there was time to meet informally.” (no location listed)*

*“Small groups were very enabling.” (Asia)*

### **c) How successful were the opportunities to strengthen networks and support?**

The average response was **8.84** out of 10 indicating a strong feeling of success around strengthening networks and support. The only critique raised was that the informal networking was difficult with language barriers.

*“Networks and linkages were made to different groups in this Dialogue. Also found several support groups who can help transgender population, which was great.” (Asia)*

*“Again, very successful. I’m sure I will stay in touch with many whom I met.” (Europe)*

*“Excellent – and what is most valuable of all the experiences is the personal contact and potential alliances.” (Latin America – translated from Spanish)*

**5.** Participants were asked to outline **any issues that were not adequately addressed** in the time available and how they would like to see those addressed in the future.

Most participants felt that the programme was extensive and there was sufficient time to discuss issues, although some requested more focused thematic discussions in the plenaries. Some participants, particularly but not exclusively those from Africa, felt there was not enough time to adequately address certain relevant and engaging topics, like practices working with trans and intersex communities.

A few participants wanted some increased focus on media and culture. At least one participant wanted time to discuss practices in specific groups working on the same issues and another felt the next step would be more regionally-specific conversations.

An assortment of other issues were noted, such as involvement of Pacific peoples in general, and specifically trans people from this region. Another issue was minority stress and infighting or bridging the gaps and collaborating within and between movements. The impact of HIV/AIDS and stigma, and intersectionality with other issues, such as disability, was also raised.

**6.** Participants were asked to rate how **useful and relevant the International Dialogue is to their work/activism**. They were also asked if they’d like to see it continue and with what focus in the future. The average response was **9** out of 10 indicating a strong feeling of usefulness and relevance.

There was overwhelming and unanimous support for continuing to create the space for an International Dialogue. It is clear that the opportunity to collect and discuss best practices is all too rare.

*“If only for the networking opportunities and a great initiative to share their practices. Maybe think of how to share broader?” (Europe)*

*“Yes, it gives organisations a chance to measure and reflect on their work and builds networks.” (Latin America)*

*“Yes, a smaller platform than a formal conference gave us the opportunity to cover a lot of issues/themes that directly/indirectly have an impact on my work.” (Africa)*

Most of the suggestions for a future focus have already been articulated in previous answers. A number of people noted that the discussions and themes already begun or opened require more time, and strategies need further and ongoing development.

*“They should continue. They should, however, try to include other partners in broader issues and also government departments.” (Africa)*

*“This kind of dialogue should be organized in different parts of the world. Hence, LGBTIQ individuals/organizations could become more transparent about their own issues in different regions.” (Asia)*

## *Appendix #1*

### *Dialogue Schedule*

#### **Thursday, January 14<sup>th</sup> (Day 1)**

- 16:00-18:00 Registration (NH City Hotel, Bolivar 160, Buenos Aires)  
18:00 Opening Dinner/ Gift exchange/Welcome
- Flavio Rapisardi, INADI (Instituto Nacional contra la Discriminación)
  - Diana Maffia, Congresswoman from Buenos Aires
  - Esteban Paulon, Secretario General de la Federación Argentina de Gays, Lesbianas, Bisexuales y Transexuales

#### **Friday, January 15<sup>th</sup> (Day 2)**

- 8:00-9:00 Registration  
9:00-9:30 Introductions/Overview of the Agenda  
9:30-10:45 **Case Study Presentations - Group A**  
(Strengthening Communities and Building Alliances)
- Florin Buhuceanu – Euroregional Center for Public Initiatives (Romania)  
*“Campaign for social change in Eastern Europe”*
  - Anne Lim – Gay and Lesbian Activist Network for Gender Equality Inc. (Philippines)  
*“Grassroots community working model for organizing with lesbians in poverty”*
  - Andrés Ignacio Rivera Duarte – Organización de Transexuales por la Dignidad de la Diversidad (Chilé)  
*“Four practices of integration within government programs targeting women, children and youth”*
  - Delene van Dyk – OUT Wellbeing (South Africa)  
*“Empowering LGBT people through implementation of mental health programming”*
  - Amitava Sarkar – Solidarity and Action Against The HIV Infection in India (India)  
*“Addressing the needs of transgender and Hijra communities in India through a collaborative approach”*
- 10:45-11:00 Questions/Clarifications  
11-11:30 Break  
11:30-13:00 Small group work from Group 1  
13:00-14:30 Buffet Lunch/Caucuses
- Proposed Caucus #1:**  
*LGBTI rights in the Commonwealth: cross-regional challenges and opportunities*  
*This lunch discussion will highlight some of the major achievements and challenges experienced during the recent Commonwealth Heads of Governments Meeting and the opportunities that originated from the joint work-in-progress of a group of activists from Asia, Africa and the Caribbean.*

14:30-15:30 **Best Practices Panel: Funders**

- Michael Heflin -Open Society Institute (USA)
- Esther Vonk – Mama Cash (Netherlands)
- Carla Sutherland - ARCUS Foundation (USA)

15:30-16:00 Questions and Answers

16:00-16:30 Break

16:30-18:00 Plenary session – feedback from small groups and strategies

*(Dinner and evening on own – registration kit will have ideas for things to do)*

**Saturday, January 16<sup>th</sup> (Day 3)**

9-9:30 Check-In/Feedback from Day 1

9:30-10:45 **Case Study Presentations – Group B**

(Activism and Advocacy Strategies)

- Rosa Posa Guinea – IGLHRC (Paraguay)  
*“Learning and exchange for LGTBI activists of Latin America and Caribbean through an institute on strategies against religious fundamentalisms”*
- Geert-Jan Edelenbosch– COC (Netherlands)  
*“Combatting homophobia in Dutch schools”*
- Azusa Yamashita – GayJapan News (Japan)  
*“Engaging with international instruments and collaborating with international organizations to transform local realities”*
- Morten Sortodden/ Andrés Lekanger - Prostitutes Interest Organisation/Skeivt Forum - Queer Student Organization (Norway)  
*“Political debate, photo-exhibition and Pride campaign focused on “SEX-WORKERS RIGHTS = HUMAN RIGHTS”*

10:45-11:00 Questions/Clarifications

11:00-11:30 Break

11:30-13:00 Small group work from Group 2

13:00-14:30 Lunch/Thematic Caucuses

**Proposed Caucus #2:**

***International Coordination Group Meeting***

*HRW, IGLHRC, ARC, SRI, COC Netherlands, GATE, ILGA, Heartland Alliance, Global Rights, ICJ, CGE, CREA, Mulabi and other international groups or domestic/regional groups engaged in international advocacy*

14:30-15:30 **Best Practices Panel: Government, Public Institutions, Academia and the Media**

- Jack Byrne – New Zealand Human Rights Commission (New Zealand)
- Ranjita Biswas – Independent Journalist (India)
- Diego Cao - Human Rights Secretary at the Government of the Buenos Aires Province (Argentina)

- 15:30-16:00 Questions and Answers
- 16:00-16:30 Break
- 16:30-18:00 Plenary session – feedback from small groups and strategies

(Dinner and evening on own – planned group evening activity/outing to Nadia Echazu School for Travestis – garment factory and training institute)

### Sunday, January 17<sup>th</sup> (Day 4)

- 9-9:30 Check-In/Feedback from Day 2
- 9:30-10:45 **Case Study Presentations – Group C**
  - (Combatting homophobia / working in hostile environments)
  - Kenneth van Emden – Suriname Men United (Suriname)
    - “Public media campaign targeting homophobic lyrics of dance hall artists”*
  - Sean Casey – Heartland Alliance (U.S.A.)
    - “An initiative to build the capacity of grassroots LGBT organizations in the Global South and East in countries that are particularly oppressive or dangerous for LGBT activists and individuals”*
  - Christian Rumu – Humure (Burundi)
    - “A diplomatic campaign to combat criminalization in Burundi”*
  - Diana Sacayan- Movimiento Antidiscriminatorio de Liberación (Argentina)
    - “Changing discriminatory policies that impact travestis, transsexuals, and transgendered people in Argentina”*
  - Shaun Kirven – Protection International (Nepal)
    - “Training manual for the protection of LGBTI defenders”*
- 10:45-11:00 Questions/Clarifications
- 11:00-11:30 Break
- 11:30-13:00 Small group work from Group 3
- 13:00-15:00 Lunch (Regional Working Groups/Priorities)
- 15:00-16:30 Strategic Discussion (In plenary)
- 16:30-17:00 Wrap Up and Evaluation
- 17:00 on Social Activity

## *Appendix #2*

### *Participant's List*

<b>Participant</b>	<b>Organization/Affiliation</b>	<b>Country</b>
Alejandra Sarda-Chandiramani	Mama Cash	Netherlands
Alli Jernow	International Commission of Jurists (ICJ)	Switzerland
Álvaro Queiruga	Colectivo Ovejas Negras	Uruguay
Amitava Sarkar	Solidarity and Action Against The HIV Infection in India (SAATHII)	India
Andrés Ignacio Rivera Duarte	Organización de Transexuales por la Dignidad de la Diversidad (OTD)	Chile
Andres Lekanger	Skeivt forum – Queer studentorganization	Norway
Anne Lim	Gay and Lesbian Activist Network for Gender Equality (GALANG) Inc.	Philippines
Azusa Yamashita	GayJapanNews	Japan
Bjorn van Roozendaal	COC Netherlands	Netherlands
Carla Sutherland	ARCUS Foundation	USA
Charlotte Schneider Callejas	TransColumbia	Colombia
Christian Rumu	Humure	Burundi
Daniela Ponce	Protection International	Chile
Delene van Dyk	OUT LGBT Well-being	South Africa
Diana Sacayan	Movimiento Antidiscriminatorio de Liberación	Argentina
Diego Cao	Secret. De SDHH	Argentina
Esther Vonk	Mama Cash	Netherlands
Fernanado D'Ellio	IGLHRC	Argentina
Florin Buhuceanu	Euroregional Center for Public Initiative	Romania
Geert-Jan Edelenbosch	COC Netherlands	Netherlands
Germán Humberto Rincón Perfetti	Asociación Líderes en Acción	Colombia
Gloria Careaga	International Lesbian and Gay Association (ILGA)	Mexico
Indyra Mendoza	Red Lésbica Cattrachas	Honduras
Ivana Pivato	Mulabi	Argentina
Jack Byrne	New Zealand Human Rights Commission	New Zealand
John Fisher	ARC International	Switzerland
Juan Manuel Burgos	Mulabi	Argentina
Juliana Cano Nieto	Human Rights Watch	USA
Julie Dorf	Council for Global Equality	USA
Justus Eisfeld	Global Advocates for Trans Equality (GATE)	USA
Kenneth van Emden	Suriname Men United	Suriname
Kim Vance	ARC International	Canada
Lohanna Berkins	ALITT	Argentina
Mandeng Macaire Sebastian	L'Association pour la Defense de L'Homosexualite (ADEFHO)	Cameroon
Marcela Ferreyra	IGLHRC	Argentina
Marcos Di Mattia	Mulabi	Argentina

Maria Mustika	GAYa NUSANTARA	Indonesia
Masbah U ahmed	Bandhu Social Welfare Society	Bangladesh
Mauro Cabral	Mulabi	Argentina
Michael Heflin	Open Society Institute	USA
Mima Simic	Lesbian Group Kontra	Croatia
Morten Sortodden	Prostitutes Interest-organisation in Norway (PION)	Norway
Natasa Prsir	Lesbian Group Kontra	Croatia
Radhika Chandiramani	TARSHI	India
Ranjita Biswas	Independent Journalist	India
Rosa Posa Guinea	IGLHRC	Paraguay
Rosanna Flamer-Caldera	EQUAL GROUND	Sri Lanka
Ruben Mayorga	UNAIDS/ONUSIDA	Argentina
Sanjana Gaind	CREA	India
Sean Casey	Heartland Alliance for Human Needs & Human Rights	USA
Shaun Kirven	Protection International	Nepal/Brussels
Sofía Chaij	Mulabi	Argentina
Stefano Fabeni	Global Rights	USA
Suhail Abualsameed	Supporting Our Youth	Canada
Wiseman Chibwezo	CEDEP	Malawi
Yolanda Orozco	Mulabi	Argentina