

FREEDOM IN MIND AND BODY

At first, the subject appears to be odd in terms of development cooperation: LGBT rights, rights for lesbians, gays, bisexuals and transsexuals, or any other sexual minority. These rights are, however, intrinsically connected with freedom, self-determination and access to chances and opportunities. And that has everything to do with emancipation and development. Hivos is firmly convinced of the importance of this interrelationship between sexual emancipation and opportunities for development, which is the reason why Hivos wholeheartedly embraces the theme and will continue to do so during the next years. Also to correct the misconception that LGBT rights would be merely a Western issue.

The LGBT programme has been part of the Human Rights and Democratisation theme since the nineties and consists of financial support, the exchange of knowledge and the influencing of policy. Hivos supports the outcoming of sexual minorities, the fight against homophobia, the mobilisation for political change and worldwide coalition building.

There's more to it

- more than thirty LGBT-organisations
- more than twenty aidsprojects with focus on LGBT
- more than two million euros a year

THE RIGHT

The world's first gay organisation, COC, was founded in the Netherlands as early as 1946. The humanist movement has always been closely involved in the emancipation of sexual minorities, from the belief that self-determination and diversity also apply to sexuality and lifestyle. That is why Hivos, as a humanist organisation, is particularly focused on gay activism in developing countries.

Gay rights are human rights. Yet gays - like women before them - still have to fight for acceptance and integration in general human rights organisations. Fortunately, discrimination based on sexual orientation is increasingly regarded as a violation of

human rights. And the fight against stigmatization and for prosecution continues to grow, in recognition as well as man- and womanpower.

An alliance between hetero and gay activists in the anti-apartheid movement in South Africa paid off: the first constitution in the entire world to explicitly protect citizens against discrimination based on race, gender and sexual behaviour. Ecuador followed this example by making a constitutional provision about freedom of sexual preference. Hivos supports organisations that fight to abolish laws which punish homosexuality.

THE PIONEERS

Ironically, it was the AIDS epidemic that to a great extent gave impetus to the foundation of gay organisations in developing countries. Hivos realised that the virus was to have an extremely devastating effect on development worldwide, and drew up a relevant policy as early as 1991. It paid special attention to high-risk groups such as gay men, and their double stigma: for carrying the AIDS virus and for their sexual preference.

In many countries it was the members of the gay community that rolled up their sleeves and took responsibility. With the support of Hivos, they organised themselves in order to find solutions for the AIDS issue together. It is they who are the flag-bearers. They form the basis for successful projects, inspiring the work of subsequent AIDS prevention programmes. Many of these early projects have grown into valuable professional non-governmental organisations.

'Homosexuals are worse than dogs and pigs.' President Mugabe of Zimbabwe continues his campaign against sexual minorities. In this hostile atmosphere, the Hivos partner organisations GALZ and Behind the Mask do their jobs. The first works actively to secure rights for the gay community and to banish all forms of discrimination. The second organises a digital platform where gays from all over the continent can inform each other.

THE FIGHT

As the world gets smaller, the global LGBT movement grows. The International Lesbian and Gay Association (ILGA) accommodates more than four hundred organisations already. However, opposing movements provide new challenges: religious fanaticism, nationalism and totalitarianism. They go hand in hand with conservative, fundamentalist views that are diametrically opposed to selfdetermination, women's rights and the right to be different.

Many laws in developing countries punish sexual behaviour that does not comply with the heterosexual standard. The fact that discrimination and suppression are still daily practice in countries with a sound constitution, like South Africa, is also a bitter pill to swallow. In the West too, acquired rights are increasingly under pressure. New and old taboos constitute a danger to effective sexual education and aidsprevention.

In Latin America, the return to democracy provided room for LGBT activism. Cases of homophobic violence are brought to the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights. This includes the case of the cruel death of a member of Comunidad Gay Sampedrana in 2003. In anticipation of that judgement, the Honduran government must now offer protection to members of the Hivos partner organisation.

THE APPROACH

The United Nations still do not recognise gay rights as human rights. Yet this issue is about the right to freedom of conscience and opinion, and the right not to be discriminated. All the more reason for Hivos to put the spotlight on exclusion and humiliation based on sexual orientation, and to promote diversity within the gay movement as well.

Hivos wants to contribute to the dream of a global rainbow coalition. That is why it aims to support LGBTs in all its focal countries. Since not every organisation is on the same level of development or offers the same space openly organise themselves, tailor-made support is the basic principle.

Hivos is a Dutch non-governmental organisation inspired by humanist values. Together with local organisations in developing countries, Hivos seeks to contribute to a free, fair and sustainable world. A world in which citizens - women and men - have equal access to the opportunities and resources that will determine their future.

More information

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Moving safely

- create a trusted environment for LGBTs
- influencing policy for the benefit of political change and public awareness
- affirmative action for 'special' groups such as lesbians, transsexuals and intersexuals

Growing bigger

- further development of global and regional networks
- representation of LGBT organisations at the UN
- lobbying activities for the inclusion of explicit LGBT rights in international treaties

Getting stronger

- coordination with like-minded donor organisations to increase effectiveness
- stimulate of cooperation between LGBT movement and other social movements
- guarantees for the protection of gay and human rights activists

Purposeful integration

- promotion of gay-friendly projects in education, the police force, healthcare and journalism
- setting up a network of trainers in sexual diversity education
- use of ICT in order to facilitate LGBT activities