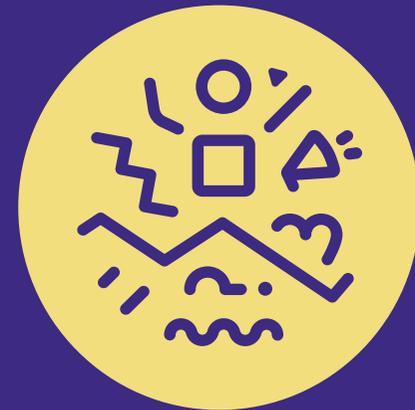
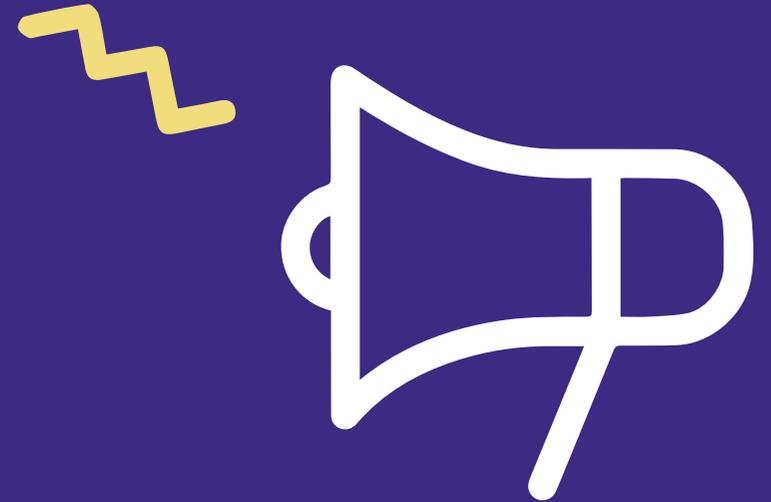


# CHANGING HEARTS & MINDS



Successful SO/GIE/SC  
Campaigns from Around the Globe

# INTRODUCTION

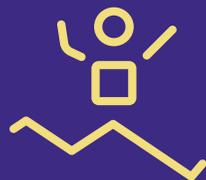
If you are interested in shifting how people think about gender and sexuality – **then this document is for YOU!**

We hope that there are ideas in here that can provide inspiration and insight for activists around the world. However, it is particularly aimed at activists who work in hostile social, political and legal contexts.

If you have ever seen case studies of campaigning work around Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity and Expression and Sex Characteristics (SO/GIE/SC) and thought to yourself “that’s not going to work here” because

- We can’t legally organize around these issues
- We don’t have those kinds of resources
- Our government isn’t democratic
- There are so many other human rights abuses
- I don’t even know where to begin

**Then, please,  
read on!**



If you are looking for a step by step toolkit, then this guide isn't for you. The approach taken here is to share the work that organizations have undertaken in Poland, Costa Rica, Ukraine, Nepal and Zimbabwe, and across Southern Africa. Activists share why and how they developed their campaigns: what worked and what didn't; and lessons they learnt along the way.

We hope that this is only the start to documenting and sharing case studies of work being done by activists around the world. We know there are many more examples – particularly case studies undertaken by trans and intersex activists.

This guide was supported through the Right Here, Right Now (RHRN) program. RHRN is a five-year initiative active in ten countries, and the Caribbean sub region. The program was designed to strengthen advocacy for a progressive and inclusive Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights (SRHR) agenda. In particular, this included holding governments accountable for the adoption of progressive and inclusive policies for the implementation of comprehensive sexuality education and youth friendly SRH services, including safe abortion. The initiative is funded under the Dialogue and Dissent policy

framework of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Netherlands.

The program has been implemented by a consortium of seven organizations, led by Rutgers, and including Hivos, Arrow, Choice for Youth and Sexuality, Dance4Life, IPPF and Latin American and Caribbean Women's Health Network (LACWHN). The partnership is premised on the belief that young people, everywhere, have the inalienable right to make their own choices, and lead happy and healthy lives. Hivos played a leading role in supporting advocacy work around Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity and Expression and Sex Characteristics (SO/GIE/SC).

**At the conclusion of the case studies we provide some general lessons learnt about SOGIE campaigning from around the world.**



## Background

Huge gains have been made by SO/GIE/SC movement(s) over the past few decades. Many of these gains have

been won through human rights-based advocacy focused on politicians, policy makers, diplomats and through legal arguments made in courts around the world.

At the heart of that work has been a very simple premise: all people are created equal and deserve to be treated with dignity.

SO/GIE/SC advocates have won policy and legal battles to enforce inclusion in this ideal because rigorous scientific and medical evidence across the globe is unequivocal in agreeing that diverse sexual orientations and gender identities and expressions and sex characteristics are a natural part of our humanity – and most certainly not a legitimate basis for discrimination, hate and violence. Further, activists have been able to document and provide systemic evidence of the appalling levels of discrimination, hate and violence that is experienced when people of diverse SO/GIE/SC become more visible in homes, schools, places of worship, workplaces, and communities.

Opponents to these victories and changes - having been roundly defeated in the evidence-based world of science, medicine and law - are now investing in more insidious ways to make their 'case' in the court of popular opinion. Armed with misleading stereotypes, half-truths, and outright lies they have been increasingly successful at creating moral

panics. Using deeply conservative frames they have presented a particular view of religion (across many denominations) that demonizes and excludes us. They have fermented widespread fear over the loss of privilege and power by calling for a 'return' to traditional gender hierarchies and patriarchal families.

To counter the influence of conservative forces on public opinion smarter and more effective campaigns have to be developed that are aimed at ordinary people – not just policy makers, politicians and judges.

## A Learning Frame

In a recent analysis<sup>1</sup> of over 150 case studies of SOGIE campaigns from around the world, as well as a review of best practices in wider social-change campaigning, the following were identified as critical to successful campaigning:

- Clear goals and strategies
- Extensive knowledge of the target audience
- Compelling frames and messages that connect with that target audience
- Innovation in outreach methods and supporter engagement
- Long term funding

It is no surprise to find that these strategies are generic to any social change process – not only campaigning. They were core to the work that SO/GIE/SC activists undertook to challenge and change political and legal barriers: identifying key laws and policies that needed to be changed; strategizing about the best way to work with decision makers; using creative methods to persuade decisions makers to act; and securing long term funding needed to see the work through over many years.

However - and this is really important – that kind of advocacy work is not directed at winning popular opinion. Rather it is primarily focused on accessing and reaching people in power who can directly influence legal and policy processes at the national, regional and global level. There is little doubt that huge wins have been made in these arenas because of those sophisticated and nuanced advocacy strategies. However, there is a growing agreement that those strategies, content and framing that were so successful in shifting **individual decision makers** tend not to work as well for the task of shifting wider public opinion.

For example, many activists have tried to 'pivot' a human rights approach and language - that was so central to successfully winning political and legal victories – to use it to shift



<sup>1</sup> Please see [www.sogicampaigns.org](http://www.sogicampaigns.org) for further details (and some great campaigning ideas!)

public opinion and attitudes. In many places a direct human rights framing has been ineffective, and in some places, actually damaging. While advocacy strategies aimed at individual policymakers and decisionmakers need to continue, it is important that they are accompanied by another set of strategies aimed at shifting hearts and minds in the wider public.

**considering what technical expertise exists in those countries already.**



One challenge to finding successful ways to share experiences and knowledge about campaigning is that many of the successes have taken place in the Global North. Far too often, there is a tendency to take messages and approaches that have been highly successful in that context and try to reproduce them in in other contexts. This has included bringing trainers from the Global North with limited understanding of contextual nuance, language and culture, to countries in the Global South without pausing to explore if this is a sensible starting point, or considering what technical expertise exists in those countries already.

There are some structural reasons that mistakes like this keep happening: in many of the places where shifts in public opinion are most needed it is simply too dangerous and/or illegal to

engage in direct and overt SO/GIE/SC public campaigning work. Many activists, in places that need the most support, find it difficult to access appropriate training that makes sense in their own contexts. Very few organizations have dedicated and experienced communications staff. And universally there is a legitimate sense that donors are reluctant to provide funding for campaigning – particularly long-term funding.

In a sector where needs far outstrip resources – it's important to unpack that last point. Frequently it is the first one of the first to be raised in discussions about SO/GIE/SC campaigning work. Given that there will never be enough funding for all the work that needs to be done, funding will always be competitive, and will frequently be shaped by donor priorities and restrictions on what can be funded, where and how. A better question around limited funding might be to ask "How best to work within these limitations?"

**A better question around limited funding might be to ask 'How best to work within these limitations'**



First, there certainly needs to be more donor advocacy, specifically about the need for, and value of, investing increasing resources in

campaigning and strategic communications. One of the best ways in which to do this is by increasing numbers of organizations presenting powerful and compelling funding proposals. Those proposals need to demonstrate that applicants have a solid grasp of the basics of what a good campaign takes. At a minimum this requires an understanding of how the following has been achieved (or will be) as part of the proposal:

- the identification of clear short-term and long-term goals
- the identification and justification of the choice of a particular target audience
- the development and justification of the choice of a particular message
- the development of a strategy of how (and by whom) the message is delivered
- the presentation and justification of measures of success and how they will be measured
- a realistic timeframe and carefully thought through budget

Second, there is a need to get better at strategizing and implementing innovative and creative advocacy work safely - even in the harshest of contexts. This means demonstrating to funders a deep contextual understanding of where the work is to be undertaken, and what a realistic starting point is. It may well be,

that campaigning about SO/GIE/SC directly might not be possible – but that a more generic campaign, perhaps in alliance with other stigmatized minorities, could be done around stopping police targeting or political intolerance or gender-based violence. Or perhaps all that is possible as a realistic starting point is engagement with other civil society organizations – such as moderate religious groups – so that those groups are positioned to take forward a more inclusive message rather than SO/GIE/SC groups themselves.

A shift is needed from imagining that only glittery, expensive, mass-based campaigns count in this work. Rather, there is a need to be thinking systematically about multi-year campaigns that start in a very low key manner and build momentum over time.

~

**A shift is needed from imagining that only glittery, expensive, mass-based campaigns count in this work.**

Six case studies are presented here. As communications and campaigning are context specific, there is a brief introduction to each country, in order to capture some of the wider political and human rights issues that shape the context in which the work was undertaken.

**The case studies are not intended for reproduction, but rather to provide inspiration and insight.**



The work that has been undertaken by each of these groups can't simply be reproduced in other spaces (other than the Positive Vibes example, which is essentially a methodology shaped by its users in context). The case studies are not intended for reproduction, but rather to provide inspiration and insight. They have been carefully chosen as examples of work that have successfully overcome challenges that we believe face many organizations seeking to do effective SO/GIE/SC advocacy. They are written in a way that we hope will be helpful to groups wanting to critically think through possibilities in their own very specific context that we can't possibly know enough about.

Each of the case studies is framed around a central challenge that an NGO has encountered and found an innovative and effective way of addressing.

## A NOTE ABOUT TERMINOLOGY:

You might notice that there are a number of terms used to describe sexual orientation and gender identity expressions and communities. This is always a complicated process. Language is important – especially when it refers to people's identities. Rather than creating a false unity of practice in this document, we have (for the most part) chosen (a) to use SO/GIE/SC rather than LGBTIQ where we are commenting, and (b) tried to keep to the terminology used by activists in their interviews, websites and documents.

As this document is primarily intended for activists who regularly encounter a wide variety of terms, we hope that this will be understood with the spirit in which it is intended.



[https://youtu.be/U\\_BoDbAaQM8](https://youtu.be/U_BoDbAaQM8)

## 6 CASE STUDIES

### Poland

1

#### FINDING EFFECTIVE MESSAGES AND MESSENGERS

**Katarzyna Remin**, Board member,  
Kampania Przeciw Homofobii |  
Campaign Against Homophobia

### Costa Rica

2

#### FINDING THE RIGHT TARGET AUDIENCE

**Gia Miranda**, Executive Director  
of the Sí Acepto campaign

### Ukraine

3

#### THE VALUE OF AN INTERSECTIONAL APPROACH

**Taya Gerasimova**, communication  
manager of Insight NGO,  
update.com.ua founder

### Nepal

4

#### INTEGRATING INTO THE CULTURAL FABRIC OF A SOCIETY

**Sanjay Sharma**, Program Director  
of Blue Diamond Society and Board  
Member of Global Interfaith Network

### Zimbabwe

5

#### PERSUASIVE CONVERSATIONS AMONGST KEY STAKEHOLDERS

**Beatrice Savadye**, Director,  
Real Open Opportunities for  
Transformation Support (ROOTS)

### Positive Vibes Trust

6

#### MITIGATING THE IMPACT OF LIVING IN DEEPLY HOMOPHOBIC AND TRANSPHOBIC SOCIETIES

Staff members from Positive  
Vibes Africa

1

# Finding effective messages and messengers: Poland

Katarzyna Remin, Board member,  
Kampania Przeciw Homofobii |  
Campaign Against Homophobia



*How do you work effectively in contexts where prejudice is deep and widespread, and rooted in strong religious beliefs? Political, legal and philosophical arguments are seldom persuasive when trying to shift attitudes grounded in sincerely held spiritual tenets. Is it possible for LGBTIQ activists, who are not themselves religious, to be effective advocates in such contexts?*

These were some of the questions that Polish LGBTIQ activists grappled with when trying to develop strategies to shift public opinion in their country. Poland has one of the largest practicing Catholic populations, with close to ninety percent of Poles sharing this religious affiliation. This case study explores how activists came to understand that if progress was to be made then finding a way to meaningfully engage with religious opposition was essential. It shows how sometimes direct advocacy may not be the best

approach for SO/GIE/SC organizations. Over a multi-year period, a working partnership was built with more open and inclusive faith-based groups that better understood how to engage persuasively with more conservative religious communities. Through this process a set of shared values were found, and campaign strategies were shaped around them, including ensuring the visibility of religious allies throughout.

This case study will show how important it is **to fully understand key audiences** that you are hoping to engage. By **finding allies** within these communities and building sincere trust and working relationships based on shared values, it is possible to make inroads into even the most challenging spaces.

2

## Finding the right target audience: Costa Rica

Gia Miranda, Executive Director  
of the Sí Acepto campaign



*So, you know what issue you want to work on: maybe it's to work towards a political or legal change goal; maybe it's to tackle police violence or work-place discrimination; maybe it's just to raise awareness and visibility. Finding a specific target audience needs to be the one of the first decisions that you make when developing a campaign.*

*It's easy to miss out this step or not to take the time to do it well: after all, doesn't it make sense just to try and reach as many people as possible?*

These were the kind of issues that a coalition of organizations in Costa Rica had to think through when they were developing a campaign to shift public opinion around the issue of same-sex marriage. It shows how important it is (especially when resources are limited) to make sure you develop a campaign which reaches the people most open to persuasion. That is, not the ones who already agree with

you; and not the ones where you have no chance of changing their minds; but rather the aptly named 'movable middle'. Once the movable middle has been identified, the case study shows how activists worked to develop specific messages and strategies to reach their target audience; language and tactics that would not have been arrived at if the campaign had been aimed more generally at 'the public'.

The case study will outline the benefits of identifying a specific target audience for campaigns, including how this will save considerable time and resources developing and testing messages, as well as identifying persuasive messengers and strategies for message delivery.

# 3 The value of an intersectional approach: Ukraine

Taya Gerasimova,  
communication manager  
of Insight NGO,  
[update.com.ua](http://update.com.ua) founder



*How can you reach a wider audience when most people don't think about SO/GIE/SC as something that directly impact them? What do you do when you feel like you are only talking to people within your own community and you can't find effective ways to reach other people? And, do we ever pause to consider whether and how activists within our SO/GIE/SC community tackle human rights issues beyond their own direct concerns? How (if at all) are issues of racism, disability, ethnic minorities and sexism being dealt with in our own community and work?*

This case study explores the challenges and opportunities of shifting away from approaching SO/GIE/SC advocacy and campaigning as a single-identity issue. Set in Ukraine, the case study examines the kind of strategies and activities a lesbian-feminist group uses to build an intersectional understanding of human rights within their own community and more broadly. It shows how, over time, working under a broad umbrella that includes ethnic minorities, environmentalists, and disability activists can build solidarity and increase visibility and audience.

## 4

# Integrating into the cultural fabric of a society: Nepal

Sanjay Sharma, Program Director of Blue Diamond Society and Board Member of Global Interfaith Network



*We know that some of the most impressive political and legal gains for our communities have happened in the wake of wider social change in countries that have won struggles for freedom and democracy. A good example of this is Nepal, where the first out-gay Parliamentarian in Asia was elected in the early 1990s. One of the questions faced by activists in Nepal in the wake of this extraordinary event, was how to take political and legal victories - that had largely been won through activists' engagement with winning political parties - and popularize the gains in a wider range of communities – particularly in more conservative rural areas.*

This case study describes how the leading SO/GIE/SC organization in Nepal has actively engaged with deeply traditional cultural norms and practices and in order to

strengthen and reinforce legal and policy changes won around third gender recognition. Of all the case studies, this may be the most context specific – and in terms of content not able to be transferred elsewhere. However, it does demonstrate that 'Pride Marches' are not the only celebratory ways that our community can be more visible.

It poses the challenge to all organizations to dig into their own unique traditions and cultures and to find ways to light up pathways and connections to current gender and sexuality identities and expressions that resonate authentically.

The case study will show how this work began rather spontaneously but has been steadily expanded and strengthened – despite funding and other challenges.

5

# Persuasive Conversations Amongst Key Stakeholders: Zimbabwe

Beatrice Savadye, Director,  
Real Open Opportunities for  
Transformation Support (ROOTS)



*How do you get public authority figures – from the political, religious, and cultural realms – to take a lead in making courageous decisions about difficult issues? While it may be possible to shift leaders’ personal opinions about sexual and reproductive health issues (such as abortion) through one on one advocacy behind closed doors, how can you build on that and get them to provide visible leadership to policy reforms that don’t have widespread public support.*

This case study focuses on sexual health and rights, specifically on campaigning for legal reform about access to reproductive health services. We believe that there are many lessons for SO/GIE/SC activists from work being done by SRH activists. In this case study, activists in Zimbabwe worked with women impacted by laws denying them access to legal abortions to capture their stories and document the harm

caused by unsafe abortions. This led to a series of “community dialogues” with religious leaders, traditional leaders and Members of the Zimbabwe House of Assembly. The community dialogues ensured that a much more informed group of community leaders influencing wider public discourse, which in turn created greater support – or at the least less opposition - about the work of politicians working to protect women’s SRHR.

This case study, explores how activists were able to work closely with community members, mobilize, House of Assembly Members, and train community champions on safe abortions for these ground-breaking dialogues that opened up space and support for legal reform for an Act that had not been changed since 1977.

# 6 Mitigating the impact of living in deeply homophobic and transphobic societies



Staff members from Positive Vibes Africa

*How do you find a way of changing other people's hearts and minds when the messages you've seen or heard are overwhelmingly ones that denigrate and deny who you are? How can you heal your own wounds from unrelenting homophobia and transphobia to feel whole and confident enough to engage with others to change their attitudes and beliefs?*

Some of the most important social advocacy that is required of activists takes place far from the political arenas of the UN, policy forums, or courts of laws. It is the kind of advocacy that is needed to take on – safely - homophobia and transphobia in one's own family and immediate community. In these kinds of spaces the discourse of politics, rights and dignity are seldom persuasive in terms of challenging the myths and misperceptions that underpin bigotry and prejudice. And yet, if these kinds of spaces can be made more welcoming and understanding – it can be truly transformative for the lived experiences of ordinary LGBTIQ people.

Our last case study examines the work of an organization that has over the past decade developed a range of very effective ways to partner with community activists to work through these kinds of challenges. A process of self-reflection and exploration is facilitated to enable activists to understand better how homophobia and transphobia has impacted on them as individuals – as well as on their wider communities. The goal of work is to ensure that activists have worked through their own questions and prejudices around gender and sexuality before contemplating how to work more effectively with others.

The work is intense and slow, but as the case study will show, it has the potential to be powerful and healing for participants, and in the longer term, for their communities.

# Case Study 1

## Finding effective messages and messengers

*This case study explores the challenge of how to work effectively in contexts where prejudice is rooted in strong religious beliefs. This example is set in Poland, where 90 percent of the population is Catholic. This case study explores how activists came to understand that it was essential that they grapple with this reality if they were to shift public opinion. It shows how important it is to fully understand key audiences that you are hoping to engage. By finding allies within these communities and building sincere trust and working relationships based on shared values, it is possible to make inroads into even the most challenging spaces.*

**Katarzyna Remin**, Board member, Kampania Przeciw Homofobii | Campaign Against Homophobia

# Poland

## Background

**National Context:** Poland is a country in Central Europe, and home to close to 40 million people. It fell under contested Communist rule imposed by the Soviet Union, post the Second World War. Sustained opposition, particularly by the labor movement, ultimately led to democratic elections ushering in a new era from 1989. The decade following was full of tumult as the country transformed its socialist-style planned economy and single party system into a market economy and parliamentary democracy. As with other post-communist countries, Poland initially suffered quite a severe decline in social and economic standards, that took more than a decade to turn around. Currently, it has the tenth largest economy in Europe, proving a very good standards of living for most citizens. Alongside a highly

developed public primary and secondary school system, the state also provides free tertiary education, basic social security and a universal health care system.

Poland voted to join the European Union in June 2003, cementing its steady progress towards institutionalizing civil, political and human rights within its legal-political frameworks. In 2020, Poland was scored as “free” by Freedom House<sup>2</sup>, with the following results:

<b>Electoral Process</b>	12/12
<b>Political Pluralism and Participation</b>	16/16
<b>Functioning of Government</b> Issues with corruption	10/12
<b>Freedom of Expression and Beliefs</b>	16/16
<b>Associational and Organizational Rights</b>	12/12
<b>Rule of Law</b> Courts slow and notorious for delays; subject to political pressure. Roma and LGBT face discrimination and violence	13/16
<b>Personal Autonomy and Individual Rights</b> Some of strictest abortion laws in Europe	14/16



<sup>2</sup> Freedom House is a US based a funded NGO that conducts research on democracy, political freedom and human rights. <https://freedomhouse.org/country/poland/freedom-world/2020>

# Case Study 1

## Poland

### LGBTIQ Formal Rights and Organizing:

Same sex relationships have never been criminalized in Poland. As early as 1932, this was formally codified, with 15 years set as the age of consent, regardless of orientation. Transgender people are allowed to change legal gender. Employment discrimination is prohibited, but there are no legal protections from hate crimes and provision of services. Marriage between same-sex couples is prohibited, and same-sex couples are not allowed to adopt children. There are, however, recognition of limited cohabitation rights.

**the first large-scale public protest against homosexual discrimination**



The LGBTIQ movement in Poland has its roots in the early 1980s with the Warsaw Gay Movement beginning its organizing work in 1987. Other groups and activists coalesced into an association of groups called Lambda, which registered in 1990. 2001 was the first year that

Warsaw held a Pride event, attended by over 300 people. This was the first large-scale public protest against homosexual discrimination, and shortly after that Kampania Przeciw Homofobii (Campaign Against Homophobia) was established. Counter protests and opposition from the conservative political parties have risen in the wake of increased visibility by the LGBTIQ movement, particularly after Poland joined the EU. Membership of the EU brought with it a requirement to meet a number of nondiscrimination and equality measures, that LGBTIQ organizations used to press for greater recognition and protections. Many left-wing political parties began to advocate for support for the LGBTIQ movement. In 2011, Poland became the third country in the world to elect a transgender Member of Parliament, and this was followed in 2014 with the election of Poland's first out gay activist to their national parliament.

**Social Attitudes:** Poland has one of the largest practicing Catholic populations, with close to ninety percent of Poles sharing this religious affiliation. Given this context it is not surprising that Polish society tends to hold

conservative views about issues dealing with sexual orientation and gender identity and expression. Attitudinal surveys from the early 2000s consistently showed deeply held beliefs on the part of the majority of Poles that homosexuality is "unnatural", with overwhelming opposition to same-sex marriage and adoption by same-sex couples. As late as 2013, over two-thirds of Poles were against gays and lesbians "showing their way of life" in public, and in 2014 over 70 percent of Poles reported that same sex sexual activity is "morally unacceptable".



 <https://youtu.be/iK5p7XU46Kg>



## Case Study

*How do you work effectively in contexts where prejudice is deep and widespread, and rooted in strong religious beliefs?*

**Lead Organization:** Kampania Przeciw Homofobii <sup>3</sup> (KPH) is a Polish organization, which aims to promote legal and social equality for people outside of the “heteronorm”. KPH works to establishing a tolerant society, in which gay, lesbian, transgender and other minorities feel comfortable.

### Can you tell us a little about the kind of work that KPH does?

We are working towards achieving a more tolerant society in which LGBTIQ people (and other minorities) feel comfortable being themselves. Our work is wide ranging including political advocacy (meeting with politicians and political lobbying); public education and outreach (through conferences, exhibitions, workshops, hosting integration parties, research and publications); services (legal and psychological counselling, legal monitoring); and protest (participating in and organizing demonstrations).

**Some of our previous campaigns have included:**

- **Niech nas zobaczą (Let Them See Us)** - Photographs portraying gay and lesbian couples standing in the streets and holding hands were to be put by KPH on billboards in major Polish cities in 2003. However, before even occurring in the streets, this caused enormous public outcry, and a debate on homosexuality on unprecedented scale in Poland. Arguments, that these photos would ‘promote deviations’ caused outdoor advertisement companies to withdraw from contracts on displaying them. As a result the photos were displayed in art galleries. This however, was the point when according to some, discrimination became apparent and obvious (and publicised about) in Poland for the first time.
- **Jestem gejem, jestem lesbijką. Poznaj nas. (I’m gay, I’m a lesbian. Get to know us.)** - was a tour around Polish universities: with educational meetings for students, teachers, and LGBTIQ-people’s parents - and for many, a first opportunity to talk with openly gay people.



## How long have you been doing this work, and what are the ways in which it has changed over time?

Since 2013, we have changed our public campaigning strategy to one that is totally informed by a “values-based approach”. For instance, our campaign on parents of LGBTIQ people developed messaging that rested on the values of family bonds and respect and love towards their children. The campaign was rolled out in bus stops in 5 cities and gained huge media attention.

## What are some of the challenges of working in a deeply religious country?

For a long time, KPH carefully avoided engaging discussions with the Catholic Church. For many activists it is seen as a source of prejudice and a force so hostile that it is best not to engage with it at all.

However, some people within KPH felt that in the country where over 90 percent of people claim to be practicing Catholic, changing public attitudes would necessarily mean

addressing this population, and thus engaging campaigning directly on Catholic values. Hence, we decided to develop a campaign with the objective to address people of faith rather than engaging the leadership and hierarchy of the Catholic Church itself.

## What were you hoping to achieve with your campaign?

The campaign had two major objectives: (1) changing the mindset of the “**moveable middle**”<sup>4</sup> – in this case more open-minded people of faith; and (2) getting supporters from within faith-based spaces to speak out publicly.

## How did you begin to develop the campaign?

Early contacts were made with Faith and Rainbow, a group of practicing LGBTIQ Christians who work to reform the church from within. They very willingly embraced the idea of a common campaign with us. Tolerado, an LGBTIQ-organization from Gdansk, joined as the third partner.

We took a long time to find common ground - trust and understanding – amongst the three partner organizations. That process was

essential in order to develop an agreement about what was needed and what would work in terms of a message and key visuals for the campaign. Overall, it took **two years** to get to that point.

Then we contracted a professional PR agency to work with us. They came up with a very simple idea of a handshake between an LGBTIQ person and a Christian. That was the core image that the campaign coalition partners agreed on. We then took it to our identified Catholic media partners, whose endorsement for the campaign was considered strategically crucial. It was received really well by them, so we decided that we had enough agreement that we could move forward.

## What strategies did you use?

Initially, we had planned a single big cultural public event. But we spent some time talking with the **Irish Yes Equality campaign and the US Freedom to Marry campaign** and decided against it. We wanted to try and find a way to really connect with faith-based people and so focused on much more personal videos that were strongly related to positive values and human stories.



<sup>4</sup> *Moveable middle refers to those most open to persuasion. That is, not the ones who already agree with you; and not the ones where you have no chance of changing their minds.*

We created these stories internally by KPH over two and a half months. Even though we had a professional PR firm, we stayed in the driving seat for this work, developing the narratives and conducting the interviews and doing the editing. We drove the communications strategy with their support. Ultimately we produced 10 short videos, as well as 10 longer versions of them. We also made a short collage of all the videos.<sup>5</sup>

We also wanted something beyond a social media strategy. We wanted to also have an off-line public presence, so we decided on public billboards that many people would see. Hence, we designed our campaign around four pillars:

- **A billboard campaign in ten cities.** We knew we had to include Warsaw, but wanted it to be truly a national campaign beyond just the capital city or a few of the big cities.

- **A social media campaign.** We knew that a lot of younger people use social media, and so made a number of videos and made them widely available on a range of social media platforms. We built a website and set up a Facebook page.

- **A press strategy:** We wanted to have a space to explain the billboards and to get coverage

that would reach people of faith. For this reason, we included specifically some Catholic media partners, to ensure wide and positive coverage getting to the people that the campaign was for.

- **Direct public engagement:** We organized a number of public appearances, with a well-known advocate for LGBTIQ recognition and inclusion within the Catholic Church, Sister Jeannine Gramick.

## How did the strategy include mobilizing your existing communities, supporters and allies?

That was hard – beginning with internal resistance within KPH! That was overcome via dialogue. However, it also took a lot of engagement with other activists who hold more radical and anti-religious positions to explain KPH's strategy and the benefits of engaging in dialogue with the Catholic Church and its followers. This included inviting people to express their Christian attitude of loving thy neighbor over the obedience to the church's official discriminating position.

The benefits of this dialogue with LGBTIQ

activists before launching the campaign at large was a lesson learnt from the Irish Gay and Lesbian Equality Network (GLEN) and proved highly useful and valuable. As a result, almost all criticism from within more radical circles (which could have torpedoed the campaign from "within") was avoided.

The alliance with Faith and Rainbow had to be built gradually, as the two organizations are very different and had different interests and limits. For KPH, it was important that the campaign would not result in the opposition of "good" church-going LGBTIQ people versus "bad" non-believers. Faith and Rainbow had other limitations and at times it was not easy to find common ground.

## How did you make these kinds of decisions? Why did you choose to work in this way?

The campaign wasn't implemented according to a formal written plan. Rather, it was primarily carried out in constant and close collaboration between all campaign leads across partner organizations. A briefing paper was issued for campaign allies and other partners from the LGBTIQ platform, to make sure the campaign messaging stayed on track. In particular,



<sup>5</sup> You can find the videos (with English subtitles) here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Gah3f0n7ZQg&list=PLGSaZiMf2O5ls6OnA1zRkVWkKAzBr-VYh>



it was important to keep the campaign design within the borders agreed on with the allied catholic magazines, one of which was more “centrist” than leftist and needed the campaign to keep to a moderate messaging.

## Was there any formal research involved?

Not on this campaign. But we learnt a lot from our mistakes and so our next campaign did! We made much greater use of research, including working directly with our target audiences to brainstorm ideas of possible narratives, and to hold focus discussion groups to test them.

## When did you launch the campaign?

We spent a lot of time thinking about this question.<sup>6</sup> Our initial thought was to keep it connected somehow to the World Youth Day, which was to be held in Krakow in the presence of Pope Francis at the end of July (2016). However, it couldn't be too close either, as then there would be no attention to the campaign. We finally decided on early September, just after an important national anniversary and the start of the new school year.

## What did the launch consist of?

In an incredible coincidence, an advertiser contacted the campaign to offer quasi pro bono advertising billboards across the country. On the 6th of September 400 billboards went up, including 5 huge ones of 40 meters squared! That was much more ambitious than anything we had imagined possible – or what we could have funded.

The website was launched at the same time featuring 5 of the 10 long format videos. Simultaneously, the team published the short versions of the videos on their Facebook page and kept uploading new ones regularly to keep the momentum.

## What do you think have been your major impacts or successes (and on whom?)

The key successful factor of the campaign was the alliance between KPH and Tolerado, F+R and a third campaign lead, Pawel, an openly gay, charismatic and media-friendly person of faith with experience in numerous religious movements.

KPH had the campaigning skills and the organizational strengths but had little knowledge of the issue or contacts to the Catholic community. Meanwhile, F&R had built these contacts over several years but were not even a registered organization and did not have much technical capacity. Yet it was their contacts that secured 4 catholic media partners and one catholic organization to be public partners of the campaign, which was a huge element of its impact and success.

The official reaction from the Church was not supportive. The very conservative Archbishop of Krakow stated that the campaign was seeking to demolish the benefits of the World Youth Days, while the Bishop Conference declared that no Catholic should be part of this campaign.

The campaign clearly became an expression of the controversy between the traditional Catholic hierarchy and the leftist Catholic “opposition”, which most of our media partners belonged to.

## What kind of progress do you think you made in terms of campaign objectives?



<sup>6</sup> World Youth Day is an event organized globally by the Catholic church. It was initiated by Pope John Paul II in 1985.

In relation to getting people from within faith-based communities to speak out, there have been some clear signs of the effects of the campaign.

### For example,

- A high-level cleric adopted a very supportive standpoint, even going beyond the messaging that produced in the campaign videos. The fact that this cleric did not get sanctioned by the authorities, signals that the campaign has started shifting the fault lines on the issue.
- A Polish nun, well known by the public for her freedom of speech and her commitment towards homeless people, endorsed the campaign publicly.
- After a Polish preacher released a virulently anti-LGBTIQ video on his blog, one of the catholic partner magazines reacted spontaneously with a strong counter statement involving University experts to bust the preacher's lies.

**We see these as signs that the anti-LGBTIQ consensus is starting to crack and that the field of allies is expanding, including within Catholic circles.**



A lot of support came of course from other civil society groups. Unfortunately, it remained largely off the radar of the political pundits, and politicians remained disappointingly silent.

Recently, also as a direct consequence of the "handshake" campaign, the team was contacted by an advertising agency that was looking for civil society partners to launch a public campaign in favor of acceptance of minority groups. This initiative, branded "**Our Daily Bread**", was directly inspired by our approach.

### Did you do any kind of formal evaluation and/or assessment and learning process?

The campaign team hired a media monitoring institute to keep track. Their report mentions 3600 neutral items, 500 negative and 300 positive ones in the media. When checked against these items' reach on the general public, the figures are even more compelling, with positive items far outweighing negative ones and 80% of reach being neutral.

But at the end of the day the only really valid learning process is doing more and more activities, and learn from our own successes and failures.

### What has surprised you most about the work?

The campaign immediately got strong reactions. The first groups to attack were 2 TV-show hosts, both violently anti-LGBTIQ, who desperately tried to get someone from the campaign to get harassed on the show. Our first reaction was to avoid this at all costs. The campaign leads sent messages out to all organizations and individuals asking them to resist going to these shows.

After some time, both TV-shows offered to change their format and offered to have a one on one conversation in the studio (instead of the usual 4 persons invited). Eventually, the campaign team decided that it was worth to take the risk and for two activists to accept the invitation. Both activists are openly gay and Catholic in a very engaged way. While everybody was expecting the activists to be trashed, they both incredibly - and against all odds - managed to steal the show and come across as the genuine bearers of Christian values of peace, gentleness and generosity.

One of the activists in particular had given a lot of thought to the doctrine on homosexuality and actually managed to engage in the discussion on religious arguments. For example, on the much used "hate the sin not the sinner"

argument, he questioned the notion of the sin, and pushed the question to ask where this “sin” actually starts, and whether, for example, bringing a cup of tea to one’s sick partner would constitute a sin. He thereby managed to break the doctrinal approach and to get people to actually consider the reality of a loving relationship.

To their own surprise, their TV appearance did not generate the expected wave of hate messages.

**Rather, these appearances brought them an avalanche of supportive messages, including even prayers from nuns.**



We think the success of the TV show for us was that we chose activists who were both part of the target group, as well as being part of the campaign. They were people that the target group - the people who felt a conflict between their Catholic values and the Church’s virulent hateful positions - could relate to. In a beautiful way, they were the exact vision of the campaign: the handshake could now be understood as the handshake between the two parts of them, the reconciliation between their conflicted sides. The

handshake could now even be understood by the target group not as a handshake between them and the “foreign other”, but between their faith in the Catholic dogma and their acceptance of diversity.

### **What were some of the challenges? How did you address them?**

With this campaign angle not being “natural” for KPH, the organization found it at times difficult to make quick decisions. It was also difficult to get the concept across to others. For instance, while this was the 4th campaign that the PR agency and KPH had collaborated on, it was still a lengthy process. The agency at first was resistant to the idea of engaging with the Catholic community. It took a lot of dialog and trial and error to make it work. The first round of proposals proved unsuccessful. A second and a third round had to be conducted, taking half a year to complete. But it was worth it – as the agency came up with a brilliant visual and slogan. It became the heart of our campaign.

Through this process we learnt that we really need to stay in the driving seat when working with PR agencies. This means having more expertise internally on the functions of a PR

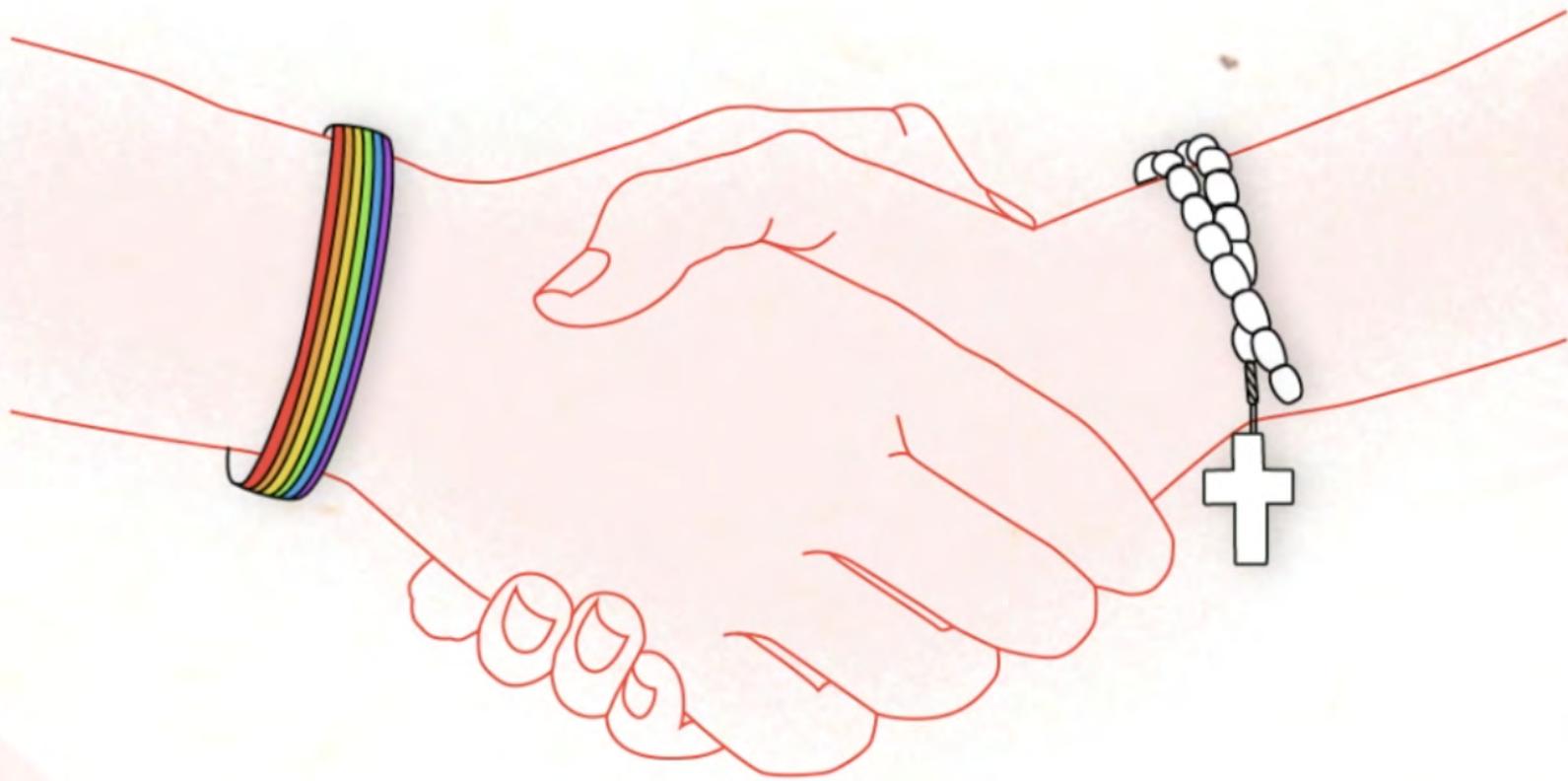
but mainly it means doing more and more campaigning so we develop our own confidence in what good communication is, not just rely on other people’s judgement.

### **Is this work part of an explicit “change journey” that you are planning to take your audience on?**

In this campaign we didn’t do that so much. But we did find that empowering people into doing their own outreach to their own constituencies and surroundings is key to involving them significantly.

But the question is interesting because we realized that we did not repeat the campaign message with the audience. We know that people need a lot of repetition before they really absorb the message. So we should really be reiterating the campaign message instead of leaving it there.

We do have another program where we really have taken this approach. In that program we work with parents of LGBTIQ children over an 8-months process that includes 6 workshops to get them from one step to the next. At the end we see parents really went through a



transformation process and start influencing their surroundings to start transforming too.

## What lessons have you learnt? If you were to start all over again, what might you do differently?

So many! Here are some of them:

**Identify your target well:** it's no use preaching to the choir and it's equally a waste of time to try to convince your worst opponents. Careful research should be applied to identifying the "moveable middle". Identify the values that will move the "middle": your own values are not what matters; people will change only when you appeal to theirs. Finding your common values is key to the success of a campaign. Ideally, your messengers should be part of both your group and the target group, as this powerfully embodies the fact that your campaign expresses these common values.

**Working with a professional PR/Advertising company** will be a huge bonus to craft effective messages. But your organization has to stay in the driving seat as the company will not necessarily be able to fully understand the underlying meanings, the hidden assumptions, the possible pitfalls, etc. In order to stay in the driving seat, the campaign team needs

the basic skills to be part of the conversation. Each organization should ensure that the team has sufficient time and resources to develop their skills. **Alliances are key to success.** And time and flexibility are key to forging alliances. Don't rush it, and be prepared to adjust your positions to accommodate others.

**Work within your movement before you address the outside world:** nothing is worse for a campaign than a conflicted and messy "community", where dissenting voices are heard from "within". Whatever time it takes, engage with the community to explain your strategy, win as many support as you can, and try to secure at least a "do no harm" position from the ones that will still not support you.

**"It takes a wise person to learn from their own mistakes. It takes a genius to learn from others"**



Be prepared to change your plans. Discuss all your ideas with people you trust and listen to experiences from other campaigns. If part of your campaign doesn't sound right, drop it.

## What kind of resources did you need to do this work? How did you get them?

We got adequate funding via OSF, over a two-year period which is what we needed

## What would you say to donors thinking of working in this field?

It's important to fund inputs: training, networking, connecting to others, mentoring, but also analysis of the landscape, of the social narratives, of the media; etc. It's also important to fund monitoring of the results but also how to take these results to the next level.

What are essential things that need to be in place for this to work (size and budget of organization; context; access to media etc)

**What was useful to us was:**

- a suitable budget
- prior experience in campaigning
- a very diversified team of in-house experts (political advocacy, communications, mobilisation, research, etc.)
- an ability to create alliance, which requires an approach that is open to discussions and that is not dogmatic. We have this because we include non-LGBTIQ people in the organisation, which enables us to create bridges with the target audience. So we find it easier to "step out of the bubble".

**What advice would you give people thinking about doing this work?**

**What do you think are the very first steps to take?**

**In addition to the lessons stated earlier, we could give the following advice:**

- When you start thinking about a campaign, tap into the creative potential of the target group: ask them for their own ideas. You might be surprised!
- However well you think you know the target group, they will always know themselves better. Organize focus group discussions and research their deep motivations, values and don't forget to research their discomfort zones.
- Letting people be creative and adapt part of the campaign message favors their engagement with the campaign and makes their participation more meaningful. Don't try to provide all the message. Share some of the power.

- Even if your campaign is mainly online, some form of action in the "real" world will give your campaign essential authenticity
- Getting professional help will take your campaign to a higher level but don't become excessively dependent on it. At the end of the day you will need to be able to rely on your own strength.

**How can people contact you to find out more?**

People can visit our website and send a message from there.

<https://kph.org.pl>

**Any last words of advice or encouragement to other activists?**

**If you have a vision GO FOR IT!**

Many of our most spectacular actions were believed impossible at the start. But life and social reality often bears more options than some minds are prepared to imagine.



# Case Study 2

## Finding the right target audience: Costa Rica

*This case study explores the work that is being done in Costa Rica, where important legal victories have been won in this socially conservative country. The most contentious issue around SO/GIE/SC equality has been around the recognition of same-sex marriage.*

**Gia Miranda**, Executive Director of the Sí Acepto campaign

## Costa Rica

Beginning in 2006, a number of attempts have been made to press forward equal marriage, both in the legislature and the courts. Ultimately however, the defining decision was made outside of a national context through a ruling made by the Inter-American Court of Human Rights. In January 2018. The court ruled that countries which are signatories to the American Convention on Human Rights<sup>1</sup> were required to allow same-sex couples to marry. As Inter-American Court of Human Rights rulings are fully binding on member countries and take precedence over local laws this effectively made same-sex marriage legal in Costa Rica. The ruling caused uproar in the country and is widely regarded as one of the major causes behind the divisive 2018 Costa Rican general election. A central issue in the election was whether Costa Rica should abide by the ruling or if it should defy the regional court. The two main candidates

- a conservative Evangelical and a liberal – took opposing points of view. The liberal, Carlos Alvarado Quesada (PAC) won the election, and committed the government to moving forward on same-sex marriage recognition.

While celebrating this victory, the LGBTIQ movement recognized that there was work to be done to win over popular opinion that remained firmly opposed to same-sex marriage. This case study explores how the movement in Costa Rica is responding to this challenge through a coalition campaign called “Si Acepto” (‘I accept’)



[https://youtu.be/E7gjkP7K\\_gY](https://youtu.be/E7gjkP7K_gY)

# Case Study 2

## Costa Rica

### Background

**National Context:** Costa Rica is a country in Central America, with a population of around 4 million people. Costa Rica came under Spanish rule in the 16th century, crushing the Indigenous population. Following the Spanish defeat in the Mexican War of Independence in 1821, the whole of Central America was declared independent, and in 1847 Costa Rica proclaimed itself a sovereign nation. Since then, Costa Rica has remained a remarkably stable democracy in a region marked by violence and conflict. Close to half the population live in and around the metro-pole of the capital city, San Jose. Christianity is the country's dominant religion, with close to sixty percent of the population identifying as Catholic. A quarter of the population identifies as Evangelical Protestants.

In 2020, Costa Rica was scored as “free” by **Freedom House, with the following results:**

<b>Electoral Process</b>	12/12
<b>Political Pluralism and Participation</b> Weak indigenous rights and participation	15/16
<b>Functioning of Government</b> Issues with corruption	11/12
<b>Freedom of Expression and Beliefs</b>	16/16
<b>Associational and Organizational Rights</b>	11/12
<b>Rule of Law</b> Courts slow, Police brutality complaints Lack of protection of rights of indigenous people	13/16
<b>Personal Autonomy and Individual Right</b> Gender discrimination in the economy. Violence against children and women a problem. Serious problems around people trafficking	13/16

**LGBTIQ formal rights and organizing:** Same-sex relations have been legal in Costa Rica since 1971, and since 2013 some domestic partnership benefits have also been recognized. A range of protections against

discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation were passed into law in 1988. Since 2013, transgender people have been able to change their legal name on documentation so that it matches their gender identity. Surgery is not a requirement, but it does require a judicial order.

**A socially conservative place, in a large part due to the strong influence of the Catholic church and a strong cultural tradition of ‘machismo’.**



Despite these formal rights and protections, Costa Rica remains a socially conservative place, in a large part due to the strong influence of the Catholic church and a strong cultural tradition of ‘machismo’. Police raids and government harassment have been commonplace.



<sup>7</sup> Freedom House is a US based a funded NGO that conducts research on democracy, political freedom and human rights.  
<https://freedomhouse.org/country/costa-rica/freedom-world/2019>

# Case Study 2

# Costa Rica

The right to organize had to be won through the courts in various cases in the early 1990s, as the Costa Rican government sought to withhold legal recognition of organizations seeking to advance LGBTIQ rights. Against the backdrop of hostile political parties and social attitudes, much of the change won in Costa Rica has been through the courts. Currently the most important factor currently shaping LGBTIQ activism in Costa Rica is the Inter-American Court of Human Rights ruling

that was previously discussed. In August 2018, the Costa Rican Supreme Court ruled against the country's same-sex marriage ban, and gave the Legislative Assembly 18 months to reform the law accordingly, otherwise the ban would be abolished automatically.

**Social Attitudes:** A 2013-2014 survey using samples from different religious backgrounds showed that support for LGBTIQ rights was stronger among non-religious Costa Ricans,

non-practicing Catholics and non-Christian minorities, whilst most practicing Catholics, Mainline Protestants and Neo-Pentecostals considered homosexuality as morally incorrect and "curable". It is these attitudes that are driving opposition to same-sex marriage.





*What happens when legal victories that guarantee the equal rights of LGBTIQ people are out of step with popular opinion? How do you bring broader society along, especially when wide-spread religious beliefs appear to be in contradiction to legal determinations?*

## Case Study

### Please tell us about the Movement for Civil Marriage Equality?

The Movement for Civil Marriage Equality (MCME) is composed of 36 collectives and social organizations that joined the initiative.

The coalition is led by two of us – from different organizations. We both have a background in marketing, so we are comfortable and have experience doing campaigns.

The two of us proposed the Si Acepto campaign at the beginning of the year [2018], after we participated in a workshop with Freedom to Marry . As we gathered the movement's members and proposed to conduct a campaign, most voted in favor, with the exception of one organization that had some reservations on the need to elevate the issue unnecessarily at the time.

We made a call to those interested in taking part in the process of the campaign more directly, and the two or three more frequent participants joined the "Campaign Central Committee" (CCC), the command group in charge of most decision-making

processes. The CCC has led fundraising efforts, outreach, and administrative support – the latter in partnership with the Diverse Families organization, which provides the legal expertise.

Before each big decision, we informed the rest of the movement through chat. We always maintained close communications and guaranteed the confidentiality of the process and the use of information.

### What kind of a context are you working in?

During the electoral process of 2018, the LGBTIQ community became the divisive issue of the day. Conservative candidate Fabricio Alvarado, who won the first round and lost the runoff, placed the rejection of homosexuality in general, and equal marriage in particular, at the center of his messaging. The wave of electoral violence it triggered was one of the reasons why the MCME was founded and the campaign launched. We wanted to eliminate some of the harsher reactions to the impending coming into force of equal marriage.

## Please briefly describe the work that you do to influence public ideas / attitudes

On August 8, 2018, the Constitutional branch of the Supreme Court of Justice effectively approved same-sex couples from gaining access to civil marriage and non-marital unions. However, it will only take full effect in May 26, 2020

We see this as a great victory in terms of the legal framework, but in Costa Rica, legalizing something does not mean it is fully accepted by the people. This is why we launched the campaign: The historical move to recognize equal marriage in Costa Rica required us to reach out to people to ensure most people in society sees same sex couples as equals.

As part of this process, we created a cooperative model of social outreach, which brings together civil society, private sector, government, and other international organizations with the objective of the campaign.

We believe a country that is inclusive and respectful of difference benefits all sectors of society and the economy, and that union is the key to success.

**“Under the table we saw an immense violence that got worse over the electoral period around the question of same-sex marriage”**



Costa Rica is often seen as a country that is inclusive and accepting. But under the table we saw an immense violence that got worse over the electoral period around the question of same-sex marriage. So, we looked to other places that had faced similar challenges. That led us to Freedom to Marry in the US.

We had to adapt the strategies we saw in other places and countries to the Costa Rican context, a process which we conducted with support and advisory of Freedom to Marry. We took some best practices in the development of public education campaigns and adapted these to what worked in our society. Freedom To Marry is a team that truly supports you and works with the heart, so we never felt alone.

**Can you more specifically tell us the goal of the work: who was it aimed at? What changes did you want to achieve?**

Our goal was to diminish the effect of possible barriers and resistances to the arrival of civil equal marriage in Costa Rica. We wanted to do this through the development of a narrative based on human histories and common values, that more easily connect to all people's hearts.

**Did you conduct any formal research of your target group? What are the most interesting elements from this research?**

“No teníamos ni un cinco”! (We didn't have a penny) and had to begin with something, so our initial research consisted simply of a social media poll that we shared as extensively as possible.

Shortly after, we requested support from Garnier BBDO, one of the biggest marketing and publicity agencies in the country. They agreed to work with us pro bono and have been our partners since December 2018.

With their help, we conducted in depth research and focus groups. Through these discussions we were able to understand that the campaign had to go beyond the LGBTIQ community and its allies. But equally

we understood that we would never be able to reach or shift the views of the anti-rights groups “even if Jesus came down himself and told them to put their finger on his side to stop doubting” they wouldn’t shift! That is what led us to the ‘movable middle’. So not the people already on our side; and not people who would never change; but people who were open to listening.

## What were the essential frames and messages that you used?

### Why did you choose these?

We determined that some of the key common values for Costa Ricans are respect, justice and family. Using this frame we focused on how to show everyone could support the basic idea of equal respect and dignity – and that if they truly believed that then they could not exclude gay and lesbian members of their family or their community. And that if they felt that way, then why would they not let them get married?

For example, in one story a father demonstrated this by showing how he learned to respect his lesbian daughter, her life project and relationship, even despite his traditional upbringing, which included the mandate to men not to be sensible or be seen as weak.

“I was concerned about what people that knew me would say, but what was truly drowning me was machismo”, he says in his testimony, “Understanding is good because you get rid of myths and prejudices. And I feel more of a man for having recognized the mistake I was falling in. Now my daughter can come home, can get married and make her own family, just like my wife and I”

There are some variations on the narrative pointing to how traditionally masculine environments can also favor acceptance and solidarity. For instance, we showed the story of a rugby player who comes out of the closet, to gradually gain the support of his initially reluctant fellow players. He did this by showing that the values he enacted were ones everyone shared – discipline, respect, humility, passion and solidarity. Those values did not go away when he came out as gay.

The narrative also emphasized the role of family and mutual support to effectively welcome their diverse members. The case of one family, for example, points to the reluctance of the father – a former evangelical pastor – in accepting his son, which he eventually did following several internal processes and with close help from the other siblings. Another family, meanwhile, also shares their story of opening their arms to a gay son, emphasizing

that those key moments in which many families turn their backs on their LGBTIQ kids “are when they most need the support”.

## How did you decide on the campaign tactic?

The ‘movable middle’ is the key to an effort of this sort. We didn’t focus on people that were already on our side, or our complete detractors. We were seeking to talk to those that perhaps feel the issue doesn’t affect them.

**In general, we found that many people were simply worried about what other people might say if they supported same-sex marriage**



In general, we found that many people were simply worried about what other people might say if they supported same-sex marriage. They didn’t actively oppose same-sex marriage, but they were never going to feel like they could – or should – speak up in favor.



¿Por qué no? Si ellos son igual que nosotros.



[https://youtu.be/E7gjkP7K\\_gY](https://youtu.be/E7gjkP7K_gY)

## Can you tell us a little about your strategy?

The first part of the strategy was clearly defining the do's and don'ts amongst ourselves. We agreed that the campaign was not necessarily going to be marked by activism strategies. We were not going to use rainbow flags. And for strategic reasons, we did not want to directly confront the issue of civil marriage. We wouldn't go to other, equally important LGBTIQ issues such as trans rights, diverse families, adoption, among others, because people understand one topic at a time more easily.

### Just using the word "civil" was transformative



Another key decision was to emphasize the word "civil" to differentiate civil marriage – which is our only focus – from religious marriage, which most people have as their top of mind in Costa Rica. An estimate we used found that there was a 20 percent increase in people's acceptance towards allowing gay couples to marry when we specifically cleared up that we meant marriage officiated by a lawyer and not by a priest. Just using the word "civil" was transformative.

We also decided that the campaign would center on real stories and real people, to incentivize empathy. So we used testimonies and life journeys, which share the process of people coming to terms with the issue, their learning process and how they changed perspectives.

Through focus groups, using a nationally representative sample of people – men and women, over 18 years of age- we determined that some of the key common values for Costa Ricans are respect, justice and family. These are equally important to Catholics and Evangelicals, so we tried to build our narratives to show how the acceptance of civil equal marriage promotes these values most people already adhere to.

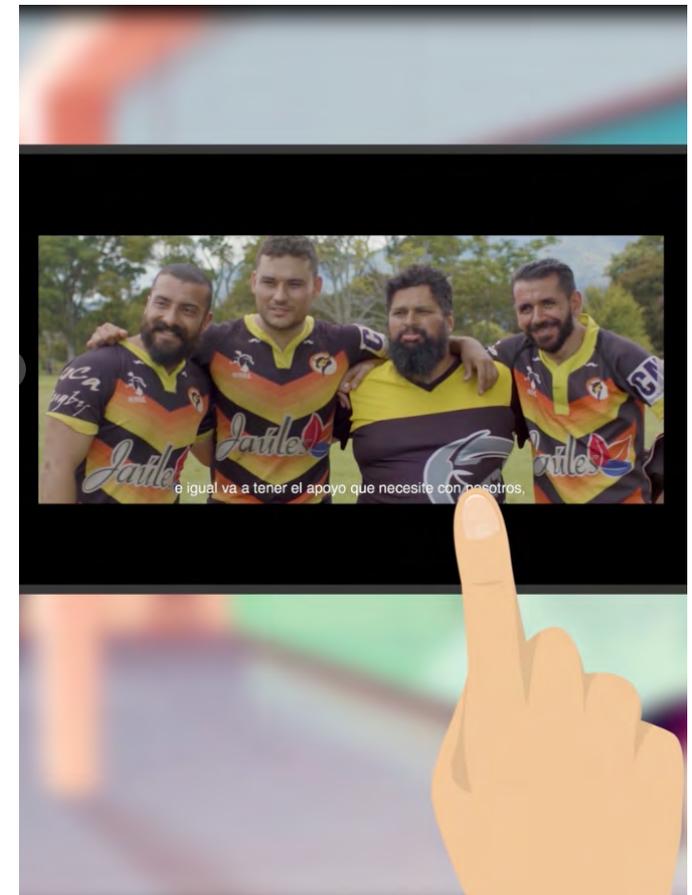
The campaign was launched through national TV, as its main distribution channel, ensuring we had a space in the main channels and in primetime segments.

We also allocated some funds to radio and billboards; press came on its own.

We also discovered that Whatsapp is a very effective tool to generate conversation about the issues. We prepared materials anticipating our various media releases, prompting allies to share videos and other materials; and this develops into a range of one-on-one conver-

sations or groups conversations discussing matters.

With support from the government we got an important donation in airtime with the official tv channel. In addition, the for-profit channels, while not giving anything for free gave us between a third and double the amount of airtime for the same price.



## What were the main expectations in terms of outcomes?

We dreamed big. We didn't want to stay with a digital campaign only. We thought about television, radio, digital, and other forms of communication. We sat down with the agency to design the concept, and then gradually approached production companies one on one, to get some support from them. We also had many volunteers supporting the process with their talents and their time.

Besides the TV donations, billboard companies donated four spaces in key traffic areas – with access to provinces outside of the capital city.

In paid advertising, we secured around 1.5 million people (in a country with 5 million population).

## What do you think have been your major impacts or successes?

We think part of our success was how we were able to saturate a national market with a truly minimal budget. We realized how successful we had been when we learnt that a national beer company did not reach the same amount of engagement in the key

moments in which the campaign was active, despite their more considerable investments.

In terms of PR, we estimated the value of what we secured in terms of press coverage and other leads we pursued in around half a million dollars we didn't pay.

## What has surprised you most about the work?

We expected a very arid, confrontational, perhaps even violent reaction, which is what we saw before the election ended. But in response to the campaign we saw a rather positive reaction, with human touches, in the sense of "I'm understanding something I didn't before".

Over the Christmas season, for example, we heard of several families and groups of friends coming together after several years of being apart. We see that as a way to prevent homophobia and discrimination from happening in several spaces, after some people have taken a clearer stance and spoken out. That voice of love and support went "viral".

This has brought back some sanity to society. Even within LGBTIQ movements, we have seen several people that were fighting for years speak to each other again. We're talking about people that suffered enormous violence and vulnerability, which for these reasons reacted in a similarly violent way, preventing their organizations from collaborating and organizing. But speaking from the heart, as this campaign and some of the preparations entailed, led to several approaches that led to a hug, to forgiveness, to healing.



## What were some of the challenges/risks (counter demonstrations, police harassment, media indifference, etc.)? How did you address them?

We have been anything but confrontational! With media companies that denied our entry, we just opted to allocate more funds to their competitors, to show them how they were losing out.

We did see several cringey reactions on social media, anything from how this meant Sodom and Gomorrah to how the end of times was nearing. But the people themselves have learned through the campaign, and now they participate actively in neutering these negative arguments.

We don't have the tools to measure the reactions to a TV ad, but there we can also point to good elements in the public conversation. We are convinced that what we are able to measure is minimal compared to the impact we are having at the social level.

## What kind of resources did you need to do this work? How did you get them?

You need to have a clear idea of how much you need, to avoid looking for support without an exact picture of the resources the campaign requires. Define a base and quickly move to find supporters.

Initially, we made a list of possible companies that could help us. We sought for contacts their CEOs, human resources manager, CSR focal points, anything- to establish an appointment to introduce ourselves and gain their support.

## What were the challenges related to funding and how did you overcome them?

We had a short time to fundraise, because we started in February 2019 and wanted to launch in July, so we had to make a quick shortlist based on which companies had inclusion programs and that would be more interested in participating. We made around 60 formal introduction letters, with support from the Presidential Commissioner for LGBTIQ Issues, and convened a gathering of



those who would confirm. Only 4 companies from this initial group eventually donated, not a lot as you can see, but you start with something and try to find different strategies. It's important not to use a single formula.

**What advice would you give people thinking about doing this work? What do you think are the very first steps to take?**

You need to have an objective very clearly defined. If you start to see success, it's important not to let the ego interfere, to understand you're doing a public service to the community, and that you need to give all you possibly can to the cause.

Key to the success is to understand that all families need to be seen as hugging their diverse members.

**How can people contact you to find out more?**

<https://siaceptocr.com/>

**Any last words of advice or encouragement to other activists?**



**"GO FOR IT. DON'T STAY FOCUSED ON WHEN THINGS DON'T COME OUT PERFECTLY".**

# Case Study 3

**Taya Gerasimova**, communication manager of Insight NGO, update.com.ua founder

## Ukraine

## The value of an intersectional approach

*This case study explores how SO/GIE/SC campaigning and advocacy can be considerably strengthened by adopting an intersectional approach.*



One way of understanding an intersectional approach is think about how we all have a variety of social identities – sex, race, sexual orientation, gender identify and expression. These are just some examples. These identities impact how we are viewed, understood, and treated. Intersectionality simply means examining how different identities intersect for a single person. For example, black women are both black and women, but because they are black women, they endure specific forms of discrimination that black men, or white women, might not. Similarly, SO/GIE/SC is an important personal identity, that also intersects with race, gender, class, religion and nationality.

An intersectional approach to organizing and advocacy is a shift away from a single-issue (for example, homophobia, racism, sexism) or a single identity (for example being a woman, a black person

or a gay person) approach to one that deliberately seeks to integrate different social identities and their forms of discrimination. Most SO/GIE/SC advocacy and campaigning around the world work takes a single issue / identity approach. Shifting to an intersectional approach could be done in a number of ways. For instance, a particular campaign could focus the general issue of discrimination, including homophobia as well as sexism, racism and so on. Or, alliances could be built with other single-issue groups to come together to tackle an issue that they all are facing – such as violence or a particular piece of legislation.

This case study explores the way in which a lesbian-feminist group in the Ukraine developed an intersectional approach to explore if they this approach could give their work greater reach and impact.

<https://youtu.be/NZsyLOCfvGg>

## Background

**National Context:** Ukraine is a country in Eastern Europe, that borders a number of countries, most notably Russia. It is the second largest country in Europe and has a population of around 42 million people. From the end of WWII, until the dissolution of the Soviet Union, present-day Ukraine was part of the Soviet federation. The first independent government of Ukraine, established in 1991 following the break with the USSR, was overthrown by a popular revolution in 2014. The new President, Petro Poroshenko, stood on a pro-European Union platform that was solidified by various treaties with the EU over the next two years which have made Ukraine

a “priority partner” of the EU, with a view to membership in the longer term. Prompted by the civil uprising, Russia annexed the Crimean Peninsular, leading to an ongoing territorial dispute that has had profound military, political and economic consequences for both countries, but particularly Ukraine. Ukraine is a developing country, hugely reliant on agriculture. Along with Moldova, Ukraine is the poorest country in Europe. It suffers from a very high poverty rate, and high levels of corruption. In 2020, Ukraine was scored as “partially free” by Freedom House <sup>11</sup>, with the following results:

<b>Electoral Process</b> Elections could not take place in annexed Crimean Peninsular	<b>9/12</b>
<b>Political Pluralism and Participation</b> Russia plays a significant role in Ukraine affairs through the Crimean Peninsular	<b>12/16</b>
<b>Functioning of Government</b> Long standing problem of corruption	<b>6/12</b>
<b>Freedom of Expression and Beliefs</b> Government does not systematically control and censor the media, but many political parties have an outside role in running and owning media companies (including TV)	<b>11/16</b>
<b>Associational and Organizational Rights</b> Advance notice to authorities must be given for large peaceful assemblies. A key problem is vigilante mobs opposed to views of rallies and protests attacking participants and/or the police attempting to protect legal gatherings	<b>7/12</b>
<b>Rule of Law</b> Deep political involvement and pressured on courts. Discrimination and prejudice against Roma population and SO/GIE/SC	<b>7/16</b>
<b>Personal Autonomy and Individual Right</b> Some largely lawless areas in disputed and separatist controlled territories. Trafficking and prostitution a large scale problem.	<b>10/16</b>



<sup>11</sup> Freedom House is a US based a funded NGO that conducts research on democracy, political freedom and human rights. <https://freedomhouse.org/country/ukraine/freedom-world/2020>

# Case Study 3

## Ukraine

### SO/GIE/SC formal rights and organizing:

There are no legal provisions that make same-sex sexual activity between consenting adults any more or less equal to heterosexual sex, but prevailing social attitudes are widely intolerant of LGBTIQ people. Since 2015, discrimination on the basis of SO/GIE/SC in employment has been outlawed, but same-sex couple households are not eligible for any of the same legal protections available to opposite-sex couples.

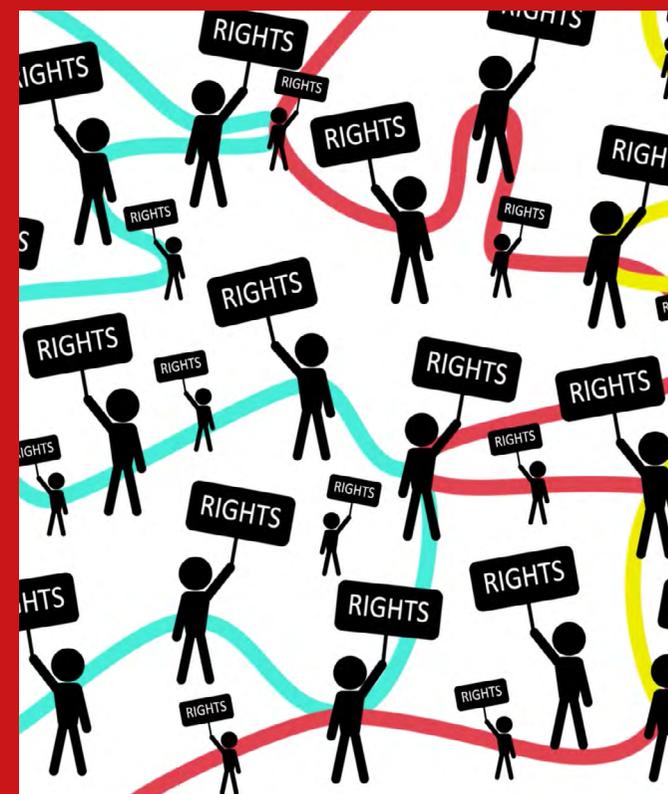
There are a number of organizations working to advance the rights and wellbeing for the LGBTIQ community which has given greater visibility to demands for equality with some success. However, several attempts in a number of cities to hold Pride Marchers have been marred by violent attacks by nationalist groups and cancellation by authorities. In 2016, Ukrainian officials simplified the transition process for transgender people

**Many commentators believe that Ukraine's desire to join the European Union has strongly impacted its approach to LGBTIQ rights, particularly in terms of allowing for organizing and protesting.**



**Social Attitudes:** Most Ukrainians affiliate with the Eastern Orthodox Church, which has a significant influence on the perception of society towards members of the LGBTIQ community. The Orthodox Church has opposed LGBTIQ events and groups, often in the name of "combatting immorality", and has even encouraged violent attacks. As such, many LGBTIQ people in Ukraine report feeling the need to lie about their true sexual orientation or gender identity in order to avoid being a target of discrimination or violent harassment. Several politicians have proposed so-called "anti-propaganda" laws to prevent LGBTIQ advocacy.

A 2017 poll found that 56% of Ukrainians believed that gay and bisexual individuals should enjoy equal rights, marking a significant improvement in public opinion, from a similar poll in 2010 when just over a quarter of participants responded positively then.



*What opportunities and challenges does an intersectional approach offer to SO/GIE/SC campaigning?*



## Case Study

**Lead Organization:** Insight is a Ukrainian LGBTIQ organization, that particularly focuses on lesbians, and bisexual women, transgender, queer and intersex people. Insight is one of the few organizations in Ukraine working with transgender people.

### Can you tell us about your Words Hurt campaign? What was the general idea behind it?

Well, it really came about because we weren't facing a particular challenge, like a law or a scandal, so we had the necessary space to develop a "proactive" campaign, where we could be in control of the message. In thinking about how to do that, we were struck by how LGBTIQ issues generally only get limited attention, even amongst progressives. People seemed to feel like 'that's not me', so it doesn't concern me. They switch off. So we decided to see what would happen if we expanded our message to include other issues – such as racism and the abuse of women.

We had a lot of discussion. We recognized that there would be challenges to have

such a "big tent" approach, it might dilute the focus. But we also realized that it would help in getting the attention of progressives who are convinced that racism and violence against women is wrong, but whose attitudes towards LGBTIQ people are less clear, more complicated.

What we hoped to do was to do a campaign that would activate the "association bias" by pairing our concerns for LGBTIQ people with other concerns. We also realized that if we wanted to tackle the root causes of stigma and discrimination, an intersectional approach was key to doing this.

### How did you conceptualize it?

A friend of mine is co-owner of an advertisement agency and offered to develop something pro-bono. This seemed all the more of a good idea as this person is a young straight progressive person, exactly the kind of target we wanted to reach.

### How did the campaign unfold?

The campaign had two phases: first we issued some posters with the kind of hate

speech that we hear every day on women, LGBTIQ people and ethnic minorities.

The second phase was the issuing of the “insect” posters, see below, that were aimed at shocking people so much that they would go online and find out what the campaign was about. The ‘insects’ were a representation of the ugliness of hate speech.

The most unusual part of the dissemination strategy is that we chose to also go off-line and use billboards. While this cost quite a bit, we felt it would be essential in order to raise public awareness beyond our “obvious” young target.

### **The main striking feature of this campaign is the violence of the visuals. How was this perceived?**

Of course, some people didn’t like it! But we trusted the professional team which developed the campaign. And by and large we achieved our aim, which was to catch people’s attention. One good indicator for that is that far-right groups diverted our posters to create anti-LGBTIQ hate speech. The kind of recognition we could do without, really...Did you do any message testing before-hand?

Yes, some. The person we were working at the advertising agency tested the visuals and the messages on friends and colleagues. It was a pretty good sample to get feedback from, as they were mostly young and most progressive. There wasn’t a deeper testing process, like focus group discussions, for lack of budget, but even the little that we did was definitely better than nothing.

### **Did you have a specific target group in mind?**

Yes, definitely. Our target group were essentially young people.

### **What strategies did you use to reach young people specifically?**

We relied a lot on Update, a youth-focused website that speaks of the concerns of young people, like sexuality, drugs, confrontation with the police, etc. in their language. The site has up to 100,000 visitors per month, so we were really reaching out widely to Ukrainian youth.

We also disseminated the visuals via our networks of journalists and creative people in advertising. With these folks, we were confi-



dent that it would go viral quickly, which it did. We also of course received a lot of interest and support from other groups working on women's rights or for ethnic minorities.

## Do you think the campaign was successful?

The campaign was seen by 20,000 users of the website and increased our Facebook subscribers by 1,500. About 10,000 people read one of the articles of the campaign "9 jokes that are not fun" on [update.com.ua](http://update.com.ua)

## What lessons did you learn from this campaign that you would like to share with other campaigners?

It's good to have the help of professionals who are not from the community. This way there is at least some form of testing of both visuals and texts with the target group. Some testing is better than no testing. In our case the developer's social environment was a useful testing ground.

**Shocking and provoking are good to attract attention. But they also have their limitations.**



Shocking and provoking are good to attract attention. But they also have their limitations. In our case, we couldn't get the posters to be displayed in the metro because they were deemed too extreme. There might also have been people who didn't share them on social media for this reason. But by and large the attention the campaign got far exceeded the resistance. Maybe in future we'll try a somewhat more neutral approach. Let's see.

## Why would you recommend using an intersectional approach when planning a SO/GIE/SC campaign?

As I said before, I really believe an intersectional approach is key to unwrapping the root causes of stigma. While it may seem like it is "diluting" the attention, it actually serves more to increase the attention to LGBTIQ concerns from people who we would probably not reach if we had an "LGBTIQ-only" approach.

## Can you give us other examples of how you work with this approach?

Intersectionality has always been a part of how we work at **Insight**. One of the first projects that we started was the Festival of Equality. We've been doing that Festival for five or six years now. The idea of the Festival was to gather a lot of discriminated groups under one umbrella of this festival. We didn't only want to **talk** about our issues, we wanted to use the arts to **show** it.

## What happens at the Festival?

Well, we do have discussions and lectures – but we wanted more art and less speaking. So we have a lot of theater and plays. We show various movies. We have several art exhibitions. Mostly during the day we have lectures and so on, followed by theatre, movies, music.

What message are you trying to get across? From the start, we saw that there was sometimes a problem in our human rights community: not everybody understands intersectionality. For example, some organizations working on HIV, or maybe someone who is positive – doesn't understand or doesn't like LGBTIQ. Some LGBTIQ people have not really thought about ethnic minorities. So we noted that there were such things happening in our community.

So for us, the key message in organizing and presenting the Festival is that when we work against discrimination, you can't only be thinking about one group. For us, we can't only be thinking about LGBTIQ. We are trying to get across the message that human rights apply to all of us. When you are a member of one group that is discriminated against, you need to be thinking also about the ways we can violate other people's rights, with our own prejudice. We are trying to get that message across – both to our own community and more widely – a really deep understanding of human rights.

### **What other kinds of groups participate in the Festival?**

We connect with quite a lot of human rights organizations. For example, people with disabilities, parents of LGBTIQ, and people who work with immigrants and so on.

### **Do you think that this approach has strengthened the Festival?**

Oh, yes, definitely. We know that some of the artists that come might not perform for something that is specifically LGBTIQ, but they come because it is also supported by other organizations involved in the festival.

And it works the same way for fans who are interested in specific performers, or someone who is interested in a specific lecture. Someone who is interested in issues of disability for example, comes and sees a performance and they also hear about other issues from other vulnerable groups. And they accept this information much more... They accept this information because they begin to see the connections.

### **Have you seen any kind of reaction from within the LGBTIQ community pressing back against the 'big tent' approach, saying, "Well, now we talk about everything but we're losing the focus on ourselves?"**

I have heard some more theoretically based people who fight everything saying that kind of thing. But not a lot. Mostly people really appreciate how it is working. But you know, it's just one festival that happens only once a year. Besides this festival, we have a lot of events for our community, just our community.

### **Has the Festival influenced how you work in other ways?**

The Festival is a great space to meet people – and you get to know them personally. You meet partners. And you see their support for you. And then you realize you can also be a support to them. And that doesn't end when the festival is over. So day to day, we can connect to each other, and that makes it easier for all of us to provide ongoing support for all of our individual campaigns throughout the year. For example, it might be small things like signing a petition and sharing information to bigger things like supporting protests and marches. We know we can always count on one another.

### **Do other groups also use an intersectional approach?**

Yeah, for sure. A good example is the March 8 Women's March that we've been attending now for several years. When the International Women's Day march began here, about ten years ago, the march was like 200 people and everybody knows everybody. And then we started to communicate more understandably with a wider audience. And we talked to all our partners and we tried to ask them to speak to their audiences. And for this year we have also women on bikes, eco feminists, and so on. So this year, after doing that outreach for a number of years, we had about 3,000 people on the women's march.

## What are some of the challenges of using an intersectional approach?

I think it's rather hard work when you initiate an intersectional event. When it's your initiative and you're one of the organizers, it always will be hard to hear everybody and to connect everybody. But I think if you manage this, you can have a lot of gains and a lot of benefits from these partnerships.

**We have learned over time that some people are just really closed about our issues, and we won't be able to work with them**



I really believe that it's a good area to communicate with people who are sometimes just a little bit homophobic – you can change them by working with them. But in other case, when they are unwilling to move, we don't want to waste our time.

We have learned over time that some people are just really closed about our issues, and we won't be able to work with them. It is also not just one-sided: we also have to recognize that there are some problems within our own communities, with racism for example, and we have to find a way to keep on working with that as well.

## If people are interested in learning more about your work, how can they contact you?

The best way is through our website:

<https://www.insight-ukraine.org/en>



**ТАК  
ВИГЛЯДАЄ  
СЕКСИЗМ**

[stop-hate.in.ua](https://stop-hate.in.ua)



# Case Study 4

Sanjay Sharma, Program Director of Blue Diamond Society and Board Member of Global Interfaith Network

Nepal

## Integrating into the cultural fabric of a society

*This case study describes how the leading SO/GIE/SC organization in Nepal has actively engaged with deeply traditional cultural norms and practices and in order to strengthen and reinforce political, legal and policy changes won around third gender recognition. Third gender is often used as an umbrella term in Nepal to refer to sexual and gender minorities broadly, including many other terms specific to Nepali culture and the many languages spoken in the country. More specifically, it is used to describe biological males who have “feminine” gender identity or expression and biological females who have “masculine” gender identity or expression. One of the major victories won by activists, was the ruling that the term “other” (anya) be used to represent this category on official documents.*



<https://youtu.be/1F082ZhVblc>

*This case study does not include a detailed examination of how these various victories were won. Rather, it shows the value of taking up the challenge to really get to grips with unique traditions and cultures, particularly in less urbanized areas, and to find ways to light up pathways and connections to current gender and sexuality identities and expressions that resonate authentically within a specific context. The case study shows how this cultural engagement work began rather spontaneously but has been steadily expanded and strengthened – despite funding and other challenges.*

## Background

**National Context:** Nepal is a landlocked country in South Asia, located mainly in the Himalaya mountains. It has a population of just over 26 million people. Nepal shares borders with China in the north and India in the South.

As a country, Nepal was never colonized, and until very recently was the world's oldest Hindu monarchy. It only became a republic in 2008, following a decades-long and brutal civil war that was largely spear-headed by the Nepalese Communist Party.

The current constitution of Nepal was adopted in 2015, as early attempts to adopt a new

constitution fell apart over competing nationalist visions. The constitution was adopted by an elected constitutional assembly, that affirmed Nepal as a secular federal parliamentary republic. The first elections held under this constitution saw the Nepal Communist Party emerge as the ruling party with a strong majority at the federal level, and in six of the seven provinces.

In 2020, Nepal was scored as “partly free” by Freedom House <sup>13</sup>, with the following results:

<b>Electoral Process</b> This concerned problems with the first attempt to develop a new constitution that was later ratified	<b>10/12</b>
<b>Political Pluralism and Participation</b> Clashes between the Maoist Communist Party and nationalist parties	<b>10/16</b>
<b>Functioning of Government</b> Issues with endemic corruption	<b>5/12</b>
<b>Freedom of Expression and Beliefs</b> Harassment of journalists and political control over media	<b>10/16</b>
<b>Associational and Organizational Rights</b> NGOs have a lot of space to organize, but control over issues related to Tibet	<b>7/12</b>
<b>Rule of Law</b> Endemic corruption and demeaning prison conditions Lack of accountability and punishment for long standing human rights abuses and war crimes	<b>6/16</b>
<b>Personal Autonomy and Individual Right</b> Hard to start independent businesses because of corruption Women rarely receive the same educational and employment opportunities as men. High levels of gender-based violence. Major problems with bonded labor, especially children	<b>8/16</b>



<sup>13</sup> Freedom House is a US based a funded NGO that conducts research on democracy, political freedom and human rights. <https://freedomhouse.org/country/nepal/freedom-world/2020>

09037149

3

राहदानी बाहकलाई रोकलोक नगरी सरासर जान दिन तथा परिआएको  
बेनामा आवश्यक मद्दत र सरक्षण प्रदान गरिदिन सरोकारवालाहरूसँग  
नेपाल सरकार परराष्ट्र मन्त्रालय अनुरोध गर्दछ ।



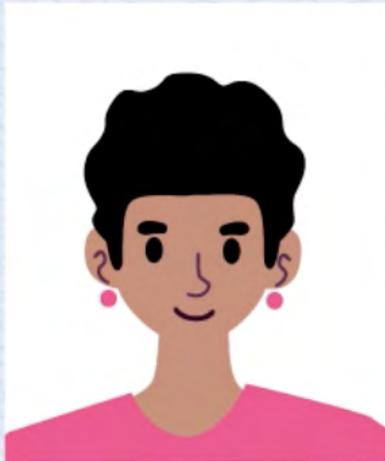
The Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Government of Nepal, requests and  
requires whom it may concern to allow the holder to pass freely,  
without let or hindrance and to afford him or her every assistance and  
protection, which he or she may stand in need of.

Signature of the Issuing Officer

Passport Officer



# INTERNATIONAL PASSPORT



Surname

**Nepali**

Given Names

**Ram**

Date of birth

**20 JUN 1991**

Date of issue

**30 JUL 2015**

Date of expiry

**29 JUL 2025**

Passport No

**09037149**

Personal No

Sex

**O**

Place of Birth

**Ramechhap**

Holder's signature



<https://youtu.be/1F082ZhVblc>

# Case Study 3

## Nepal

### LGBTIQ formal rights and organizing:

One of the most defining elements of LGBTIQ formal organizing in Nepal is its engagement with electoral politics. The largest LGBTIQ organization in the country is the Blue Diamond Society (BDS) which was founded in 2001 by Sunil Pant. Under his leadership, LGBTIQ activists were very engaged at a local level working with the Nepalese Communist Party. In this way LGBTIQ activists were widely engaged in contributing to the struggle for Nepal to be a fully democratic state. Pant points to this direct and visible involvement as laying the foundations for a range of legal and political victories when the Communist Party came to power following the fall of the Nepalese monarchy as the primary governing institution.

For instance, in 2008 Pant became Asia's first openly gay federal-level elected official.

Flowing from this victory, literally hundreds of

LGBTIQ people, many associated with rights groups, have stood for elections and applied for government posts in recent years, claiming mainstream political space.

Similarly, in anticipation of a new constitution Nepal underwent a thorough review of its laws and policies. Sunil and the BDS were very instrumental in ensuring that LGBTIQ issues were included. One of the first rulings from the Supreme Court of Nepal, following the end of the civil war, was order the government to

- legally recognize a 'third gender' category,
- audit all laws to identify those that discriminated against LGBTIQ people, and
- initiate a study to explore the legal recognition of same-sex relationships.

### This resulted in third gender options being included



The new government moved quickly to legally recognize a third gender category. This resulted in third gender options being included in voter rolls, immigration forms, on the federal census and on Nepalese passports. Progress around same-sex relationship recognition and protection, however, happened more slowly: over 100 laws were identified that needed to change to eliminate discrimination in a complex, ancient and deeply patriarchal legal system. A huge step forward was taken in 2015 when Nepal became the world's 10th country to specifically name LGBTIQ people as a protected category in its new constitution, but since then things have slowed down quite a lot. Many people point to conservative social attitudes underlying this trend.



<sup>14</sup> Drawn extensively from Kyle Knight <https://www.hrw.org/news/2017/08/11/how-did-nepal-become-global-lgbt-rights-beacon#>





*How do you popularize political and legal victories, that advance the rights and well-being of LGBTIQ people on paper, but are out of step with wide social attitudes? In particular, how do you reach more conservative rural areas?*

## Case Study

**Please tell us about your organization - how long have you been around, what kind of work do you do?**

**The Blue Diamond Society (BDS)** is an LGBTIQ rights organization in Nepal. It was established in 2001 to advocate for change in the existing laws against homosexuality and to advocate for the rights of Nepal's marginalized gay, transgender and other sexual minority communities.

The BDS also aims to educate Nepalese society on proper sexual health, to advocate with local governments for queer minorities, to encourage the artful expression of LGBTIQ youth, and to document violence against Nepalese queers.

We are also a service provider. We provide care, counselling, and services to people living with HIV/AIDS.

The BDS has also recorded various abuses against the community ranging from physical and verbal abuse and discrimination inflicted in workplaces and healthcare facilities.

In 2018, the Blue Diamond Society had over 700 staff and forty offices throughout Nepal.

**What kind of context do you work in?**

Nepal is a very traditional and religious society. LGBTIQ are among the most marginalized, least visible, discriminated, and subjugated groups in Nepal. They continually face social exclusion, severe discrimination, and violence in their private as well as public sphere. Hetero-normative gender roles are deeply-rooted in social values leaving very few LGBTIQ people with acceptance from their family. The discriminatory culture is also visible in institutions such as medical facilities, educational institute, workplace, and government offices. The bias-motivated violence, oppression, and harassment from general public as well as specific institutions have left Men who have Sex with Men (MSM), Transgender people, and people living with HIV (PLHIV) even more marginalized and subjugated, and prevented many LGBTIQ people to come out of the closet. Thus, extreme marginalization deepens the need for informed intervention by non-governmental organizations (NGOs).

## Please tell us about the work you are doing to shift public ideas about the LGBTIQ population?

In Nepal, we take great pride in our many religious festivals. They are widely celebrated across the country particularly in rural areas – with the biggest festivals (in terms of participation) in the urban areas. Since 2004, BDS has been participating in two important festivals:

First, we have been celebrating Gaijatra Pride March to create awareness and advocate for the rights and wellbeing of sexual and gender minority communities of Nepal; and second we also organize celebrations of the Haritalika Teej festival.

## Why did you choose those festivals?

The festival of Gai Jatra is one of the oldest of our festivals. It falls on the day after the full moon day of August. The Gai Jatra is a day for remembering those who have died in the past year. We began to mark the festival by having a candle-light memorial in memory of those LGBTIQ people and activists who have died in the past year. That way we began to integrate our community losses with a recognition of

other losses from earthquakes or other big national events.

**We have over two thousand people – mostly young people – attending the festival we organize for Gai Jatra.**



Despite its associations with the dead the festival procession is not a sad or solemn event. In fact there is a lot of joy connected to it, with costumes and music. Traditionally, many third gender people have participated. Also, in the days when political expression of any kind was outlawed, Gai Jatra was the day when ordinary citizens could vent their frustrations through political and social satire without fear of reprisal from the rulers. So it feels like a very good festival for us to be a part of.

We have over two thousand people – mostly young people – attending the festival we organize for Gai Jatra. This annual festival has become one of BDS primary events and draws crowds of local supporters as well as tourists to join in on the fun and enjoyment of the festivities. BDS has been celebrating this unique festival for the last 10 years.

## What about Haritalika Teej?

The religious significance of Teej festival lies in devotion of Goddess Parvati for her husband Lord Shiva, and the day marks the occasion that Lord Shiva and Goddess Parvati reunited with each other after hundreds of years. Traditionally, Nepalese women have commemorated this mythological event. With unmarried girls fasting and wishing for a good husband. Similarly, those who are already married wish better health and long-life of their husband.

Clearly there is a lot of traditional ideas about gender and gender roles embedded in the festival. So it was very significant when over 500 third gender members gathered at our BDS office for the purpose of celebrating the Teej for themselves and the wider LGBTIQ community. Now it has become a time when same-sex couples and transgender people celebrate this festival wishing healthy and long-life of their life partner.

## What is the goal of this work?

The goal of this work is about us being visible in our communities and claiming our inclusion in our traditional and religious heritage. We are trying to get people in general to see us and accept us as part of the community.



नेपाल गौरव

Love is Love

Both these events are widely covered by national and international media, thereby reaching the Nepalese public. So everybody hears about it. It's become very popular and widely accepted.

Also, embedding the fight for the rights of LGBTIQ people in a wider traditional ceremony allows the mobilisation to happen outside of main cities where acceptance of diversity is habitually higher. BDS has taken the festivities to smaller cities in the country, like Pokhara, with immense success.

### What are the essential framing and messages? Do you do any formal research on framing and messaging?

No, we don't do any formal research and we don't have a specific messaging strategy.

However, we do have different themes each year that try to convey specific ideas. Often it's about family, and community and belonging.

For example, in 2017 we had the theme "My Friends and Family Celebrates Me". That the Honorable Minister Asha Koirala, Ministry of Woman, Children and Social Welfare inaugu-

rated Pride March by raising rainbow flag and colorful balloons, in support and solidarity for LGBTIQ citizens of Nepal. A focus on family makes it easier for government officials to participate as it links more directly to their work.

Similarly, on May 17, 2017 we initiated a "Parents and Friends of Lesbian and Gay (PFLAG)" campaign during International Day Against Homophobia and Transphobia (IDAHO) with an aim to bring all allies of LGBTIQ people together for wider social awareness, acceptance & visibility of LGBTIQ people in Nepal.

### How did you make these decisions? Why did you choose to work in this way?

It really has just evolved over time and has become a feature of the work that we do – so really just internal discussion and strategizing.

### Why do you make participating in these festivals as an organizational priority?

In our community we face discrimination from every side. There isn't a place where we don't face stigma and discrimination including

family, school, society, workplace, health care centers, and service providing institutions. So we think that participating in large community events and integrating ourselves into them is a good way to go about sensitizing, orienting and lobbying at many different levels at the same time.

**We are very interested in developing research over the evolution of public opinion on sexual orientation and gender identity or expression**



### Did you do any kind of formal evaluation and/or assessment and learning process?

No, and that's really because we lack the resources for it. We are very interested in developing research over the evolution of public opinion on sexual orientation and gender identity or expression. But it's just really hard to get funding for that kind of work.



## What do you think have been your major impacts or successes?

Our work in this area has led to increased visibility in society. It has increased solidarity and helped us find allies. For example, a number of celebrities - singers and artist – are showing an active willingness to be involved in the LGBTIQ rights movement. Most recently, the New York based fashion designer Prabal Gurung has begun openly talking about being gay at a photo festival. We've had Nepali media houses having more frequent and positive messaging on LGBTIQ populations.

The festival gives us access to an incredibly high number of attendees. Rainbow is the new cool amongst young people. Organisations working on the issues speak about an increased knowledge on SO/GIE/SC and marriage equality. Pride parade itself is a one



kind of sensitization event along with celebration. When we march in the street there is a great attention from the public and the media. People want to hug, want to join, want to take a photo with us.

All this helped to create awareness on the matter of marriage equality with policy makers. There were several LGBTIQ groups who gave interviews to the media. Therefore we can say this will definitely support our long term objectives and support for police reform and marriage equality

## What were some of the challenges? How did you address them?

The bulk of our funding is for HIV programs. Donors don't really fund Human Rights



advocacy work directly. We do this work by marginal contributions from HIV programs.

It would make a big difference if we could have specific funding that is clearly earmarked for campaigning.

## What lessons have you learnt? If you were to start all over again, what might you do differently?

This year we had LGBTIQ Pride along with Rainbow Concert where we invited different well known singers and actor and actress. It would be great if we add different innovative events like concert along with the pride. We are thinking to continue rainbow concert during our pride in upcoming year

## What kind of organizations and contexts do you think this kind of work is most suited to?

This kind of activity is best carried out in places where gender diversities are not considered in a systemic conflict with tradition. In Nepal, third gender is a very traditional element of culture, which is essential.

The organization who organizes it has to be deeply rooted in the community, so that the event has a significant size and that its visibility creates a positive impact.

And because the impact happens via the media mainly, it is essential that the organization has a strong access to media and is considered credible and trustworthy.

## What are the security concerns and how can they be addressed?

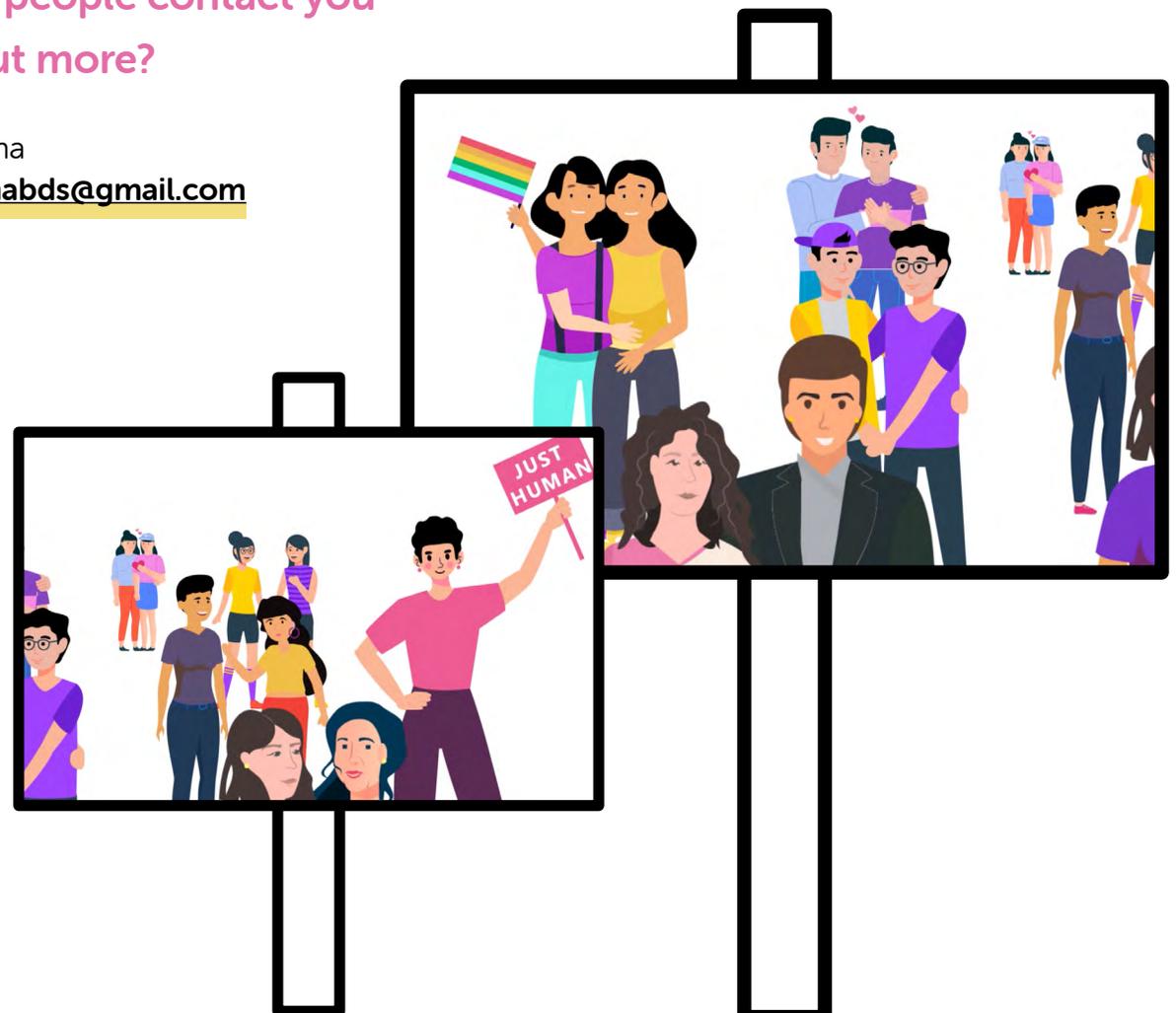
We don't have any real security concerns, but this is why I think this kind of work is most suited to places that don't have active social hostility towards the community. The activities have to be officially authorized by police authorities who take necessary measures to secure access of participants.

## What advice would you give people thinking about doing this work? What do you think are the very first steps to take?

The best learning is learning by doing, because all contexts are so different.

## How can people contact you to find out more?

Sanjay Sharma  
[sanjaysharmabds@gmail.com](mailto:sanjaysharmabds@gmail.com)



# Case Study 5

Beatrice Savadye, Director, Real Open Opportunities for Transformation Support (ROOTS)

## Zimbabwe

## Persuasive Conversations Amongst Key Stakeholders

*This case study focuses on sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR). It explores how activists organized a series of dialogues with specially trained ‘community champions’ and religious, traditional and political leaders around the issues of access to safe abortions. The dialogues ultimately opened up space and support for critical legal reform, despite the sensitive nature of the issue. We have included it because it shares many similarities with work that activists need to do to raise questions related to SO/GIE/SC.*



▶ <https://youtu.be/Dn8h6GoN9bU>

This is an important case studies to look at for activists who have had some success with shifting leaders' personal opinions about sexual and reproductive health issues through one on one advocacy behind closed doors. It demonstrates ways in which elected officials can be supported to provide more vocal and

visible leadership to policy reforms that don't have widespread public support, and through that leadership begin to shift public opinion. It shows how powerful emotions and actions can be triggered through story-telling about the impact that restrictive and discriminatory laws are having on marginalized communities.

# Case Study 5

# Zimbabwe

## Background

**National Context:** Zimbabwe is a country in Southern Africa. It has an estimated population of around 12 million people. It is difficult to accurately estimate the population, as around 3.5 million Zimbabweans (about a quarter of the total population) have left Zimbabwe since 2007, in response to rapidly worsening economic conditions. The vast majority of these people have become refugees in neighboring South Africa and Botswana.

Zimbabwe has been much defined by its colonial experience: the borders were defined in the 1890s by Cecil John Rhodes; it became a British colony called 'Southern Rhodesia' in 1923. In 1965, conservative white settlers declared 'unilateral independence', in response to the drive of the British Government to give all colonies independence. The white

minority government survived for 15 years, through international sanctions and isolation and a vicious guerrilla war with black nationalists. In 1980, the war ended with universal enfranchisement and the first free and fair elections. Robert Mugabe became Prime Minister when his party won those elections. Despite a hopeful start, Mugabe's government descended into an authoritarian regime, responsible for widespread human rights violations. By the early 2000's, internal opposition began to press for serious reforms, despite the introduction of a much-needed land-reform program. The program itself however was poorly managed and richly rewarded political cronies, while devastating the agricultural industry on which Zimbabwe relied. Opposition of any form was harshly dealt with, and protests continued for the next decade with varying degrees of intensity. In 2017, Mugabe was finally overthrown through an internal

party coup, that enabled the political party to finesse the continued exclusion of the opposition party. In 2020, Zimbabwe was scored as "partly free" by Freedom House<sup>15</sup>, with the following results:

<b>Electoral Process</b> Elections were marred with serious irregularities, including violence and intimidation	<b>3/12</b>
<b>Political Pluralism and Participation</b> The ruling party uses state institutions as well as violence and intimidation to punish opposition politicians, their supporters and political activists	<b>6/16</b>
<b>Functioning of Government</b> Highly partisan military, police and intelligence agencies play a central role in government decision making	<b>3/12</b>
<b>Freedom of Expression and Beliefs</b> A repressive legal framework continues to impact in many ways to control media and other forms of free expression, despite various court rulings declaring many of the laws being used as unconstitutional.	<b>8/16</b>
<b>Associational and Organizational Rights</b> The police and army regularly and violently disperse a myriad of peaceful public protests. Despite this there is a vibrant and effective civil society.	<b>4/12</b>
<b>Rule of Law</b> Courts subject to political pressure LGBTIQ face discrimination and violence	<b>3/16</b>
<b>Personal Autonomy and Individual Right</b> A myriad of challenges across a wide range of thematic issues	<b>5/16</b>



<sup>15</sup> Freedom House is a US based a funded NGO that conducts research on democracy, political freedom and human rights. <https://freedomhouse.org/country/zimbabwe/freedom-world/2020>

# Case Study 5

## Zimbabwe

**There are strong taboos, reinforced by strong religious beliefs, against premarital sexual activity**



### **Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights:**

Around a quarter of Zimbabwean women aged between 15 and 19 years old are married or in an informal union. There are around twice as many women of this age married in rural areas than in urban areas. There are strong taboos, reinforced by strong religious beliefs, against premarital sexual activity. Despite this, surveys have consistently shown that around 1 in 3 young women (15 – 19 years) and 1 in 4 young men (of the same age) have had sex. Access to contraceptives are difficult, and it is estimated that around two-thirds of sexually active women in Zimbabwe are not able to access effective contraception.

This unfortunate set of realities means that many unmarried pregnancies are unwanted.

Access to abortion in Zimbabwe is governed by the Termination of Pregnancy Act. This law was first enacted in 1977 and retained after Zimbabwe gained its independence in 1980. It has not been changed since then. Legal abortion is very restricted, requiring two physicians' consent, and at times a magistrate's approval. These can only be obtained under three circumstances: if the woman's life is threatened; if the unborn child has serious physical or mental 'defects', or if the fetus was conceived as a result of rape or incest. Illegal abortion carries a penalty of imprisonment up to five years and/or a fine.

In recent years there has been growing support to amend the law and expand legal

abortion access. Much of this support comes from a concern about the strict provisions forcing many women, particularly young and unmarried women, to seek unsafe illegal abortions. It is estimated that around 70,000 women undergo unsafe terminations each year, risking death from hemorrhage, infection or shock. Teenagers account from almost one in three of Zimbabwe's abortion-related maternal deaths.





*How do you get policymakers to shift their narratives and ideas about taboo SRHR and issues like termination of pregnancy?*

## Case Study

### Can you tell us a little about your organization please?

Our organization is called Roots. We are a community-based organization working on gender equality. We also do community outreach because many of our communities are poorly resourced and they receive very few services.

As an organization we are not into service provision. But whenever we go for outreach programs, we will bring in other service providers so that they can service our communities. We also work with volunteers from the Ministry of Health that provide HIV and counseling and testing services, as well as family planning services.

We do a lot of work around community dialogues to challenge issues such as harmful cultural practices that lead to say gender-based violence or to child marriage. We also challenge retrogressive societal norms that promote inequalities.

### Can you give us an example of a harmful cultural practice?

We do most of our work within farming and mining communities in rural areas. Many of the people that live in these communities came from Malawi and Zambia a long time ago. Actually, they are the children of parents who died a long time ago. So, while they are now a part of the Zimbabwean community, they have brought different cultures from their countries into these areas. There isn't just one culture. There are very diverse cultures in one community.

A lot of intergenerational sex happens in some of these communities. One of the cultural practices that has developed in those areas include 'sex initiation camps'. They are organized by older women and held for girls every August. Sometimes girls as young as nine and ten are being taken to the initiation camps. So, we work with the women who actually do the initiation. We can't stop the practice entirely, but sometimes the women in charge will make sure that it is only girls of a much later age who are brought to the camps.

## How else do you tackle such harmful practices?

We work with traditional leadership who are the custodians of culture. They also preside over all the cases – civil cases - that happen within communities. We've done several trainings for the traditional leadership for them to be able to be aware of rights about issues of gender. We also cover when traditional leaders should be referring matters to the police for criminal prosecution.

## How do you support young girls in these communities?

We have set up special clubs for adolescent girls. Our girls meet on a monthly basis. These clubs are very independent and run by the adolescent girls themselves. They come up with a plan about what they want to talk about.

## What about boys and men?

### Do you also work with them?

We do also work with them!  
We normally reach the boys through sports. We have sports tournaments and alongside have a mini symposium. But the very innovative work we do is with men. We have a pro-

gram that we call The Laundry Café. We bring men a community and their wives or other women from within the community. Then they do their laundry in public together. We provide the soap. Usually women do the laundry, but here the men also get to do it.

While the laundry is being done, we facilitate a dialogue with them about gender inequalities and especially about issues of gender-based violence. The laundry is symbolic of their private 'dirty laundry': you know, the issues that are happening within their homes that they need help with. We help create a space where they can talk about why maybe they are abusing their women or why are they being abused by women and what needs to be done.

**It allows other men and boys to see men who can also be supportive to their partners and their families.**



It's been a very successful model in terms of engaging men, not only because it provides a space to talk about hard issues. When men do the laundry - which is something that, you know, is usually only done by women – we are

challenging that idea. It allows other men and boys to see men who can also be supportive to their partners and their families.

We keep having conversations and often we find by the time we finished doing the laundry and are hanging them to dry, we've been able to find a solution to some of the challenges that they face as a community.

## Can you tell us about the work that you are doing on the Termination of Pregnancy Act?

We are part of Right here, Right now, Zimbabwe which is a platform with youth serving organizations and youth led organizations. Our work is in the subcommittee focusing on the Termination of Pregnancy Act. Our goal is to promote safe and legal abortion in Zimbabwe because there's a lot of unsafe abortions. There are about 70 thousand unsafe abortions annually. And ending that is our goal.

It's a critical issue. We need to be working for bodily autonomy for women. We need access termination services. People have a right to choose when they want to have children.



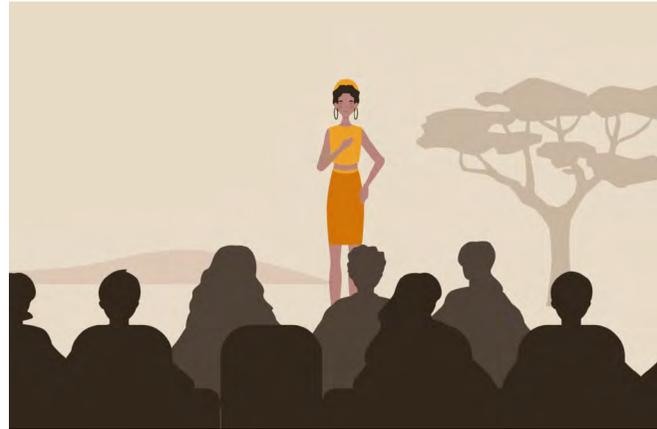


## How do you bring up these issues in a community?

What we've been doing is going to our communities to do community dialogues. The purpose of the initial dialogues is to understand and learn about people's knowledge, attitudes, behaviors around the issue of the termination of pregnancy. We want to really understand what communities think about the termination of pregnancy and the practices around it, and how it's done so that we are really informed when we talk to policy makers.

## How does the work that you do at a community level influence policy makers?

What we do is we bring that evidence that we get from communities to policy makers.



When there's a statistic in the newspaper that says there are about 70 thousand abortions every year, it's just a statistic. But by going to communities, we taking those stories as evidence about what's really happening. How it's affecting women in our communities. We bring a human face to the statistics so that when we talk to the policymakers, they get to understand it.

## Just telling stories can make a difference?

What we realized was that for many of the policy makers they think that the women getting abortions are all sex workers or promiscuous women who get pregnant and want to abort. So when we do our dialogues we try to talk with diverse numbers of women so that we can bring more diverse narratives. You know, women in the church, women living in the

rural area, women in the Islam community. And what we find is that they are all saying we actually need these services.

So then what do is to train "community champions" who are able to tell these stories to a wider audience, sometimes the media, sometimes policy makers. It is very powerful. We brought one Member of Parliament to a presentation by a community champion who shared the impact that unsafe abortions were having in her community. At the end, the Member of Parliament stood up and said, "you know what, when I was invited for this dialogue, I just came but I was so against it. I'm a Christian and pro-life. But now I'm thinking differently. I didn't know that these are the challenges that women are going through. It's very moving". So that's the main strategy that we've been using, taking the policymakers to the communities.

## What's been the impact of the work that you have been doing?

We have been doing this work for the past four years almost five now. And I would say, we have managed to build quite a lot of momentum around the issue. We managed to mobilize members of parliament to support to our cause. We managed to go to communities to sensitize them about the issue and get an un-



with such cases where people come in and they want support in terms of access to abortion services and information. So we couldn't sign and so all the funding we had from US-AID had to be sent back. It really derailed the work that we were doing around reproductive health. So that's the greatest challenge. At the point when we lost that grant, it was almost 50 percent of our total annual budget as an organization.

### What did you do?

We asked some allies within the donor community for help. We wrote a lot of proposals and the Global Fund for Women came through for us.

It's great, but it reminds me that there are lots of problems with funding for community organizations. Many international donors want to give only the big institutions money. I mean the kind of money that really allows you to do good work. When grants go to the bigger, better known institutions and then trickles down from them to more community-based organizations, it's just too little. We can't do the work that we want to. It barely pays for staff. It's now too little. We can't do much work with it.

### Any advice for donors in the sector?

I say to donors who want to work in this field - this is a hard subject. You want organizations that have strong resilience. I think they need to find groups have demonstrated that they can actually work on this issue with a wide range of people.

**Politicians are quick to make promises and in times of election they want to please people. So, it's a great opportunity to be putting pressure on them**



Understanding of the issue and what needs to be done. We got the media to cover needs our community dialogues. We had radio programs on the termination of pregnancy. It felt like we were really having a national dialogue around it. That has been one of the big impacts.

### What are some of the challenges you have faced?

The biggest challenge that we have faced is the Global Gag<sup>16</sup> rule brought in by USAID. We were getting funding from them. But then we were asked to sign the Global Gag contract as a condition for us to carry on getting funding. We could not do it. We don't provide abortion, but the Gag rule goes way beyond that. It asked that we not even refer women to abortion services. We are always being faced

### Any last words of advice for activists?

Look for strategic moments to push your work forward. Here in Zimbabwe, we'll be getting into elections again soon. When we are going towards elections there can be a lot of opportunities. Politicians are quick to make promises and in times of election they want to please people. So, it's a great opportunity to be putting pressure on them - while they are listening.

 <sup>16</sup> The global gag rule (also known as the Mexico City policy) is an anti-abortion policy that prevents foreign organizations receiving U.S. global health assistance from providing information, referrals, or services for legal abortion or advocating for access to abortion services in their country — even with their own money.

# Case Study 6

Staff members from Positive Vibes Africa

## Positive Vibes Trust

### Mitigating the Impact of Living in Deeply Homophobic and Transphobic Societies

*This case study focuses on sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR). It explores how activists organized a series of dialogues with specially trained 'community champions' and religious, traditional and political leaders around the issues of access to safe abortions. The dialogues ultimately opened up space and support for critical legal reform, despite the sensitive nature of the issue. We have included it because it shares many similarities with work that activists need to do to raise questions related to SO/GIE/SC.*



<https://youtu.be/tAOshnRLjMs>

*The central issue this case study seeks to address is what work needs to be done in deeply hostile places - particularly those where direct public advocacy is unsafe and most often illegal. It shares a methodology that has been developed to support activists to come to terms with living in families and communities where the only messages about SO/GIE/SC have been ones that are denigrating and denialist.*



*How do activists heal their own wounds from unrelenting homophobia and transphobia in order to feel whole and confident enough to engage with others to change their attitudes and beliefs?*

## Case Study

### Please tell us a little bit about Positive Vibes.

Positive Vibes (PV) is a Queer African Rights-based development organization, focused on ending “othering”. We value personhood, and the development of human capacity.

Since 2010, PV has developed significant expertise in practice, advocacy and lobby programming in Namibia as well as across 17 countries in Africa and Asia, focusing on sexual and gender minorities in particular. We have offices in both Namibia and South Africa.

PV is focused on developing and applying a range of participatory processes. These are based in pedagogical, therapeutic and socio-political development theory. They are designed for work with individuals, groups, and communities. Their purpose is to encourage personalization, to activate and develop and mature conscientization, the awakening to self and the coming to and expression of voice.

We align ourselves with the interests of groups, organizations and movements of people whose human rights are unjustly limited or denied. Currently, our strongest focus is on work with LGBTIQ, sex workers, people living with HIV, and adolescent girls and young women.

Our approach is based on the conviction that people can:

- **take charge** of their own lives, organizations and movements;
- **strengthen themselves** to more effectively shape their own futures;
- **use their voices and actions** to contribute towards the larger goals of social inclusion, social justice and equity.

### What kind of work do you do with LGBTIQ communities?

Our work is about ‘change’. Change in people’s thinking and feeling, in their lives, in their organizations, the cultures that they create and are shaped by, and the structures and systems in which they live. Without changes in all these levels, we cannot make

a world in which it is safe to be different, but still recognized as human; in which justice is available to all; and in which people can reach their potential and make their unique contributions.

## Your initial focus was on people living with HIV. Why and how did you expand your focus?

I guess the biggest driver was that we came to see that a range of different kinds of sexual and gender minorities actually face very similar issues. For example, sex workers and LGBTIQ people are often criminalized – through a variety of different laws regulating sexual activity and mores. People living with HIV, sex workers and LGBTIQ people are stigmatized in ways that make them vulnerable to violence, particularly sexual violence. Stigmatized and criminalized minorities inevitably have limited access to legal services or to health care. The absence of social safety nets create structural vulnerabilities to sexually transmitted infections, including HIV, and so you see higher prevalence rates. Stigma also leads to economic marginalization that makes it even more difficult to seek protection and support.

## What impact does this have on our community?

Facing these, and other unjust and unequal treatment, gender and sexual minorities frequently suffer adverse physical and mental health. Our community members are often isolated and suffer from the stress of being a minority. We worry that these kind of issues are frequently overlooked as we struggle to build strong movements for change: we are not only dealing with public attitudes, hostile laws but challenges within our own community that foster distrust and division.

At PV we think it's important to understand this wider context – and to really take it into account when we think about our activism. We can't just ignore these realities. That's why we a big part of our work is to challenge, disrupt and redress socio-structural and sociocultural barriers that prevent us from realizing human rights for all.

**In sum, our ambition is to end "othering".**



## What is 'othering'?

We think of "othering" as both a verb and an adjective. When it is used as a verb (ie an action) it involves the "exclusion and rejection of persons or groups by ascribing characteristics deviant from what society widely believes to be normal or desirable". When it is used as an adjective (ie as a description) it concerns the way in which people or systems punish deviation and difference from a constructed (and dominant) 'norm'.

## Why is that important?

The process of dividing up society around social markers such as race, gender, and sexuality perpetuates the structures and dynamics of power and privilege. It makes it more difficult to challenge the status quo by, subtly or overtly, affirming the inherent rightness of in-group members against the backdrop of a scape-goated other. Their 'not-OK-ness' defines our 'OK-ness'.

All groups do this to some extent, and it is always dysfunctional: it limits the potential of the othered, and of the 'otherer', and of the whole system. It erodes the basic idea of our shared humanity which should provide common ground.



**This dynamic is at the root of all the –isms:** racism, sexism, heterosexism, etc.

## Why do we 'other'?

Othering works to preserve inequality. It is both the product of an unequal system, and it also perpetuates that inequality. Members of society are conditioned to reproduce this dynamic: we teach our children to hate and fear what we hate and fear, we embed distrust and doubt in others' basic humanity in our laws; we blame systemic problems on largely defenseless, often blameless, minorities. And this keeps our societies stuck – one thing holds down another.

If we can disrupt othering and change this dynamic, we make a significant contribution to addressing inequality, fostering development and realizing human rights.



## So, how do you tackle 'othering' in your work?

We call it the Inside-Out process. It's inspired by Freire's (1968) Pedagogy of the Oppressed. Freire said that the key to liberation lies in the awakening of critical awareness, or 'conscientization' in the individual. So we begin all our work with a process of personalization to strengthen self-esteem and self-efficacy for activists.

**Let me give you an example:** securing human rights for all requires a particular kind of strategic activism and advocacy. Communities need to be mobilized, and power need to be confronted. We think that there are steps – stages if you will – that need to be taken if people from marginalized and stigmatized communities are going to be able to meaningfully

participate, and ideally lead, that mobilization and organizing.

Speaking truth to power has consequences! Learning how to think and speak about power is an essential step before raising our voices to speak effectively to people in power.

Before people can respond to their circumstances, and to fight for improvement, there is a process through which they must come to find their own "voice". That involves being able to tell their own story – for and to themselves and about themselves. We have learnt that this is an essential first step that in the process of being effective advocates for change.

## So, in concrete terms, what do you do?

Essentially we build long term working partnerships with community and advocacy organizations to co-create, learn and strengthen our collective approach to the work that we do. Our starting point is always the process of "personalization" in relation to the advocacy or social change issues being explored. Personalization is an iterative process that begins with an examination of a series of questions, for instance

- “How does this issue (e.g. of exclusion/discrimination) connect to my experience?”
- “What does this mean for me and my life?”
- “What is my part in creating this reality?”

Working with these kinds of questions in a variety of creative ways, and supported by a community of peers, strengthens self-esteem and self-efficacy – both for the people who we work in solidarity with, and for others with the power to facilitate or undermine the realization of their rights.

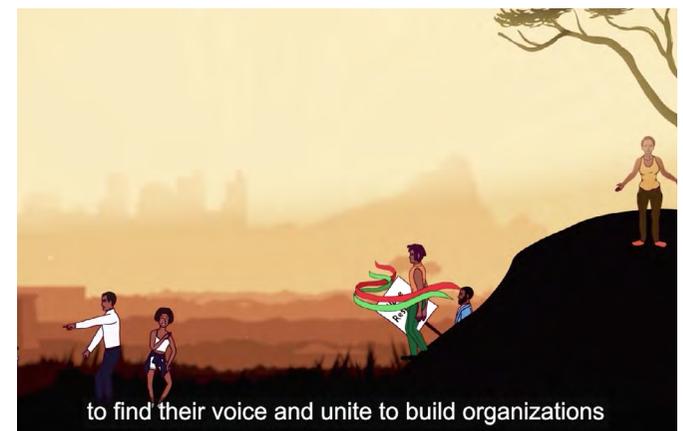
Personalization connects people intellectually and emotionally to their own realities and the experience of others. It begins the process of personal exploration and change that is needed to support wider relational and structural change. It is the beginning and the heart of PV’s approach. If people connect sincerely with their reality – and in particular, to experiences of oppression, exclusion and stigma – our experience shows that movement through the remainder of the Inside-Out process follows quite naturally and can be supported and deepened in a structured way.

## Do you only work with individuals and on individual change?

No, we see that as a starting point. All of PV’s methods (workshops, coaching programmes, curricula, etc.) are built on this core model, as is our approach to long-term accompaniment of groups and organizations. Each method includes and speaks to all elements of the Inside-Out process, even if particular workshops have a more directed focus (e.g. on supporting personalization or on developing effective voice). Further, over time, our overall programming framework supports people to move from a focus on the self and on individual growth and development, towards encompassing change in larger human systems such as organizations, communities and movements.

## How does this support wider social change?

There are a number of different ways in which we support activists to work together to challenge and change their communities – at the very local to the national level. For example, we also have developed ways of supporting increased “participation”. By that we mean making it possible for people to meaningfully and authentically engage in processes that impact on their lives. Rather it’s about ensuring that people who are marginalized not only



understand the myriad of ways in which powerful people, institutions and systems impact them, but find ways to engage, challenge and hopefully change it.

**When powerful institutions criminalize same-sex relationships and powerful religious voices label them as morally repugnant – essentially, they are saying to the LGB community – “your love and your relationships aren’t real, they don’t matter, they are sinful and wrong”.**



When that’s the overwhelming message that a community is giving to LGB people it’s very hard to find it in yourself to tell yourself a different story: to say, “no, that’s not true! I know that what I am feeling and experiencing is love, that it is precious and important and no less a value than heterosexual relationships”. To challenge and change those laws and those views the LGB community needs to find a way to challenge that dominant narrative and replace it with their own. That can’t begin to be done until LGB people have got to a place where they personally believe that they are okay, despite all the messages saying that they are not.

## **That’s a lot to ask of a marginalized and criminalized community! How do you support LGBTIQ groups in these processes?**

Yes, it is hard. That’s part of the reason that it can’t be done quickly. In suppressive environments especially, we have found that people sustain their will and energy and confidence for activism when they are consistently, intimately, and appropriately companioned by supportive “others” who believe in and affirm their human capacity to make their own responses in their own time.

We think the most effective way of doing this is through a process of “enablement” rather than “intervention”. As an organization we strive to be vigilant about behaving ethically. We think our work is more akin to the ethics of counselling – rather than training. Through deep facilitation we seek to stimulate and support the unveiling of strengths in people and communities to make a response in their own lives - instead of prescribing or providing solutions, assuming people are unable or deficient.

## **Any last words of encouragement or advice?**

Here are some of the things that we have learnt over the many years of our work:

### **No-one is voiceless**

Everyone has something to say, something worthwhile, some truth of their own – from the power of their own experience – that has meaning and value. Everyone has a personal story, and a narrative that reflects how they perceive the world, and how they experience the world. Story is voice, and in that personal narrative lies power. Systems of power and privilege marginalize and exclude people from spaces and opportunities and make it really hard for marginalized voices to be expressed and appreciated. Extreme marginalization – resulting through persecution and violence or threats to safety – suppresses voice, but it does not remove it. No one is voiceless.

### **People are experts of their own lives**

Each person lives their lives within a rich tapestry of personal experience and perception that interfaces with a sophisticated, complex, intricate social, cultural and traditional environment. Communities are not homogenous and, in order to do good

work amongst those who are marginalized – whose voices are often suppressed – it is valuable and necessary to tune into their personal life worlds, to find their voice and story, to understand how life works in that space.

### **We are resilient!**

Despite environments where power and privilege work to silence voice, to erase story – to suppress – people on the margins do not quickly give in to despair, as if they have abandoned all hope. Even in harsh conditions, people are capable of a remarkable optimism – hopefulness, vision, yearning and believing for a future better than what they are presently experiencing – that sustains them in life.

### **Participation is Critical**

Participative processes – that go beyond community involvement, or consultation – where meaningful, authentic engagement is enabled, and where such contributions are validated, appreciated and valued, generate incredible personal confidence and power in those who are extended the opportunity to participate.

In spaces where human rights programming may be difficult to explicitly or visibly advance, or where classically held ideas of advocacy might be dangerous to promote,

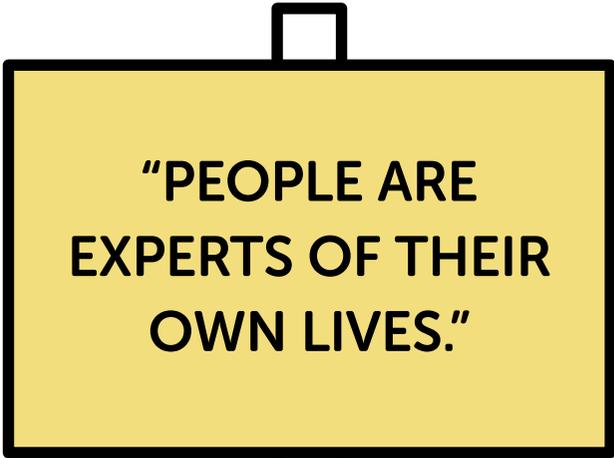
ways of working that enable authentic participation by those who have been marginalized are a viable – and effective – alternative pathway to building power and voice. Achieving that degree of engagement requires conscious and visible shedding of power by programmers in order to build confidence, trust and equity with communities so that the space for genuine participation becomes accessible.

## **How can people contact you if they want to learn more about the work of PV?**

Our webpage is currently undergoing an update – but that is still the best starting point:

<https://positivevibes.org>

Contact details are on the page.



**“PEOPLE ARE  
EXPERTS OF THEIR  
OWN LIVES.”**

# Lessons and Questions from the Field



SOGI Campaigns was established as a learning platform for people who want to make “a change in the world towards more acceptance and equality for people who don’t fit standard or traditional norms or patterns” in relation to sexuality and gender identities and expressions. It is a collective work actively involving hundreds of activists worldwide, and is currently managed by the team that also facilitates the International Day against Homophobia, Transphobia and Biphobia.

In this concluding section, Joel Bedos who runs the SOGI campaigning site reflects on his observations of the field. These observations reinforce many of the points made in the case studies and concludes with additional questions activists should reflect on during campaign planning.

## Joel, why is public campaigning so important to winning substantive social change around SO/GIE/SC?

The limits of strategies centered solely on political, legal or judiciary tactics has become visible as progress has regularly sparked social backlash. Any significant progress on sexual, gender and bodily minorities’ meaningful access to their universal Human Rights must rely on deep transformation of the social acceptance of sexual and gender diversities. Successful public campaigns around the world increase momentum towards achieving that.

## What differences do you observe across the field?

The current context is marked by the increasing attention that issues around sexual and gender diversities and body characteristics are receiving, and by the strong mobilization of our opponents.

Of course, there is a strong difference between the way various issues make it to the public discourse. By and large,

trans issues still remain at the margins of debates, even if the last years have been marked by a dramatic surge in coverage. For intersex people, the visibility is at the very early stages and finds the movement under-resourced and so struggling to meet the challenges this visibility poses.

## What challenges do you see coming from increasing visibility?

In certain contexts, increased attention has led to a growing understanding from other social change actors (including on some issues that have been very invisible so far, such as the issues faced by Intersex people). Again, let me emphasize, this is a trend – subject to local differences.

But where it is happening, it is becoming more acceptable for allies to be more visible in supporting or advocating around SO/GIE/SC issues. So, you see in some contexts, allies who were “discreet” political allies, increasingly ready to “come out” and become visible campaign partners. In places where this has happened, this has presented both new opportunities for diversifying strategies,



but also some new challenges. Activists need to be careful of possible “pinkwashing”, or short-term alliances based on narrow interests. Sexual and gender minorities organizations need to learn how to navigate the specific challenges of such alliances.

Growing awareness of our issues within broader allied social movements similarly opens up new spaces for campaigning, but also creates challenges in terms of keeping the focus on our issue without being watered down. For broader alliances to work, activists must be very clear about the values on which joint campaigns are built. Even with shared values, broader campaigns demand careful thought as they weaken our ability to enforce the messaging we identify as being the most effective.

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specific campaign approach**



One of the best ways to manage this is to have a dual approach, with, on the one hand, a widely negotiated inter-sectional strategy, and on the other hand a sharp, specific campaign approach, focused on sexual and gender

minorities only. The connections/coherence between these two strategic approaches constitutes both a strong asset and a strong challenge, as organizations need to be doubly strategic in their approach.

## **What changes have you seen as a wider array of tech becomes more accessible?**

The surge in variety and scope of voices plays out across contexts, with globalization acting strongly to disseminate agendas and messages. The rapid growth in online access, especially via mobile phone technology, has a tremendous effect on the globalization of discourses. While on the one hand this allows messaging to have an impact on a large target audience, this also creates a lot of un-strategized communications flows, and this makes interconnection among the sexual and gender minorities movement all the more indispensable.

In the last years, we have seen many new initiatives from individuals, or very informal entities to inform, mobilize or influence the public. Not very many SO/GIE/SC organizations know how to respond to this situation.

In past decades organizations were at the center of the campaigning process, generating

the discourse and mobilizing people around it. Increasingly however, the trend is very visibly evolving towards a model where people don't only want to be passive participants – they want to participate in more meaningful ways – for instance, by being involved with the active development of a campaign. Traditional LG-BTIQ organizations have not always taken this new reality into account and continue to work in a way that is at odds with the expectations.

This means that more and more of the campaigning “noise” is being generated outside of concerted movements and there is only limited capacity, especially in some regions, to set up effective distributed action and people-powered campaign models to channel this dynamic. This underlines the needs for proper campaigning skills to be developed across the field and not only in mainstream, formal organizations. As more voices are getting heard, it is increasingly difficult to keep a coherent approach, but all the more necessary to invest serious resources in trying and this is where networks have a strong added value.

## **What have you observed about our opponents and how they are responding to the changing global context?**

In general, our opponents have become much more strategic. New tactics are used to oppose us, sometimes claiming most of our values through effective values-based messaging, including based on Human Rights and Freedom of Expression, which confuse us even further in our own “classic” campaigning strategies.

**opponents are also massively investing in modern propaganda techniques, which ally fear-mongering techniques based on fake news and “infox” with automated distribution (bots**



But aside from this, opponents are also massively investing in modern propaganda techniques, which ally fear-mongering techniques based on fake news and “infox” with automated distribution (bots), including from within our own social circles via fake accounts. The increasing control of communications channels by authoritarian States and other repressive authorities heavily plays in the strategies of conservatives.

This trend is unfortunately also visible in other progressive social change issues and calls for a concerted, and more coordinated response

from us. I think there is almost an obligation to network our strategies into a broader framework, all the more as the level of technical skills needed to confront these challenges is beyond what we currently can muster.

## **What do you mean by that?**

The increased mainstreaming of sexual and gender diversities in global discourses has already generated a lot of backlash, with spaces closing down or getting increasingly dangerous, rendering it vital for more and more organizations to focus on security and safety procedures, including online. This backlash has fueled the emergence of new opponents, including within our traditional ally groups (like youth or feminist movements) and to the blurring of traditional fault lines, which is confusing our traditional strategies. This is made worse by the reclaiming by the opposition of frames around rights, such as the right to freedom of religions, the right to speech, the right to traditional cultures, etc. We are also seeing a (re)emergence of the “Alt-Right” movement, fueled by massive investments and energized by electoral successes, including in the USA, Brazil, Poland, Hungary, Italy, etc.

The last couple of years have seen a dramatic shift in the way communication channels shape our context and two equally worrying

trends are surfacing: the increasing narrowing of social circles to ever closer knit “bubbles” leads to an intensification of the polarization of debates. In other words, we live more and more in closed social bubbles, with hardly any interaction with the “outside” world. For campaigners, this is a worst-case scenario. Organizations are developing their awareness that we run the risk of increasing the problem if we participate in the polarization of the debate.

## **How can we best respond to these major challenges?**

Well, it is not only challenges from our opponents! There is a new surge of public mobilization initiatives in all social change sectors, encouraged by distributed action and participatory platforms, makes it hard to stand out among the noise. The reality is that there is limited space for innovation and to be heard, and that many interventions fail to be effective.

**starting with social science and research that is needed to better understand our own issue, draw the right connections with other social change issues**



All these factors point to a need for us to become more professional and strategic in building campaign tactics and strategies, starting with social science and research that is needed to better understand our own issue, draw the right connections with other social change issues, develop effective tactics to identify and reach moveable targets, and manage backlash. As our awareness of the need for sound research-driven strategies grows, so does the awareness of the lack of data and social proof for our change hypotheses.

**replacing the focus on our lived realities and concerns, which are far from the “liberal” framing which the opposition tries to mainstream**



The good news is in many parts of the world this is beginning to happen: several investigations have been conducted into the way the opposition is framing their attacks, and initiatives are underway to develop and reinforce resistance. By and large we are rapidly moving from a position where we defend ourselves

against attacks to a position where we take control of the frames, replacing the focus on our lived realities and concerns, which are far from the “liberal” framing which the opposition tries to mainstream, and to which we have often contributed.

It seems that we can witness a shift from a “liberal” approach based on the defense of our specific interests to an approach that integrates larger social concerns and is based on a vision, on values.

New frames include focuses on poverty, families, religion, national identity, etc.

**What learning opportunities exist for activists to get better at responding to the need to become better informed and more sophisticated campaigners?**

Fortunately, the sexual and gender minorities movement is getting better organized and has increased its ability to network beyond national and regional boundaries and to carry out meaningful knowledge transfer. Several initiatives have been developed and more are

underway, with a focus on online learning. Most networks are integrating public campaigning somehow into their capacity development plans. Current insights into training and capacity building indicate that peer-to-peer approaches are essential, as is support over the long run to assist organizations in the development of a full campaign strategy. Initial residential trainings and online modules can be useful approaches within this larger mentoring process, which remains essential.



# Where to Begin?

## Four Questions to Consider When Planning a Campaign (and writing a proposal for funding)



### 1. What is your theory of change for your campaign, and how does it relate to your broader organizational priorities and strategies?

Many campaigns are undertaken in an opportunistic way: that is, either responding to opportunities (broader campaigns by allies) or threats (a reaction to attacks). While it is important to be responsive and current, this kind of campaigning can often take up a great deal of an organization's resources and yet be unrelated to the strategic priorities and mission of the organization.

While it is difficult to do – it is really important to not rush ahead in these moments, but rather to pause and to spend some time thinking through why and how any campaign goal is directly connected to your organization's core mission(s) and associated theory

of change that directs your organization's work and resources. You need to be able to clearly articulate what you hope your campaign will achieve and how, and over what time-period. And you need to be able to demonstrate how this will contribute towards the wider work of your organization. If you can't do this, then you need to either adjust your campaigning ideas, or reconsider the core goals and strategies of your organization (hint: it's easier to adjust your campaigning ideas...)

## 2. What kind of campaign do you think is needed to achieve the goal you have in mind?

It is helpful to spend some time thinking through what kind of campaign you intend to undertake – as this will inform the approach you take, and the resources you need. There are three key types of campaigns; be sure you understand which one your organization is undertaking:

- (a) awareness raising campaigns, which use education/information strategies and tools (e.g. argumentation tactics, cognitive science, etc.) to make an issue more visible or better understood;
- (b) mobilisation campaigns, which use engagement strategies and tactics (social marketing, diffusion science,

etc.) to get people more involved or to undertake a specific action; and  
(c) social change campaigns which use persuasion strategies and tools (social psychology, message framing, etc.) to try and shift people's attitudes and behaviours.

**It is important that each type of campaign defines its own process and content.**



## 3. What will success look like?

It is much easier to imagine that your campaign has been a "success" if have not thought through how you will measure its impact. A critical component of effective campaigning is spending time working out what success might look like and what indicators you can use to get an empirical sense of the progress made. In thinking about "success" it is important to focus on external shifts and gains that you hope will be made.

In thinking about success, make sure you haven't developed a campaign that appeals to your organisation and/or your base of supporters, rather than being appealing to an external audience. This sounds really easy – but it's a mistake we see a lot. Activists develop campaigns that appeal to activists! And remember that getting lots of 'likes' from people who already agree with you is not necessarily a great success if your aim is to work to change the minds of a particular target audience.

## 4. How does change happen?

Many campaigning happens with an assumption that 'common sense' and information will achieve change. However, decades of science behind social psychology show that reality is very different as human psychology is an extremely complex arena.

Attitudes are shaped by a large range of factors. Rational thinking is only a very marginal part of it. This, and other very basic notions and concepts are rarely clearly identified by campaigns. For example a very limited number of campaigners are aware of the "availability bias" which reveals that disputing a message by repeating it actually anchors it even more in public perceptions: Campaign messages such as "homosexuality is not a disease" actually tend to reinforce that very idea.

Our experience suggests that many SO/GIE/SC activists have not had the opportunity to learn about "attitude change theory" despite advocacy and campaigning being a central component of their work. For this reason, it is useful to ensure that you have thought through some of these questions as part of developing a deeper understanding of change:

### a. Is there a clear target group?

The most frequent and obvious indication of a lack of strategic approach is that campaigns are aiming at the "general public". A 5 minutes exercise asking people to describe a member of this "general population" suffices to show how this approach is wrong. Yet in a large majority of campaigns this clarification has not been done.

### b. Is there a clear "pathway to change"?

Just as policies don't go straight away for full equality and non-discrimination, attitudes don't go from hate to love in one step. A "continuum of change" needs to be spelled out in campaigns, otherwise you run risk of either going for an unrealistic big picture (e.g. "erase transphobia") or for very short-term objectives (e.g. "get support against death penalty"). One way to do this is to envision the journey – with different milestones along the way – that you are leading people on.

### c. Is your message shaped by a deep understanding of your target audience?

Choosing a target audience is a critical starting point. But this means more than simply thinking about where and how to reach them. In campaigning we need to constantly remind ourselves that we (our organizations and supporters are NOT the audience). We can't assume that we understand our target audiences and how they think and what they value. Only careful social investigation can unveil this with any accuracy, and this hardly ever takes place. What is more, where it does take place it is often based on rather antiquated models of Focus group discussions or Individual In-Depth Interviews. While still valid, these techniques date back to the pre-internet area and more modern approaches into investigating online conversation and using online or phone (SMS, Whatsapp, etc.) surveying tools are seldom used.

### d. Have you fallen into the trap of using a confrontational approach?

In general, confrontational strategies don't appeal to the moderate "moveable middle". "Blame and shame" tactics are good for mobilisation but might act as deterrents for changing attitudes. When designing powerful campaigns, activists need to move beyond seeing the world in black and white, and/or in "us" vs.



# Congratulations!

## You're made it through to the end of this report!

We hope that it's been a rather fascinating trip around the world of creative campaigning.

After months and months of lockdown and limitations in travels and personal contacts, perhaps this report has made you feel like you went out and about, having met great people - at least in your imagination.

And we hope it has given you renewed momentum and energy to engage in innovative approaches to public advocacy, whether online or offline.

The main body of this report was written by Carla Sutherland and Joel Bedos from SOGI Campaigns, which is a resource and training center on creative campaigning for SO/GIE/SC. We greatly acknowledge and value the work they put into it. We hope the snippets in this report will make you want to access more of their resources, which include some great free online courses.

Various other persons were involved in different phases of the development of this report. We particularly want to thank the activists interviewed for their vital contributions. Hivos staff from our various regional offices and from the global office were also involved throughout the development of this report. Here we particularly want to mention Anna Kiebert, Karen Hammink, Ginet Vargas, and Justus Eisfeld.

As for Hivos, we are more than ever upholding our commitment to achieve gender equality and diversity inclusion. We believe that gender equality is a prerequisite to achieving more just, fair, dignified, and prosperous societies. It emphasizes gender as both a cross-cutting theme in Hivos work, and the focus of distinct programming, research and advocacy. This report was a flavour of it, we hope it has raised your appetite.

**Will Jansen**  
*Programme Director*

# CHANGING HEARTS & MINDS



This training is developed within the framework of the program Right Here Right Now and aims to particularly serve the eleven platforms and eight consortium members that are part of it. The program is financially supported by the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and led by Rutgers. We thank them for making it possible to develop the current training material

