

20. juni 2013

Comments on the concept note for a new *Strategy for promoting gender equality in Danish development cooperation*

LGBT Danmark welcomes the concept note and appreciates the important questions for discussion it poses. The strategic direction that is outlined and the overall intention of revising the strategy to obtain better alignment with the overall strategy for Danish development cooperation, *The Right to a Better Life*, is valued. In this respect, LGBT Danmark supports the statement made by FORDI – Forum for Rights and Diversity on the concept note but we also want to elaborate further on the inclusion of sexual orientation and gender identity in the comments below.

Comments on *Strategic questions*

Terminology and definitions

LGBT Danmark fully supports the inclusion of sexual orientation and gender identity in the definition of gender. Sexual orientation and gender identity are human rights issues on their own but our understanding of gender and gender equality issues are also closely intertwined with our understanding of sexual orientation and gender identity. What constitutes a ‘real man’ or a ‘real woman’ is not only linked to how we perceive the correct correlation between biological sex and gender roles, but also how we perceive what the ‘right’ sexual orientation is and how gender is expressed. Including sexual orientation and gender identity in the definition of gender will therefore serve two purposes; it will put a highly needed focus on the rights and opportunities of LGBTI persons and it will qualify the more traditional work on gender equality by adding an understanding of how notions of sexual orientation and gender identity shape women’s and men’s position in society.

Comments on concept note

Overall vision

The focus on the violence and discrimination that LGBTI persons are exposed to in many parts of the world is welcomed. However, in order for LGBTI issues not to be treated only as separate and special issues and in accordance with the inclusion of sexual orientation and gender identity on the definition of gender, references to sexual orientation and gender identity when defining the term ‘gender’ would be helpful. The gender stereotypes that the social and cultural expectations build on are very much also a product of how sexual orientation and gender identity is perceived.

International framework

Although there are no UN declarations or other binding documents that include the rights of LGBTI persons it does not mean that the UN or other international forums do

not work on these issues. References to this work and the main documents – such as the report from the High Commissioner for Human Rights from 2011 (A/HRC/19/41) and the Yogyakarta Principles – should be included.

Strategic considerations and choices

The Human Rights Based Approach in Danish development cooperation entails according to the concept note a focus on the most vulnerable groups. This leads to a main focus on women and girls as they are disproportionately affected by poverty, discrimination and marginalization. It is however worth having in mind that the same goes for LGBTI persons and to integrate this perspective when focusing on the root causes of gender discrimination and the acquisition of basic rights. For instance, hate crimes committed against LGBTI persons are a form for gender-based violence and should be treated as such.

Likewise, it is important not only to strengthen the organisations that work for gender equality and women's rights but also include organisations that work on issues of sexual orientation and gender identity. This will strengthen the overall work on achieving rights and eliminate gender-based problems.

Key elements

Human Rights and Democracy

As homosexuality is prohibited in many countries and LGBTI persons face discrimination and violence on a daily basis and thus cannot live openly and realise their full potential they also face lack of access to decision making, lack of access to media and information and misrepresentation in media, institutions that are not sensitive to LGBTI issues etc. This should be addressed when working within the framework of human rights and democracy.

Social progress

Because LGBTI persons in many places cannot live openly and risk marginalisation access to social services such as especially health and education can be difficult. The health sector is not equipped to deal with issues related to especially transgender and intersex persons and LGBTI persons risk expulsion from education and work if they are 'found out'. Programmes dealing with social services should also address these issues.

“Political flagships”

LGBT Danmark welcomes a focus on sexual and reproductive health and rights. This is an obvious point of departure for the focus on LGBTI persons rights and opportunities and it thus very important that activities on ensuring the rights and opportunities of LGBTI persons are also linked to this flagship.

Modalities

LGBT Danmark welcomes that combatting discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity is explicitly mentioned as part of the policy dialogue and that the targeted interventions also can include LGBTI persons. Mainstreaming LGBTI issues in the overall development assistance is very important, but targeted interventions still has a crucial role to play.