

CEPPS Guidance Note:

Designing and Implementing Effective Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer, and Intersex+ (LGBTQI+) Democracy and Governance Programming



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Cover Photos:

(Left) Activists march with a banner reading, “Love Changes the World” during the Belgrade Pride Parade in Belgrade, Serbia, 2016. Photo credit: Beta

(Right) Activists from Guatemalan and Nicaraguan LGBTQI+ organizations meet to discuss advocacy campaign best practices in Guatemala City, Guatemala, July 2015. Photo Credit: Sarah Stern

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CEPPS Global Elections and Political Transitions (GEPT) Guidance on Designing and Implementing Effective Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer, and Intersex+ (LGBTQI+) Democracy and Governance Programming

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CEPPS GEPT Guidance Note on Designing and Implementing Effective LGBTQI+ Democracy and Governance Programming

Glossary of Terms

Gender - The socially constructed characteristics and related roles, rights, responsibilities, entitlements, and obligations associated with men and women in societies. The social definitions of what it means to be female or male vary among cultures and change over time. The concept of gender also includes the expectations held about the interests, aptitudes, and likely behaviors of both women and men. Identities such as sexual orientation, class, caste, race, ethnicity, religion, disability, and age also impact perceptions of gender and gender roles.

Gender Expression – The manifestation or expression of one’s gender identity; how a person behaves, appears, or presents with regard to societal expectations of gender. One’s gender expression may not necessarily match one’s gender identity or gender assigned at birth.

Gender Identity - The innate personal sense of one’s gender, which may or may not align with norms attached to one’s gender assigned at birth.

Gender Non-Conforming - People who do not conform to social norms about how they should look or act based on their gender assigned at birth. The term gender queer may sometimes be used synonymously.

Gender Sensitive - Being gender-sensitive involves the ability to recognize gender-related issues and concerns and to recognize gender-based differences in perceptions, priorities, needs, concerns, and interests that arise from differences in gender roles and in social location (i.e., ethnicity, race, age, sexual identity, disability, class). Gender sensitivity helps to generate respect for the individual regardless of gender identity; identify challenges, barriers, and opportunities related to gender; and helps inform responses that are gender-informed and responsive to gender differences.

Identity-based discrimination - Discrimination based on any aspect of a person’s identity or identities, including but not limited to gender, race, ethnicity, class, religion, caste, sexual orientation, age, marital status, language, or ability.

Intersectionality - The intersections between forms or systems of oppression, domination, or discrimination. Intersectionality recognizes and examines how various biological, social, and cultural categories such as gender, race, class, ability, sexual orientation and other identities intersect and interact on multiple and often simultaneous levels, often contributing to discrimination and inequality. Intersectionality holds that varying forms of oppression within society, such as racism, sexism, and homophobia, do not act independently of one another, but rather interrelate and create systems of oppression that reflects the intersection of multiple forms of discrimination.

Heteronormativity - The assumption that heterosexuality and heterosexual norms are universal and that these norms are the standard for social, political, economic, and personal relations and power dynamics.

Homophobia – A term used to describe a range of negative attitudes, beliefs, and feelings toward homosexuality or people who identify as or are perceived to be lesbian, gay, bisexual, or transgender. Homophobia, as well as biphobia and transphobia, may include contempt, prejudice, fear, aversion, hatred, and/or antipathy and is observable in hostile behavior such as discrimination and violence.

Intersex – Refers to a range of biological variations that fall outside the strict male/female binary based on genetic (chromosomal), phenotypic (physical appearance) sex, and/or secondary sexual characteristics.

LGBTQI+ - An acronym for the umbrella terms referring to lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer and intersex+ individuals. There may be many variations of this acronym used in different contexts

Sex - The classification of people as male or female. At birth, infants are assigned a sex based on a combination of bodily characteristics including chromosomes, hormones, internal reproductive organs, and genitalia.

Sexual Orientation – A person’s romantic and sexual attraction to persons of the opposite sex or gender (heterosexuality), the same sex or gender (homosexuality), or to more than more sex or gender.

SOGI – An acronym used to refer to sexual orientation and gender identity

Trans* - An umbrella term that encompasses identities within the gender spectrum in which one’s gender identity differs from the one which they were assigned at birth, including transgender, non-binary, gender queer, and gender nonconforming identities.

Transgender - People who have a gender identity or expression that is different from the sex they were assigned at birth. It is an umbrella term that encompasses people who identify as transmen, transwomen, transsexual, or otherwise gender non-conforming.

Yogyakarta Principles –The result was the Yogyakarta Principles, a universal guide to human rights drafted in 2006 that aims to provide a consistent understanding about application of international human rights law in relation to sexual orientation and gender identity and affirm binding international legal standards with which all States must comply. The Yogyakarta Principles plus 10 (YP+10) was adopted in 2017 based on the intersection of developments in international human rights law with the emerging understanding of violations suffered by persons on grounds of sexual orientation and gender identity and the recognition of the distinct and intersectional grounds of gender expression and sex characteristics.

Notes on Terminology

Language related to sexual orientation and gender identity is dynamic, contextually specific, and constantly evolving. It may also be location, age, and language-specific. Furthermore, difference in terminology related to gender identity and sexual orientation may differ among and between various cohorts and individuals within LGBTQI+ communities within a country or region. As part of a USAID-funded project, this guidance note utilizes common USAID language with the understanding that as country-specific program planning and data collection are undertaken, appropriate local language and terminology will be identified and adjustments will be made as necessary. Intrinsic to the Do No Harm principles that must guide all related programming is the concept that each person has the right to self-identify and every effort should be made to support people in self-identifying in the manner of their choosing without imposing labels or terminology on them.

In addition, CEPPS recognizes the heterogeneity of what is commonly referred to as “the LGBTQI+ community” and the wide range of diverse sexual and gender identities that this term encompasses. In keeping with USAID terminology, CEPPS utilizes the “LGBTQI+” nomenclature. This is done with the understanding that this is an umbrella term that encompasses lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, intersex, queer, questioning, gender fluid, and a variety of other gender non-conforming and/or non-binary identities.

Furthermore, CEPPS recognizes that “the LGBTQI+ community” is, in fact, a collection of communities and individuals representing a wide range of people across the spectrum of age, disability, ethnicity, religious affiliation, race, caste, educational level, health status, employment status, housing status, etc. Each of these factors, taken both singularly and in combination, directly and/or indirectly influence one’s barriers and access to participation in public life. This document alternates between use of the terms “the LGBTQI+ community” and “LGBTQI+ communities,” however, in all instances rejects the idea that this group is monolithic and recognizes that, regardless of which term is used, an intersectional approach which examines the interplay of various identities must always be utilized.

Guidance Note Background and Purpose

This guidance note draws on several years of programming and survey research within the CEPPS partners, as well as key informant interviews with stakeholders in LGBTQI+-focused programs in Guatemala and Nicaragua. Additionally, it builds on lessons learned by the international LGBTQI+ community through years of advocacy and organizing and best practices distilled from decades of gender mainstreaming efforts by the international women’s rights and democracy and governance communities.

This guidance note is intended to provide a roadmap for thinking about program design and implementation for practitioners who are interested in launching, expanding, and/or strengthening LGBTQI+ inclusive and/or LGBTQI+ focused programming. While the most appropriate interventions will always be responsive to and contextualized within local socio-political realities, this guidance note reflects promising practice approaches to designing and informing locally-responsive program interventions in a way that is sensitive, effective, and sustainable for the LGBTQI+ communities which they seek to engage. As this is a rapidly evolving field and CEPPS’ engagement in this work is expanding, this guidance note should be seen as a living document and will be updated to reflect the changing landscape.

Background and Introduction

Democracy is more likely to take form and endure when all members of a society are free to participate and influence political outcomes without encountering barriers, discrimination, or reprisal. Despite the fact that the right to equal participation in public life is enshrined in multiple international and regional human rights conventions, including the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), in many countries large portions of the population are excluded from public life because of sexual orientation and/or gender identity. This marginalization often prevents members of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, and intersex (LGBTQI+) communities both from exercising their basic human rights, such as freedom of speech and association, and from participating in political processes.

Discriminatory laws, including bans on homosexuality punishable by imprisonment or death in more than 70 countries, as well as repressive gender and cultural norms frequently restrict LGBTQI+ individuals from voting, running for elected office, engaging with their representatives, joining political parties, advocating for their priorities, and taking part in other aspects of public life. Overt legal barriers and pervasive societal discrimination also often prevent LGBTQI+ individuals from securing and retaining employment and/or housing, obtaining adequate healthcare, accessing and/or completing their education, and accessing basic public services. Restrictions on changing one's legal name and/or gender marker within national identity registries, for example, often result in denial of services to transgender and gender nonconforming individuals on the grounds that their name or appearance do not match the gender marker on their identity documents. At the same time, LGBTQI+ individuals and groups are frequently ostracized, isolated and/or targeted for physical and psychological violence by the state, their communities, and even their families. While each socio-political context differs, these common threats routinely impede LGBTQI+ individuals from fully exercising their basic rights as citizens and from participating in public life.

Additionally, exclusionary legal frameworks targeting LGBTQI+ individuals and communities have broad implications for democratic development. There is growing recognition that restrictive laws on same-sex activity or so-called "homosexual propaganda" may be used by governments more broadly to silence civil society or opposition parties. Sudden increases in discrimination against LGBTQI+ populations not only send a stark message to marginalized communities, but often also act as a bellwether for larger democratization challenges, including greater restrictions on citizens overall.

The CEPPS Approach

Given the acute marginalization of LGBTQI+ populations and the detrimental impact that anti-LGBTQI+ legal frameworks can have on prospects for inclusive democracy and governance, CEPPS works with LGBTQI+ communities to increase their political inclusion and advance equality while fostering broader principles of citizenship and pluralism. This programming aims to create more inclusive political processes in which all members of society are better able to participate and influence the decisions affecting their lives. CEPPS works to build LGBTQI+ individuals' and groups' capacity to exercise their civic rights and organize for their rights and interests. In recognition of the unique challenges to political participation due to discrimination and inequality on the basis of sexual orientation and gender identity, CEPPS seeks to

implement USAID’s LGBTQI+ Vision for Action¹ and reflect this vision in its programming. A carefully constructed approach to program design and implementation that is inclusive of LGBTQI+ populations takes into account the challenges unique to these communities, including security, legal barriers, and socio-cultural discrimination and inequality. Such interventions must take a dual track approach, which include both mainstreaming LGBTQI+ voices and perspectives as well as targeted or standalone programs, and is informed by the following principles:

Guiding Principles on LGBTQI+ Inclusive Programs:

- Democracy is impossible without the full and meaningful participation of all segments of society;
- Political participation is a fundamental means of addressing the social and economic inequities associated with marginalization;
- Each letter in the “LGBTQI+” acronym represents a distinct community or communities with its own particular sets of priorities, challenges, and resiliencies;
- Some sexual and gender minorities in some countries may not feel that any letter in “LGBTQI+” umbrella accurately reflects their identities or their communities and may prefer different terminology. In any given context, these terms may be fluid, culturally specific, and constantly evolving;
- There is no monolithic LGBTQI+ community or experience. The lived experiences of LGBTQI+ individuals vary greatly based on sex, gender identity, age, class, (dis)ability, and a range of other identities that may afford certain privileges and/or additional barriers;
- Following the “nothing about us without us” principle, CEPPS believes firmly in partnership with representatives from LGBTQI+ communities to design and implement program interventions that center and amplify their participation, voices, and perspectives;
- All programming must be informed by the full integration of “do no harm” principles in which the safety and security of members of marginalized groups is paramount and every effort is made to prevent programming from inadvertently reinforcing barriers to LGBTQI+ inclusion or putting the lives or safety of LGBTQI+ individuals at risk; and
- Due to the disproportionate levels of violence and persecution LGBTQI+ individuals may face, CEPPS carefully evaluates potential threats to local LGBTQI+ partners’ safety to determine what is possible or prudent in each context.

CEPPS works directly with organizations, networks, and individuals representing LGBTQI+ populations to help them address particular laws, practices, policies, and norms that exclude them. Such activities may include assisting groups to advocate for the creation of an anti-discrimination ordinance, helping political party activists form an LGBTQI+ party wing, or working with an election management body (EMB) to ensure policies exist to allow transgender and gender non-conforming individuals, whose gender identity often does not reflect the assigned gender on their identification documents, to vote. In some countries, where a general ignorance of or hostility to LGBTQI+ issues is pervasive, visibility and outreach initiatives that challenge cultural stigma are often required to educate political parties, elected officials, and the public about these communities and will likely need to precede and/or accompany campaigns targeted at discriminatory laws and practices.

¹ <https://www.usaid.gov/sites/default/files/documents/1874/LGBT%20Vision.pdf>

At the same time, CEPPS strives to mainstream LGBTQI+ groups and individuals into all other programming alongside other participants. This may include creating coalitions among LGBTQI+ civil society organizations (CSOs) and other local groups to work together on shared advocacy campaigns, creating opportunities for LGBTQI+ citizens join youth councils or become election monitors, or including LGBTQI+ candidates or elected officials in political skills trainings. At the same time, CEPPS strives to integrate the perspectives, needs, and realities of LGBTQI+ communities into other existing program interventions to better ensure their inclusive and responsive nature.

Inclusion is critical to sensitizing other citizens to LGBTQI+ individuals' perspectives, interests, and barriers; in some contexts, such coalition or joint activities are the first substantive interaction many citizens will have had with members of the LGBTQI+ community. Bringing LGBTQI+ and other CSOs together into broader initiatives is one way that CEPPS programs create opportunities for positive interactions that can break down bias and challenge negative perceptions of LGBTQI+ people. In doing so, more diverse perspectives and voices may be integrated into broader civil society movements, therefore enhancing the inclusive nature of these groups and strengthening their work. At the same time, LGBTQI+ groups and individuals, who are often excluded from political processes because of discrimination and stigma, are both able to learn from other community leaders who may have had greater access to political experience and to amplify their voices and perspectives.

Unique Value Added

CEPPS engagement in LGBTQI+ programming adds particular value, as it is one of the few DRG practitioners operating in this space. While there are some LGBTQI+-focused organizations operating internationally, their efforts are not typically situated within a democracy and governance framework. CEPPS' international reputation as a respected, impartial organization providing support to local partners seeking to strengthen representative institutions allows it to leverage its technical expertise to expand political space for increased participation of LGBTQI+ individuals in public life. This work, which is integral to CEPPS' inclusive democracy and governance work, promotes an expansion of citizen participation, helps build more representative democratic institutions, enfranchises historically marginalized populations, and helps mitigate conflict and instability.

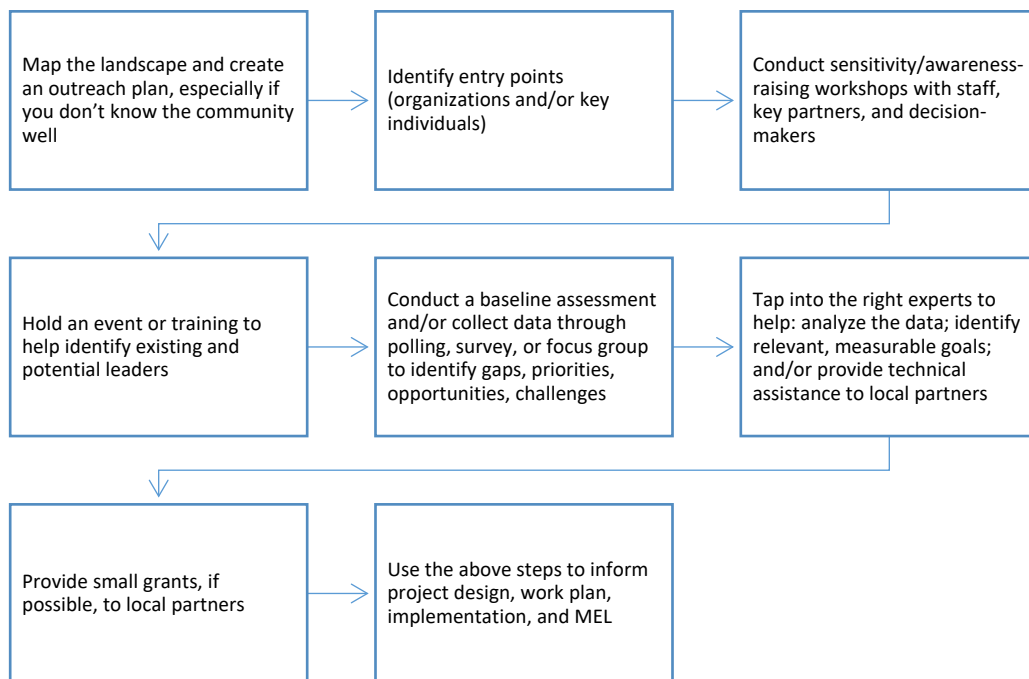
CEPPS experience designing and implementing DRG programming with a specific LGBTQI+ focus has illuminated several keyways in which its engagement adds a distinct value to efforts to create more inclusive, representative socio-political structures. This includes:

- Acting as neutral arbiters and conveners of diverse stakeholder groups and help develop an increased sense of unity among these stakeholders;
- Leveraging its in-country reputation, networks, and expertise in political engagement to enhance the capacity of local organizations to operate more strategically and effectively and to gain access to institutions and policymakers;
- Linking local groups to new funding sources;
- Increasing the confidence and capacity of local organizations to engage political leaders;
- Highlighting the concerns and priorities of LGBTQI+ citizens among traditional local partners, such as political parties and government bodies, and helping integrate them into their work;

- Helping local partners identify and capitalize on key windows of opportunity to create change that leads to more inclusive societies;
- Integrating LGBTQI+ organizations within broader DRG coalition work, which often fundamentally changes the other organizations and helps propel them to become more internally inclusive in both structure and mandate; and
- Creating opportunities for LGBTQI+ activists to increase their citizen engagement in new spheres, for example within political parties or domestic election observation.

Suggested Program Sequencing

As with any new or emerging area of programming, particular attention should be given to creating a strong, well-informed foundation upon which to base program design and implementation. Based on CEPPS experience and best practice in this area, suggested program sequencing when initiating or expanding LGBTQI+ related DRG programming would follow a model similar to the one presented below. This suggested sequence should not be viewed as rigidly uni-directional, however, as it may make sense to bring technical experts in to help design or conduct the baseline, a baseline assessment may indicate additional entry points to explore, or the outreach plan may change based on newly collected data.



Windows of Opportunity

CEPPS has identified several factors which indicate that a favorable set of conditions exist for the partners to increase their engagement in LGBTQI+ focused programming. Globally, a trend can generally be seen toward increasingly opening space for engagement on LGBTQI+ issues and a growing body of resources,

including information, knowledge, networks, and financing, surrounding this topic. This opening space, combined with a significant need for basic knowledge among the general population on LGBTQI+ issues in many places as well as a high level of demand from local LGBTQI+ focused groups and individuals, some clear windows of opportunity exist to increase engagement in designing and implementing LGBTQI+ inclusive DRG programming. In order to do so, it is necessary to consider both the challenges and opportunities, as well as the best practices and lessons learned, in doing so.

Stakeholders from CEPPS partner programs that have engaged in LGBTQI+ focused work have shared a number of benefits from these efforts - for implementing partners, local partners, and the public at large.

Benefits for Implementing Partners Include:

- Enhanced status and/or demand for implementing partners among a wider set of donors and stakeholders who are increasingly looking to support LGBTQI+ inclusion in DRG programming;
- Enhanced perception of implementer as a partner and provider of technical assistance among local groups and not just a donor;
- Empowerment of individual LGBTQI+ staff members;
- Increased awareness of LGBTQI+ issues among implementing partner staff;
- More inclusive atmosphere within implementing partner offices;
- More successful delivery of inclusive DRG projects.

Benefits for Local Partners Include:

- A new group of more engaged citizens as LGBTQI+ individuals build their capacity and increase their civic participation;
- Better trained and more skilled civil society organizations and civic leaders;
- More inclusive citizen-government relations and more responsive representative institutions;
- Expanded political space and increased status for LGBTQI+ citizen engagement in political and electoral processes;
- Increased social acceptance of LGBTQI+ individuals and other traditionally marginalized groups;
- Fuller participation of LGBTQI+ individuals social, political, and economic life;
- Increased capacity of local organizations;
- Better integration of trans* voices in the larger LGBTQI+ community;
- Improved relationships between disparate groups and organizations within the LGBTQI+ community;
- Opportunity to foster collaboration between LGBTQI+ organizations and political parties, electoral management bodies, legislative bodies, and other democratic institutions and to influence these institutions to become more inclusive;
- Collection of new data on LGBTQI+ individuals, their engagement in public life, and their status within a society.

Challenges

Despite the clear benefits of democracy and governance-focused organizations like CEPPS focusing on LGBTQI+ inclusive programming, a number of community-specific/organizational and socio-political

challenges remain. Identifying these challenges early on and building appropriate interventions into program design is essential in responding to and mitigating them.

Community-specific/organizational challenges include:

- Low capacity and scarce resources among LGBTQI+ groups;
- Lack of political consciousness or a culture of political organizing and advocacy among LGBTQI+ communities;
- Minimal interaction and/or low levels of trust between LGBTQI+ and non-LGBTQI+ civil society organizations;
- Differing goals and priorities among various groups within LGBTQI+ communities;
- Internal disputes among personality-driven organizations;
- High levels of competition between LGBTQI+ organizations over scarce resourcing;
- Lack of shared political vision among LGBTQI+ partners
Translating LGBTQI+ partners' work from exclusively health- or HIV-focused programming to more political process-focused engagement;
- Economic and social marginalization of many LGBTQI+ individuals, particularly lesbians and trans* individuals, persons with disabilities, and ethnic minorities, which creates additional barriers to political engagement.

Socio-political challenges include:

- Public resistance to cultural change;
- Religious barriers;
- Invisibility and stigma of LGBTQI+ individuals;
- Barriers to changing legal frameworks;
- Entrenched heteronormative and patriarchal social norms;
- Difficulty gathering accurate data and measuring results;
- Lack of inclusivity within political parties, electoral bodies, and government institutions;
- Accessing and maintaining long term, sustainable funding streams.

Best Practices

CEPPS engagement in this area of programming has yielded a number of valuable best practices. While not all of these conditions will exist simultaneously or must be met in order to effectively operate LGBTQI+ related programming, when taken individually as well as in aggregate, these best practices have proven to contribute to more inclusive, more effective, and more sustainable programming.

- Conduct a baseline assessment on the status of LGBTQI+ people in the country, barriers to political participation, priorities for various subsets of the LGBTQI+ population, public perceptions around sexual orientation and gender identity, and challenges and opportunities for change.
- Partner with a regional and/or local organization that has a history working in this area to lend credibility to nascent efforts in the area.

- Proactively take steps to build relationships with and gain the trust of LGBTQI+ communities and a variety of organizations representing LGBTQI+ interests.
- Conduct sensitivity training and awareness raising on LGBTQI+ issues for all implementing partner staff led by a technical expert and provide ongoing opportunities for additional training. Directly address bias, misconceptions, and lack of awareness among staff and local partners regarding sexual orientation and gender identity whenever they may occur.
- Ensure that all human resources policies and practices are inclusive and LGBTQI+ sensitive. Make updates, where necessary, and ensure that all staff are familiar with the policies and accountability mechanisms.
- Include representatives from diverse LGBTQI+ communities in program design, planning, and implementation to better ensure that a wide range of voices and perspectives from across LGBTQI+ communities are incorporated.
- Convene a diverse group of activists with varying degrees of skills and capacity who either share or can develop a shared vision in order to create a strategic action plan based on data collected in the baseline assessment.
- Create transparent processes and lines of communication with local partners so as to minimize inter-organizational and/or inter-personal challenges.
- Utilize existing LGBTQI+ regional networks and experts.
- Invite a USAID or senior organizational staff person to speak to local staff and partners on the importance of the issue to DRG programming and why the organization is committed to it.
- Develop a clear political strategy to address any pushback that may be encountered.
- If it is safe to do so and desired by local LGBTQI+ communities, collaborate on activities to raise the visibility of LGBTQI+ individuals and organizations.
- Understand and acknowledge intersectionality and the varying challenges/barriers and privilege that exist within LGBTQI+ communities across various identities.
- Tailor materials to the educational and political experience level of LGBTQI+ program participants, many of whom have been excluded from formal education and professional and political training opportunities.
- Recognize and plan appropriately for the local LGBTQI+ community, much of which is often is young. This may entail tailoring how you conduct outreach, training, and advocacy, among other things.
- Bring in credible external technical experts at key moments to increase capacity and credibility, share comparative examples, and help refine or validate strategy.
- Take steps to ensure cross-cutting integration of LGBTQI+ issues across all areas of programming by integrating LGBTQI+ individuals, organizations, issues, and perspectives into broader DRG programming in the country, i.e. campaign training, countering disinformation efforts, youth empowerment events, election observation, etc.
- Send a consistent message within all DRG programs and local partners that LGBTQI+ inclusion is a fundamental democracy, human rights, and governance issue and an integral part of the work to create more responsive representative institutions by increasing access to political processes for traditionally marginalized populations.
- Cultivate relationships with relevant human rights bodies to help situate local efforts to advance LGBTQI+ rights and issues within the larger human rights context.

- Cast a wide net across government ministries, legislative bodies, the justice sector, election management bodies, political parties, and other actors in identifying possible partners, allies, and entry points.

Lessons Learned

- Leveraging the established reputation of an implementing organization engaging in the political process strengthening lends credibility to newer areas of programming
- Initial awareness raising and sensitivity training for staff by a technical expert is critical to the success of the program. Ensuring that staff are clear on the values of the organization and the strategic, programmatic reasons to engage in LGBTQI+ programming as a means of achieving democratic development goals should be an ongoing effort.
- Raising awareness among the organization’s staff who are implementing ongoing DRG programs, as well as among existing local partners, is critical to creating more LGBTQI+ inclusive programs and to fostering change within government institutions. This may be particularly useful is getting LGBTQI+ issues on the agenda outside of elections.
- Conduct a baseline assessment as early as possible and use it to inform program design
- Conduct outreach to better understand the LGBTQI+ community, its political and social history, organizational culture, barriers, needs, priorities, and fault lines. Recognize that different individuals and different groups within LGBTQI+ communities may use different language to describe themselves. This language may differ internally and may also differ from commonly used English-language terminology.
- Provide more funding to local LGBTQI+ organizations in the form of sub-grants.
- Deliberately and consistently contextualize LGBTQI+ work within a human rights context and explicitly articulate the linkages to democracy strengthening and inclusive, responsive governance.
- Recognize that much of the LGBTQI+ community is “in a permanent state of confrontation”², with many members facing deep economic, legal, and social marginalization and ensure that in program planning reflect those realities.
- Identifying allies and champions within government institutions, political parties, and other local partners is essential to creating change
- Identifying and building the capacity of a staff member(s) who is committed to the program and can act as a bridge between LGBTQI+ organizations and between CEPPS and local partners and set the right tone new partners is critical to program success
- Training and awareness raising among non-LGBTQI+ partners and consultants is essential to ensure basic cultural competency and avoid doing any harm. This may be particularly important with short-term contractors providing activity-related services, such as interpreters, drivers, etc.
- Designing and analyzing polling or survey work on LGBTQI+ issues and making the data actionable can be challenging and may require specialized technical assistance

² As noted by a transgender program participant in Nicaragua, LGBTQI+ individuals face a variety of economic, social, legal, and political, barriers. These include but not are limited to unemployment, lack of access to healthcare, homelessness, reliance on transactional sex work, lack of access to education, violence, and discrimination. This often creates a deep sense of alienation, deprivation, and insecurity, putting many LGBTQI+ people in what feels like a “perpetual state of confrontation” with their families, their communities, the justice sector, and with society at large.

- Evaluate the benefits of employing a member of the LGBTQI+ community with the possible costs that may bring. In some cases, it is an extremely beneficial tactic in gaining entry and building trust in the community, as well as deepening the organization's commitment to inclusion. In some cases, however, there may be costs associated with employing someone from within the community if there are competing interests within organizations or among individuals within a small, marginalized, under- resourced community.
- The visibility of LGBTQI+ individuals is often very low and members are not always established as a community and/or as a constituency. Assessing and responding to this may be a program's first step.
- LGBTQI+ civic leaders may not be publicly out and self-identified LGBTQI+ individuals and/or allies in government are often not out. Raising visibility, cultivating a wide range of allies, and identifying champions of change are essential early steps.
- Challenges may exist in working with mainstream media to cover LGBTQI+ related issues in a responsible and sensitive manner, therefore a strategic communications and media engagement plan is often necessary. At the same time, this type of programming provides an opportunity to increase local partners' capacity to effectively use alternative and social media.
- Identify, leverage, and strengthen, as appropriate, existing government support of and investment in LGBTQI+ issues (relevant ombudspersons, hate crime reporting legislation, rights awareness campaigns, pending legislation etc.)

What's Needed and Next Steps

As an important emerging focus area within democracy and governance, LGBTQI+ inclusive programming has garnered significant interest and support across the DRG practitioners and donors, as well as a growing track record. As implementers seek to design and deliver new and additional programming in this area, experience has shown that there are several areas of need and gaps. These areas of need include:

- Training for LGBTQI+ groups and activists, especially on political advocacy, organizational development, communications, networking and coalition-building with other civic and political actors, and financial management.
- Awareness raising and training for LGBTQI+ groups and activities on legal rights and remedies, state obligations under international human rights law, and how to leverage international and regional human rights mechanisms to advance LGBTQI+ issues.
- Financing for local groups to enhance sustainability
- Data collection and documentation on LGBTQI+ individuals and priorities, as well as on public perceptions around these issues, and challenges and opportunities for change
- LGBTQI+ inclusive training materials across sectors, including for election management bodies, political parties, civil society, etc.
- Technical assistance and resources for government institutions seeking to create more inclusive processes and policies
- Additional resources and training to DRG practitioners to support the design and implementation of LGBTQI+ focused and LGBTQI+ inclusive programs
- Increased efforts to institutionalize change within implementers' offices, in particular, notably regular sensitivity/awareness-raising trainings and updates to human resources policies

Conclusion

Democracy is more likely to take form and endure when all members of a society are free to participate and influence political outcomes without encountering barriers, discrimination, or reprisal. Despite the fact that the right to equal participation in public life is enshrined in multiple international and regional human rights conventions, in many countries large portions of the population are excluded from public life because of sexual orientation and/or gender identity. This marginalization and discrimination often prevent members of LGBTQI+ communities both from exercising their basic human rights and from meaningfully participating in public life.

Exclusionary legal frameworks targeting LGBTQI+ individuals and communities have broad implications for democratic development. Marginalization or exclusion of LGBTQI+ individuals decreases the level of responsiveness and inclusivity of government, impedes participatory democracy, and erodes pluralism. As populist and authoritarian governments come into power around the world, there is growing recognition of the ways in which restrictive laws on same-sex activity and so-called “homosexual propaganda” may be used by governments to both restrict rights for minority groups as well as to more broadly to silence civil society or opposition parties. Such actions not only unfairly target LGBTQI+ communities, but may provide a bellwether for larger democratization challenges, as well.

Given the acute marginalization of LGBTQI+ populations and the detrimental impact that anti-LGBTQI+ legal frameworks can have on political processes, democracy organizations’ work with LGBTQI+ communities to increase their political inclusion and advance equality is now more important than ever for fostering broad principles of citizenship and pluralism. Such programming aims to create more inclusive political processes in which all members of society are better able to participate in the processes and influence the decisions affecting their lives.

CEPPS has a specific contribution to make within LGBTQI+ focused programming in a democracy and governance context and experience in this area has yielded a number of useful best practices and lessons learned, as well as innovative ideas for next steps. A carefully constructed approach to program design and implementation that reflects this learning and takes into account the needs and challenges unique to LGBTQI+ communities will be well positioned to have a tangible impact and make clear strides toward more inclusive, responsive, participatory democracies.

Additional Resources

[Accessing U.S. Embassies: A Guide for LGBT Human Rights Defenders](#) – Council for Global Equality

[An Ally's Guide to Terminology: Talking about LGBT People and Equality](#) - Movement Advancement Project (MAP) and GLAAD

[CEPPS GEPT Statement of Approach: Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, and Intersex \(LGBTQI+\) Communities](#)

[Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women \(CEDAW\)](#)

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