



**LGBT and Other Marginalized Communities:**  
**Vital Components of Sound Developmental Assistance Policies**

Marginalized communities are often scorned by society and ignored by their own governments. Those composed of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) individuals are frequently targeted for violence and discrimination. For our developmental assistance strategies to succeed, **the Council for Global Equality believes our assistance priorities must embrace the rights and needs of these communities.** We see this as:

- **a moral imperative**, given our country's historic foreign policy support for human rights, respect for minorities, and fairness in governance;
- **a matter of coherence** between our human rights advocacy and rule of law programs;
- a demonstration of the **tangible credibility of President Obama's March 2009 call** for homosexuality to be decriminalized globally;
- **essential pillars of a range of developmental priorities**, including good governance, principled rule of law, poverty reduction, increased economic opportunity, stronger civil societies, and effective disease prevention; and
- **good development policy**, as historically marginalized communities often become drivers of economic development when provided opportunities to participate, on an equal footing, in many countries' economic and social life.

A rights-based approach, founded on consistent application of the rule of law, can be the integrative tissue of restored U.S. leadership in sound developmental policy. Respect and support for marginalized and targeted communities, long central to American democracy and human rights goals, also should be a specific pillar of our development policies. While marginalized communities need our assistance, they also should be seen as potential agents of development. Their increased role in civil responsibilities and economic development will be markers of success.

**Government-to-Citizen Relations**

Good governance requires full respect for human rights and even-handed application of the rule of law; these in turn are vital to any successful development strategy. Although Millennium Challenge Corporation (MCC) country contracts are predicated, in theory, on criteria embracing these goals, the MCC has been inconsistent in demanding fair and equal treatment of all citizens, a criterion fundamental both to U.S. values and effective and fair governance. This is of critical importance to LGBT individuals, whose rights are often limited or denied, and who often are deprived of full and safe enjoyment of, and participation in, all aspects of human life – it itself a measure of failed governance. To be fully effective, our assistance policies must seek to remedy this imbalance, thereby helping individuals who may otherwise receive no attention or recourse within their societies.

- U.S.-funded rule of law and judicial assistance programs should incorporate measures aimed at developing or amending legal frameworks so as to be consistent with standards of international human rights for each individual, including those of LGBT and other marginalized or targeted social populations. These frameworks must include measures to decriminalize homosexual relationships and conduct, an inequality at the heart of societal discrimination against LGBT individuals, and to resulting barriers to their economic and health well-being.
- Police assistance programs should incorporate training on proper enforcement of these laws, with specific attention to respect for minority rights and the identification of patterns of violent harassment against gender non-conforming individuals.
- Speaker, exchange, and other U.S.-funded public diplomacy programs should underscore that freedoms of association, assembly, speech and expression must be applied equally to all elements of society.
- LGBT communities suffer from hate crimes and gender-based violence, which undermine civil society. U.S. assistance programs should seek not only to strengthen legal protections against these crimes, but also to discredit them. Public education campaigns based on tolerance, inclusion and equal treatment ideally should be developed in partnership with host governments and civil society groups.
- Funding for emergency assistance to victims of violence should be directed to include LGBT victims of hate crimes based on real or perceived sexual orientation or gender identity.
- As laws and conventions relevant to LGBT rights are often ignored, compiling these as a reference handbook for local and national officials can contribute to these goals.

### **Assuring Economic Access and Training**

Developmental assistance should seek to create employment opportunities and economic prosperity for all citizens of recipient countries, including those from marginalized communities. LGBT individuals are among the most disfavored, with many countries showing little concern about their treatment or integration. U.S. assistance policies can help remedy these inequities.

- Programs aimed at broadening educational opportunities and/or professional training – the foundation to economic success – should deliberately include LGBT and other marginalized communities.
- To encourage entrepreneurial development, USAID micro-credit and other financial programs should be advertised within, and made available deliberately to, LGBT individuals.

Poverty reduction programs similarly should target LGBT and other economically disadvantaged and/or marginalized populations. Indeed, the issues faced by gender-nonconforming individuals are similar, in some respects, to those faced by women in many societies.

### **Giving LGBT Groups a Seat at the Table**

Good governance and government-citizen relations are founded on transparency, accountability and citizen access; these in turn are weakened when already fragile LGBT groups are disadvantaged or disallowed in law. LGBT individuals are increasingly visible as a distinct subculture in many parts of the developing world; in parallel, LGBT rights and advocacy groups are proliferating. These groups often are not allowed to register officially, thereby undermining their capacity to develop as civil society associations or, indeed, to accept external philanthropic funding. In some cases they are the targets of abuse, including by governing authorities. Strengthening the capabilities of nascent LGBT NGOs is essential to assuring their place at the table as part of a vibrant and fully representative civil

society, and to tempering a growing backlash against LGBT individuals – a backlash which now poses a serious human rights threat.

- U.S. technical assistance programs can help meet this critical need by training LGBT organizations in strategic planning, budgeting, advocacy, consensus-building, and other leadership skills.
- Public diplomacy speaker and exchange programs can help develop mutually supportive, progressive advocacy associations, including among organizations focused on LGBT-inclusive policy goals.
- Where possible, assistance programs should be designed to enhance the self-sustainability of LGBT support and advocacy organizations.

### **Making Global Health More Effective**

A primary goal of health care-related foreign assistance programs is to strengthen the capacity of governments to meet their citizens' health needs and reduce chronic poverty. LGBT populations are at greater risk of exposure to some diseases, including HIV/AIDS, for which men who have sex with men are particularly vulnerable. Economic marginalization (see above) impedes many LGBT individuals' access to health and other social services. Moreover, because homosexuality is criminalized or taboo in many countries, LGBT communities often are fearful to seek access to these services. Unless the health needs of LGBT people are met, health care programs cannot be fully effective.

- These health care issues strongly underscore that priority must be given to decriminalizing homosexual relationships and conduct (see above), often at the root of the unwillingness and/or inability of homosexual and transgender individuals to seek/receive medical care.
- Additional scrutiny also must be given to laws that criminalize or otherwise limit an individual's right to choose his/her own gender identity and express that identity within society. The human rights of all people, including those who are LGBT or HIV-positive, must be respected.
- Access and treatment are particularly critical in the case of HIV/AIDS. The impact of the PEPFAR program has been diminished by ideological exclusions and omissions, many to the detriment of LGBT communities. It must be reformed to fully embrace condoms as a proven barrier to the spread of HIV; offer greater attention to the needs of LGBT individuals, including in countries where existence of the latter is denied; target sex workers, to ensure full coverage of vulnerable populations; and focus to a greater extent on the needs of bisexual men and women.
- Importantly, PEPFAR grants should not be given to U.S. or foreign groups that seek to demonize LGBT individuals or groups – a Bush Administration practice that is injurious to many of the goals set forward in this paper.
- Maternal, child and reproductive health services should be made available to LGBT individuals in the same manner that they are provided to heterosexual individuals. Laws that limit access to reproductive health services or to information about human sexuality, family planning, and safer sex should be targeted for repeal.
- U.S. assistance should support the efforts of grassroots organizations to implement community-based interventions.

## **Towards Greater Coherence in U.S. Foreign Assistance Goals**

Finally, we see this developmental policy review as an opportunity to rationalize and reassert U.S. leadership. We urge that the opportunity not be missed to rebalance how developmental assistance goals are set between Washington and the field, and to mesh disparate assistance programs with a view to increasing their impact.

- In general, assistance priorities should be set in the field, by those with direct vision over both country-specific priorities and how our programs can be tailored to meet local needs. However, as the needs of marginalized communities are often invisible in many societies, we believe Washington must direct the field to evaluate these needs and to find appropriate means to address them.
- The inconsistent attention to minority rights within MCC's otherwise laudable criteria should be redressed. That program should work more hand-in-glove with Democracy Fund programs than currently appears to be the case.
- The goals and direction of a range of other assistance programs, maintained in a plethora of USG agencies, should be reviewed with a view to whether their synergies are being realized in support of meaningful developmental change.
- Finally, we urge that an enhanced, revitalized and more capable USAID focus on partnering with private philanthropic institutions and partners where possible, rather than continuing our current high-overhead reliance on contractor firms.

*The Council for Global Equality is a coalition of 14 human rights and LGBT advocacy organizations that together seek a clearer and stronger U.S. government and corporate voice on international LGBT human rights and equality concerns. For more information, please visit [www.globalequality.org](http://www.globalequality.org).*