

A large, stylized green triangle is positioned above a horizontal band of colorful geometric shapes (triangles and diamonds) in various colors including red, orange, yellow, green, blue, and purple. The text "Lessons Learned" is overlaid on this band.

# Lessons Learned

Raising awareness of stakeholders and mobilization  
of transgender and intersex communities

# SUMMARY

Rainbow Identity Association (RIA) lessons learned process focused on raising awareness on issues of transgender and intersex persons to different stakeholders (religious leaders, cultural leaders and educators, service providers and legal practitioners) and also educating and empowering the transgender and intersex community members. During the implementation of the project RIA learned that communication and language usage with different stakeholders is a vital key note to address when doing workshops and trainings. Rainbow identity Association also learned that the transgender community, when accessing or seeking services from different provisions tend to default from their original gender identity, hence there are no statistics that show how many transgender and intersex persons are accessing services.

# DESCRIPTION

The workshops and trainings were done through a learning and dialogue process where stakeholders were given a platform to share knowledge and experiences they have had with the transgender and intersex community. RIA also shared the work they are doing and how they can work together with different stakeholders.

Rainbow Identity Association chose raising awareness as the project activity because Botswana as a country has not realized the existence of the transgender and intersex community and it is still upheld and silent on gender identity issues, hence there are no policies and laws in country that address or speak to issues and challenges pertaining to transgender and intersex persons.

## Problems that the project highlighted on were issues of:

- Visibility of the transgender and intersex community
- Inclusion of the transgender and intersex community into the mainstream society
- Access of health care services and other institutional services e.g. education

## The objectives of the project were to:

- Raise awareness on issues of transgender and intersex person
- To sensitize different stakeholders on sexual orientation and gender identity/expression

- To increase knowledge and understanding on sexual orientation and gender identity issues
- To build relationship with different stakeholders who can help in advocating and can influence changing attitudes and social relations about the transgender and intersex community and gender identity /expression issues
- To increase the knowledge of the transgender and intersex communities about gender identity/ expression issues

## Expectations

During its project, RIA had expected to raise awareness on human rights issues affecting the transgender and intersex community. As well as try and get a national validity (statistics) on transgender and intersex persons because without these it becomes difficult for the organization when doing advocacy work for the community and also to build mass through stakeholder support in trying to push for a bill of rights concerning gender identity/ expression issues.

The project is supported by COC Netherlands and is still on going. The intent is to extend the project across the country in the future to increase advocacy and raise awareness on gender identity /expression issues.

## Target Groups

- **Transgender and intersex community** - this was to help empower, educate and mobilize the community to help increase visibility of the transgender and intersex community from the age of 18 and older, from various backgrounds and educational levels.
- **Religious leaders and cultural leaders** - through these target groups RIA was aiming at raising awareness and build mass and relations, because these groups are two of the most influential in terms of societal acceptance and influence on issues arising in the country as well community building.
- **Education sectors** - the aim was to raise awareness, increase knowledge and build relations, because RIA has observed that most of the transgender and intersex community members drop out of school due to the stigma and discrimination, bullying they face at schools. This plays a role in the economic status of trans\* and intersex person in the country.
- **Health care service providers** - the purpose of targeting this group was the challenge that the transgender and intersex community has in accessing health care services and how useful the community finds the services that are already provided by hospital and clinics.

These activities were undertaken at a local level, in the capital city where Rainbow Identity Association is situated. RIA has made efforts to cover areas that are outside the capital city Gaborone such as, Molepolole reaching out to the LGBTI community (20), Kanye reaching out to over 85 educators, Manyana reaching out to 20 community members including cultural leaders, religious leaders and community members (10), Lobatse reaching out to the LGBTI community (25) and Francistown reaching over 10 health care providers and 26 educators.

## Activities implemented in the past

RIA has been reaching out to different stakeholders through dialogues and meetings in Gaborone. Support groups within the organization were the T&I community meet to discuss issues in safe spaces and freely, and sports and recreation activities such as the annual Rainbow Identity Association "soccer and gender" tournament, beauty pageants and other activities.

## Methodology

- Reflect on key issues affecting T&I
- Mobilize different stakeholders
- Mobilize trans\* and intersex community

### ***After the workshops the following procedure was undertaken***

Questionnaires were distributed among 40 transgender and intersex persons. Questionnaires were used to determine how much the transgender and intersex community understand about issues that affect them and how much impact the work that Rainbow Identity Association has in providing services and information dissemination (workshops, trainings and dialogues) to them. A focal group discussion was also done with the transgender and intersex community. The aim of this was to get information on how much knowledge the transgender and intersex community have about gender identity issues and how often they seek to access services. The focal group discussion was also used because sometimes questionnaires do not express the tone and feel of the participants, 10 transgender and intersex persons participated in the focal group.

20 questionnaires were distributed among different stakeholders including religious leaders, cultural leaders, health care providers and education institutions; the aim was to get a reflection on how well the stakeholders understood issues of gender identity /expression and how much knowledge they had gained from the dialogues, workshops and training that have been rolled out by RIA.

Another aim was to get a sense of any form of attitudinal change among stakeholders particularly health service providers and educators. Based on the observation made, through Rainbow Identity Associations trainings, workshops and dialogues in comparison to data collected from questionnaires it showed a positive change in the attitudes of different stakeholders. This was done after the implementation process of the project "**raising awareness**"

## Theory of Change

RIA anticipated that instead of using the normal / previous workshop / lecture way of interacting with stakeholders and the transgender and intersex community it would be more effective if there was more dialogue in the processes of interaction so as to get a direct understanding of how stakeholders, LGBTIQ community and the mainstream community understand issues surrounding gender identity /expression. This gave a direct approach in getting to understand challenges faced by the transgender and intersex as well as stakeholders through sharing personal reflection, experiences and knowledge from both ends.

The organization assumed that all religious leaders would be hostile to issues of gender identity and expression and that they would not understand the issues and challenges of the community. Another assumption made was around the lack of access to health services for transgender and intersex persons. During the focal group discussion and from RIA observation it became clear that the transgender and intersex persons do not access services using their transgender and intersex identities, but make a personally choice to present as cisgender and non-intersex, because of the stigma. Hence health care providers say that transgender and intersex persons never access their services.

Advocating for transgender and intersex rights seemed to work better through the dialogues process rather than through lecture workshops and meetings where RIA just rolls out information to participants.

## Essential resources needed for implementation

Funding was secured through COC Netherlands to cover the costs of the project implementation. RIA needed someone with good communication, dialogue and facilitation skills and who understood the issues well, not only from a human rights perspective but from all views of different stakeholders. The interaction between facilitator's and stakeholders could be hostile at times because of the approach used and the language that the other party is not familiar with hence stakeholders did ask for Rainbow Identity Association to create some form of translation booklet which will be more easier to understand and explain.

### **Was the activity adapted over time, were measures and solutions taken to overcome previous difficulties and challenges?**

As an ongoing process, the activity was adapted over time. The challenges that were encountered were that sometimes inviting or expecting a certain number from the stakeholders would turn out differently or have a lesser number than expected. This led to not being able to reach the targeted number, in counter measuring this we made sure that staff members worked as a team to mobilize from every point because they all know people from different fields of work, which worked better.

The other difficulty that was realized when implementing the project was that getting health care providers to attend. RIA had to go through the Ministry of Health to get nurses and service providers which is a long process so it took time to get them.

The LGB community still has a difficulty in understanding the difference between sexual orientation and gender identity/ expression, the fact that LGB has this misconceptions leads to a lot of stigma, discrimination and Trans phobic behavior towards the transgender and intersex community and this has caused tension between the LGB and the transgender and intersex community.

Within the transgender and intersex community what have appeared are also internalized stigma, discrimination and phobia for example a transitioned transman feeling that a gender queer or gender non confirming person is not transgender enough or that they will out them in public.

### **What were the major turning points in the process?**

During the evaluation process what was found mostly with the stakeholders (religious, cultural, health service providers, education institution) was as follows;

- Willing to work and become allies of Rainbow Identity Association
- Relationships that have been very difficult to build with religious and cultural leaders have since been established fully through this project and found that the groups that we work with have made pledges in helping RIA fulfill its organizational mandate as well as advocate for gender identity issues.
- Capacitating members of the transgender and intersex was of great impact since most of them have come out and are more comfortable with their self-identity.
- Positive change in attitudes towards transgender and intersex person's in some educators and some health services providers.

- Education institutions especially teachers are willing to influence certain parts of the school policy, looking at uniform and some parts of the subject curriculum.
- Cultural leaders are also willing to work together with RIA on advocating for rights of the intersex child / persons.
- The political parties; Leader of the opposition party Umbrella for Democratic Change (UDC) address issues of gender identity / expression in parliament after attending SADC PF meeting as well as after RIA engaged with political parties.

### **What were the major internal and external factors which shaped the development of the activity?**

#### **Internally**

- The staff knowledge and experiences has grown vastly
- Communication skills have improved the working environment within the organization
- Encouraging response by members of the community as well as stakeholders has led to reach out to greater numbers
- Increase in the number of RIA membership more transgender and intersex persons coming out)

#### **Externally**

- Request for open dialogue about issues of gender identity / expression from different and new stakeholders
- More awareness has been raised about gender identity /expression issues
- Partners understand the difference between sexual orientation and gender identity
- Rainbow Identity Association has also been able to increase the number of areas in terms of reaching out e.g. Maun, Francistown, Serowe /Palapye.

### **Expected Results**

- Working relations and relationship building between stakeholders and RIA
- Capacity and knowledge building for the transgender and intersex community
- Sensitization of health care providers, religious leaders, cultural leaders and educational institutions on the needs and issues of transgender and intersex persons

- Dissemination of information packages to different partners and stakeholders
- Awareness raising for transgender and intersex human rights for the mainstream community, stakeholders and the LGBTIQ community itself

## Unexpected results

After these interventions a number of members of parliament have become interested in working with Rainbow identity Association in trying to push for gender identity / expression strategies.

### What were the main difficulties faced?

- The fact that Botswana does not have any laws and policies that speak to gender identity/expression issues made addressing these issues with stakeholders difficult
- Getting religious institutions, health care providers and legal practitioners to dialogue on gender identity issues and sexual orientation was very difficult
- Some stakeholders gave negative feedback about SOGIE issues and how it is "un-African" and against Gods nature
- Commitment of team leaders was a challenge because of funding constraints
- There are no specific programs for transgender persons
- There is no transgender and intersex HIV/AIDS prevalence schemes hence it becomes difficult to advocate or speak on health care barriers with clinics or health care facilities
- Even though NGO health care providers cater for LGBTI persons most of their service are not specific for the transgender person especially because they are funded by government

## ANALYSIS AND LESSONS LEARNED

### To what extent has the activity worked as intended?

- RIA has been able to build working relations with different stakeholders: religious leaders especially Botswana Council of Churches (BCC), Botswana Sectors of Educators Union (Bosetu), Botswana Teachers Union (BTU), Cultural leaders, University of Botswana, Princess Marina Hospital and other individual health care providers, Botswana Family Welfare Association (BOFWA), political leaders

- Building alliances with other organizations and strengthening the advocacy movement: working with different organizations such as BONELA, LeGaBiBo, Sisonke, Health Empower Rights, Botswana Social Workers Association (BOSWA)
- Influencing positive attitudes in the mainstream community and with stakeholders- E.g. teachers now have positive attitudes towards school children identifying as transgender and intersex and are now more cautious about gender identity / expression issues
- Encouraging members of the transgender and intersex to accept themselves and encouraging them to access services.

Raising awareness on issues of gender identity and sexual orientation : the society now better understands the difference between gender identity and sexual orientation

### Key factors for success

- Team work amongst staff
- Effective communication with community members LGBTIQ
- Funding for the project
- Open dialogues with stakeholders
- Attendance of activities by LGBTIQ members and the mainstream society

### Key factors for failure

- Some target groups were not reachable or did not turn up in expected numbers for example ruling party and lawyers.
- Transgender and intersex are reluctant to express their identities.
- Low turnout for protest activities such as IDAHOT and pride marches which were meant to increase visibility of transgender and intersex human rights.
- Government procedures that take long in order to get health care providers, or government employees to join dialogue sessions.
- Access influential policy makers such as ministers due to the fact that 2014 was election year therefore difficult to access the policy makers, also the procedure to access them.
- There is a gap between stakeholders, trans\* and intersex community and facilitators during dialogues because of issues of language, approach, understanding and personal issues brought to the table by all parties.

- No strategies and policies on gender identity/ expression issues by government.

### **What have you learned?**

- even though it might advocate for transgender and intersex issues it is always best to understand and acknowledge what the transgender and intersex community members need or find as priority. The fact that people have different views of issues does not mean they cannot work together for a common goal and get support from each other.
- It is always important to build relationships before assuming that people will automatically be negative of issues that are brought forward or discussed.
- It is always good to have a monitoring and evaluation process of the trainings and workshops done to help measure the impact of the project before, during and after.
- There is still a need to engage at mainstream community level especially parents, elders and the youth on raising awareness about issues affecting transgender and intersex person within the community they live in.
- More workshops need to be done for the transgender and intersex community about self-acceptance and self-awareness

### **What would you do differently in the development and implementation of the activity focused on?**

- Engage with stakeholders more regularly to keep the momentum of the project going
- Dialogues with stakeholders to also encompass the transgender and intersex community in the same space, to create a space where the two can discuss issues without room for stigma or discrimination and also showing the visibility of the transgender and intersex community
- Make room for bigger platforms to address Sexual Orientation Gender Identity / Expression issues tackling policy change for example by attending political party congress and trade unions congresses
- Look at the legal framework and engage more legal practitioners on human rights issues
- Re – group team leaders and organizational groups to work together on projects like this to continue the implementation process in different spaces
- Identify influential people who can be ambassadors of RIA and gender identity and expression issues

- Increase outreach programs to stakeholders and government office for example Ministry of Labour and Home Affairs

## **WAY FORWARD**

### **Future Actions**

RIA will look forward to re directing /expanding the project to other areas of the country where they have realized that there is a number of transgender and intersex identifying persons who cannot access services and still are not aware of themselves and their identities and there are still issues of stigma and discrimination amongst LGBTI persons.

There is need for monitoring and evaluation of projects as well as scoping the framework well in time in order to communicate with stakeholders and measure the impact of the projects

Working on having government develop strategies, policies and laws that speak to gender identity / expression rather than having it used interchangeably with sexual orientation which hinders the advocacy aspect for RIA as well as litigation process because most of the laws speak to sexual orientation and gender as only male and female. Most of the acts cover sexual orientation, sex and gender rather than gender identity or expression

Using sports and recreation as a form of awareness raising through the RIA soccer and gender tournament; different sporting codes, also using that platform to have wellness day, health talks, inviting partner organizations such as Tebelopele, BOFWA for HIV testing, health care providers and other different stakeholders to participate in the sports and recreation activities.

RIA will look at using media as an advocacy tool when having dialogues for coverage as well as television programs and radio slots that speak to social development.

As an observation RIA has noticed that religious leaders and cultural leaders have more influence than other groups so it would be advantageous to engage more with them.

### **To which extent has this lessons learnt documentation process been useful and relevant for your organization?**

The document has been able to identify what needs to be done and the gaps that need to be filled when doing future activities and building way forward strategies.

It has also been somewhat a monitoring and evaluation process for the organization to see what is effective and what is not in building relations with stakeholders, awareness raising and for the advocacy work the organization does. This is also reference material for the organization to see how much work it has done and how much impact it has as a project and to mainstream society.

### ***What would you do differently in a next lessons learned documentation process?***

1. Targeting one group at a time rather than dealing with different groups in the same period, this would give the organization the chance to do a monitoring and evaluation process for each targeted group accordingly.
2. Involve more stakeholders in the process looking at different time scope that they are fully available to address issues.

## **Organisational background**

Rainbow identity Association is a non-governmental organization in Botswana founded in 2008 and was legally registered in 2010. It was formed by a group of activist to address the challenges faced by Transgender and Intersex community and to promote the rights, access to services and overall visibility working to minimize stigma and discrimination in the mainstream society.

## **Objectives**

1. Facilitate community organizing and movement building and individual case support for transgender and intersex persons
2. Increase visibility, participation and inclusion of transgender and intersex communities and issues into the mainstream policies , practices and activities
3. Conduct and participate in public advocacy activities and campaigns
4. Build knowledge base about transgender and intersex community through action oriented research and monitoring
5. Strengthening RIA's organizational capacity to fulfill its mandate

## **Vision**

A world where there is gender equity and justice in which transgender and intersex persons possessing all genders and diverse identities feel safe, valued and respected.

## **Mission**

RIA exists to advocate for the inclusion of transgender and intersex people across all spaces and to challenge the stigmatizing and discriminatory social treatment of transgender and intersex bodies, identities and people as unjust.



## Lessons Learned publications in this series:

43. Raising awareness of stakeholders and mobilization of transgender and intersex communities
42. LGBTI refugee programme
41. Advocating against draft anti-LGBT legislation in Kyrgyzstan
40. Integrated Training for Health Care Providers in South Africa
39. A comparison of urban and rural LGBT support groups in Botswana
38. Identifying gaps to focus on in future work through community dialogues with law enforcement, healthcare workers, students and rural villages in Lesotho
37. Creating access to health services for LGBT Community in primary health care settings in the four regions of Swaziland.
36. Lessons learned at Equidad's HIV/STI testing centres for MSM in Ecuador
35. Raising awareness in the face of ignored deficiencies in the National Police Force of Panama
34. Safety for human rights advocates and defenders in the Central American context
33. Health Care Providers' sensitization and capacity development; and community mobilization through arts and theatre in Lusaka (Zambia)
32. Moving beyond individual counselling of LGBTI people to address central psychosocial issues on community level in Tshwane (Pretoria)
31. Bonela Challenging structural barriers through the Gender and Sexual Minority Rights Coalition in Gaborone (Botswana)
30. CEDEP Advocacy Approaches in Malawi
29. GALZ Lessons learnt amongst MSM in the uptake of Male Circumcision (Zimbabwe)
28. Uptake of Post-Exposure Prophylaxis (PEP) by Men who have Sex with Men in Tshwane (Pretoria).
27. OUT's Peer Education Programme for MSM / LGBT's in Tshwane, Pretoria
26. The Pink Ballot Agreement
25. Peer Education Programme (Malawi)
24. Schorer Monitor
23. Health, culture and network: Interventions with homosexuals living with HIV/AIDS at Rio de Janeiro polyclinics
22. Telling a story about sex, advocating for prevention activities – informational materials about safe sex and harm reduction for gay men and MSM from 14 to 24 years.
21. Mainstreaming of LGBTI/MSM/WSW issues in all areas of service provision: Empowering Service Providers and Policy Makers in Botswana through trainings
20. Now we are talking! – Developing skills and facing challenges.
19. Towards a Comprehensive Health Care Service Model for Transgender People in Ecuador
18. Comparative analysis and account of the outreach process to implement a method to change behaviors of youngsters with homo/lesbo erotic feelings in Costa Rica
17. Methodology for behavioral change in teenagers with same sex feelings, from the Greater Metropolitan Area, in Costa Rica
16. Breeding Ideas: building up a young peer educators' network.
15. Prevention Images: notes about a photography workshop with young MSM and people living with HIV/AIDS in Rio de Janeiro
14. Advocacy campaign to prohibit hate lyrics targeted at men having sex with men during a dance hall concert in Suriname.
13. Interactions between young multipliers and young gays and bisexuals in internal and external activities in Rio de Janeiro (Brazil).
12. Information Stands: Prevention Project aimed at young gay men from Tegucigalpa (Honduras)
11. Ndim'lo (This is me) Photovoice with lesbian and bisexual women in the Western Cape, South Africa
10. Me&3 Campaign for lesbian and gay individuals in Pretoria (South Africa)
9. Sensitization of the National Police by transgender organizations in Ecuador
8. Exercising 'Knowledges': Implementing training and prevention activities.
7. Public Incidence Activities: In search of public spaces accessible to teenagers with same sex feelings in the Greater Metropolitan area of Costa Rica. "Specific Case: Incidence with the National Institute for Women - INAMU - Costa Rica"
6. My body, your body, our sex: A Sexual Health Needs Assessment For Lesbians and Women Who Have Sex With Women, Durban, South Africa
5. Working with buddy groups in Zimbabwe
4. 'MAN TO MAN', a joint approach on sexual health of MSM in the Netherlands via the Internet
3. Lessons learned from project "Visual information on sexual health and the exercise of citizenship by the GLBTI beneficiaries of the Organization in Quito, Ecuador".
2. Coffee afternoons: Prevention Project aimed at young gay men from Tegucigalpa (Honduras)
1. Womyn2Womyn (W2W) quarterly open day, for lesbian and bisexual (LB) women at the Prism Lifestyle Centre in Hatfield, Pretoria (South Africa)

available at:

<http://lessons-learned.wikispaces.com/English>