



Documentation of the conference

„Queer Development Cooperation Leave no queer people behind!“

2nd and 3rd of November 2023, Hamburg

Background

In 2021, the BMZ jointly with the Federal Foreign Office published the strategy for LGBTI inclusion for foreign policy and development cooperation. In March 2023 both ministries published their strategies for a feminist foreign and development policy in which queer perspectives play an important role. However, at the same time we see a major backlash across the globe against queer rights, from Uganda and Ghana to Iraq and Hungary. Thus, we know at GIZ, it is a challenge to engage and advocate for these topics in our various partner countries and integrate them in our projects. The intention of the conference in Hamburg was to bring together people from the political and activist sphere in order to jointly discuss the current discourse, challenges and opportunities for queer development cooperation.

Link to all presentations, keynote,
other relevant documents and videos:
[https://bund-laender-
programm.de/en/node/462](https://bund-laender-programm.de/en/node/462)

DAY 1 – 2nd of November 2023, Hamburg

Day 1 started with a reception in the Hamburg Town Hall hosted by the Hamburg Senate. The conference was opened by the Parliamentary State Secretary at the BMZ, **Niels Annen**, who emphasized that the federal government focuses on supporting LGBTQI+ civil society as “agents of change”. Additionally, Germany’s development policy is “value based” and thus, strives towards „a safe, free and self-determined way of life for everyone no matter where they live, who they love or what their gender identity is.” This is also brought forward in the dialogue by the BMZ with its partner countries.

Other opening remarks were made by the State Councilor from the Hamburg Ministry for Culture and Media **Jana Schiedek** as well as **Matthew Blaise** (queer rights activist from Nigeria) and **Magda Liliana Rojas Rojas** from the District Institute for Participation and Municipal Action, Bogotá, Colombia. Matthew Blaise emphasized the role of Germany in the context of pushing for queer rights in the international sphere: “With its Feminist Foreign and Development policy, Germany has set a great example when it comes to the protection of human rights, both locally and internationally, but I believe there is still much work to be done. I believe there has to be a meaningful intentional change.”

At the event on Day 1 which was open to a wider public, queer human rights activists from various partner countries (Ghana, Colombia, Venezuela, Nigeria, Serbia, Uganda, Ukraine) raised their voice to support LGBTQI+ rights. **Dr Stella Nyanzi**, a feminist rights activist from Uganda, who currently lives in exile in Germany for fear of persecution in Uganda for her commitment to queer-feminist positions, kicked off the event with a meaningful keynote speech. In her address she focused on the need “to keep talking about the human rights of queer people (...) because it breaks the silence around a tabooed subject, exposes homophobic prejudice (...) and hopefully eventually changes the everyday lives of LGBTQI+ individuals and communities.” Yet, it is essential “to find a balance between the universalising talk of human rights on the one hand, and local queer people’s realities on the other hand.”



Representatives from the German Bundestag, Hamburg Parliament, GIZ, Engagement Global and BMZ exchanged views on the relevance, approaches and challenges of addressing this sensitive topic in many partner countries. Thereafter, activists of associations and international organisations such as Outright International, LGBT+ Rights Ghana and Let's Walk Uganda rounded off the picture with their contributions and ensured that the event was geared towards the specific civil society needs and perspectives of our partner countries in line with the postcolonial approach. During the panel several aspects were highlighted, among them, two central points. Firstly, the do no harm principle must never be an excuse to do nothing. Secondly, LGBTQI+ organisations are the main drivers of change all around the globe and therefore must be the focus of funding and all other kinds of support measures.

The day closed with three inspiring project presentations about the specific integration of queer people and their perspectives in development cooperation. Firstly, Klaus Jetz was supposed to present the work of the Hirschfeld-Eddy foundation by the German Lesbian and Gay Association but was unable to join the conference due to illness. Instead, moderator Sonja Schelper presented the project "Masakhane" which aimed at empowering LBQ+ women in Southern Africa. Secondly, two representatives from the GIZ pilot project to improve services for queer people on the move in Serbia presented their past successes and challenges. Finally, the association Queere Nothilfe (Queer emergency relief) talked about their approach to supporting queer people in emergency situations, especially in Ukraine and Uganda. All project presentations can be found under the link above.



The strategy for feminist development cooperation recognises that: "Cooperation with civil society organisations, especially women's rights, LGBTQI+ and other human rights organisations, is of particular importance for a feminist development policy." **Specific demands were outlined towards GIZ and German development cooperation in general, in particular for more flexible and long-term support for queer civil society in many countries.**

Day 2: 3rd of November 2023, Hamburg

In a rather familiar setting Day 2 was focused on two sessions regarding the following focus topics:

- * Specific demands towards development cooperation from queer rights activists
- * Finding orientation to the question which role diaspora in Germany can play to strengthen queer persons rights in the partner countries.



In the first panel, queer activists from Ghana, Nigeria, Uganda, Serbia, Ukraine, and Colombia delineated the current situation and conditions for queer activism in their respective countries.

Subsequently, they emphasized their key wishes, needs and demands directed towards diaspora communities, civil society organizations, and governmental agencies in Germany, seeking support for their activist endeavors. During an exchange of perspectives with the other conference attendees, discussions revolved around essential topics such as types of support required, potential contributions by diaspora communities, civil society and governmental agencies, necessary policy or attitudinal changes to facilitate support, limiting factors and concrete steps.

Following these discussions, the activists presented their key takeaways during the closing plenary. Notable wishes, needs, and demands included:

- Flexible/alternative/better access to funding
- Simplified visa processes, along with provisions for shelter, food, and escape corridors
- Protection for human rights defenders
- Participatory implementation of the German Feminist Foreign and Development Policy



- Recognition of queer people as socially vulnerable groups
- Specific medical support and mental health care
- Decolonization of relationships
- Increased research and data
- Community-empowered programs
- Protection against sexual violence and violence from police and "security" authorities

In a second session all participants divided into facilitated groups and discussed the potential role diaspora could play to protect and strengthen queer rights. Outcomes from the groups were summarized in plenary and can be found below:

Group 1: BiPoc (safer space)

Tshamala Schweizer, Afrokids international e.V

- * It is wishful to have a clearer division of roles between Diaspora and activists in the countries - the view is that the Diaspora could be responsible to find funding without being the focus group for donors.
- * Ownership of interventions should lie with the activists in the countries and NOT with the Diaspora.
- * It needs to be invested into a unity of the different organized Diaspora. Is it possible to speak with one voice?

Group 2: Open Group

Ina Wolf, „Queer Refugees Germany“, LSVD

(Presentation to be found in link blow)

- * Relevance and reflection of the external image via internet presence and social media in the diaspora as the homepage of queer refugees is accessed more than 20,000 times a month in countries where "being queer" is a criminal offence
- * Continuous exchange on practical skills/ best practice in human rights work needed
- * Networking for more joint cooperation, especially when applying for funding
- * How can we secure joint and more straightforward application for funding, especially more agile ones in sudden emergencies e.g. due to negative changes in the law.

Group 3: Queer (safer space)

Ali Naki Tutar, Queeraspora, Bremen

- * Diaspora organisations and queer organisations can work together to support communities in the countries since they have context knowledge
- * Both organisations should receive easy-access funding to decide their own priorities on the ground
- * Lots of organisations struggle with basic necessities in Germany such as legal support, shelter etc. before they can cover international solidarity
- * Working with (queer) refugees is essential since they will transport their (queer-friendly) perspectives back in their home countries (example of Kwitne Queer's work in Berlin)

Group 4: Open Group (Spanish)

- * Strengthening and creating spaces for dialogue between NGOs and the international community
- * Strengthening advocacy
- * Diaspora: Migration - "considering those who stay" – Offer for support and counselling from those who left
- * The significance-importance-relevance of international resources (international cooperation): In monetary terms, but also using the role as an international ambassador with influence on the political sphere in the partner countries.

We would like to thank all participants for their engagements and valuable contributions to the discussion!

Project team

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Documents from the event can be found on the following link: <https://bund-laender-programm.de/en/node/462>