

## **Charting a Programmatic Roadmap for Sexual Minority Groups in India**

In September 2011, the World Bank partnered with Amaltas, a research and consulting organisation based in Delhi and the Humsafar Trust, based in Mumbai; to develop a programmatic roadmap to establish an enabling environment for improved access by the lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) community to sexual and reproductive health services. The task was carried out under the World Bank Regional Program on HIV and AIDS and utilised the platform of the Integrated Network of Sexual Minorities (INFOSEM) to reach out to groups and organisations working for same sex rights in India.

The task involved an intensely consultative process, in which the LGBT community played a leadership role. An open recruitment of participants drew people of the community into three meetings across India with the active participation of over 100 persons from the community with solicited participation from lesbian and bisexual groups which represented about a quarter of the total. The agenda of the regional consultations were developed during the consultations which were facilitated by leaders and experts of the community.

The consultations suggested that procedures to obtain identity documents need to be simplified, equal access to public spaces needs to be assured by local authorities, and difficulties in accessing public facilities, employment and social security schemes needs to be systematically addressed. In particular, the consultations indicated that access by the community to education and health services was gravely compromised. Sound sex education which caters to the needs of the LGBT community needs to be mainstreamed along with the institution of strong anti-ragging laws, and safeguards provided for the LGBT community during admission and term tests.

Society at large can also contribute to the full inclusion of LGBT populations. Homophobia and transphobia must be countered and linkages developed between wider social movements such as the women's movement, networks of people living with HIV etc. with the LGBT movement. LGBT issues must become everybody's issues by participation in events that celebrate life and the open society advocated by LGBT community such as Pride Marches, film festivals and blood donation camps etc. Media must be galvanized to cover issues on LGBT in order to sensitize mainstream society and initiate greater discussion on LGBT issues. The power of secondary groups must be utilized. Formal institutional mechanisms such as the workplace, organizations, clubs, media, religious places etc. must be used to educate people on LGBT issues.

Discrimination and stigma emerged as the single most crucial element in the lives of the LGBT community. Apart from the demand for decriminalization, the main issues that confront the community are discrimination and violence, recognition of alternative family structures, adoption and property rights, and access to social security measures including identity documentation, welfare schemes, and education and health services. Property rights commensurate with those of heterosexual couples were an important issue that came up during all three regional consultations. This demand was also linked to the recognition of alternate family structures which are often found in less accessible regions of the country. Hijra gharanas must be recognized through a legal process and extensive consultations must be held with this subsection to identify how to safeguard their property rights. In order to establish a realistic plan for the inclusion of the LGBT community into State- provided services and liberties, it was important to understand what prevents them from doing so at this time, and to develop a carefully crafted roadmap for actions that the State, community and other stakeholders can program into their day-to-day work.

<http://documents.worldbank.org/curated/en/2012/07/16514787/charting-programmatic-roadmap-sexual-minority-groups-india>