



Wilton Park



Image: Ludovic Bertron

Report

**Opportunities and challenges: the intersection of  
faith and human rights of LGBTI+ persons**

Wednesday 7 – Friday 9 September 2016 | WP1488

In association with:





## Report

# Opportunities and challenges: the intersection of faith and human rights of LGBTI+ persons

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The often challenging discussion regarding the relationship between faith, religion, sexual orientation, gender identity and sex characteristics is at the forefront of the international human rights debate, generating discourse at a number of high level meetings, including the UN Human Rights Council, the Global LGBTI Human Rights Conference and the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting (CHOGM). Conversations are also taking place in many other contexts: in national parliaments, faith spaces, educational institutes and local communities.

The Wilton Park roundtable built on work undertaken in other fora, focusing on practical ways in which to promote greater understanding of, and tolerance for, sexual minorities in the context of faith and the inter-face between LGBTI rights defenders, religious leaders and LGBTI people of faith, recognising that they are not mutually exclusive.

The meeting brought together 64 people from 27 countries, including faith communities, LGBTI and human rights advocates, selected governments, international institutions and regional organisations. A key consideration was how stakeholders from different contexts can work together to protect and promote both the human rights of LGBTI persons and the right to freedom of religion or belief and develop alliances for progressive action. The specific aims were to:

- Identify challenges facing LGBTI persons of faith, faith leaders and faith communities, and seek ways forward to raise awareness and promote equal human and civil rights
- Consider different perspectives on LGBTI equality and identify how best to work with national legislators, community and faith leaders to promote tolerance;
- Share lessons learned and best practice amongst civil society and faith groups to increase capacity to provide protection from harm;
- Strengthen international focus and collaboration on the promotion of human and civil rights of LGBTI persons;
- Further develop networks in support of advocacy groups and faith communities with a view to future joint working.

## Executive Summary

LGBTI+ people face, in varying degrees in different parts of the world, hatred, prejudice, and discrimination from people of faith. In some cases this includes violence and has resulted in deaths. These negative attitudes and behaviours are often inspired by leaders who use religious texts to justify them. Colonialism, in particular the criminalisation of homosexuality, and the role of some missionaries in spreading prejudiced views, has

contributed to the context in which these attitudes and behaviour have flourished. In recent years, the spread of Islamisation and the growth of US based Protestant Evangelical churches have intensified hatred, disseminating it in parts of the world which had previously exercised greater tolerance. To some extent, evangelicals and Islamic states have made common cause in international fora to inhibit LGBTI+ human rights.

A strategy is needed to tackle this serious global problem. The approach will vary from place to place, according to local traditions, cultural norms and needs, but common components include:

- challenging the interpretation of sacred texts
- promoting inclusive explanations of the value of human rights
- finding champions and allies to hold dialogues with faiths
- influencing and educating people of faith, champions and allies
- confronting hatred

Funding is essential to: enable dialogues; capture learning; spread good practice; create toolkits; and access theological research. Donors may need to collaborate to ensure funding is well targeted.

“Nationally, regionally and internationally evangelical activities against LGBTI+ people are growing”

## Background and context

1. North/South differences: in the north Christian churches are, generally, in retreat. If not in numbers, certainly in law where homosexuality is no longer criminalised and discrimination on grounds of sexuality is prohibited. In many countries same sex marriage is legal.
2. In the global south there are many legacies of colonialism: laws criminalising homosexuality, and the activities of missionaries ‘who bought the trust of the people’ and entrenched hateful attitudes towards homosexuality, transgender and intersexuality. This influence is amplified where there is poverty and churches can provide what the state cannot: schools, hospitals and other social goods as well as a community for people, many of whom are unemployed. The churches’ position gives them a powerful influence on cultural and political attitudes, which can include negative views of LGBTI+ people.
3. More recently, some US based protestant evangelical churches have spread hate filled messages about LGBTI+ people, including calls for execution. Nationally, regionally and internationally evangelical activities against LGBTI+ people are growing. On the international stage, at the UN, the UN Human Rights Council and other fora they are making common cause with representatives from Islamic states who are equally determined not to accord LGBTI+ people human rights.
4. The rise of Islamic fundamentalism has worsened the position of LGBTI+ people in predominantly Muslim countries eg the recent clamp down on LGBTI+ people in Indonesia. Malaysia has seen a diminution in rights of transgender people since the 1980s, prior to which they were able to live relatively freely in Malaysian society.
5. As a result LGBTI+ people in many parts of the global south are:
  - Denied access to health services, especially in the HIV/AIDS sector, because faith based organisations- often funded by northern governments and foundations- have taken
  - Excluded from schools and places of higher learning
  - Widely discriminated against in employment
  - Encountering prejudice in private and public life
  - Facing public vilification including assertions that LGBTI+ people are eternally

“The rise of Islamic fundamentalism has worsened the position of LGBTI+ people”

doomed to hell and have no rights.

- Experiencing persecution, violence and death

6. The role of the churches in the global north has been both persecutor and liberator. For example, in the 1950s the Church of England lobbied against the criminalisation of homosexuality. Today it struggles with issues around sexual orientation. The communiqué of the 2016 global meeting of primates of the Anglican Communion, influenced strongly by the Archbishop of Canterbury, contained strikingly positive words towards LGBTI+ people.
7. The main focus of the Wilton Park discussion was on Christianity, Judaism and Islam but similar issues arise for LGBTI+ people in countries where Hinduism or Buddhism is the dominant religion.
8. Public reaction to the mass murder committed by a Muslim at the gay club 'Pulse' in Orlando on 12 June 2016, resulting in 49 deaths and many injuries, provided some insights to attitudes in the global north. Some religious (and non-religious) people had difficulty acknowledging that this was both an act of terrorism and a hate crime against LGBTI+ people. For others, the massacre fuelled their already prejudiced feelings about Muslims, a minority group with whom the LGBTI+ community might be thought to have some sympathy, because of their joint experiences of exclusion and discrimination. In the Netherlands, it is more difficult for a Muslim to find a job, than to be a homosexual in the Dutch Muslim community.
9. While no two countries are the same, these insights are relevant to many countries that criminalise homosexuality as well as those that do not. In particular, people of faith recognise the decline of religion in the global north, with the growth of secularism leading to diminished congregations. In some cases this is compounded by LGBTI+ people of faith – and LGBTI+ friends- feeling unwelcome and choosing to leave their places of worship, unprepared to tolerate intolerance. In the global south, there is a perception that lawful LGBTI+ activity, including same sex marriage, is a western import.
10. It should be recognised that there are many people in both global south and north who do not consider faith and LGBTI+ issues to be in fundamental conflict and who do not hold hate filled and prejudiced views.

“there are many people in both global south and north who do not consider faith and LGBTI+ issues to be in fundamental conflict”

“The linkage of HIV with LGBTI+ people is seen as ‘proof’ of God’s judgement on homosexuals”

## Key themes

### Theology and culture

#### Main points of discussion

11. Faith is deeply rooted and can rarely be changed overnight. The language used by religious people about LGBTI+ persons often links homosexuality to paedophilia and pornography. What has driven this? Negative attitudes towards LGBTI+ people by people of faith have their roots in religious texts and the way in which these have been interpreted over time. Christian theological readings reflect the heteropatriarchy of Christianity brought by western missionaries. This places a strong emphasis on the traditional roles of the sexes and an abhorrence of homosexuality. The linkage of HIV with LGBTI+ people is seen as ‘proof’ of God’s judgement on homosexuals.
12. Is it not the case, however, that the very first religious texts are silent about homosexuality? Does prejudice come from the culture of the religion developed over time – a culture which may be indigenous or have been influenced from outside? Colonialism brought criminalisation of homosexuality to many countries; and evangelicals and Islamic fundamentalists are now helping to perpetuate negative views. The situation is exacerbated by high levels of ignorance amongst faith communities about LGBTI+ issues and people as well as veils of silence about the lived reality of their lives. Church leaders want to maintain the unity of their congregations in

an increasingly secularised world amidst which the rights of LGBTI+ people is a divisive issue.

“There is a risk that both activists and people of faith see the tensions between LGBTI+ rights and religious views and freedoms as a zero sum game”

13. In some countries where the church has a dominant position (eg Argentina and Malta) it has nevertheless been possible to pass laws on same sex marriage, secular education, and self-identity for an individual's gender.
14. Some LGBTI+ activists choose not to engage with faiths because they are anti-clerical or atheists. There is a risk that both activists and people of faith see the tensions between LGBTI+ rights and religious views and freedoms as a zero sum game i.e. that if one 'wins' the other 'loses'. Somehow strategies need to be evolved which will approximate to 'win/win'. Religious texts could provide a useful starting point.
15. There are many LGBTI+ people of faith and there are many people of faith who are not prejudiced against LGBTI+ people. There are also LGBTI+ religious role models.
16. In situations when the state abdicates responsibility to provide services such as education or health, it also diminishes the ability to exercise moral authority against churches which are providing them.

### Recommendations

“There are many LGBTI+ people of faith and there are many people of faith who are not prejudiced against LGBTI+ people”

17. Understanding of key religious texts which appear to perpetuate discrimination should be improved by using well reputed scholarly texts to challenge accepted versions eg the story of Sodom and Gomorrah from Genesis Chapter 19. A good example of a thoughtful scholarly based discussion of this story is 'Breaking Open: Sodom and Gomorrah' a 2016 booklet by Soulforce Inc.
18. More work is needed on theology and sexuality, particularly with regard to traditional and indigenous religions where it is important to challenge interpretations of the past. For example, is it true that homosexuality is a western import and did not exist in Africa before colonialism? Why was Malaysian society more comfortable with transgender people 30 years ago than is now the case under increasing Islamisation? What can other religions and LGBTI+ persons learn from cultures that have traditionally recognised a 'third gender'? How far is it possible to deploy the tolerant and inclusive aspects of religions such as Buddhism and Hinduism?
19. Queer theology, feminist theology and a theology of inclusion need wider currency, particularly in seminaries, in order to inform discussions around faith and LGBTI+ issues. Feminist theology can be used to challenge the anti-gender ideology of the religious right.
20. The promotion of more creative ways to reread religious texts would do much to encourage a change of viewpoint. In addition, contemporary stories of repentance and change can be linked to biblical stories.
21. Providing young people with greater scriptural literacy would support them in challenging the interpretations of religious leaders. Brash truth telling can be of value.
22. Recognition and acknowledgement that religions and religious texts contain within them the resources for liberation and an understanding of human psychology could underpin fresh textual interpretations.
23. It is important to challenge the view that religion is the only and key binding force in society. Challenges to religious views about LGBTI + issues are challenges to the power of religion, not to religious conscience.

“What can other religions and LGBTI+ persons learn from cultures that have traditionally recognised a 'third gender'?”

“Religious opponents of LGBTI+ rights do not accept that human rights are universal and interdependent”

“Does the language of ‘human dignity’ provide a better starting point?”

“a Malaysian court ruled that a sharia based law banning cross dressing was unconstitutional because it violated the right of transgender people to live in dignity”

“LGBTI+ groups need to keep a close watch on ‘language creep’”

## Religion and human rights

### Main points of discussion

24. Religious opponents of LGBTI+ rights do not accept that human rights are universal and interdependent and argue that there is a distinction between (a) basic human rights as enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) and (b) decriminalisation of homosexuality and same sex marriage. Some see human rights as a western concept eg transgender people in Malaysia are seen as imposing a western culture. LGBTI+ people argue that the UDHR overrides any religious view or conscience. In the global north, there are conflicts over religious conscience, for example in relation to the registration of same sex marriages. Does the language of ‘human dignity’ provide a better starting point? However, this approach may still exclude women and LGBTI+ people who are not accorded dignity.
25. The law does not change culture overnight as shown by the experience of South Africa. However, constitutions can be used to expand rights. South Africa has a progressive constitution which has enabled the courts to expand engagement with human rights discourse and balance the right to religion and the right to equality. In spite of this, surveys in South Africa show that attitudes towards homosexuality are still very negative. The Canadian charter of rights and freedoms which entrenched rights in Canadian law is an alternative route.
26. There are many examples of successful legal challenges. The landmark Kenyan LGBTI+ case resulted in the court stating that religious views should not impact on the rights of groups to register. In a recent case which challenged the criminalisation of homosexuality in Belize, the court asserted that religion cannot be determinative of constitutional rights. In 2014, a Malaysian court ruled that a sharia based law banning cross dressing was unconstitutional because it violated the right of transgender people to live in dignity.
27. In 2016, the creation of the post of a UN independent expert on violence against LGBTI+ people and the Security Council discussion and statement following the Orlando massacre showed that attempts to water down the supremacy of human rights over culture and religion can be successfully resisted.
28. Politicians may be sympathetic to decriminalisation or anti-discrimination laws but they are often anxious about the power of religious leaders and their influence on voters.

### Recommendations

29. A holistic understanding of human rights and how all benefit from the application of the principles should be widely shared. Religious people eg teachers and pastors should have generic human rights training so that they can understand LGBTI+ issues in the wider context of protection for all people. People in faith communities should take the lead and encourage their communities to support decriminalisation and end discrimination, telling human stories about human rights.
30. Challenge states on their adherence to international human rights instruments and resist attempts to insert references to ‘culture’ or ‘traditional values’ in texts in a way that over-rides human rights obligations. LGBTI+ groups need to keep a close watch on ‘language creep’ and be ready to assemble coalitions to challenge it.
31. In the US, there are many well co-ordinated people working against LGBTI+ rights. Resistance to these groups and individuals needs to be equally co-ordinated, particularly with like-minded groups, the State Department and via US embassies.
32. Challenge religious impunity. Sexual Minorities Uganda’s (SMUG) case in the US courts against the evangelical preacher Scott Lively has already silenced another anti-gay evangelist.
33. LGBTI+ groups and their allies should support law reform on wider issues such as sexual offences designed to improve the position of women and children. For example,

the prohibition of child marriage or the creation of an offence of marital rape, while removing the criminalisation of consenting adult same sex relationships, as in Mozambique.

“Those seeking a dialogue with people of faith may not know the vocabulary and language of religion”

## Language

### Main points of discussion

34. Those seeking a dialogue with people of faith may not know the vocabulary and language of religion. It is important to avoid generalisations about Christian or African ‘culture’.
35. How important is same sex marriage? Marriage is part of heteronormative society; there are other types of relationships: polyamorous relationships, bisexual relationships. Sacralising things excludes people, and can create demons in others. It is important to go beyond Christianity if the aim of dialogue is the creation of a diverse society.
36. Including bisexual, transgender and intersex issues in the dialogue may increase difficulties: people of faith may be unwilling to accept a person’s self-description of their gender. However, a more productive dialogue around general LGBTI+ issues may be possible in countries which recognise transgender or third sex people.
37. Religious people can respond to secularism as freedom **of** religion and **from** religion. Secularism is a difficult but useful concept for engagement.

“a more productive dialogue around general LGBTI+ issues may be possible in countries which recognise transgender or third sex people”

### Recommendations

38. Develop the Islamic lexicon on human rights.
39. Tone and language are important. Use the language of faith, but incorporate love and inclusion. Use vernacular expressions where possible. The term ‘patriarchy’ is not widely understood.
40. Start with the vocabulary of ‘social justice’ before that of ‘human rights’ and ‘human rights’ before ‘LGBTI+ rights’. In the first instance avoid legalistic language and interpretations, when attempting to engage. Equal access to health, clean water and education provide a more practical and consensual entry point to discussions about ‘rights’, than the language of human rights and equality. Use ‘faith’ rather than ‘religion’
41. The African concept of ‘Ubuntu’ embodies ‘a quality that includes the essential human virtues; compassion and humanity’.
42. Distinguish and be prepared to explain and define the differences between L and G and B and T and I.
43. Frame sex education in schools in terms of help and support for parents, rather than lecturing them about obligations and responsibilities.
44. Look for common ground and build on it, rather than identifying obstacles and points of difference. For example, allude to same sex marriage, but move the discussion on if this is a contentious ‘sticking-point’.
45. Be sensitive to the sense of isolation felt by non-English speakers.

“be prepared to explain and define the differences between L and G and B and T and I”

## How to effect change through dialogue: finding allies and champions, educating them and others

### Main points of discussion

46. What should be the aim of dialogue with religious groups? Change is more likely to be effective if it is driven from inside an organisation rather than imposed from outside. Engaging with supportive allies within religious organisations is an effective tactic – but not the only one. Small changes may be easier to accept than large ones so be

“Change is more likely to be effective if it is driven from inside an organisation”

prepared with some 'low hanging fruit'- small, concrete, and manageable changes. Be visible.

47. There are as many ways of initiating and maintaining dialogues, as there are societies and countries. Diversity is key.

48. Aid conditionality is not dialogue and should not be seen as the route to change.

“ ‘all over the world LGBT people are persecuted. This makes them doubt that they too are children of god’”

### Finding allies and champions

49. There are some strong allies and champions promoting positive discussion and engagement. In particular, within faith communities there are LGBTI+ role models, referenced in a recent Stonewall publication. There are some faith leaders in Africa who are pro-gay. These allies can raise sexual orientation issues from the inside, as Stonewall has done with the Anglican Church.

50. Internationally recognised South African Archbishop Tutu is a vocal champion of LGBTI+ people: 'all over the world LGBT people are persecuted. This makes them doubt that they too are children of god'. The Archbishop of Canterbury, Justin Welby is a straight ally of faith. However, the examples of Muslims who are more accepting of LGBTI+ have had limited impact to date.

51. How to empower faith leaders to speak more openly about this issue? There may be a gap between progressive leaders and the more conservative community. Progressive people of faith, especially leaders, must not be set up to fail.

52. Parents and families of LGBTI+ people are potential allies.

53. **Outside faith communities** the risk of being open about sexual orientation issues may not be as great as feared. There are individuals in some African countries who have been open about their views and have not suffered at the ballot box.

“How to empower faith leaders to speak more openly about this issue?”

Other potential allies are:

- UN agencies (UNAIDS, UNDP etc)
- Policy makers- however, they need skills and knowledge to develop their arguments, particularly in countries where homosexuality is criminalised.
  - Policy-makers may be inclined to think in terms of nation states while faith groups are likely to have a more global approach.
  - In secular cultures, policymakers may have difficulty engaging with faith groups. Should anti LGBTI+ groups be excluded from discussions?
- Celebrities (particularly those who are LGBTI+) and the media.

### Recommendations

54. Encourage religious people to use religious language and texts to challenge intolerance from within. Symbolic gestures are important- for example, a priest washing the feet of two lesbians in church; the presence of a transgender man and sex worker in a church service.

“Symbolic gestures are important- for example, a priest washing the feet of two lesbians in church”

55. Encourage religious leaders who are vulnerable about their own lives to speak out. In the UK, the Bishop of Grantham recently spoke out about his sexuality. This prompted statements of public support from the Archbishop of Canterbury and many others of faith in the Anglican Church.

56. Reach out to divinity students who have not completed their studies: they can advise on ways to challenge narratives and beliefs.

57. Ask churches in sympathetic countries in the north to stipulate that money sent to churches in the south is not used for the promotion of hatred.

58. Encourage parents of LGBTI+ children who are of faith to meet in safe spaces to

“Fundamentalists often appear powerful because they are fearful. Promote a public theology of not fearing”

discuss how to challenge prevailing orthodoxies, based on their stories.

59. Demonstrate how the faith community would benefit from a change in approach, linking to a cause which resonates with them in order to bring them on board.
60. Find stories of surprising alliances and friendships. Fundamentalists often appear powerful because they are fearful. Promote a public theology of not fearing.
61. Is there a way to link with women’s movements? If the Bible is misinterpreted or mistaken on women, the same arguments will apply to LGBTI+.
62. Encourage celebrities (royals, TV and film stars, athletes, singers and other cultural icons) to speak out.
63. Rather than tackling LGBTI+ rights issues head on, try to bring public figures behind a discrete issue such as violence against LGBTI+ people.
64. Reach out to public health people through discussion of eg. mental health, demonstrating the links to LGBTI+ people and the negative impact of discrimination and hatred on their well-being.
65. Hold private discussions with policy makers at the earliest opportunity, encouraging them to consult on policy design; share good practice and success stories, including examples whereby religious opposition has been countered. Establish a strong evidence base, including factual information regarding the financial impact of discrimination and the cost of doing nothing. Ensure policy makers have clear and well thought through arguments available. Articulate positive aspects of policy change and document negative aspects of violence and discrimination.

“Thank people, give awards, praise publicly”

66. Attempt to bring conservative voices on side before approaching policy makers in order to assure that there is broad base support and reduce the risk of hostile responses. Show policymakers evidence of faith groups engaging with LGBTI+ at public events such as Pride.
67. Encourage policy makers and other opinion shapers to convene meetings with more progressive faith leaders outside their own countries, providing an environment removed from local pressures where LGBTI+ issues can be discussed in safety.
68. The Equal Rights Coalition of governments has committed to an LGBTI+ aspect in development aid, integrating LGBTI+ into wider development. Use this to join with others in promoting implementation of the key SDG principle to ‘leave no one behind’. Probe the role of faith organisations in development; many groups receive public funds so there is scope to push for accountability and transparency and promote the principle of ‘do no harm’. Share information and experience with allies, including other NGOs and government departments.
69. Create a human rights media hub to provide a reliable source for journalists seeking answers to questions regarding human rights.

“Religious leaders should be held to account for their promotion of hatred against LGBTI+ people, including the exporting of hate speech”

70. Develop and support long term relationships with allies and champions setting out clear, limited goals, underpinned by openly stated terms of reference of purpose, shared objectives and who it will serve, as well as recognising who is excluded.
71. LGBTI+ groups should apply for membership of regional organisations in order to ensure representation at regional discussions.
72. Thank people, give awards, praise publicly.
73. Religious leaders should be held to account for their promotion of hatred against LGBTI+ people, including the exporting of hate speech, which can lead to violence and death. Queer lawyers and allies are well placed to challenge hate speech through administrative law and litigation. In some cases, direct action is more effective than dialogue in order to challenge hateful religious teachings. LGBTI+ people need to be clear where their opponents are invested and to understand when religion is being co-

opted for nefarious purposes. Mass mobilisation can be a powerful tool.

“Encourage a child centred harm reduction approach in education”

## Educating people inside and outside faith communities

### Main points of discussion

74. Many aspects of sexuality are ingrained from an early age and it is difficult to deconstruct these fundamental attitudes. Some religious groups now exclude any reference to gender, or even diversity, in educational materials because of concerns that this may open up discussion of LGBTI+ issues.
75. How can LGBTI+ people and their allies gain access to people working in education institutions in countries that criminalise? And how can they influence what is taught? This is particularly difficult in countries such as Indonesia where there is clear lack of government support.
76. Soulforce deploys nonviolent direct action in the belief that it can contribute to wider strategic campaigning. It trains young people on theological issues who then go on ‘Beyond Equality’ rides to religious schools to challenge the teachings. These and other similar actions attract media coverage, highlighting the issues. Soulforce also produces ‘Kudzu’, a national student paper for LGBTI+ and students of colour. All material is available online.
77. Telenovelas, radio plays or serials, soap operas, films, plays, museum exhibitions of people of faith who are LGBTI+ and other art forms which include LGBTI+ characters can have a powerful positive influence on attitudes.
78. Diaspora networks can be influential, but they are sometimes seen as too western influenced and out of touch with the home country.

### Recommendations

“spiritual violence regarding LGBTI+ is gender based violence”

79. Encourage a child centred harm reduction approach in education. Suggest that Sunday school teachers address sexual and reproductive health and rights. Parents of LGBTI+ children – PFLAGs - can be helpful allies in advocacy and engage with inclusive educational materials.
80. Recognise that spiritual violence regarding LGBTI+ is gender based violence.
81. Promote general teaching about human rights and evolve principles for educators that focus on diversity and promote positive stories of change. Ensure boundaries are in place to ensure that educationalists are teaching from a shared value set, rather than imposing their own.
82. Encourage parents to listen to their children with particular regard to LGBTI+. Engage mothers in their role as custodian of souls.
83. Use resources such as International Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer and Intersex Youth and Student Organisation (IGLYO): a wide range of guides, toolkits and research, which can be deployed for LGBTI+ education and wider engagement with young people. Other sources of useful material include UNESCO.
84. Embrace intersectionality as an inclusive approach, demonstrating that LGBTI+ issues are interwoven with others and are not exclusive or excluding. IGLYO has a useful Intersectionality Toolkit.
85. When challenging what is being said in schools about LGBTI+ issues and faith, ensure that alternative religious messages are provided.
86. Encourage high profile opinion pieces by prominent people of faith in the media.
87. Create appropriate and supportive social media presences, especially for young people.

“Create spaces for alliances, coalitions, and sub-regional dialogues”

88. Copy Stonewall’s ‘I’m gay, so what?’ campaign of posters and T shirts.
89. Encourage the media to seek alternative minority voices: people of colour, older voices and promote positive stories around LGBTI+ and faith, including both perspectives.
90. Invite people of faith to conduct eg opening prayers at events such as Pride. Include policy makers in these invitations to demonstrate inclusivity.
91. Amongst diasporas, create networks of LGBTI+ people to connect with people in origin countries- this could include joint bids for funding. Invite faith leaders from the home country to meet with diaspora persons of faith who are LGBTI+ or LGBTI+ friendly to demonstrate the positive benefits of LGBTI+ freedom. Use the stories of LGBTI+ people of faith and deploy their contacts to engage businesses operating in their home country, and identify pro-LGBTI+ churches, in African countries and elsewhere.
92. Create healthy and safe spaces (both physical and digital) where issues can be discussed and to reduce isolation and the risk of aggression from religious people for LGBTI+ people. These should encourage engagement from young people, their families, parents and siblings.
93. Consider proactively who might not feel safe and why safe spaces might be needed. Create spaces for alliances, coalitions, and sub-regional dialogues. Ask embassies to provide safe spaces in places where it is difficult for LGBTI+ people to meet publicly.
94. Remember and celebrate LGBTI+ successes.

“paucity of funding can lead to competition between like-minded organisations”

## Support and funding

### Points made in discussion

95. Financial support is critical to any sustained work on faith and LGBTI+, however there is currently insufficient sustainable funding.
96. The paucity of funding can lead to competition between like-minded organisations, force a focus on fundraising at the expense of core activities and limit the capacity to plan long term. It can also lead to significant regional disparities of LGBTI+ groups within and between countries.
97. It is particularly difficult to measure outcomes. Funders, mainly from the global north, generally require clear indicators of impact to accord with their funding framework. This reporting can entail disproportionate effort and may be very bureaucratic. It would be useful to develop more nuanced indicators of success including an evidence base that can be easily understood and widely applied.
98. There are some regions of the world, including South and South East Asia, which appear to be less attractive for funders in spite of serious concerns on faith and LGBTI+.
99. Funding for wider issues such as health, education, economic justice and governance, could include a faith component.

“Organisations need money”

### Recommendations

100. Organisations need money:

- to develop strategies to challenge hatred and discrimination, for alliance building, for evidence and for campaigning
- for research, including textual exegesis, to challenge the negative interpretations of faith leaders regarding sacred texts
- to help LGBTI+ activists exchange experiences and develop learning towards more effective dialogues with persons of faith and to support them in the related challenges.

“for research, including textual exegesis, to challenge the negative interpretations of faith leaders regarding sacred texts”

101. LGBTI+ organisations need resources for capacity building to conduct dialogue with people of faith. There is scope to experiment with the framework for funding requirements- exploring outcomes from a project, rather than requiring a statement of outcomes at the onset. This developmental approach could lead to some ongoing –and even unexpected- outcomes eg. the production of a ‘dialogue toolkit’ or a knowledge hub to share experiences.

102. Funders should:

- identify non-traditional stakeholders, including trans/intersex projects, demonstrating diversity in order to break with stereotypes, cast a wider inclusive net, and provide core funding.
- coordinate approaches, particularly in South and South East Asia where funding is limited but challenges persist.
- invest in story- telling about LGBTI+ and faith people bases on funded projects.

“Courts, academics, theologians and others continue to wrestle with these issues, whilst LGBTI+ people and their families, friends, partners still suffer”

## Conclusion

The conflict between faiths and LGBTI+ people has long tap roots. The rise in LGBTI+ activism and the enshrining in law of LGBTI+ equality has proved to be a profound challenge to the majority of religions, generating discourse on some fundamental issues:

- What is male and what is female? Are these the only ways to describe gender?
- Who may a person love?
- Does religion have a right to challenge what people do in private?
- Who do human rights protect?
- What happens if human rights conflict with deeply held religious conscience?

Courts, academics, theologians and others continue to wrestle with these issues, whilst LGBTI+ people and their families, friends, partners still suffer, sometimes fatally. This report sets out a number of proposals which, with support, could build on and develop work with faith communities to increase understanding, compassion, and inclusion which ultimately could lead to a better and more tolerant world.

### Philippa Drew

Wilton Park | October 2016

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