

12/04/22017

Dear Global Philanthropy Project,

ActKnowledge is pleased to apply for the proposed research consultancy on the rise of the religious right and the impact of this on LGBTI communities and individuals. This is an area of huge interest to us and we have very particular skills and experience in research and strategic planning relating to the advancement of LGBTI people. Based in the Graduate Center of the City University of New York, ActKnowledge also has extensive experience in working with grant makers and other organizations in framing effective grant making strategies based on a Theory of Change approach to analyzing the context for maximizing collective impact. These include the Rockefeller Foundation, the Gill Foundation, The Helmsley Charitable Trust, UNICEF and Oxfam,

We propose a research team led by Eoin Collins, a senior staff member in ActKnowledge with extensive experience in developing research to advance LGBTI rights in Ireland and in the United States. He was responsible for some of the most important research studies on LGBTI people in Ireland, including the first study ever undertaken on transgender people and the first study to explore the links between anti-LGBTI discrimination and poverty. He also co-edited the book *Lesbian and Gay Visions of Ireland*, which explored the ways in which the Irish LGBTI movement was able to draw on international movements to develop its own, ultimately successful, indigenous strategies to counter religious opposition to the successive gains made by LGBTI people in Ireland since de-criminalization in the early 1990s.

Dr. Hel ne Clark, Director of ActKnowledge and Zabi Rahat will also contribute to the research. Dr. Clark is an experienced researcher on policy and human rights issues. She is also a leader in the development of Theory of Change, a conceptual approach and method developed to help people identify and respond to the conditions necessary to deliver change in their particular contexts. Zabi Rahat is a research associate in ActKnowledge. Originally from Afghanistan, he is a board member of the Muslim American Leadership Alliance (MALA) where he has specifically focused on promoting dialogue within Islam to support the rights of women and LGBTI people.

From our own experience and review of research, a recurring finding in addressing the impact of the religious right is the importance of facilitating LGBTI movements in any country to develop their own indigenous theory and practice. In Ireland for example, although the LGBTI movement drew on the experiences of movements elsewhere, the most effective strategies focused on appealing to the more positive traditions in Irish society and within the main religions. The successful 1993 campaign for decriminalization of sex between men for example, appealed to Ireland's anti-colonial past and highlighted the genesis of these prohibitive laws in the British parliament prior to Irish independence. Positive links by LGBTI organizations with the churches (by appealing for example to traditions of social justice within the Catholic Church), while not

winning them over to support progress for LGBTI people, did at least soften their stance and limit their active opposition to subsequent progress.

Activists and writers have made similar points in research on the religious right in Africa and other regions. In a very religious continent like Africa, Kapya Kaoma urges secular LGBTI advocates not to degrade the Bible, the Quran or faith traditions more generally when challenging religious justifications for denying human rights. Antagonistic approaches in this context can be counter-productive and can unwittingly empower and validate narratives by the religious right that LGBTI rights are simply part of a Western, anti-religious secular agenda.

Other writers have highlighted some of the more positive developments internationally that support strategies by indigenous LGBTI movements in showing that LGBTI rights are not some sort of Western import. Human Rights Watch for example, notes that widespread support from Latin America for the UN SOGI resolution shows that the terms of debate have shifted from a North vs. South or East vs. West dichotomy to something more promising and productive.

The proposed research consultancy provides an important opportunity to draw out these issues and, in particular, to identify through the research literature and through interviews the conditions the religious right have been able to exploit in advancing anti-LGBTI social and political agendas. Understanding these conditions and understanding the basis for successful strategies developed by indigenous LGBTI movement to counter them is critical to identifying reliable examples of best practice for grant makers.

We believe our particular experience of research and policy actions on LGBTI rights, of contextual analysis of cultural and religious attitudes and our strong research background more generally make us uniquely suited for this project.

To support our application, we attach resumes for the three members of the research team as well a writing sample as requested. We also attach an additional overview of the particular experiences of Eoin Collins on LGBTI issues, including references to published policy and research.

Yours faithfully

Eoin Collins, Senior Researcher and Evaluator, ActKnowledge