SASOD Guyana

Society Against Sexual Orientation Discrimination

Social Cohesion and LGBT Communities Fact Sheet

Belonging to the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender (LGBT) community has a profound impact on one's life and draws attention to the importance of identity in society. Identities have a strong effect on how we view ourselves, as well as how others see us, and thus are catalysts for inequality, poor health, and the absence of social cohesion. LGBT individuals often struggle to accept their sexuality, and experience denial through stigma and societal influences. The anxiety that their identities are wrong or unacceptable has a direct correlation with their sense of self-worth.

Marginalized LGBT populations face inequities and human rights abuse because of their sexual orientation or gender identity. We stand at the forefront of a major international challenge as LGBT communities continue to be excluded and maltreated. The global climate for LGBT individuals is one of hostility and fear as we face societal and systematic oppression, discrimination, and lack of recognition from individuals, organizations, and whole societies that try to restrict or even eliminate our group. Depression, isolation, and suicide of LGBT people are serious crises; yet current societal trends do not allow many to seek help and guidance. In too many places, our social identities hinder our ability to maintain healthy lives. Conflicts of social inequities have a detrimental and direct effect on our wellbeing.

Governments Must Ensure Social Cohesion

Social cohesion is at its highest when tolerance for differences is demonstrated in the daily interactions across social groups within a society. [2]

The Australian Human Rights Commission (AHRC) encourages government making a commitment to build social cohesion and then implementing the policies and processes to support this. Governments must commit to social cohesion, inclusion, and non-discrimination as priorities. [3]

Essential Elements of Social Cohesion [1]

Social inclusion: process of improving the terms for individuals and groups to take part in society. It aims to empower poor and marginalized people to take advantage of rising global opportunities

Social capital: the resources that result from people cooperating together toward common ends

Social mobility: the ability of individuals or groups to move upward or downward in status based on wealth, occupation, education, or other social variables

[1] "Social Cohesion." Wikiprogress. N.p., n.d. Web. 22 Feb. 2017. http://wikiprogress.org/articles/poverty-development/social-cohesion/

[2] "Social Cohesion and Education." Encyclopedia of Education. Encyclopedia.com, n.d. Web. 22 Feb. 2017. http://www.encyclopedia.com/social-sciences-and-law/sociology-and-social-reform/sociology-general-terms-and-concepts/social-26

Social Cohesion is defined as a cohesive society that works toward the well being of all its members, fights exclusion and marginalisation, creates a sense of belonging, promotes trust, and offers its members the opportunity of upward mobility. [4] All of these must be true for, and inclusive of, LGBT individuals.

Governments need to engage LGBT communities to understand their issues. Governments need to understand these communities and where there is potential for tensions to arise between different groups. The AHRC outlines 4 steps Government can take to better engage communities, including LBGT communities: [5]

1. Know LGBT Communities: Understand the characteristics of LGBT people who live and work in Guyana and if and how this might change over time
2. Engage LGBT Communities: Identify existing or potential areas for development and build on current strengths
3. Be representative and inclusive: Ensure all voices are heard
4. Identify the Issues

Further, the AHRC recommends actions to build social cohesion need a local focus and should meet the specific needs of communities as outlined in these key steps.

Key steps	What this means
Build the capacity of the community	Empower the community to participate in planning and implementing activities
Be prepared	Work with partners to develop a plan which can be quickly activated if necessary to respond to a situation
Be targeted	Learn from others but tailor programs to meet specific needs
Engage young people	Enable young people to feel connected to their community and provide safe spaces for them to interact
Support bystander action	Develop or use existing programs to support bystanders to safely and effectively respond to homophobia and transphobia

[3] "Building Social Cohesion in our Communities." Matthew.Bretag. N.p., 18 June 2015. Web. 22 Feb. 2017.
https://www.humanrights.gov.au/our-work/race-discrimination/publications/building-social-cohesion-our-communities
[4] "Social Cohesion." Wikiprogress. N.p., n.d. Web. 22 Feb. 2017. http://wikiprogress.org/articles/poverty-development/social-cohesion/
[5] "Building Social Cohesion in our Communities." Matthew.Bretag. N.p., 18 June 2015. Web. 22 Feb. 2017.
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