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Press Release

Activist's Guide to the Yogyakarta Principles Launched

New Toolkit to advance Equality on Grounds of Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity

Activists in regions around the world celebrated today the release of a new tool for LGBTI advocacy: *the Activist's Guide to the Yogyakarta Principles*.

The Yogyakarta Principles are a set of principles on the application of international human rights law in relation to sexual orientation and gender identity. They were developed in response to well-documented patterns of abuse directed toward persons because of their actual or perceived sexual orientation or gender identity.

Today's publication - the Activist's Guide - is a toolkit, which provides an introduction to the Yogyakarta Principles, exploring how they can enhance the work of activists in advancing rights for LGBTI people around the globe. It presents several creative examples of ways in which LGBTI activists have already used the Yogyakarta Principles to make significant gains, and suggests strategies for further engagement with the Principles.

One initiative profiled in the Activist's Guide is a project by the Polish organisation KPH (Campaign Against Homophobia) called "From Berlin to Yogyakarta": these travelling billboards trace the struggle for LGBTI rights from persecution under the Nazis to the affirmation of equality embodied in the Yogyakarta Principles. "From the beginning we realised the importance of the Yogyakarta Principles," said KPH Board Member Greg Czarnecki. "They have brought international weight to our efforts to combat homophobia and promote acceptance of LGBTI people. Now the Activist's Guide will bring the Yogyakarta Principles to life for the broader community."

Vreer, of the Transgender Network Netherlands agrees: "We are using the Yogyakarta Principles to get a fundamental flaw in gender recognition legislation corrected - the requirement of sterilisation in order to legally change one's gender has to go."

In India, Voices against 377 and the Naz Foundation used the Yogyakarta Principles to support a successful challenge to s. 377 of the *Indian Penal Code* – a relic of the colonial era used to harass and criminalise members of the LGBTI communities. Sunita Kujur of CREA, a member

of Voices against 377, noted: “It is difficult to ignore something that is based on international human rights law. The Activist’s Guide is a much needed document because it is not easy for everyone to understand the applicability of the Yogyakarta Principles. It is a powerful advocacy document that can equip the community to use international human rights law in the domestic sphere - otherwise there is this big divide between the worlds of international human rights law and grassroots advocacy or activism.”

As the Activist’s Guide highlights, the Yogyakarta Principles have also been applied in South Africa to underline the need for police training and hate crimes protection in the face of continued violence, killings and so-called “curative” rape of lesbians. Recently, a group of gay and lesbian Kenyans, working together with the Kenyan Human Rights Commission, produced a publication highlighting the application of the Yogyakarta Principles in Kenyan society.

The Yogyakarta Principles have been important in guiding advocacy actions at the national level in Brazil. “The Principles are an important reference source because they contain clear definitions of key concepts, such as sexual orientation and gender identity, as well as setting out many of our demands and needs,” said Toni Reis of ABGLT, the Associação Brasileira de Gays, Lésbicas e Transgêneros. “The Activist’s Guide is an excellent tool for combating stigma, discrimination and the growing religious fundamentalism we face.”

In the Caribbean, the Society against Sexual Orientation Discrimination also welcomed the publication of the Guide: “In our activism on human rights issues”, said Vidyaratha Kissoon of SASOD, “we recognise that public education is critical - especially in Guyana and the Caribbean where colonial era laws still dominate. We therefore look forward to using the Yogyakarta Principles and this Guide to engage the Government and the general public. The Guide is especially useful to the community because many people do not understand the human rights of LGBT persons.”

“We are excited to also announce the launch of a new website: www.ypinaction.org”, said Kim Vance, Co-Director of ARC international. “In addition to providing an online version of the Activist’s Guide for download, and an order form to request printed copies, this site will track uses of the Yogyakarta Principles, and help activists around the world share their success stories. We’re thrilled to be able to provide a space in which creative initiatives based on the Yogyakarta Principles can be profiled.”

The product of a collective effort, involving many groups and individuals, the Activist’s Guide was made possible through the generous support of funders including Dreilinden Gesellschaft für gemeinnütziges Privatkapital, Fund for Global Human Rights and Hivos.

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