

Conflicting development cooperation norms about LGBT+ rights in hostile environments

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Outline

- Context: When norms collide
- Norm #1: The Sustainable Development Goals and “leave no one behind”
- Norm #2: Aid/development effectiveness and “ownership”
- Clash of norms
- How to solve the conundrum

Context: When norms collide

- Focus on development cooperation norms: SDGs and aid/development effectiveness
- Could (but won't) also examine international law, human rights law
- Using the inclusion of sexual and gender minorities as a case study

The Sustainable Development Goals (1 of 3)

- Adopted unanimously at the UN in 2015, successor to the Millennium Development Goals
- Overarching principles of universality, social inclusion
- Norm #1: “we pledge that **no one will be left behind** [...] And we will endeavor to **reach the furthest behind first**” (Agenda 2030)

The Sustainable Development Goals (2 of 3)

Implications for sexual and gender minorities

- SDG 3: Ensure healthy lives and promote well-being **for all**...
- SDG 4 Ensure **inclusive** and equitable quality education...
- SDG 8: Promote [...] full and productive employment and decent work **for all**
- SDG 16: Promote peaceful and **inclusive** societies [...], provide access to justice **for all** and build effective, accountable and **inclusive** institutions at all levels

The Sustainable Development Goals (3 of 3)

- Marginalized people have extra trouble reaching specific goals
- Small but detailed literature on how to integrate LGBTQI+ concerns into specific goals
- But what if there is a lack of “ownership”?

Aid/development effectiveness

- Series of OECD-led international high-level meetings (Paris 2005, Accra 2008, Busan 2011)
- Seek to improve aid and later development effectiveness
- Codified a series of principles, with ownership as its cornerstone

The concept of ownership

- Norm #2: Ownership means developing countries “exercise effective leadership over their development policies, and strategies and coordinate development actions” (Paris Declaration 2005)
- “national ownership is key to achieving sustainable development” (Agenda 2030)

Whose ownership?

- Modifiers: government, country, national, local, inclusive, democratic
- Executive? Legislative? How representative?
- Consultations?
- Civil society?
- Private sector?
- Majority or consensus (myth)?

Hostile environments for LGBTQI+ people

- Same-sex sexual acts between consenting adults are criminalized in 67 UN Member States, in Africa (31), Asia (21), Caribbean (9) and Oceania (6)
- Provisions for the death penalty in six UN Member States: Brunei, Iran, Mauritania, Nigeria (12 Northern states only), Saudi Arabia and Yemen

Source: ILGA World, *State-Sponsored Homophobia 2020*

Implications for sexual and gender minorities

- Many governments and sometimes popular opinion support criminalization and exclusion of sexual and gender minorities = ownership, no matter which definition?
- Compromise in development: provide discreet services to “key vulnerable populations”, especially in health, work under the radar, but can be terminated
- Not the same as rights, protection, inclusion, dignity, “leave no one behind”, focusing on most marginalized

How to solve the conundrum

- Do we need to? Weight of norms?
- Can “leave no one behind” trump ownership without be imposed? SDGs/Agenda 2030 adopted unanimously at the UN. But they also call ownership “key”.
- Must recognize the limits of the concept of ownership. An aspiration, just like the SDGs?

Alternative conceptualizations of ownership

- Inclusivity means prioritizing *all* marginalized voices and groups
- Reconceptualizing ownership as localized, contextualized ownership (with partners)
- Ownership as a process, something to be built from the bottom up
- Applicability to other marginalized groups

Thank you!