

alliance news

GALE website platform opens up to members



After more than a year of preparation, GALE opens up the website platform which will support the interaction between the members of the Alliance. The website combines a range of technical possibilities, which are commonly not found within one website management system. First and foremost, the website is a wiki-like informational platform with articles in English, Spanish and French. Secondly, the website allows members of the Alliance to see more information than the general public and to submit their own news, articles and comments.

Third, the members can use mailing lists, which allow them to easily communicate with each other through their own private mailbox, while keeping an archive of the messages on the website.

From October 2007 on, the website is open for members to register. They can do this by submitting a profile. Membership is not free. However, many potential members do not have the money to pay a membership fee. This is why the Alliance introduces a virtual currency: the edu. One edu is equivalent

to one US dollar. Edu's can be earned by doing jobs for the Alliance, like writing articles, editing or translating them, or being active in a working group. The specific combination of functions and focus on interactivity is new and it is an interesting experiment to see if the system works effectively. The Alliance will evaluate this after one year.

The next phase of getting GALE better known in the worlds of LGBT activism and education. In February, a mailing will be done to more than 1.000 contact persons,

who have been specifically involved in education about LGBT issues in the last five years. In addition, GALE will start a global quick scan to map strategies and interventions that already have been developed. The quick scan will also reach out to potential stakeholders who like to collaborate on enhancing the quality of their work in this area. The results of the quick scan will be: country overviews with a short strengths/weaknesses analysis, more GALE members and a network of country ambassadors.

African Strategy Group starts to develop media resource



In the end of September, a group of representatives from southern African organizations came together to discuss the creation of a GALE resource tool for media workers. The publication will be the key tool of the GALE Strategy in Africa. The group consisted of 5 lesbian and gay members from LGBTI organizations and 5 heterosexual members from media organizations. Collaboration between these partners is an essential element in the (southern) African strategy.

The meeting was organized by Ian Swartz and his organization The Rainbow Project (TRP). TRP is the main LGBTI organization in Namibia. Before the meeting was organized, a consultation was done among southern African organizations to explore which priorities might come up at the meeting, which was meant to create a fundament for a GALE African strategy group. From this consultation it became clear that a focus on working with the media would be a priority. The mass media have a huge influence on public opinion in Africa, but reporters are often misinformed, prejudiced or forced by their governments to report negatively on LGBTI issues.

To organize the meeting, TRP thought it essential to create collaboration between grass roots organizations and mainstream organizations from the start. Thus, 4 LGBT organizations were invited and 4 mainstream organizations. The grass roots organizations were TRP itself, LeGaBiba from Botswana, GALZ from Zimbabwe and Behind the Mask from South Africa. The mainstream organizations were the Media Institute, CMS Productions and MMP from South Africa and MISA from Namibia. Most of the meeting was spent on developing concrete ideas on how one or several media tools would look like and how they would be used in local strategies. The meeting resulted in a general description of a format (a short paper media guide and a cd-rom) and a briefing for the content of the tools. Several participants in the meeting said they would be ready to invest some own resources in the tool and the implementation plans, in addition to the international funding GALE want to raise.



European Strategy Group finishes strategic plan

In February 2007, GALE invited a group of 10 people from 7 European countries to explore the opportunities to enhance education and training about LGBT issues in the European region. At the end of the meeting, it was decided to found a European Strategy Group. In a period of 5 months, the group elaborated the first exploration into a coherent strategy plan for the next 4 years.

The first priority of GALE Europe is to collect and share good practices. To give this a good start, the group wants to do a Quick Scan project. According to the Strategy Group, the central precondition to do quality-enhancing work is to have an overview of what is being done and thereupon actively share these experiences. The Strategy Group adds it is not enough to just collect experiences. When is an experience a good practice? Which are the criteria to rate this? The group intends to develop a rating system, so GALE members can see which practices are really good or best practices.

Two other projects the strategy group likes to create are the development of an effective LGBT Training Module and an LGBT Inclusive Safe Schools

Program. These two targets are focused on mainstreaming, in other words: the inclusion of LGBT specific aspects in mainstream professional training and in school policies.

Finally, the Strategy Group notes that mainstreaming is often still not possible. Even in a "developed" region like Europe, most mainstream organizations are not interested in including the concerns of LGBT people in their services and too many



governments actively resist even basic attempts to raise awareness about equal opportunities. In those cases, grass roots organizations need to take the initiative themselves. For this, GALE will develop an educational capacity-building program, which will



support grass roots organizations in developing their own plans, projects, linking with authorities, acquiring funding and managing the projects.

GALE gets support in Brazil



Meeting of GALE with Minister Lazaro of Education. On the right, Minister Lazaro with Peter Dankmeijer, director of GALE. On the left, Toni Reis, chair of ABGLT. In the middle, Jacqueline Moll, director of the ministry and an assistant.

the health curriculum of all secondary schools. Several Senators and Members of the House of Representatives pledged their support through their parliamentary function. The Ministry of Justice explained its experiment with a mandatory online course for police officers about human rights and LGBT issues. The Ministry of Justice is willing to share the expertise from the online course globally and is also interested in international exchange on interactive training of the uniformed forces.

Meeting up with the NGOs was very successful as well. Pedro Chequer of UNAIDS was enthusiastic about the GALE plan to do a quick scan in Latin America. He offered logistical and financial support. GALE will collaborate with UNAIDS as well to organize a debate during the World AIDS Conference in Mexico City. This debate should raise the awareness that combating stigma is an important issues in the AIDS pandemic. Men who have sex with men and women who have sex with women are too often denied services and their own service organizations are denied funding because of prejudice and stigmatizing attitudes. GALE agrees with UNAIDS this stigma needs

to be combated to provide effective care and prevention.

UNESCO Brazil works closely with the Ministries of Education and Health and Education. One of the successes of UNESCO Brazil is a large scale research on sexual behavior and needs for sex education. This research showed a need for more attention to LGBT issues, which was a convincing argument to start acting. GALE will collaborate with UNESCO to promote and carry out such research in other parts of the world and to enhance the quality and scope of teacher training on how to deal with sexual diversity.

During a three day visit to Brasilia in December 2007, GALE got support from several ministries, politicians, UNAIDS and UNESCO. The visit was successful beyond expectation.

Toni Reis, chair of the federation of Brazilian LGBT organizations ABLGT and GALE advisory board member from Brazil thought it was important to make the Brazilian authorities aware of the existence of GALE and explore the possibilities for support and collaboration. He invited Igo Martini and Peter Dankmeijer to join him. Igo Martini is director of CEPAC, the Parana Center for Civil Rights, which focuses on sex education in schools, CEPAC is the main implementation partner of GALE in Brazil. Peter Dankmeijer is executive director of GALE.

They visited the capital of Brazil, Brasilia, for three days

and connected to three ministries, a range of politicians and some NGO's. In advance, a networking agenda had been prepared. GALE was looking forward to create connections between GALE and Brazilian partners in the quest to raise the quality of education about LGBT issues. In addition, GALE would be exploring opportunities for concrete collaboration on 3 events in 2008: a Latin American/ Caribbean strategy meeting, a Brazilian expert meeting on working in schools and an event on homophobia during the World AIDS Conference in Mexico City.

The visit was successful beyond expectation. Both the Ministries of Education and Health assured they were very happy with the initiatives of GALE. The GALE plans link into the Brazilian plans to implement LGBT issues in

GALE Asia proposes to embark on three projects

December 16, 2007 - The first GALE strategy meeting in Asia concluded with ideas and general plans for 3 projects: a quick scan, mainstreaming LGBT issues in NGO's and storytelling.

From 31 October until 2 November, GALE organized its first strategy meeting in Asia. After getting acquainted with some Indonesian LGBT organizations in Jakarta on October 29, the group moved to a meeting resort in Bogor. The aim of the meeting was to explore the situation of education about LGBT issues in Asia and of possible strategies and projects to enhance the scope and effect of this work. The meeting was hosted by HIVOS South East Asia and there were 10 participants, from India, Indonesia, Japan, the Philippines and Thailand. The participants noted that "Asia" is not a coherent region. It may be useful to divide the region in about 5 or 6 sub regions, based on some common features like economic development, shared religions and cultures and political realities. It was stressed that many people are speaking local languages and there is a need for translation in these. It was noted also that the participants reflect only a small part of those aspects. Another important note is that

in a lot of Asian countries, the words "gay, lesbian, bisexual or transgender" or "LGBT" are without meaning or read as Western concepts. A lot of non heterosexual activity and identities are framed in gendered or/and intergenerational contexts, for example the many traditional groups of biological men who act as women, boy-man relationships, female friendships and women priest-hoods. One conclusion from this is that GALE should adapt its mission statement and goals to integrate gender issues in a more comprehensive way. It is necessary to create local analyses and interpretations. Using Westernized concepts of homophobia are often misleading to understand the varying Asian contexts and unproductive to improve living conditions. The discussion on the situation in different Asia countries concluded with some clear conclusions. First, the needs, challenges and opportunities are not at all clear at this time. This creates a need for a more thorough mapping of the situation in all Asian countries.

A second conclusion was that in a lot of Asian countries, the governments are not yet supportive for sexual diversity. In many countries, NGOs are the only ones to build capacity and networks for social sup-

port and change. Where formal collaboration with governments is not possible yet, there collaboration with NGOs will be a stepping stone to change. A third conclusion was that basic information on the living conditions of sexual minorities is little known. Giving them a voice and support to tell their stories could be a first and basic way of education. This very first analysis led to the planning of three projects:

1. Mapping the challenges, opportunities and stakeholders in all Asian countries and publishing them in native languages on the GALE website.
2. Mainstreaming sexual diversity issues in regular

NGOs in Asia, especially in countries where the authorities are not yet open to collaboration.

3. Documenting the living conditions and human rights fights through storytelling, in order to collect campaign and training material and to reach out to storytellers as future educators and trainers.

The next Asian strategy meeting was planned in conjunction with the ILGA Asia conference in Chiang Mai (January 2008). This conference was used as a start for the storytelling project as well.



global news

UNESCO pushes for equal opportunities

UNESCO is currently planning its Medium-Term Strategy for 2008-2013. The draft plan offers ample opportunities for LGBT educationalists to link into. Of course, "Education For All" is the central issue in the long term strategy of UNESCO. Mainstreaming gender equality and upholding human rights are main issues in the plan.

Contributing to the fight against HIV/AIDS has been included in the UNESCO strategy in the past years and offers multiple opportunities.

GALE will submit a formal application to be an allied partner of UNESCO early 2008. GALE will specifically link into

the goal of UNESCO to build knowledge societies based on the principles of freedom of expression, universal access to information and knowledge, promotion of cultural diversity, and equal access to quality education, which of course is exactly what GALE is. In addition, GALE looks forward to collaboration on teacher training and intercultural dialogue through storytelling.



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new materials

Dutch National Youth Council presents peer education brochure



The Dutch National Youth Council decided last year it is important to provide young people with adequate information about sexual diversity, meaning homosexuality, heterosexuality, bisexuality and transgenderism. The Council got 10 heterosexual young people of 14 and 15 year old together and guided them to develop their own information brochure. This peer education method led to an untypical education resource, called "What's Your Flavour?". One of the girls in the group was active in the

Christian Democratic Party and got the chance to interview Prime Minister Balkenende. She asked him when he fell in love for the first time and when he found out he was heterosexual. The brochure gives correcting information for Muslim young people who sometimes are prejudiced about same sex relationships and interviews a famous Dutch male to female transsexual and a gay teenager from the countryside who recently took part in the Amsterdam Canal Pride with his own float.

In September, the brochure was pre-tested to check how teenagers, teachers and voluntary educators respond to it. The feedback was positive, and suggest the Ministry of Education should consider distributing it to all secondary schools.

local news

Brazilian government develops anti-homophobia curriculum

With effect from 2005, the Brazilian government took initial steps to implement the education clause in the national action plan against homophobia ("Brasil Sem Homofobia"). As a start, a joint committee of government officials and LGBT organizations has been created to discuss the content and strategy. During this year, several discussions will take place. In 2005/2006, the Education Ministry financed 15 projects submitted by NGOs, universities and local governments for the capacity-building of education professionals in relation to citizenship and sexual diversity. In 2006/2007, 31 such projects are being financed in 12 of the country's 27 states.

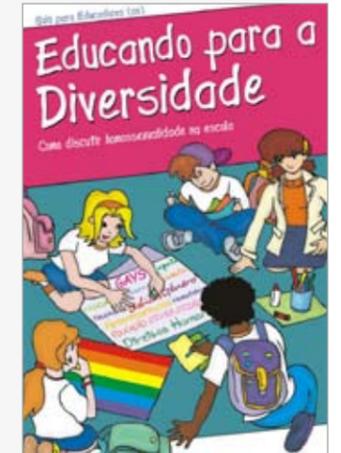
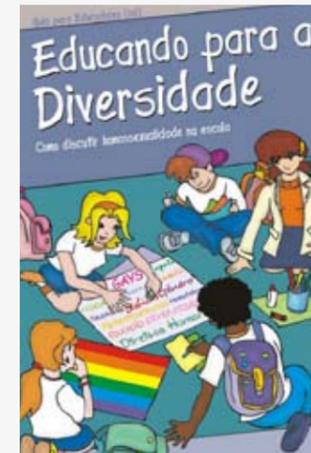
In the federal capital Brasilia, a pilot project will be done. This project, "Poder Ser" ("Can be") will focus on developing a pedagogical resource and teacher training. It aims to train at least 100 teachers. Although the focus will be on homophobia, the scope will be wider. Among other things, the project aims to "promote reflection on the socio-historical-cultural construction of human sexuality and the sexual repression that permeates it, to discuss the merits of the heteronormative model, to contribute to de-stigmatiza-

tion of non-hegemonic models and deconstruct the 'naturalized' images attributed to the male and female genders".

In 2006, schools were already 'warmed up' by the distribution of a brochure, which announced the government intention to deal with homophobia in schools.

Another example is the Educating for Diversity project, involving capacity-building for 120 education professionals from state schools in the southern city of Curitiba. A practical guidebook was also published to assist the professionals in dealing with the subject of sexual diversity as part of their daily activities at the schools.

In June 2008, GALE will collaborate with the Brazilian government to organize a national expert meeting on the implementation of anti-homophobia education.



new materials

Campaign Against Homophobia builds information website

Marta Abramowicz of the Polish organization "Campaign Against Homophobia" (KPH) is developing an educational website to inform Polish people about diversity and social inclusion in the framework of Year of Equal Opportunities for All. The website is called www.multikulti.org.pl and is online since December.

Portal focuses on all discrimination grounds, not only on homophobia. The majority of articles will be in Polish, but there will also be a section in English called "For Foreigners" presenting the main cultural differences and obstacles which a foreigner from Western World can face in Poland.

Poland faces multiple problems in combating discrimination. Not the least of all is the attitude of the government itself. The Ministry of Education recently drafted a law draft focused on banning so called "homosexual propaganda" in schools. It means that teachers who teach about homosexuality can be dismissed.

The first draft of the law even considers jail sentences for this so-called promotion.

Two years ago, Polish organizations launched a campaign to implement the Council of Europe manual "Compass" in schools. However, the Polish government thwarted the campaign by "strongly recommending not to use the manual in schools and not to invite gay activists" to explain the gay and lesbian issues. The head of the Centre of Teachers' Development was dismissed for publication of Compass. In effect, the use of the manual was prohibited. Later on the government threatened to fire any teacher giving opportunity to teach about homophobia. This gross repression of the freedom of expression forced KPH to look for other ways to provide their education. Hopefully the Polish people will find their way to the website.

