

A mosaic map of Latin America and the Caribbean, composed of small squares in shades of pink, orange, and yellow. The map is overlaid with several black warning signs (exclamation marks inside triangles). The text is overlaid on a white rounded rectangle on the left side of the map.

INTERNATIONAL DAY AGAINST HOMOPHOBIA AND TRANSPHOBIA

**STRATEGIZING
IN LATIN AMERICA
AND THE CARIBBEAN**

The International Day Against Homophobia and Transphobia ('IDAHO'), was created in 2004 to draw the attention of policy makers, opinion leaders, social movements, public opinion, the media, etc... to this issue, and to promote a world of understanding, respect and freedom regardless of people's Sexual Orientation or Gender Identity and Expression. As much as it is a day against violence and oppression, it is a day for freedom, diversity, acceptance.

The date of May 17th was chosen to commemorate the decision taken by the World Health Organization in 1990 to take homosexuality off the list of mental disorders.

There is such a diversity of social, religious, cultural and political contexts in which the rights to express gender freedom and sexual orientation and to maintain same-sex relationships need to be addressed that the International Day Against Homophobia and Transphobia is not one centralized campaign, but an opportunity for all to fight for sexual diversity and gender freedom according to the context they work in. It is a moment, a space, so that everyone, including those beyond the LGBTI movement, can take advantage of it and be involved in taking action.

The International Day Against Homophobia and Transphobia is now celebrated in more than 70 countries across the world, in the most varied ways and expressions. LGBTI organizations, governments, cities, human rights organizations, etc... have engaged in action around May 17th in all world regions and in places as diverse as Australia, Iran, Cameroon and Albania, amongst many others.

EDITORIAL

The International Day Against Homophobia and Transphobia ('IDAHO'), celebrated on May 17th, has received massive investment from organizations in almost all Latin American countries. Reports from activities developed over the past 6 years show an incredible wealth of action and imagination. The Day has been used to support public activities in the form of campaigning activities, and also, increasingly, as an instrument for political activism. The Day has provided a very unique forum for action, with specific added value.

Yet, very little had been done so far to take a closer look at how these different activities compare to each other, what they have in common and how this could generate lessons for further developments.

The idea came about to gather together activists who had done important work in the region and to discuss the specifics of the International Day Against Homophobia and Transphobia and its added value. The aim was to develop a critical and thorough analysis that could be used by activists from the region, and beyond, which would help them harness the potential that the Day brings, and to make the most out of its potential for specific agendas.

This workshop therefore implemented one of the IDAHO Committee's main missions, which is to support organizations defending Human Rights regardless of sexual orientation and gender Identity and Expression, by providing them with analytical information on campaigning and lobby strategies around The Day, and to facilitate their networking around common strategies and actions.

This workshop was developed with the strong and valuable support of the other steering committee members: ILGA LAC, IGLHRC, FELGBT and the convening organization PROMSEX.

This report cuts across some elements of analysis that we would like to share. We hope it will provide inspiration and guidance to local activists to take up the International Day Against Homophobia and Transphobia as a meaningful moment within their own strategies.

The IDAHO Committee

The International Day against Homophobia and Transphobia

The IDAHO Committee was initiated by the founders of the International Day Against Homophobia and Transphobia. Its objective is to make the Day a global moment of awareness and mobilization that constitutes a useful opportunity for everyone to promote action at all levels.

Its core strategies are to:

- ▲ **Give the initiative**, the scope, visibility and recognition that will maximize its potential as a political force at all levels.
- ▲ **Support organizations**, especially those working in very difficult contexts, to develop actions around The Day and maximize the use of The Day in their lobby and campaigning strategies.
- ▲ **Develop and facilitate** the emergence of joint mobilization initiatives and campaigns on specific LGBT issues, using The Day as a campaigning focus.

Some lessons learnt from experiences in Latin America – testimonies from the field

THE DAY CONCERNS EVERYONE. EACH GROUP CAN HAVE THEIR OWN VISIBILITY.

In each country, organizations give The Day the denomination and the scope that they see relevant. At international level, The Day is open to everyone who feels concerned with sexual and gender variance from mainstream heterosexual norms.

In some countries, the word “Homophobia” is understood as encompassing Gays, Lesbians, Bisexuals. Sometimes even Trans people. In some others, each group is made visible individually and The Day combats “homo-lesbi-bi-transphobia”.

It very much depends also on how strong the different activists’ groups have invested in other dates that provide opportunities for action, like March 8th for Lesbians, November 20th for Trans people, December 1st for people mobilising against HIV-AIDS.



IT CAN COEXIST WITH OTHER MORE SPECIFIC DATES :

In much the same way, the International Day coexists with local dates. Of course, tensions exist: in Peru, May 31st is the day that has been chosen to mobilize around Homophobia and Transphobia, as it commemorates when the Túpac Amaru Revolutionary Movement (MRTA) murdered eight LGBTI people.

“Currently, some LGBTI organizations already have pointed out that there should be more strength given to May 17th, but others indicate that perhaps this date could infringe on the commemorations of May 31st, a date that also focuses against violence and the most extreme expressions of homophobia and transphobia. I think that both dates do not oppose each other and, for that reason, we should plan a whole month of activities, that would begin on May 17th and then end with the Pride Marches in Lima and its district (which in Peru are celebrated between the end of June and the first days of July, not necessarily on June 28th). The activities would be determined by each LGBT group or activist, who should take action on each of the days. In the case of May 17th, this is a date that allows us to organize with the international LGBT movement and, therefore, we shouldn't miss this opportunity.”

Susel Paredes - PERU

“We could say that, while June 28th is a moment of celebration and of pride to be part of the LGBTQI community, May 17th is a day to expose the violation of our rights. This is an added value we see in the commemoration of this date.”

Hernando Muñoz Sánchez, Colombia

“In Brazil, Lesbians celebrate a Day against Lesbophobia on August 29th, Trans people rally on January 29th. Yet the International Day Against Homophobia and Transphobia constitutes a moment when different groups coexist and come together under a same agenda, which gives a necessary complement to more specific dates that allow particular visibilities and empowerments.”

Toni Reis, Brazil.

THE DAY BRINGS A FOCUSED POLITICAL OBJECTIVE, THAT CAN BE VERY INSTRUMENTAL IN BUILDING LOBBYING AND LEGAL ADVOCACY CAPACITIES OF THE LGBTI MOVEMENT.

“In Spain, we have celebrated the commemoration of the International Day Against Homophobia and Transphobia 'officially' since the year 2005, with various activities. Every year, we focus on one specific issue. For example, once we chose the theme of LTGBphobia in education; this year it was specifically about transphobia.”

Beatriz Gimeno, Spain



Analysis from Mexico on the added value of The Day :

- ▲ It promotes reflections surrounding Human Rights in general, as well as topics of equality and respect towards minorities.
- ▲ It encourages the development of a political conscience and sense of responsibility.
- ▲ It develops discussions surrounding sexual diversity topics, as well as the creation of spaces for these debates.
- ▲ It stimulates the creation and strengthening of practical networks between activists at local, state/region, national and international levels.

THE DAY PROVIDES A GOOD FRAMEWORK FOR INNOVATIVE AND HISTORICAL ACTION, AS IT INCREASES SOLEMNITY.

“ In May of 2010, the First March Against Homosexophobia in Caracas was organized, which culminated with a series of declarations, among them those of three members of Parliament. There were between five and six thousand people on the March. ”

Tamara Adrián, Venezuela

“ In Mexico City the First International Sexual Diversity Seminar was developed, and it involved specialists from five countries, activists and academics, and the daily presence of more than 100 people. ”

Mauricio Sáenz México

“ In Brazil the First National March Against Homophobia was put together, and hundreds of LGBTI organizations attended from all over the country. Many of them previously organized local seminars and arrived in busses to this first March. ”

Toni

THE DAY IMPLIES A CERTAIN NEED TO COORDINATE THE ACTION ON A NATIONAL LEVEL.

“ From the beginning of working to establish the International Day Against Homophobia and Transphobia (or Day against Discrimination based on Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity and Expression, as we define it in Argentina), the introduction of this date in the calendars of organizations has boosted the work, demanding an additional and superior effort of coordination for LGBT organizations, at local, national and regional levels. ”

Pedro Paradiso Sottile, Argentina

IT ALLOWS TO REACH OUT TO A VAST RANGE OF ALLIES.

Idaho offers a “neutral” or “universal” point of view: it is less perceived as associated to a specific issue/topic, such as marriage or adoption. Therefore, it attracts the attention of a potential public that would not respond to a more specific agenda. Being non-specific, it can also encourage public attention to the need to struggle against hate crimes and violence, without prioritizing sexual diversity and gender variance.

In Latin America, the participants identified various groups of interest that could potentially be contacted during the International Day Against Homophobia and Transphobia.

- ▲ The Andean Commission of Jurists (CAJ).
- ▲ Professional schools (doctors, psychiatrists, psychologists, pediatricians, lawyers, social workers, etc.).
- ▲ The trade unions and federations (such as the teachers TU)
- ▲ Student centers.
- ▲ Chambers of commerce, both national and international.
- ▲ Human Rights organizations.
- ▲ Universities and associations of graduated students from universities, such as the Latin American Social Sciences Department (Flacso).
- ▲ Transnational ‘GLBTI-friendly’ businesses, like IBM, Starbucks and Absolute.
- ▲ Public opinion leaders: actresses, actors, important sportspeople, intellectuals, writers, etc.
- ▲ Local council organizations, neighbourhood councils, etc.
- ▲ Allied social movements, with which various campaigns can be organized, for example the Association for Integral Health and Citizenship of Latin America and the Caribbean (Asical), the Committee of Latin America and the Caribbean for the Protection of Women’s Rights (Cladem), the Global Alliance for Education on LGBT Topics (GALE), etc...

IT IS ALSO A MOMENT OF CALL TO ACTION FOR BUSINESSES TO SUPPORT LGBT PEOPLE WITHOUT ALIENATING THEIR CONSERVATIVE CLIENTELE.



attention and support from LGBT-friendly constituencies.” **Toni**

THE TYPE OF ACTION DEPENDS COMPLETELY ON EACH STAKEHOLDER, WHICH OFFERS A GREAT LIBERTY OF CHOICE. ACTIONS CAN VARY FROM TOTAL SERIOUSNESS TO COMPLETE FUN.

AcciónGay initiated a campaign to name and shame various Chilean personalities who had taken public homotransphobic positions. The campaign was done over the internet, by providing pictures and texts from these conservative people. The MUMS organized a march in front of the Supreme Court, with the intention of delivering to its President a symbolic –and sarcastic– recognition for its homotransphobic actions in the year 2010.

Lukas Berredo, Chile.

In 2008, the Argentina Homosexual Community launched 1000 rainbowflag -coloured balloons to celebrate the city law giving the IDAHO official recognition and to launch our 2008 campaign “Stop AIDS”. On May 2009, we launched the “Campaign to come out of the Closet”. In 2010, CHA organised various activities, amongst which was a meeting with the “Officialist” political party to lobby them on the same-sex marriage law.

Pedro

During the week of May 17th 2010, the Banco de Brasil and Caja Económica Federal de Brasil – two major official financial institutions– exhibited the following messages in their cash dispensers receipts and bank statements: ‘May 17th: Day Against Homophobia. Our bank fights for diversity’. This is a good example of how the Day can be used to attract

Toni

In Bolivia, the days surrounding the International Day Against Homophobia and Transphobia were animated by the third edition of the International Film Festival for Diversity. During the week-long festival coordinated by the organization “Igualdad LGBT Bolivia”, the program consisted of 50 films and attracted a public of over one thousand people.

Álex Bernabé, Bolivia.

THE INTERNATIONAL DAY AGAINST HOMOPHOBIA AND TRANSPHOBIA PROVIDES AN OPPORTUNITY FOR ACTION IN CONTEXTS WHERE IT IS EXTREMELY DIFFICULT TO RECLAIM PUBLIC SPACE.

There are countries in the Caribbean where one can celebrate Gay Pride, like the Dominican Republic and Puerto Rico, but in the majority of places, it is impossible. With activists in the region we concluded that we could at least organize a great activity that would concentrate all of our efforts. This is how the idea of making a Caribbean-wide Pride was conceived. The peak event of the Caribbean Pride will be on the weekend closest to May 17th 2011. Why did we choose this date? Because May 17th is a day of great symbolism!

Mario Kleinmoedig, Curaçao



In the organization FELGTB we believe that the promotion of May 17th is especially important in those countries where it can be difficult to obtain concrete commitments. We have to work around the symbolic signification of this date, because symbols can be very powerful.

Beatriz

AS AN INTERNATIONAL FEATURE, AND GIVEN THE RAPID EXPANSION OF ACTIVITIES ON ALL LEVELS DURING THE INTERNATIONAL DAY AGAINST HOMOPHOBIA AND TRANSPHOBIA, IT HELPS TO ATTRACT THE PUBLIC'S ATTENTION AND THE MEDIA.

The IDAHO celebration can be used for meetings with representatives from political parties and unions and to get our messages across to the media, since we know that on that day we will have the media's attention.

Hernando

In Bolivia, an TV spot was developed and produced by the Ombudsman Office –with support from the STD/HIV/ AIDS National Program and the GLBT Collective of Bolivia– that mentioned May 17th as the International Day of struggle Against Homophobia and Transphobia, and June 28th as the day of Gay, Lesbian and Trans Pride.

Alex

THE IDAHO IS A TOOL TO MAKE THE GOVERNMENT ACCOUNTABLE TO THEIR ACTIONS WITH REGARDS TO LGBTPHOBIA.



“ One of the great challenges that we as GLBT activists and organizations have is to achieve that laws come into effect and don't just stay on the papers. When May 17th was instituted as the Day of Struggle Against Discrimination based on Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity in the City of Buenos Aires, the government was urged to organize actions to promote this date and to incorporate this theme into the educational curriculum. Since it did not happen, in December of 2008, the CHA used Law 104, on Access to Public Information, to demand the (right-wing) government of Mauricio Macri that it makes public any action it had organized in the framework of May 17th. They never responded, so we initiated a court case for failure to comply with Law 104 and in the year 2009 the CHA won the trial against the government of Buenos Aires, in first instance. What did they do? Well, instead of responding and admitting that they had not done anything until that moment, Macri appealed. The case went to the Chamber of Appeals, the highest justice organ of the City of Buenos Aires. Within three months, the Chamber condemned the government and evidenced that they had no political wish to obey the law.”

Pedro

Analysis from Costa Rica:

We use the International Day Against Homophobia and Transphobia :

- ▲ As a tool to 'enter' into public institutions that are reluctant to take on the subject.
- ▲ As a tool to render visible what is truly an illness : homo and transphobia.
- ▲ As a cause to generate new alliances.
- ▲ As an opportunity to create a 'new' discourse.

Daria Suarez, Costa Rica

The Day provides a regional focus

The International Day Against Homophobia and Transphobia provides a space for the exchange of information and experiences about activities on the national level. But the Day also offers focus for regional actions.

THE DAY IS A GOOD OPPORTUNITY TO MOBILIZE SOLIDARITY ACROSS THE REGION.

This action contributed to the decriminalization of same-sex relationships in Nicaragua, providing an important statement about the power of coordinated actions.

During the workshop, the participants declared unanimously their position to support strategies in the Caribbean in general and the Caribbean Pride of May 2011 project, in particular.

“ I believe the pressure from the United States, Europe and also Latin-American countries is timely and relevant. In this way, we show that support for Human Rights comes from everywhere, contrarily to what they pretend here.”

Mario Kleinmoedig

“ In May 2006, Amnesty International initiated a denunciation against article 204 of the Penal Code, which penalized homosexuality with sentences of up to three years in prison. The campaign consisted basically in picketing of the Nicaraguan Embassy of various countries. The Day constituted an obvious date for doing this at a regional level.”

Samira Montiel, Nicaragua

THE DAY PROVIDES A GOOD OPPORTUNITY TO JOINTLY ADDRESS REGIONAL STRUCTURES.

Workshop participants emphasized the importance of remaining coordinated and of deepening the collective pressure towards regional institutions. In the regional sphere, discussions in the MERCOSUR LGBT Network lead to the initiative of submitting a request to Mercosur parliamentarians to declare May 17th as a Mercosur Day against the Discrimination based on Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity.

Priority goals for future work between the workshop participants also includes the OAS, the Inter-American Commission of Human Rights, the Central American Parliament and the regional offices of UNAIDS and UNDP.

An example of regional collaboration : Campaigning against religious fundamentalism.

A particularly worrisome element expressed by participants from all over the continent was the recent increase of religious discourses referring to “conversion therapy”. In these approaches, the arguments based on morality are replaced by “scientific” approaches that borrow medical and psychoanalytic wording to preach the “abnormality” of gender variance and sexual diversity, and to propose a creative “solution” in which religious practices such as prayers and rituals mix up with psychological and psychoanalytical approaches.

The specific “therapeutical” approach poses new risks to LGBT people, adding up to the threats already borne by traditional anti-homosexuality discourses, insofar as they appeal to new constituencies who do not buy into traditional hate messages based on morality but who find in a pseudo scientific approach a legitimization of their more or less openly assumed opposition to equal rights and full visibility of sexual and gender minorities. These discourses, by promoting a sense of compassion, hit very favorable ground in internalized homophobia, leading many LGBT people to subscribe or submit to the therapy in the hope of escaping social stigmatization.

Workshop participants have identified this theme as a major focus for joint action, with the perspective of joint campaigning in May 2011. The main goal of this initiative is to create favorable atmospheres for progressive policy and legal developments, by reducing the capacity of religious extremist groups to influence public debates and to block reforms. At the same time, the campaign aims to support the voices of moderate religious leaders against homophobia and transphobia.

Using the official recognition of the International Day Against Homophobia and Transphobia to promote a national policy agenda.

Some examples:



COSTA RICA

CIPAC has worked since the year 2006 to obtain Official recognition for the National Day Against Homophobia in Costa Rica. In our campaign we were able to bring awareness to the then Health Minister, Maria Luisa Ávila, about the issue of discrimination and homophobia, as well as the risk and consequences that this homophobia brought with it when it was mostly translated into violence. Ávila showed her willingness to help us and a series of meetings started from then. Finally – after some work that was promoted mainly from Cipac –, the President of the Republic, Óscar Arias Sánchez, signed the Executive Decree.

What was important after this, was that the Decree got transformed into guidelines, manuals and other tools that truly translate into structural changes that contribute to mitigate discrimination and violence towards our people. This year we achieved a greater impact because we requested the support of two powerful public institutions: the Municipal Institute of Development and Consultancy (IFAM) and the Office of the Public Advocate. The objective was to make these two institutions urge municipalities and public institutions to concretely implement the decree. They did so and as a response we received an avalanche of letters from the municipalities and the public institutions requesting information materials, workshops, film forums and other activities to commemorate the date. The Health Ministry even exhorted their more than 90 regional departments to organize a commemorative activity; many of them called us and we found ourselves overwhelmed because we did not have the capacity to respond. Currently, we have to foster strategies to bring public institutions to assume the commemoration of this day by their own means.

Daria

BRAZIL

“As a result of the negotiations we had with members of Parliament and ministers, President Lula emitted a decree that officially declared May 17th as the International Day of Struggle Against Homophobia.”

This landmark decision builds upon the previous official recognition in nine states and 15 municipalities. Searching for the recognition of municipalities and states was a strategy that pointed towards achieving the same on a national level. We developed model texts of bills and ordinances for municipalities and states, and we did arduous legal work to reach our goal. I think this strategy was favorable, since we were creating a positive environment for the official recognition of May 17th, from the municipalities upwards. With regards to the Parliament, the bill to recognize officially May 17th at national level had been filed since 2007. And it probably will not get through, because all bills in favor of citizenship rights for LGBT people are usually blocked by religious fundamentalist members of Parliament.”

” Toni



ARGENTINA

“In Argentina in 2007, the first official recognition of May 17th was when the Municipal Council of the City of Rosario – the second most important city in Argentina – acknowledged May 17th as the Municipal Day Against Discrimination based on Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity and Expression. Since then various towns and provinces have joined the declaration of May 17th at the local and provincial levels: the Cities of Buenos Aires, La Matanza, Tucumán, Santa Fe and, more recently, the province of Santiago del Estero. A significant

fact is that this recognition – approved unanimously – not only obliged the government of Buenos Aires to organize debates during the week of May 17th about homo-lesbo-trans-phobia and discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender Identity and Expression, but it also indicated that the date had to be integrated in the school curriculum.”

” Pedro

MEXICO

“In the strategies around recognition, the devil can indeed be in the ‘details’ and sometimes a hypocritical recognition does not serve the interest of the LGBT community. In Mexico, this year, the government of Felipe Calderón officially recognized the date of May 17th as the ‘Day of Tolerance and Respect for Preferences’ and not as the National Day of Struggle Against Homophobia, as we requested. For various groups, this isn’t an achievement, because we think the day has to be named as such, as a struggle against homophobia. There was also lobbying from religious groups that oppose same-sex marriage and adoption by LGBT people. It was for this reason that it was named Day of Tolerance and Respect for Preferences, a name so general that it doesn’t say much.”

” Maurício

SPAIN

“In Spain, the FELGTB organization presented the theme of the International Day Against Homophobia and Transphobia as a matter of basic human rights. For right-wing politicians it was a good opportunity for them to prove that they supported Human Rights, even though they were opposed to marriage and other specific laws in favour of the LGBT community. As a matter of fact, they felt they weren’t committing themselves to anything, because they weren’t supporting any concrete rights; rather, they felt that they were ‘washing their faces’ (that they were getting cleaned of their bad image, in some way), that they were being ‘progressive’. What do I think? Well, I think that although the right-wing politicians felt that they weren’t giving anything, they did much more than they thought, because the recognition is symbolic. And symbols—even though it may not seem so— are crucial, because they define us as a society and as individuals. This proves that even in hostile environments, the LGBT community has adequate space for some progress. At least it’s possible to request politicians, even conservative ones, that they say ‘homophobia is bad and harmful for society’. It was like this that we were able to get all 300 members of parliament to unanimously declare May 17th as the National Day Against Homophobia and Transphobia, in May 2009. That declaration, additionally, exhorted the government to request that the UN made a similar declaration. I think that when you go for a recognition at national level, it’s always much more effective to have previously secured the support of hundreds of mayors. And it’s often more effective to have a local celebration or a rainbow flag flying over a small town as a result of this local-level recognition than to have a text coming out of Parliament, that nobody in these small towns would ever hear of. Also essential for the success of this strategy was the internal work that was done with the 50 organizations that compose the FELGTB. A briefing kit about the International Day Against Homophobia and Transphobia was distributed to each organization, so that each one of them worked in favor of official recognition on both the provincial and regional levels.”

” Beatriz

Words from the Organizational Committee

Joel Bedos, IDAHO Committee

Meeting with the activists of the Latin American region was a truly stimulating moment, full of creativity, passion, heated discussions, and long embraces. In the beginning I feared that concentrating on very specific and defined issues like “the political use of the International Day Against Homophobia and Transphobia” would be very limited and would leave some groups out of the debates. But, on the contrary, this focus allowed to unfold the discussions and to come up with a concrete plan of action.

The regional potential of The Day was especially interesting to investigate. Many ideas surged, some of which are referred to in previous pages. Others also came to light, such as creating “zones free of LGBTphobia”, in similar ways to non-smoking zones or safe zones in case of seismic activity. We also discussed the opportunity of using The Day to simultaneously publish the various Annual Reports on Homophobic Violence that are compiled and published in various countries in Latin America and the Caribbean, so as to attract increased policy and media attention.

I was very excited to see that the Day can indeed provide a good framework for organisations to develop individual and joint initiatives and I very much look forward to seeing these projects unfold in the near future.

We would like to warmly thank HIVOS for the support that has made this Latin-American workshop possible.



Fernando D’Elio, IGLHRC – LAC

In recent years, in many Latin American and Caribbean countries, significant advances have occurred in terms of the Human Rights of LGBT people, who due to their sexual orientation or gender Identity and expression, see the full exercise of their citizenship limited.

At constitutional level (or at the level of national and state laws), government programs, penal code reforms and other actions promoted by the governments (or the legislature or through the judiciary), some rights which were previously denied to LGBT people, are now guaranteed. These advances would not have been possible without the constant and prominent fight in the midst of numerous obstacles that try to prevent the imminent advance towards an inclusive, egalitarian and respectful society for all people, free from discrimination.

Nevertheless, these advances have not been consistent in the region and there is still much to do in all the countries. The incorporation of new strategies to those that are already being developed, will surely be the key to continuing on the path of equality and non-discrimination. In this sense, the establishment of IDAHO is an innovative and very efficient initiative to combat the ongoing Human Rights’ violations based on sexual orientation and gender Identity and expression. The International Day Against Homophobia and Transphobia offers a focus to combat discrimination and to create awareness of all the inequalities and sufferings that these violations generate.

Planning the implementation of this Day at a regional level, considering that it is already a global initiative, is also a way to exchange practice, to build on our common strength and to achieve more unity between the countries of the region in the fight against discrimination.

In this sense the Workshop developed in Lima, gathering activists from the region, was an excellent opportunity for that. The discussions that we had and the proposals that we developed undoubtedly enriched the initiative not only for the activists’ work in their respective countries but it also allowed us to reflect upon our work, strategies and goals in all of Latin America and the Caribbean.



George Liendo, PROMSEX Peru

In Latin America, there are few opportunities for LGBTI activists to discuss strategies that would provide a larger framework than local actions. It is gatherings like this that give the possibility of rethinking our actions and sharing our experiences, allowing for the development of key activities with greater impact in favour of our rights, generating a domino effect, in our countries, surging from particular local achievements.

Looking at our actions, sharing our conquests and our failures, and rethinking ourselves as regional allies, in Latin America and the Caribbean, does not only help our interventions have greater results, but it also helps us to confront the agenda of our opponents who, sadly, have a lot of power in each and every one of our countries.

Realities such as those recently experienced in Uganda are the product of strategies that are also experienced in Peru, Colombia, Mexico, among other countries, with the rise of so-called Homosexuality Rehabilitation Clinics, and this tells us that we need to come together as a region and promote a South-South dialogue, in order to confront the tide of global fundamentalism. Constructive dialogues, like the ones that are promoted through IDAHO, provide possibilities of developing effective actions with ample repercussion.



Pedro Paradiso Sottile, Regional Secretariat ILGA LAC

For the International Association of Lesbians, Gays, Bisexual, Transgender and Intersex people in Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC ILGA), co-organizing this workshop was an excellent opportunity to share and discuss the different activities we developed in our region to give a greater visibility to the 17th of May. As an international network of activists, with more than 700 member organizations, to take part in this reflection meant not only presenting our own agenda but also reflecting on various global strategies and how to translate them into actions that we can carry forward and advance regionally. That is our challenge and our commitment.

There have been important changes and advances in the recognition of the right to equality and non discrimination for LGBTI people in Latin America and the Caribbean that would have been unthinkable years ago. But in most cases we do not yet have the institutions to transform them into realities. However, the full recognition of our ability to access an important set of rights and protections has a huge impact on our relationships, our lives and our security, and therefore this cannot be restricted on the sole basis of sexual orientation or gender identity and expressions.

The lack of political will to enact new legislation guaranteeing full citizenship, the homophobia of the Church, conservative fundamentalism, the absence of public debate and public policy, pathological vision, the criminalization of sexual orientation and gender identity, the legitimate punitive practice, the absence of anti-discrimination laws, hate practices, physical and psychological violence, death, bullying, among many others, are at the heart of lesbophobia, transphobia, homophobia and biphobia: they limit and determine the impacts of our struggle for freedom and equality in Latin America and the Caribbean.

Our commitment is to continue working to achieve equal rights for lesbians, gays, bisexuals, transgender and intersex people (LGBTI) in every corner of the world and achieving full respect for human rights.



Beatriz Gimeno, FELGBT

For FELGBT (Federation of lesbians, gays, transgender and bisexual people) it is particularly important to support wherever possible all actions to promote equality in Latin America and to fight against homophobia and transphobia. Cultural and historical reasons, but even more so our feelings, make the Spanish feel that the situation of Latin Americans regarding LGBT rights is of particular concern to us. This is why we pressurise our government, who have already taken fundamental steps toward equality in Spain, to consider this issue when working or investing in cooperation.

The status of LGBT rights are an indicator of democratic progress to be taken into account when assessing cooperation with different countries.

The meeting in which we participated in Lima was particularly stimulating, because it allowed us to learn from dynamics and ways of working which are different from ours and it also helped us to develop a much more complete picture of the situation in Latin America that will allow us to better plan our work in the coming months. We are quite certain that the work to develop The IDAHO Day in the region will bear its results sooner rather than later.



WORKSHOP PARTICIPANTS:

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Violeta Barrientos (Peru), Global Alliance for Education on LGBT issues (GALE).

Joel Bedos (France), IDAHO Committee.

Álex Bernabé (Bolivia), Fundación Igualdad LGBT.

Lukas Berredo (Chile), Grupo de Apoyo a Hombres Trans (GAHT) y MUMS (Movimiento por la Diversidad Sexual).

Jorge Chávez (Peru), de Diario de Lima Gay (DLG) y MHOL.

Fernando D'Elio (Argentina), Latin American program of the International Gay and Lesbian Human Rights Commission (IGLHRC).

Julio Gilvonio (Peru), Investigaciones Médicas en Salud, Asical focal point in Peru.

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George Liendo y Manuel Forno (Perú), Centro de Promoción y Defensa de los Derechos Sexuales y Reproductivos (Promsex).

Samira Montiel (Nicaragua), Special Advocate for Sexual Diversity and Delegate for HIV-AIDS of the National Office for the Defense of Human Rights.

Hernando Muñoz Sánchez (Colombia), Colombia Diversa.

Pedro Paradiso Sottile (Argentina), International Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans and Intersex Association – Latin America and Caribbean (ILGA-LAC) and Comunidad Homosexual Argentina (CHA).

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