



INTER-
NATIONAL
STRATEGY
2016-2018.





Riksförbundet för homosexuella, bisexuella,
transpersoners och queeras rättigheter

The Swedish Federation for Lesbian, Gay,
Bisexual, Transgender and Queer Rights

FORE- WORD

Equality and human rights for all are fundamental for reducing poverty, establishing and maintaining peace and security and in achieving a sustainable development that leaves no one behind. Although important gains have been made, lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and queer people (LGBTQ), continue to face severe stigma, discrimination and human rights violations across the world.

It is against this background that we are proud to present this international strategy for RFSL, spanning over a three year period, 2016-2018. The strategy builds on experiences and methods developed by RFSL as well as lessons learned from engaging in international LGBT rights, development cooperation and the global arena, a commitment that dates back to 1979 when RFSL first joined ILGA.

The strategy highlights the core values of RFSL such as: meaningful participation by rights holders, gender equality, non-discrimination, transparency and sustainability. It outlines a strategic direction that will guide us in our work and provide a basis for future priorities and planning.

The strategy has four main objectives, three external and one internal; to promote LGBTQ rights on a global arena, to strengthen LGBTQ organisations in their work, to continue to support and lobby Swedish decision makers to include LGBTQ rights in foreign policy and development cooperation, and to strengthen the capacity of RFSL in our international engagement to better deliver on our mandate vis-à-vis our partners and our donors. We believe that work in these four directions in parallel is needed to continue to strengthen and better our efforts in improving the situation for LGBTQ people and contribute to sustainable change.

We encourage all members, partners, donors, allies and RFSL staff to familiarize themselves with the contents of the strategy and take part in translating the objectives into concrete actions. We look forward to working together to make human rights for LGBTQ people a reality.

All the best,
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INTRODUCTION

RFSL is the oldest organisation solely committed to the human rights of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and queer people in Sweden. Internationally, RFSL is recognised and respected as an experienced and accomplished organisation, a valuable position we wish to maintain and further develop in the next few years. This strategy builds on the experience and the lessons learned from RFSL's commitment to global LGBTQ rights; an experience that RFSL has built up over a course of more than 35 years, dating formally from when RFSL joined ILGA in 1979.

RFSL's vision is a society where diversity, and respect for diversity, is the norm; where people, regardless of sexual orientation and gender identity, and regardless of how we choose to express our gender, shall have equal rights and obligations, and equal possibilities to live our lives. This strategy will replace the current international strategy 2014-2016, and outlines the direction of RFSL's international work during 2016, 2017 and 2018, as presented in three external and one internal objectives;

1. External: LGBTQ rights are respected at a global arena.
2. External: LGBTQ communities are strong and organized.
3. External: Sweden supports LGBTQ rights internationally.
4. Internal: RFSL is a strong and responsible international actor.

Through its outlined priorities, the strategy will govern our work to achieve change within these four objectives. The strategy encompasses RFSL's entire portfolio of international work. Its implementation will be monitored regularly 2016-2018 through annual reviews. The annual review will focus on results achieved, challenges in implementation and the quality of internal processes.

This strategy will form the basis for a more long-term strategy, spanning from 2019 to 2025. Achievements under each area as well as lessons learned 2016-2018 will provide a basis for its development.

Central elements of the strategy

True change comes from within a society. As a non-governmental organisation working internationally to advance the rights of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and queer people outside of our own constituency, the role of RFSL is to support organisations and activists in their work to contribute to change.

RFSL applies a **rights based approach** where the rights holders, i.e. persons representing LGBTQ constituencies, and the priorities they identify, are at the centre of the agenda. It is only through the active and meaningful **participation** of LGBTQ people and organisations that relevant and strategic measures can be taken and a sustainable change can be achieved. A precondition is access to strategic arenas to introduce challenges, realities and identified solutions, and, by doing so, take lead in setting priorities on a local, regional and global level.

Local ownership. The developmental work RFSL engages in is always based on needs identified by our partner organisations. From the design of each project, through implementation and evaluation, RFSL works in dialogue with each partner, striving to apply the principles of responsible engagement, as outlined above with the aim of being a trusted partner. As an LGBTQ organisation with many years of involvement in, and commitment to, the global LGBTQ movement, RFSL has a unique capacity to engage in dialogue on program content and exchange knowledge and skills directly with our partners. This is also a reason why many LGBTQ organisations approach us for cooperation and support. It is our experience that programs based on ownership and partnership have the potential to be more effective and sustainable and more likely to reach its objectives than programs funded by larger scale donors with little or no capacity to engage in an equal dialogue and continuous exchange.

Responsible engagement and 'do no harm'. RFSL supports organisations in contexts where LGBTQ people face high levels of stigma, discrimination, threats and physical violence. Work to enhance the rights of LGBTQ people in these contexts is therefore often directly linked to increased security risks for the ones involved. Therefore, in all our programmes and projects, RFSL prepares a risk assessment where potential risks are identified and assessed together with measures to manage and if possible mitigate the risks. As a financial partner, RFSL should continue to be a flexible donor where the organisations and actors supported by RFSL decide what activities to implement and when. It is equally important that organisations have the mandate to cancel agreed activities if needed, for example for security reasons. As an advocacy actor, RFSL will continue to engage in dialogue with organisations in the affected countries before acting on any crises and current events, and encourage others to also consult before taking any measures.

RFSL applies an intersectional analysis in its programming to ensure that interventions are inclusive and serves the purpose of countering discrimination. **Gender equality** is an important aspect in this regard as lesbian and bisexual women as well

as transgender people in many countries and in a global context face double discrimination. Gender norms and stereotypes about LBT people have made these groups been less visible and less able to claim space and influence policy.

A Note on Terminology

A main principle for RFSL is self-determination. In this context, self-determination means allowing for local activists to set the agenda, as well as to select terminologies and identities to include in their work. LGBTQ is therefore here used as an umbrella term that attempts to encompass a wide variety of experiences and identities that members of LGBTIQ communities have worldwide. Intersex is receiving increased attention at a global level. Although the “I” for intersex is not included officially in RFSL’s work, there is nothing preventing intersex perspectives from being included in programming, or monitoring of the development of “I” inclusion. LGBT is used in this document when referring to specific contexts where Q (queer) may not necessarily be recognized, such as Sida policies.

On an activity level, interventions may be designed to reach specific parts of the LGBTQ spectrum - participation in CSW means addressing issues related to LBTI women, health interventions by our local partners may target MSM or transgender groups primarily and trans specific activities may target transgender groups.



OBJECTIVE 1: LGBTQ RIGHTS ARE RESPECTED AT THE GLOBAL ARENA

Background

In recent years the attention to the human rights of LGBTQ people - at national levels, at regional levels as well as at a global level - has increased. A driving force behind this positive development are non-governmental organisations but also governments with a long-term commitment to ensure that the human rights of LGBTQ people are universally recognised, respected, protected and fulfilled. A point in case are the LGBTQ inclusive policies in global development and foreign policy that have been adopted with examples such as two resolutions on sexual orientation and gender identity (SOGI) from the Human Rights Council in Geneva (2011 and 2014 respectively), and most recent is the Sustainable Development Goals. LGBTQ organisations and allies were very actively involved in both processes. We also see an increased demand from decision and policy makers, both from Sweden and beyond, to receive information about LGBTQ issues - a development also very much welcome.

Alongside these positive developments there has been a significant backlash observed in many parts of the world with shrinking space for civil society in general, which is also affecting LGBTQ organisations and their ability to act. In addition, their work is frequently countered by a well-organised and well-funded opposition, which has become increasingly vocal and strategic in the last few years, both on national as well as international (the UN) levels. The opposition comes in different shapes and includes both governments, conservative and fundamentalist groups and registered NGOs having access to the UN spaces, as well as right wing political groups and networks.

At a **national level**, violence against LGBTQ people is perpetrated with impunity in many countries and regions, and often with the involvement of state actors. Further, LGBTQ people are used as scapegoats in nationalist and populist political rhetoric. There are several countries that have reviewed their legislation and have criminalised,

and/or, introduced more severe punishment for same sex relationships or actions, Uganda being one example. A recent trend is to also criminalise information sharing and people working to promote LGBTQ rights. For instance, Nigeria where in 2013 the law criminalising homosexuality was reviewed and expanded to also include people working for LGBTQ organisations. Another example is Russia with its anti-propaganda legislation, threatening to spread into more Post Soviet republics.

Very few countries have any legal recognition or procedures allowing transgender individuals to change their legal gender, let alone protective legislation. As a result it may be impossible for a transgender individual to obtain an identity card with a legal gender marker that matches their identity and their gender expression, leading to discrimination, violence and abuse. When it comes to sexual orientation, as of June 2015, 73 countries still have laws criminalizing private, consensual same-sex relationships, exposing millions of individuals to the risk of arrest, prosecution and imprisonment as well as extortion. In five of these states the death penalty can be used as punishment. These laws clearly affect lesbian, gay and bisexual people but are also used to harass and persecute transgender individuals.

At the **UN level** there are countries that notoriously object to the notion that LGBTQ people have any rights at all. Several states have argued that LGBTQ persons should not enjoy the same rights as others on the grounds of respecting religion, cultural and moral traditions. One example is the Fifth Committee of the UN General Assembly, where the Russian Federation, the Africa Group states and others, attempted to limit benefits for UN employees in same-sex relationships, and by doing so actively acted against the will and mandate of the Secretary General. Another example of such discourse at the UN is the negotiations preceding the adoption of the Sustainable Development Goals. In the discussion the Arab Group, which includes Egypt, Saudi Arabia, Libya, Sudan and Nigeria argued for the removal of “vulnerable groups” from the texts as it was clear that it included LGBTQ persons. Similar attempts have been made in the final negotiations of the Sustainable Development Goals, when the Africa Group proposed to remove “other status” as a prohibited ground of discrimination, aiming to exclude LGBTQ people from the development agenda. To limit such attempts and assist in providing useful information to influence decisions it is key that LGBTQ organisations are able to participate in decision making processes at the global level. The fact that meaningful participation of LGBTQ organisations is so important is illustrated by several attempts by states to deny LGBTQ organisations ECOSOC status.

It is critical that proactive work at all levels continues and that LGBTQ organisations have the possibility to network and support each other. The work that RFSL does at a global level is central, because it enables LGBTQ people and issues to influence the agenda in arenas that were traditionally unavailable for the LGBTQ constituency. Access to high-level decision makers and actors such as diplomats, permanent missions to the UN, and also UN spaces and processes, make it possible for RFSL to support other LGBTQ organisations who do not have the same opportunities as well as have a direct impact of global developments crucial for LGBTQ persons.

Our response

LGBTQ rights are advocated at the global arena by relevant stakeholders.

Outcomes

1.1 LGBTQ organisations and actors are present in relevant UN processes and discourses

- RFSL supports and funds the participation of relevant stakeholders from the global South/East in strategic meetings at a global level to advocate for human rights and build their capacity and networks.
- RFSL's UN observer status, ECOSOC, is used by stakeholders from the Global South/East to enable their attendance at strategic meetings. It also ensures RFSL's own ability to contribute to such meetings.

Theory of change: The presence of LGBTQ rights defenders from the Global South/East as well as from RFSL will contribute to LGBTQ inclusive processes and prevent negotiations from excluding or neglecting LGBTQ rights in discussions as well as in outcome documents.

1.2 Stakeholders have knowledge, capacity and tools to engage in international advocacy

- RFSL contributes to improving the capacity of LGBTQ leaders to deliver on their mandate through capacity building on leadership, international human rights law and advocacy, as well as other relevant topics.
- RFSL contributes to improving the capacity of LGBTQ organisations in its on-going and future partnerships.

Theory of change: Advocacy brought forward by knowledgeable as well as capacitated stakeholders will effectively influence global processes and open up for relevant alliances to be created.

1.3 LGBTQ rights are highlighted at international events

- RFSL organises and participates in side events at strategic UN meetings, such as for instance the Commission on the Status of Women, together with strategic partners in the global LGBTQ movement and other strategic actors.

Theory of change: Events organised at an international level present an opportunity to raise awareness on the situation of human rights for LGBTQ persons around the world, and their priorities. These events will result in more strategic alliances and will increase awareness and understanding of the situation for LGBTQ people among decision makers, organisations and other important actors. This in turn will lead to LGBTQ rights being included to a higher extent in discussions and decisions at a global level.

1.4 Advocacy initiatives are relevant and based on an up to date analysis

- RFSL engages in continuous mapping of global and regional policy making discourses, to identify where positive change is important, possible or likely to happen if interventions are made. (The mapping and analysis will focus on relevant and strategic UN, EU and Council of Europe meetings but can also involve other relevant organisations, such as Inter-American Commission on Human Rights or the African Union, depending on developments and needs of intervention.)
- RFSL will work in close dialogue with its partner organisations to plan advocacy activities.
- RFSL will monitor the development of LGBTQ rights issues at the UN, EU, Council of Europe, and other relevant global and regional institutions such as the African Union and the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights.
- RFSL will closely monitor legislative and political developments at national level to inform global and regional advocacy.

Theory of change: These developments directly impact both RFSL and its partner organisations and will dictate strategies for work in specific contexts. Priorities and strategic alliances will be based on the mapping. This will guarantee for the most strategic use of resources in international advocacy.

1.5 Information on the human rights situation for LGBTQ persons is accessible

- RFSL will continue to produce information about developments regarding LGBTQ rights issues, and offer consultant services to produce high quality country briefs and other materials.

Theory of change: The information gathered will contribute to raising awareness on the situation for LGBTQ persons globally as well as to important developments in human rights for LGBTQ persons, possibly resulting in more actors prioritizing LGBTQ issues in their agendas.

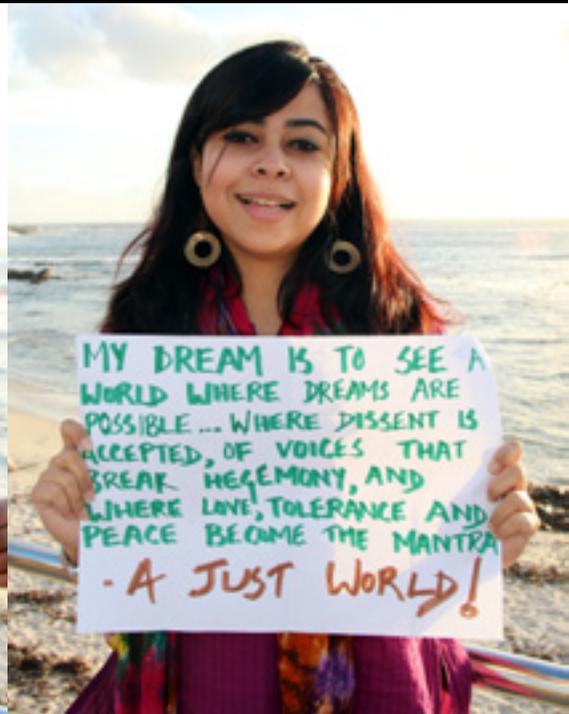
1.6 ILGA is strengthened and its meetings are characterized by democratic participation

- RFSL will fund the participation of activists from Eastern Partnership and Russia so that they can attend ILGA Europe's annual conference to facilitate dialogue between different regional actors in Europe as well as ensure that these specific perspectives are heard.
- RFSL will fund and facilitate the participation of RFSL partner organisations in ILGA World Conferences 2016 and 2018.
- RFSL will be an active partner in ILGA World and ILGA Europe aiming to promote democracy and diversity in all ILGA processes, including conferences and organisational policy making.

Theory of change: ILGA, the International Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans and Intersex Association, is the only umbrella organisation for the world's LGBTIQ organisations, with more than 1100 member organisations and present in all six regions has a unique position to bring organisations together. By facilitating democratic participation at ILGA's meetings, the agendas and priorities of the entire movement will be known and considered. This leads to a strengthened umbrella organisation with the mandate and trust from members of the entire global LGBTQ movement. Activists from underrepresented regions bring important knowledge and perspectives to ILGA, that are needed to maintain credibility as a global organisation and to be at the forefront of LGBTQ activism worldwide. Anyone attending ILGA meetings characterized by a high level of diversity also have the opportunity to bring new knowledge and new networks back to their respective setting.

Next pages: More than 120 leaders from the global LGBTQ movement have taken part in the Rainbow Leaders training programme since its launch 2013. Pictures taken in Cape Town, 2015.





OBJECTIVE 2: LGBTQ COMMUNITIES ARE STRONG AND ORGANIZED

Background

In many countries and regions, LGBTQ organisations and activists are subjected to discrimination, stigma, threats and physical violence. Growing fundamentalism, a global trend of shrinking space for civil society, difficulties in attaining funds, and in several countries, state sponsored homophobia, add to the difficulties and the increased security risks. A high level of stress and burn out among activists is common.

Parallel to the negative trends, there is more and more activism with a growing visibility and increased number of LGBTQ organisations working to advance their rights, on all levels. National level groups and organisations exist in nearly all countries around the world, and regional level platforms improve their capacity, for instance Pan Africa ILGA successfully finalized formal registration, similarly to the ASEAN Caucus for LGBTI rights.

LGBTQ people themselves, and the organisations, groups, communities and movements they form, are essential to any change process. Without LGBTQ organisations, there are no rights holders to advocate for equal rights or to testify about the needs, human rights violations and inequalities faced by LGBTQ people in different contexts. Local activists and LGBTQ human rights defenders are the experts in the field, in their hometown or country, and need to be organised for their voices to reach decision makers or other audiences with the ability to influence change. The ability to organise and advocate for your own rights is a human right in itself. Local commitment for LGBTQ rights is also the best way to ensure relevance, efficiency and also to gain legitimacy and for instance contradict a popular belief in many countries that homosexuality is something foreign, “Un-African” or a “Western import”.

The global LGBTQ movement consists of a wide spectrum of organisations; from small underground groups to national, regional and international level associations. The political and cultural contexts in which these organisations work determines their ability to act openly, to advocate and to take advantage of possible allies as well as their ability to reach out to their target group and provide a safe space for the LGBTQ community. Many organisations struggle in their effort to continue their much-needed work and are constantly weighing strategies on how to work. Some groups choose to challenge prevailing cultural norms more openly than others, sometimes using visibility as a tool, despite the risks it entails. Others operate with small-scale strategic interventions in policy-making processes and underground networks.

In many parts of the world, the only safe space for LGBTQ people to meet or access services such as legal aid, psychosocial support or health services is through spaces provided by LGBTQ organisations. Many organisations also function as social platforms with activities for members. These activities are often integral to the organisation and invaluable as a foundation for advocacy and political work. For many groups, including RFSL, social and political work is linked, as social discourses also function as a platform to bring people together to share experiences and to outline needs and strategies.

Our response

LGBTQ organisations, at local or national level, have the capacity and funding to operate and sustain regrowth.

Outcomes

2.1 Partner organisations implement programs based on local needs

- RFSL continues its engagement in partnerships customized for, and benefitting individual organisations in, Uganda, Indonesia, Armenia, Georgia, Moldova, Belarus, Azerbaijan, Ukraine and Russia.

Theory of change: The logic that guides RFSL’s work is that the existence of LGBTQ activism, and the extent of their work, their visibility or capacity is in itself a desired outcome. Keeping up with business as usual may be a very challenging outcome that requires all resources available - human as well as financial. As an in-

intermediary, RFSL will continue to work with our partners to facilitate their work to advance the rights of LGBTQ persons, as best conducted in each respective setting.

2.2 RFSL establishes new partnerships

- RFSL will explore opportunities to expand current projects into larger regional and/or thematic programs. New partnerships will draw on previous experiences of successful project programming.

Theory of change: With RFSL being one of the largest and most experienced LGBTQ organisations working with international advocacy and development work, we can use our experiences from conducting programs in a wide range of settings, to expand to new partners. By working with RFSL, partners may gain access to funding by an intermediary committed to responsible engagement and to develop flexible and customized funding mechanisms, customized to the specific needs of the LGBTQ organisations we support.

2.3 LGBTQ organisations' capacity is strengthened

- RFSL organises capacity building trainings for LGBTQ organisations and their leaders through the Rainbow Leaders training programs.
- RFSL explores opportunities to offer trainings customized to the specific needs identified by partner organisations, such as leadership, security, financial management, international advocacy etc.
- Capacity building programs are continuously part of RFSL's existing partnerships in the Eastern Coalition for LGBT Equality.
- Participants from our partners in Uganda, Indonesia and future partner countries are given priority in open calls for training, to maximize synergies between our on-going partnerships and our training.
- Exchange/internships programs are offered to staff at South/East based LGBTQ organisations to join RFSL for a period of time (2-6 months).
- RFSL facilitates for RFSL staff, volunteers and others to enter into exchange/internships programs at South/East based LGBTQ organisations.

Theory of change: Capacity building is a key element for sustainability in an organisation. The trainings RFSL give have proven to be efficient in building leadership skills and impacting an organisation's workplace culture to the better. These outcomes are crucial to many organisations that work in hostile environments with limited funding, running a high risk of exhausting human resources.

2.4 Regional and global networks are strengthened

- RFSL continues to provide space for organisations and activists to meet and conduct dialogue and establish networks in-between regions (South-South, South-East etc.) through the Rainbow Leaders training programs.
- RFSL funds and facilitates the participation of RFSL partner organisations in ILGA meetings.
- RFSL continues to conduct parts of the trainings we offer in a Southern/Eastern setting.
- RFSL strives to make use of human resources available in a group of experienced and trained activists by inviting training participants to facilitate seminars and give lectures.
- RFSL strives to accommodate the need for dialogue between South/South/East/East, which addresses the challenges of being donor dependent and required to adhere to multiple and shifting donor policies. This can be done in specific sessions in training, or in the form of articles in any of RFSL's web channels.

Theory of change: The Rainbow Leaders training has resulted in strong and long-lasting networks between activists in different countries and regions. The effect of taking part in the training, building confidence and a sense of community across borders is powerful. LGBTQ organisations are often isolated, with few other human rights organisations willing to stand up as allies. Thus, it becomes more important to have a sense of belonging within the global movement. Many times, LGBTQ activists from the Global South/East are brought together in a Northern setting, with the agenda set by Northern based organisations, foundations or donors. Facilitating exchange between South/East activists, for example by hosting activities in a South/East setting, is an important tool in strengthening networks and contributing to building confidence and community. The same principle can be applied in exchanges between LGBTQ organisations and allies such as HR organisations or other where the LGBTQ organisation can set the agenda.

OBJECTIVE 3: SWEDEN SUPPORTS LGBTQ RIGHTS INTERNATIONALLY

Background

With today's growing LGBTQ movements, and their growing influence, governments and other actors have a unique opportunity to contribute to the positive developments. With more and more countries involved in LGBTQ human rights, Sweden, through the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, including its permanent representation to the UN as well as the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency, Sida, play an important role as one of the most experienced bilateral actors in the field of LGBTQ in development. Other key actors are contributing to the Swedish position such as Swedish organisations working for human rights, women's rights and sexual and reproductive health and rights etc.

In a global perspective, Sweden stands out as one of the strongest supporters of LGBTQ rights. Policy makers have made it clear that LGBTQ persons' human rights shall be included in Swedish efforts to reduce poverty and promote human rights and democratic governance. Through its commitment to inclusive programming, funding initiatives and implementing activities to promote LGBTQ human rights, Sida is an important example for others to follow. The close contact and meaningful exchanges between Sida and civil society, which also characterises Swedish development cooperation in general, has paved the way for a responsible Swedish engagement in these issues with the rights holders themselves in focus.

RFSL has played and continues to play a highly important role for Sweden's high ranked position and credibility in a global context. RFSL provides professional expertise on human rights of LGBTQ persons rooted both in a high level advocacy and legal knowledge but also in connections to local LGBTQ organisations that provides access to first hand information. Also, the input RFSL offers is based on the most recent legal and social developments, including analysis from human rights and LGBTQ perspective as well as local perspective from RFSL's partners. It creates a

unique compilation of knowledge and credible information that cannot be accessed anywhere else. RFSL's plays a double role in this context; the organisation serves as a support and a partner to local organisations in partner countries and also strives to share the information and experiences gained with its institutional partners in Sweden and abroad, such as Sida or Ministry of Foreign Affairs. It is RFSL's responsibility and goal to ensure that the realities of its partners reach policy and decision makers in Sweden so that informed decisions regarding programmes, funding and other forms of support can be made. Moreover, thanks to our expertise, proven professionalism, and a long track record of valuable input, as well as with many close contacts with decision makers and civil servants at Sida and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, RFSL is often contacted to provide information and give feedback.

With more and more stakeholders entering the field, the need to promote and ensure responsible core values in LGBTQ programming increases, such as: local ownership, do no harm-perspectives on engaging in LGBTQ issues outside one's own constituency and aiming for flexible funding mechanisms for small organisations in high-risk contexts. These aspects are included in our dialogue with Swedish decision makers. In addition, in local contexts, support from Swedish Embassies and EU Missions can be essential. Conducting strategic bilateral dialogues, attending trials for LGBTQ activists, hosting regular meetings with LGBTQ groups and hosting pride events/receptions have all been key measures to protect and include LGBTQ activists and have also provided an opportunity to support activists at risk of persecution and harassment.

Our response

The Swedish government, implementing agencies, embassies and other relevant stakeholders, including key NGOs, work proactively for LGBTQ human rights internationally.

Outcomes

3.1 The Swedish government, implementing agencies, embassies and other relevant stakeholders, including key NGOs have up to date information about LGBTQ rights.

- RFSL arranges a variety of activities such as seminars, trainings, side events and campaigns to raise awareness among e.g. embassies, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, human rights organisations and other relevant

stakeholders. RFSL also participates in similar events arranged by other actors.

- RFSL supports government agencies with correct, relevant, and up-to-date information and advice.
- RFSL has the capacity to monitor and contribute to Sweden's engagement in human rights for LGBTQ people in relevant processes in foreign policy and development cooperation at, EU, Council of Europe and UN levels as well as bilaterally.

Theory of change: Awareness, information and knowledge are all key for commitment and taking action. Awareness raising activities targeting key Swedish stakeholders, whose actions can contribute to a positive development through policy making, dialogue or programming, will contribute to long-term engagement in LGBTQ issues. Through its close partnerships and participation in networks RFSL has unique access to essential and up to date information on LGBTQ issues globally. The sharing of this information will enable key stakeholders to engage in the most relevant and urgent actions and processes to promote human rights for LGBTQ people. Subscribing to the principles of responsible engagement, the advice and information offered by RFSL will always be based on the needs and requests by local groups.

3.2 Strategic alliances are formed

- RFSL connects local LGBTQ organisations with relevant actors such as embassies, consulates and visiting government delegations in each country, and arrange meetings with staff of relevant agencies and ministries when activists are visiting Sweden.

Theory of change: When embassies and other institutions have direct connections with LGBTQ organisations, they can make informed decisions and have increased incentives to support the work of local groups. Most LGBTQ groups will benefit from expanding their international network, not least for security reasons, as it has been evident that strategic connections and partnerships may protect activists from harassment and persecution.

3.3 LGBTQ rights are prioritized in Swedish foreign policy and development cooperation

- RFSL engages in dialogue with Sida and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs for increased inclusion of LGBTQ rights in relevant guiding documents such as results offers, strategies and policies.

- RFSL provides its expertise to governmental institutions when guidelines and steering documents are developed, to ensure the inclusion of strategic support to relevant LGBTQ programmes.

Theory of change: As a potentially cross cutting issue that pertains to human rights, gender equality, gender based violence, anti discrimination, minority rights, freedom of expression, right to health, right to assembly etc., LGBTQ rights should be included in all thematic, regional and country strategies, as well as in any targeted efforts from the ministry to enhance human rights or reduce poverty under any relevant theme. By lobbying for the inclusion of LGBTQ rights in relevant steering documents, RFSL will contribute to a continued prioritisation of LGBTQ rights in Swedish foreign policy.



OBJECTIVE 4: RFSL IS A STRONG AND RESPONSIBLE INTERNATIONAL ACTOR

Background

RFSL is one of the most experienced Swedish organisations working with LGBTQ human rights globally. RFSL is also a community based LGBTQ civil society organisation with an extensive network of LGBTQ organisations and movements globally. Our deep knowledge of LGBTQ issues coupled with our commitment to partnership and capacity development is a strategic added value in our international work.

The pool of knowledge aggregated within RFSL is a resource to many, and the regrowth of this resource is important to maintain capacity in a variety of aspects from financial management to security to remain a leading expert on LGBTQ rights in programming as well as in lobbying for the inclusion of LGBTQ rights in foreign policy including development cooperation. This strategy aims to further strengthen the capacity of RFSL, to continue to share our expertise with actors in both the global LGBTQ movement and in our dialogue with Swedish government agencies. The experiences gathered by RFSL from its capacity building partnerships with LGBTQ organisations in the Global South and East are currently used in Uganda, Indonesia, Belarus, Moldova, Ukraine, Georgia, Armenia, Azerbaijan and Russia. These ongoing projects are continuously contributing to the improvement of programming, as well as to the progress of each respective project. With this strategy, RFSL will continue to develop methods for better LGBTQ development programming and map the results of each partnership.

The guiding principles of RFSL partnerships are always local ownership and responsible engagement, where the latter refers to RFSL's aim to be a trusted partner. The results achieved by this programming have the potential to be more effective and

sustainable. Under the scope of this strategy, RFSL seeks to strengthen its capacity in **sub-granting**. As an LGBTQ organisation, RFSL has a unique position, shared with only few other actors (such as LLH Norway, COC Netherlands), to build partnerships not “merely” as financial or capacity building partner, but as a partner in the global LGBTQ movement, in which RFSL is a respected and well known actor. We will further improve our partnerships and allocate additional human resources to provide support to our partner organisations; to continue a dialogue on security and wellbeing, to look at best practises and knowledge sharing and to enable RFSL as a flexible partner.

RFSL seeks to improve and systematize its communication and to engage the local chapters in its international work. This will enable a wider outreach to a Swedish general public and make strategic use of internal resources. With an increased outreach we are in a better position to share information and knowledge and engage more people in the fight for human rights for LGBTQ people. Increased knowledge of the important, relevant and needed work of RFSL will also provide a foundation for fundraising in Sweden which we see as crucial for financial sustainability including the ability to seek and implement projects where own contribution is needed and to plan and implement projects without being driven by external donor agendas. Increased fundraising would also mean increased flexibility to engage in ad hoc initiatives and or be flexible for security reasons. Engaging the local chapters could mean arranging panels and seminars, link up the chapters with activists in other countries and be more visible in local media.

Our response

RFSL has sufficient capacity to develop its expertise in international LGBTQ issues and its role as a key actor and trusted partner in the global struggle for LGBTQ human rights internationally.

Outcomes

4.1 Strengthened organisational capacity

- RFSL engages in internal capacity building activities, based on a needs assessment that is updated annually. Capacity building involves, but is not limited to: training, development of procedures and policies, improved internal communication, documentation, updated software etc.

The activities serve to further develop RFSL's capacity in:

- Risk management and security
- Financial management (especially sub-granting)
- Program management
- Sustained knowledge in LGBTQ rights

Theory of change: For any part of this strategy to be realised, RFSL has to maintain and develop its internal capacity to be able to conduct relevant programming and deliver project results, as well as financial and narrative reporting.

4.2 Financial support from a wide pool of donors

- RFSL engages in strategic fundraising from a wide pool of donors, including Sida, other national development agencies, EU mechanisms, and corporate fundraising.
- RFSL will continue and increase its public fundraising in Sweden.

Theory of change: The core funding available from Sida to support this strategy 2016-2018 can cover staff and overhead costs, together with some activities. To implement other activities, RFSL must secure funding from other sources.

4.3 Development of effective and relevant methods for partnership programmes

- RFSL further develops methods and strategies for organisational assessments of local partners,
- RFSL monitors and evaluates the progress and look into reporting mechanisms between RFSL and partners as well as RFSL and our donors.

Theory of change: To be able to expand our work with sub granting, and remain an intermediary with financial and human resources to be an appreciated and trusted small-scale donor, RFSL needs to strengthen its capacity.

4.4 Methods for a responsible international engagement are developed and spread

- RFSL continues its engagement in the Amsterdam network, to discuss and share principles of responsible international engagement in LGBTQ rights outside of the stakeholder's own constituency.

- RFSL participates in events at a global and regional level, such as ILGA Europe and ILGA World meetings, to share experiences and best practises.
- RFSL continues to map, document and analyse methods for responsible LGBTQ programming.
- Monitoring of program progress and development of tool kit for LGBTQ programming.

Theory of change: To maintain our competence, RFSL needs to maintain our networks of other NGOs working with international LGBTQ rights, and engage in continuous dialogue on the challenges present at any given time. Keeping up to date with the developments within the field, and compiling and presenting our own experiences to others, is essential to maintain this role.

4.5 Increased knowledge and engagement among a Swedish public in the work to promote the rights of LGBTQ people internationally

- RFSL facilitates for RFSL's local chapters that want to engage in activities such as campaigns and manifestations, to raise awareness on global LGBTQ issues among the general public in Sweden.
- RFSL will increase its communication vis-à-vis a Swedish audience through our webpage, country reports and press releases.
- RFSL will continue to arrange open seminars, panels and other events with participants from partner organisations and other LGBTQ activists.

Theory of change: A public understanding of LGBTQ issues globally will strengthen the mandate of Sweden to invest and engage in LGBTQ rights initiatives in development aid and foreign policy. Increased awareness about the situation of LGBTQ persons in other countries and regions and the role of RFSL in promoting rights and reaching change will enable RFSL to fundraise in Sweden. Increased fundraising and a more diverse funding base will improve our independence and enable a needed expansion.



RFSL is one of the world's oldest LGBTQ organisations, founded in Stockholm, Sweden in 1950. With a commitment to equal rights for LGBTQ persons locally, nationally as well as internationally our work is based on core principles of local ownership, a rights based approach and responsible engagement outside of our own constituency.

This strategy aims to guide the work that RFSL does to improve rights and living conditions for LGBTQ people globally 2016-2018.

