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Article 1 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights of 1948 states that «all human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights.» The Declaration is of a binding nature for all countries that accede to the United Nations. But despite this universal applicability, the most basic human rights are still not being upheld in many parts of the world and space for civil-society work is being curtailed. In many countries, such as Egypt and Russia, civil-society engagement is a criminal offence under legislation on NGOs. In concrete terms, these shrinking spaces often mean that people who campaign for the rule of law, tolerance, a vibrant democracy and a diverse society face harassment and violence and harbor human rights violations.

Endeavours to ensure that human rights are respected and strengthened throughout the world form the cornerstone of German foreign policy. Germany is a contracting party to almost all human rights agreements drawn up by the United Nations and Europe. Not only does Germany’s Basic Law express unambiguous commitment to this principle, it also defines a clear task for policymakers: «Human dignity shall be inviolable. To respect and protect it shall be the duty of all state authority. The German people therefore acknowledge inviolable and inalienable human rights as the basis of every community, of peace and of justice in the world.» This applies to all action taken by the state and thus also to foreign policy.

We are using our current membership of the UN Security Council and the UN Human Rights Council to flag up human rights issues at the global level. Such issues will also be an important part of Germany’s Presidency of the Council of the EU in the second half of 2020 when we aim to adopt a horizontal sanctions regime to protect human rights. In concrete terms, this means that individuals can be sanctioned by the EU, irrespective of where their transgressions occurred. This would enable the EU to penalise grave human rights violations such as genocide, torture, slavery, the systematic use of sexual violence as a weapon and so on. But alongside our endeavours at global and EU level, supporting human rights defenders on the ground remains particularly important to me. In many countries, these individuals increasingly face repression, threats, violence and even murder. Human rights defenders who campaign for the rights of LGBTQ people are often the first to experience repression, as homosexuality remains a criminal offence in dozens of countries. In eleven nations, including Saudi Arabia and Iran, for example, homosexuality is punishable by the death penalty. This is unacceptable.

German embassies around the world thus actively support human rights defenders, be this through regular meetings, fostering contacts between them, symbolic visits, accompanying people to appointments, work at the political level, public statements or trial observation. Since 2016, the Franco-German Prize for Human Rights and the Rule of Law has been awarded annually on 10 December, that is, the date on which the UN General Assembly adopted the Universal Declaration of Human Rights in 1948. The prize is awarded to 15 human rights defenders from all over the world in honour of their commitment to human rights. Furthermore, the Federal Foreign Office funds over 100 human rights projects worldwide every year.

The focus of our work around the world is on strengthening civil-society stakeholders and organisations and creating new spaces. In response to the shrinking spaces imposed by many governments, we see it as our role to counter this trend by making a concerted effort to create new spaces and to expand existing ones. We repeatedly underline that it is essential for our multilateral work that civil society have access to the United Nations. We openly criticise the repression and intimidation of human rights defenders who work, or want to work, with the United Nations. Egypt is one example of this. Our embassies’ work and engagement on the ground makes them particularly well placed to lobby for spaces to be expanded again.

However, we need close partners such as ifa (Institut für Auslandsbeziehungen) for this work. In its Cross-Culture Programme (CCP), ifa helps to strengthen civil society and its networks through personal contacts, empowerment, sharing best practice and getting joint projects off the ground. Through its CCP Fellowships, ifa supports around 100 professionals and volunteers from over 40 countries each year. During practical training in civil-society host organisations in Germany or CCP partner countries, participants improve their expertise, make useful contacts, acquire intercultural skills and familiarise themselves with the day-to-day work of partners in other countries. Through its growing alumni network, ifa offers alumni and civil-society organisations further networking, training and discussion opportunities. In cooperation with ifa, we are also setting up the Elisabeth Selbert Initiative, a new initiative to support human rights defenders. The main aim of this initiative is to provide support locally and regionally to human rights defenders facing acute threats and to provide them with temporary respite if necessary, either in the region where they live or as a last resort in Germany, should no other option be possible. Ifa has already acquired useful experience in this field via the Martin Roth Initiative for artists at risk. These examples show that ifa has long since developed into an important stakeholder as regards supporting civil society in cultural relations policy.

I am happy that ifa is conducting exchange and networking activities for LGBTQ activists from the CCP alumni network. As stated above, queer communities and those who support them are under particular pressure in many parts of the world. In Germany, too, section 175 of the Criminal Code stigmatised and prohibited homosexual relations between men until after German reunification. This section was only permanently deleted from the Criminal Code in March 1994. In 2017, the German Bundestag finally approved same-sex marriage. It took a long time to achieve this and there is still plenty to do in Germany as regards LGBTQ rights and desegitisation.

Actively networking in order to share different experiences and viewpoints is a way to gain insights and support. Furthermore, it provides examples of good policy practice for current and future political decision-makers and civil-society stakeholders in Germany and elsewhere. These important networking activities, as well as »Gender and Diversity«, the publication arising from them, provide information on the work of the alumni and the Cross-Culture Programme. The engagement demonstrated by fellows and alumni, which many of them continue to show years after their placement and to this day, is remarkable. I hope you will all find this publication encouraging and inspiring.

Best wishes, Bärbel Kofler

Federal Government Commissioner for Human Rights Policy and Humanitarian Assistance at the Federal Foreign Office

Bärbel Kofler

CROSSCULTURE PROGRAMME

GENDER & DIVERSITY
We relied on close exchange with the alumni network while planning the meeting and adapting the points and phrasing to the participants’ needs. The result was a comprehensive programme that ranged from training sessions on digital security and fundraising to debates on decolonisation, visibility, and other potential areas of action. Participants from various countries had the opportunity to exchange ideas with key actors from Germany and take part in an exclusive tour of the Gay Museum in Berlin.

We have compiled the central outcomes, impulses and thoughts of the network meeting for you in this publication. In addition to examples of good practice, personal stories and numerous original quotes, the publication focusses on three topics. Firstly, we address the use and connotation of language in the struggle for visibility and the demand for basic rights. In an interview with Ins A Kromminga, the artist examines the development of gender-equitable language and the progress achieved for intersexual people in Germany in this regard (pp. 16). Secondly, we raise the issue of changing donor funding practices to support LGBTIQ human rights defenders in target countries. In her contribution, Eva Welling provides concrete examples of what such changes could look like (pp. 28). Nora, an activist from Egypt, supplies input about foreign funding for LGBTIQ projects in the MENA region and the local challenges involved (pp. 32). Finally, the role of art, culture and media for the societal acceptance of LGBTIQ is also highlighted. In these regards, curator and artist Aymen Gharbi explains how contemporary art initiatives in Tunisia have contributed to positive change (pp. 40). The publication concludes with practical recommendations for both activists on site and decision makers in supporting organisations.

We hope you enjoy reading the first CCP Alumni issue!

Dear readers,

We are pleased to present you with the CrossCulture Programme (CCP) publication Gender & Diversity, which continues a thematic initiative from the ever-growing ifa Alumni network.

With the help of CCP funding, an international network of alumni covering a wide range of topics has evolved over the last 15 years. The programme has continued to develop and has steadily expanded its alumni outreach in recent years. The work aims to utilize the benefits of the established network, stimulating synergies that permanently enable civil society actors to generate new impulses for their work, acquire relevant skills and knowledge, or to initiate projects with network partners even after the initial funding has ended.

Increasingly, the CrossCulture Programme and ifa has been supporting the alumni network with digital services, such as via its own group on social media and the Alumniperportal Germany. CCP also offers former fellows individual mobility funding, encourages alumni as honorary CCP country representatives, or invites them to varying regional or thematic network meetings.

ifa designs network meetings based on the impulses that come out of the network itself. In this way, we noticed an increase in the number of applications from human rights defenders from the LGBTIQ community, and we were also approached at the institutional level to address this topic. In 2019, approximately 10% of our fellowship recipients identified as queer or as belonging to the LGBTIQ community. Plus, in many of our CCP target countries, LGBTIQ persons face serious danger – the establishment of concentration camps for homosexuals in the Russian republic of Chechnya, the execution of homosexuals in Syria, and the persecution and torture of LGBTIQ human rights defenders in Egypt are just a few of the examples. All of this prompted us to dedicate the November 2019 network meeting in Berlin to these particular concerns.

DEFINING LGBTIQ
LGBT, LGBTI+ or LGBTQA+ – There are just as many different names for the queer community worldwide as there are identities within it. LGBT stands for lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender. But as the community and the understanding of its diversity has developed, it has also become more difficult to give it a single name. In their articles, the CCP editorial team has decided to use “LGBTIQ”, which stands for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, intersexual and queer or questioning, as this term is widely used nowadays and includes people who do not identify with one of the other categories. In this publication, we would like to give our authors the freedom to choose which term they wish to use. Therefore, you will find different versions of the acronym.
The LGBTQ movement, which by default is considered diverse and equal, in fact has gender issues like any community. The interests of lesbian, bisexual and queer women (LBQ) are under-represented and women themselves are essentially invisible. A comment by Liliya Ten.

In 2017 news about the persecutions and murders of several gay men in Chechnya made it into the international media. These events were investigated by several independent Russian media outlets and were reported on and acknowledged by the international community. A number of gay men were evacuated to European countries where they found a safe haven. But there are hardly any reports about the violence and so-called »honour murders« against LBQ women within the widespread anti-LGBTQ purge happening in Chechnya. The Russian activist Valentina Likhoshva from the Moscow Community Center explained in a 2019 presentation that »in a patriarchal society, even if the man is gay, he is still a human. His life matters. Whereas, a woman is not considered an individual human; she is property of the family.« The fact that LBQ women receive less attention is also evident in the agenda of the LGBTQ community itself, which tends to focus on the needs and rights of men and neglects the fact that the needs of LBQ women are different. In Kyrgyzstan there are several groups and organisations of gay and bisexual men in five from seven oblasts (regions) but only two LBQ women organisations, both of which are situated in Bishkek, the capital of Kyrgyzstan. This not only shows the under-representation of LBQ women in the community but also the difficulty these women face in finding a safe meeting space.

The rights of LBQ women are being neglected because of the lack of information about their needs and the threats they face. The logic here is simple – the more data there is about an issue, the bigger the problem. The bigger the problem, the more attention it receives. But there is no or very little statistical data available concerning LBQ women. In comparison, there are dozens of studies on gay and bisexual men’s health and rights issued annually in Kyrgyzstan, but only three studies dedicated to LBQ women have been issued within the last 10 years. To improve the situation and to conduct more studies, grassroots organisations need funding, but the rights of a small group of invisible women like LBQ are overlooked by international funders and the Kyrgyz government. And this situation is common in all countries of Eastern Europe and Central Asia.

The other important aspect is invisibility and social stigma. The rights and interests of LBQ women resulting from the influence of patriarchal norms, unequal payment, parental responsibilities and household duties. For example, even if all expenses are covered by the organisers, it is challenging for a group of 30 LBQ women to attend a three-day training outside of the city because of these social factors. Plus, some of the LBQ have to ask permission from their parents and have to lie about where they are going because they cannot speak about their sexual orientation freely. Some might have children from a previous marriage with a man and have to find and pay a babysitter. But most women earn less than men and usually don’t have the extra money for such expenses. Living under such circumstances, they have less time and opportunities for social activities, are unable to attend events conducted by organisations, and thus become invisible.

And the third but most important cause is discrimination. The LBQ women live under the burden of double discrimination – firstly by being women in a patriarchal society and secondly because of their sexuality. This intersectional discrimination makes them also more vulnerable to violence. If a heterosexual woman experiences outside violence, she can usually turn to family support. But for many LBQ women, their family and relatives are often more likely to be the source of violence and sexual assault. According to a report by Human Rights Watch, there are two types of sexual assault on LBQ women registered in Kyrgyzstan: assault in order to punish or assuage »to correct« them. In particular, sexual assault »to correct« sexual orientation is commonly initiated by the family. Few LBQ women who experienced sexual assault find the internal strength to overcome the shame and speak about it with a counsellor or friend. Domestic violence against women in general is very common in Kyrgyzstan, but it is not given serious attention within the society or by the government.

Within the LGBTQ community, gay and bisexual men and transwomen are often faced with police brutality and blackmailing. In comparison to violence against women, these cases mostly attract more attention from the media and society. Even the LGBTQ community sometimes argues with LBQ women saying, »You don’t suffer from police brutality like we do« or »Violence for you is not a problem«. It is often assumed that the rights and interests of LBQ women are being considered in the women’s rights movement and in the LGBTQ agenda, but in fact they are not included in either of them.
Localizing the language of gender and sexuality? The acronym LGBTIQ is commonly understood – yet frequently questioned and rightly accused of perpetuating (neo)-colonial power structures. The CCP workshop on Gender & Diversity gave room to discuss questions of labelling LGBTIQ, to reflect on historical trajectories of gender and sexuality and to ask questions such as: Is there a need for universal terms? In which circumstances do new labels evolve? Do we have to label sexual identity at all?

**CHANGE FROM THE BOTTOM UP**

The roots of the problem of LBQ discrimination and invisibility are deep within the system. Significant changes are only possible with the support of the government and radical changes in society. But change could also happen from the bottom up. It is therefore time for LBQ activists to start the discussion on this issue within the movement itself. LBQ should identify themselves as an independent community, articulating their rights, needs and goals.

Each community can find its own successful strategy for standing up for their rights. The Kyrgyz LGBTQ organisation the GRACE, for example, uses videos as an advocacy tool to raise important topics, provoke discussions, and to inform and educate society. Recently, the GRACE produced a documentary film about the lives of LBQ women in Kyrgyzstan. This is the first film about LBQ created by the community itself. Its purpose is to show the influence of patriarchal norms, family pressure, domestic violence and discrimination that LBQ women are exposed to and to bring attention to their invisibility and vulnerability. Through promotion of this film at international film festivals, the organisation is attempting to attract attention to the question of LBQ women’s rights in Kyrgyzstan and worldwide.

**LILIYA TEN** was a CCP fellow in 2019. She is the co-founder and executive director of the LGBTQ organization the GRACE in Kyrgyzstan. The NGO promotes ideas of tolerance and human rights to overcome stigma and discrimination on the grounds of sexual orientation and gender identity.
»Sexuality is fluid, and the Arab world has always been fluid. When the West came in with labels, that’s when we started to have problems. You have the homosexual, the heterosexual, the bisexual, the transgender, the intersex. They are put into boxes, and I think people felt like each person had to fit into one of those boxes. But we all belong to a mouldable space which shifts. Every region should consider sexuality in their own way.«

MADIAN, JORDAN

»The concept of transgender and homosexuality came from the Indian sub-continent and dates back to a history of more than 3,000 years. Transgender and intersex people were widely accepted and understood in Indian civilisation, and they were part of the culture until the British system and colonial laws were imposed in British India.«

ANONYMOUS, PAKISTAN

»The notions of gender and sexual diversity also keep changing in Germany. Much of that has to do with education, class affiliation, and age. Young people describe themselves differently than people who are 60. Historically, this is nothing new – even self-designating terms like gay or lesbian are relatively new. It’s even more fascinating in transnational and cross-cultural processes because identities and self-positioning can’t just be rendered one-to-one. In countries like Pakistan or Tunisia, globalising effects have an enormous influence on how sex and gender are talked about.«

NELLY, ARMENIA

»Most people consider LGBT rights to be a part of a European agenda, one which assaults our national-traditional values. Hence, these people think no Armenian person can be gay. Another false perception promoted by homophobic groups is that homosexuality is a Western European value, actively cultivated with foreign funded projects. People still need to recognise the reality, which is that LGBT people have existed since ancient times. They need to acknowledge the fact that LGBT people can be among their friends, co-workers and colleagues, relatives and closest loved ones.«

AIZAT, MALAYSIA

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AIZAT, MALAYSIA
DIVERSITY IS AN ENRICHMENT, NOT A THREAT

Ins A Kromminga

In terms of language, Ins A Kromminga sees progress for intersex people in Germany, but there is still much to do within the scope of politics and medicine. With their work at Organisation Intersex International (OII), Kromminga advocates for the rights of intersex people worldwide.

«Everything has already been said, but not yet by everyone». You begin the brochure Inter* & Speech (Intersex & Language), which you published together with other authors, with this quote by the comedian Karl Valentin. While in the last 20 years intersex people have made their voices better heard, in our language, and thus in our reality, they are still relatively invisible. Do we still not have words for this reality? Maybe 10 years ago I would have said this, but in the meantime, we have sufficient words in the context of the German language – a language that's now less medical. It used to be called »people with intersexuality«, for example. This sounds like an illness, and ultimately feeds the idea that you have a syndrome or a disorder, which in turn also affects your own perception of yourself. Today we talk about intersex or gender diverse people (in German, Inter* or intergeschlechtliche Menschen). It’s best to ask people how they would like to be addressed because there are intersex people who do define themselves as either female or male. Then in my case, I don't identify myself as either. I would identify myself as non-binary. When being addressed, I prefer my first and last names or the title of artist, Künstler*in in German, which is indicated with a star or underscore in writing.

Since 1st January 2019, it is possible to select either »male«, »female«, or »diverse« when entering oneself into the civil registry. Would you say this is a milestone when it comes to accepting sex/gender diversity?

It is a step in the right direction, but it’s not enough. We still haven’t freed ourselves from medical dictates. A person is still required to have medical proof to select the entry »diverse«. For intersex people, this means further pathologizing. On a positive note, the entry »diverse« into the civic registry and the debate around it has made LGBTQ issues more visible.

Intersex is often defined alongside LGBTQ – that is lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and queer. Could you briefly explain what intersex is and how it compares to transsexuality?

Intersex describes people who are born with variations in physical sex characteristics that do not correspond to the normative conceptions of male and female. This can be physically evident at birth, or it may become apparent later in life, or not at all. Therefore, many intersex people undergo operations, having sex-modifying (medical) treatments as early as their childhood in order to be fitted into one of the typical binary notions. This usually happens at an age when they don’t yet have the power to choose their gender identity. Transgender people, on the other hand, have a different gender identity than the sex they were born with. As adults they may consider body-modifying interventions to change their sex to match their gender identity, which involves many physical and mental hurdles.

«Art makes what can’t be said visible.»

You call yourself an intersex activist and handle this topic artistically as well. What role does art play for you? What role can it play for other LGBTQ people?

Art creates a space free of attributions. It makes that which others cannot yet see visible. I know that even if they haven’t yet found a way of manoeuvring the issue themselves, intersex people who find themselves in my work will be triggered by my drawings. When they see the issues which are affecting them receiving public attention, it empowers them. When I figured out I was intersex, there was no one I could look up to, no orientation for what this meant. In this regard, I’d like to be catalyst, motivating other intersex people to be true to themselves and to defend their rights.

On 26 October Intersex Awareness Day will be celebrated worldwide. It commemorates the first protests by intersex people who demonstrated in Boston in 1996 against intersex medical practices. What does it mean to be intersex or LGBTQ today?

Around the world, we are confronted with human rights violations, discrimination and pathologization because of our sexual characteristics. Still, we aren’t a homogenous group; our experiences are very different. The problem for intersex people is that those who are evidently intersex at birth or in childhood are made invisible through surgical and medicinal interventions and are made to conform to the phenotypes »male« and »female« without their consent. This has been happening systematically since the 1950s and in the wake of John Money’s widespread gender theory. Money was of the opinion that masculinity and femininity were arbitrary and that physical changes should occur as early as possible in order for a person to better identify with the sex assigned to them. Of course, it’s not that simple. Sex-modifying (medical) treatments also happen in India or Africa, but they have a completely different meaning because not everyone has access to medical care. In some African countries, medicalisation can prevent child murder and thus save lives. This is a different strategy, but of course, not a solution.»
We offer trainings and information about the circum-
stances of intersex people and the human rights viola-
tions committed against them, and we advise EU and
UN institutions on the violations of human rights. In
addition to this, our members are represented in rele-
vant working groups. We regularly comment on cur-
rent political decisions and develop campaigns like
#MyIntersexStory. We’ve also published a book of 15
stories which describe the day-to-day lives of intersex
people in Europe.

If a networking meeting brings together LGBTQ
people from Germany, countries within the
MENA region, as well as those from Central and
South Asia. What specific ideas will you take
with you for your work at OII?

I’ve been asked to translate certain information and
materials into other languages, specifically into Arabic.
Although we focus our work within the European con-
text, having this information in other languages is ex-
tremely important, in part because there is now a large
Arabic-speaking community in Germany.

»Often there is no specific
community for intersex people«.

OII has been a guest organisation in the Cross-
Culture Programme since 2019. What motivat-
ed you to participate?

This exchange allows us to approach topics differently.
Through our former fellowship recipient from Egypt, we
know that the situation for intersex and transgender
people is very different there. For example, the two groups
are hardly distinguished from one another. Many peo-
ple in the transgender community are actually intersex,
but there is no specific community for them. Of course,
we have to be careful not to assign our own values to oth-
er cultures during this exchange. We should remember
that our language operates within Western concepts,
namely that of compartmentalisation. If there are terms
within other cultures that have been developed in the
respective communities, we should respect them.

And finally, what message can you give other
LGBTIQ activists as they make their way?

We have been part of your communities for some time
now. Include us! If you’d like to work on an intersex
topic, ask us if we’d like to be involved or contact inter-
sex organisations like OII. Support us and our needs.

»Nothing about us without us«.

Interview by
Juliane Pfordte

1 In German many titles and terms are differentiated as either
female or male; with the use of an underscore character or a star,
these words can be both. For example, Künstler (artist) is
male, Künstlerin is female, and Künstler * is denotes gender
diverse people.

I hope that we will build a partnership with OII to work on intersex
issues. At the moment, this issue is still at the fringes in Egypt and
the Middle East. But it is good to start somewhere, and the material
offered by OII on intersexuality is really good. I will use the infor-
mation they have which I think is beneficial for the Middle East con-
text. Since they don’t yet have an Arabic version of this material,
I will translate it. In exchange, OII will provide me with materials to
conduct workshops on intersexuality in Egypt.«

Krosninga

INS A KROMMINGA is an intersex human rights activist and artist. They work for Organisation
Intersex International (OII) Europe, which fights for the rights of intersex people. Kromminga’s
art work focuses on the experiences of intersex persons while intending to raise questions as well as
the interest of the observer.

NORA from Egypt completed her CCP fellowship with OII in 2019.
Iraq has been a war-torn country for many years, giving rise to ISIS with its conservative and homophobic beliefs. Ali Al-Hindawi’s story is that of a survivor but also of an activist promoting gender equality and the empowerment of women and sexual minorities.

Since 2012, you have been volunteering at TEDxBaghdad. Imagine you were one of the speakers, what would your story be about?

It would be a survivor story, a story of resistance. We Iraqis by nature are a country of resilient people because of our history, starting from the failed kingdom, the Ba’athist Iraq, the Iran-Iraq War (1980–1988), the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait and the following economic embargo, the US invasion in 2003, the rise of ISIS and so on. For sure this reflects my life, my parents’ lives and the lives of so many others. But life is a continuous process, and we will keep trying to live a good life. I remember that even in 2003, when there was no electricity and food and we were living on the street because our house had been partially destroyed and looted, we still played cards and had tea. »Don’t lose hope» would be my message.

You graduated in 2014, the same year the so-called Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant announced the establishment of the caliphate.

To what extent did this affect your work?

I remember the day ISIS came as if it were yesterday. I got up rather early to go to university – I was in the final stages of preparing for my final practical exams. On my way, my mom called me telling me that there was something called Daesh surrounding Baghdad and that I should come home immediately. I didn’t know the word Daesh and I didn’t take her seriously, but I saw people’s pale faces; people busy with their telephones because they had already lost someone or were afraid of losing someone. On my way back home, I noticed that Baghdad was completely different. I saw tanks in the streets, the checkpoints; roads were closed. I realised that there was some kind of danger, but that didn’t stop anyone of us from taking our exams the next day. These circumstances actually gave me more motivation for my voluntary work: I started to take part in missions to support some villages under ISIS control and did some mapping of people’s needs in Mosul. I also assisted internally displaced persons (IDP) in Baghdad and went to schools to play with the children, to sing and dance with them. Later on, I started volunteering for the United Nations Development Programme as well as for the UN Assistance Mission for Iraq.

What could be possible next steps to a more equitable, gender-inclusive society?

We need an education reform that changes and updates our school curricula. It needs to be more secular. That would be a big step forward for girls and women but also for religious minorities whose beliefs are not represented in today’s curricula. We have to include the general human rights aspects and get out toxic ideas like the oppression of girls and women and the restriction of their liberties. Of course, now is not the time to include LGBT topics in school curricula directly because this wouldn’t be possible with the present society. First of all, Iraq needs stability and security.

Since 2017, you have been working as a portfolio analyst at the United Nations Office for Project Services (UNOPS) in Geneva. You might know the HeForShe-Campaign that was launched by UN Women in 2014. It invites men and people of all genders to commit themselves to take action for a gender equal world.

I attended the launch of this campaign in Baghdad in 2015. It helps women’s rights but not so much the ones of LGBT. But we have to see the big picture. I think it is a great campaign, it initiated many other campaigns for women’s empowerment in Iraq. I can observe a change through my female friends and networks. These days, they are feeling more empowered to be independent enough to have their own work and careers. For many young women, becoming a housewife is no longer an option. They are challenging the stereotypes and oppressions with their lifestyle, driving cars, they have jobs or are social media influencers.

> GENDER & DIVERSITY

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It would be a survivor story, a story of resistance. We Iraqis by nature are a country of resilient people because of our history, starting from the failed kingdom, the Ba’athist Iraq, the Iran-Iraq War (1980–1988), the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait and the following economic embargo, the US invasion in 2003, the rise of ISIS and so on. For sure this reflects my life, my parents’ lives and the lives of so many others. But life is a continuous process, and we will keep trying to live a good life. I remember that even in 2003, when there was no electricity and food and we were living on the street because our house had been partially destroyed and looted, we still played cards and had tea. »Don’t lose hope« would be my message.

You graduated in 2014, the same year the so-called Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant announced the establishment of the caliphate.

To what extent did this affect your work?

I remember the day ISIS came as if it were yesterday. I got up rather early to go to university – I was in the final stages of preparing for my final practical exams. On my way, my mom called me telling me that there was something called Daesh surrounding Baghdad and that I should come home immediately. I didn’t know the word Daesh and I didn’t take her seriously, but I saw people’s pale faces; people busy with their telephones because they had already lost someone or were afraid of losing someone. On my way back home, I noticed that Baghdad was completely different. I saw tanks in the streets, the checkpoints; roads were closed. I realised that there was some kind of danger, but that didn’t stop anyone of us from taking our exams the next day. These circumstances actually gave me more motivation for my voluntary work: I started to take part in missions to support some villages under ISIS control and did some mapping of people’s needs in Mosul. I also assisted internally displaced persons (IDP) in Baghdad and went to schools to play with the children, to sing and dance with them. Later on, I started volunteering for the United Nations Development Programme as well as for the UN Assistance Mission for Iraq.

What could be possible next steps to a more equitable, gender-inclusive society?

We need an education reform that changes and updates our school curricula. It needs to be more secular. That would be a big step forward for girls and women but also for religious minorities whose beliefs are not represented in today’s curricula. We have to include the general human rights aspects and get out toxic ideas like the oppression of girls and women and the restriction of their liberties. Of course, now is not the time to include LGBT topics in school curricula directly because this wouldn’t be possible with the present society. First of all, Iraq needs stability and security.

Since 2017, you have been working as a portfolio analyst at the United Nations Office for Project Services (UNOPS) in Geneva. You might know the HeForShe-Campaign that was launched by UN Women in 2014. It invites men and people of all genders to commit themselves to take action for a gender equal world.

I attended the launch of this campaign in Baghdad in 2015. It helps women’s rights but not so much the ones of LGBT. But we have to see the big picture. I think it is a great campaign, it initiated many other campaigns for women’s empowerment in Iraq. I can observe a change through my female friends and networks. These days, they are feeling more empowered to be independent enough to have their own work and careers. For many young women, becoming a housewife is no longer an option. They are challenging the stereotypes and oppressions with their lifestyle, driving cars, they have jobs or are social media influencers.>
In 2015, you participated in ifa’s CrossCulture programme. You worked with Schollsise27, an NGO in Berlin that supports young refugees through language training, art and culture workshops explaining cultural differences in gender norms. Which experience influenced you the most during this time?

I think the experience of coming to Germany shaped my life. I arrived in the heat of the refugee crisis and for me, it was the first time that I saw a host community working with refugees from foreign countries. I hope I was able to add some value to their projects because they needed knowledge about the cultural and religious context of the refugees. They also gave me a lot of input and insight into how projects can be realised. Project management in Iraq has nothing to do with how it’s done here in Germany. In Iraq, whenever you think about a project, the main priority is security, and then comes the rest. In Germany, projects focus more on the results and how people feel about them.

»In Iraq the main priority is security«

In 2018, you held a series of lectures at the University of Hawaii at Mânoa. One was titled »The New Challenges of Diversity«. Could you give an example of these new challenges?

One challenge is the fragmentation of society, especially in societies that are rather individual than collective. Western societies usually have special interest groups for each and every issue, but this has the potential of dividing societies even more instead of creating social cohesion. In each idea, there lies an extreme part, and dividing societies even more instead of creating social cohesion. In each idea, there lies an extreme part, and creating social cohesion is of the utmost importance. One challenge is the fragmentation of society, especially in societies that are rather individual than collective. Western societies usually have special interest groups for each and every issue, but this has the potential of dividing societies even more instead of creating social cohesion. In each idea, there lies an extreme part, and dividing societies even more instead of creating social cohesion is of the utmost importance.

»If you want change, work with your local government«

What do you think are the most relevant abilities and skills that one needs to advocate for human rights?

From my experience in Iraq I can say: One needs to be able to collaborate, to address things constructively and to be passionate and patient. With all respect to activism – I don’t like this word very much because for me it is linked to rebellion – I don’t think this is how it works. If you really want change, work with your local government, even if they are the worst. Trying to change something is better than just shouting at them. If you simply put more pressure on the government and ask the international community to help, the government will be more stubborn and not listen. We can politely preach about human rights, but this alone will not solve the problem. In 2015 I was part of a project that advertised new values in education, especially soft skills since they are usually neglected in schools. We developed a curriculum that included teaching soft skills through physical education. In the beginning, it was difficult to convince the government, but we systematically addressed schools and got support from local networks. In the end, the decision-makers got familiar with the input and finally, our curriculum was implemented in ten schools.

This event brings together CCP alumni and organisations from different countries of Europe, the MENA region and Central and South Asia. What is your impression so far? What ideas will you take back with you?

If the main idea of this workshop is networking, it has been successful. Our community of former CCP participants sometimes works in a black box due to the lack of content available online and the lack of communication or expertise. So, workshops like this really add value to the community. It brings people together, it makes them communicate, share experiences and develop new projects. And when you develop personal skills and your network, it will eventually contribute to society as a whole.

Interview by Juliane Pfordte

Ali Al-Hindawi was a CCP fellow in 2015. Born in Iraq, he became involved with local humanitarian and cultural projects at a young age. He is now working for the United Nations Office for Projects Services in Geneva where gender equality in multicultural work environments and gender mainstreaming are integral parts of his work.
The struggle for LGBTIQ rights is fought in the throes of society, and yet these issues also revolve around personal stories. Nora, Nelly, and Madian tell us how their struggle for equal rights began and where they derive their continued motivation from.
I did not comply with the law or the social rules. I started to fight for equal rights in 1995 when I found out the authorities were monitoring my bookshop-café. They did so because I stopped self-censoring and I started to speak openly about (my) homosexuality. This is who I am. I do not belong to any association; I belong to a bookshop-café. At that time, my café became a local hub for all kinds of rebels from Jordan, including people from the LGBTQI community.«

MADIAN, JORDAN

Since 2010, I have been involved in the field of youth and education with a particular focus on women’s rights programmes. Meanwhile, as a youth worker, I felt the need to work with marginalised communities and those who do not always enjoy the same educational opportunities because of their social-economic status, geography (coming from rural areas), migrant background, etc. I thought it was very important to also empower young LGBT people and to work on their capacity-building skills. There are many talented young people who do not participate in local community programmes because of the lack of awareness about these programmes. Two years ago, I started my first programme on boosting the entrepreneurial skills of LGBT youth. I then founded an initiative aimed at sports engagement and LGBT youth mobilisation in a non-party environment because I think that sports are one of the best ways to bring people together and make them more active and mindful.«

NELLY, ARMENIA

In the aftermath of the 2011 revolution, I was arrested and detained by the Egyptian authorities together with a couple of friends. I remember sitting in the cell with no help in sight. At the time, most NGOs didn’t really include LGBTQI rights in their mandate, and the organisation I am currently working for was still new, with no resources for providing legal assistance to the LGBTQI community. So we suffered abuse without any hope of receiving justice. In that moment, I decided that if I ever got out, I wouldn’t let anyone else go through what I was going through. I would at least provide them with a chance to fight fairly; I want to give people the chance at an equal opportunity in front of a court of law, offering them the opportunity to defend themselves.«

NORA, EGYPT
Colonialism and imperialism have exerted such influence on the whole globe, and continue to do so, that it affects even the most intimate sphere of life: sexuality. Even today, (neo-)colonial structures of power influence the way sexualities and gender expressions are perceived around the world. With this in mind, Western actors supporting LGBTIQ+ activism in the so-called Global South need to critically reflect on their own role. Eva Welling shares her research findings on how Western donors can decolonise sexual rights activism in the MENA region.

In Western societies, there is the prevailing perception that gay, lesbian, or homosexual is something that one is and that it therefore constitutes an essential part of one’s identity. In contrast, throughout history and in societies around the world, sexual behaviour has primarily been considered as an act that one engages in. However, the concept of a sexual identity, where people have a sexual choice – « normally» involving a person of the opposite sex – it, historically speaking, a relatively new phenomenon that originated in European and North American societies in the late 18th century. Through the power structures of colonialism, the European epistemology of sexuality, along with colonial laws sanctioning same-sex sexual behaviour, were introduced to countries of the MENA region from Europe. European powers rejected locally existing sexual practices, like the widely common tolerance of same-sex sexual behaviour in men, as backwardness that had to be prohibited. In many cases, the colonial powers, like France in Tunisia, introduced laws banning (male) same-sex sexuality which now form the legal base for the persecution of LGBTIQ+ today. While the gay rights movement that started in Europe and North America in the 1960s was successful in increasing the societal acceptance of LGBTIQ+ there, in many societies of the Global South, accepting LGBTIQ+ became increasingly associated with the West. Still today, the colonial background regarding sexuality in large parts of the world and in Western hegemony still have significant implications for the work of Western donors who are involved in supporting sexual rights activism in the Global South and in the MENA region.

Sexual rights activism is caught between areas of tension. Due to the way global power structures work and how wealth and hegemonic power is distributed worldwide, it would be naïve to think that donors and activists are really able to work eye to eye with each other. Financial resources are scarce and most sexual rights activists in the MENA region depend on funds from abroad. Of course, this dependence has an impact on the relationship between donors and activists. Donors are particularly responsible for analysing how their own agenda could and does affect their relationship with and the work of their local partners, and how much agency and influence they as donors should or shouldn’t have on decision making processes.

Western donors have to be aware of the fact that they act as outsiders in political and cultural contexts which are often highly sensitive. They should also bear in mind that by being associated with Western actors and donors, local activists are at risk of being discredited as «agents of the West». In order to deny their legitimacy, they may be accused of following a foreign agenda and acting against alleged existing moral values. For Western donors and supporters, it is therefore important to constantly reflect on the possible negative impacts of their involvement. They have to be aware that their support, as well as too much public visibility of their efforts, can put their partners in danger. For example, while at first glance it may seem appropriate to publicly call out a government’s homophobic rhetoric and legislation and to put international pressure on it to grant sexual rights, this can also do more harm than good. Starting a public discourse on LGBTIQ+ rights may incite governments and conservative public figures to increase their homophobic rhetoric and their oppression of LGBTIQ+ in a public display to protect «traditional values» and «moral norms» against hostile foreign forces and their alleged local allies. Therefore, to mitigate the risks of negative side effects, it is appropriate for external actors to, instead, stay in the background, listen to their local partners’ needs, and grant them agency and ownership.

European and US-American donors play an essential role when it comes to funding sexual rights activism, and their support can be valuable when it comes to the capacity building of newly established activist groups and NGOs. However, local activists know the political context best and can assess the impact, effectiveness, and risks of different approaches and strategies better. Therefore, they should be the ones who draft, plan, and implement their projects and activities according to the needs of their community. In some instances, local activists may not want to become publicly associated with their foreign donors for fear of being delegitimised as «foreign agents». Donors should listen to these concerns and react accordingly.
MAKE LOCAL VOICES HEARD

Another important issue is the language used to address sexual rights. Around the globe, people are gathering under the umbrella term LGBTIQ+. While on one hand, this shared term can create a sense of transnational solidarity and unite activists and their struggles for sexual rights, it is, again, a Western-originated term that implies certain forms of sexuality and gender expression while excluding others. It also implies that sexual acts mirror a certain type of sexual identity, which, as explained above, should not be accepted as a given fact but rather as a social construct.

For Western actors, this means that they have to be open to alternative concepts of sexuality. In order not to imprint their own terms and concepts on local actors, they should listen carefully to partners and adapt to the language they are using. There may already be other, more adequate terminologies that describe the existing forms of sexuality and gender expression and, thus, may be more inclusive for the local communities. By excluding local terms and exclusively using Western concepts of sexuality and gender expression, the local realities could regretfully be rendered invisible.

Finally, it is important that local actors be allowed to speak with their own voices and that their voices are heard. They should be able to reject Western concepts of sexuality without fearing they will lose the resources and funding they depend on. They should decide what their activism looks like while the donors stay in the background. Also, donors need to be aware of their own privileges, both individually and as an organisation. It is important for Western donors to understand that they have the power to decide where and how to spend their money, not as a coincidence, but as a result of the century-long, ongoing history of colonialisation and Western imperialism; and the same reasons continue to force local activists to struggle for access to scarce resources. Starting an open and honest discussion among donors and local partners on how colonial patterns and power structures affect their relationship and their work can be another step towards decolonising sexual rights activism.

EVA WELLING studied Psychology and Peace and Conflict Studies in Dresden and Marburg, Germany. During her master studies, she focused on Postcolonial Studies and Gender Studies as well as on the MENA region. For her master thesis, she conducted interviews with donors and activists who work in the field of sexual rights in the MENA region to investigate how the colonial history of the region affects sexual rights activism and the involvement of Western actors. She lives in Berlin and is currently working on a project for political education that offers trainings for activists from the MENA region.
Facing civil and full-scale wars, dictatorships, and poverty, the MENA region has been troubled for a long time. Under these circumstances, human rights in general were neglected for years, and in many countries, human rights are still not recognised for most of the population. Since LGBTQ+ individuals are among the most marginalised individuals in the MENA region, LGBTQ+ rights are not only to receive little attention, but in almost all of these countries, there are laws against homosexuality, including a possible death penalty in the United Arab Emirates, Saudi Arabia, and Iran.

»The Middle East was a gay friendly place before colonial powers took charge.« You may often hear this statement from people within and outside the MENA region, people who choose to be in denial and read history in a way that pleases them. It is true that there were a lot of historical figures in the pre-colonial Middle East that were rumoured to be gay. However, the context behind these stories needs to be kept in mind: the persons who wrote these historical texts belonged to the privileged part of society, meaning the rich and powerful, and their texts do not give a clear image of the society as a whole. It’s important to understand that even if these documents have elements of homosexuality in them, they do not have any correlation to the modern definition of a consensual homosexual relationship. Often the men in these stories were powerful, rich or intellectual persons who took advantage of their social status and often enslaved young boys. For example, one of the main figures that people rely on to prove that the Middle East was gay friendly is Abou Nawas, a poet, who often wrote about his lust for »al-ghilman«, a word that means young, pubescent boys. This is just one of many examples that show, with a closer reading, that these relationships were not based on any form of consent. We also have to keep in mind that being tolerated does not mean having rights. Even if these individuals were tolerated in the society due to their social status, they were not necessarily granted »gay rights«. Furthermore, the narrative stating that the Middle East was only changed by colonial power is misleading because it feeds into the story of the white man entering the Middle East to teach us how we should behave. Every Middle Eastern society functions differently and is unique, so it is foolish to imagine that each one turned homophobic after centuries of alleged acceptance just because Westerners came and enforced a law. It is a sad reality, but in terms of homophobia, Middle Eastern societies were not different from other societies at the time; fear of anything different was widespread in many places of the world.

The fact is that many Middle Eastern countries still lack basic democratic institutions and an essential understanding of human rights in order to push LGBTQ+ rights forward. It is impossible to introduce change without having the necessary tools and elements that will lead to a greater respect of human rights in general, let alone LGBTQ+ rights. As a consequence, the LGBTQ+ movement in the MENA region will continue to stagnate until they stop ignoring the fact that there is first a need to ensure basic human rights on which to build upon. But the hurdles do not stop there.

As a human rights activist, one will soon discover that in order to have access to the resources necessary for initiating any kind of project, one will need to enter a circle of already well-established NGOs and activists. In so doing, many human rights defenders occasionally forget their cause and start to act like politicians rather than activists. This creates a certain dynamic: activists are observed by the established human rights organisations within their country or region and conform to a certain ideology or line of speech to maintain their status within this circle, and in return, they receive the resources needed for their projects.

Another problem is that the LGBTQ+ movement in the Middle East does not have control over its agenda and priorities since these are mostly set by foreign funders in many cases. In several countries, »the white man’s way« did work, but the context is always unique. Since many Middle Eastern societies view any Western-backed ideology as evil, change must come from within the society. There are only a few funding opportunities for LGBTQ+ groups working in the MENA region, which leads these groups to concede and abandon some of their important priorities just to keep on working and serving in a way that pleases the funders. The funders need to understand the context of each individual country before they decide which projects will be funded. If a funding organisation, for example, receives a proposal from an activist group in Egypt, the organisation should research the geopolitical situation in Egypt in order to understand why this group wants to conduct these particular activities and then decide about the funding. Some organisations only give funding to trans, intersex and queer women groups, ignoring the fact that gay men also do not have any kind of rights nor are

Homophobia is not a new phenomenon in the Middle East. As the Egyptian activist Nora describes, it has been present for centuries and is still ongoing within societal and political structures today. She also explains that the fight for acceptance and equal rights should not be dominated by the agenda of Western funders but by the local LGBTQ+ activists and organisations themselves.
they protected in some form like they are in the West. By excluding such a large number of people from their funding programme, organisations can cause a divide within the LGBTQ+ movement. These kinds of funders typically assume to know the situation better and have almost zero understanding of what is actually happening in the specific region.

There is also another kind of funder who exhibits what’s called the “white guilt complex”. They want to help out of feelings of guilt. This is quite a dangerous motive because, again, people need to know, understand, and most of all, care about the cause they are trying to support. If they only act because they read about the terrible circumstances for gay people in a certain country, then they need to rethink their motives for supporting these groups.

Thankfully, not all funders have these mentalities. In Egypt and in other MENA countries, there are funders who keep an open mind, who have a keen interest in implementing the kinds of projects and activities that the locals see as suitable and appropriate for them. By giving the local activists the control over their own cause and their own choices of how to address the issues they are facing, these funders can and should be an example for others to follow.

All of these challenges do not mean that there is no valuable work being done in the MENA region when it comes to LGBTQ+ rights. Movements and groups across the region are evolving, mostly teaching themselves in the process, despite the fact that their resources are limited. The Egyptian queer movements, for example, managed to put together the first Universal Periodic Review (UPR) for the UN Human Rights Council in 2019 that discusses the issue of LGBTQ+ rights in Egypt. Certainly, this is a huge step, but there is still a long way to go. Right now, the queer movement needs to focus on pushing for intersectionality with other movements that are working on establishing democratic institutions, national human rights mechanisms, and the rule of law in order to assure basic human rights overall, and then we can advance further to achieve specific rights for LGBTQ+ individuals.

NORA is an LGBTIQ activist from Egypt. She has worked in several organisations advocating for the rights of women and LGBTIQ as well as offering counselling and legal aid. She was a CCP fellow in 2019.
Prison, death penalty, torture, and violence – in many countries, lesbians, gays, bisexuals, transgender and intersexual people are forced to live in constant danger and fear. Regularly, political and religious leaders fuel an atmosphere of hate and persecution. In many cases, acts of violence against LGBTI individuals go unpunished as police or other authorities often refuse to help or even participate in the incitement or violence themselves. Nevertheless, today courageous people all over the world are speaking up for the rights of LGBTI and making it clear that human rights apply to everyone.

We at the Hirschfeld-Eddy Foundation support the global fight against brutal homophobic criminal laws, state censorship, and social exclusion. Founded in 2007 by the Lesben- und Schwulenverband (LSVD, Lesbian and Gay Association in Germany), the foundation is named after the pioneer of the gay civil rights movement Dr. Magnus Hirschfeld (1868–1935) from Germany and the prominent lesbian civil right activist Fannyann Eddy (1974–2004) from Sierra Leone. We provide help to people who have fled persecution and support human rights projects in Eastern Europe and the global South.

ON-SITE ASSISTANCE

The foundation provides assistance on site, for example in resistance to censorship laws and incitement in Russia, in the legal and political fight against brutal homophobic law enforcement in Uganda or Nigeria, in helping gay refugees from Iran who could face the death penalty, but also in campaigns in Nicaragua that are successfully promoting respect and acceptance among the population. Together with our partner organisations, we are working to improve human rights in these places and in many other countries around the world. Great successes can be seen in the support of the queer film festivals in St. Petersburg and Tunis, where the third annual event of this kind can take place this year.

PROMOTION OF ACCEPTANCE

As a foundation, we want to achieve sustainable changes. To this effect, we organise international conferences and the like in Serbia, Russia or Latvia so that the civil society, media, and democratic political forces extend civil rights issues to LGBTI individuals. We also include parishes in the responsibility for change. Together with the German Federal Foreign Office, activists of the global LGBTI movement are invited to meet with high-level representatives of the Church in Germany. It was inspiring to see how the personal stories of LGBTI colleagues from sub-Saharan Africa, their experience of religiously motivated hostility against them, dismayed and left an impression on the representatives. As a result, Church officials promised to have a moderating influence on their religious followers in Africa.

RAISING PUBLIC AWARENESS

For a long time, human rights work on sexual orientation and gender identities wasn’t considered a topic for German international policy or development cooperation. This is beginning to change. We at the Hirschfeld-Eddy Foundation have done a lot of persuading and have achieved support for LGBTI projects. We continue to make alliances with other human rights and development aid organisations, draw attention to persecution, violence, and state desposition through publications and events, and we ensure that the fight for human rights is brought to public and media attention.
For years the Hirschfeld-Eddy Foundation (HES) has been calling for an LGBTIQ+ inclusion concept within German foreign policy and development cooperation. Preparing and asserting these efforts was decisive for the founding of the Yogyakarta Alliance. The civil society league initiated by HES in 2012 is named after the Yogyakarta principles for the application of human rights with regard to sexual orientation, gender identity and expression, and sex characteristics (SOGIESC). These principles were developed in 2006 by a group of international human rights experts in Yogyakarta, Indonesia and supplemented in 2016.

Dozens of countries around the world criminalise LGBTIQ+ people, and their organisations and groups are greatly threatened. A large part of the laws and norms stem from the colonial period, and these also concern the ideas of gender and gender roles. However, research shows that in many countries, there are traditions of non-binary gender orders and same-sex ways of life. It’s not homosexuality that comes from the West, but its criminalisation.

Resisting this kind of treatment is rising out of the communities of these countries themselves. For example, the Supreme Court in India first gave a positive verdict which recognised the third sex in 2014, then it decriminalised homosexual acts in 2018. In Botswana, the LGBTIQ+ movement there also fought for decades with strategic litigation for the decriminalisation of homosexual acts and was finally successful in 2019. In countries like Kenya and Singapore, activists are still working hard to abolish colonial legislation. These movements need to be supported.

In light of the complex situation, the Yogyakarta Alliance is therefore calling for a special programme entitled »Cultures and Colonialism«. The programme intends to support people and groups who research legacies, biographies, and traditions of regional homosexuality, gender, and gender histories. It is important to reflect upon the German missionary history and its colonial responsibilities in the homophobic and transphobic sexuality and gender norms. This programme hopes to receive additional support through a corresponding programme with researchers and universities in the countries of the Global South in cooperation with the German Federal Ministry of Education and Research (BMBF).

This is the central request of the Yogyakarta Alliance’s Thirteen-Point Paper for a LGBTIQ+ inclusion concept. We finally need a postcolonial practice. In public, at events such as those at the Berlin Africa House, we regularly discuss what a postcolonial practice could look like and what that means in practice for German foreign policy and development cooperation. Our concern is to transform the theory of postcolonial impulses into practical German foreign policy and development cooperation. The Yogyakarta Alliance is unique in this way. Cooperation is very welcome.

Our concern is to transform the theory of postcolonial impulses into practical German foreign policy and development cooperation. The Yogyakarta Alliance is unique in this way. Cooperation is very welcome.

In 2012 the Hirschfeld-Eddy Foundation helped initiate and establish the Yogyakarta Alliance, which advocates postcolonial practice and the inclusion of LGBTIQ+ in German foreign policy and development cooperation. Coordinator Sarah Kohrt explains the founding principle and work of the Alliance.

Sarah Kohrt

Sarah Kohrt is a cultural scientist and the project manager of the LGBTIQ+ Platform Human Rights at the Hirschfeld-Eddy Foundation. She is responsible for coordinating the Yogyakarta Alliance, a civil society league. Her focus is on postcolonial practice, intersectionality, and shrinking spaces.

THE YOGYAKARTA ALLIANCE: A POSTCOLONIAL-ORIENTED LEAGUE

Sarah Kohrt

Yogyakarta Alliance: http://www.hirschfeld-eddy-stiftung.de/vernetzung/yogyakarta-allianz/
The Thirteen-Point Paper for a LGBTIQ+ inclusion concept within German foreign policy and development cooperation: http://www.lsvd-blog.de/?p=17232
The LGBTIQ+ communities in Tunisia suffer under legal uncertainty and conservative public opinion. However, since the Arab Spring, various initiatives have been working on introducing LGBTIQ+ interests to the public realm in an attempt to counter discrimination. Aymen Gharbi talks about contemporary art initiatives driven by rainbow communities that function as incubators for changes to come.

"I feel very queer in my thinking even though I don’t consider myself a gender fluid person”. A Berlin-based artist told me this when discussing the origin of the word « queer ». And although I am not sure if I really understood what he was trying to say, I have been thinking about what a sentence like this means in my home country ever since. Tunisia is clearly a place where public opinions still either demonise or ridicule anything other than heterosexuality.

Despite the adoption of the new Tunisian Constitution that protects individual liberties and physical integrity of all Tunisian citizens regardless of their race, religious beliefs, gender, sexual orientation, or any other factor, LGBTIQ+ rights are still ignored and violated. LGBTIQ+ individuals in Tunisia endure recurrent discrimination, marginalisation, and violence. Their privacy is constantly violated and they undergo humiliating and degrading treatment, says Bader Baabou, President and Co-founder of Damj, an NGO that fights for justice and confronts inequalities in Tunisia. He adds, "In fact, sexual relationships between consenting adults of the same sex remain a crime under Tunisian law. Article 230 of the Tunisian Criminal Code criminalizes sodomy. The application of this article is legally controversial in its form and in its content."

Although we can argue that non-heterosexual standards have a long-standing history in Tunisia, currently, the level of tolerance is low, and it seems that there are more disrespectful and even violent public reactions. Since 2011, several Tunisian organisations have been addressing the interests of the queer community by publicly featuring individual liberties, human rights, and democratic politics, but Bader Baabou underlines that "fighting for justice and equality for LGBTIQ+ persons in Tunisia is challenging and complex for many institutional and cultural reasons."

As young Tunisians, we appreciate the newly found freedoms of expression, and over the last ten years, we have learned to live in the context of unstable political and socio-economic environments. As a freelance curator of contemporary art in Tunisia, I work on public art projects and move in a quite diverse community, including those with all kinds of attitudes, preferences, and identities. This engagement for art in public space allows me to observe queer issues in and beyond the cultural scene and also beyond those of the current debates within society and the political climate. We are the generation that sparked the Arab Spring; the diversity of our communities underlines that we are living in different times and that our engagement has an impact on our socio-cultural fabric.

Since the Arab Spring, we can see a rise of socio-cultural initiatives, cultural heritage engagement, and contemporary art projects driven by civil society. Away from the political parties, these are forums of discussion and opinion building.

**SPEAKING UP THROUGH ART**

Even before the Arab Spring, when the number of art and culture projects by activists was smaller, they played an important role in the development of democratic culture and the political changes of the last 20 years. These projects were the spheres in which to discuss and experiment, they provided a public stage in which to speak up, and they actively nurtured new ways of expressing that which seems difficult to address in our society. Already during the dictatorship under Ben Ali, the cultural scene was cultivating ideas and intellectual experimentation even while artists were living in hiding. I can remember that underground musicians such as Badiaa Bouhrizi and Bendir Man were already speaking up against the political regime. They both produced music in which the lyrics and metaphors directly targeted the police system and internet censorship. Since 2007, the caricature artist _Z_ has been criticising the same subjects via his drawings and characters, which have become a reference for a whole generation. We can still find his inspiring archives on his famous blog debatunisi.com. After the revolution, art and culture ventured into temporary formats, often appearing in public spaces and open to all kinds of discussions, including the ones raised by the LGBTIQ+ communities. From this point of view, in the last few years, the field has been an important incubator for numerous individuals and organisations to foster gender diversity and to defend queer rights in Tunisia.

Festivals like the biennial of performing arts Dream City and the international light art project Interference in Tunis, or the international media art festival See Djerba in the South are only a few of the examples of inclusive communities that are offering spaces for artists to showcase their work and receive support in case of emergencies; in several cases, acts of violence against artists forced them into a secret safe shelter and psychological support was needed. This kind of protected space created a fertile ground for individuals and organisations to experiment with and communicate their identity outside of their own bubble. Gender diversity was not an explicit theme of their curatorial concepts, but the realities of the communities where the projects were carried out brought the theme to the table within the producing collectives, the international artistic networks, the communities of art mediators, and...
the participating audiences. With the rising number of projects, new opportunities for LGBTIQ+ artists and activists were generated.

QUEER VISIBILITY ON THE RISE

In recent years, the number of Tunisian artists under the label of queer has increased considerably. Bader Baa-bou enumerates that « about 100 artists form the queer community are publicly visible ». They helped influence the cultural scene and introduce issues such as public visibility, the notion of sexuality, and most importantly, violence. Artists like Chakib Zbidi and Mohammed Issaoui have been dealing with LGBTIQ+ issues in their dance routines, working to showcase their reflections on this topic. In his new performance « Khtoui » , Issaoui retraces the steps of several women in his life from the time when he was young. In his work, he stages the influences of the milieus he grew up in and recreates his path that has been shaped by women. About his first performance « Al-Jarjar » from 2018 he said, « In the work, I talk about my initiation into sexuality and how it grew in me and how it’s perceived in the city where I live. Queerness is in the centre of my practice; I try to translate it via movement. It is a choice, a political one ». International artists invited to participate in the biennial Dream City were struck by the critical situation in Tunisia. In his artwork « Title Frame », South African artist Boyzie Cekwana concentrates his two-year research with queer minorities in Tunisia into a stage performance. In it he documents the violence and suffering of the queer community through a shockingly realistic, theatrical rage of a Tunisian drag-queen. The performance acted like a valve, releasing the expressions and experiences of queer performers. In her performance « Un-Marry Us », Lebanese artist Tania el Khoury took a different artistic approach for addressing the same kind of struggle. To bring to light and celebrate people who are rendered invisible by society, she staged a traditional wedding on the rooftops in the Medina of Tunis with a drag queen, queer performers, and marginalized women. Emerging cultural professionals from the Tunisian queer community helped to influence cultural activities and came up with their own platforms and activities. In 2013, the association CHOUF launched the first » feminist « festival entitled Choutouhonna. For four years, the festival developed mainly in secret and with the support of different institutions and individuals. Presented to a large Tunisian audience, the festival featured hundreds of feminist artists from all over the world. The project showcased different kinds of artwork and performances and offered space for workshops, round tables, and public debate on feminism and queerness. It created a protected environment within public space. One of the founders, Bochra Triki, said that » sharing a safe and collective public moment was a great aspect. The last two editions of the festival took place in Halfaouine Quarter and were open to a diverse public, which allowed for a great interaction between the artists, the feminist and queer audience, as well as with the residents of the quarter». The Mawjoudin Queer Film Festival is another initiative that focuses, as its name indicates, on queer art. Hosted by Cinéma Le Rio and organised by the cultural NGO Mawjoudin, the festival is a platform to screen short and medium-length films and organise concert, debate, and panel discussions. In 2018, the main topics were « Queer as Art » and « Queer as Resistance ». CAPITAL OF CULTURE

Both festivals bring the public closer to the queer community and act as a communication platform for their cultural identity and values. Although they manage to address a large audience and to include quite a few stakeholders, it continues to be very challenging to maintain and organise these events due to the current social and political situation as well as the lack of funds and supporting structures. All activities mentioned mainly take place in the capital of Tunisia. At this moment, it is far from imaginable to host regional LGBTIQ+ events due to the extremely conservative social structure. As one of the few decentralised art events, the community that produces See Djerba raises the same discussions in order to impact public opinion on LGBTIQ+ issues. The first step is to include LGBTIQ+ artists and to include their concern in the art mediation programme without displaying explicit images. What might look like a small step, might actually be a beginning. As the Tunisian proverb goes, « You have to shear the wool before you can sell it ». Ten years after the Arab Spring, we are far from including a broad spectrum of non-normative sexual and gender identities and politics into Tunisian life. The queer community has made the space of art and culture a refuge to generate interest, debate, and new channels of communication. Together, we are starting to break grounds to change public opinion, nourish tolerance, and to make Tunisia a safe place for all of us. »In particular cases, art can serve as a mediation tool, navigating the issues of the LGBTIQ+ community in Tunisia. I think it is important to find a way of tackling the subject of LGBTIQ+ so as not to shock people. Ultimately, LGBTIQ+ rights are closely related to other topics, such as women’s rights, human rights, economy, and politics. Therefore, we should find the right balance when talking about it; otherwise, it might have the opposite effect of turning people away.»

AYMEN GHARBI

is an artist, curator, and cultural producer. He is actively involved in the cultural and social life of the Medina of Tunis and directed the Media Art Biennial See Djerba together with Bettina Pelz. His work focuses on urban heritage and sociocultural participation as well as on contemporary culture. Aymen was a CCP fellow in 2016.
Media and art have the power to sensitise and mobilise large parts of society, playing both a constructive as well as a potentially dangerous role. Four workshop participants share examples of the positive and negative effects of art and media on LGBTIQ activism in their home countries.
»Art is a way to foster social cohesion. By focussing on the similarities rather than on the differences, we can use media for good and for building bridges between people of any kind of gender or sexual orientation. This is something I learned from another participant during the Gender and Diversity workshop. I believe that art is more subtle when it comes to addressing these similarities rather than talking about LGBTQI directly.«

ANONYMOUS, LIBYA

»The extent of hate that we as human rights advocates have received is brutal sometimes. In my country, we have something called doxing. It means that human rights defenders are demoralised online. The attackers name and shame advocates on social media, posting incriminating information about the individuals or organisations, propagating character assassination campaigns. For example, if you work for a pro-LGBT or a women’s rights organisation, they would associate you as an agent for the West or for the Zionists. It goes viral among the netizens who won’t bother to verify the authenticity of information, and they spread it further on social media. Then if the activists’ families and the larger society read these things, they also feel socially pressured to disapprove of activists’ human rights efforts! The repercussions go on and on ...«

AIZAT, MALAYSIA

»The Armenian media landscape may seem quite controversial if you are not aware of the country’s internal situation and do not have enough media literacy to filter fake news from what is true and objective news. In 2018, our country underwent a peaceful, non-violent revolution which resulted in a change of government and the transition of power to another political party. The previous regime used to target LGBT people in various ways, using the media as a tool for shifting people’s attention away from important events to provoking national hysteria and intolerance towards minority issues. You would see Facebook posts littered with thousands of comments about how immoral gay people are, a wash of hate speech and threats. As the government changed, our media pretty much divided. The ex-regime created its own news outlets and tried to retaliate by spreading misinformation and fake news about the new government. Thankfully, since people have become more aware of what is happening in their country, this tactic has less and less success.«

NELLY, ARMENIA
LGBTQ ARE OUR DOCTORS, FRIENDS OR NEIGHBOURS

Asma Abidi

After the Tunisian Revolution in 2010, censorship and threats against critical voices declined and the LGBTQ movement became more visible. Even so, a lot of prejudices still exist in Tunisian society, says Asma Abidi. One way to overcome them is through conscious and enlightened media reporting.

Original you studied engineering at the National Institute of Applied Sciences and Technologies in Tunis. How did you get involved with your current occupation in the media and the topic of the CCP workshop Gender and Diversity?

It was shortly after the revolution in Tunisia in 2010/11 that I started to work in media and journalism. I wouldn’t say that I am an LGBTQ activist. I describe myself as an ally. I am interested in discussing the medial challenges of this issue and the way the media frames the discussion around non-formative sexualities. Besides, I am a feminist, and for many years I was a human rights activist in Tunisia, occupying the streets after the revolution. My basic fight is for human rights, and I deal with the public sphere, government monitoring and corruption. I identify myself as a Pan-Africanist and a citizen of the world even though I have a lot of critique for this word. We struggle a great deal with on and offline mobility, not only as activists and journalists, but also as citizens.

How would you evaluate the media coverage about gender diversity in your country?

I have the feeling that the intensive media coverage on homosexuality, their rights and fight against the oppressive laws actually produces the opposite effect. People think: »Oh my God! What is this homosexuality that everyone’s talking about?« People feel that it is a direct threat. I can imagine different, more useful strategies for media coverage. In Tunisia, the media only talks about homosexuals and makes no difference between bisexuals, gays, lesbians or asexual people, probably because journalists themselves do not have enough background information. Since religion and related taboos are so strong, people cannot really tackle these topics in a pragmatic way. It is always a very emotional issue, and the media often contributes to the misconceptions of homosexuality.

> Activists are coming out online.

What is the situation for LGBTQ activists in Tunisia like?

In the past four years, LGBTQ activists and associations have become more visible. We have a couple of registered organisations and their struggle is recognised as activism now. There are a lot of activists who are coming out online or people who are considered allies – people advocating and defending LGBTQ. We have a lot of Facebook groups and support communities. There is a big group campaigning for #MeToo in Tunisia and many people are speaking up against harassment, so it is not such a prevalent taboo anymore.

There is a huge potential in storytelling because stories go beyond numbers and statistics.

Which formats are necessary to contribute to a more balanced media coverage about gender and sexual minorities?

I don’t think we should have specific media coverage that shows LGBTQ people as extraordinary because this framing is very critical. We should just speak about LGBTQ as normal members of society. They are our doctors, friends or neighbours. I think longer documentaries are a good form of storytelling, including in-depth interviews and following people and their struggles. We need more extensive stories, more analysis and more expert inputs. We should look for niche media such as podcasts that target specific communities and people. Among the most popular podcasts are ones from people of colour in the US or homosexuals in Kenya. We now have the first homosexual web radio in Tunisia. It is a growing medium for stories.

> Should we create our own narratives?«

How do you address the topic of inclusive language in your work?

I belong to different kinds of online and offline communities. One of them is called Shaml, a collective of women and people who identify themselves as women. We speak about the language the media uses to frame or label persons and we monitor the media in Tunisia regarding hate speech or labelling terms. At the moment, we are communicating a lot about the conception of gender. It is important that we work on our own language in our own region and dialects. In Arabic there are different ways to say transwoman or man. Should we adapt certain terms or concepts, or should we decolonise these and create our own narratives? Even the people who do not directly identifying themselves with LGBTQ who are cis or heterosexuals, contribute to the discussion and believe in basic human rights.

To what extent does security affect your work?

After 2010, the security threats and censorship against activists and journalists declined. To a certain extent, we do have freedom of expression, but I don’t think we are safe from threats, attacks or surveillance. I have
At the CCP workshop Gender and Diversity, participants presented their success stories from the last few years and, at the same time, highlighted where engagement and change are still needed. A collection of suggestions, project ideas, and future perspectives for LGBTIQ activism worldwide.
»We as a community initiated several projects focussing on transgender people in places of employment. We are aiming to break the stereotype of transgender people being sex workers, and we are trying to show that you can really change your way of life and work as a transgender person in Pakistan through self-determination. With the collaboration of some companies, we were able to create jobs for transgender people in what’s called the »normal« labour market. One of my friends, for example, got a job as a designer in the denim industry. Together we started to initiate small projects in different cities to build community spaces where sexual and gender minorities feel safe. We are trying to create safe spaces for their well-being and for their mental health.«

ANONYMOUS, PAKISTAN

»What LGBTQI in Egypt need is their voice to be heard, but at the same time, if they speak too loudly, they are monitored and subjected to oppression, jail or torture. There needs to be an international network of NGOs, policy makers and members of parliament in governments who put pressure on Egypt to solve this situation and to support the local LGBTQI community. This also applies when people are being imprisoned and sent to trial; they need to have an international network of support so that they are not alone. It is important for governments worldwide to understand that LGBTQI are also entitled to basic human rights.«

NICOLAS GILLES, FRANCE

»We have a very long way to go in the context of LGBT rights protection in Armenia. Unless people change their mentality, no legal framework will work and no law will be exercised properly. We need to educate and offer accurate information to people working in educational institutions, the healthcare system and in the justice system. LGBT people should not be afraid to study, receive proper healthcare nor should they be afraid to report violence to the police. People need to be educated on what they don’t understand. Education is the key!

NELLY, ARMENIA

»I love the idea of documenting and archiving things from the past and from now for the future. At the moment, cross-dressing and being transgender is criminalised. As a man, I cannot cross-dress; it is against the Sharia law in Malaysia. And you cannot speak about LGBT because it is considered immoral. But if we look at how things used to be in Malaysia, we can see that even if they were not explicitly labelled as LGBT, it was completely normal to see LGBT characters and people in old tabloids, in TV and magazines. This shows that we can learn about social change or transition in our society through archives. This is something from the workshop I will take back with me.«

AIZAT, MALAYSIA
I’m currently thinking about drawing a comic that would include people with different sexual orientations, giving hints to some stereotypes that readers might be able to pick up on. It would focus on the similarities such as being loved, being friendly and how the characters care about the people they trust and love. «

ANONYMOUS, LIBYA

Since the transgender bill passed in 2018, we have reached important milestones for transgender persons in Pakistan. Transgender organisations even receive funds from the government. However, the situation for other sexual and gender minorities (SGM) is still overlooked. The LGBQ concept is in direct conflict with Islam, and homosexuality is therefore completely prohibited by Islamic law. For this reason, within our capacities, we as transgender organisations are attempting to work for SGM visibility and rights. «

ANONYMOUS, PAKISTAN

Another thing is to include information about LGBTQ people and their issues into educational curriculum in order to develop educational formats. One of the biggest misconceptions is that homosexuality is a sickness. People still aren’t aware that the World Health Organisation doesn’t consider homosexuality a sickness anymore. Through education, information and raising awareness I think people could at least fight these misconceptions. «

ASMA, TUNISIA

This grassroots intercultural mini conference is important. There has to be more exchange between the countries of the MENA region. We need to find our own way of dealing with LGBTQI. For us to achieve our full rights, we need to combat colonialism, we need to combat pinkwashing and we need to redefine who we are as Arabs. «

MADIAN, JORDAN

Because from country to country the differences are huge, also in regards to the situation of LGBTI people, this South-to-South exchange among individuals in the MENA region is important since it gives them a chance to get in touch and stay connected. The participants and we can learn from each other through the exchange. The question for local organisations to answer is: how can they counter the accusation that by taking funding and support from the so-called West, they are driving a Western agenda? We encounter this problem from Armenia through to Egypt. The accusation of the governments and parts of society in many of these countries is that the organisations being supported are pursuing a Western agenda. The politicians and society need to be instructed in the fact that, like here, there were always LGBTI individuals in all of these countries. In actuality, that has nothing to do with a Western agenda. «

KLAUS JETZ, GERMANY
WHAT’S NEXT – LESSONS LEARNT AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Rebekka Muth and Malina Becker

Worldwide, people are discriminated against, persecuted and even murdered because of their sexual orientation or gender identity. These are often grounds for people to hide or leave their social environment and home country for a place where they can be safe and live their identity. LGBTIQ rights and acceptance vary greatly from country to country. In all countries, however, it continues to be necessary to fight discrimination and guarantee equal rights for all sexual orientations and gender identities.

The aim of the CCP workshop was to promote networking for LGBTIQ actors from the MENA region, Southern and Central Asia, and Germany, to discuss strategies and case examples, and share successful concepts, tools, and methods. During the workshop, a particular interest for the topic clusters language & labels, funding policies, media representation, and culture emerged, which was accompanied by the questions: What is the current situation worldwide? What is needed? Who can contribute to making changes and what are the roles of individuals, organisations, and governments in this process? The following recommendations were drawn from the points of view expressed by workshop participants.

LANGUAGES & LABELS

- **More than gays and lesbians** – Inclusive language is needed, including within the LGBTIQ community itself. In addition to people who define themselves as homosexual, there is a wide range of other sexual orientations and gender identities that should be included in projects, both in terms of the language used and in their implementation.
- **Man or woman?** Instead of using only clear-cut male and female terms, non-binary identities should also be included via linguistic conventions such as singular »they« (instead of he or she) or the gender star in German. It is important to ask which pronoun and name people prefer to be addressed by.
- **Colonial relics** – The debate about relevant terms and labels should be held in an international context, and linguistic relics from the colonial era should be revised. For example, many cultures have or once had a third gender and were and/or open to ambivalence. The precolonial tendencies inherent in these cultures could be promoted. At the same time, it is important to discuss the extent to which labels and established terms are meaningful and constructive or whether they restrict the diversity of existing identities.

FUNDING POLICIES

- **On equal footing** – Funding from foreign and international sponsors for regional activists and organisations must not establish dependencies or hierarchies. Projects and campaigns should be anchored in dialogue and mutual respect. Funding institutions, in particular, should be conscious of the power imbalance and avoid reinforcing it. Colonial influences must be critically reflected and reviewed.
- **Keep the local context in mind** – Usually, the people and institutions receiving funding know best where funding is meaningful for the local community and how it should be used. The requirements and funding rules should be adapted to these regional needs and further developed in cooperation with the people receiving the funding to achieve the best possible results and real changes.
- **Adapting to local requirements** – In many countries, LGBTIQ actors have difficulties acquiring funding because they are unable to found NGOs in their country. As a result, they do not have access to funds that are only available to NGOs. Money transfers are also being restricted by a number of stakeholders, whether due to international sanctions or national laws. Adapting funding policies to these circumstances would facilitate local human rights work.
- **Imposing conditions for funding** – Funders should stipulate criteria for receiving funding, even for projects that do not receive financial support specifically for LGBTIQ issues. The explicit obligation to prevent discrimination when implementing projects could help increase awareness for LGBTIQ issues and protection.

MEDIA REPRESENTATION

- **Nothing special** – The fact that LGBTIQ issues are receiving more attention from the media is a positive development. But, instead of (always) singling them out, they should be automatically included as part of society. Furthermore, it is important to represent the variety of LGBTIQ people instead of always showing the same people and identities and corresponding clichés and stereotypes.
- **Get your facts right** – A huge problem is the erroneous and false presentation of LGBTIQ people in the media. Journalists and representatives of the media must be equipped with background information to ensure their reporting is accurate, objective, and respectful.
- **Stay safe** – In many countries, LGBTIQ people are still not safe from discrimination and persecution. It is therefore even more important to guarantee their safety and, if desired, anonymity when reporting about individual people and organisations and their activism.

CULTURE AS A SAFE SPACE

- **Back them up** – Many cultural institutions are gathering places for a diverse range of people, providing the opportunity to experiment and try something new in a safe and tolerant environment. Smaller cultural spaces and niche media, in particular, offer programmes outside the mainstream. Funding and supporting these spaces and projects should be a long-term goal.
- **Out of the cities** – There are often numerous programmes and services for LGBTIQ in larger cities. The situation is quite different in rural areas. Projects that are not located in urban hotspots especially need support.
IFA AND ITS CROSSCULTURE PROGRAMME

With its CrossCulture Programme (CCP), ifa (Institut für Auslandsbeziehungen) is working in partnership with the Federal Foreign Office to build strong civil society networks between Germany and the rest of the world. Since 2005, young professionals from the fields of culture, education, science, arts and media have benefited from the opportunities provided by work-related stays either in Germany or in CCP partner countries.

- **Strengthening civil society:** With the CCP Fellowships, the CrossCulture Programme funds around 100 professionals and committed volunteers from around 40 countries each year. During two to three months of professional exchange in host organisations in Germany or in CCP partner countries, participants deepen their expertise and acquire intercultural skills. In turn, the host organisations benefit from the expertise, regional knowledge and networks of the CCP Fellows. Upon returning to their home organisations, the participants bring their experiences gained abroad into their everyday working life. Work placements are currently being offered in the following areas: politics & society, media & culture, human rights & peace, and sustainable development. From 2019 to 2023, the focus will also be on civic & citizenship education and digital civil society.

- **Networking civil societies:** Civil society organisations from Germany and from a CCP partner country are supported by the CCP Synergy programme as they work together on a project and create a lasting network. Funding for short stays is provided to employees of the two cooperating organisations. Aims of the cooperation can be the development and the expansion of joint projects, publications or events. The programme encourages the direct exchange between organisations and helps to bring together civil society actors across borders in order for them to learn from each other.

- **Intensifying collaboration:** With travel grants and regular seminars, workshops and symposia, the CCP Alumni programme promotes the professional development of hundreds of CCP Alumni worldwide. Since 2005, the programme has been helping participants build upon their established partnerships and networks. Travel grants are available to alumni to attend conferences, work on small joint projects and undertake fact-finding missions. In addition, CCP appoints volunteer representatives in the respective countries to act as contact persons in cooperation with alumni, the German Embassy, ifa and other interested parties. Together with the CCP, they organise regular alumni network meetings on topics of regional and professional interest.

For more information about the programme: www.ifa.de/en/fundings/crossculture-programme/
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With the fellowships of the CrossCulture Programme (CCP), ifa supports the interlacing of German and foreign civil society actors from the cultural, educational, scientific, artistic and media sectors from more than 40 partner countries. The goals for the participating fellows and organisations are to broaden and deepen their expertise, share and acquire intercultural skills, learn from each other and impart their own knowledge.

Building and strengthening an exchange within its alumni network is one of the main aims of CCP. This is supported through off- and online meet-ups, further funding possibilities and thematic workshops. The 2019 alumni workshop highlighted the topic of »Gender & Diversity«. This publication collects personal commentaries, best-practice examples and policy recommendations by the participants regarding labels and language, media, culture, and foreign policy.