

What is the UNCRPD?

The United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD) is an international convention which outlines the human rights of people with disabilities. It came into force in May 2008 and to date 158 countries and international structures have signed it, including the EU.⁴ It was developed in partnership with people with disabilities and is based on the “social model of disability”. Article 19 is all about the right to independent living in the community.

What is the social model of disability?

Traditionally disability is seen as a medical problem that needs to be fixed. People with disabilities are seen as problems that need to be segregated from society. This approach has led to people with disabilities being excluded, discriminated against and even killed.

The social model of disability was devised by disabled people who realised that their medical conditions were not what stopped them from taking part in society but it was how society reacted to their conditions that caused the problem. They identified three types of barriers that disabled people experienced: negative attitudes and physical/environmental and organisational barriers. So, for example, if a blind person isn't allowed into a restaurant because he or she has an assistance dog that is an example of attitudinal and organisational barriers. An essential element of the social model is that disability is not the fault of an individual and it is the whole of society that needs to take action.

Personally I think taking an approach that looks at barriers would be helpful when considering multiple discrimination as it places responsibility on the individual and makes being inclusive everyone's issue. For example an organisational barrier for those who identify themselves as LGBTQ might be the use of boxes marked male and female to express gender rather than leaving a blank space so people can respond how they like.

4. www.un.org/disabilities/ accessed 20 July 2014.



From multiple discrimination to intersectionality: IGLYO's approach

By Jordan Long

Photos by Alex Müller

I would like to get my whole community to come together so that we can work as one big organism. Will I manage?

Alex Horky (19), Czech Youth Queer Organisation, Czech Republic

INTRODUCTION TO IGLYO

In 1984, a group of young people saw the need for an independent voice in the European lesbian, gay, bisexual and trans movement. They established what has become IGLYO – the International Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender and Queer Youth and Student Movement. This year, IGLYO celebrates its 30th anniversary of representing the needs and interests of LGBTQ young people.

IGLYO develops programmes to build the capacity of young activists who work on issues concerning sexual orientation and gender identity. These programmes take the form of conferences and workshops that explore pertinent topics or organisational development. At the same time, IGLYO lobbies in co-ordination with other European civil society organisations for inclusive measures at the EU and the Council of Europe.

For the past six years, this programmatic and policy work has been driven by a strategic plan, written and passed by LGBTQ young people to mandate IGLYO's executive board and secretariat to draft a work plan that reflects the interests of those IGLYO seeks to represent. In the past, the general assembly has decided that IGLYO should work in areas such as health, education, human rights and social inclusion. Recently, the topic of intercultural and interreligious dialogue developed into our current strategic focus area of intersectionality.

I consider myself an activist because of what I am. As a teacher I have to act on behalf of others.

Blessed Busingye (20), Youth Reproductive Health Link, Uganda



INTERSECTIONALITY AS A FOCUS AREA

In October 2013, the delegates of IGLYO's general assembly (GA) met in Copenhagen, Denmark. One outcome of the GA was a new strategic plan – a five-year plan that included three strategic focus areas.

While the focus areas of social inclusion and education were easily agreed upon, the GA took more time to discuss the final focus area. The delegates recognised a need to address the multiple layers of identity – after all, IGLYO works on issues that affect young LGBTQ people. However, the debate focused on whether IGLYO would focus on multiple discrimination or intersectionality.

At the outcome, the GA decided that IGLYO would work on the focus area of intersectionality for the years 2014 and 2015. By doing so, the GA decided that IGLYO would not just focus on the harm that exists as a result of multiple discrimination, but on the positive recognition and celebration of multiple identities.

IGLYO wanted to recognise multiple layers of identity in addition to age, sexual orientation and gender identity. The GA mandated that we should not only focus on the ways young LGBTQ might be discriminated against because of their other minority characteristics, but how these multiple characteristics and experiences enrich the LGBTQ community. Indeed, IGLYO wanted to acknowledge that there is no monolithic "LGBTQ community", and that each person lives alongside systems of privilege and power.

In particular, IGLYO would like to explore the ways that different socio-economic statuses, genders, (dis)abilities, and racial and ethnic identities intersect with the experiences of young LGBTQ people and develop our organisational position on intersectionality.

ROUNDTABLE SERIES ON INTERSECTIONALITY

In the first half of 2014, IGLYO launched its 2014 roundtable series on intersectionality. In four different meetings, we gathered stakeholders to discuss the topics of socio-economic statuses, genders, (dis)ability, and racial and ethnic identities. Participants at the roundtables were activists within each field, and we tried to bring together European, national and local actors. There was no pre-requisite for working from an intersectional approach, as each roundtable served as a starting point to establish common ground.

Some common themes emerged from the roundtables. One is that various social movements have often assumed homogeneity in their respective groups, ignoring the diversity within any community. We discussed the challenges of promoting diversity within the various movements, thus giving opportunities for meaningful participation and leadership for all people aligned with the cause.



Advocacy on policies is needed to make sure that laws are in sync with the needs of society and especially with the needs of marginalised communities such as LGBT people.

Luluk (27), Srikandi Sejati Foundation, Indonesia



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Another discussion at each of the four thematic roundtables focused on the difference between intersectionality and multiple discrimination. While most groups worked on the topic of multiple discrimination, they recognised the value of using an intersectional approach. An intersectional approach provides the recognition of multiple social identities at any given time. For IGLYO, an intersectional approach is especially important, as young people do not have the same access to means of fighting institutional discrimination, especially when they experience multiple discrimination.

You can read the statements released by each roundtable:
www.iglyo.com/what-we-do/focus-areas/intersectionality/.

CROSSING PATHS CONFERENCE

Additionally, IGLYO recently held the conference Crossing Paths: Exploring Intersections within the Diversity of LGBTQ Communities. Over 50 activists gathered in Bologna, Italy, with the objectives of:

- gaining a better understanding of intersectionality as a methodological tool in life/activism;
- exploring the specific themes of socio-economic statuses, genders, (dis)abilities, and racial and ethnic identities to become more aware of diverse experiences;
- critically reflecting on their own and their organisation's practices to increase inclusion;
- developing work plans and tools tailored to the needs of their organisation/context/peers.

The conference continued to explore these areas with experts who were invited to roundtables on each topic. The conference also included theoretical background to the concept of intersectionality, discussions on the benefits and challenges of this approach, and individual action planning for participants to map out practical steps to improve the inclusivity of their organisations and groups.

WAYS FORWARD

IGLYO has one last event on intersectionality. The rapporteurs from each roundtable will meet to prepare a set of materials on the topic. In addition to publishing *IGLYO on Intersectionality*, the rapporteurs will prepare an organisational position paper on the topic. Finally, they will draft a guide to inclusive organisations, which will be a practical tool so that our members can reach the diversity we know exists among LGBTQ young people.

Activism means standing up for justice and acceptance every day at any time and any level. Being an activist is a meaningful and significant part of my life and my identity.

Selbi Jumayeva (22), LGBT Organisation Labrys, Kyrgyzstan

