

Long Story, short (14)

What exactly is “promotion” of homosexuality?

“Long Story-Short” is a weekly email describing one LGBTQIA+ inclusion principle around 250 words (or less!) while demystifying some of the complexities around LGBTQIA+ inclusion in humanitarian and development environments.

Homophobic and transphobic governments have left this deliberately vague

A number of new and proposed laws seeking to impair LGBTQIA+ civil society criminalize “promotion” of homosexuality and other SOGIESC identities.

Uganda’s draconian *Anti-Homosexuality Act* includes a penalty of up to 20 years in prison for “promotion”. In Burundi authorities have used a law against “promoting debauchery” to charge LGBTQIA+ activists. Successive proposed laws in DRC have sought to criminalize promotion and “encouraging.”

But what does it actually mean to “promote”?

Unsurprisingly, this isn’t defined; the main and central goal is almost always **to intimidate and silence civil society**.

Many INGOs and UN agencies have also opted to self-censor or even cut off outreach to LGBTQIA+ persons. Fear of “promotion” clauses being used against them if they provide assistance to LGBTQIA+ persons has shown just how fragile core humanitarian principles can be.

Ultimately, this means that the **intent is working**. Governments use vague language such as this to intimidate, cajole, and extort. Many aid agencies, fearing repercussions, then curtail assistance and access.

Interestingly, civil society and community benefit organizations are remain unbowed. Despite the fact that these organizations are much more vulnerable than international organizations, they persist. Over and over, we see CSOs adapt and **modify and innovate** to find ways to continue to provide assistance to their communities which not only comply with restrictive enforcement regimes, but which adapt to avoid any accusations – or proof- of so-called “promotion”

If only we could “promote” local CSOs’ courage and innovation a bit more.

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