



CTDC

Centre for Transnational
Development and Collaboration

Call for Participation- LGBTQ Rights Activists

CTDC is delighted to announce the launch of its Gender and Sexuality program in the MENA region, with its first project under the title of LGBTQ Regional Advocacy Action Plan (RAP) in the MENA Region. In partnership with Cecilia Karlstedt Consulting, CTDC is organising two workshops in Turkey for LGBTQ rights activists to come together and discuss a way forward for advocacy. The project is being carried out with financial support from the Swedish Institute. The project will take place over a period of 18 months, during which there will be an initial workshop to come up with a regional action plan, followed by a period of remote consulting advice to participating LGBTQ rights activists and organisations in their advocacy work provided by CTDC, and finally there will be a final workshop to discuss advocacy work following a year of implementation of the joint regional advocacy plan (RAP).

The first workshop is intended to take place between 17 and 21 November 2016 in Turkey.

The second workshop is intended to take place between 16 and 20 November 2017 in Turkey. The same persons will be selected for both workshops.

CTDC is currently seeking statements of interest from LGBTQ activists, individuals and organisations from Palestine, Jordan, Iraq, Tunisia, Lebanon and Syria. We are disheartened that we cannot include more countries in this call for participation, as places are limited to twenty participants, but we are hoping that this will be a pilot project that will lead to a larger MENA-region wide program. If you are interested, please submit a statement of interest to info@ctdc.org. The deadline for applications is August 1, 2016.

Statements of interests must seek to address the following questions:

- What type of activism have you been involved in and in which countries?
- If you have *not* been engaged in activism, what were the reasons for that? This could be anything from family pressure, to state-imposed sanctions.
- How do you believe you can contribute to this project and how do you believe this project can benefit you on a personal level and/or in the scope of your work?
- What other workshops relating to LGBTQ activism have you attended over the past years?

Women, trans women and trans men activists are especially encouraged to apply. Selected applicants will have their flights and hotels booked and covered and will be provided with a daily subsistence allowance during the workshops.



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Project Background

LGBTQ individuals face legal, social, economic and cultural discrimination in MENA, and that is the main problem this project seeks to address. However, to do so, there are other problems that need to be addressed as well. Each country has its own discourses with regards to LGBTQ folk, and the lack of coordination between different activists, groups and organisations in the region hinders the creation of a unified approach and methodology to address those issues. There is also a lack of safe spaces for Syrian LGBTQ folk in particular, which prevents them from organising and advocating for their rights. This project will also provide this safe space for different LGBTQ groups to meet, organise and debate a regional action plan. There is also so little representation of women LGBTQs in the MENA region and this projects aims to pro-actively address this issue as well through including women's representation in the RAP.

The project idea developed through research CTDC has been carrying out with LGBTQ individuals, activists and organisations in the region. We have found out that there is a lack in coordination between organisations in Arabic speaking countries working on LGBTQ issues. Countries within the region share similar media platforms, and to a certain degree have the same discriminatory attitudes towards LGBTQ individuals, however, we found out that the discourse is different between those countries, despite the fact that they share the same language. The idea of this project developed due to the need to organise on a regional level, in order to create a cohesive action plan to address LGBTQ media advocacy. **We believe that we are stronger together.**

CTDC has conducted a series of consultations with several local LGBTQ NGOs and activists, who have expressed the real need for efforts to be unified in order to create a real change in public attitudes towards LGBTQ individuals. We have also found out that due to sexism and patriarchy women are underrepresented in LGBTQ rights activism, therefore, we are encouraging the participation of women, as we believe that LGBTQ rights and women's rights tie in together in the region, and a comprehensive approach to LGBTQ rights would ensure that inclusion of women.

Despite the legal and social differences, between different countries in the region, there is a huge lack in a *unified* advocacy plan, which could potentially create cohesion and coordination between different groups. We have found out that for instance LGBTQ rights in one country may create a backlash among local communities elsewhere, instead of advancing rights or having a positive impact. This backlash needs to be addressed through creating a regional action plan between the different agents of change. We have chosen to work with organisations because they work directly as frontliners with LGBTQ identified people. Activists are people, who can be LGBTQ identified and allies, who work towards advocating for LGBTQ rights. As for LGBTQ identified individuals, we have chosen them because they are exposed directly to discrimination and because we believe that they can be agents of change.



This project will be utilised for awareness raising on the regional level, and it will open the space for dialogue about LGBTQ issues, using alternative terminology that is more accessible and understood by communities.

Summary of Project Activities

- **Initial Workshop:** This workshop, taking place between 17 and 21 November 2016, will aim to bring together LGBTQ activists and organisations; to come up with an action plan for joint coordinated work that has a region wide influence. The workshop will also aim to create a regional network of activists and organisations, who work in close coordination with each other.
- **Short Film:** This film will show LGBTQ experiences from across the region, and will be used as an advocacy tool to raise awareness and to launch an advocacy campaign on LGBTQ issues. Participants and participating organisations will be given the chance to participate in the film during the workshop. In the making of the film, we will ensure that identities are concealed, whenever requested, and that the film is produced in close collaboration with all those involved. The film will be made available in February 2017.
- **Consultations and Follow-up Sessions:** CTDC will provide consultations and technical assistance to participants throughout the project implementation phase. CTDC will also act as a coordinator for the network ensuring regular communications and advice is channelled, while providing safe space for critical insight into the work. Funding cannot be granted under this project for advocacy activities, but we hope that this will be a pilot, which will lead into further projects in the region.
- **Second Workshop:** This workshop with the same group of activists will consist of focus groups, interviews and plenum discussions to discuss the results of the regional action plan, the lessons learned through the implementation to collect data for a final policy paper.
- **Policy Paper:** The policy paper will aim to increase the understanding of LGBTQ issues in the MENA region and recommend further possibilities for LGBTQ media advocacy in the region based on results from the workshop. The policy paper will also aim to inform future work by assessing the lessons learnt through the creation of the RAP. The paper will be made available to the public in February 2018.