

ILGA - International Lesbian and Gay Association

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ILGA statement for the CEDAW session on elaborating a General Recommendation on LGBTI girls' and women's right to education, 7 July 2014

State Representatives, Colleagues and Friends

ILGA presents this statement on behalf of communities which are often oppressed, marginalised and forgotten, namely lesbian, bisexual, trans and intersex (LBTI) girls and women. We highlight some shortfalls by states in upholding Article 10 of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against women – namely, equal access to- and provision of quality education. 'Women' is a broad heterogeneous category. ILGA therefore stresses that States need to address institutional discrimination against LBTI girls and women of colour, particular ethnic groups, classes, ages or abilities in various socio-political and educational spaces. The overlap of these variables complicate problems of discrimination and oppression. Stigma and criminal-labelling assigned to LBTI girls and women also make provision of quality education impossible.

Article 10 a) is regularly contravened owing to rigid societal norms, political pressure, legal loopholes and difficulties around sexual orientation, gender identity and roles, body morphology and medical knowledge. Marginalisation, violence and discrimination within the family affect whether or not LBTI girls and women receive an education. They often experience sexual, physical and verbal assault, harassment, suspension and expulsion from institutions, and attitudes that undermine the social and political equality of women. Forced reparative counselling with counsellors who are ill-equipped to handle their issues, is common. Furthermore there is often discrimination with regard to career promotions within academia or other institutions.

LBTI persons who are 'out' or perceived as gender transgressive, experience discrimination and expulsion from sports. This contravenes Article 10 b) which covers the right to sports and physical education. Stereotypical gender roles assigned to girls and women also means that some may be discouraged or prohibited from undertaking an education of their own choice such as various technical-vocational trainings.

Article 10 c) that education must be available, accessible, acceptable, and adaptable to women and girls in urban as well as in rural areas and to all disadvantaged groups is regularly violated. Many LBTI girls and women do not receive comprehensive sexual and reproductive health education, including information on sexually transmitted illnesses, unwanted pregnancies, contraceptive methods and safe abortion options. Specialised education for Trans persons on various therapies and sex reassignment surgery, and education for intersex people about health aspects of intersex variations, sexuality and the range of non-invasive surgical procedures is lacking. Studies that indicate a higher than average consumption of alcohol and drugs and weight problems amongst LB girls and women should be made available to them, including how and where to seek professional support.

ILGA recommends that States review discriminatory laws, encourage attitude changes, ensure free choice of educational trainings and prejudice-free job opportunities in all socio-political areas.

ILGA, the world federation of LGBTI organisations
*1044 members from 117 countries committed to equal human rights
for lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans and intersex people*
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