

Addressing the roles of NGOs during disaster response and recovery

Institutional discrimination towards LGBTQ people in disaster and recovery by David King, Centre for Disaster Studies, James Cook University, Queensland, Australia

The focus of Disaster Risk Reduction is on building resilience through the strengths and capacities in society, but it has a tendency to homogenise characteristics of resilience to the community level, thereby flattening and hiding diversity. LGBTQ people are largely ignored as minority groups with specific information needs. Specific response and recovery processes and actors exacerbate the vulnerability of the LGBTQ minority, especially in evacuation, support, counselling, and rehousing. The role of faith-based organisations in providing these services during disaster relief and recovery has been examined in a review paper which identifies and critiques the attitudes and practices of some faith based organisations towards LGBTQ groups in their provision of disaster relief services. While the review indicates significant faith based institutional discrimination towards LGBTQ people in countries outside Australia there is a risk that increased devolution of response, evacuation and recovery activities to NGOs and especially to faith-based organisations carries a risk of increasing discrimination and stress to a vulnerable minority.

Responsible emergency management agencies, including researchers, should identify discrimination and call out those organisations, or sections within them, which practise discrimination and who speak publicly against LGBTQ individuals and communities, both outside the period of a disaster event but especially during a disaster impact and recovery. Understanding is needed to fully appreciate how those inside these faith based organisations can work within disaster relief operations and recovery in a way that does not impinge on the rights of LGBTQ members of the community during times of disaster and recovery. The question to be addressed will be whether faith-based organisations which advocate or practise discrimination should be identified and removed from disaster relief operations even if they have a long history of successful and effective relief and recovery strategies. LGBTQ people within such organisations have a critical role and responsibility in enacting transformation that may harness the goodwill and capacity of faith-based organisations to care for all members of the impacted community.

Full review paper may be downloaded at

<https://www.worldscientific.com/doi/10.1142/S2345737622410056>