

GALE facilitates successful strategy workshop on education rights in Jakarta

Peter Dankmeijer, 26-4-2013

On 24 April, Peter Dankmeijer (GALE director) facilitated a strategy workshop on how to advocate for the right to education for LGBT people in Indonesia. He did the workshop on invitation of Arus Pelangi, a national civil society organization based in Jakarta that focuses on LGBT human rights advocacy. About 17 activists and staff from mainstream organizations were present, including People Like Us Satu Hati (PLUSH) Jogjakarta, Komunitas Sehati Makassar (KSM), GaYa Nusantara (GN), Ardhanary Institute (AI), GWL-Muda, Yayasan Inter Medika (YIM), Youth Interfaith Forum on Sexuality (YIFOS), Yayasan Sejiwa, and Perkumpulan Keluarga Berencana Indonesia (PKBI, or the Indonesian Family Planning Association).



The group went through 3 cycles of information and analysis of the national situation of Indonesia. It was concluded Indonesian schools suffer from a general violent school environment: teachers erroneously still believe that corporal punishment is good pedagogy and this bad

example role models students in bullying behavior. Although the national Indonesian creed is “Unity in diversity”, nor teacher nor students learn how to deal with diversity or conflict.

After a strengths/weakness analysis, the general consensus was that combating violence and bullying, and extending this strategy to diversity pedagogy, would offer the best

opportunities. If the Indonesian movement would develop this choice, it would follow the lead that UNESCO has taken until now. The day before the strategic workshop, Arus Pelangi and GALE visited the Indonesian UNESCO staff, which was interested to further explore the issue and potential cooperation. One of the mainstream participants of the workshop was a director of Yayasan Sejiwa, which is an anti-bullying organization. Cooperation with this and other NGOs is promising to offer the LGBT movement access to mainstream institutions and to the government.



Photo: Anna Arifin poses behind an Indonesian identity card. Normal cards only allow a choice between 2 sexes and you are obliged to fill in one of five religions. No religion is not possible. This version of the identity card is filled in how activists like it: varied sex, spiritual for religion.

Indonesian LGBT activists trained to be peer-educators

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On 26 and 27 April, fifteen activists from all over Indonesia were trained by GALE to offer peer education to young people in upper classes in high schools (16-20 years old) and in universities (18-25 years old). Indonesia is one of the first Asian countries to attempt such peer education. After a few small scale pilot sessions, it was decided that some training would be helpful, especially on how to deal with difficult and aggressive questions from high ignorant and homophobic students, sometimes with orthodox Muslim backgrounds.

The two-day training made the aspirant peer educators aware of the difference between combating “homophobia and transphobia” and “nuancing heteronormativity”. The participants reflected on their own position in relation to heteronormative values and became more conscious of useful and feasible objectives for peer education sessions. In addition, the participants learned how to deal with aggressive emotional responses and with groups that



remain silent because of taboos, how to deal with prejudiced questions and which simple and more advanced methods can be used for different target groups. The training ended with two teams developing draft programs for high school students and for university students.

Photo: Peter Dankmeijer trains activists on how to get shy students to engage in role play, which enables a more lively dialogue and opportunities for "learning by experience" than just teaching through lecturing

The training was facilitated by Peter Dankmeijer, director and senior consultant of the GALE Foundation. He personally comments on the training: “As a trainer I aim to continuously keep learning, and this training was an excellent opportunity for me to explore in which ways the European good practice of storytelling sessions in schools by LGBT peer educator could work in Indonesia and how it should be adapted to local needs and customs.

One of the most interesting aspects is that informal storytelling by LGBT people should be followed by a dialogue between the peer educators and students on values and norms. This requires the students to voice their opinion, but this is rather alien to Asia. Students are supposed to be silent and listen; not saying anything is considered a sign of respect. Of course, this complicates an open discussion, especially when it is about sensitive issues: Indonesian students don't even get general sex education. So we had to work out ways to partly work within these limitations and partly teach the students (and educators!) how to have a discussion like this.

A very concrete example of how this works out on the classroom and in educators is the use



of open questions. Closed questions ask for a short confirmation (yes or no) or a fact. They tend to stop dialogue, while open questions invite students to tell a story and open up dialogue. I asked the aspirant peer educators to sit in pairs and ask each other only open questions. This skill exercise is commonly difficult for

anyone, but maybe even more for Asians because such questions can be conceived as crude curiosity or even as an attempt to lower your status by making you talk too much.

When we debriefed the exercise, some participants commented on this. But at the same time we analyzed that when the educators are too much focused on convincing the students of their mission, they tend to use closed questions. By doing this, they implicitly ask for

confirmation of their mission, rather than engaging in a dialogue, which is much more effective to change minds. The tendency to keep using closed questions may have more to do with the strong wish of activists to be a missionary, than with cultural respect. Asking open questions is not just a technique, but also a state of mind of being interested in your discussion partners. Just as students need to learn empathy with LGBT people, so do LGBT educators need to learn to empathize with the students they educate – even when you don't like their opinions. We ended our reflection on this exercise by exploring ways to be less of a missionary, more of a facilitator and of cultural appropriate ways to express curiosity and empathy.”