

**International Student House, Washington, DC - Ms. Georgina Rannard -  
Building Rainbow House: Achieving LGBTIQ rights - Kyrgyzstan**

**Proposal Narrative**

LGBTIQ persons in Kyrgyzstan talk about 2014 as the worst year in recent history. They describe fear, harassment, assault, suicide, and death as an increasingly normal part of life. HIV/AIDS infection rates amongst MSM (men who have sex with men) are increasing, yet the government refuses to target resources at the LGBTIQ community. Some discuss leaving their country to seek safe refuge. A 2014 report by Human Rights Watch, 'They Said We Deserved This: Police Violence Against Gay and Bisexual Men in Kyrgyzstan', documented physical, sexual and psychological violence, as well as extortion and detention, against gay men in Kyrgyzstan. Additional non-profit research supports these conclusions. There are predictions that 2015 will bring a further deterioration of conditions.

With the support of Davis, *Building Rainbow House* will transform the capacities of a prominent but chronically under-supported LGBTIQ organization *Indigo*, who work in Bishkek. *Indigo* provide crucial services and support to the LGBTIQ community in Bishkek, but their work is hindered by a lack of a safe space and long-term HQ. This has led to a reactive, 'fire-fighting' approach by the organization to their work. Of equal significance is their limited capacities in reporting and awareness-raising of the LGBTIQ situation. Their online presence is limited, and they do not currently produce press releases etc. This is a missed opportunity in the context of the existing global community of LGBTIQ activists, which could provide material, political, and spiritual support to the *Indigo* community.

The project has two core aims: 1) To transform *Indigo's* strategic goal to purchase a safe house and headquarters from an ambition into a full-scale campaign. *Indigo* currently rent a small apartment, which drains much of their resources and does not allow them to plan strategically. The acquisition of a dedicated space in Bishkek, which they plan to call *Rainbow House*, will allow them to significantly expand the range of health, support, capacity-building, community outreach, and organizing activities they are able to do. The Davis project will kickstart the campaign with training in crowdfunding campaigning, organizing a Fundraising dinner, and establishing international links with LGBTIQ organizations.

The successful acquisition of *Rainbow House* will enable *Indigo* to:

- Provide training to LGBTIQ persons about personal safety, human rights, and legal support for those threatened by homophobic groups.
- Empower LGBTIQ persons by organizing community events such as cooking classes, movie nights, art classes, AA meetings (for alcohol dependent LGBTIQ persons), language courses.
- Give medical and psychological support, including providing HIV/AIDS tests free of charge.
- Give temporary shelter to socially and economically vulnerable members of the LGBTIQ persons. This is particularly important for those LGBTIQ persons who evicted from their homes after coming out or being outed forcefully.

2) To give LGBTIQ persons in Bishkek an international voice and presence in the global LGBTIQ community by providing essential and in-depth media and reporting training. The project has at its centre the fundamental belief that information is power, and that international links will strengthen *Indigo's* peace and human rights work. Two different workshop will develop capacities in reporting, social media, blogging and basic photography will enable *Indigo* to:

- Transform 'fire-fighting' into a sustainable and proactive approach to political and social environment.
- End international isolation empowerment by building close links with other LGBTIQ organisations.
- Empower *Indigo* activists and members by enabling them to report and tell their stories.
- Enable *Indigo* to issue regular reports regarding the human rights situation in Kyrgyzstan.
- Establish a crowdfunding campaign to support the *Rainbow House* campaign.
- Expand the skills base of *Indigo* activists.

Achievement of these core aims will empower and emancipate LGBTIQ persons, increase their self esteem, and build greater social cohesion. This will further contribute to eliminating internal homophobia and encouraging them to coming out, which is crucial for the overall LGBTIQ movement in Kyrgyzstan.

**Project Execution: June 1st-18th 2015**

- Workshop 1 - Training in reporting, blogging, social media for *Indigo* staff: Week-long workshop training for *Indigo* staff and activists in writing press releases, producing and pitching articles for publication, social media including twitter, blogging using manageable sites such as *Wordpress*, basic photography skills. It will train staff with the aim of enabling them to produce at least monthly updates on the political and social situation in Bishkek for an international audience.
- Workshop 2 - Training in crowd-funding and building an online presence for *Rainbow House* campaign: This will build on media skills, but with a focus on creating a website for the *Rainbow House* campaign. The aim will be to make international links to boost the campaign, and accelerate crowd-funding for the project. The key output will be a website for the campaign, and an initial target of \$4000 within six months.
- Fundraising dinner 17th June 2015: This will launch the *Rainbow House* campaign, raise awareness of the situation in Bishkek, and raise target of \$3000 for the campaign. *Indigo* will invite members of diplomatic missions of those countries, including the US, who made recommendations to Kyrgyzstan to withdraw the current anti-gay draft bill in 2014. One of the ways I will assist the organisation of this dinner is by forming links with LGBTIQ advocacy groups in Washington D.C in February to June to raise the profile of the event.
- Build links to other LGBTIQ organisations, with focus on creating a 'partner' relationship with an LGBTIQ organisation in Washington D.C, such as *The DC Centre*. I can facilitate this relationship during my time as a Lantos Foundation fellow in Washington D.C.
- Photographic and written story on the Davis project for publication in July 2015: This will be joint-written between myself and *Indigo* activists as a collaborative media story, for publication in *Contributoria* or similar.

#### Timeline for activities

<i>Indigo</i> to contact guests for Fundraising dinner and secure keynote speaker	February-June 2015
Georgina Rannard to contact Washington D.C advocacy and community LGBTIQ groups regarding creating partner relationships with <i>Indigo</i>	February-June 2015
<i>Indigo</i> to select participants for workshops	May 2015
Georgina Rannard travel to Bishkek	June 1st-18th 2015
Workshop activities	June 1st-18th 2015
Fundraising dinner	17th June 2015
Publication of joint-venture story	July 2015

#### Goals and indicators of success

- Short-term: Successful organisation of fundraising dinner, with target amount raised of \$2000
- Short-term: Establishment of a crowdfunding campaign for *Rainbow House*, including videos and website, with global audience.
- Short-term: Successful training of minimum five members of *Indigo* community in media, blogging, reporting (including press releases).
- Long-term: Subsequent monthly press releases and/or publishable articles by *Indigo* for national and international audiences reporting on developments in human rights situation for LGBTIQ.
- Long-term: Build strong 'partner' links with LGBTIQ organisations in Washington D.C.
- Long-term: Purchase of the safe house and community centre *Rainbow House* in summer 2016.