

IT GETS BETTER PROJECT®

The mission of the It Gets Better Project is to communicate to lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) youth around the world that *it gets better*, and to create and inspire the changes needed to make it better for them.

The It Gets Better Project® started in 2010 as a response to a number of LGBT youth in crisis, and in particular, several suicides among LGBT youth that were widely reported in the media. The Project's goal was to use technology and social media to reach LGBT youth — wherever they lived and whatever their circumstances — to offer a message of hope. It urged young people to stay true to themselves through the bullying and other challenges that confronted them in their adolescent years, and described the positive future they could experience as adults. The Project quickly ignited a worldwide phenomenon. A growing chorus of diverse voices submitted online videos telling their stories, and offering encouragement to LGBT youth across the globe.

The Project's online video collection and social media platforms remain at the center of its global messaging and outreach to youth. The videos have been viewed tens of millions of times, and feature celebrities, musicians, professional athletes, political leaders, and countless everyday LGBT people and their allies, representing all ages, races, religions, nationalities, gender identities and sexual orientations. Every video offers a unique perspective, but the core message in each is the same: telling LGBT youth that, whatever their circumstances, *it gets better*.

Today, the It Gets Better Project has a library of over 50,000 videos and focuses its efforts on its media initiatives, community engagement and international growth.

Growing up as a gay boy in Venezuela wasn't easy. Even though it wasn't violent, I was always subject of laughs and I was made fun of for years, just for being obviously different. Today those differences set me apart and make me unique. The secret is to recognize that even when it's tough it always gets better. — An it gets better video from Venezuela

Even if things are bad for you today, maybe tomorrow, the day after tomorrow, or in a week or two things will get better. You'll find the person who will be at your side, no matter your orientation or profession. No matter what you look like. They'll be with you.

— Nastia, from the Moldovan It Gets Better Project Affiliate, Egali

I don't know what it's like to be picked on for being gay. But I do know what it's like to grow up feeling like sometimes you don't belong. It's tough. But what I want to say is this: You are not alone.

— U.S. President Barack Obama



INTERNATIONAL PROGRAM

From the beginning, the invisibility of geography on the Internet meant that *it gets better*® videos were being viewed and submitted from around the world. The videos are diverse in language, culture and political viewpoint, and feature a range of different issues.

A remarkable number of people from outside the United States who have been inspired by the message have reached out to the Project and expressed the desire to use the message to promote change in their home countries. Sometimes, those efforts take the form of focused opportunities, such as a museum exhibit in South Africa featuring local *it gets better* videos or an award-winning film featuring a transgender lead character in Thailand (the film's title is *It Gets Better*, in Thai). These relationships and opportunities inspired the Project to develop a formal Affiliate Program, with representatives from Europe, South America, the Caribbean and Australia (with more to come), each of which operate a variation on the It Gets Better Project, tailored to local language, culture, and issues.

The international work offers immediate hope to LGBT youth; accelerates a change in attitudes about rights and protections for LGBT youth; sets the stage for significant legal and cultural shifts around the world; leverages the expertise and resources of established organizations that provide services for LGBT youth; and brings people together from around the world for a unifying cause. Ultimately, the It Gets Better Project is building a global, grassroots movement to help make it better for LGBT youth, and our affiliates play a crucial role in this effort.

For more information on the International Program, visit www.itgetsbetter.org/international or contact international@itgetsbetter.org.

The It Gets Better Project and its Affiliate Program make things better for LGBT youth in countries around the world through a unique and powerful approach that includes:

- 1 A powerful organizing theme.**
The *it gets better* message is simple, optimistic and honest, giving it a universal appeal to LGBT and non-LGBT individuals, youth and adults, and many other diverse stakeholders. The message implicitly acknowledges that things are not perfect today, but that they can improve. It is a call to action and a reminder that there's work to be done.
- 2 A suite of media and cultural tactics.**
The Project uses social media, community engagement and storytelling to keep issues important to LGBT youth in the spotlight and to build a community of support. These tactics are readily translatable into other regions through training, technical assistance and creativity.
- 3 A grassroots approach.**
The Affiliate Program offers organized support and powerful tools to local leaders who request it, and who share the values and vision of the Project. The *it gets better* message is best utilized when its inherent strength as a brand and its collaborative approach are combined with a strong, active, thoughtful team on the ground in a particular region.
- 4 A convening of local and international resources.**
Through coordinated efforts, both domestic and overseas, and working alongside its affiliates, the Project is able to bring the expertise of established organizations into regions where resources for LGBT youth are scarce. Once an individual or group deploys the Project's tactics locally, it opens doors for organizations with relevant expertise from around the world to offer their support and resources to build local programs, whether that involves the creation of focused mental health services, new programs in the educational system, political change that benefits LGBT youth, and more.