



REGIONAL WORKSHOP TO PROMOTE FAMILY ACCEPTANCE OF LGBTIQ PERSONS IN ASEAN

ASEAN SOGIE CAUCUS

22-23 FEBRUARY 2017

REGIONAL WORKSHOP TO PROMOTE FAMILY ACCEPTANCE OF LESBIAN, GAY, BISEXUAL, TRANSGENDER, INTERSEX AND QUEER (LGBTIQ) PERSONS IN ASEAN

Title of Event: Regional Workshop to Promote Family Acceptance of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Intersex and Queer (LGBTIQ) Persons in ASEAN

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ASEAN SOGIE CAUCUS is a regional network of human rights defenders advocating for the protection, promotion and fulfillment of the rights of all persons regardless of sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression and sex characteristics (SOGIESC). The organization envisions a SOGIESC-inclusive ASEAN community.

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The ASEAN SOGIE Caucus, in partnership with Trung Tâm ICS in Vietnam, organized the Regional Workshop to Promote Family Acceptance of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Intersex and Queer (LGBTIQ) Persons in ASEAN. Allies from the academe, the child rights movement, community organizations, and Vietnam's Parents and Friends of Lesbians and Gays (PFLAG) gathered to discuss key issues regarding families and their relationships with LGBTIQ people, good practices in promoting family acceptance, and potential strategies to move the advocacy forward in Southeast Asia. This area of LGBTIQ advocacy is critical given the symbolic and cultural power families have in the region, which are often considered the fundamental units of society and the nation.

The two-day workshop provided a safe space for LGBTIQ advocates and allies to talk about their experiences, with discussions ranging from organizational initiatives to personal experiences within their families and the families of others. The concept of family acceptance was discussed, framed as originating from a person's need for love and belongingness, and opportunities for collaboration and solidarity were imagined with the goal to move families from conditional acceptance to a genuine acceptance that is total and unconditional. Other factors which contribute to or obstruct the journey to family acceptance were considered, such as questions of ethnicity, immigration, socioeconomic status, and religious affiliation. A key point raised was that discrimination is a significant variable that can bridge parents to their LGBTIQ children and family members. For example, in the experience of Vietnam's PFLAG, families began to exert more effort into advocacy when they realized the extent of the suffering endured by their LGBTIQ loved ones and how their rights were compromised.

During the final session, participants grouped together to discuss plans of action in both their respective countries and the wider region with the aim of promoting family acceptance on a larger scale. Considerations included engaging with religious leaders and communities, boosting local and national lobbying efforts for inclusive legislation, and strengthening coalition work with other rights-based movements.

DAY 1

Keynote Speech



*Secretary Judy Taguiwalo, PhD
Department of Social Welfare and Development
Republic of the Philippines*

Secretary Judy Taguiwalo of the Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD) delivered the keynote speech. According to her, the respect of diverse sexual orientation, gender identity and expression (SOGIE) has been long recognized as part of the reforms envisioned by what is often called the “political left.” She noted that the Philippines is, in comparison to other countries in the region, a more welcoming country: homosexuality is not criminalized, and major cities have enacted various anti-discrimination ordinances related to SOGIE. But obstacles remain, for instance, in efforts to enact a national anti-discrimination legislation, which continue to be blocked by various conservative groups. Discrimination in various forms also remains a serious issue: according to a study by the United Nations Development Program

(UNDP), at least 1 out of 10 LGBT Filipinos have been abused by their own parents. A 2014 report, cited by Sec. Taguiwalo, states that the Philippines had the worst record of violence experienced by transgender people, with 29 documented murders from 2008 to 2014. These, among others, make it clear that acceptance has yet to translate fully.

Describing it as an uphill battle, Sec. Taguiwalo recognized that much work needs to be done in pushing for family acceptance and the rights of Filipinos of diverse SOGIE. Parents and friends must realize that acceptance matters, as this has a direct impact on a person’s health and well-being. As Sec. Taguiwalo says: “Rejection is a universal experience, and we do not like it.”

Part of the work involves mainstreaming the cause in various social arenas. Government agencies dealing with welfare, for example, should be pushed to support and encourage families to be accepting of LGBTIQ children. As an example, Sec. Taguiwalo mentioned how the DWSD, led by their LGBTIQ personnel, came up with a memo allowing personnel to use the uniform that affirms their gender identity. Collectively, these policies constitute a kind of critical mass with which to push for human rights. In closing, she reminded everyone that the fight for the rights of people of diverse SOGIE should never be isolated from the fight for the economic and political rights of all Filipinos.

“Advocacy and activism are never easy. Acceptance in the family, in the workplace is not going to fall from the sky. We have to work for it. We have to rally for it.”

Sec. Judy Taguiwalo, PhD



UNPACKING “FAMILY ACCEPTANCE”

In pushing for family acceptance, key concepts need to be unpacked and understood in specific contexts. How do we define family acceptance? How do we move people from the point of tolerance to acceptance? For the first session, advocates from the academe and human rights sectors shared their thoughts on family acceptance and how they put these ideas into practice.

Dr. Francis Mina **LGBT Psychology Special Interest** **Group of the Psychological Association** **of the Philippines**

Dr. Francis Mina often deals with issues regarding SOGIE (e.g. coming out, relationships with parents and siblings, etc.) in his line of work, family acceptance is not an uncommon factor, and a strong contributor to his students' problems. As the most basic social unit, families are critical in the development of LGBTIQ children and youth, and family acceptance is the foundation of self-worth and resiliency.

Dr. Mina shared that family acceptance works in two ways. First, it is protective and empowering: it is the acceptance of the person's vulnerability, and to protect and nurture them. It is to say: “I recognize that you are vulnerable, that people can harm you and therefore I will protect and love you.” Second, it is about relinquishing, allowing the child to explore opportunities and express her or his personal agency. He puts it this way: “Having taken care of you, I now allow you to be who you are, so you can be somebody to others.”

Another interesting point made is the need to look at other factors within the family which contributes to acceptance, such as the family's experience of ethnicity, immigration, socioeconomic status, and religious affiliation. When the family is able to shows flexibility in these areas, it benefits the LGBTIQ children because it shifts the focus away from changing the individual and towards changing potentially dangerous beliefs within the family that are rooted in these factors.

“If I come from a supportive family, it buffers against the negative impacts of a less inclusive world.”

Dr. Francis Mina

Ms. Marcella Donaal **ChildFund Philippines**

Discrimination has made many homes unsafe for LGBTIQ youth in Southeast Asia. So from the perspective of children's human rights, issues of SOGIE are inseparable. Emphasizing this point, Ms. Marcella Donaal of Childfund presented their research on the potential vulnerabilities of LGBTIQ children. According to their study, fluidity in gender expression and the lack of awareness on gender and sexuality issues among parents and relatives are some of the factors that put children at risk. On the other hand, knowledge of rights and acceptance of the diverse SOGIE of the child serve as protective factors.

Ms. Donaal also introduced other programs ChildFund is rolling out to move forward on the issue of family acceptance. Their activities, such as school-based child protection programs, training sessions with peer educators, and Parent Effectiveness Sessions all now integrate LGBTIQ issues. For Ms. Donaal, more activities on SOGIE issues need to be organized with parents and caregivers actively involved. Awareness-raising with both parents and children, when these activities are guided, have been effective in ChildFund's experiences.

She also expressed her discomfort regarding taking an aggressive stance in meeting other people with different beliefs. She suggested that matters which deal with people who are not as open to the issues of LGBTIQ people must always be handled with care. Sometimes, the situation demands that advocates sugarcoat their language, lest they risk losing potential allies. It may be helpful to think of sugarcoated language may be used as an entry point in deepening the discussion. Activists have gotten so used to using pressure tactics on institutions with power, but more nuanced strategies is needed for dealing with non-state actors.

“Why reinvent the wheel if the wheel is already rolling? There are already successes. Let's celebrate and keep going.”

Marcela Donaal

Ingrid Saplagio GALANG Philippines

Ms. Ingrid Saplagio is part of a feminist human rights organization which work closely with LBTs in urban poor communities. She gave an overview of their work, which includes community organizing, research, policy advocacy, and networking. According to Ingrid, they started tapping families when they realized they needed a much more holistic approach to engaging communities. This came together with the Family Acceptance and Diversity Initiative, which aims to capacitate family and friends of LGBTIQ people through a 4-module training program. These modules focus on the following points: an overview of LGBTIQ issues in the Philippines; basic SOGIE concepts; building family acceptance and support (which include sharing stories of coming out); and an action planning workshop.

According to Ms. Saplagio, genuine acceptance involves loving the person, helping them fight for rights, taking concrete steps to fight for equality, using inclusive language, joining activities which promote LGBTIQ rights, and simply being willing to educate oneself. Galang also has partner PFLAGs in their communities, and these PFLAGs also plan to conduct more SOGIE orientations for their communities, attend pride marches, fundraisings and other safe spaces to promote their advocacy.

"Family acceptance is not just tolerance. It needs to be genuine acceptance."

Ingrid Saplagio

Open Forum

How do you deal when a family member says that because of my religion, I cannot accept? I still care for them but because of my religion, I cannot fully accept. Is that really acceptance?

Some are very uncomfortable regarding taking an aggressive stance in meeting other people with different beliefs. Dealing with people who are not as open to the issues of LGBTIQ people, sadly, must always be handled with care. Sometimes, the situation demands that advocates sugarcoat their language, lest they risk losing potential allies. But it may be helpful to think of sugarcoated language as an entry point for deepening the discussion, once the initial discomfort subsides. Activists are often used to using pressure tactics and other straightforward means when dealing

with public institutions and governments, but more nuanced strategies is needed for dealing with non-state actors.

A related question would be: what about coming out? Sometimes it is really not the best decision to come out. When doing so takes away your needs, or if you know you will be abused, then it's not the best decision. If you feel you are empowered enough, then come out.

The need for love and belongingness is universal, but it's true that other factors make this need blurry. There are families who have to maintain certain occupations to maintain stature. For some, it's a matter of practicality. It is not unusual to hear how LGBTIQ people yourself into work, or provide for yourself so you are not dependent on the family. Economic independence is often used as a failsafe, in the event that your being LGBTIQ is discovered and the family takes it negatively. And based on the stories of LGBTIQ people who work abroad, they tell us that ever since they started contributing to the household's finances, they were somewhat accepted. Conditional acceptance is problematic, since acceptance shouldn't have conditions.

When I am asked about coming out, I say that sometimes it is really not the best decision. When coming out takes away your needs, or if you know you will be abused, then it's not the best decision. If you feel you are empowered enough, then come out.

How do we deal with bullying or discrimination when it's the school that does it?

In this case, the prerogative must always be the best interest of the child. If there is clear harm, pull the child out. It helps to know the school policies and laws. One must go back to handbooks and review what were mentioned. If the family thinks their child is in danger, we have legal recourses, such as the Anti-Bullying Act of 2013. However, this may jeopardize the image of child. As parents, we shouldn't put our children in places where they are vulnerable. It also helps to build relationship with the administration. If they are uninformed, then take it as an opportunity for education.

It's very disappointing when the space where children should be free and accepted is the very environment where they are discriminated. But this is where the power of networks comes in. Let's keep looking for a champion within our political system. Let's continue the battle.

STORY TELLING: EXPERIENCES OF P.F.L.A.G. IN VIETNAM

"It's a process to reach the stage where there is no more conditional love."

Huynh Minh Thao

Coming out for LGBTIQ persons is a continuous process. It doesn't stop after saying: "I am gay." For many families, the mere concept of SOGIE, let alone issues that rise out of SOGIE, is incomprehensible. There are accepting families, but many still experience coming out as dangerous and violent. Parents and Friends of Lesbians and Gays (PFLAG) in Vietnam joined the discussion on family acceptance and shared their inspiring stories on how they moved from the point of discrimination to the point of total acceptance for their LGBTIQ children.

Huynh Minh Thao, Trung Tam ICS Communications Manager, shared their story. ICS was created in 2008 and was formed by LGBT groups all around Vietnam. The group's main objective at the time was to work with the press and media to change perceptions on LGBT people, which was mainly associated with robbery, murder, and rape. Since then, portrayals of LGBT people have become more positive and constructive. They then asked the LGBT communities there what was most important thing to them. 80% answered "family."

When the group officially formed in 2011, they drafted their second objective: to create a movement of families and friends of LGBTIQ people. They initially adopted the model of PFLAG International, and later on readjusted it to better suit their experiences in Vietnam.

Based on his experience in various conversations, the initial concern of the parents was to cure what they believed was a sickness. They feared the future both for their children and for themselves. Thao admitted that it was a slow process, but it improved steadily. Thao also mentioned that one effective technique was to show the reality that their LGBTIQ children were being stripped off their rights. This was effective, as parents would become very angry knowing that their children did not have the same rights as others.

Din Thien Li



For Li, five years was how long it took for her to completely accept that her son is gay. Her initial reaction was shock, and from then on, she feared the discrimination he would face. This reaction is common for parents of LGBTIQ persons, but for Li, family culture and economic status played a big role. Her son was the first grandson of the paternal line, which meant he had to responsibility of carrying the family name. Li feared how her parents-in-law will react. "I was the one who tried to force my son to go to therapy. I took him to private counseling, believing this would solve my problems," Li explained.

However, the fear and denial changed with a letter written to her by her son. Li shared that what struck her the most was when her son recognized that as his mother, she gave birth to him, and that he was anguished by the thought of causing her so much pain. These heartfelt words urged her to act and know more about her son's situation, and she began interacting with members of ICS and went through various SOGIE trainings. Joining ICS gave her a chance to effectively communicate, learn more about SOGIE and the rights of LGBTIQ people.

When I first found out my son was gay, I went to my mom and cried with her. But she told me to be happy that I had a successful son. "There's nothing to be sad about," she told me. Then she gave me newspapers: "Here, study them so you find out more about your son," my mother said. Because of her support, my other relatives loved and accepted me and my son.

Her family never asked anything about her son. But if they ever ask: “I will be happy to explain the situation.” She went to her husband after visiting her mother, but he refused to work with her on this issue. “I’m very proud of myself,” Li told us, “that even without my husband, I was able to do a lot.” She took home resources from ICS and brought them home for her husband to read. A few times they debated, her husband would complain: “What if our workmates found out? They would shame me.” She would then ask him compare their son to other sons who did nothing for their families. “I continued to campaign,” she explained. “I’m actually thankful for my husband because while I’m away for a workshop or something else, my son’s partner would come to our house. They would have dinner with my husband. It went okay.”

Families with LGBTIQ children also have a way of coming out to the rest of the world. For Li, accepting his son is merely the first step: she still had to deal with her peers. She joined video interviews and other public activities on one condition: that her face would be covered or blurred. Li’s fear was not just fear of discrimination for his son, but for herself too. “I was afraid, especially in the workplace,” she told us. “I worked for a science department, which you’d think should be progressive with all of these advancements.”

This apprehension was accidentally remedied. In one interview for the BBC, Li allowed her face to be uncovered. “It was my son’s fault,” Li said amidst laughter. “He said no one watches BBC in Vietnam.” Her son was obviously wrong, but she received an unexpected reaction. A day after the broadcast, she received text messages and calls from peers communicating their love and support. That was a turning point for Li as a mother. Her confidence skyrocketed.

“As a Buddhist, I talked to a lot of monks regarding our situation. They told me that as long as one follows the principles of Buddhism, who he loves does not matter.”

Din Thien Li

Tran Minh Thanh



Thanh’s livelihood involved boat work, which meant he was usually away from home. Like most families, this moved him to fostering a close relationship with his son. One night, his son came out to him through a text message, but having no knowledge about “LGBT”, he did not understand what he meant. Thanh asked his son to explain, and his son replied that he was a “third gender”, but he still did not understand. He asked his wife, who explained what his son meant. He confessed to the group that he cried for three straight days.

“I love him, but I cannot accept,” Thanh said. He admitted that he was in denial for twenty months. What triggered him to reconsider was when he realized the effect of his rejection was having on his gay son. He was a great student, but his performance in school started to fall. According to his wife, his son didn’t know whether to love or hate his father. She also chose to look at it in a more positive way, telling him that other families have children with disabilities, and they should be thankful that they are in a much better position than them.

His change of heart came in one ICS event, when the director gave a talk to the young participants. Thanh realized that if someone like him who is gay can become successful and influential, so could his son.

“The pressure came from my family,” Thanh explained. “Even if my relatives are practicing medicine, they still encouraged me to have my son’s DNA checked in the city. It might be hereditary, they said.” His son naturally disagreed. Thanh then held a massive family gathering, and discussed the issue using whatever he had learned from ICS. He said to them, finally: “Here’s

my son. I give him the right to do whatever he wants.” It was now clear to him that the purpose of what he’s doing is to accept the sons and daughters in the LGBTIQ community.

“The family should be a place of peace.”

(Tran Minh Thanh)

Cao Thi Minh Nguyet



For some parents, anger is not unusual when their children come out. For Nguyet, this feeling is tripled: she has three children who have come out as transgender, lesbian, and gay. But this shock was quickly overshadowed by a larger feeling of concern for her children.

Nguyet recalled when her transgender son went through shocking discrimination and violence. The first two relationships of her son ended in brutality, as both families assaulted him. It came to a point where one of the parents came to Nguyet’s workplace and demanded that her family to transfer somewhere else. These parents eventually forced their daughters to marry, but according to Nguyet, both were unhappy and ended up in divorce. Seeing her son in such anguish, she decided she had to do something. When her son met his third partner, Nguyet took it upon herself to talk to the girl’s family. Without knowing if she would succeed, she decided to educate them in the only way she knew, using what she learned from the events and trainings organized by ICS. She said that she could not

bare to see her son suffer any longer.

The parents of the third partner told her: “My daughter is not the same as your son.” To which she replied: “If they are not the same, then they wouldn’t be in love. It’s all about love, after all.” She would end up organizing her son’s wedding. And being the daring person she was, she decided to invite all the high officials in their hometown. They all eventually came, though she wasn’t sure if it was just out of curiosity. Whatever the reason, Nguyet was only happy to have given her son the wedding he deserved.

“I’m Christian, so I wished for church weddings for my children at first,” Nguyet told us. “I realized then that they are missing out on a lot in life, and that along with them, I am being discriminated too.” As a mother, giving birth to her son and seeing him grow through the years, nobody else can know the love I feel for him. This is why, to Nguyet, discrimination needed to be addressed. “I also realized that in this situation, it is very easy to fall if one’s mind and heart is not as strong,” she explained. “Because I saw the things that happened to my son, I did something. I made sure he attained happiness.”

“The most upsetting thing is seeing your son not be able to love who he wants to love because of society.”

Cao Thi Minh Nguyet

Nguyen Lang Mong



"Without this knowledge, you are creating a wall separating you from them. Knowledge is the hammer that will break down that wall."

Nguyen Lang Mong

to her, it is a sensitive issue in Vietnam, so they work with the community to fight for these rights. She said she wants to share all this knowledge to all the parents in Vietnam.

"My family wanted me to take care of my economic situation first and focus on my son before joining movements like this," she explained to the group. "My husband even told me that I just enabled my son to cause trouble, and that I was just making him become worse off in the future." She was especially worried about the reaction of her son's grandparents, but she went to them and insisted that he was still their grandson. As for her husband, Mong said: "He is now less tense about the situation."

For Mong, all parents love their children in their own different ways. But if parents learn to love their children the right way, then they'll be able to understand their children more. As a mother, understanding SOGIE and the rights of LGBTIQ people is an important part of loving their children the right way. And for her, great journeys start with small steps. Their work has been very slow, but they take their time in visiting towns and cities.

Mong didn't initially get along with her son, and in his coming out, she knew she had to know more about his life to be able to understand him. The concept of being LGBTIQ was new to her, and she had to study hard in order to catch up. She studied how to use the internet for the first time, read newspapers, and joined ICS frequently. She also learned more about her own rights: according

"When I realized my son could not change, I had to change myself."

Nguyen Lang Mong



DAY 2

OPENING MESSAGE



*Commissioner Karen Gomez-Dumpit
Commissioner of Human Rights
Republic of the Philippines*

For Commissioner Karen Gomez-Dumpit of the Commission on Human Rights, it is important to recognize the role played by PFLAG Vietnam in promoting acceptance. Their children are fortunate to have them as parents, and Vietnam is fortunate to have their advocacies. In mirroring the initiative, the commissioner suggested various angles for understanding family acceptance in the Philippines and its impact. This includes looking at the stories of Filipino LGBTIQ children themselves who have been accepted by their families. Describing Filipinos as world citizens, Commissioner Gomez-Dumpit asked that we consider also why some LGBTIQ persons prefer

to go abroad either for work or to live permanently. And to further strengthen the movement for the full appreciation of the rights of LGBTIQ persons, collaborating with icons or champions in different fields is a must. She turns to Ms. Marcella Donaal of Childfund as an example, from whom she first learned in a broader sense the affirmation of LGBTIQ people's rights through the lens of children's rights.

Experiences of discrimination and violence leave even deeper wounds when committed by individuals who are supposed to be sources of love and protection. For Commissioner Gomez-Dumpit, it is also important to look at existing structures and practices in eliminating all forms of stigma against the LGBTIQ people. Working on a larger scale to affect the necessary changes such as establishing protection and remedies for discrimination must also be kept in mind. She urged the work of ICS and others to continue, because the cause for LGBTIQ rights must not cease.

"The family is the first circle of protection for each human being, so why not for LGBTIQ persons too?"

Comm. Karen Gomez-Dumpit



FACTORS INVOLVED IN FAMILY ACCEPTANCE

The first day made clear that family acceptance directly affects the well-being of LGBTIQ persons. How families react when their children come out is important, how parents often go through a process of denial and questioning, and awareness of the human rights of people with diverse SOGIE to help understand their LGBTIQ family members were among the topics discussed. For the second day, participants mapped out the factors which enable or obstruct family acceptance, and drafted local and regional action plans to promote family acceptance. Participants were divided into four groups and were asked to reflect on the following questions:

What influence family members to be aware about the rights of LGBTIQ persons?

What influence family members to respect their LGBTIQ family members?

What influence family members to take action for the rights of their LGBTIQ family members?

1. Awareness Raising

1.1. Resources from ICS and their other programs have made strides towards educating families on SOGIE issues, and have provided safe spaces for both parents and children to ask questions and express their grievances without judgment.

1.2. Access to information through traditional and new media, such as television and social networking platforms, also plays an important role in shaping perceptions of LGBTIQ people. One group considers the role of media to be a double-edged sword, which can be either beneficial or detrimental.

1.3. Family values also contribute to this awareness, with more diverse families being more likely to know more about the issues of LGBTIQ people. Extended networks, which includes other relatives and the friends of families, are also crucial to shaping the family's perceptions of LGBTIQ people and SOGIE issues, and as such are also important points of engagement.

1.4. LGBTIQ persons themselves are naturally another source for raising awareness. The way they communicate information to their families and their visibility in public, which include holding hands with their same-sex partners or wearing the clothes matching their gender identity, is already a start.

1.5. Another group also mentioned that the current attention given to HIV awareness campaigns also provides a doorway for other LGBTIQ concerns

to be discussed. Research, for example, into the cultural aspects of HIV and other conditions that disproportionately affect LGBTIQ people have linked the expression of stigma at various levels of social life to LGBTIQ people's increased vulnerabilities. Talking about these links can give people a greater sense of discrimination's impact on LGBTIQ people's lives.

2. Respect

2.1. Respect ought to be a non-issue. Unfortunately, respect has become something LGBTIQ people must work for. This lack of respect for one's dignity and one's rights as a human being often stem from a lack of awareness, since certain prejudices (e.g. of LGBTIQ people as liars and sexual deviants) take precedence in many people's minds.

2.2. Exposure to other people's experiences of having LGBTIQ family members is a crucial to creating the environment for respect to flourish, particularly experiences which mirror that of their own family. Highlighting positive experiences to other people may encourage them to think that these can also become possibilities for them. Negative experiences may also urge family members to rethink their dispositions towards LGBTIQ persons.

2.3. For some families, when their LGBTIQ children start to contribute financially to the household, it becomes easier to accept and respect them. This relates to what some participants called a "class-escaping" issue, where parents mistreat children because they believe their being LGBTIQ will compromise the possibility of improving their socioeconomic class. This then changes when they begin to build professional careers. Other families assume that their LGBTIQ children will stay and take care of them because they will not go on to start families of their own. The mere recognition that LGBTIQ persons are equally productive people seems to contribute to more positive perceptions of them. That said, we must be very critical of this reality, and emphasize that the humane treatment of LGBTIQ people should not be contingent on whether they help pay the bills.

2.4. Looking at different intersections also help provides a more substantial understanding of the issues present. Are opportunities more limited, for example, when an LGBTIQ person is also disabled? Do similar issues apply when the family of the LGBTIQ person lives below the poverty line, or are part of an indigenous group?

3. Protection of Rights

3.1. Similar to the motivations which urge parents towards acceptance, the outright discrimination, absence of protection, and violation of their children's human rights push families to step up. These negative experiences signal the need for te more safe spaces within and outside the home.

3.2. Joining organizations and trainings also help in deepening their knowledge on LGBTIQ rights. Awareness on laws and policies that protect and discriminate the rights of LGBTIQ persons is a critical aspect in being part of the movement. The responsibility then, of those who want to understand better is to seek accurate information from the right sources. For the participants, knowing their networks carefully is a must.

3.3. Many families grow up with unchallenged prejudices which solidify over a lifetime. Children, however, have cleaner slates, which advocates can build on to give them the appropriate mindset to see through these learned stereotypes.

3.4. Advocating in the simplest ways, as long as it is consistent, is already an important contribution in and of itself. Some participants, for example, would leave printed resources on SOGIE in their living rooms for parents to read.

3.5. Hope is the guiding force among the participants. They believe that even though some parents take time in understanding their children, their instinct to protect their children will eventually make manifest.

ACTION PLANNING

The following is a summary of the various local and regional plans of actions identified by participants which can potentially contribute to promoting family acceptance of LGBTIQ people.

Group 1 Led by Rina Fulo (Women and Gender Institute, Miriam College)

1. Strengthening existing LGBTIQ groups on the ground. This can be done by continuing education initiatives, engaging more stakeholders, and reviewing existing strategies.
2. Identify allies and engage with human rights organizations to further advance our advocacy.
3. Organize among communities and aim for a "snowball effect": tap friends and parents who will tap their friends and relatives, and so on.



4. Tap religious leaders and communities to emphasize the values of love and acceptance, directly relating them to the experiences of LGBTIQ persons.

5. While in the Philippines, local ordinances concerning SOGIE are being drafted, it is still important to continue engaging with local government units for more policies. For them, it is also important to ensure bad and discriminating laws are removed.

6. Organize a “PFLAG ASEAN” to coordinate and strengthening all future PFLAG initiatives regionally. A closer relationship among existing LGBTIQ groups must also be established.

Group 2 Led by Matcha Phorn-in (Sangsat Anakot Yawachon)

1. Strengthening coalition work among and between various advocacy groups. We must engage with other marginalized groups, and share resources on SOGIE issues with them.

2. Find ways to effectively replicate Vietnam’s PFLAG experience for other ASEAN countries.

3. Recreate safe spaces for communities outside of social media.

4. Effective use of traditional and new media, such as newsprint, should be emphasized.

5. The sharing and organizing of digital materials relating to SOGIE issues must be improved.

“Activists must know how to engage with different people, but we must also have our non-negotiables. If the walls need to go up – if they’re not listening or are being combative – let the walls go up.”

Nicky Castillo, Metro Manila Pride

Group 3 Led by Lynx Hufrancia (GALANG Philippines)

1. Consolidate the group’s issues through a local manual, drawing from in-depth discussion of support groups and frank discussions of failures and areas for improvement.

2. Work towards creating a training of trainers program with a strong and established training methodology that builds on prior experiences.

3. Translate existing resources for different stakeholders in different countries where English is not one of the primary languages.

4. Create PFLAG chapters in the region, and engage embassies to strengthen their presence.

5. Policies and memorandums relating to gender will not be followed if there are no existing local groups which can help in LGBTIQ awareness.

Group 4 Led by Loreen Ordone (Metro Manila Pride)

1. Engage religious leaders in the advocacy and invite them to collaborate with us through the effective use of theological and spiritual language.

2. Always include SOGIE in discussions on children’s well-being in the context of family life.

3. Engaging with mental health professionals and others in the allied medical professions which may help shed light on some traumatic experiences for LGBTIQ persons.

4. Strengthen lobbying efforts and other engagements with public officials.

5. Consider engaging with influential brands who are allies of the LGBTIQ community.

6. Engage proactively in risks and threats analysis, especially in places where violence and hostility against LGBTIQ people are rampant.

7. Build on regional and international advocacies by following up on successful initiatives.

“Anger is vital when we deal with institutions, particularly the state. But when we deal with individuals with emotions who are also products of a patriarchal culture, a sense of empathy is needed.”

Ryan Silverio, ASEAN SOGIE Caucus

ANNEX

CONCEPT NOTE AND PROGRAMME

REGIONAL WORKSHOP TO PROMOTE FAMILY ACCEPTANCE OF LESBIAN, GAY, BISEXUAL, TRANSGENDER, INTERSEX AND QUEER (LGBTIQ) PERSONS IN ASEAN

FEBRUARY 22 TO 23, 2017
QUEZON CITY, PHILIPPINES

ORGANIZED BY:
ASEAN SOGIE CAUCUS AND TRUNG TÂM ICS

1. BACKGROUND

The family plays a significant role in the lives of every LGBTIQ person.¹ In many countries in ASEAN, the family is conceived as a key political and social institution that has a role in protecting and promoting the dignity and well-being of every person. However, the family may likewise be both the agent and space that perpetuates violence and discrimination of LGBTIQ persons. In some cases, the family may likewise serve as an empowerment agent that provides support and defense.

Several researches pointed out how LGBTIQ persons experience violence within the family. A research covering 10 countries in Asia reported that LBT women face violence in the “private sphere” by immediate and extended family members where they face beatings, ostracism, verbal abuse, forced marriages, corrective rape.² In some cases, family connives with law enforcement agencies to press charges of trafficking and kidnapping towards partners of LBT persons.³ A research in the context of Vietnam noted discrimination by family members exist.⁴ These acts aimed at preventing the disclosure of the identity of an LGBTIQ family members, changing the person’s sexual orientation and gender identity, and to prevent them from having intimate relationships.⁵

In some cases, the family may accept LGBTIQ members but with certain conditions. A research noted that acceptance is derived from an understanding that regardless of the child’s SOGIE they are still able to perform family duties towards their parents.⁶ These duties include financial support, looking after parents’ welfare, getting married and having children.⁷

Meanwhile, the family may also be agents of empowerment for LGBTIQ persons. There were reports where parents accept their LGBT children. In Viet Nam, progress has been made in changing attitudes of families towards their LGBTIQ family members through the work of the Parents, Families and Friends of Lesbians and Gays (PFLAG) and other CSOs. Efforts have been done to integrate the work of the PFLAG into the advocacy of the LGBT movement. Their work entail providing counselling and setting up of support groups to encourage LGBTIQ family members to come out, and to advise fellow parents and relatives to fully accept their LGBTIQ children.

2. OBJECTIVES

The regional workshop is designed to achieve the following objectives:

- To provide a space for sharing and learning about good practices in promoting family acceptance towards LGBTIQ persons;
- To develop common regional and country-level strategies and approaches.

¹Family, in the context of this workshop, is conceptualized in an inclusive and diverse way. It includes a nuclear form of family, an extended family and gender-diverse family.

² International Gay and Lesbian Human Rights Commission (ILGHR). Violence on the Basis of Sexual Orientation, Gender Identity and Gender Expression against Non-heteronormative Women in Asia: Summary Report. IGLHRC is now known as Outright Action International.

³ Ibid.

⁴ ISEE, 2015. Is it Because I am LGBT?: Discrimination Based on Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity in Viet Nam.

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ Winter, S. (2006) Thai Transgenders in Focus: Their Beliefs About Attitudes Towards and Origins of Transgender. International Journal of Transgenderism, Vol. 9 (2) 2006. The Haworth Press, Inc. as cited in UNDP, USAID (2014). Being LGBT in Asia: Thailand Country Report. Bangkok.

⁷ Ibid.

3. WORKING PROGRAMME

Day 1 - February 22, 2017	
9:00 – 10:00	<p>Welcome and Introduction</p> <p>Welcome Remarks</p> <p>Ryan Silverio, ASEAN SOGIE Caucus</p> <p>Keynote Speakers:</p> <p>Sec. Judy Taguiwalo, Ph.D. Secretary, Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD)</p> <p>Comm. Karen Gomez-Dumpit Commissioner, Commission on Human Rights of the Philippines</p> <p>(Note: Group photo will take place after the presentations.)</p> <p>Moderator:</p> <p>Ron De Vera, ASEAN SOGIE Caucus</p>
10:00 – 10:30	Break
10:30 – 12:30	<p>Unpacking Concepts: What do we mean by family acceptance? Why is family acceptance important in the context of LGBTIQ rights advocacy?</p> <p>Dr. Francis Mina University of the Philippines Manila / LGBT Psychology Special Interest Group – Psychological Association of the Philippines</p> <p>Marcella Donaal ChildFund Philippines</p> <p>Ingrid Saplagio Galang Philippines</p> <p>Moderator:</p> <p>Jan Castaneda, ASEAN SOGIE Caucus</p>

12:30 – 13:30	Lunch
13:30 – 17:00	<p>Story Telling: Experiences of PFLAG in Vietnam</p> <p><i>(Leaders of PFLAG Vietnam will share their experiences, reflections and good practices in organizing and encouraging fellow parents and community leaders to promote social acceptance of LGBTIQ persons.)</i></p> <p>Speakers:</p> <p>Cao Thi Minh Nguyet</p> <p>Tran Minh Thanh</p> <p>Dinh Thi Yen Li</p> <p>Nguyen Lang Mong</p> <p>Tran Khac Tung</p>

Day 2 – February 23, 2017	
9:00 – 12:00	<p>Analysis: Understanding Factors that Facilitate or Hinder Family Acceptance</p> <p>Process Questions:</p> <p>What influence family members to be aware about the rights of LGBTIQ persons?</p> <p>What influence family members to respect their LGBTIQ family members?</p> <p>What influence family members to take action to protect the rights and well-being of their LGBTIQ family members?</p> <p><i>(This session will be done through a World Café method.)</i></p>
12:00 – 13:30	Lunch
13:30 – 17:00	<p>Planning and Synthesis</p> <p>Process Question:</p> <p>What local and regional actions can be done to promote family acceptance?</p> <p><i>(This session will be done through a World Café method.)</i></p>



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