



ATTITUDES TOWARD LGBT:
A CASE OF SCHOOL COMMUNITY
IN MANDALAY AND DAWEI OCTOBER 2019



Photo : Zaeya



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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Discrimination, violence, and bullying the lesbian/gay/bisexual/transgender (LGBT) community is common in the society, historically and still existence in most part of the world. LGBT have been experiencing different forms of discrimination and oppression in across culture though it varies based on the contexts.

Studies shows that homophobic individuals cannot suppress their feelings of hatred and the fact that they cannot accept LGBT individuals. Thus, they harass LGBT individuals verbally or physically and expose them to violence, their wellbeing is endangered, and they develop negative outcomes such as physical injuries, behavioral and somatic reactions, attempt in interpersonal relations, blaming her/himself, coming out.

Sexuality either hetero or homo in general and LGBT issues in particular are taboo and, negative stereotypes about gender and sexuality still strong exist in many cases, even forbidden in Myanmar although there is a growing climate of social acceptance and tolerance toward LGBT. Transgender people are subject to police harassment and sexual assault, and their gender identity is not recognized by the state. Historically, the combination of official homophobia, limited public awareness and lack of community role models have rendered LGBT people invisible in Myanmar society.

The study on 'Attitudes toward LGBT: A case

of school community in Mandalay and Dawei' is envisaged to fill the gap as a learning product, focusing on LGBT specific issues, in order to create a safer and better learning and working environment at schools for LGBT teachers and other staff with respect and dignity. With a set of recommendations, the study further aims to contribute for policy engagement.

This study explored attitudes toward LGBT by conducting 6 Key Informant Interviews (KIIs) (2 male, 4 female), and 6 Focus Group Discussion (FGDs) (24 male, 25 female) boy and girl students, school teachers and education officials, and organizations working for LGBT rights in Mandalay and Dawei. The perception on homosexuality was explored from 55 quantitative survey (26 male, 29 female).

KEY FINDINGS

Who are LGBT?: Most of the respondents insufficiently interpreted and narrowly understood 'LGBT'.

Student attitudes towards LGBT: LGBT is seen as 'un-natural' and 'culturally and traditionally inappropriate'; thus, family, school, and society is responsible to 'change' to be 'natural' and 'appropriate' so as to meet with the traditional gender norms. Violence is acceptable and justifiable as a mean to change for appropriate behavior. Deeply rooted gender embedded cultural norm give tiny room to transmen compared to transwomen.

Teacher attitudes towards LGBT: Accepting the value of 'diversity' and respect 'identity' is directly link with receiving knowledge about LGBT. Taking action for sexual harassment exists in some schools. However, the degree of punishment is not gender responsive.

Sexuality in school curriculum: The school curriculum to learn about sexuality is insufficient, and the 'life skill' class is not fully utilized. The taboo against teaching/talking on sex, and cultural barriers make teachers (especially women un-married teachers) and students hesitant for open discussion.

Family and community acceptance of LGBT: Acceptance by the family (LGBT as family member) and the community (as superior or leadership position) is significantly low. The family uses physical violence to the LGBT children to 'discipline' or 'punish' as it is against family values.

Discriminations and difficulties faced by LGBT: The LGBT in general and transmen/ transwomen in particular have been experiencing different forms of discriminations in family, at school, and in society.

Limited understanding on 'violence' makes the responsible persons or the society tolerant and fail to protect. LGBT themselves have been encountering internal conflicts between their sexual identity and societal norms as a result of perceived gender norms and discriminator ideology against LGBT. LGBT is not homogeneous, they have different interest and needs, and experiencing different vulnerabilities. The media plays a key role in delivering negative and discriminatory messages that LGBT have to faced and be mocked by the public.

Works for LGBT rights: Limited understanding on LGBT rights exists even the persons who are working at NGOs where there is non-discrimination as organization's core value.

Challenges faced by CSOs working for LGBT rights: There is limited legal awareness on LGBT, limited or lack of coordination among the organizations working for LGBT issues. These are the issues that needs to collectively move forward as movement. Growing civil society organizations especially LGBT focused and/or gender and social inclusion initiatives are immediate and strategic means for better understanding LGBT to end discriminations

Attitudes towards and awareness of Homosexuality: The discrimination against homosexuality is an issue at the study environment. Boy and male respondents have more negative perception on homosexuality. And, the respondents considered a same view on homosexuality homosexuals are as 'sick' or as 'sinners'.

RECOMMENDATIONS

A set of recommendations are provided for CRM for reviewing the existing project and incorporating and further development of initiatives for promotion and protection the rights of LGBT. It also aims to contribute to the advocacy for policy engagement.

Initiate and scale up targeted intervention: Awareness raising and desensitization for students, teachers, and parents to better understand LGBT and mitigate discrimination. Develop communication strategy and devise relevant communication messages for respective target groups.

Establish and strengthen collaboration: Collaborate with the school authority, introduce feasible and appropriate activities at school to promote living with diversity, respect identity, violence and stereotype. Collaborate and strengthen the working relationship with other organizations and network working for LGBT rights, develop advocacy strategy to collectively advocate media personnel and agencies to respect rights of the LGBT and stop discrimination against LGBT.

Review: The life skill curriculum to incorporate basic concept of violence, non-discrimination, stereotype, diversity, identity. Review and strengthen coordination among the organizations working for LGBT rights for helping each other and for the collective advocacy.

Advocacy: Advocate Ministry of Education and relevant key stakeholders Ministry of Health and Sports, Ministry of Social Welfare, Relief and Resettlement, etc for incorporating basic concept of violence, non-discrimination, stereotype, diversity, identity, and for culturally appropriate and feasible initiatives for sexual education at schools. It also includes the capacity development for non-discrimination and diversity programme with pilot phase and scale up strategy.

Further study: Conduct wider perception survey for the attitudes towards and awareness of homosexuality.

1. BACKGROUND

Sharpe (2002) revealed that many young people still maintain uncomfortable and confused attitudes towards non-heterosexual lifestyles despite a society that is moving forward in acceptance of differences.¹ These attitudes lead to discrimination and oppression of the lesbian/gay/ bisexual/ transgender (LGBT) community.

Throughout the world, Lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgendered (LGBT) people have been experiencing various forms of oppression and discrimination, despite it might vary one community to another based on different social, economical, legal, and political situation that specific community possesses.²

Zümrüt Biçmen and Zafer Bekiroğulları noted in their study "Social Problems Of LGBT People In Turkey (2014)" that LGBT individuals will have to abandon the cities, countries they live in cases that they are not accepted by the society they live in, they are exposed to attacks, and they are limited or deprived regarding job opportunities.³

Wong, McCreary, Carpenter, Engle, and Korchynsky (1999) examined sexual orientation of male and female college students. It was suggested that a male will be looked down as being more feminine, and that a female might not be "punished" for acting masculine under the notion of "feminine" as lower social ranking and "masculine" is considered

superior.

There is a link between having positive attitudes on homosexuals and possessing more knowledge and understanding about LGBT, and it leads to greater acceptance.⁴

As per Herek (1988), it was confirmed that heterosexual individuals with negative attitudes are more likely to express traditional, restrictive attitudes about gender roles. One of the most consistent findings in this study revealed that heterosexual males manifest more anti-gay hostility on average than do heterosexual females.

Homophobia, as described by Tuzer (2003), is hatred or fear to homosexual individuals and homosexuality. Homophobic individuals cannot suppress their feelings of hatred and the fact that they cannot accept LGBT individuals. Thus, they harass LGBT individuals verbally or physically and expose them to violence. In the study, Pilkington and D'Augelli(1995) found out that lesbian, gay and bisexual young people's psychological and physical wellbeing is endangered, and they develop negative outcomes such as physical injuries, behavioral and somatic reactions, attempt in interpersonal relations, blaming her/himself, coming out.⁵

Like most of the countries across the globe, historically, it has been seeing 'homosexuality' as

¹ College Students' Attitudes toward LGBT Individuals: Tessa M. Johnson and Ashley A. Greeley: Undergraduate Students, Human Development and Family Studies

² Oppression and Discrimination Among Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgendered People and Communities: A Challenge for Community Psychology Gary W. Harper and Margaret Schneide: American Journal of Community Psychology, Vol 31, Nos. 3/4, June 2003

³ Social Problems Of LGBT People In Turkey: Zümrüt Biçmen and Zafer Bekiroğulları/Procedia - Social and Behavioral Sciences 113 (2014) 224 – 233

⁴ Footnote 1

⁵ Footnote 3

'un-natural' in its legal system⁶, society, workplace, and school in Myanmar. Despite the fact that there is a growing climate of social acceptance and tolerance toward LGBT people,⁷ negative stereotypes about gender and sexuality still strongly exist in Myanmar. Transgender people are subject to police harassment and sexual assault, and their gender identity is not recognized by the state. Gay men are stigmatized, especially if they are living with HIV/AIDS. In the local Buddhist tradition, those born as LGBT are perceived as facing punishment for sins committed in a past life. Historically, the combination of official homophobia, limited public awareness and lack of community role models have rendered LGBT people invisible in Myanmar society.⁸

Sexuality either hetero or homo in general and

LGBT issues specifically are taboo and, in many cases, even forbidden in Myanmar. The data and study in relation to LGBT is extremely limited, and there is no data available for the students who are dropping out of school because of harassment by peers and incredibly, also by staff.⁹

The study on 'Attitudes toward LGBT: A case of school community in Mandalay and Dawei' is envisaged to fill the gap as a learning product, focusing on LGBT specific issues, in order to create a safer and better learning and working environment at schools for LGBT teachers and other staff with respect and dignity. With a set of recommendations, the study further aims to contribute for policy engagement.

⁶ Same-sex sexual activity is illegal and section 377 of Myanmar's Penal Code 1861 subjects same-sex sexual acts (regardless of whether they were consensual or done in private) to a term of imprisonment from ten years to life. < https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/LGBT_rights_in_Myanmar >

⁷ The spaces include flourishing public events for LGBT, more and more LGBT rights focused organizations, inclusion of LGBT into youth policy at national, etc.

⁸ < https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/LGBT_rights_in_Myanmar >

⁹ Term of Reference, Colors Rainbow Myanmar, 2018

2. STUDY METHODOLOGY

2.1. Objectives

The overall objective of the study is filling the gap in knowledge about the LGBT youths by assessing societal attitudes towards LGBT, and to provide recommendation to create enabling environment in education system for LGBT.

The specific objectives of the study are:

- 1) To assess awareness and attitudes towards LGBT
- 2) To assess the extent of the problem of discrimination, incidence of violence, and bullying faced by the LGBT
- 3) To examine possible and feasible responsive measures for creating non-discrimination environment based on sexual orientation

2.2. Coverage

The study covered boy and girl students those who are in high school level, teachers from both private and public schools, and those who are working for LGBT issues in respective study areas.

2.3. Sample design and data collection method

The study employed data collection tools that include desk review, key informant interview, and focus group discussion. Different sets of interview type questionnaire were used for different target audience and purposes.

Focus Group Discussions: The FGDs with students (boys and girls) and civil society organizations were envisaged exploring whether and to what extent the communities (family, school, and society) possess acceptance or discriminatory attitudes towards LGBT and their rights, the incidences occurred due to the consequences of discriminatory practices, violence, and bullying. The FGD was guided by 5 key questions:

1) awareness and view on LGBT; 2) homosexuality and LGBT rights in school curriculum; 3) the community acceptance on LGBT; 4) difficulty faced by the LGBT and the organizations working for the LGBT; and 5) perceptions on their roles and capability towards LGBT. Four FGDs in total were conducted in two study areas.

Key Informant Interviews: The KII with school authority/teacher explored more in-depth information with regard to 1) awareness and attitude towards LGBT; 2) practices towards LGBT; 3) the problem faced by the LGBT; 4) homosexuality and LGBT rights in school curriculum; 5) possible responses for LGBT issues. In total, the study carried out 6 KIIs with the male and female teachers in two study areas.

Survey Questionnaires: The study used the following survey questions with the individuals those who involved in the FGDs.

- 1: Knowledge about homosexuality and heterosexuality
- 2: Myths and fact about LGBT
- 3: Perception on being LGBT
- 4: Perception on behavior of LGBT

A total of 55 (26 male, 29 female) quantitative survey was conducted in the study.

2.4. Limitation of the study

The study that was conducted in two geographical areas (Dawei and Mandalay) where CRM is operating their project. The findings in the study were drawn from the two mentioned project areas, therefore, it cannot be said that the findings represent the whole targeted area of the project.

The perception and attitude revealed from the male and female respondents who the study team met during the study; thus, there is limitation to conclude all the students, teacher, and CSOs/NGOs have the same view found in the study.

2.5. Fieldwork

The study was carried out in two geographical areas: 1) Dawei in Thaninthari Region; and 2) Mandalay in Mandalay Region during the period from the late 2018 to the early 2019.

Study area	Focus Group Discussion (FGD)	Key Informant Interview (KII)
Dawei (Thaninthari Region)	Boy and girls students	Divisional education officer, Ministry of Education
	Project partners (CSOs, NGOs)	Township education officer, Ministry of Education
		Male and female teachers
Mandalay (Mandalay Region)	Boy and girl students	Male and female teachers
	Project partner (CSOs, NGOs)	

The distribution of quantitative and qualitative in two study areas

Sr. No.	Region	Townships	Respondent	FGD		KII	
				Male	Female	Male	Female
1	Thaninthari	Dawei	Teacher			1	2
			Student	10	10		
			CSO/NGO	3	3		
2	Mandalay	Mandalay	Teacher			1	2
			Student	7	11		
			CSO/NGO	4	1		
Total				24	25	2	4

3. KEY FINDINGS

3.1. Who are LGBT?

The LGBT is mostly perceived as the individuals those who wear as different sex, in other words, LGBT is identified as transmen and transwomen. Some of them mentioned 'sexual orientation (specifically homosexuality)'.

and tried so many times. It didn't work. His family also beat him. But we couldn't make it. He also told me that he couldn't help and he feel guilty for being a gay. He paid less attention and couldn't continue education." (Boy student, Mandalay)

3.1.1 LGBT is insufficiently interpreted and narrowly understood by most of the respondents.

3.2. Student attitudes towards LGBT

Some of them from FGDs with the boy and girl students revealed 'difficulty in going to bathroom' as the need for LGBT and support for separate toilet, however, the majority thought that it is unnecessary to do so.

A wrong perception on being LGBT as he or she was infected from others or due to peer pressure was stated by the students. They stated that LGBT are less capable in education as well as in doing business as homosexuals are seen as physically wrong people.

"I have a close friend. He was okay till grade 6, real boy. But when we were in grade 8, he has become a gay. I scolded and beat him to change to be a real boy. I tried

The majority of the respondents (boys and girls) considered it is acceptable or comfortable to have LGBT friends. The girl students prefer having friends with transwomen as they see they are the same, and they said that they can talk openly with transwomen friends. The boy students have hesitation to be closely dealing with transwomen friends (going together, living together, etc) as they are afraid of seeing them as 'gay' or 'transwomen' and fear for violence.

Nonetheless, they (more boy student than girls) disclosed that they will not accept if they have a LGBT as family member and as teacher, and they will do by all means to change 'un-natural' into 'natural'. Compared to gay and transwomen, acceptance is slightly more on lesbian and transmen, the students stated.

3.2.1 Being LGBT is perceived as disease and due to peer pressure.

3.2.2 There are different levels of acceptance on LGBT. The students tend to accept homosexual more as friends and neighbors than as family members, as teacher, and as school head (or leadership position).

3.2.3 LGBT is seen as 'un-natural'; thus, think that the society (friend, family, and community) is responsible to change to be 'natural'. And, using violence is viewed acceptable and justifiable to change to be 'natural'.

3.2.4 There is a view on direct relationship between homosexuality and education performance as well as and business ability.

3.2.5 Gender embedded cultural norms is deeply rooted: male as superior and female is subordinate; thus, behaving as men (transmen) is somehow acceptable than behaving as women (transwomen) or gay.

3.2.6 Across the study areas, almost all boy and girl student respondents view that using by all means to meet traditional and cultural values is justifiable rather than accepting the value of 'diversity' and respect 'identity'.

3.3. Teacher attitudes towards LGBT

As similar responses received from the student respondents, the teachers with limited knowledge about LGBT identified LGBT as transmen and transwomen.

Among the teacher respondents, it comprises two different types of them: those who received awareness session about LGBT or those who used to work in LGBT-friendly environment; and those who have never received any knowledge about LGBT. Obviously, the teachers who received LGBT awareness training have high awareness with regard to discrimination, violence, and bullying against LGBT.

Although some of the teacher respondents possess understanding the LGBT issues, almost all have the same view on men as superior status and women as lower position than men; therefore, they have less acceptance on transwomen and gay than transmen and lesbian.

At the individual level, as teachers, most of them feel comfortable having LGBT as students and expressed that they do not have problem living the same room. However, they said that they wouldn't agree to let their sons/daughters living with LGBT in the same room.

Some of them have strong resistance:

"To me, it's acceptable being "tomboy" than transwomen. I might accept if my daughter behaves as a son, but I won't accept if my son is a gay or behaving as a daughter. I will tell my son the weakness and disadvantages of being a female in the society. I really hate transwomen as they don't value being male which is much higher than female." (a male teacher from private school, Mandalay)

"There is no discrimination at school, we treat

equally. There are LGBT at school but not so obviously dress up because we don't allow to do so. Frankly, I would say that I hate LGBT especially transwomen. I do not like them at all." (a male teacher from private school, Mandalay)

Some have moderate resistance:

"I have a son who is in grade 8 now. I personally don't like LGBT. We try to change their behaviors as much as we can. If my son is LGBT, I'll try my best to change him. Since it is difficult to talk, because things will not happen as anticipated, I have to accept his preference eventually." (a female teacher from private school, Mandalay)

A couple of male KII respondents shared their experiences in receiving violence committed by transwomen in the past. Those incidences reinforced stereotypical assumption and induced resisting promotion and protection LGBT rights.

"When I was University student, I went to the cinema in Yangon. One gay man holds my arm and rubbing other part of my body. I firstly pushed him but he did not stop. I eventually punched him and went out." (KII with a male teacher from public school, Dawei)

"I had an experience in taking action for a sexual harassment case at my school. The incidence was committed by one male teacher to one boy student at his home. We (the committee for the incidence) gave him a warning letter and put his name in the record. If he (or other male teacher) commits to girl student, the punishment is 'dismiss'." (KII with a male official from education department, Dawei)

The perception also depends on, though it might vary from one case to another, the exposure. A male private school teacher who used to live and worked in Thailand shared his view as:

“I think it depends on the curriculum and the system. The schools in Thailand (both public and private) encourage joint activity for girl and boy students. The students need to learn how to work and study together since their kindergarten. There is no separate classroom sitting style for girls and boys at Thai schools but we do have such kind of arrangement here in Myanmar schools (both public and private).

Our thought here is if we let sit girls and boys together at classroom, they will get easily fall in love or have an affair at their early age. It is not true and I totally against it. In Thailand, the schools teach “civics” at their primary schools; so, the children learn how to help and respect each other, and how to have brother and sister mindset. They are trained to be good civilians since at their very young age. Our children did not learn ‘civics’ and do not understand what civilized manners are. Since they grow up sitting separately in the classroom, they do not know how to work together.

They also have to learn about ‘stereotype’ so

there are less stereotypical assumptions when they grow up. Here in Myanmar, once I asked one boy student to clean the classroom, he said that it is girls’ business and not his responsibility. Also asked one time to girl student to move chairs, she told me to ask boy student as it is more suitable for boys.

There is age specific sexual education in Thailand. But here we cannot talk about contraception, condom, and sexual education. Teachers feel uncomfortable teaching such kind of topics. And the parents in majority also won’t accept teaching their children about sexual education. The parents and teachers (as well as authority and community at large) thought that children will try (having sex or having boyfriend/girlfriend) if they are taught sexual education. It is actually misconception and just a myth.

We only issue regulations such as ‘dos and don’t’, not having boyfriend/girlfriend, etc. It is not bad but it is not a long-term solution. We don’t have a proper mechanism tackling when incidence happens. That’s why girl student needs to quite the school if she gets pregnant, no other alternative.

3.3.1 Teachers those who have exposure in receiving knowledge about LGBT, they have understanding of the issue and reduced discrimination. Lack or less discrimination against LGBT highly depends on whether he or she receives awareness on the issue.

3.3.2 Taking action for sexual harassment exists in some schools. However, the degree of punishment is not gender responsive.

3.4. Sexuality in school curriculum

With regard to the sexuality and sexual education, all KIIs and FGDs identified that there is a school curriculum 'life skill' at school in late 2000. However, the curriculum mainly focuses on sexual transmitted disease such as HIV, drug, personal hygiene, etc. The curriculum includes human rights, but it does not cover sexual identity, sexual orientation, sexual rights, women's rights, rights of the people with disability, and LGBT's rights. But the students have basic knowledge about sexuality from social media such as Facebook.

"We learn 'life skill' starting from grade 5. It includes personal goal, drug, proper behavior, personal hygiene, and sexual transmitted diseases. It also includes 'Buddhism' but not other religions. There is sex education. It was separate session with boy students, but we feel shy when the teacher talked about sex. She taught about female organ with picture but not male organ. She is the one who teaches the boy students. I have no idea how she teaches them." (Girl student, Mandalay)

It was learnt that the time allocation for 'life skill' at school is 45 minutes per week. Across the interviews in the study stated that the school does not take

regular class for 'life skill'. Instead, the class time is used as 'study time' for the exam, and some teachers use their respective subject instead of 'life skill'. Furthermore, the teachers particularly women teachers are having uncomfortable in delivering the information about sexuality (from 'life skill'), more difficulty for women teachers who are un-married (or single).

As per the teacher respondents, text book for 'life skill' is available from grade 5 to the grade 7. There is only teacher guide book starting from grade 8. It is intended to do inter-active discussion between teacher and students, however, it does not happen in reality, said the teacher respondents.

A couple of KIIs with teachers revealed that the teachers at school do not take 'life skill' class nowadays as it does not require 'exam'. The other challenge is uncomfortable especially for female teachers to talk about sexual related topics.

"The life skill is not a subject that requires exam. The teachers now are rarely taking that class. That might be a reason for teachers and school authorities to less pay attention and limited understanding on the value of the life skill." (KII with a male education officer, Dawei)

3.4.1 *The school curriculum to learn about sexuality is insufficient. And, seeking knowledge about sexuality is risky as information delivered at Facebook does not guarantee providing the accurate and right information.*

3.4.2 *The 'life skill' class is not fully utilized at school. The taboo against teaching/talking on sex, and cultural barriers make teachers (especially women un-married teachers) and students hesitant for open discussion.*

3.4.3 *School teachers are uncomfortable in teaching sexual education.*
Taking action for sexual harassment exists in some schools. However, the degree of punishment is not gender responsive.

3.5. Family and community acceptance of LGBT

All the respondents were asked how their families and the community view LGBT and the ways they react because of LGBT.

"I don't mind behaving as opposite sex. I don't mind any individual being homosexual. I'm okay with LGBT as friends and neighbors. But, I totally don't think he or she should take up leadership position such as school head, mayor, minister, president, etc. They might be capable and strong, but I don't think that they are suitable." (a female teacher from private school, Mandalay)

I'm a transman. My mother is okay with the way I dress up and behave as a man. But my father totally against it and he pushed me and forced me all the time. He allowed me wearing whatever I like till grade 10 and kept reminding me to change after that. How can I do as I'm not comfortable? I don't. Then it made him angry and he lose him temper.

He started beating me. He kicked me and punched me. He was telling me that punching is the way to punish son. I feel sad and I was asking myself 'why' and 'why' but no answer. Till now, my dad and I couldn't find mutual agreement.

I just turned my 23. At one point, my parent knew that I have a relationship with one transman. It was a nightmare for the whole family. I used to have a privilege position in the family. The situation was totally turn down immediately after the incidence. They said that it is totally unacceptable and they won't tolerate. They both (my dad and

mom) beat me up. They forced me to sit and pray Buddha, and forced me to promise that I'll stop my relationship with him (transman). The conflict with my parents is going on as our relationship is going on.

No single coping mechanism to reduce tension and conflict with the family and the community was found in the study. Some of them resist, some compromise, some ignore, and some leave the family.

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- 3.5.1 *Acceptance by the family (LGBT as family member) and the community (as superior or leadership position) is significantly low.*
 - 3.5.2 *The family uses physical violence to the LGBT children to 'discipline' or 'punish' as it as against family values*
 - 3.5.3 *There is no coping mechanism to reduce tension and conflict with the family and the community*
-

3.6. Discriminations and difficulties faced by LGBT

Across the study, the respondents identified the followings as forms of discrimination against LGBT.

- Physical abuse (pushing, shaking, throw something, slapping, beating, kicking, punching, etc)
- Verbal abuse (teasing, shouting)
- Sexual abuse (transmen usually receive sexually abusive comment by the men)
- Emotional abuse (humiliating the sexual orientation, isolation)
- Economical abuse (as a consequence of denial sexual identity, refusal to employ)

The respondents from the CSOs, the students, and teachers confirmed that teasing and humiliating are common for the LGBT particularly transmen and transwomen in the community and at schools. Traditionally, teasing each other is assumed as acceptable and as 'natural order of thing', thus, no one stops such behavior.

"Teasing transboys and transgirls is very common at school and in the community. At our school, whenever the students (boy student) see a transgirl, they shout and

tease 'a-chaut' and 'ball-pyar' to transboy. There are teachers and those kind of incidence were happening in front of them, but they said nothing."

(FGD with girl students in Mandalay)

"Verbally abuse is very common in our society, I think in the whole country. Discriminatory mindset is deeply rooted in our blood. Since it is seen as 'nature of things', no action is taken seriously. Once I saw a transman and his girl friend are holding hands and walking. A group of men made teasing and shouting. There was a policeman and it happened in front of him. It is violating the human rights and hamulating. But, he said nothing, simply ignored. Lack of awareness made the duty bearer fail to protect the citizen's rights.

(FGD with CSO/NGO partners, Mandalay)

"The discriminations at schools exist, both verbally and in behavior. Some of them (school teachers) call transgirl student 'Gan-doo' and transboy 'York-Ka-Hsar'. Some of them did it intentionally and making as a joke. But I don't think so of them know it is discrimination and humiliation. I do believe that many of them have lack of awareness and understanding. I think that they behave as what they have learned. It is so pity for LGBT."

(FGD with CSO/NGO partner, Dawei)

I met with one young man at the language center last year. He was so smart, linguistic, and have high capability. But he is a gay, and the way he behaves is like a young lady. He was also at top position at the class. I was thinking of him that he would have much opportunities after when he finishes the class. Later when finishing the class, as I anticipated, he got an offer from a local company.

There, at the company, a requirement was dressing up as a male. He was not happy, and felt uncomfortable for the dress. He finally quit the job. He told me that he also hates and disgusts by himself being a gay and would like to dress up like a female.

I found that it was a loss for both him and the company. I don't know which is wrong, him or the company?

I am the only daughter. But since I was young, I dress up as if a boy. My parents do not totally agree with me but they say nothing.

I am very much interested in engineering. I applied GTC (Government Technology Colleague) and I got acceptance. The GTC restricts the way

students dress up. They have uniform for male and female students. I don't want to wear female, so, dressed up as a male student. The colleague principle scolded me, and told me that it is totally unacceptable. I had no choice, and eventually I left GTC.

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I am very much interested in engineering. I applied GTC (Government Technology College) and I got acceptance. The GTC restricts the way students dress up. They have uniform for male and female students. I don't want to wear female, so, dressed up as a male student. The college principal scolded me, and told me that it is totally unacceptable. I had no choice, and eventually I left GTC.

The CSO respondents highlighted different problems faced among LGBT. Transmen and transwomen are the most vulnerable among LGBT as they fear for forced marriage by the parents. Lesbian, gay, and bisexual have different problems. Since their

behavior is not so obvious as transmen and transwomen, the LGBT are hidden population and they are hard to reach. One of the male teacher respondent confirmed that the discrimination is the most challenging for LGBTs to disclose their identities, so, they are vulnerable for seeking services.

FGDs with the girl and boy students from both study areas stated that they learned discriminatory behaviors against LGBT from the media.

"It is very common and usual practice in the movies and other media channels that the society and community do not accept LGBT's behaviors."

(FGDs with boy and girl students,
Dawei and Mandalay)

3.5.1 *Acceptance by the family (LGBT as family member) and the community (as superior or leadership position) is significantly low.*

3.5.2 & 3.6.1 *The LGBT have been experiencing different forms of discriminations in family, at school, and in society.*

3.6.2 *The LGBT particularly transmen and transwomen have been suffering from different forms of violence in the family, at school, and in society.*

3.6.3 *There is limited understanding on 'violence'. The society (school, community, institution) do not see violence as violence. Such ignorance makes the responsible persons or the society tolerant and fail to protect.*

3.6.4 *The gender norms and discriminator ideology against LGBT deeply rooted into the LGBT themselves. With this, they have been encountering internal conflicts between their sexual identity and societal norms.*

3.6.5 *LGBT have different interest and needs, and they have been experiencing different vulnerabilities*

3.6.6 *The media plays a key role in delivering negative and discriminatory messages that LGBT are strange people who makes the society damage, and they deserve to receive 'discrimination, humiliation, and violence'.*

The family uses physical violence to the LGBT children to 'discipline' or 'punish' as it as against family values

3.5.3 *There is no coping mechanism to reduce tension and conflict with the family and the community*

3.7. Works for LGBT rights

The study was able to meet with the organizations, from study areas, working for LGBT rights and explored their views. In fact, the organizations working for LGBT issues is limited. The issues that LGBT have been encountering are: 1) employment opportunity; 2) discrimination and conflict with societal value (family, school, community, work); 3) low self-esteem.

It is also found out that there are people working at NGOs have limited understanding on LGBT rights.

“One of my friends consulted me before she applied at one organization working for LGBT rights. She told me that she couldn’t make up her mind for applying the job. She frankly told me that she felt guilty working for LGBT rights against the cultural and religion. She has many years working experiences with NGOs, so, you can imagine how other people can understand LGBT rights. She was not the only one who have such mentality.” (A female CSO, Dawei)

3.7.1 Limited understanding on LGBT rights exists even the persons who are working at NGOs where there is non-discrimination as organization’s core value.

3.8. Challenges faced by CSOs working for LGBT rights

Addressing LGBT issues in Myanmar has just started though, like other countries in the world, the issues have existed for generations. There are not many civil society organizations working specifically for LGBT rights in Myanmar. Since many of them situated in big cities such as Yangon and Mandalay, fulfilling the needs of LGBT is significantly low. Beside, they have been facing challenges in term of technical, financial, operational, and cultural.

Lack of systematic coordination was identified as one of the challenges that the organizations have been encountering. As per the KIIs with the organizations, there are different levels of experiences among the organizations, some of them are ahead of than others as they are in maturity stage but some of them just started. Limited or lack of coordination among organizations creates barriers for the organizations recently formed to learn from well established organizations.

“Registration” was mentioned as the most challenge for the organizations recently formed as they

do not afford to open the office (operate at their homes) due to limited funding resources. Another challenge when they conduct awareness session was a mixture of group (transmen and transwomen). Both groups have different interest since issues encountered are different. The CSO respondents stated that transmen are reluctant asking questions and not fully participate.

While there exist challenges, promising initiatives are ahead. The areas where there are LGBT or social inclusion focused initiatives are able to sensitize the community through targeted population, the CSO respondents from the study area shared their experiences.

“Our organization is providing health education and services to young and adolescent. It is not actually LGBT specific focused one but ‘diversity’ and ‘inclusion’ are, among others, our organization mandates. When we conduct health education, we include topics such as sexual education, respect for diversity and sexual identities, and no one left behind. We found that the young and adolescent girls and boys perceived very positive and changed their discriminatory ideology.”

(A male CSO staff, Dawei)

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- 3.8.1 *There is limited legal awareness on LGBT.*
 - 3.8.2 *Limited or lack of coordination among the organizations working for LGBT issues to collectively move forward as movement.*
 - 3.8.3 *Growing civil society organizations especially LGBT focused and/or gender and social inclusion initiatives are immediate and strategic means for better understanding LGBT and end discriminations*
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4. ATTITUDES TOWARDS AND AWARENESS OF HOMOSEXUALITY

A quantitative survey was carried during the study. A total number of 55 respondents (boy and girl students, teachers, education officers, and staff from CSO and partner organizations) who participated KIIs and FGDs enumerated the survey. The survey results indicated that there is a very small number of respondents were aware of when homosexuality is, majority were not. The respondents from CSO/NGO represented the highest awareness and positive attitude towards homosexuality while teacher and student respondent have limited understanding the issue.

A common misunderstanding for CSO/NGO is:

- *"Historically, among every culture has evidenced widespread intolerance towards homosexuals, viewing them as 'sick' or as 'sinners'"*

There are two common misunderstandings for boy student respondents from both study areas:

- *Homosexuals are usually identifiable by their appearance or mannerisms*
- *Historically, among every culture has evidenced widespread intolerance towards homosexuals, viewing them as 'sick' or as 'sinners'*

For girl student respondents from two study

areas, they shared a similar view on:

- *Homosexuality does not occur among animals (other than human beings)*
- *Homosexuals are usually identifiable by their appearance or mannerisms*

The teacher respondents from across the study areas have a same view on:

- *Homosexuals are usually identifiable by their appearance or mannerisms*
- *Homosexuality does not occur among animals (other than human beings)*
- *In the last decades there has been an increase in homosexuality*
- *Historically, among every culture has evidenced widespread intolerance towards homosexuals, viewing them as 'sick' or as 'sinners'*

On the discrimination against homosexuality, the girl student and female teacher respondents provide positive views compared to boy student and male teacher respondents.

4.1 It can be considered that the discrimination against homosexuality is an issue at the study environment

4.2 Boy and male respondents have more negative perception on homosexuality

4.3 The respondents considered a same view on homosexuality -homosexuals are as 'sick' or as 'sinners'

5. RECOMMENDATIONS

A set of recommendations are presented for incorporating the existing project and further development of initiatives for promotion and protection the rights of LGBT. It is therefore hoped that the findings and recommendations from this study will be useful in informing future programme

preparation, so as to ensure better integration of LGBT concerns. Table below provides a summary of findings and the corresponding recommendations. The recommendations provide specific guidance for CRM when reviewing and developing its initiatives in a forthcoming programme.

Findings	Recommendations
<p>Who are LGBT?</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. LGBT is insufficiently interpreted and narrowly understood by most of the respondents. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Targeted interventions of awareness raising and desensitization for students, teachers, and parents to better understand LGBT and mitigate discrimination
<p>Student attitudes towards LGBT</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Being LGBT is perceived as disease and due to peer pressure. 2. There are different levels of acceptance on LGBT. The students tend to accept homosexual more as friends and neighbors than as family members, as teacher, and as school head (or leadership position). 3. LGBT is seen as 'un-natural'; thus, think that the society (friend, family, and community) is responsible to change to be 'natural'. And, using violence is viewed acceptable and justifiable to change to be 'natural'. 4. There is a view on direct relationship between homosexuality and education performance as well as and business ability. 5. Gender embedded cultural norms is deeply rooted: male as superior and female is subordinate; thus, behaving as men (transmen) is somehow acceptable than behaving as women (transwomen) or gay. 6. Across the study areas, almost all boy and girl student respondents view that using by all means to meet traditional and cultural values is justifiable rather than accepting the value of 'diversity' and respect 'identity'. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. In collaboration with the school authority, introduce feasible and appropriate activities at school to promote living with diversity and respect identity 2. In collaboration with the school, introduce basic concept of violence and stereotype to the students (boys and girls) through interactive dialogues

Findings	Recommendations
<p>Teacher attitudes towards LGBT</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Teachers those who have exposure in receiving knowledge about LGBT, they have understanding the issue and reduced discrimination. Lack or less discrimination against LGBT highly depends on whether he or she receives awareness on the issue. 2. Taking action for sexual harassment exists in some schools. However, the degree of punishment is not gender responsive. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Review the life skill curriculum to incorporate basic concept of violence, non-discrimination, stereotype, diversity, identity 2. Advocate the Ministry of Education (both basic and higher education) to incorporate the proposed values and concepts 3. Advocate, coordinate, and facilitate coordination meetings/consultations with relevant key stakeholders (Ministry of Education, Ministry of Health and Sport, Ministry of Social Welfare, Relief and Resettlement, etc) for culturally appropriate and feasible initiatives for sexual education at schools 4. Develop the capacity development for non-discrimination and diversity programme with pilot phrase and scale up strategy (programme on LGBT or Homosexuality might be a little bit sensitive)
<p>Sexuality in school curriculum</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The school curriculum to learn about sexuality is insufficient. And, seeking knowledge about sexuality is risky as information delivered at Facebook does not guarantee providing the accurate and right information. 2. The 'life skill' class is not fully utilized at school. The taboo against teaching/talking on sex, and cultural barriers make teachers (especially women un-married teachers) and students hesitant for open discussion. 3. School teachers are uncomfortable in teaching sexual education. 	
<p>Family and community acceptance of LGBT</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Acceptance by the family (LGBT as family member) and the community (as superior or leadership position) is significantly low. 2. The family uses physical violence to the LGBT children to 'discipline' or 'punish' as it against family values 3. There is no coping mechanism to reduce tension and conflict with the family and the community 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Develop appropriate and relevant interventions for the parents (pilot and scale up) 2. Initiate a counseling mechanism for family acceptance in Mandalay and scale up intervention
<p>Discriminations and difficulties faced by LGBT</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The LGBT have been experiencing 	

Findings	Recommendations
<p>different forms of discriminations in family, at school, and in society.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 2. The LGBT particularly transmen and transwomen have been suffering from different forms of violence in the family, at school, and in society. 3. There is limited understanding on 'violence'. The society (school, community, institution) do not see violence as violence. Such ignorance makes the responsible persons or the society tolerant and fail to protect. 4. The gender norms and discriminator ideology against LGBT deeply rooted into the LGBT themselves. With this, they have been encountering internal conflicts between their sexual identity and societal norms. 5. LGBT have different interest and needs, and they have been experiencing different vulnerabilities 6. The media plays a key role in delivering negative and discriminatory messages that LGBT are strange people who makes the society damage, and they deserve to receive 'discrimination, humiliation, and violence'. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. In collaboration with other organizations and network working for LGBT rights, develop advocacy strategy to collectively advocate media personnel, agencies, and employer association to respect rights of the LGBT and stop discrimination against LGBT
<p>Works for LGBT rights</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Limited understanding on LGBT rights exists even the persons who are working at NGOs where there is non-discrimination as organization's core value. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Strengthen the working relationship with CSOs in the project areas to better understand the issues of LGBT 2. Incorporate basic concept of violence with specific focus on 'consent' targeting to the LGBT
<p>Challenges faced by CSOs working for LGBT rights</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. There is limited legal awareness on LGBT. 2. Limited or lack of coordination among the organizations working for LGBT issues to collectively move forward as movement. 3. Growing civil society organizations especially LGBT focused and/or gender and social inclusion initiatives are 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Review and strengthen coordination among the organizations working for LGBT rights for helping each others and for the collective advocacy

Findings	Recommendations
immediate and strategic means for better understanding LGBT to end discriminations	
<p>Attitudes towards and awareness of Homosexuality</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. It can be considered that the discrimination against homosexuality is an issue at the study environment 2. Boy and male respondents have more negative perception on homosexuality 3. The respondents considered a same view on homosexuals are as 'sick' or as 'sinners' 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Conduct wider perception survey for the attitudes towards and awareness of homosexuality 2. Develop communication strategy and devise relevant communication messages for respective target groups