

**Process Documentation for Finance Inc. Project**  
***Bridging LGBTQI Communities and the Private Sectors for Inclusion***

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**I. Introduction**

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights states that “*all human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights,*” yet social exclusion of LGBTQI communities are happening around us on a daily basis - especially in countries that are not offering legal protection towards sexual minority groups. Among different types of social exclusion, employment-related exclusionary practices are - without undermining other forms of exclusionary practices - one of the most common types of exclusion that LGBTQI communities experience. Through the Finance Inc. initiative, APCOM and Suara Kita worked hand-in-hand to tackle this challenge, to ensure that all people - LGBTQI communities included - are able to enjoy peace and prosperity, as stated in the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), through the spirit of “*leaving no one behind*”.

With the aim to strategically engage and advocate with financial and development institutions for LGBTQI inclusion in Indonesia, Suara Kita began the implementation of the pilot project in July 2020. Through the support provided by APCOM, Suara Kita was able to implement three different activities that are aligned with the goal of the program: 1) Webinars with Private Sectors; 2) Video Production on Workplace Inclusion; as well as 3) Producing and Distributing LGBTQI Workplace Inclusion Module. Although COVID-19 pandemic forced Suara Kita to readjust some of its activities, the pandemic also served as a learning opportunity for us on how to adapt quickly and make use of everything that we have on hand.

When discussing social exclusion and LGBTQI communities, especially employment-related exclusionary practices against LGBTQI communities in Indonesia, the processes need to be understood as something *relational*. Report from Badgett, Hasenbush, and Luhur (2017) shows that LGBTQI people in Indonesia are facing “*a lack of career opportunities*” due to their lower educational achievement - that is attributed to the exclusion in the education system. This, to some extent, creates a situation where LGBTQI people in Indonesia are pushed to work in informal sectors or to be self-employed (Badgett et. al., 2017). Aside from lower educational achievement, the lack of proper identity documents is also mentioned as one of the barriers preventing LGBTQI people in Indonesia from securing employment; and this is especially true for *waria* and LGBTQI youth who were forced to leave their home after being rejected by their families.

Thus, it’s important to keep in mind that fighting for LGBTQI inclusion requires us to link-up with as many stakeholders as we can; since the root of the problem lies within the

system. Not only we have to work alongside the private sectors to ensure inclusive career opportunities for LGBTQI community, we also have to work with the government to make sure that they are supporting the initiative - and The Finance Inc. program, as well as the pilot project in Indonesia was designed with this rationale in mind.

As an illustration on how exclusionary practices take place in Indonesia, In October 2020, Chief Sergeant RR, an Air Force personnel who served at Dr. S. Hardjolukito Yogyakarta Air Force Base Hospital (RSPAU), Yogyakarta, was dishonorably discharged (DD) through the sentence from Semarang Military Court. Apart from receiving the DD, Chief Sergeant RR was also sentenced to 8 months in prison by the judge, for violating Article 103 of the Military Criminal Code/Article 281 of the Criminal Code on Immoral Acts. *"The defendant was legally and convincingly proven guilty of committing a crime of deliberate disobedience, Therefore, (we) sentenced the defendant to principal imprisonment for 8 months, and the additional punishment of dishonorable discharge from the military service,"* said Chief Judge Lt. Col. CHK Khamdan while reading the verdict in the Semarang Military Court II-10's main courtroom, Wednesday, 21/10/2020. [Source](#)

## II. Implementation Process

Our first challenge in implementing our activity plan was to adjust the activities with the current COVID-19 health protocol. In June 2020, the number of COVID-19 positive cases reached more than 1000 cases/day in Jakarta alone, resulting in several limitations imposed by the local government. Thus, we decided to conduct the seminars on workplace inclusivity online, instead of having offline sessions. We took our time, around 1 - 2 months, to finalize our activity plan; by asking around our allies - LGBTQI organizations and other partners - to ensure that we would have a working online infrastructure, as well as making sure that the virtual space could serve as a safe space for LGBTQI people who were participating in the webinars. It turned out that all of our partner organizations were experiencing the same thing, and we kinda followed their advice while testing the water ourselves during our first few webinars.

We developed a simple 'division of labor' and an online prompt to guide us through the webinars. We conducted our first webinar on 26th August 2020; and to ensure the safety and security of the virtual space, we planned the event as an invitation only event. We began by asking the participants' consents to record the session, and then proceeded to the introductory session, followed by the presentation from the speaker; the representative from a private company. Speaking about the speakers, contacting and convincing them to talk in our webinar sessions were a challenge in itself. During the program planning phase, we were confident that we could invite big companies such as Facebook, The Body Shop, Accor, and other big, "inclusive" companies into our webinars. Yet all of those big

companies refused our invitation to speak in our webinars - either blatantly by saying no, or subtly by not responding to our invitation despite promising that they would follow up our request.

But those rejections didn't let us down. We managed to ask around for recommendations, and we utilized our personal contacts to find business owners and employees that want to share their experiences in our webinars. We linked up with 8 different individuals who are working (or owning) small - medium sized companies, that are willing to represent their companies and share their knowledge with LGBTQI communities in our webinar. This is such a blessing in disguise, since we didn't realize that we have these great and resourceful individuals so close to us, since most of them are close friends and/or members of our organization.

<b>Date</b>	<b>Session</b>	<b>Participants</b>	<b>Main Takeouts</b>	<b>Challenges</b>
26/08/20	Workplace Inclusion: Saving and Loans Association ( <i>Koperasi Induk</i> )	39	Establishing LGBTQI+ savings and loans association would be helpful to strengthen the community	Unstable internet connection, digital literacy (mute, unmute)
17/09/20	Workplace Inclusion: Hospitality Sector, Tourism World Part 1	28	Companies must have a set of regulation that ensure the wellbeing of their employees, especially employees from minority groups	Unstable internet connection, digital literacy (mute, unmute)
20/09/20	Workplace Inclusion: Hospitality Sector, Tourism World Part 2	27	Business owner's understanding on workplace inclusivity is crucial in deciding the direction of the company	Unstable internet connection, digital literacy (mute, unmute)

24/09/20	Workplace Inclusion: Publishing Sector	22	Mobile working might be one of the working model that suits the need of minority groups, expanding entrepreneurial capacity of the minority groups is also important	Unstable internet connection, digital literacy (mute, unmute)
27/09/20	Workplace Inclusion: Global Insurance Sector	22	Several companies do have guidelines on inclusivity, but sometimes the country where the company resides doesn't offer legal protection towards minority groups. This is a loophole	Unstable internet connection, digital literacy (mute, unmute), speaker's privacy (we have to turn off the video camera)
01/12/20	Workplace Inclusion: Mining and Renewable Energy Sector	19	There exist a company who provides full HIV screening and medication for its employees, and this company is state-owned	Unstable internet connection, digital literacy (mute, unmute)
04/12/20	Workplace Inclusion: Health Service and Reproductive Health Sector	18	Employees working in so-called 'inclusive' companies are also facing stigmas and prejudices from outsiders	Unstable internet connection, digital literacy (mute, unmute)

08/12/20	Workplace Inclusion: Digital Agency Sector	18	Media companies should be the beacon of information regarding sexuality, and framing the issue so that everyone will not be overly resistant to it is one of our homework	Unstable internet connection, digital literacy (mute, unmute)
21/01/20	Workplace Inclusion: Report on Findings and Further Discussion - January 21 2021	60	A lot of companies have similar initiatives regarding workplace inclusion, yet they are not linked up to one another	Unstable internet connection, digital literacy (mute, unmute)

**Table I.** Main takeouts and challenges from inclusion webinars

On the video production, we produced three short videos as part of the Finance Inc. Program. The first video told a story about how the government provides for LGBTIQI+ individuals who are suffering from COVID-19. Through the video, we saw that during the COVID-19 pandemic in Indonesia, the government doesn't discriminate against people based on their gender or sexual orientation. Everyone receives the same services and medication that they need, and the gay COVID-19 patient that we followed received non-judgmental care from service providers. The second video told a story about two transgender individuals who are fighting their own battle in securing employment; while the third video tells a story about Suara Kita's journey in implementing the project. While the first two videos came out smoothly, we encountered some problems when editing the third video - our editor went missing, and we have to find an emergency replacement; and that explains the delay that happened during the submission of the third video.

Moving on to the formulation and distribution of the workplace inclusivity module, we managed to finish the module on March 25th, 2021. We faced several challenges when trying to finish the module; first, is that all of the writers involved are experts with full jobs, so they have other responsibilities that oftentimes affect their writing speed. Although we've just finished writing the module recently, we've informed our partners that we are

formulating a module on workplace inclusion since late 2020; and surprisingly, one of them - the representative from a private company who became a speaker in one of our session - gave us the permission to use their business to test out the module, even before seeing the final product. This amount of trust and mutual understanding is invaluable to us, and is considered as one of the main takeaways from the whole Finance Inc. Project.

### **III. Discussions and Learnings**

During the implementation processes - which are full of trials, errors, and tribulations - we encountered several “*aha!*” moments. First is that through dialogue, both parties are able to get rid of prejudices and engage in a constructive conversation; and this is reflected in the webinar sessions that we facilitated. Webinar participants admitted that they used to think that they don’t have a place in private companies, and after meeting with the representatives from private companies, they feel more confident in finding that ‘perfect’ company, or even start their own business. The opposite is also true, that through the webinars, representatives from private sectors got the opportunity to listen and learn from the experience of LGBTQI+ individuals, especially when highlighting their hardships in securing employment. This then was taken home by the representatives as inputs to keep pushing their companies to be more inclusive in the future.

Second, we realized that there are quite a lot of private companies who are inclusive, yet they are not linked with one and another. Thus, facilitating a dialogue between these companies, with the goal of forming some sort of union, might be a strategic move that we can explore in the future. We also realized that there was a lack of formalized and standardized workplace inclusion protocol; as each company implemented their own version of inclusive regulation - which most of the time came from the owner’s personal take on the concept of workplace inclusion. The module that we formulate will help with this problem, but still, monitoring and evaluation should be done on a regular basis to ensure that private companies are adhering to the workplace inclusivity guidelines.

Aside from those *aha!* Moments, we also learned a couple things from the implementation process. When it comes to facilitating webinars, in a span of 7 months, we managed to deliver 9 webinar sessions, and each offers a new perspective to our participants, members of LGBTQI communities. Through these webinars, we managed to put representatives from private sectors and members of LGBTQI communities in one room, to engage in an open discussion and learn about each other. Participants learned that there are inclusive companies around them, and it’s possible to find and apply to these companies; while on the other hand, these representatives from private companies learned the harsh, lived realities of LGBTQI individuals, on the matter of securing employment. Challenges that we encountered during the implementation of the webinars are mostly technical, such as

unstable internet connection, and participants who were forgetting to mute and/or unmute their microphone in a certain scenario.

The video production processes offered another learning opportunity from us. First thing is of course to navigate along the COVID-19 health protocols and to ensure that everyone is not exposed to any health risks while we were shooting. Second is that getting the consent from potential source persons is hard, and the consent can be revoked at any given time. When shooting our last video, there are some members from our organization who opted to not appear in the video, since they are afraid that their safety might be compromised; same thing happened with webinar participants and representatives from private companies, that don't want to be exposed. This is totally fine, since it's part of their rights to refuse, but this phenomenon shows that the digital platform is perceived as something unsafe by LGBTQI+ individuals. Third is that we need to be more selective in choosing whom we are going to work with, this is due to our last editor who disappeared without saying a word to us, that sent us into a panic. We later found out that the editor just left and doesn't want to continue working with us; he even said that "*I haven't signed the contract so I can get off anytime*".

Lastly, when struggling with the formulation and the distribution of the workplace inclusion module, we learned that communication was the key to solve the problem. We just have to check each other's progress on a regular basis, and have a clear objective in mind about what the final product should look like. Also, it's important to pay attention to our staff's wellbeing since working in this issue exposes oneself to different kinds of situations that to some extent, might be triggering, and again, checking each other's back on a regular basis would be helpful when it comes to keeping everything under the table.

In December 2020, we hired a new staff to help us in wrapping up the implementation of Finance. Inc project. We did this because our previous project manager had to leave the project to deal with his mental health issues. This shows that again, mental health issues are real, and working with LGBTQI issues during COVID-19 pandemic was indeed taking a toll on our mental health. We are still working on developing the proper formula to keep our staff' mental health in check as well as developing the effective communication pattern, and we believe that we are making steady progress. Stay healthy, everyone!

#### **IV. Moving Forward**

If there's a last thing that we learned from this whole ordeal, is that we must not stop here. Suara Kita is committed to continue our effort in bridging LGBTQI+ communities with private sectors and other financial institutions, since our goal includes introducing, promoting, and maintaining workplace inclusion for LGBTQI individuals. Seeing all of the

positive feedbacks, looking back at the existing networks that we managed to build with private companies, as well as trust and commitment from both private companies and community members, we hope that we can continue to push this initiative onto the next stage; starting with piloting the implementation of the workplace inclusion module, and conducting research on the impact of LGBTQI inclusion in the workplace to the national economy.

We believe that our battle has just begun, and there is still much more to explore that lies in front of us.