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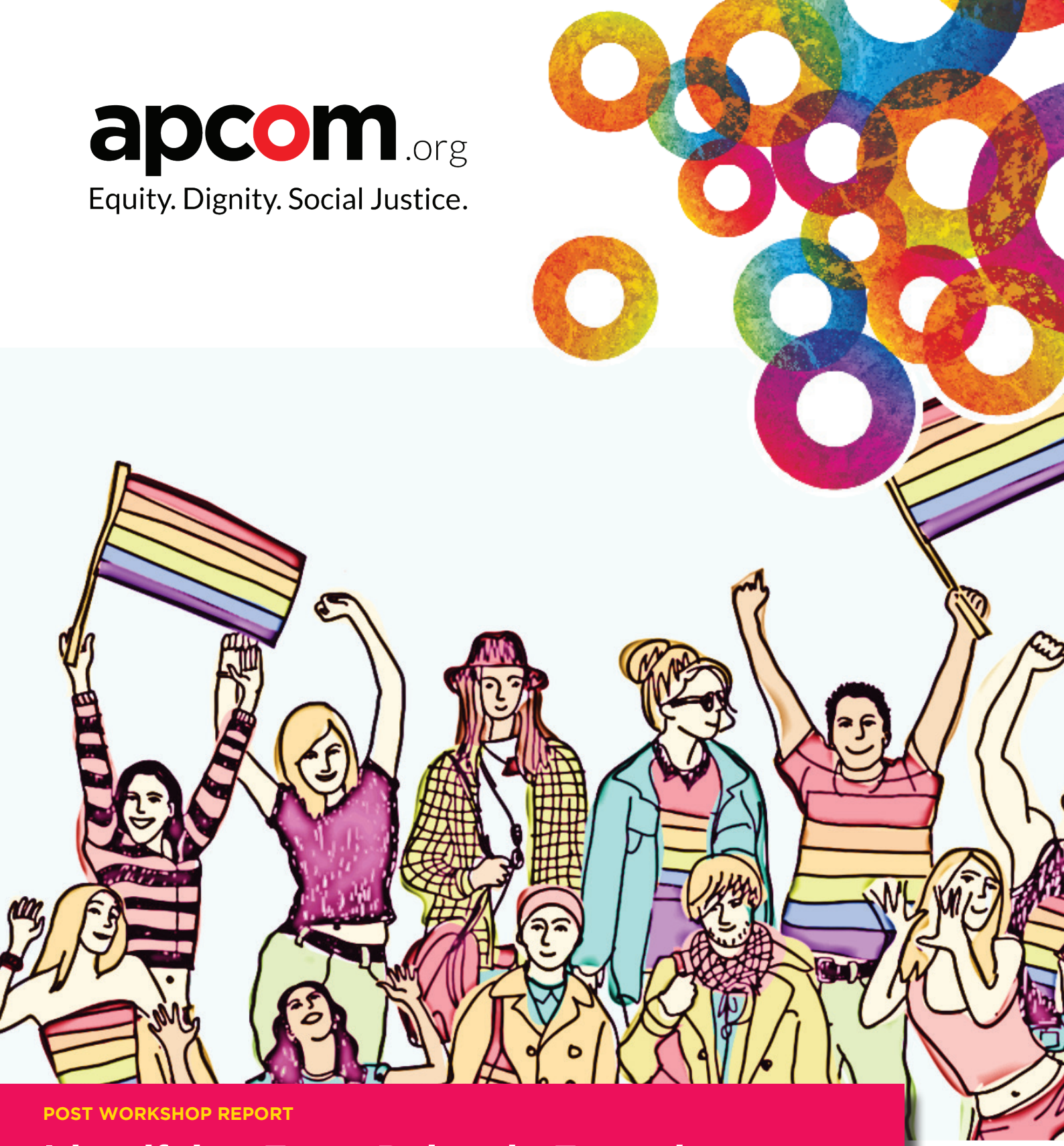

POST WORKSHOP REPORT

Identifying Entry Points in Engaging the Private Sector

Lao PDR

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Post-Workshop Report

Identifying Entry Points in Engaging the Private Sector

Lao PDR

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The Capacity-Building Workshop and the Modules

Purpose and Objectives

The two-day workshop aimed to contribute to LGBTQI organizations' ability to engage with the private (business and finance sector) in their Laos PDR, towards contributing to the overarching goal of LGBTQI economic, social and financial inclusion. It also aims to explore ways and platforms of how LGBTQI organizations in Laos can partner with and strengthen capacities to engage with the private and finance sectors.

At the end of the workshop, participants are expected to be able to:

1. Describe concepts and frameworks related to social, economic and financial inclusion;
2. Be Familiar with economic, social and financial issues experienced by LGBTQI;
3. Link concepts related to inclusion to the economic, social and financial issues experienced by LGBTQI;
4. Describe the private sector in Laos PDR and identify possible roles of the private sector towards becoming more inclusive;
5. Identify strategies/entry points for increased engagement between LGBTQI organizations and the private (business and finance) sector in Laos PDR.

Organizer and Target Participants

In Laos PDR, APCOM Partner Lao Positive Health Association (LaoPHA) was responsible for organizing the workshop. 23 participants from LGBTQI organizations and community attended. These included LaoPHA, PEADA, PSI, VYC, APL+, Proud to be us (PTBU) Laos. Representatives from OXFAM VOICE supported projects working on LGBTQI issues were also invited, together with OXFAM Laos, but unfortunately due to conflicts in schedules, only a few partners of OXFAM were able to confirm attendance. Potential resource persons from the business community and private sector were identified and invited, but were unable to attend.

Workshop and Module Development Process

A call for proposals from consultants to develop a training module and to conduct the workshops was done by APCOM in May of 2019, and selection of the consultant was a nnounced in August. APCOM did a regional review of literature, scoping visits, and preliminary work with the ADB and selected partners (local NGOs working on LGBTQI and social inclusion) in each of the four countries. APCOM partner for Lao was Lao Positive Health Association (LaoPHA).

Module development leading up to the workshop started back in August-September, with the outlines, comments from APCOM and partners, revisions, and subsequent drafts being written and revised, in an attempt to make all four modules somewhat similar. However, there were specific contexts for each country and partner and adjustments had to be made for the module design.

Laos is relatively new to the issues around SOGIE-SC, and partners here worked more extensively on HIV, particularly with MSM, sex workers and transgender. Laos participants felt a need to have a session on basic SOGIE-SC concepts. The private sector in Laos is also relatively small (except in the mining, and extractive industries, hydropower) and there was virtually no interaction between the LaoPHA and partners and these sectors. Also there is very little information on the LGBTQI situation in Laos, much of it is from the foreign media, and supplied by a single, non-registered organization. Stigma on LGBTQI also seems to be higher in Laos; even LGBTQI human rights defenders do not wish to be identified for their advocacy. ("Revealing the Rainbow, Destination Justice, 2018)

It was clear that the modules would not be totally completed prior to the workshop, as adjustments were made until the time of the sessions themselves, but the basic structure of the modules remained intact. A common format for writing the modules was suggested by APCOM in October. Once the module outlines were drafted, the workshop design was developed and refined further, enhanced by discussions with LaoPHA. A guide for activities, basic concepts and key messages were articulated for each session of the modules.

Since workshops had already been delivered in early November by the APCOM Partner in Indonesia and the Philippines, there were lessons learned and additional inputs from APCOM for specific sessions, and suggested material that was very useful for all four countries participating in the project. These included recent study findings on LBGTQI Economic and Social Inclusion as well as other related material from the UN, World Bank, and prominent INGOs and advocacy groups. APCOM had supported a regional literature review, and also had its partners conduct FGDs with LGBTQI people in each country, to get a "feel" of LGBTQI Inclusion and/or Exclusion.

The experience of previous workshops done in the Philippines and Indonesia also informed the modules in Laos, particularly in developing the sessions/presentations on business and inclusion. It was envisioned that the workshop itself would be a "test" for some of the sessions in the module. Since translation would be used for the workshop, these had to be as short, simple and concise as possible. While various attempts were made to have resource people from OXFAM, the international chambers of commerce, and others, to talk on the private sector, only one person was available in Laos. Nevertheless, this person – Anan Boupha of PTBU Laos is arguably the most prominent activist/advocate for inclusion and equality in the country, if not the best known. After the Laos workshop, an event, "Rainbow stories" – a symposium on LGBTQI people and allies and their stories was held, supported by the Australian embassy. This was a fitting "end" to the two days, and three of the participants/facilitators in the workshop were in the panel.

Brief description of the modules

The module is firmly anchored on the concept of LGBTQI rights as human rights, and inclusion in all spheres – the economy, health, education, political participation, legal recognition, freedom from violence. It introduced basic principles of inclusion/exclusion, the impacts, and analyzed the situation of LGBTQI people in the country, from a human rights perspective. It also introduces concepts about the business and private sector. The module also shared lessons from other countries on LGBTQI inclusion, on engaging the private sector, as well as the outstanding practices of several "Fortune 500" companies, many of whom are also familiar brands in Laos.

Arrival, Registration

Participants arrive at the venue, fill out the registration/attendance form with their contact details, and given a workshop schedule and kits containing notebooks, pens, copies of the slides and reference/reading material.

Module 1. Introduction and "Getting to Know You", Purpose and Objectives, Pre-test/ Pre-workshop Questionnaire, Administration arrangements & Workshop "Ground Rules"

This session enables participants to get to know the others better, one-on-one, in a fun and engaging atmosphere. Participants pair up with those who they do not know, answer a couple of set questions, introduce themselves then present their partners to the rest of the group. Expectations are checked via group work, with participants assigned randomly. Administration and logistics arrangements are clarified, and a set of" ground rules" for the workshop is discussed and agreed with participants. The workshop purpose and objectives, activities of the project Finance, Inc. is presented by APCOM, and a pre-workshop questionnaire to gauge level of awareness of workshop topics is a dministered. The questionnaire below is used, participants state their level of agreement with the statement, with ratings as follows: 1 – disagree strongly; 2- disagree; 3- neither agree nor disagree; 4 – agree and 5 – strongly agree.

	Statement	1	2	3	4	5
1	I am familiar with basic and current concepts of SOGIE (Sexual Orientation, Gender Identity and Expression)					
2	I am familiar with the general situation of LGBTIQ people in my country, how they live and work and treated by society					
3	I am familiar with laws and policies and social and cultural norms relating to LGBTIQ people in my country					
4	I am familiar with concepts and frameworks related to social, economic and financial inclusion;					
5	I am familiar with economic, social and financial issues experienced by LGBTQI in my country					
6	I am familiar with the private sector in my country, different types, enterprises and business groups					
7	I can identify possible roles of the private sector towards becoming more inclusive of LGBTI					
8	I can identify strategies/entry points for increased engagement between LGBTQI organizations and the private sector in my country					

Module 2. Basics of SOGIE-SC

Introduces participants to current jargon and evolving concepts of "LGBTQI" and SOGIE-SC. Participants also free-list terms that they know/hear that are related to LGBTQI, and what these mean in their particular context. Meanings of Sexual Orientation, Gender Identity, Expression, Sex Characteristics. Transgender and cisgender are discussed. The "gender bread" diagram is introduced. Emphasis on SO not being necessarily congruent with GI or GE.

Module 3. LGBTQI situation in Laos

Contains information from a scan/review of documents on the LGBTQI Human rights situation in the respective countries. A world map of countries which have affirmed/protected LGBTQI rights, and those where LGBTQI people are considered criminals is shown. Emphasized the various human rights: legal recognition, rights to health, education, decent work, freedom of assembly and expression, as they might apply to LGBTQI persons. Updates about the situation in each country are discussed, and views about progress or regression.

Module 4. What is Inclusion?
LGBTI Inclusion? What do we know from Laos – FGD results

Introduces concepts of inclusion and exclusion, the definitions of the World Bank and UNDP, and the negative impacts of exclusion, at the individual/micro level, as well as the national/sector (macro) level, with material from studies done by Professor Lee Badgett et al. The potential loss to the economy and society brought about by exclusion. This session introduces the concept of an LGBTI Inclusion index, and its components – the economy, health, access to education, decent work and employment, political recognition and participation, and freedom from violence and discrimination. The findings from the FGDs done by LaoPHA are also presented in this session.

Module 5. Private Sector/Business sectors and the Private sector in the country

This module introduces the concept of "private sector" in general, as well as the private sector in the country in particular. The differences between private and public sectors; the main purpose of the private sector, its rationale, and the contribution of the private sector to economic development. Introduces jargon on enterprise classifications (micro-small-medium-large); industries that make up sectors, and sectors that make up a country's economy. Also presents the private sector associations and other business associations, the classifications of enterprises in the country. Participants who had the experience of being employed with a business and the private sector also share their ideas. Some entry points for LGBTQI organizations, focusing on diversity/inclusion policies where these exist, and special initiatives such as Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) are introduced.

End session: Feedback on Day 1

A short session for participants and facilitators to reflect on the first day, and what they think can be improved. Seated in a circle, each one is encouraged to speak and cite how the day was for them, just to note a few points.

Module 6. Review of Day: "Hot Potato" exercise

A participatory and fun exercise, set to music, that at the same time allows people to share what they have learned from the previous day's sessions. Interspersed with some fun actions to be performed if you get "caught" with the "hot potato" when the music stops.

Module 7. Reflection: Individual Sharing, "What can I do to help LGBTQI inclusion, in my own way?"

This session uses the nominal group technique—sitting in a circle, allowing reflection for a few minutes, and allows people to share on what they can do as individuals, within their own control, to improve LGBTQI inclusion and safe spaces for LGBTQI friends, neighbors, colleagues, or family members. Affirms that small changes can always start from within one's own mind, and heart.

Module 8. Business and LGBTQI I Inclusion: Rationale and Learning from other countries

The session introduces Business and Human rights concepts and their origins, from various UN declarations such as the UDHR and conventions, the Yogyakarta principles, and other landmark documents. Provides an overview of the rationale for, and the business case for LGBTQI inclusion. Shows how major companies in the Fortune 500 index are leading by way of their inclusion policies for LGBTQI people and their partners; but also how these benefits may not be universally available to all staff because of different country contexts.

Module 9, Panel or Resource speaker on LGBTIQ inclusion

In this session, LGBTQI resource speakers with experience in the private sector – employees, employers, entrepreneurs – are invited to share about their experiences, and suggest some entry points for LGBTQI organizations to start engaging with the business/ private sectors. Constrained by resource speaker availability. Embassies and European business networks in Bangkok, Laos and Cambodia were approached for suggestions. This is a moderated panel discussion, with an introduction of the speakers, each talks for around five minutes, followed by Q & A session.

Module 10. Defining Entry points for engaging the private sector (Presentation, followed by Workshop and Group Discussion, and Presentations by the Groups)

This session synthesizes various types of approaches towards engaging with the private sector, such as the need for planning and knowing the specific country context, listening to other views, proceeding cautiously, doing one step at a time, and trying to influence company policy and workplace culture. Also provides information about some entry points via a company's diversity and inclusion strategies, as well as any corporate social responsibility (CSR) policies and activities. The workshop tries to integrate lessons learned throughout the past two days, by dividing participants into small groups of up to 10 persons and asking the groups to discuss about "What can we do, on LGBTQI Inclusion, knowing what we know about the LGBTQI situation in Laos, our current activities, and the private sector?" Representatives of one organization are put together in one group, to enable them to think and strategize collectively. Groups are given 40 minutes to prepare a three-minute response, and are asked to be as creative as possible. They can do role-plays, posters, songs, performances, pantomime, dances etc.

Module 11. Post-test, Evaluation and Workshop closing

The closing session involves answering the post-test questionnaire (with a few additional evaluation-type questions thrown in), followed by a reflection of the workshop, and some closing remarks from APCOM. Facilitation team then meets to discuss any feedback and comments on how the workshop could have been improved.
Dates and Venue

Workshop Highlights

November 25 & 26, 2019
New Rose Hotel, Vientiane

Organization of workshop

LaoPHA organized workshop administration and logistics, invited participants, contacted interpreter/translator, Soupha Rawady. Co-facilitated some sessions. Preparation day on the 23rd of November.

Participants

21 participants, most were from LaoPHA. Other organizations were Proud to be Us (PTBU) Laos, the Vientiane Youth center, Lao Red Cross, and other groups. Around half of the participants were from outside of the capital city, and at least 80% of the participants identified as LGBTQI

Arrival, Registration, Introductory Sessions

See workshop documentation for details Participants sign in and receive their workshop kits. After a short welcome from MRI and an introduction to APCOM, the Finance Inc. project and its activities, participants have an introduction using dyads, then they are divided into four small groups of 6 to 7 to discuss and present their expectations of the workshop content, of the other participants, of the facilitators, and other aspects like the venue, food, etc. Then ground rules of the workshop, such as the use of mobile phones, respect for other person's views, confidentiality, starting/ending on time, etc. are discussed and then posted on the wall as a reminder.

The pre-workshop questionnaire was administered, with the following results. Each score was given a value (1 = 1 pt.; 2 = 2 pts.; 3 = 3pts., 4 = 4 pts., and 5 =5 pts.) Then these were totaled, and divided by # (no. of respondents) to get the mean or average score. The same questions will be asked during the closing session, to see if there are any improvements in the average scores (the scores should ideally increase if participants agree more with the statements).

	Statement	1	2	3	4	5	Total	#	Ave.
1	I am familiar with basic and current concepts of SOGIE (Sexual Orientation, Gender Identity and Expression)	1	2	12	7		68	21	3.2
2	I am familiar with the general situation of LGBTIQ people in my country, how they live and work and treated by society	4		7	5	8	82	21	3.9
3	I am familiar with laws and policies and social and cultural norms relating to LGBTIQ people in my country	15	8	9			47	21	2.2
4	I am familiar with concepts and frameworks related to social, economic and financial inclusion;	8	3	2			27	20	1.3
5	I am familiar with economic, social and financial issues experienced by LGBTQI in my country	1	3	8	2		46	21	2.2
6	I am familiar with the private sector in my country, different types, enterprises and business groups	10	2	16	2		61	21	2.9
7	I can identify possible roles of the private sector towards becoming more inclusive of LGBTI	14	6	5			37	21	1.8
8	I can identify strategies/entry points for increased engagement between LGBTQI organizations and the private sector in my country		4	3			31	21	1.5

Basics of SOGIE-SC

This session was introduced upon a rough assessment of the Laos context, participant knowledge and desire to know about the topic (Work on SOGIE-SC in just starting in the country and much of the jargon and terminologies used are new). Participants also generated many different words and phrases in the local Lao language that indicated or described LGBTQI people, or referred to sexual activities. Most of these terms are considered insulting or derogatory and often have allusions to animals, or morality, or damaging effects on people. Many participants were hearing these terminologies for the first time, and considered them to be amusing. LGBTQI and close friends may call each other these terms also while teasing each other, so some terms are acceptable to use in some contexts but not in others. Some of the terms mentioned include (the full list is in the workshop documentation):

"plastic vagina" – fake vaginal organs. Transsexual/transwomen
"Golden finger" – reserved for vaginal finger insertion,
usually said to be done between two women, masturbatory activity
"short penis" – reference to gay. Effeminate men
"yellow tongue" – lesbian same-sex activity, licking vulva so often their tongue becomes yellow' can also refer to a tongue that has smegma from an uncircumcised penis
MSM
"soy bean paste " - anal sex, fecal matter
"Chinese penis" – fake, small penis with racist overtones
– weak, something not lasting or durable; gay men or feminine men
"Immoral"
Trans with big feet – someone who can't use high heels or shoes for women because too big feet
"poisonous insect" (can hurt others) - gay man
"Big buffalo" (transgender woman that stands out because of their height, shape, body build, big feet, husky voice, etc.
"Vacuum cleaner fist" – way of sucking the penis (Gay man)

LGBTQI situation in Laos

Most expressed that the situation for LGBTI people was still challenging and many instances of discrimination in the family, schools, and finding work were cited; LGBTQI are not criminalized, but neither are they recognized. Over the past few years the situation was improving slowly, and much more needed to be done. Gay men and transgender women tend to be more "out"; few lesbians or transmen are known. Only a few government agencies recognize or acknowledge LGBTQI in their programs, and mainly in the context of HIV and health related concerns

What is Inclusion? LGBTI Inclusion?

Definitions of inclusion, according to the world Bank and UNDP, were explained. Findings from research showing the benefits to the economy at the macro and micro level were presented. The LGBT Inclusion index and its components were introduced. The experience of MRI Cambodia on its financial inclusion project was shared: How NGOs work to improve inclusion? (MRI Cambodia experience) The facilitator presented some slides, made by MRI Cambodia, on the Micro rainbow project and their financial inclusion model. MRI also worked with a microfinance institution to help provide loans

for small businesses that are run by LGBTQI people. Their support and advice included training on business planning, completing documentation to make a loan, and running/ managing the business. Some other experiences in Asia, such as the Hong Kong LGBT inclusion Index awards, were also shared.

Participants were curious to know about experiences in other countries especially with regards to legal recognition of relationships between people of the same SAB or gender.

FGD results

Olam of Laos PHA then shares the major findings from the FGDs that were done recently. Major findings included discrimination in the school setting, which limits access to Education. Many TG females and tomboys only reached the third grade in school, being bullied for not following school dress codes. In the field of employment, stereotyping in jobs was reported. Most trans are expected to work only in beauty salons, or in retail/sales. Poverty and lack of assets such as land was considered a barrier to inclusion. Bisexual and Intersex – not able to get much information, no respondents. Trans females and lesbians may have more discrimination. Only a few lesbians joined the discussions. Most participants affirmed the findings and shared related experiences of discrimination and stigma

Private Sector/Business sectors and the Private sector in the country

Presentation and discussion about the private sector in general and the private sector in Laos in particular. Group work was done and three groups discussed different questions and presented their outputs.
Participants were asked to count off (1, 2, 3) and then were asked to group themselves together, with three groups resulting. Each group was given a topic to discuss, and after 30 minutes they reported back in the plenary.

Group 1: What are the differences between Private and Public Sector

Public sector: Generally, refer to the government, their systems and ministries, departments etc. including the police, health, and others. It is generally stable. Job, pays less but has more benefits including a pension. There are less rules and regulations, not implemented strictly, can come late and leave earlier, less strict in working hours. May have strict dress code. there are less opportunities for advancement. There is more policy…challenges for LGBTQI people to be hired and recruited, and you may also be difficult to get promoted because of SOGIE. For the Private sector, there is more efficiency, activity, you're always asked to do more, it is competitive, but there are also better opportunities.

Group 2: What does "private sector" mean to us?

They help people get jobs and an education, help hire them even if they have limited education. They provide social benefits, they pay higher, they are strict about working time; using punch cards or time checks. In the private sector you are more free to choose who you want to be, to be innovate and effective, and gives new ideas. They are there mainly to run a business and make profits; they come here so they can make bigger profits because of the cheap labor. They create markets for their products to sell, and thus they can expand the business, earn ore, and provide more jobs.

Group 3: The Private sector in Laos

They can range from small to large enterprises or companies, give health benefits, try to pay minimum wage and overtime wages. Seem to provide more incentives and as general rule they have less gender discrimination. They do not mind employing people even if they are married, or make no distinction between civil status when hiring. Samples of these companies include: factories, hotels, restaurant, banks, UNITEL, Lo Telecom. Cambodia Brewery, Honsa group (construction & Real estate), Banking conglomerates, airline companies. Many big companies enter into a public-private partnership with government.

Discussion

Most participants thought that the most number of businesses in Laos are medium to large enterprises. These are usually the most visible…however according to government data a very large proportion of all business are small, informal and unregistered. Most of these are female-owned; the small businesses tended to remain small, and very few managed to become larger or to expand, for various reasons. Explained the differences in classification between small, medium and large enterprises. In terms of numbers of staff, capital. Listed different types of business associations, the Lao National Chamber of Commerce and Industry, Foreign Chambers of Commerce such as the Australians are more LGBTQI Friendly than others. Other discussion points covered the following:

- How about the other companies from the US and Europe?
- Are some industries or businesses more friendly or open than others, which are these?

The group named the popular enterprises in Lao, the various associations of business and there was initial discussion on the possible entry points to consider on how to approach the enterprises.

Participants had little information about the private sector, the different enterprises and industries, regulatory framework, as well as the different chambers of commerce and the business associations. Very few participants had experienced working in the private sector and hence were not familiar with it. Distinctions are also made between “profit associations” and “nonprofit associations (NPA)” as this is the preferred terminology in the country and is enshrined in various laws and declarations. Specific businesses, chambers of commerce and business associations were cited.

End session: Feedback on Day 1

Participants suggested doing more activities and discussions, and reduce the number and length of slide presentations

DAY 2
Review of Day 1: "Hot Potato" exercise

Questions and tasks prepared to include understanding of SOGIE-SC, The private sector, types of enterprises in Laos according to government classifications (Small, Medium, Large) the function and purpose of the business sector, as well as Human rights of LGBTQI persons. Enabled participants to review main points of day 1, in a fun, engaging and energizing way.

The tasks are written on a piece of A4, some samples are:

- What is "SO" in SOGIE?
- Name some human rights.
- What does "GIE" in SOGIE mean?
- On May 17 each year, to celebrate the WHO declaration of homosexuality not being classified as a mental illness, a special day is organized. What is this day called?
- The primary purpose of the private sector is to….
- Ask the facilitator and one of the participants to do something funny
- An enterprise in Laos has 25 employees. According to the classification, is this enterprise Small, Medium or Large enterprise?
- Do a special Lao Dance
- What is CSR, what does it mean?

Reflection: Individual Sharing, "What can I do to help LGBTQI inclusion, in my own way?"

Participants sat in a circle, reflected and shared one point, about what they could do, as individuals, and in their own way and lives, to make LGBTQI Inclusion a reality. Some responses included:

- First and most important, is to Know, Love yourself –accept yourself
- I have an office mate who is LGBT; to make him feel included I talk to them, invite to eat together, share and go out together with co-office workers (NGO staff); try to be considerate, give compliments to boost their self-confidence
- Include in work and social activities
- Respect, Listen to LGBT people
- Don't discriminate
- Be like a family member – understand and protect
- I have one friend who is not sure of their sexuality; They asked me for advice about SOGIE – they're not sure of themselves yet, and I share my knowledge about the topic with them
- Trust them and be a good example
- Lead and work together
- Be positive in your attitude, "can do"
- "It is OK to be yourself, you are you"
- Some reflections on having internalized homophobia and transphobia.

Participants realized that change must start from within, one person at a time, and that self-acceptance is crucial. LGBT allies also mentioned several ways to improve inclusion in the workplace setting.

Business and LGBTQI Inclusion: Rationale and Learning from other countries Introduce the Business and Human rights framework

Presentation to show the evolution of various human rights instruments over the years; the duties of states, institutions and businesses, "ensure, protect, remedy"; the intersection of business and human rights; the rationale of a Business and Human rights perspective.

Making a business case for Inclusion

Presents why businesses should practice inclusion, including statements from their leaders, results of studies and researches done, and the benefits to the business and the community at large if they practice inclusion.

Examples from big companies, Fortune 500 firms.

Showed how many of the world's top businesses practice LGBTQI Inclusion, afford benefits to same-sex couples, include SOGIE in their anti-discrimination policies, design attractive pride logos, support equality in their policies, strategies and CSR work (for example - Accenture, IBM, Facebook, Adidas, Google, etc.)

Possible entry points:

Slides on possible entry points and strategies to engage Business, such as proceeding with caution, listening to other views, knowing the context of how business operates in the country, engaging stakeholders and changing company culture one step at a time.

Questions/discussion on Entry Points in PS Session

Do all these companies have the same practices in all the countries where they work – not necessarily, the companies always operate within a national context, so if there are some provisions that might not be the same in different countries, or expatriate employees may have different benefits because of their nationalities and requirements of the countries.

Are Business and HR principles followed everywhere? – no but it is a vision for the future, see it as an opening. Business and HR principles should be shared everywhere in the country

Is there fear from others that LGBT people will take over their jobs?

Can you share about the Philippine situation, what about laws there? Is there a national Anti-Discrimination law? Not, it is not yet passed in the congress but local authorities can pass Anti-discrimination laws, many cities in the Philippines now have their own anti-discrimination ordinance for LGBT

Marriage recognition? In Cambodia?

In Khammouane it was reported that two women had a marriage, not known if this was just a celebration or if they had the papers to make this legally recognized. Shared the Cambodia experience where local authorities can make some documents to help LGBT families, but not with marriage certificates, only family books and a declaration of family relationships.

Panel or Resource speaker on LGBTIQ inclusion

Up to three speakers were considered but only one was available to share, the session was moved to the early afternoon of Day 2 in order to accommodate the availability of the speaker. Anan Boupha of PTBU Laos shared about the experiences in organizing Pride events, and the new developments in diversity and inclusion strategies of Australian banks in Laos. ANZ bank had a whole day consultation on diversity and inclusion, and they invited PTBU to share on SOGIE and Inclusion. PTBU has also completed a small study on LGBTQI in the workplace, done in collaboration with the National University of Laos and its faculty of Law.

"Being LGBT at work (Diversity in the workplace) – A study of LGBTI persons in the workplace in the Laos PDR". The study aims to know more about gender diversity in the workplace, employment issues and challenges of LGBT employees, and find solutions to overcome these challenges.

- 28 participants, used quantitative and qualitative methods, both from employees and employers
- some provisions in the 2015 constitution can be interpreted to cover these concerns (articles 35, 37, 39) as these articles address citizen's rights to the law, equal rights and freedom of profession
- Over 60% of LGBT employees experienced problems at work due to SOGIE; 40% felt pressured by colleagues and supervisors. During difficult times 80% will discuss problems with friends
- Employers: Some say they do employ LGBT, say they consider more about the ability of staff rather than SOGIE. 52% report positive attitudes towards their LGBT staff, and 57% think that these staff have a chance to move up to management or leadership levels.
- Study funded thru Canada fund for local initiatives
- Difficult to get more participants, several did not agree to be interviewed, the various business sectors (6 sectors) represented were not identified, as to which sector these businesses represented
- No specific breakdown as to LGBTQI but TG seem to find it harder to get a decent job
- PTBU advocacy approach – no need to be too prominent, logo is not on the cover/ masthead, let the government institution lead and get the credit

This is the first such study in the country on LGBTQI that is endorsed by a government institution. However, many of the businesses participating in this study did not want themselves to be identified. The study results will be launched in December and is sure to be a landmark event of the LGBTQI community in the country, and a good entry point for working with the government and private businesses.

Other points:

- General diversity and inclusion is broad—not just SOGIE, but also considerations like age, disability, ethnicity.
- provides a good fit for the company's policies, change can happen; there are better outcomes and productivity; even marketing strategies can improve
- D & I strategies of a company are another entry point for engagement

Defining Entry points for engaging the private sector (Workshop/Discussion, and Plenary)

Participants asked to count off 1, 2 and divided into two groups, and to discuss: "Based on what our organizations do, and with our current context as well as private sector, what can we plan to do to increase engagement with the private sector?" They were encouraged to be as creative as possible and to use different styles to make their group presentation. They had 45 minutes to discuss then make a presentation of any style, that would last at most three minutes, and note what the key messages are.

Group A demonstrated that they would organize a launch and presentation of the study on "LGBT in the workplace" and invite private companies to attend. There would be panelists from the private sector to react to the findings of the study as well as to suggest solutions. The PS representatives would also be asked to give feedback… It was suggested that a "mix" of business representatives from different sectors –not just hotels, for example should be invited, and that their messages should be clearer.

Group B presented a poster, with a technique of how to organize a workshop or an event for business sector. They would select businesses who are interested, have relevance, and select them first by reviewing the literature, their websites and business documents.

For both groups, participants suggested that they map out businesses better, develop a relationship with the partners, SOs and the public sector, with a view to developing or improving policies. Hold a consultation and find out more about the interests of the various businesses.

Post-test, Evaluation and Workshop closing

Post-test forms filled out by participants are with LaoPHA, these have not yet been rated and thus cannot be compared with the pre-test results. The pre-test had a series of statements that reflected workshop goals and purpose, and participants asked to rate their level of agreement with the statement, on a scale of 1 to 5, with 1= strongly disagree, 2- disagree, 3 – neutral; 4 = agree and 5 = strongly agree. The totals were summed and divided by the number of those who answered to get the mean score for the statement. Then the average scores would be compared with the pre-test results.

Summary of participants' evaluation

Participants mentioned these points in the closing session:

- Proud to have attended, first time to learn about APCOM
- Much learning about LGBT, esp. in public and private sectors
- Made me excited (3 persons said this) –
- Also learned to respect each other
- Made many new friends
- Learned about new terminologies in LGBT and the private sector, like SME
- Presentation went too fast-lots of slides, many were skipped
- Three-day workshop would have been better
- Organize the workshop outside of the city so people can't just drop in
- More activities to involve the participants
- Handouts should be I local language
- Too much information to absorb
- Would have been good to hear more from the other participants about their experiences

Reflections

From feedback sessions, From the module developer/facilitations

Challenges:

- Change in focus and topics: Originally understood as LGBTQI financial inclusion, the modules and workshop became more focused towards engagement of the private sector with LGBTQI groups
- Developing content/text for modules, as there was Lack of existing information, and not always shared in a timely manner; Some slide text and content was adapted from presentations in Manila and Jakarta
- Few groups or organizations represented, usually just one or two persons from specific organizations.
- Lack resource person from the private sector, contacted but unable to attend or nominate representatives
- Use of translators/interpreters always has limitations, and use of consecutive vs. simultaneous translation
- Paucity of references for Laos for the private sector, given the nature of the political system (i.e., state controlled economy, newly open to larger private enterprises)

Lessons learned:

- Important to have APCOM/Project staff in all four workshops, could help modify design and provide additional insight into the process as well as focus onto the sessions
- Flexibility on sessions, some designed “on the spot”
- Laos workshop was more of a “dry run”
- Slides translated into local language
- Show some short clips and films

Recommendations

From participants' evaluation

Most said they had learned a lot about the private sector, and wanted to have a similar workshop in their own localities. Most felt it was too short and another day might have been more useful; it was considered to be a "safe space" for the discussions.
Written feedback on the training is in the post test questionnaires that are currently with LaoPHA.

From module developer/facilitator

General comments

1. More activities should be done to engage participants more, less slides needed, and translations of slides and resource material into local language would have helped
2. More open seating and venue arrangements, rather than backs turned at tables
3. Useful references and slides from Indonesia & Philippines for Private sector, Business Inclusion and Samples of good/outstanding practices of private companies. Several slides too text heavy and need to be modified to be more concise, adapted to different workshop sections
4. Lack of representation on panel from OXFAM, Voice Project and private sector/ Chambers of Commerce (Voice and Oxfam had previous commitments),
5. Other events that had a focus on LGBTQI people were being held at the same time in both countries, and this furthered awareness and understanding to the local context and supporters of LGBTQI.
   LAOS: Australia-Lao Institute event, "Rainbow stories" was a good event to attend and network. New LGBTQ youth group, "LGBTQ Equality" – seems to have close private sector links and potential (UNILEVER staff, young founder). Would advise more meetings and networking with this group, also with the Vientiane Youth Center, which had a booth at the forum. Great inputs from PTBU Laos on the findings of the research study on LGBT employment, and updates on Australian support plus ANZ Bank's development of a diversity and inclusion strategy
6. Should have a written brief from LaoPHA on the findings from the FGD.
7. Field test of the modules – several major revisions are done in this version to reflect the actual activities carried out. New module added, and two modules collapsed into one
8. Flexibility with adjusting sessions because of resource speaker availability
9. Valuable insight and contributions, suggestions for workshop methods from APCOM Staff (Ramil, thanks a lot!)

Annexes:

The full workshop documentation has been sent earlier.
Translations of the slide presentations into local languages (Cambodian and Lao) are in progress.

We are united in advocating for issues around HIV and those that advance the rights, health and well being of people of diverse sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression and sex characteristics.

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