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## ILGA World Session

### Evidence Building and Advocacy for LGBTQI Social and Economic Inclusion in Asia

Wednesday 4 May

16.45 - 17:30 PST

Ballroom C, The Westin Long Beach

#### Speakers

- M.V. Lee Badgett
- Nada Chaipayjit
- Midnight Poonkasetwattana

#### Session Brief

There are ongoing efforts to address economic and social exclusion based on sexual orientation, gender identities, expressions and sex characteristics in various sectors including the private sector and multilateral development financial institutions.

APCOM presents its work on LGBTQI social and economic inclusion in the Asia region, and lessons learned from doing this work in Cambodia, Laos, Indonesia, the Philippines and Thailand, as well as its engagement with the Asian Development Bank (ADB).

Supported by Voice, APCOM aims to contribute to improved access of persons of diverse SOGIESC to economic and social services, and to contribute to increased participation of LGBTQI communities in the conversations aimed towards inclusion.

This session is hosted by APCOM Executive Director, and joined by two of our prominent advisors:

- M.V. Lee Badgett, professor of economics at the University of Massachusetts Amherst and the co-director of its Center for Employment Equity
- Nada Chaipayjit, Thai gender activist

The session will present a state of data and evidence related to LGBTQI social and economic inclusion/exclusion specifically with data from the Asia region; how community organizations can utilize present available data in advocacy and campaigns, the importance of meaningful participation of LGBTQI communities in the process of data and evidence generation, and how other stakeholders can support in bridging the data gaps related to LGBTQI economic and social inclusion/exclusion.

APCOM will also share its engagement with the ADB, and the up-coming ADB Safeguard policy review and update and one of the themes is sexual orientation, gender identities and expressions, on June 6-

7, 2022. APCOM is convening a preparatory consultation with LGBTQI organizations in the region prior to the ADB consultations.

## Session Summary

Presented by Prof. M. V. Lee Badget, Nada Chaiyajit and Midnight Poonkasetwattana

\* This session began with an insight perspective of "Data Collection on LGBTI Inclusion in Asia", presented by Prof. M. V. Lee Badget from the University of Massachusetts Amherst, USA

Prof. Badget emphasizes the significance of data for social and economic inclusion in Asia and the Pacific, where diverse LGBTQI communities face various scenarios of socioeconomic exclusion. It is about human rights and development advocacy, research is a key tool that helps multi-stakeholder in achieving it as it helps reveal empirical evidence in core sectors such as education, health, and employment.

Data does not only help us identify existing problems so that we can develop a measurement or program to address those thematic issues. Data derived from real-life experiences benefits us in terms of improvement in situations where discriminatory situations appear as a form of exclusion. Meanwhile, different types of data could also be used to scale up or advance socio-economic inclusion in general or even in specific areas. Most importantly, it makes us as LGBTQI communities and individuals visible and our voices heard. Prof. Badget presented some examples of the existing data on the lack of socio-economic inclusion in the Asia-Pacific region, such as:

**In an educational setting**, young LGBTQI people continue to face school bullying, discrimination by teachers, staff, and school policies.

**When it comes to the right to fully enjoy equal employment**, there is significant data showing how LGBTQI people still experience hardship in accessing and surviving in the labour markets. Lack of support for entrepreneurship as well as access to financial support.

**In terms of health**, LGBTQI people are still facing barriers to health care as well as negative impacts on physical and mental health.

Diving into Social and Economic Inclusion, Prof. Badget said we all know LGBTQI inclusion is good for economic output at the national level, but to prove it? For example, the loss of human capital and economic potential caused by LGBTQI exclusion from education, employment, and health care has a negative impact not only on business sectors but also on overall economic growth. Prof. Badget also strongly addressed that when we say the loss of economic growth at the global level, the loss is about 1% of the global GDP, which is the total economy of Turkey or the Netherlands!

Lastly, Prof. Badget addresses a recent meta-analysis study from Thailand, over the past two decades of study from over a hundred pieces of research. Despite revealing the form of socio-economic exclusion, also its root causes, more studies are still recommended due to the lack of consistent collection of disaggregated data! Therefore, in order to create greater impact in advocacy on social and economic inclusion, there are a number of recommended steps to follow which require both commitment and resources, including

- The data development process is divided into three stages.
  - 1) Identifying anecdotes and stereotypes

2) Reaching out to get larger community-based samples of LGBTI people  
The goal is to have an overview of the range of outcomes and experiences.  
However, it is not necessarily representative of the whole community.

3) Probability samples through population-based surveys

- Create strong convincing data by making comparisons with cis/het people across countries (LGBTI Inclusion Index).
- **KEY TASK: Research methods to design and test survey questions on SOGIESC**
- Sequential and overlapping stages
- Collaborative networks: MDBs, LGBTI civil society, NSOs, researchers, government agencies, private sectors.

\* The session was then followed by Nada Chaiyajit, an advisory member of APCOM's Social and Economic Inclusion Programme. Her presentation was specifically focusing on the use of diverse data on workplace inclusion; "When DATA meets Action, A Journey Toward Equality in the Workplace."

Chaiyajit began her presentation by outlining the gap when businesses apply diversity and inclusion, while LGBTQI communities expect to enjoy the right to work as a part of the full enjoyment of human rights protection. While the legal principle of employment outlines the free will and equality in making labor contracts between business sectors and LGBTQI individuals, the power dynamics between companies and workforces are not at the same level, potentially leaving room for business sectors to engage in discriminatory practices.

In order to hold businesses accountable when there is a breach of labour rights, especially in a context such as Thailand, where the myth of LGBTQI paradise creates blindness for businesses to not realize or even believe that employment discrimination on the grounds of SOGIESC happens in reality on the grounds. Multiple credible data sources could advance the testimonies of LGBTQI workplace discrimination and bring justice to the victim, while we could educate business sectors to prevent future discrimination.

The instance resource includes: International Human Rights Instruments, existing national laws and policies, research from UN agencies, CSO surveys and academic journals which identify reality on the ground related to the victim scenarios. It is important to significantly illustrate the comparison between the scientific facts and myths to draw attention and elevate our evidence. To prove the importance of evidence or data as important tools for LGBTQI inclusion advocacy, Chaiyajit presented some successful testimonies from various business sectors in Thailand, ranging from access to the labor market, inclusive workplace environment, and legal advocacy for policy change within business operations.

\* The session was closed by Midnight Poonkasetwattana, the Executive Director of APCOM. He gave a conclusion by emphasize the key points presented by Prof. Badget and Chaiyajit concerning how important for us as LGBTQI communities and CSOs to collaboratively working toward social and economic inclusion in Asia and Pacific. He also gave a good example from APCOM's initiative project involving with Asia Development Bank (ADB) on safeguarding policy reform as well as an example of short-term outcome how APCOM has successfully advocate for ADB to host the first IDAHOBIT event since 2019. The advocacy with ADB on expanding the coverage protection of LGBTQI people through their Safeguard policy will be continued to face greater challenges which need not only strong commitments from multi-stakeholders but also it needs recourse allocation. The significantly change we all are looking for is impossible when we LGBTQI in Asia and Pacific Communities shall keep working with solidarity.

## Biography

### **M.V. Lee Badgett – she/her**

M. V. Lee Badgett is a professor of economics and co-director of the Center for Employment Equity at the University of Massachusetts Amherst, and she is the former director of the School of Public Policy. She is also a Williams Distinguished Scholar at UCLA's Williams Institute, where she was a co-founder and the first research director. Her research focuses on economic inequality for LGBT people, including wage gaps, employment discrimination, and poverty, and on the global cost of homophobia and transphobia. Her latest book is *The Economic Case for LGBT Equality: Why Fair and Equal Treatment Benefits Us All* (Beacon Press, 2020).

### **Nada Chaiyakit – she/her**

Nada Chaiyakit is a prominent intersex, trans and gender advocate and human rights and gender equality educator. Hailing from Northern Thailand, she is an advisor to the Manushaya Foundation, promoting community empowerment to advance human rights, social justice, and peace. She completed her Master of Laws in 2020 from the University of Essex, UK, having received the prestigious Chevening Scholarship.

She faced severe barriers in accessing her education, being banned from sitting in exams when she dressed and presented herself as a female, and facing discrimination and harassment from teachers and students. Nada, however took it upon herself to challenge her university's regulations and succeeded, and is now using her Master of Laws to support LGBTQI people in Thailand who are facing bullying, abuse, violence, and discrimination.

### **Midnight Poonkasetwattana – he/him**

Based in Bangkok, Midnight has been the Executive Director of APCOM since 2011, working in multi-sectoral partnerships with governments, donors, the United Nations, development partners and most importantly the community and civil society organisations working on advancing SOGIESC rights, and alleviating HIV in Asia Pacific region.

Midnight is a member of various advisory committees, including the global IDAHOT committee, international advisory group of Dignity Network, World Health Organisation Global PrEP Coalition and Guidelines Development Group for HIV Testing Services, and ASHM's Regional Advisory Group member leading on Key Populations of the Taskforce on BBVs, Sexual Health and COVID-19.

Midnight obtained his Masters in Globalisation and Development from SOAS, University of London.