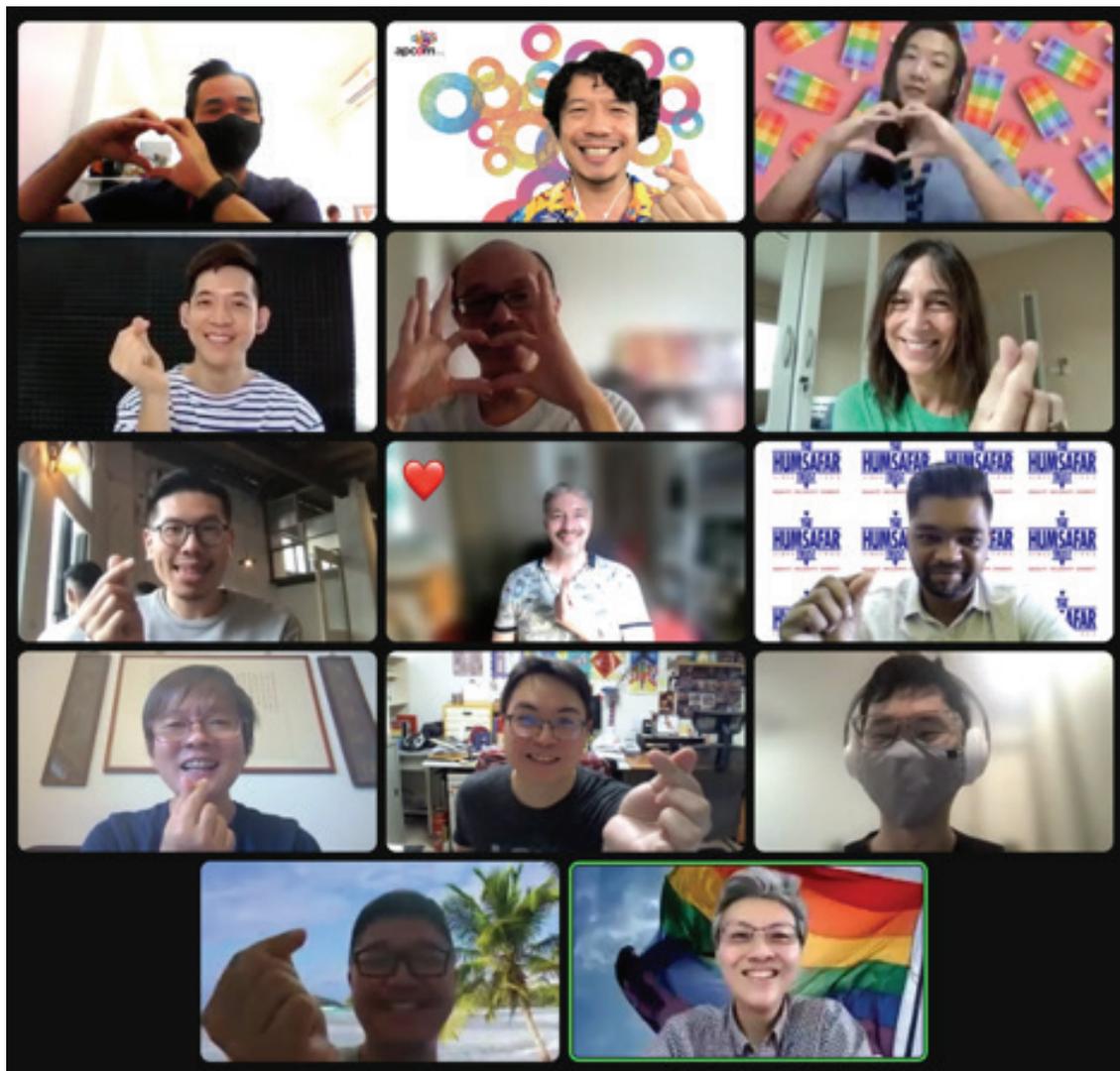




Sydney WorldPride 2023 Human Rights Conference (1-3 March 2023)

APCOM-hosted Regional Consultation - April 26, 2022



I INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

APCOM is coming upon its 15th anniversary. We are one of the Regional Partners for the 2023 Sydney conference, and the only Asia-based partner. We hope to see strong representation from our region. Our presence is particularly important, given that Taiwan will host the 2025 WorldPride, and we want to build momentum towards that.

Today's overall objective is to generate session ideas and answer key questions related to content for and access to the three-day Sydney conference, including proposing specific topics and speakers. This consultation process builds on the global survey, and complements findings that will come from Pacific and indigenous consultation processes. In June 2022, conference hosts will compare notes from all of the research findings to inform the 2023 conference design.

II PARTICIPANT INTRODUCTIONS AND ICEBREAKER ABOUT WHAT WE DID DIFFERENTLY DURING COVID-19

A total of 29 people from the Asia Pacific region registered for the discussion: Australia, Bangladesh (3), People's Republic of China (2), India (3), Indonesia (2), Japan (2), Malaysia, Nepal, Pakistan, Philippines (3), Singapore (3), Taiwan (4), Thailand (2), and one "unspecified."

III DISCUSSION

A

Question 1:

Ideas on conference content that is pertinent to LGBTQI in Asia

In addition to expressing support for the range of issues collected via email and summarized in advance of the conversation on the shared Powerpoint slides, Zoom consultation participants contributed a wealth of new ideas through discussion, the chat box, and on a Jamboard, summarized and integrated with the pre-collected responses, below. An asterisk (*) following the issue indicates that several people expressed agreement or echoed support for that topic



One of the main issues with broad consensus was the desire to **include/invite grassroots community organizers and organizations** (who play a key role in mobilizing their communities and sensitizing stakeholders). *“We should give priority to on-the-ground advocates, since it’s mobilization work that is key to policy change.”*

Intersectionality and inclusivity in the LGBTQI community was also high on the agenda and discussants wanted to see more representation of elders and disabled people, for example, who are less engaged in the movement as yet, and it might be a good idea for a pre-conference. Their involvement is critical *“as Thailand, for example, and Asia generally, moves into an ageing society.”* Including a diversity of LGBTQI-communities such as the kink and polyamorous communities, ethnic groups, refugees, and youth, is a priority so *“we can see ourselves here.”* Lesbian, bisexual, and transgender invisibility must be rectified, in particular by giving much more space to trans perspectives. How can we identify and solve transphobia within the queer community in Asia? Similarly, **intersex** issues were raised as relatively new for Asia with consequent low awareness. Mutual understanding among LGBTQ and I communities is inadequate. As intersex people, *“LGBTQ issues are not in our daily life, so we don’t understand even though we are one of them. We (LGBTQ and intersex people) “belong” to each other and share intersectional issues, but here’s still misunderstanding and conflict”* that should be addressed at the conference.

Everyone agreed that issues of LGBTQI **well-being, self-love and self-care to heal and sustain our activists** is a priority and culturally-appropriate programs are urgently needed. *“We must build systems of support for our young/activists to prevent burnout and heal from the work. In Thailand, for example, where youth are challenging political and social systems and are fighting for democracy, burnout rate is high.”*

There was overwhelming agreement that given Asia’s diversity as 60% of the world’s population, it must be adequately represented at the conference. *“Let’s highlight our diversity, while bringing us to unity”* throughout the conference. The need for optimizing Asia-regional collaboration and comparative learning opportunities is critical to learn from each other’s experiences; for example, in addressing the struggle with the colonial legacy of criminalization through Section 377-type laws.

We need a **dual regional/global approach** at the conference, that provides space for both Asia-specific themes that matter to us, and conversations on more global themes like conversion therapy, self-care/mental health. Within the Asia focus, tailor geographically-focused sessions on the shared culture of Greater China, Post-colonial Asia, South Asia, Southeast Asia where ethnicity, religion, and languages are so diverse, etc. Allow space for how each region or country addresses LGBTQI organizing and activism in its unique context. Beyond Asia, we should use the conference for global solidarity work.



We would also like to hear from the under-represented Middle East region by including more participants at the conference. Other unique populations and topics discussants wanted to see at the conference included North East Indigenous queer people and colonialism and a First Nations Gathering Space.

The policy and legal environment is of paramount importance and discussants broached numerous topics for consideration at the conference: legal gender recognition laws, decriminalization struggles, and SOGIESC and SRHR. Related to family law: marriage equality and related rights, including transnational same sex marriage; assisted reproductive technology and surrogacy (in Asia in particular), same-sex adoption. The social and family structure support also was of concern, for example in Japan, not just for the coming-out process but ensuring resources targeted to families of LGBTQI people in light of the conservative society, colonial histories, etc. Many participants concurred on the importance of these issues.

Expanding the venue/spaces for sharing of experiences and strategies and continuation for further discussions between organizations that is coordinated by the organization/s in the region (like when APCOM hosted the Asia Marriage equality movement in 2018) to help bridge learning from each other and grow mutual capacity. *“Even in Taiwan, after same-sex marriage acceptance, coming out is still a huge issue and should be discussed more.”* Specifically suggested was the idea to host a Human Rights Coalition of Asian politicians (as with the Global Equality Caucus), addressing barriers to freedom of SOGIESC expression and peaceful public assembly, and a session on *“Building Pride Organizations in a Hostile Environment.”* On a related note, the issue of negative LGBTQI images in the media, and talking about social media, were also suggested. Also, addressing sexual assault in the LGBTQI community and building support.

Many important individual suggestions were made on the need to branch out into newer topics, such as *“Queer in STEM,”* and focusing on getting direct funding to communities. A session reflecting on the history of LGBTQI movement was also suggested. Private sector engagement with LGBTQI communities and the need to better engage to advance rights and address workplace discrimination and harassment was discussed, along with equality in job access. Everyone agreed the corporate sector should be engaged and their role considered in light of these challenges and violations.



B

Question 2:

Ideas on speakers from Asia and their expertise that will help move forward LGBTQI issues in Asia

Everyone agreed there needs to be an abundance of “*queer Asian faces!*” In particular, priority should be given to community implementers/leaders “*who really endure the hardships and push forward on our challenges,*” rather than giving primacy to influencers, who --while helpful --shouldn’t be majority/priority.

A number of specific names of leaders and allies in the Asian LGBTQI community were put forward, along with types of invitees, listed below:

Names of potential individual invitees:

1. Gina Chua, journalist/writer/editor (Reuters)(Singapore)
2. Charlene and Raymond nominated!
3. Madhavi Menon, Ashoka University in India. YouTube sexuality expert.
4. Menaka Guruswamy and Arundhati Katju working on 377.
See: <https://www.indiatimes.com/trending/human-interest/two-women-lawyers-who-helped-overturned-section-377-come-out-as-couples-371648.html>
5. Two Japanese LGBTQ+ politicians who are strong human right voices in Japan: Taiga Ishikawa (*the only gay male in parliament who also works on Japan’s asylum issue*) and Aya Kamikawa (*local politician but very community-based*).
6. Theresa Goh from Singapore, a queer woman, wheelchair user, and a decorated Paralympian
7. Kevin Tsai
8. Mika Yakushi, Founder of ReBit
9. President Tsai Ing-wen from Taiwan
(“Since Taiwan is the country that highlights LGBTI human rights in Asia,” “I think her speaking may encourage advocates in other countries in Asia.”)
10. Rahul Upadhyay- Founder (Gandhinagar Queer Pride), Board of Director (InterPride), Co-chair (WorldPride committee, InterPride)
11. Taiwanese minister Audrey Tang. Because they are probably the only prominent LGBTQ+ politician with a global reach.
12. Santa khurai, “*I want her voice to reach every corner of the globe.*”
13. Nicholas Steepe “*Because he has the similar kinds of experiences while growing up.*”



Types of invitees:

- Asia Region Human Rights Council, policymakers
- Mainland China community leaders, academics, Rainbow media talks about legal landscape; workplace inclusion advocates (who are otherwise rarely present).
- We could create a new topic for someone we want, or invite people based on our pre-chosen topics
- Regional representation leaders to comprise a session? Ex., APTN, APCOM, ILGA-Asia, Intersex Asia
- Community donors to listen what are the challenges in direct funding for communities
- ILGA Asia leaders, rights activists, local and grassroots LGBTQI activists, youth activists
- Allies from feminist organizations,
- Indigenous queer rights because our identity has been overshadowed by mainstream queer narratives
- Queer engineers and data scientist
- Digital/online and social media experts

C

Format of engagement (apart from formal panels) that you would like to see

- Access for online, virtual participation for those not attending in person? (Mix)
- Plenary/keynote and parallel sessions is the general approach. Can we consider (non-stage) workshop-style interactive sessions to help to create something together. Ex., 377 issue: *how can successful countries help others wanting to work on this. Build a workflow, checklist, etc.*
- Agree with above: “Can Australia ‘Say Yes’ campaign talk about how they went from Zero to Yes?”
- Physicality of the space. 2015 ILGA-Asia space great. A youth center with student volunteers: conducive to exchanging. Casual sit and catch-up space friendly to huddle, co-working, co-creating, chill-out, networking, coffee?
- Space to promote well-being and self-care throughout conference if we value this. Put ourselves first. Rest and relax.
- Team-building, regional retreat-like activity for advocates and leaders. Can we have a session on this? The conference is open to the public, so can we have a specialized internal space/session for us for our own relationship-building, build a sense of belonging relations to work better together as regional leaders? At a WINERY?
- Quiet spaces
- Regional rooms
- Opportunity for more activists to participate in general?



D

Barriers and issues to meaningful participation at the Conference for LGBTQI in Asia

1. In light of financial barriers, travel restrictions, etc., offer virtual access.
2. Prioritize global south activists, youth/young people
3. Language barriers. Many are “keen but freaked out” (Japan) about this. What interpretation is offered? Is simultaneous interpretation system planned?
4. Sign language – consider need for various sign languages, as Aussie sign language is not understood universally. Ask all participants re: need.
5. For virtual platform: add captions for online sessions
6. Privacy, religious sensitivity, other concerns: could do “no photo” stickers, other options/considerations?

E

Ideas on speakers from Asia and their expertise that will help move forward LGBTQI issues in Asia

Taiwan-based activists say there is much discussion but needs more time to answer this. There is time but they’ve already begun planning now. Inviting people to exchange opinions, consider media, build schema, etc. . “It’s a new type [of Pride] in history as it’s the first time to hold World Pride in Asia; for the LGBTQI culture here, it’s not acceptable or popular in the public as Europe or American-style WorldPrides. Asian culture can be more closed, there’s a first nation culture here in Taiwan, which is more traditional in comparison. We’ll have “special ingredients” and materials to deal with in response to this context, when planning.

Many pride organizations in local area have struggled to organize a pride parade or pride activity due to the COVID-19 pandemic, a legacy could be how we can build an interconnected Pride across the region.

F

Anything else you’d like to add?

Asia represents 60% of the world’s population! Would like to see lots of queer Asian activist/advocate representation.

Waiting to hear about scholarship opportunities, and ways LGBTQI people in Asia can take part (like being a volunteer).

