

**Surfacing Lesbians, Bisexual Women
and Transgendered People's Issues in
the Philippines**

**TOWARDS AFFINTIY POLITICS IN
FEMINIST MOVEMENTS**

**Submitted by Isis International
October 2010**

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**Surfacing Lesbian, Bisexual Women and
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Towards affinity politics in feminist movements**

INTRODUCTION

As the struggle for equal rights for LGBTIQ people advances in the Philippines and in the Asian region, fundamentalist forces have also heightened. In the Philippines, the annual LGBT pride march has been protested by Christian fundamentalist groups. In the recent Philippine elections, the COMELEC contested the entry of the first LGBT political party Ang Ladlad on moral and religious grounds. In Indonesia, the Third ILGA-Asia conference was stopped by Muslim fundamentalist groups. The rise of religious fundamentalism has been documented in other parts of Asia.

In this context of increasing fundamentalism, Isis International Manila has been advocating for LGBTIQ rights in Asia. Isis is a feminist development organization that advocates for women’s rights primarily through communication and movement-building. Isis has been bringing feminist analyses into LGBTIQ spaces such as ILGA-Asia and ILGA and bringing LGBTIQ issues into feminist spaces such as the APNGO Forum and AWID. Isis has been engaging in intermovement dialogues between LGBTIQ movements and feminist movements

within the framework of affinity politics.

Affinity politics is located in the broader framework of social inclusion and the belief that the struggle for freedom and human dignity is shared by all human beings. Affinity politics recognizes the specificity of needs and issues of each group and the diversity of forms of oppression each group experiences. Unlike identity politics, affinity politics argues that the basis for coalition-building must be affinity rather than identity, or the recognition of difference and not sameness. Within affinity politics, women can embrace the cause of LGBTIQ people and people from whatever position and can work in solidarity with one another.

Through the Kartini Asia Network, Isis engaged in a research project to surface lesbian, bisexual, and transgender or LBT women's issues in the Philippines towards achieving affinity politics in feminist movements. The Kartini Asia Network is a women's studies network in Asia that bridges the academic and activist communities through action research. The first objective of this Isis' research project with the Kartini Asia Network is to understand the issues of LBT women in the Philippines. The second objective of the study is to explore how feminist organizations can systematically address LBT issues.

Past studies have documented how lesbians in the Philippines have experienced discrimination and how lesbians have organized to fight for equal rights. Historically, homosexuality in the Philippines has been conceived of as a sin and sickness. Though homosexuality is not illegal, it is generally viewed as immoral. Because of the social stigma surrounding homosexuality, Filipino lesbians have experienced diverse forms of discrimination in different areas of life. Together with gay men, lesbians have organized politically to demand for social acceptance and legal protection through anti-discrimination laws.

Very few studies have documented bisexual and transgender experiences in the

Philippines. Bisexuality and transgenderism have been largely invisible. This invisibility stems from the lack of recognition of the existence of bisexual and transgender identities. To this day, bisexuals remain invisible and unorganized. In recent years, transgenders have gained visibility politically and have organized to demand for recognition.

There has been no study on how women or feminist organizations in the Philippines have addressed lesbian, bisexual, and transgender women's issues. To further articulate the issues of lesbian, bisexual, and transgender women in the Philippines, this study asks: "What are the issues of LBT people in the Philippines?" To further articulate how women's organizations in the Philippines can systematically address LBT issues, this study asks "How can women's organizations systematically address LBT issues?"

METHODOLOGY

A. Context

The description of this project in the original research design states that the overall objective of this 14-month action research is to examine the understanding of lesbians, bisexual women, and transgender people's issues and concerns and how it is positioned in Philippine feminist movements, particularly in the areas of sexual health and violence against women. The study was described as having two general research objectives. The first objective aimed to know how lesbians, bisexual women, and transgender people (LBT) represent their issues and concerns in the domains of sexual health and violence; and to examine if these are included in the current practice of women's organisations. The second objective aimed to advance LBT issues and concerns by exploring how these can be included in the feminist praxis in the areas of sexual health and violence.

As we conducted the data gathering activities of the project, we felt the need to change the project rationale somewhat. Increasingly we discovered that pre-determining the issue areas of concern as primarily health and violence posed some limitations to a holistic understanding of the LBT life conditions. Limiting the issues to health and violence would also pose hindrances to the advancement of the LBT agenda in feminist praxis.

B. Objectives, design, changes in the design

As such the project rationale is rephrased as surfacing LBT issues in the Philippines towards achieving affinity politics in feminist movements. The research objectives were also reformulated to reflect a more inclusive inquiry into LBT issues and the advocacy agenda.

The original research objectives were stated as: 1. What are the social representations of LBT issues and concerns in the area of sexual health and violence? 2. How can LBT issues and concerns in the area of sexual health and violence be addressed in Philippine feminist praxis?

The final research objectives were reformulated as: 1. What are the issues of lesbians, bisexual women, and transgender people (LBT) in the Philippines? 2. How can feminist organizations systematically address LBT issues?

C. Methods chosen and why

Based on the rephrased research questions (see above), modifications were made in the selection of a conceptual framework, as well as an addition of a data gathering method. The conceptual framework had shifted from the original intent of using Social Representation to a framework deemed more appropriate, Affinity Politics. This was primarily because of the study's desire to contribute to a more diverse appreciation of LBT issues. The researchers felt differences within and among the LBT community would not be sufficiently realized with social

representation as its frame of analysis given the Social Representation frame looks at the collective representations of issues. On the otherhand, such differences among LBTs would be better captured and emphasized with the use of affinity politics that seeks to develop empathy and support for political convergences based on the differing realities and struggles.

The additional data gathering method included in the design of the research, were the key informant interviews (KIIs). In the process of seeking LBT organizations for the conduct of 'kwentuhans' (small FGDs), the researchers discovered that many groups were no longer in existence or active. We also discovered many individuals who played important roles, particularly in lesbian and bisexual organizing, were no longer affiliated with any organization. The knowledge, experience, and insights of these individuals were deemed crucial to a more holistic understanding of the LBT organizing and advocacy context in the Philippines.

Recognizing the pioneering work lesbian feminists organizing had contributed to the present LGBT political landscape, six KIIs were conducted with individuals affiliated with one or more lesbian feminist group at one time or another. These groups included The Lesbian Collective (TLC), Women Supporting Women Center (WSWC), Can't Live in the Closet (CLIC), and Lesbian Advocates of the Philippines (LEAP).

In total, four focus group discussions and seven key informant interviews were conducted. A pilot FGD with lesbians and feminists was also conducted in developing the research design.

Finally, to guide the analysis of issues of lesbians, bisexuals, and transgendered women, this research adopted the ecological model of life spheres. Five spheres were identified: (1) the self, (2) relationships and micro-contexts, (3) work, (4) community or movements, and (5) social

institutions and macro-contexts. As such, the presentation of the issues of LBT women and strategies for addressing these issues followed the ecological model, specifically;

1. self ; 2. relationships and micro-contexts 2.a. family, 2.b. intimate relationships, 2.c. peers/friends/barkada ; 3. work ; 4. community/movements 4.a. LGBT movements, 4.b. feminist movements, 4.c. other social movements ; 5. public/social institutions 5.a. law/legal system, 5.b. health/medical services, 5.c. public spaces, 5.d. other social institutions

FINDINGS

A. Lesbian feminists and the beginnings of lesbian organizing

Interviews were conducted with lesbian feminists who had been involved in lesbian organizing within the broader context of movement building in the Philippines. The conversations with these key lesbian feminists of varying age groups and involvement in the women and lesbian movement building, provides the research with a glimpse of their personal experiences of coming out in the movement, initiating lesbian discussions within feminist groups, and the current state of lesbian organising.

The interviewees relate the different levels of struggles given the different types of invisibility experienced within the progressive movement for social change. They talk about how despite the challenges they forged on to find and create safe spaces for lesbians. This was based on a sense that there was a felt need among lesbians to just be able to gather and freely talk and support each other. Personal sharings and discussions led to creatively looking for openings to assert lesbian issues of sexuality and identity as an advocacy concern for feminist movements, locally and globally.

Discussions on lesbianism in global conferences. Malu Marin and Ana Leah Sarabia noted two major conferences in the late 80s and early 90s that took up lesbian concerns even as

side events and these were the Sisterhood is Global Dialogues in 1988 and International Women and Health Meeting in 1990. Marin noted that these conferences were able to achieve a number of things for lesbian organising, and these included: the recognition of lesbianism as a political issue, it also encouraged lesbians to come out and share their stories, and surface the need to address lesbian issues within the feminist movement.

Discussions on lesbianism in local feminist organisations. Certain existing feminist advocacy domains provided entry points for discussion on lesbian issues. Specifically, these included themes such as sexual discrimination, women's health, and women's rights. According to Aida Santos, two feminist groups in particular, initiated discussions on lesbianism. One was Kalayaan, who held education discussions or EDs on the issue of homosexuality. Another was the Women's Resource and Research Center, who would encourage and support the coming together of lesbians to discuss their issues.

Lesbian groups and organizing in Manila. Eventually **The Lesbian Collective (TLC)** was formed in February 1993 by a group of young lesbian feminists. This loose collective of young lesbian feminists noted three key accomplishments. According to Giney Villar key accomplishments of TLC included the visibility during the women's day march in 1993 where, for the first time ever, a lesbian contingent joined the women's march and crafted a lesbian statement that debunked common negative myths about lesbianism which was read during the program of the said event. In an article written by Malu Marin in 1996 she also recalls another contribution of TLC, that is TLC also participated in discussions with women's groups on ways to address homophobia within their institutions. TLC did not have a very long organisational life as it was not spared from internal conflicts, as well as affected by the divisions within local feminist movements and the broad social movement. However, clearly TLC played a key role in

the history of lesbian organising. In being the first group to publicly assert that lesbian issues be recognised by the local feminist movement, it had contribute to building the confidence for some of its individual members to form other lesbian groups that continued the organising and advocacy work of lesbianism as feminist agenda.

Among these was the **Womyn Supporting Womyn Collective (WSWC)** that started out as a lesbian committee within WEDPRO. One of the major contributions of WSWC was to gain lesbian visibility in media through a feature article by the Philippine Daily Inquirer about the founding members Giney Villar and Aida Santos. The article inspired a number of lesbians to come out to share their stories of love and struggle. This prompted WSWC to set up its hotline and diversifying their communication systems so that they could reach many lesbians even in the farthest regions. As narrated by Aida Santos, the members of WSWC then even had to undergo training in counselling with the Women's Crisis Centre so as to be equipped in handling the calls received. Aside from establishing the hotline services, WSWC also wanted to know and address the issues that lesbians faced. As such, the First National Lesbian Rights Conference was convened. The conference sought to provide the space to gather lesbians to talk about issues of health, sexuality, and discrimination in various life situations and conditions.

Eventually WSWC left the nest of WEDPRO and established itself as an independent lesbian organisation that continued on with its education and support group work. WSWC continued to hold fora and various discussion spaces in collaboration with other lesbian groups, such as LESBOND (a lesbian group based in Baguio) and the Asian Lesbian Network (ALN) in support of the ALN conference in 1998 held in Manila.

Can't Live in the Closet (CLIC) was formed in April 1994 and their primary strategy was to use media to raise issues on lesbianism. They saw film as a non-threatening way to start up conversations on lesbian issues. They often hosted film showings followed by discussions, which CLIC describes as a non-threatening and effective way to talk freely about lesbian issues. CLIC also sought to make educational materials to lesbians available. As such, much of their work was directed at producing IEC materials such as newsletters and primers for popular dissemination. An key example of this was the material entitled **On Our Terms: A Lesbian Primer (1999)**. CLIC was also responsive to lesbian issues of discrimination at work, and played a major role in building coalition support for the labour case filed by a lesbian couple regarding discrimination they felt they had experience from an NGO engaged in peace and human rights work.

Lesbian Advocates Philippines (LeAP) was formed by Filipino lesbians involved in lesbian rights advocacy in April 2000. The focus of their work in the last decade was to engage in action research that aimed to improve quality basic health services available to lesbians. The data gathered in their action research helped produce materials that tackled discrimination, health issues in both the general sense as well as those specific to sexual health of lesbians. LeAP also went into organising in the communities, aptly named as LeAPunan. LeAP continues to maintain links with its members through the maintenance of an e-group. It also engages in legislative advocacy work together with the current and diverse set of LGBT groups in the Philippines that are at the forefront of raising awareness on LGBT issues in contemporary times.

Lesbian Feminists on Achievements and Challenges. In the narratives of these key lesbian feminists they acknowledge the roots of lesbian organising in Manila as a growth

nurtured within feminist organisations. Feminists in the 1990s provided the space for lesbians to come together and eventually gain the capability to build organisations that continue to provide spaces for lesbians of varying ages and diverse concerns. As the groups identify and prioritized their issues of focus, there developed a natural link to other 'sexual minority groups', such as gays. Initial conversations with such groups led to deepening an understanding of sexual diversity as a shared concern of lesbians, gays, bisexuals, and transgendered people. This did not mean though that ties with feminist groups needed to be cut off. It just meant there was a felt need by lesbian groups to strengthen ties with other 'sexual minority groups' towards advancing the call for the inclusion and recognition of LGBT rights as human rights.

In noting the current connections of lesbian groups they are able to note gains in LGBT visibility and recognition in various sites. In the area of *psychological health*, specifically in 1994 the Philippine Psychological Association removed homosexuality in the list of mental disorders. In the area of *legislative advocacy*, there have also been some gains in linking with progressive law makers in trying to claim basic rights of sectoral representation, calling attention to discrimination in hiring of homosexuals, legal recognition of same-sex partnerships.¹. One of the most recent bills filed is HB 956 or the Anti-Discrimination Bill filed by Rep. Riza Hontiveros of AKBAYAN. *Mass support for LGBT sectoral representations* was also evident in December 2010 when human rights, feminist groups, some local government officials, select congress representatives, senators and even the Commission on Human Rights issued statements in defence of the third disqualification case of the COMELEC against the sectoral representation filed by Ang LADLAD. This support had resulted to the recognition of Ang LADLAD as a sectoral party to run for representation in the National Elections in May 2010.

The lesbian feminists also noted some growth in mass media, that is in way of more positive depictions of lesbian and gays in television and film, major daily newspapers providing support to lesbian and gays through advice columns maintained by lesbian and gay writers, and of course the advent of new ICTs has provided spaces for expression and participation of LGBTs of various walks of life.

Also important to note as pointed out by a lesbian feminist who directly suffered discrimination when coming out as a lesbian in the communist party, speaks of advancement in the acceptance of LGBTs in progressive political movements -- even by way of acceptance of same-sex unions in political left parties.

Challenges in Organising and Movement Building. In as much as they note achievements on various sites, the lesbian feminists continue to be reflective of the challenges faced in lesbian organising then and now. In noting past difficulties in lesbian organising they acknowledge the effect of the split within the left that eventually affected women's groups, and also stunted the growth of the lesbian organising in Manila. Some of the lesbian feminists who continue to be active in lesbian organising also noted a decline in lesbian membership. They note two reasons behind the decline in lesbian membership: the first being that maybe it is much easier to be a live as a lesbian now because of various forms of acceptance in social institutions; and the second was the advent of new ICTs such as networking sites, that are perceived as new forms of activism.

B. Feminist organizations on LBT issues and strategies

LBT Issues According to the Women's Crisis Center

The Self

Importance of coming out and visibility. In the excerpts below, the issue of coming out is described as being ‘authentic’ and speaking ‘the truth’. As a counsellor, the speaker explains the need and importance of expressing the authentic self. She believes that a counselling session is one such space that allows for ‘the truth’ to be revealed. She also explains that it is in being witness to lesbians and gays coming out and hearing them share their life experiences, that she, as a heterosexual woman, is able to develop her knowledge and awareness on such issues.

“If I look at my own development and consciousness about lesbian issues, I can only credit to one is having lesbian and gay-lesbian women and gay men- really talked about their experience... For example, I distinctly remember one saying: I can hide my lesbianism with ribbons in my hair... but the day came when it was really time for me to be authentic... the day came when my own daughter asked me whether I thought the woman across the room was hot. (P.15, TER)

“Ako yung gusto kong identify, conditions in which women can speak the truths of their lives... WCC really can claim tayo talaga-that it’s in counseling talaga that the truths really come out...” (P.31 TER)

Youth coming out during counselling sessions. It was also pointed out by another participant of the WCC ‘kwentuhan’ that in a group counselling session among sexually abused young women, several of them opened up about their sexual orientations and attractions for the same-sex. This had also affirmed the idea that such counselling sessions did provide women with the space to freely express the sexuality (This is further discussed in section B. Applied Strategies).

Identifying and creating such spaces for women to come out was deemed as important for the building of women’s self-esteem and empowerment, that is, towards the general development of a healthy sense of self.

Relationships and Micro-Contexts

Violence in intimate relationships. As a crisis center that services women who are victims of violence and abuse, the WCC was able to share some of the cases that they had handled. While many of their cases dealt with women being abused by their husbands, they had also encountered cases of violence among women in same-sex relationships. In some cases, the nature of the violence was one-way, meaning one particular woman inflicted the violence to the other. Yet in other cases the violent behavior was mutual. Striking in these cases of violence in same-sex relationships among women was the desire to work it out. In one such case, the woman explains that she believes it would be easier for her to work it out with her partner than look for another partner.

“Pero as we go along, nakikinita niya na parang ‘hirap naman maghanap ng’ — parang may ganun ano—‘hirap maghanap ulit ng partner’ ”, (ANN p 29)

When comparing the behaviour of these women who experience violence in same-sex relations, with that of heterosexual cases of domestic violence, WCC explained that some of the women really appeared ‘powerless’. They were described as fitting the stereotypical demeanour of a ‘victim’. However, they also recall a case where the lesbian had a very strong demeanour and in many situations she would fight back and defend herself.

“So may isa lang akong nakita na-kasi yung pingpongna sinasabi ni Teret, dun sa mga nakausap ko, isa lang yung nakita ko talaga na yung personality niya siguro na parang pagtitignan mo yung sa mga hetero na relationship? Yung mga babae na powerless na powerless? Ganun na ganun siya. Oo, unlike dun sa iba kong nakakusap na may pingpong pa nga eh. Talagang lumalaban, nag-aaway, naglalabanan, yung ganyan. Pero ito talaga yung isang ito parang typical na [maamo], iiyak na lang, yung ganyan. Syempre magsasalita siya yung ganyan, pero-yung ganun. So yun, yun yung isang nakita ko rin na siguro, I don’t know sa ibang experience kasi iilan lang naman ito noh.” (P.26, ANN)

WCC also recalls a case of a woman who was in a same-sex relationship and at the same time, was being battered by her husband.

“May isa kami palang hina-handle din dito, battered wife siya pero eventually nalaman namin she’s into a lesbian relationship.... Ito siguro ang kailanga-kasi hindi ko nag-

handle sa kanya eh-ito siguro yung kailangan naming alamin noh kung san ba nag-develop yung ganung ano niya noh, saan siya nag-engage, saang part? Nag-asawa na ba siya o even before ganun na siya pero napilitan ba siyang mag-ano, ganyan. Or during, o after na nung-kasi humiwalay na siya eh-- (P.30, ANN)

Rape in the community. Also raised was the rape of ‘tomboys’ by men in the community. The use of rape by these men in the community was described as intentionally directed at ‘tomboys’ to send the message that these tomboys are still women.

“Babae ka pa rin!” (P.29 Ann)

The use of rape is in a sense a way to prevent tomboys from expressing their gender identity as tomboys. It is a way of saying that the tomboy identity is unacceptable in their community.

Infidelity issues. Among the issues raised in the area of intimate relationships was infidelity. The scenario was described as having similarities among heterosexual couples where infidelity is used by women to get back at their husbands for being ‘unfaithful’. Similarly, women in same-sex relationships because of being very much hurt and affected when their partners are ‘unfaithful’, will resort to committing acts of ‘infidelity’ as a way of punish their partners for the betrayal.

“Mahal niya parin talaga ito. Parang kumbaga-yun according to her ha! Yung ganun, na just because of it, so parang nasaktan kasi siya so ginawa niya rin. –“ (ANN p. 26)

Community/Movements

Feminist community expanding its services. Within the life sphere of community and movements, WCC made no mention of the LGBT movement but rather focused on the feminist movement or community. As a longstanding feminist organization, WCC talked about the ways

in which they are constantly challenged with the need to expand their knowledge and approaches on various issues and concerns.

Among those was the issue of women's sexuality and in particular lesbianism. They had recognized the importance and need to expand their programs and services. They made specific comparison between the desire to have a program for men, to that of a program for lesbians.

“Pero on our part, I think it's also going to help us identify our own needs noh, para we can broaden our services. I was telling them, May, na ang challenges sa atin ngayon halimbawa, hindi ba, lagi tayong hinahanapan ng men's programs, ganyan ganyan, so—“ (P.8 TER)

Public/Social Institutions

The law and legal systems as discriminating and homophobic. Important to note in the WCC 'kwentuhan' was the experience of a tomboy client who was a victim of rape and sought medico-legal assistance. Apparently, this case was not taken seriously by these agencies the tomboy sought assistance from, and was confronted with further humiliation and sexual harassment.

“In fact, naging issue yun sa aming training sa medico-legal kasi, siya yung nagsabi na, di syempre dito lang naman dapat daw ang i-examine diba? Kung may na-tear na hymen, diba yung ganyan. Eh bakit pati daw yung kanyang dito ay inano, ganyan siya. So may-kumbaga I don't know-yun na nga parang hindi ba siya nirerespeto or tine-take seriously sa process dahil nga ano siya. Yung mga tipong ganun.” (KW 5FemV P.35 Ann)

Applied Strategies

Upon reflecting on the current approaches that the WCC were undertaking in addressing LBT issues the following strategies were identified: [1] Feminist counselling based on feminist principles; [2] Issue-Discussion Sessions; and [3] Hiring of non-homophobic social workers.

Feminist counselling based on feminist principles. The WCC cites the values and principles of feminism as the fundamental framework for their approaches as a center that tries to understand and help women in crisis. As such, they explain that feminist principles demand that all types of women are accepted, that all women that come to them are assured of their respect and confidentiality, that all women that come to them are not and do not feel judged or discriminated.

“And I would like to trace that talaga to the values and principles that we hold as feminists. Like confidentiality for example. Like yung undivided talaga, yung whole hearted ka talaga sa babae, yung pagiging-yung pag-aaccept mo talaga siya, [warts] and all, you know. Those are standard requirements for us eh.” (KW 5FemV P.31 TER)

“Yeah, I think it’s not something that you announce in public. Ah parang ano siya eh, ah kasi na-u-uncover naman natin sa counseling yung mga issues eh. It comes out too. Kaya nga yung truth, that’s really a WCC ano-experience talaga na the truth really comes out in counseling. Kumbaga yung mga issues talaga on lesbian, and things like that, comes out during counseling. Sa alam ko. Pero parang, kasi kahit as a feminist talaga, we always [say in] any woman is welcome. We never turn down any woman sa feminist principles.” (KW 5FemV,P.13 Mary)

However a challenged that was posed and recognized as indeed an area they had not yet considered was what if the individuals did not identify as women. Concretely, this referred to the tomboys or masculine looking females who did not identify as women but still very much needed crisis intervention.

Issue-Discussion Sessions. As a practice, the WCC organizes and conducts learning sessions which they call, ‘issue-discussions’ when there is an issue they feel they need to gain a deeper understand of in order to enhance their crisis interventions. It was through this approach

that they felt they could get a better understanding of lesbian/tomboy issues and concerns, as well as develop their skills in handling such cases.

“Basta may topic kaming gustong aralin, and kailangan sabay-sabay kami nung staff in our growth in consciousness. That’s what we call an issue-discussion. –“ (KW 5FemV,P.15 TER)

Hiring of non-homophobic social workers. Another practice of the WCC that is based on feminist principles, is the screening of non-homophobic social work applicants. One of the participants of the ‘kwentuhan’ relayed how one particular applicant responded to their interview question on personal views about lesbianism. She recalls:

“Sa interview ito eh kasi nga nag-aano nga kami ng mga applicants. Sabi niyang ganyan-kasi tinanong ko siya, what’s your view about lesbianism? Nahirapan siyang mag-isip. “Sana po wag na silang dumami” (laughs). Kinwento ko sa kanila. Sabi ni Teret, “Ah. Definitely out.” (laughs)” (KW5FemV, P.38 ANN)

Proposed Strategies

In there area of proposed strategies for the inclusion of LBT issues, WCC had much to share and revealed much enthusiasm. Their specific proposals can be categorized into two broad areas for the development of LBT inclusive strategies: [1] Expanding knowledge and framework building in sexuality and gender identity; and [2] Formalizing the handling of same-sex cases in office processes and procedure.

Expanding Knowledge and Framework Building in Sexuality & Gender Identity. For truly effective and inclusive crisis interventions, the WCC recognizes their need to expand their knowledge on the issues and concerns of LBTs. There is recognition that a feminist organization such the WCC could not simply apply heteronormative frameworks and approaches in crisis intervention to LBT cases. They recognize that there is much to learn and explore in

understanding marginalized sexualities and gender identity. There is also recognition that such learning entails the questioning of **heterosexual assumptions** and **binary thinking**.

“...I think as part of our own education, is to also-the shift ba from male equals masculine-female equals feminine. Most people think like this. Some people are beginning to think or expand that already na magin ganun. Dapat umabot talaga tayo sa gender transcendence. For us to be abl(e to be able to respect people’s sexual orientation, gender identities, etcetera etcetera. Let us-ito talaga, i-debunk talaga na ang pagkalalaki or ang pagkababae ay determined nung kanilang sex organ.”
(KW 5FemV,P.37 TER)

Some of the areas WCC identified for knowledge and framework building included problematizing the **concept of love** within romantic relationships and how this is linked to actions of violence both in same-sex and heterosexual relationship.

“Because may “love” nga na sinasabi. So, kaya kung may question mark ng love, anong ibig sabihin niyan ng love? Ano ba yung ano na yun? Kasi kung emotion lang yun or init lang ng katawan, parang kulang pa yun. It has to be translated to-yun na nga-not exploiting the other person’s vulnerability.” (KW 5FemV P.27 TER)

WCC also mentioned the need to expand their knowledge and gain an in depth understanding of the **dynamics of same-sex relationships**, most especially if they are to effectively counsel such clients.

“Yung sa counseling skills siguro, sabi ko no question with that. Pero ako parang nire-recognize ko parin na mahalaga parin dagdagan natin yung kaalaman natin in terms of yung dynamics talaga nung relationship. So which is-yun na makakatulong ka talaga doon at yung-syempre yung-para mag-kumbaga mava-validate din yung perspective but at the same time yun na nga, ma-expand din natin, at yun na nga, eventually maka-develop tayo ng...” (KW 5FemV, P.32 Ann)

However, while recognizing the importance of a distinct understanding and distinct approach for handling such cases, for instance of same-sex intimate violence, WCC believes that the fundamental concern is still the issue of **inequality** and the sources of **power**.

“Oh definitely! Different. But I think an expansion of the framework. So

halimbawa kung ganito kami-kung ganito ngayon noh, unequal power relations between women and men, but what if-at ito pa ang binubuo, woman [one, and](..) you know, woman parin ang victim dito, paano mo ngayon dinede-determine yung inequality nila? Ano yung-kasi yan din and dapat nating hanapin dito. Ano din yung power and control issues dito? If the violence is due to inequality-gender inequality as in het-ano ang nature ng inequality between two women? So that will expand our notions of ano, which will bring us now to the sources of power of either that. So it's basically the same inequality, but refining. Kung ang violence is a result of abuse of power and control, we have to ask ourselves, itong challenge being posed by lesbian violence, we have to know now ano yung mga power issues niya-power and control issues niya? Paano niya yan ine-express? Paano niya yan ine-enforce, which therefore should strengthen our ano na ngayon dito, in relation to heterosexual violence. In that sense, this study is going to be useful to us. So we can even extend that to child-parent. We can extend that to other relations of inequality.” (KW 5FemV,P.19 TER)

Such new thinking around LBT issues was also linked to the ways in which theorizing and framework building is being done to understand the **male standpoint**. That is, to better understand the men who commit violence and to have them account for their violent behavior. To not simply label such men as perpetrators of violence without hope of restoration. This kind of thinking was deemed as possibly providing insights into new frameworks for crisis intervention approaches that could be useful for same-sex relationships that sought to **overcome the violence** and make the relationship work.

“Of battered women. Quite open talaga to the ano na-yung violence naman on men. Yung-in other words, away ano, so-that's one. Another is how can their fathers, for example, even if they don't want their parents to get together, paano nila matulungan yung tatay nila? Kasi nananakit. So we're opening our-ano naman-to-nandoon na kami sa “okay, we'll meet to the men, only if requested by the survivors”. “Sana nanaman makausap niyo na yung asawa ko” ganyan ganyan. Only under that condition do we talk to the men. But we also need understanding-understanding men in that sense. At tsaka kung makikinig sila, di sasabihin namin sa kanila. Pero ano parin kami don, clear headed kami about making them accountable for their violence and making them responsible for stopping the violence. So from there, maybe we can move on to other things. Kaya this thought of-at least we're opening now to cases of lesbian abuse na-kasi mahirap. Pareho silang babae. In the previous paradigm, madali eh. Basta kampi ka sa babae, tapos. But what about this? So, nare-refine ngayon ang-na dapat pala tignan natin, sino ba ang victim dito? Balik tayo doon sa original ano na, services to the victim, accountability to the survivor. So this is going to help our understanding of unequal power relations talaga. Whether it is between a man and a woman, between two women and—“ (P.1 TER)

Also critically assessed by WCC was their counselling approach. They recognized that despite having and developing the skills to ask highly sensitive issues such as experiences of violence, they had not developed the same sensitivity and skills for **probing sexualities** and sexual practices of their clients. This was deemed important if one was not to assume all women that sought crisis intervention are heterosexual.

“Halimbawa I asked our counselors, “Ah, ine-explore din ba ninyo yung mga sexualities ng clients?” Hindi daw. Kasi hindi mo naman inaano yun, uhm, as it is mahirap naman magpa-misclose ng violence noh. Sabi ko-yah, but if it is if we dare ask about the violence, we should dare ask about their sexualities. Kasi baka may kinalaman yun” (P.3 TER)

It was also seen particularly essential for one counsellors to **pro-actively seek to speak with the partner** of her client when handling cases of intimate violence in same-sex relationships given they are both women.

“Oo, yung ganun. Kasi minsan tinitignan ko nga dito unlike sa het-approach namin sa hetero, not unless a woman would tell us na, “pwede mo bang kausapin yung asawa ko?” so dun kami papasok. Pero dito, akong nakikita ko, ang challenge ko dito sa experience ko, mas siguro pro-active ang counselor na “can I talk to your partner?” KW 5FemV,P.32 ANN)

LBT inclusive office processes and organizational development. Upon reflecting on the current office processes and organizational development of the WCC, two areas of improvement were identified. One was in the area of developing LBT inclusive **educational materials**, specifically providing reading materials on same-sex violence, putting up LBT posters in the office, and the like. Such approaches were deemed necessary by WCC if they were to truly reach out and be inclusive of all types of women.

“Tsaka siguro yung atmosphere ng office natin, parang maka-build tayo ng ano, baka may mga posters tayo on things like that na nababasa. Kasi minsan maraming nakaupo diyan, at least may nababasa sila.” (P.35 Mary)

The other area identified was in consciously and **systematically documenting lesbian cases**. That is, to not simply see such cases as exemptions or anomalies in their work. In fact, WCC pointed out that had Isis, through the course of conducting this research, not asked them about these cases, they believe they may not have really paid such attention given the many demands of their work.

“Pero you know what-tama nga Teret eh, kasi nung nag-usap tayo because of Isis ano nga, business [counsel], doon lang lumabas diba na, “Ah! Meron tayong case na ganito. Meron tayong case na ganyan”. Na documented ba tong mga to, at tsaka ano, kasi kung ganyan na very rare pala na dumadating, dapat nado-document siya. Pano nga ba siya [hinahanda]? [below] the benefit of issue-discussion at learning diba for all of this. So papaano hinahanda?”- (P.18, Mary)

LBT Issues According to Likhaan

The Self

Tomboy identity and body dilemma. Given tomboys do not identify as women, but moreso as men, they were often alienated from the physical structure and needs of their female bodies. The tomboy identity and its disassociation from the female body, was raised as an important concern by LIKHAAN particularly because of its health implications. At best, the tomboys were described as not being sensitive to the needs their bodies, and at worst they were described as being in denial that they had any physiological health care needs at all. That is from wearing loose clothes to cover the the shape of their breasts, to deny out right that they do not menstruate.

“Syempre yung ano nila mas [mas ano naman yung mga tomboy sa’min na nagtrabaho] ng mabibigat, oo. Pero ang tingin padin nila, babae sila sa-alam nila eh, sa katawan, pisikal. Pero yung [ano nila na]”—(P.2, LIN)

“Sa sando! Lagi silang-kasi ang mga tomboy sa’min, hindi nagfi-fit ng damit. Nakikita ko yun eh. Lagi silang naka-loose tas nagsasando. Mas—“(P.2, LIN)

“Tapos yung isang problema pa, yung services, yun nga yung nabanggit niya na dine-deny nila na sila ay babae, na “ako ay hindi nagre-regla kaya wala akong problema”. So kahit na may problema na sa rekta, kung meron nang, hindi nati-treat kasi ayaw nila. “Hindi ako babae. Bakit ako pupunta sa-para magpa-pap smear?” So yun, medyo challenge yang ano na yan, grupo na yan. Parang nagpa-schedule yata sila ng isang (murmurs inaudible). Mga two weeks siguro. Mukhang exciting no? (laughs) (P.10, BET)

“Ang meron yung nagpunta sa amin siguro last week, kine-kwento niya, yung mga ino-organize nilang lesbian sa community, talagang ang problema din nila, yung hindi pagtanggap ng regla. So lahat pag sinasabi “may problema ka ba sa ganyan?”, “Ay hindi ako nire-regla! Wala akong regla, lalaki ako.” So ganun yung-kaya nung lumapit siya sa’min parang ah, gusto niyang humingi ng tulong kasi ito yung-may denial dun sa mga-sana may health care needs na hindi naa-address kasi nga wala akong regla eh! So, ganun yung sinasabi.” (P.2, JOY)

Taking on negative masculine stereotype qualities. Another serious problem among tomboys identified was the ways in which they take on the negative masculine stereotypical behaviors of dealing with problems. That is to resort to excessive drinking, smoking, getting into fights, and the like. Sadly the problems they encounter were often cited as related to the discrimination they encounter as tomboys, for instance, not being able to get employment. As such they feel their negative behaviour is justified, acceptable and even expected of them as tomboys.

“Tomboy yung nag-consult samin. Tapos yung problema niya pa nga sabi niya, yung ibang mga tomboy mukhang nadi-discriminate sa paghahanap ng trabaho. Kaya karamihan tambay, yung tomboy na nandun sa community na yun. Tapos dahil tambay, parang no choice, barkada talaga ang ano kausap, inuman, inuman. Hanggang sa may mga times na yung iba daw nagwawala. Yung lalaki talaga yung tingin nila na okay lang na magwala pag umiinom, nagugulpihan sila-sila.” (P.11, BET)

“Discrimination din pag tomboy ka, hindi tinatanggap yung iba minsan sa trabaho. Kaya yung iba, natambay na nga lang. Tapos inuman dito, inuman doon kasi walang tumatanggap, walang mapasukan kaya ang barkada mo minsan ang umaano sayo, nanamantala. Ang hirap din.” (P.11, CHO)

Desired physicality sought through hormone pills. Given the MTF transgenders identify as women, their desire to look like women is an important everyday concern. Apart from dressing in women’s clothes and taking on stereotypical feminine qualities, the drinking of hormone pills plays an important role in achieving their desired physical state. Likhaan explained

that often the transgenders, which they often referred to as ‘baklas’ would take hormone pills for enlarging their breasts and for beautifying their skin.

“Sabi ko na hindi namin naaral yon, kung ano yung effect sa inyo kaya dapat –“ (P.12, CHO)

“Pero ano yun, continuously umiinom sila (inaudible murmer) hanggang makuha nila yung size na gusto nila—“(P.24, JOY)

“Gusto niyang gumanda ang kutis daw niya.” (P.13, JOY)

Relationships and Micro-Contexts

Family. Likhaan’s general observation is that there is **more acceptance now** of same-sex relationships than there was years ago. In the past the beating up of homosexuals by family members was not uncommon, while now it would seem families are more tolerant.

“At type talaga nila. Kasi ang mga-ang nakakaganda lang kasi hindi na ganun ka-ano na dati pag nalaman na [tomboy] ginugulpi. Oo, ganun talaga sa community nung bago kami sa [Kalpol] mga [1980], makikita mo na ina-ano-sinasaktan yan ng parents nila tapos parang”— (P.3, LIN)

The nature of acceptance by the family is described as **gradual acceptance**. That is, allowing the family some time to see and understand that such sexual relationships and gender identities can work and prove to be healthy and productive. The level of acceptance is also very much dependent on the economic contribution and stability that LBTs are able to achieve, in a sense, in exchange for family acceptance.

“Hindi siya ano, okay siya. Nakakasama namin yun eh, pag ano-pag dumadating. Kaya nakakapasok sa bahay namin yung partner niya, yung-ng pamangkin ko, kasa-kasama namin pag umaalis. Walang ano-nung umpisa lang tinatanong-tanong nila na, “Bakit naman anak babae?” (giggles) “Bakit sa babae ka nagka-gusto?” eh ang sagot parang, “Eh doon-yun talaga ang gusto ko eh, anong-doon ako masaya”. Pati yung mga anak ko, ano din sila-hindi sila-hindi mo maririnig na, “ay bakit babae yan?” Hindi nila na-ano. Parang kung magke-kwentuhan lang, natural na kagaya din sa mga partner nila.” (P.8, LIN)

“Kasi tingin nila pag may selos daw yung marami paring ganun eh, pag may selos, may pagmamahal (laughs). Yun yung ano, yun yung ano talaga. Pero may iba rin naman talaga na hindi rin ganun. Pag may galit ka, syempre may pagmamahal, mga ganun. Yung tingin nila pa, pagmamahal. Yun yung ano, tapos yung-may isa nga kong ano, yung OFW yung babae. Nung una, partner niya kasi lalaki. So nakita niya na parang iba yata yung pagsasama niya. Na-meet niya itong lesbian na to, so hanggang nagsama. Nung una, hindi tanggap itong lesbian ng magulang kasi iba ngang tingin eh. Pero nung nakita niya na mas mahal nitong lesbian yung anak niya at alagang-alaga, parang yun, welcome na yung lesbian doon sa bahay nila. Tapos halimbawa, six months siya doon sa abroad, parang hanggang nung una tagong-tago sila, hanggang naging welcome na. Tumibay naman yung samahan. Una kasi parang dumanas ng bugbog itong lesbian doon sa asawa kasi ano eh, nasisikit siya. Pero katagal-tagalan, naipaglaban nila yung-at ngayon, mukhang okay naman sila na kasama-kasama na.” (P.6, CHO)

“Mix naman, may mga mas may edad sa atin na parang yung una diba yung iba rin tinitignan nila walang bukas ka sa-ako sa-syempre lahi ko rin mga tomboy din diba (laughs) aminin ko naman talaga. (Simultaneous laughing and speaking) so yung lahi ko talaga ganun, yung parang, nung una (simultaneous speaking and laughing) hindi yung una, yung ano-yung tingin nila pag “Tomboy ang ka-partner ng anak ko, paano yan?” ganyan ganyan. Tapos nung—oo maraming sumisikil na kamag-anakan, ganyan, nung nakita nila na nagsumikap naman itong dalawang mag-asawa at yumaman, ibig sabihin hindi naman yumaman. Nagkaroon sila ng pera. Parang na-ano narin, natanggap narin. Kasi minsan lipunan ba yun, cultura, ganyan—“(P.9, CHO)

It is particularly important for **same-sex couples** to be accepted in the family and be allowed to **live with their families**. For many, the ability to financial sustain themselves and live on their own is very difficult given the discrimination they experience in getting work.

“May mga nagsasama din. Hindi lang sila kasing-dami sa pagka-ano ko sa lesbian. Kasi sa lesbian ilang couples talaga yung nakikita ko. Tapos living together sila sa family. Diba sa community parang pag nag-family na yung anak mo dun din. (affirmations) Iisa, sama-sama sila sa-hindi nagse-separate kasi wala namang pang-bukod ng sariling bahay.” (P.3, LIN)

Also described was a kind of **conditional acceptance**, where in a particular case of a transgender and the family, the parent found it difficult to beat-up his transgender ‘son’ given ‘he’ proved to more responsible and reliable than his other ‘normal’ children. Interestingly, there seemed to be an unsaid social expectation that parents and families are supposed to reject and be violent to such children should they have proved to not be responsible and reliable members of the family.

“Respeto. Kasi yung kumpare ko anak niya bakla, pero macho talaga siya. Sabi niya, “Alam mo mare, hindi ko mabugbog-bugbog tong si Robert eh (laughs). Hindi ko mabugbog-bugbog eh.” Kasi talagang ano eh, pagkatao na daw niya at yun ang maasahan nila sa bahay. Masipag, malinis, sabi niya. At tsaka nagsusumikap, sabi niya, “Itong dalawa, mare, ewan ko ba!” Sabi niya, “Itong si Robert hindi ko mabugbog- bugbog!” Pero macho yung tatay talaga. P.15, CHO)

Intimate Relationships. The issues raised in the area of intimate relationship were mainly related to cases of **intimate violence in same-sex relationships**, as well as, the spread of sexually transmitted infections (STIs). The violence in same-sex relationships were described as being born out of feelings of jealousy where the ‘butch’ in the relationship was identified as the perpetuator of the violence. The issue of STIs, on the other hand, presumably from multiple relationships, was not clearly and explicitly explained. It was however deemed as a serious problem and increasing problem.

“Oo, pag problema ka kasi diba may kanya-kanya tayong dating. So yung pag paano yung ano mo, sila narin yung mag-o-open up sayo eh. Hindi ka na hirap mag-ano sa kanila. Mas sila na yung mag-open sa lahat ng [mga problema].-- Mas marami ngayon concern sa STIs. Mas marami yan. Tsaka yung pambubugbog minsan. Minsan kasi diba may iba ngayon na, nag-drugs diba, yung ganyan. So mayroon yung iba yung tinatawag na “butch” ba yon? Yung lalaking dating na parang, gagamitan ko ng dahas ‘tong ano kasi sabi nila yung iba seloso diba yung, selosa. So, pero [na-ge-gets naman yun from part], so may iilan lang namang ganyan. So yung, marami din silang concerns sa VAW at tsaka sa STIs—“ (P.4, CHO)

“Parang hirap. Tapos hindi ko matanong, “o sige anong tingin mo pano nangyari yan? Bakit ka nagka ganyan?” Saka niya lang kinwento, “O ganito yan, ganito ganyan...” Tas, “Ah okay.” So sabi niya siguro pati yung ka-partner niyang lalaki dapat i-treat din. Sabi ko dapat.” – (P.7, BET)

“So yung dalawang case na na-handle ko, bale yung lesbian, yung medyo mas butch type, nagkaroon siya ng STD, ay! STI. So, yun medyo mahirap i-handle kasi parang ako, “naku may STI”. Usually kasi yung konsepto ng isang tao kapag may STI ang isang tao, mas heterosexual ang relationship. Pero-eh partner niya girl, so parang “ay”, medyo ano ka talaga, napaka-sensitive mo magtanong tungkol sa ano niya, sa case kasi baka ma-offend. So yun yung wino-worry mo pag provider ka. Tapos nagulat ako kasi yung mismong lesbian na yun, nagpa- treat siya, in-accept niya na ano nga-may STI. Tapos yung concern niya doon sa ka-partner niya na “ikaw din, baka nahawaan kita, magpatingin ka rin.” Tapos, aware pala yung butch type na yung partner niya ay may ka-partner na lalaki. Tapos hindi rin siya nagalit. Sabi niya, “Yung lalaki baka patingin mo rin kasi baka may ibang siyang ka-relasyon or ka-sex na mahahawa niya rin yung ibang babae. So ganun siya ka-concern. Talagang nagpa-check up pa sila, nagpa-treat. Tas okay naman. Nagamot naman sila, silang tatlo. Parang dalawang case yun na ang concern nung ka-partner na babae talagang, “sige magpatingin tayo”. Talagang dinadala niya sa OB.” (P.6, BET)

Another issues raised was the desire of those in same-sex female relationships to find ways in which they can **strengthen their relationships** and make them more stable and lasting.

“...Merong iba na, ano talaga, gusto nila maging [inaudible word] yung kung papaano, yun yung mga unang tanong nila. “Paano kaya maging matatag yung-magiging matatag kami, yung magsama kami”. Meron talaga kaming—“ (P. 4, CHO)

Peers/Friends/Barkada. Also discussed during the ‘kwentuhan’ with LIKHAAN was a case where in one of their communities, there is the rampant **rape of tomboys** (this is further discussed in the following sections). In such cases, some tomboys are impregnated. When this happens and they decide to have the baby, these tomboys are rejected by their peers that is, other tomboys. They are perceived as no longer being tomboys because they chose to have the baby. Not only do their **peers refuse their sympathy and support**, they also pressure the tomboy to marry the biological father of the baby that is the rapist.

“May isa kaming ah ano lang, parang nagpunta sa office nag-kokonsulta siya kasi mukhang yung community na yun na ino-organize niya yung mga, tomboy yung tawag niya eh, mga tomboy, lesbian na butch type, mukhang medyo malaki yung problema na pinanggalingan. Ang sinasabi niya, meron silang mga parang grupo-grupo din yun sa community eh, pag nabuntis at-malaking issue yung rape sa community daw nila kasi ilang tomboy daw yung nare-rape ng-nire-rape tapos yung tomboy, dahil wala siyang malapitan, na ipa-abort kung gusto naman, at nag-decide siya o wala na siyang choice na i-continue yung pregnancy, yung kapwa niya mga tomboy raw, ano siya, nilalayuan na tapos ano ka na parang tumiwalag ka na sa grupo. Dini-discriminate na siya, parang hindi ka na, out ka na. Hindi ka na lesbian, babae ka na kasi pinili mong manganak. Tapos hindi na nasolve yung issue ng rape kasi parang napipilitan din yung tomboy na “sige, sama nalang tayo...”-- (P.10,BET)

“Hindi na siya, parang ganun yung tingin ng mga kapwa niya tomboy so parang, yung problema nung lumapit samin na pan oba i-explain sa kanila na hindi ganun na, hindi dahil pinili niyang manganak ay hindi na siya lesbian. So yung, humihingi samin ng tulong, paliwanag. Mas [ed] yung hinihingi nila. Tapos yung isang problema pa, yung services, yun nga yung nabanggit niya na dine-deny nila na sila ay babae, na “ako ay hindi nagre-regla kaya wala akong problema”. So kahit na may problema na sa rekta, kung meron nang, hindi nati-treat kasi ayaw nila. “Hindi ako babae. Bakit ako pupunta sa-para magpa-pap smear?” So yun, medyo challenge yang ano na yan, grupo na yan. Parang nagpa-schedule yata sila ng isang (murmurs inaudible). Mga two weeks siguro. Mukhang exciting no? (laughs)” (P.10, BET)

Work

Difficulty in getting employment. Among the serious issues faced by tomboys was their difficulty in getting decent employment. Lesbians, who are more feminine, can easily pass as heterosexuals, and therefore able to avoid this level of discrimination in gaining employment. Tomboys, on the other hand, because of their masculine physical appearances are immediately discriminated. In fact, LIKHAAN points out that tomboys are discriminated much more than gays, when it comes to employment opportunities.

“Yung mga bakla, ano eh, naha-hire sila sa mga trabaho kahit na pumunta ka, SM, Jollibee, sila yung makikita mo. Pero tomboy or-bihira eh. Unless naka-babae ka. Lesbian na hindi ka nagpakitang-pwede kang matanggap. Pero pag naka-ano ka, lalaking lalaki yung dating mo, hindi-mahirap eh. Tsaka halos wala kang makita. Pero ang bakla, sa Jollibee pwede. Ang tomboy, ang hirap maghanap ng trabaho. Baka don, makikita mo yung discrimination sa kanila”. (P.14, Bet)

“Tomboy yung nag-consult samin. Tapos yung problema niya pa nga sabi niya, yung ibang mga tomboy mukhang nadi-discriminate sa paghahanap ng trabaho. Kaya karamihan tambay, yung tomboy na nandun sa community na yun. Tapos dahil tambay, parang no choice, barkada talaga ang ano kausap, inuman, inuman. Hanggang sa may mga times na yung iba daw nagwawala. Yung lalaki talaga yung tingin nila na okay lang na magwala pag umiinom, nagugulpihan sila-sila.”(P.11, BET)

Community/Movements

Feminist Community. Being a longstanding feminist organization, LIKHAAN had deep and critical reflections about their approach to LBT issues and concerns. They described their approach as extremely **supportive of LBT issues**, but it was indeed not seen as core to their work in women’s health.

“Sa Likhaan, na-issue siya eh, kasama siya sa issue pero hindi siya yung pinaka core issue. Yung parang ano, andyan siya eh—“(P.20, JOY)

“Kahit sa mga ano namin na mga organisasyon, malinaw yung ano namin na masabi namin na ang pwedeng sumapi sa samahan ay kababaihan, mga kabataan, lesbian, ang lalaki ay [honorary]” (laughs). (P.20, LIN)

LIKHAAN explains that while they, as a feminist organization, had joined LGBT pride marches and events, they also know of certain lesbian individuals who are part of their safe

abortion advocacy networks. Clearly, they could see the importance of supporting each other's primary or core issues as a movement, the importance of **intermovement involvement**.

“Basta nandoon kami sa marchang yon. Yung first march na yun, na support. So syempre nagulat yung media, parang sabi pag tinanong kami, “Are you, what is Likhaan? Is that a lesbian group? [How] the women's organization are supporting the gay and lesbian...” (P.21, JOY)

“Tapos within the kunyari kahit yung abortion issue ay ano talaga, may ilang kilala na mga lesbians na nakapasok within the ano network of abortion. Yung ano talagang ine-encourage nila yung ibang issues ng women (next few words inaudible) (P.21, JOY)”

Admittedly, they recognize they do not have the expertise to provide health care services to LBTs, that is, in the way they are able to provide it for heterosexual women. However, LIKHAAN explains that **what they may lack in expertise, they make up for in sensitivity** to the needs, conditions, and lifestyles of LBTs.

“Wala samang ang expertise –“ (P.18, CHO)

“Expertise ng mga lesbian, and yet may pumupunta nasa amin, at ngayon nga yung tumawag. Medyo marami-rami rin.” (P.18, BET)

“Ang hinahabol namin yung sensitivity ng mga health providers sa Likhaan, at ano naman talaga yun, [top] naman siya na kunyari pag mga ganyan, concerns ng sensitivity sa mga patient lalo na pag, yung mga nasa gay community, lesbian community, women in prostitution, yung mga differently abled, kasi yung mga ganyan (voice fades). Pero hindi nga siya yung mas marami diba parang ano eh, ang mas marami talaga poor women sa community eh. Tapos may isa o dalawang ceminases na kung lalapit ka for ano, yung mga lesbian problems. O kaya ilalagay niyo isang organisasyon na lumalapit for services or legal advise.” (P.18, JOY)

LIKHAAN also recognized their particular **limitations in their knowledge of bisexual issues**, conditions and lifestyles. In fact, were really not sure who among the members of their community identified as bisexuals. Bisexuals seemed more invisible to them than lesbians, tomboys, and/or transgendeers.

Similarly, LIKHAAN was unsure and **vague about the definition of transgenders**, or who and what qualified as a transgender. The term transgender is not used in the community but

rather the term ‘bakla’. LIKHAAN had also explained that transgenders do not go to them and seek their health services.

“May dating mga gay na nag-asawa na. Iba pang ano nun diba, parang [tatay] sila, silahis yun. Ngayon kasi, pero ngayon asawa na sila, may mga anak na. Yun naman may mga ano talaga sa community. Dating mga ano yun [babae ang tingin]. Yung mga nagpapaganda noon, ngayon macho na ulit.” (P.17, LIN)

“Babae. May asawa siya. Tapos may ka-partner siyang lesbian. Kasi yung lesbian ang bumubuhay sa kanya—”(P.17, LIN)

“Trans ba siya o gay?” “Pareho na walang distinction eh. Parang ang trans sa atin operada ?” (P.16, CHO)

Other Communities. The general perception and response of the broader community ranges from seeing **transgenders as comic relief**, to stereotyping **lesbians as ugly women**, to labeling **tomboys as having no future**, and to the **systematic rape of tomboys** by members of the community.

“Parang komedyante pa nga yung tingin sa kanila eh nung community kasi happy sila... Gusto silang kasama kasi patawa ng patawa, so nag-eejoy yung mga tao.” (P.13, BET)

“Sa family, (laughs) mga partner kasi nung aming mga anak, nage-get-together, kasi kahit yung boyfriend ng anak ko, girlfriend nung isa, pag umuwi kaming Pampanga, sumasama yan. So sila, pag nandun din kami, nandiyan din yung mga partner nila. Syempre nung ano sabi ko-naririnig ko nung tatay, “Ganda-hindi ko nga maintindihan, ganda-ganda nitong anak ko tapos ang ganda rin nung partner (laughs)”— (P.8, LIN)

“Oo tingin nila pag ito tomboy ang ka-partner ko, walang bukas to. Parang ano-pero pag nagsisikap pala, nakikita na—”(P.9, CHO)

“May isa kaming ah ano lang, parang nagpunta sa office nag-kokonsulta siya kasi mukhang yung community na yun na ino-organize niya yung mga, tomboy yung tawag niya eh, mga tomboy, lesbian na butch type, mukhang medyo malaki yung problema na pinanggalingan. Ang sinasabi niya, meron silang mga parang grupo-grupo din yun sa community eh, pag nabuntis at-malaking issue yung rape sa community daw nila kasi ilang tomboy daw yung nare-rape ng-nire-rape tapos yung tomboy, dahil wala siyang malapitan, na ipa-abort kung gusto naman, at nag-decide siya o wala na siyang choice na i-continue yung pregnancy, yung kapwa niya mga tomboy raw, ano siya, nilalayuan na tapos ano ka na parang tumiwalag ka na sa grupo. Dini-discriminate na siya, parang hindi ka na, out ka na. Hindi ka na lesbian, babae ka na kasi pinili mong manganak. Tapos hindi na nasolve yung issue ng rape kasi parang napipilitan din yung tomboy na “sige, sama nalang tayo...”-- (P.10,BET)

Public/Social Institutions

Law. In the area of national legislation, LIKHAAN was quick to point out that **lesbian rights** are often **excluded in the law** and the law making process. They cited the Magna Carta for Women as an example of how excluded and unintegrated lesbian rights are from a document that is considered key in advancing women's social status. LIKHAAN explains, that clearly government programs do not recognize and include lesbian issues and concerns.

"Sana nga diba! Yun naman gusto natin eh, kaya lang andiyan eh. Pag tinignan mo walang ano, lesbian rights, lesbian ano. Kasi kung ang ano siya diba parang ang guiding principle na women, bill of right--" (P.25, Joy)

"Oo, gynecological disorder. Family planning. Yung discrimination diyan sa mga health issues ng mga lesbians, hindi masyadong ano eh. Kahit sa mga programs sa mga government, diba yung kapag tinignan mo, bakit wala ? Kahit yung Magna Carta wala eh." (P.25, Joy)

Health Services. As a feminist organization that is primarily geared towards understanding women's health issues, providing services to grassroots communities, and lobbying the government for appropriate law and services directed at the development of the national health care system, LIKHAAN sees a great many serious concerns for LBTs in these area.

Clearly, the health services in general are **inappropriate and insensitive** to the needs of LBTs and therefore not encouraging of LBTs to seek health care. Yet, there are serious health concerns among the LBT community that LIKHAAN identified that remain unaddressed.

Among the concerns highlighted were the **increasing cases of STIs**, the **not seeking of medical help**, and the **unguided use of hormone pills**.

"Kaya ako naman, kagaya ng sa mga gay sa-na may mga-nag-iisip sila ng pampaganda, kasi sa community wala namang-siguro kung mayaman ka [may pambili ka ng mga panglagay-lagay diyan] pero yung mga, pano yung mga mahihirap. Syempre nagbabase lang sila sa mga naririnig din nila kung ano yung mga effect-kahit kami hindi rin namin alam kung san sila papupuntahin, so pano namin masabing buo yung serbisyo. May kakaibang pangangailangan din talagasila na hindi natutugunan ng ano. Kung yung mga kabataan hindi namin natutugunan, mas sila. Kahit yung ano, mga pap smear, syempre pag sa ospital yan eh wala naman yang pakeme-keme. "O sampa ka! Bukaka!" O, kasi ang tingin-wala namang pakialam kung lesbian o ano ka. Pero alam namin ang mga ano

minsang nahihya silang maghubad sa harapan namin. Mas, diba yung kahit-tapos alam mong dahil wala namang mga anak yan kahit may ka-partner yan –“ (P.14, LIN)

“Parang hirap. Tapos hindi ko matanong, “o sige anong tingin mo pano nangyari yan? Bakit ka nagka ganyan?” Saka niya lang kinwento, “O ganito yan, ganito ganyan ganyan...” Tas, “Ah okay.” So sabi niya siguro pati yung ka-partner niyang lalaki dapat i-treat din. Sabi ko dapat.” – (P.7, BET)

“So yung dalawang case na na-handle ko, bale yung lesbian, yung medyo mas butch type, nagkaroon siya ng STD, ay! STI. So, yun medyo mahirap i-handle kasi parang ako, “naku may STI”. Usually kasi yung konsepto ng isang tao kapag may STI ang isang tao, mas heterosexual ang relationship. Pero-eh partner niya girl, so parang “ay”, medyo ano ka talaga, napaka-sensitive mo magtanong tungkol sa ano niya, sa case kasi baka ma-offend. So yun yung wino-worry mo pag provider ka. Tapos nagulat ako kasi yung mismong lesbian na yun, nagpa-treat siya, in-accept niya na ano nga-may STI. Tapos yung concern niya doon sa ka-partner niya na “ikaw din, baka nahawaan kita, magpatingin ka rin.” Tapos, aware pala yung butch type na yung partner niya ay may ka-partner na lalaki. Tapos hindi rin siya nagalit. Sabi niya, “Yung lalaki baka patingin mo rin kasi baka may ibang siyang ka-relasyon or ka-sex na mahahawa niya rin yung ibang babae. So ganun siya ka-concern. Talagang nagpa-check up pa sila, nagpa-treat. Tas okay naman. Nagamot naman sila, silang tatlo. Parang dalawang case yun na ang concern nung ka-partner na babae talagang, “sige magpatingin tayo”. Talagang dinadala niya sa OB.” (P.6, BET)

“Tinatanong talaga nila, tinatanong nila, kaya lang, [halimbawa yung mga sa amin, sila Starla laging nandun eh] “Te sige na ano...” Sabi ko, “Eh kasi nga, dapat yan [i-daily isa tapos yung isa] pero kung ginagamit nila na ano pagka-15, mga ganun” – (P.12, LIN)

Public Spaces in General. A number of basic everyday concerns in the realm of public spaces in general were also raised. Such concerns centered primarily among tomboys and MTF transgenders. For LIKHAAN, it seemed MTF transgenders, as compared to tomboys, are more visible and accepted in public spaces. For instance, they explained that tomboys are not seen in **public toilets** as often as transgenders.

“Tsaka bibihira lang kami makakita ng butch type na nagsi-CR eh. Parang hindi ka-wala kami masyadong makita na nagsi-CR. Mukhang ayaw. Unlike ang gay, makikita ko, masasalubong ko galing sa men’s room. Alam mong nag-CR siya.” (P.14, BET)

LIKHAAN also pointed out that they know of MTF transgenders who have to deal with being forced to wear **masculine school uniform**, that is pants and shirt. This was described as a constant and everyday issue of having to change immediately out of their uniforms after school

and put on their ‘skirts’, that is, to dress in a ways that is more comfortable for them, in a way that truly expressed who they are.

“Eh yung makikita mo sa ano, nasusubaybayan talaga namin [pagka ganyan], hanggang yung magan-ano n asila, lalo na silang nagdadamit babae. Sa school nga gusto nilang naka-palda (giggles). Kaya minsan yan, hindi diba naka ano parin nag-aaral silang highschool, babaon silang palda. Yun daw mga ginagawa nila. Tapos lalabas sila nagpapalda na sila, oo yung mga estudyanteng mga highschool. Sabi ko, eh pano nga naman kayo papasukin kung naka-palda kayo kasi hindi naman ganun ka-orient yung school. Nagbabaon silang palda, paglabas nila, palda na sila, pag-uwi na tsaka, aano na sila. Pero pag papasok sa school, nakapantalón. Nagke-kwentuhan yung mga yun. Makikita mo talaga.” (P.13, LIN)

Applied Strategies

The strategies applied by LIKHAAN are framed within their strong commitment to be supportive of LBT issues and concerns. However, it is also framed within the recognition that LIKHAAN has not developed the expertise for addressing LBT issues, given it is not seen as a core mandate of the organization. As such, the strategies included three main approaches/activities:

Being **responsive to requests** coming from lesbians and tomboys for papsmear services was one approach. This entailed holding special activities directed at providing such services specifically geared towards the papsmear needs and concerns of lesbians and tomboys. It also required developing customized educational materials, given the existing brochures were deemed inappropriate.

“Yung mga cases, hindi pinag-uusapan yung specific cases, pero kunyari may nag-request from lesbian group na may magpapa-pap smear, yung talaga, sa clinic ang ginagawa namin, talagang usap-usap kami. Bago pa kami humarap sa kanila, ano yung sasabihin, ano yung ipe-prepare na mga equipment, mga gamit. Tapos paano magsasalita sa kanila ng hindi offensive. So, mas ganun. Tapos siempre yung mga lesbian din nabibigyan namin ng orientations, eto yung mga gagamitin sa inyo, eto yung mga ganyan, para hindi narin sila masho-shock. Tapos, mas madalas sa kanila nagre-request na pwedeng pasama yung partner sa loob habang naka-ano sila, nakasalang. Ina-allow namin.” (P.15, BET)

“Tapos before that nag-aano pa, parang ED session: ano yung papa smear, ano yung ganyan ganyan. Tapos yung isang mga nakatulong din sa mga IEC materials sa pagfo-

formulate, kais usually yung pap smear, brochure general mo no, sana walang pakikipagtalik sa lalaki-noon kasi parang general lang eh walang “pagtatalik bago mag-pap smear” para hindi ma-corrupt yung specimen na sperm, etcetera. Kasi ganun yung general na ano, pap smear brochure eh. So tinanong nila, paano pag ano, babae ang katalik”? (P.15, JOY)

Sponsoring an **LGBT prom night** in recognition and celebration of diverse sexualities was another approach. Though seemingly a social event, it did indeed have a clear political value.

“Tapos ginawa namin yun sa community, ulit, para yung sa community naman maka-appreciate sila na pwede pala silang sumali, naka-polo shirt doon sa prom night. Ganyan, ganyan. Yung partner nila yung naka-ano, yung mga gay na naka-gown. Ginawa namin siyang”—(P.12, LIN)

Heightened sensitivity to the issues, concerns, and lifestyles of LBTs was and remains a major strategy, particularly given the recognition that they still lack the expertise.

“Kahit sa Likhaan yung ang target talaga poor women, marginalized, women in prostitution, lesbian (inaudible word). Kami pumupunta, pero yung specific na meron tayong specific na service talaga. Basta [equip] lang yung mga healthworker na sensitivity pag ano mga lesbian relations, etcetera.” (P.18, JOY)

“Syempre may mga orientation kung paano ka magiging sensitive sa ating mga pasyente kasi, ako sa karanasan ko nung hindi pa ko lantad (laughs, jokes) Nung time na yun, hindi ako alam na nagkakasama yung mga ano, pero ang tanong ko, kasi hindi ko alam na tomboy yung ano-yung ano sabi ko, may pagtatalik ba kayo? So kapag, sabi ko, ay! Maging sensitive ka sa pagtatanong niyan kasi baka ang katalik pala niya ay babae. So minsan, bilang provider ka, may mga learnings ka rin sa clients mo kasi dun kami matuto sa kanila eh, so parang ano din yan, give and take. Tapos yung dating mo din sa tao kasi minsan may kanya-kanya tayong personality eh. May kanya-kanya tayong dating. Ako nga tingin ko, sabi ko, kahit mukha akong aso, pero ang dating ko sa tao dapat pipilitin kong maging tao (laughs loud)” (P.15, CHO)

“Kaya kailangan, caring, i-explain mo talaga. Bago sa kanila yun eh.” (P.14, CHO)

Proposed Strategies

LIKHAAN had a great many thoughts and ideas about what needs to be done in order to strengthen services for LBTs, and in particular enrich the feminist communities' inclusiveness of LBT issues and concerns. The proposed strategies and approaches include the following:

The **development of knowledge and skills** that is expertise, in handling LBT issues such as same-sex intimate violence, knowing and addressing LBT specific health concerns, addressing issues arising from multiple relationships without judgment, and the like.

Need to develop expertise on how to approach same-sex intimate violence

“Kaya yung issue ng VAW medyo parang ang hirap in a way i-counsel yung babae kasi alam mong ang bumugbog sa kanya ay kapwa niya rin babae. Parang sa mahabang panahon na lumalapit, puro babaeng binugbog ng kanyang asawang lalaki. Tapos ngayon may lalapit sayo, babae na binugbog ng kapwa niya babae. Parang, may special counseling ba diyan? Ano ba yung dapat? Kasi ang alam natin, kaya ka ginugulpi ng lalaki kasi napa-power ano yan, etc, etc. Tapos ngayon etong babae, paano? So generic yung approach mo na hindi ka dapat sinasaktan ng kahit sino, karapatan mo na free ka from violence etc. Pero yung specific na ano, medyo hindi pa ganun kasi mas women talaga yung center. (jokes, laughs) Kaya yun din ang interesting din, sana natututo din-kasi hindi namin masyadong [kapado] – “(P.18, BET)

Need to develop knowledge and expertise on lesbian health needs

“Mahusay din na makilala namin sila, ano yung pagtingin nila sa ganito, ano ang pagtingin nila sa ganitong issue, para kami din nakaka-ano din yung care namin, adapt doon sa specific health care needs niya or kung social needs yan. Dapat ganun kasi mas women, “O women ka, eto yan, o feminist ano yan counselling lahat”, pero pag tomboy or lesbian, sana makilala namin sila ng husto. Baka sometimes, akala namin dahil babae din naman, may puki yan, may suso yan, pareho lang ng health care needs. Pero baka hindi. Yun yung gusto naming alamin sa mga lesbian at tsaka sa mga tomboy.” (P.19, BET)

“Kasi kung yung ibang women nahihiya rin magpa [IE] bubuka-bukaka, pano pa yung mga lesbian talaga na talagang ayaw, pano mo-lalo na kung mga butch type na talaga ayaw. “O pano... ” tapos alam mo naman na ano kailangan talaga. O kaya pano mo ia-approach yung sinasabing hindi ako nabubuntis-Ay! Hindi ako nagre-regla.” (P.19, JOY)

“Tsaka baka may mga ano narin sila, may mga special health care needs na tingin nila ay hindi natutugunan dahil hindi nakikita ng providers. Baka yun, kung mas makikilala nga namin sila ng husto, mas mai-improve din namin yung services na ibibigay sa kanila. At at least, specific din sa kanila.” (P.22, BET)

Need to develop skills in handling STI cases born out of multiple relationships

“Mukhang dalawang case yung na-handle ko na heterosexual yung babae, may ka-partner na lalaki tapos nahawahan niya yung lesbian partner. Kaya nagulat din ako eh. Parang hindi ko ma-imagine. Hindi ko matanong ano yung sexual ano ninyo. Ano yung mga activities ninyo. Yung ganun”— (P.7, BET)

“Parang hirap. Tapos hindi ko matanong, “o sige anong tingin mo pano nangyari yan? Bakit ka nagka ganyan?” Saka niya lang kinwento, “O ganito yan, ganito ganyan ganyan...” Tas, “Ah okay.” So sabi niya siguro pati yung ka-partner niyang lalaki dapat i-treat din. Sabi ko dapat. – (P.7, BET)

Strengthening our sensitivity in providing health services in general, that is, **questioning** our **heteronormative assumptions** when dealing with all clients.

“Siguro sa mga providers, baka din yung orientation sa mga ibang providers kasi yung iba pwedeng insensitive talaga sa kanila, yung tanong, “nabuntis ka na ba? Ilang pagbubuntis?” So yun medyo, even kami medyo ilang kaming magtanong kasi part siya ng OB history dapat eh. Tinatanong yan kailan ang regla mo, para malaman namin yung history. Pero”—(P.14, BET)

Designing **educational materials** as direct servicing organizations, that are more inclusive, not too technical, and based on local contexts.

“Oo nga eh, so may mali jan sa brochure mo? (Laughs) hindi malinaw diba, kung anong pagtatalik. Kaya ang ginagawa-ni-revise namin yun, tas-“wag makipagtalik, dapat hindi makipagtalik sa lalaki”. Sa lalaki lang, pag babae pwede. Sperm lang kasi ang nakaka-contaminate eh. Tapos sana wag gumamit ng lubricant, yun ang makaka-contaminate sa result. Wag kang maglu-lubricant.” (P.15, BET)

“Tapos before that nag-aano pa, parang ED session: ano yung papa smear, ano yung ganyan ganyan. Tapos yung isang mga nakatulong din sa mga IEC materials sa pagfo-formulate, kais usually yung pap smear, brochure general mo no, sana walang pakikipagtalik sa lalaki-noon kasi parang general lang eh walang “pagtatalik bago mag-pap smear” para hindi ma-corrupt yung specimen na sperm, etcetera. Kasi ganun yung general na ano, pap smear brochure eh. So tinanong nila, paano pag ano, babae ang katalik?” (P.15, JOY)

Enhancing our political strategies that will allow for an **intersectional analysis and approach** to women concerns, rather than what currently appears as an issue-specific and compartmentalized approach.

“Parang kasing medyo yung women’s movement dito institutional siya eh. Diba parang may specific na group dealing with VAW, women’s health, LGBT issues, yung lesbian issues. Medyo ano na siya eh, institutional. Parang hindi siya napapasok sa isang yung buong encompassing na issue. Parang hindi siya intersecting.” (P.20, JOY)

Organizing at the grassroots level, particularly among lesbian and tomboys, towards enriching their political participation in development.

“Actually bago lang. Siya kasi ang worry niya, parang ang tingin nung nag-consult samin, parang ang lesbian, puro mga middle class. Parang tingin niya parang hindi napapansin yung mga lesbians na mga grassroots level—“ (P.11 BET)

“So sabi niya parang hindi masyadong nae-express yung kanilang rights kasi siya sabi niya, “Ako alam ko na ganito ganyan...” Pero dun sa community level, parang hindi masyado. Kaya —“ (P.11, BET)

“So makikita mo yung mga bakla, may regular talaga silang activity. May [beauty-beauty] sila, oo!” (P.12, LIN)

“Regular talaga sila na nagkikita kita sila, mayroon silang pang-beauty contest o kaya yung mga nagpapaganda ng mga (giggles) sa mga community. So meron silang mga, yung mga lesbian, kaya nga minsan may nagsabi, nag-front line sa community, doon sila tuwang-tuwa kasi parang may ganung opportunity na nakasama sila nun sa—“ (P.12, LIN)

Conducting research studies that are specifically geared towards learning more about the lifestyles of LBTs and their health implications.

Need to study effects of hormones pills being taken by trans

“Sabi ko na hindi namin naaral yon, kung ano yung effect sa inyo kaya dapat —“ (P.12, LIN)

“Pills yung-hormones kasi yun eh. Combined Estrogen tsaka Progesterone.” (P.12, LIN)

“Sa amin, ang [ginagamit] namin, para hindi ka mabuntis [sa women], isang tableta araw-araw.” (P.12, LIN)

“Pero kung magpapalaki ka nga ng boobs?” (P.12, MIR) “Hindi namin alam.” (P.12, LIN)

“Oo, so yun din yung sinasabi namin na hindi na namin alam yon. Baka mamaya may effect sa heart kaya dapat nagpapacheck kayo. Ang problema daw nila, saan sila magpapa-check? Kasi ganun yung-tinatanong din nila kami, eh hindi din naman namin sila maturo kung saan yung-kaya sinasabi namin dapat talaga nagpapatingin kayo kasi gumaganda nga kayo baka yung effect naman sa katawan niyo.” (P.13, LIN)

C. LGBT organizations on LBT issues and strategies

Lesbian Issues According to R-Rights

The Self

Sexual awareness. Lesbians sometimes suffer self-doubt when initially becoming aware of their sexuality. As shared by a member of R-Rights who considers her awareness of her sexuality as very late, she tried to facilitate this process of awareness for herself by going to the lesbian parties and bars, and just tried to be with others whom she knew had the same experience. She recalls that at some point she was looking for something more than the party scene, she was wanting to be with people in advocacy work for lesbians. Her involvement in such, she believes facilitated her full knowledge of herself and her sexuality. She talks about this experience in the following narrative:

“But since yun nga I came out late, feeling ko kailangan kong mag-socialize din. And I think mga 2 years akong nag-a-attend ng parties and it came to a point na parang ano ba wala namang nangyayari dito. Parang you pay for the ticket, you go inside and-siyempre may mami-meet ka dun. Kung may ma-meet ka e di winner, may take home ka or mate-take home ka or something pero it ended there. Hanggang doon lang sila, until I met people who were in the, yun nga, yung advocacy na. Germaine is actually a sorority sister. *But since I came out very late, I felt like I needed to socialize too. I think it was about two years that I was attending those parties, but t came to appoint when I was asking myself, what will happen after I attend all of these. So you buy the ticket, and you go inside and mingle, there are nights that you feel a like a winner when you are taken home or somebody takes you home, but after that what else. That was when I started feeling it was never going to grow from there. That was when I started meeting people who were doing advocacy work. I got reconnected with Germaine who was also my sorority sister*”. (Roc8)

Internalised oppression. In attending the party scene they also came across bars that had lesbian ledge dancers to be watched. This practise bothered some of the R-Rights members and they began to wonder how lesbian dancers were feeling about performing for others. At one point they even attempted to ask these dancers.

Roc: Pero pag sinabihan niyo sila, “feeling niyo ba nadi-discriminate kayo?” Feeling nila hindi naman. Pero-they could do what they want pero yung bar, may mga nakalagay na itim na tela diyan para wag makita na – *But then when you start asking them, “do you feel discriminated? Then they respond that they do not feel discriminated. But still I sometimes have the feeling that bar owners could still do very much whet they want. Under covered curtains – when they are not seen”*(Roc, 9)

Ger: May ledge dancing. Nakatakip. *There is ledge dancing, and then there is just the cover.* (Ger. 9)

During this exchange it got them to think that that these dancers may have been suffering from a painful resignation about her situation, a situation that to feminists translates to internalised oppression.

Limited Access to Lesbian Sensitive Doctors. Trust and comfortability are key elements in a patient doctor relationship, elements that are sometimes elusive to lesbians. They have registered that there seems to be a difficulty for lesbians to go for medical check ups because in the course of these check ups they are sometimes asked very inappropriate questions. There is great difficulty in finding lesbian sensitive doctors who will not ask you inappropriate questions, or do unnecessary examinations. The group notes that butch lesbians find this particularly problematic.

Tes: Kasi ang diba ang tanong diyan, are you sexually active? *The question asked most times is "are you sexually active?"*

Ger: Yun na nga, ayun nanaman. (laughs)-- *Yes, that question is asked*

Tes: Then again we stick to friends.

Abb: Kaya dapat nasasabi. *Which is why you really have to say...*

Roc: Tapos pipilitin ka, "Are you pregnant?" "Hindi", "Are you sure?" (laughs) Sure na sure!

Ang: Tama ba, dapat tutukan yan? Kasi iba na yung nagpa-check up ng breast, magpapakap-kap na yun lalo na mga trans. Mga tomboy, magpahawak ba yun? *Yes, I really think we should make an effort to look into that. I am concerned about breast examinations, when they actually touch you, sometimes even for the trans. I doubt that even butches will feel comfortable with that. (Page 25)*

Concerns for long-term effects of breast binding. Another concern raised by the group was the practice of breast binding among the youth. In earlier researches this has come up as a concern because the experience speaks of an alienation from one's body. As this concern comes up again in this study the group raises concerns over long-term effects of breast binding. The R-Rights group brought up this concern within the context of the availability of breast binders in the market that the youth can easily access, without the proper information of its long-term

effects, such as its possible connection to breast cancer. As they too do not have answers to this they see this as an area for study that can allow lesbians a more informed choice about the practice.

Lalo na ngayon kasi the younger, nagbi-bind. Hindi nila alam ang implication nun sa breast cancer. Parang ganun. Naka-bind sila! *Especially the younger ones are really into breast binding. But they do not really know what its' implications are to the younger ones who are into breast binding.* (Ger 25)

So, wala. Nobody's checking them kasi wala naman-unless may mga medical practitioners na magsabi na, "We don't encourage yan." *There is no available information on that, nobody is really checking the practice. Unless there are really medical practitioners who will say that 'We don't encourage that.'*"(Ang 25)

The Relationships and Micro-Context

Intimate Relationships

Butches' Negative Masculine Stereotypes. The groups acknowledges that butch-femme role playing in relationships happens and individuals and couples find that a comfortable set-up. What they consider problematic however is that certain butch practices to take on the negative masculine stereotypes such as excessive drinking of alcohol, subordinating their partners in relationships, and sadly, even violence. R-Rights refers to this as falling into 'male-trappings'.

Forcing Sex on the Femme Partner. Another issue they brought up with regards to relationships was some femmes complain of having forced sex by their butch partners. This sometimes results to bleeding that could be alarming.

Mutual Violence. In trying to clarify the issue of violence in relationships the research team probed into how violence happens and who is the perpetrator. The R-Rights group acknowledged that there are cases of forced sex on the femme that sometimes results in further violence. As such, at times it may be easy to assume that in cases of violence in intimate relationships, the butch always and only the perpetrator, of violence. However, it would seem that often the violence is mutually committed by both parties in the relationship.

The three issues mentioned by R-Rights of falling into the male trappings, forced sex and mutual violence was captured in the following exchanges:

Ger: Kase na-ano nila yung sa role playing, the butches and the femmes. So, the butches try to get all the male trappings ba. Malakas uminom, magyosi, mambabae-sabi sa Cebu, "I'm live in with my wife", sabi niya (laughs) so, parang lahat ng negative ano din about males parang nakuha din nila, so parang-- *In the role playing of butches and femmes. So the butches try to get into all the male trappings. Where they drink a lot, smoke and womanize. There are even cases in Cebu where they even say 'I'm live in with my wife' (laughs), so sometimes we feel that they also got all of the negative qualities of males.*"

Mir: So yung violence ba na nire-report dun, the butch yung ano— *So in incidences of violence, is the butch reported as the ---*

Tes: Perpetrator.

Abb: Hindi rin lahat e. *No, not in all cases.*

ALL: Mutual.

Ger: In fairness, lumalaban yung femme. *In fairness, sometimes the femme put up a good fight too.*

Ang: Pero nagreklamo yung femme na pag sometimes pinipilit daw, dumudugo. Pinipilit daw siya. *But there are also times that soem femmes complain that they are sometimes forced to have sex and she bleeds in the process.*

Tes: Ah, pinipilit daw siya— *Ah, so she is forced to have sex?*

Ger: Oo, may ganun din. Sex. *Yes, sometimes there are cases like that. Sex.*

Abb: At that age.

Ger: Dinudugo daw siya. Nagreklamo siya. *She would bleed, and that is her complaint.*

Ang: We're not saying-we don't tell namin na, "do not do that anymore." We had somebody talk to them about yung consequences dun, baka may masira sa loob. *We don;t tell them -- don't do that. We had somebody talk to them about the possible consequences of that, of something being damaged inside.*

Non-Recognition of Rights of Partners' R-Rights also noted that concerns of lesbians within relationships are also very varied depending on the age range. Older lesbians sometimes worry about their recognition as partners especially in relation to property they acquire as partners' or sometimes the custody of children, particularly in the event that the partner passes away.

First Dates and Handling Relationships. If older lesbians are more concerned with their recognition as partners, younger lesbians are concerned with relating and handling relationships. Beginning relationships is a concern especially for those who have recently come out. For instance, handling themselves on dates or even asking someone on a date. Handling oneself in sexually active relationships is also cited as another area of concern for younger lesbians.

Kasi wala silang konsepto ng-wala silang concern about property. First girlfriend nga lang nila eh (laughs). Problema lang nila papaano sila magsi-sine diba, tas yung iba parang property nila. So it's different. I think {hindi naman kasi tayo sobrang young kasi}, yung sa kanila I think yung sa friendships, coming out, yan yung mga mas very individualized at tsaka hindi siya gaanong ano eh, hindi very concrete pero yun yung mga issue nila usually: coming out, friends, dealing with ano na ba talaga sila, yung sexuality, tapos paano yung mga issue nila with their girlfriends, ganyan. Doon namin pinapasok yung sexual relations. So we have sex talks before na- *The younger ones donot have concerns about property yet, because they are dealing with their first girlfriend. What they problematise how to go on a movie with their girlfriend, and then there are others that are concerned about property. So concerns are very different. I think, we need to acknowledge that we are also not very young and our concerns may vary, it may not be very concrete as concerns are very individualised. But some of the issues of the yunger ones is coming out, acceptance of friends, dealing with themselves and their sexuality, or even issues they may have with their girlfriends. Then that is how we go about talking about sexual relations, r even sex talks that they may need.* (Jaz 8)

Friends

Acceptance of friends after coming out. R-Rights has a membership of varying ages, so in as much as some of their members are concerned with property rights and custody of their children, some of their members that are younger have different concerns. Acceptance especially after they come out to their closest friends is a huge concern for their young members.

Work

Inappropriate questions during interviews. The experience of discrimination exists in various stages of job application from hiring all the way up to career advancement. It was noted that discrimination against lesbians in the pre-employment phase ranges from outright rejection

or being asked inappropriate questions. In several R-Rights sponsored fora, participants would wonder if questions on sexual orientation is a legitimate interview query. When these questions come up they always clarify that this question is not necessary because a person should not be discriminated because of their age, gender or sexual orientation. Yet some companies have not gained the sensitivity to veer away from such questions.

Discrimination in Hiring. Lesbians in knowing the possible discrimination they face when applying for jobs have tried hard to look for jobs that they perceive as gender neutral. Some of these jobs have been factory work. However, some members of R-Rights shared the accounts of lesbians who had attempted to apply as factory workers, they had this to shared:

Meron, like yung mga lalo na yung mga butch talaga tapos they go into-minsan nga factory work lang, pag nakitang butch sila, “ay, hindi kami tumatanggap ng katulad niyo.” Factory work na yun ah? Or minsan yung iba-yung iba naman ding butch, ayaw naman nilang mag bestida. Dress code problem naman yun. *Yes there is still discrimination until now, we even know of some butches who go for factory work thinking they will not be discriminated against, but then employers tell them we do not accept people like you.” That is factory work already. Other struggles that butches go through is having to wear dresses and conforming to dress codes.* (Roc 8)

When R-Rights members hear of stories and narratives like this they try to share more positive experiences of how the workplace can be more accepting of people’s diverse sexual orientation. They also know of certain positive practices of commercial institutions like PureGold who seem to practice preferential hiring for “tomboys”, whom they feel are very more reliable and trustworthy as bus conductors. In some instances they have hired and assigned tomboys to check receipts.

Forced Conformity in the Workplace. Conforming to very traditional lady-like dressing is one workplace practice butches have a hard time dealing with. They are very uncomfortable with such a dress code.

Stereotypes on Job and Tasks. Another struggle of butches is to be stereotyped on certain jobs and tasks. Some of the tomboys that they have encountered have experienced being rejected for certain types of jobs, such as housemaid, perceived more appropriate for “real women”. Rather the stereotypical jobs deemed more appropriate for tomboys as those as janitors or security guards.

Community and Movements

LGBT Movements

Tensions between young and old lesbians. R-Rights is an LGBT organisation with a strong lesbian leadership. Lesbians in the organisation take an active part in programme management, and they also have a growing following among young lesbians. What has been aired out by the younger members is that they do not like the “politicking” that they witness in the LGBT movement, so the more senior members have assured them that they merely need to focus on what they do best which is LGBT advocacy using media and ICT. Other tensions that have been noted is the perception of young lesbians is that the first generation lesbians are sometimes ‘too serious’. The way R-Rights try to bridge these differences in perception is to initiate spaces for exchanges and discussion among first generation lesbians and the younger generation of lesbians. In these exchanges, it is hoped that there will develop a better understanding of issues and advocacy strategies then and now.

Limitation of lesbian feminism as a theory. Lesbian organising in Manila was heavily guided by lesbian-feminism that took strong stands on sexual identity, sexual politics, equality, and relationship concepts such women-loving-women. For some these concepts could work but the frame does not quite capture the experience of butch lesbians or those living in the community, who do not problematise being called tomboy. They also noted that labels like

tomboy is a shared term of both butch lesbians and female-to-male transsexuals. While concepts of women-loving-women sometimes do not exist for lesbians in the communities, some may even be more comfortable being referred to as butch or tomboy. These initial thoughts have led the group to reflect on the limitations of LGBT labels that do not seem to capture the diversity and complexity of LGBT realities.

Non-visibility of Bisexuals. R-Rights has really sought to work with L-G-B-T but in the recent years they have been occupied with how to bring in more of the bisexuals into the discussions. They have even designed certain activities to encourage the participation of bisexuals and to initiate engagement with them. Unfortunately, their interaction has been limited to certain individuals only

Stereotypes on Bisexuals. The group also shared candidly about their perceptions on bisexuals as not having a serious problem, given they can engage with both men and women. They also said that there is a general perception that bisexual are confused and/or promiscuous people.

Ang: Yung Queer discussion natin was suppose to flush out the bisexuals. (laughs). Yung ang purpose talagadun. Kasi, no one was speaking out, tapos tinanong namin kung ano ang issues ng bisexual and then I realized, sabi ko, “e, baka naman wala silang problema, bakit natin hanapan sila ng problema? *Yes, even the Queer discussion with sponsored was mainly to flusho out the bisexuals. (laughs) That was the purpose because we felt no one was speaking our. But then I became reflective later on that maybe they do not have a problem. So I thought why should we create problems for them.*”

Eva: Confused sila tapos yung stigma nga na promiscuous sila kaya siguro nahihiya rin sila to come out and declare kasi parang ang tingin ng tao sakanila, “oh my God! Mahilig to. Babae at lalaki ang gusto.” *They are probably also confused about they are viewed, plus they may be aware of the stigma on them of being promiscuous, that may cause them to feel ashamed to come out and declare. They may feel uncomfortable to be out a seen as promiscuous with men and women.*” (Page 17)

The Experience of “Passing”. They was also an expression of empathy towards the plight of trans women, particularly on the use of toilets, which they feel is easier for tomboys to pass unquestioned than it is for trans women to pass unquestioned.

Feminist Movements

Exclusion of Lesbian Issues in Local and International Policies for Women. One of the primary work of R-Rights is on asserting LGBT rights for legislative advocacy, and they have had the experience of working with women’s groups on initial consultations for this. This working relationship speaks of two faces of the experience, one of acceptance especially when they are invited for initial consultations, the other is also of rejection. The experience of rejection is a bit more painful because they feel strongly about the inclusion of lesbian rights in major policies at the international and national level. Historically lesbian concerns have been sacrificed in favour of winning a tactical agenda. To this date R-Rights still speak of experiences relating to this, especially in working on the recently approved Magna Carta for Women:

Umamin naman sila na it’s really difficult passing it, as it is, na parang they don’t need the additional publication pero I don’t know if they expected us to understand na kailangang magka-laglagan and parang support us now and we’ll take care of you later. Ah, okay, ito nanaman tayo. It’s not like, masamang loob namin na talagang ayaw na namin sa women’s movement, maybe sanay lang tayo sa discrimination and this is it again. But, we’re not going to say hurt tayo. It’s just na maybe it’s something na they really need to do, its tactical din. Baka not right now pero parang they’re holding on na, “parang kahit papano, nasingit namin kayo.” Na parang I can’t even work with that provision kasi I gave a list of dati pa yun sa discussions 7 years ago, I gave a list of words, kapag naipasok niyo yan, solved tayo. Ako na ang bahala sa [inaudible] kasi trabaho ko yung gumagawa ng batas e. Ay hindi! Sabi ko. Pasensiya ka. They did admit that it would be difficulting passing it as it is, and they really do not need the additional complications, but I’m not sure of they expected us to understand that we needed to be sacrificed, and then expect our support now even if we drop your concerns, we are sure to take care of you later. But then do we really fall into that trapa ll over again? It is not that we feel so urt that we do not want to work with women’s movement anymore. Maybe we ave been so used to discrimination and this is another form of discrimination we are facing. But I would nto be ready to just say we are hurt, but maybe something that we all need to do in order to win a tactical agenda. Maybe the women’s movement feels they have done their part in trying to accommodate lesbian issues. But I do not agree that we should work like that, I’ve suggested other ways of working. As early as seven years ago I already

drafted a list of words that needed to be incorporated. If they worked towards including those, then we have agreed. I could have done the rest, that is my job anyway – to draft and pass laws. But then when that was never incorporated, then I am sorry we cannot continue on like this. (Ang p. 22)

Exclusion of health issues of lesbians in policies for women. R-Rights further points out that the exclusion of lesbian concerns in major policies also have an impact on the availability and appropriateness of health services. To date they have noted that the CEDAW and provisions on sexual health and reproductive rights do not have clear provisions on addressing health issues of lesbians, that may explain the lack of appropriate health care services for lesbians, bisexuals and transgendered people.

R-Rights continues to be mindful of ways on how to engage with feminist groups. It is clear to them that they need to work with feminist groups in asserting the rights of the LGBTs.

Public Institutions

Law

In the course of R-Rights legislative work they have noticed the lack of protection for LGBT rights and ironically it non or limited inclusion in the human rights agenda.

Non-Recognition of Partner Rights. Even if lesbian couples have been together for 50 years, they are not protected within their relationships. This is a condition that many couples continue to be insecure about whether they are talking about property they have acquired as partners or custody of children.

Lack of Laws Guiding and Protecting Lesbian Relationships. Unlike heterosexual relationships lesbians do not enjoy state protection of their marriages / unions. R-Rights notes that lesbian relationships are not included in laws on concubinage and even adultery, this non-

inclusion may also stem from non-recognition of their partnerships to begin with. They note this coming from a concern for keeping and protecting the integrity of their relationships, noted in the following narrative:

Edi magbugbugan kami. Pakialam niyo. Di kami covered ng batas. Same way na yung concubinage. Yung ano pag nahuli ng husband-adultery-yung wife niya having sex with a man. E pag nahuli niya with another woman, hindi covered ng batas yan (laughs and simultaneous speaking). Alam mo yung mga ganun? So let's not change the law. May mga ganun tayong secret, sa atin lang yan. These are ano. Diba nice? (laughs) Pero yun, we're taking responsibility. We're having-in the laws pati yung responsibility for our relationships. We can engage in violence and the state never cares, we are not covered by existing laws. Same way as in concubinage, the law that punishes a woman for being caught having sex with another man. But what if the wife is caught with another woman, that is not covered by law (laughs and simultaneous speaking). Do you realise that? So if you come to think of it actually works to our favour if the law stays as it is. That would be nice. But then we do take up the responsibility for our relationships. We are ensuring that these are built into the laws, within the sense of being responsible for our relationships. (Ang 23)

Exclusion of LGBT Rights in Human Rights. Another issue noted by the group is not only are LGBT rights not recognised in general, but these are also not included in the entire agenda for National Human Rights. The irony of this is that many human rights activists are LGBTs but even their basic rights are not recognised or protected.

Denial of LGBT Political Representation. R-Rights talked a lot about the disqualification of the LGBT political party that sought to be approved by the commission on elections, otherwise known as the COMELEC. It was explained that the COMELEC first announced the disqualification of 'Ang LADAD', the name of the LGBT political party, on moral and religious grounds. 'Ang LADLAD' has tried to register as a sectoral party three times, and they have also been disqualified three times. On their first try they were disqualified on the basis of their claim to be a marginalised group as untrue. On their second attempt they were disqualified because their mass base and membership was deemed questionable. Then in 2009, the COMELEC disqualified them on moral and religious grounds, at the same time saying they are a threat to the youth because they are promoting immorality and pornography.

Public Spaces

Victim Blaming in Violence Against Lesbians. As was noted in earlier sections of the R-Rights discussion, violence against lesbians does exist in various sites including that of intimate relationships. However cases like these are unreported and unaddressed. Sometimes it is even the lesbian victims of violence that decide not to speak about the experience of violence for fear of being judged. In some cases, authorities have indeed been unsympathetic to lesbian issues of violence. This is evident in the following exchange:

Mir: But like yung sa VAWC, and now na yun nga, ini-implement supposedly, integrated ba yun sa implementation like yung mga nage-service sa mga nabubugbog-pinapapunta yung mga-tinatanggap namin mga tomboy--

Ger: Alam mo there is a feedback na sabi ng mga barangays, mga barangay officials and the police, nahihya daw lumapit.

Ger: Yung mga lesbian, yung mga nabugbog. Nahihya sila. Kasi daw may mga a few na nagreport, parang bumalik nanaman. So homophobia, may discrimination na “ayan ang napala mo”, parang ganun.

Abb: Kasi andun padin siguro yung stereotype na --

Ger: May ganun parin na parang napaka unsympathetic.

Abb: Pumatol ka kasi sa babae.

Ger: Ngayon there's an aversion, ayaw daw magreport.

(R-Rights Page 23)

Prohibition of Same-sex Union Celebrations. The R-Rights group also articulated the experience of being discriminated in public/commercial spaces where they sought to celebrate same sex unions. Some lesbians also experience being denied entrance to bars. It was shared in the following narrative:

Ganun kababaw. They got to know about a time when we cannot even [come in bars]. When weddings-di pwedeng mag same sex marriages-weddings in some restaurants, pinagbawal, yung mga ganun and they don't know about that time kasi wala namang history. So, get to

know about that. What they do with the information, sa kanila na yun. Pero, ang good thing dun, we got young activists who decided to learn more. Naging part sila ng team. (Ang 13)

Applied Strategies

The Self

Understanding Violence Against Women within the Lesbian Context. As there were issues on violence within intimate relationships that kept coming up, the R-Rights group noted that they noticed that there was more a clamour from lesbian individuals and groups to learn more of lesbian experiences of violence. The need to learn more about their experiences of violence range from learning more about the provisions of VAW and its inclusion of the lesbian experience, availability of services, and institutions providing immediate intervention such as shelters. This clamour speaks about the community's willingness to address issues of violence that are coming up, even if it is within the context of intimate relationships.

Relationships and Micro-Context

Intimate Relationships

Most of the current intervention raised by R-Rights is to address issues of intimate relationships that have come up even within the course of their work on upholding LGBT rights within the context of current laws and legislative advocacy to improve these. In doing this they try to be mindful of creative ways these can be addressed and diversify the ways they are able to impart knowledge on handling oneself within intimate relationships.

Addressing Questions on Relationships. Even within their education sessions on LGBT rights and advocacy, questions on handling intimate relationships often came up. R-Rights would

take this as an opportunity to discuss what makes for a healthy sexual relationships. One of the basic things they raise is the importance of being grounded on the value of respect for oneself and one's partner. This can guide the relationship from decisions on sex to handling conflict within relationships. In bringing these up, they are also mindful not to be "preachy", and for others to also have the space to share their experience and knowledge. This way they are able to nurture an environment of knowledge sharing and dialogue.

Taking Responsibility for Our Relationships. Another way R-Rights sees the need to be responsible for our relationships is to assert the inclusion of lesbians, bisexual and transgendered people within current laws and policies for women. In this way they are able to address issues of violence that comes up in various ways. This includes sharing basic guidelines in maintaining relationships that includes mindfulness in our choice for partners or girlfriends (especially with having relationships with minors that may be misconstrued as rape).

Support from Lesbian Individuals and Groups. Support is also deemed necessary for individuals and groups to have the knowledge on addressing issues within their relationships, be these issues of new sexual practices, or addressing conflict within relationships.

Work

Basic Requirement for Employment. Another area of concern that R-Rights continues to address is that of work and employment. They remind LGBTs about the basic requirement for employment, that is: training, experience, knowledge and eligibility. They remind them of these requirements so as to be guided on bounds of how they are interviewed and regarded in the workplace.

Positive Hiring Practices. Another strategy that R-Rights developed is to come up with more positive messages. As they keep track of discriminatory practices regarding hiring, they

have also noted more positive ones and these are shared as information to LGBTs in the different discussions they had.

Community / Movements

LGBT Movements

Upholding the Rights of LGBTs. R-Rights continues to provide legal assistance to the LGBTs by giving them the full benefit of the law to work for them, be it on criminal procedures, guide to relationships, or employment procedures. They have even developed these in easy pocket size materials for easy reference and referral for immediate needs: Pink – criminal procedures, Blue – same-sex offenses Lilac - employment rights.

Understanding other identities. They also continue to be more reflective of how to better understand other identities as that of bisexuals, and trans. They have noted that the existence of the trans discourse now has led them to better understand the context of the butch that hold more similarities with the FTM trans. Since then they have learnt that recognising the varying degrees of feminism and women groups can be more inclusive to the trans. As a group they have also developed a way of respecting the identity of Bs and Ts, by allowing spaces for exchange where they can learn more from each other. This understanding and openness have also led them to be more open to how terminologies continue to evolve across time and class, ex: from tibo to FTM, from bakla to MTF. To date they continue to find ways to engage with the Bs more.

Intergenerational Dialogue. To address the differences between older and younger lesbians they have attempted to bridge this understanding through intergenerational dialogues. In this space the younger lesbians get to speak about the things that concern them at this current stage, while older lesbians are acknowledged for their commitment for their achievements in the history of lesbian organising.

Forms of Activism for the Younger Generation. R-Rights have also sought to acknowledge and harness the potential of their young members. In the different discussion sessions of R-Right, younger members are encouraged to surface their experiences and concerns, while they are also given the hand to manage projects that harness their potential. Media and ICT have been noted to be a strong medium for the younger generation. This has been the space they have created for their activism and how they raise awareness on different issues affecting LGBTs. Since the launch of the Rainbow Radio in 2009, their younger members have been the ones shaping the programme from content to its technical operation.

Feminist Movements

Inclusion of LBTs in Current Policies for Women. R-Rights described their working relationship with feminist groups as having both positive and negative experiences. They continue to engage with various groups towards the inclusion of lesbians, bisexuals, and transgendered people in existing policies at the national and international level. A sample of this engagement is to work with groups on the inclusion of intimate violence for same-sex relationships within the current violence against women law.

Terminology that is inclusive of the LBTs. They have also noted how they are more concrete in the ways they want to be more inclusive of LBT issues within certain policies and

services. They have come up with a list of words that can be used to include LBT struggle in women's policies.

Referral System. As they take violence very seriously they have also sought to maximise the services of the Women's Crisis Centre as they encounter lesbian experiences of violence.

Support for Ang LADLAD. They have also noted how feminist groups such as WEDPRO and LIKHAAN have issued statements of support for 'Ang LADLAD' when the COMELEC had repeatedly disqualified the political party.

Other Social Movements

Mass and Social Movement Support for Ang LADLAD. Aside from support received from feminists movements on the COMELEC disqualification of Ang LADLAD, mass and social movement support was also felt during these times. The youth, policy makers, Commission of Human Rights, and some government officials showed support for LGBT political representation through sectoral politics. The disqualification also provided timely discussion as it neared the pride march and human rights week. This show of support made the resolve of Ang LADLAD to fight for this even if it had reached the Supreme Court. The discussion they took on was that of the area of asserting their rights.

Si Dr. Guy of Likhaan came up with a letter to the editor, si Aida Santos din of [webpro] also nag-show ng support. So, we expected it from our former allies, our friends. Luma na e, kumbaga were old partners but yung new ones, we're surprised abot the youth, yung reaction ng youth, we're also surprised in some politicians whether it's for their political vested interest or not kasi they're arguments are very logical, very objective. Nakakagulat. Policy makers, chairperson ng CHR for the first time, very openly yung supporting ng LGBT rights pero for the longest time the CHR parang hindi nagco-comment e, ng gay rights.

Kasi nga hindi kasama sa national human rights agenda ang gay rights then all of a sudden, here comes a chairperson na very-open siya. Supportive siya talaga. So, I guess in that aspect, "uy, makapasok na sa agenda ngayon."

Last year she also commented eh. Yung kanyang human rights week na comment sa CHR was all LGBT rights si [laila]. (Ger 26)

Public Institutions

Engaging with the Commission on Human Rights. As the Commission on Human Rights showed support for the Ang LADLAD case, R-Rights together with other LGBT groups used this opening to gain support for other LGBT issues such as the inclusion of LGBT rights in the National Human Rights Agenda.

Radio for LGBT Advocacy. The recently launched 'Rainbow Radio' is one of few radio programmes in the Philippines and Asia that tackle LGBT rights and issues. Reaching the masses to also raise their awareness on LGBT issues is one of their core commitments. As well, the Rainbow Radio has provided them with inexpensive means to reach the masses and be able to talk about the issues at the community level.

LGBT Rights with HR Discussions. R-Rights also noted that they want to continue working with human rights advocates and engage with them on the inclusion of LGBT rights. Human Rights is a shared concern that both can benefit from while deepening each other's grounding on LGBT understanding that is based on human rights.

Proposed Strategies

The Self

Appropriate Health Care for Lesbians. R-Rights notes that health care for lesbians could be an area of research so that lesbians have access to proper information, care and services. It is important that information is accurate and backed by current researches for example, on the effects of breast binding.

Relationships and Micro-Context

On Intimate Relationships

Integrated Efforts Towards Addressing Intimate Violence. R-Rights noted that in as much as they want to be responsible for relationships, they also need to understand how to deal with issues of violence in intimate relationships. In the cases they have encountered they have also identified that there are various ways on how violence may be addressed from counselling and immediate intervention. They also need to work with groups like the women's crisis centre who are more experienced in these interventions. It was noted by both R-Rights that they can benefit in engaging in alternative frameworks that is more apt to understanding intimate violence within lesbian relationships. They identified various ways to address intimate violence ranging from counselling to immediate intervention, and referral systems should be established. This commitment to establish responsibility within relationships should also be matched with policy intervention that is inclusive of the lesbian experiences of violence.

Community / Movements

LGBT Advocacy with Various Groups. R-Rights noted that they are entertaining collaboration work on LGBT advocacy with various groups. They remain open to working with women's organisations, development organisations and human rights groups. They feel that LGBT advocacy can reach various levels if they are able to establish working relationships with them. SARILAYA, a broad network of women's organisation with a very strong mass base at the community level, have already expressed an interest in working on LGBT awareness at the community level. Human Rights groups have also expressed a need for engagement with R-Rights for developing proper handles in approaching LGBT rights from a human rights perspective.

Public Institutions

Raising Public Awareness on LGBT Issues. R-Rights has also noted that LGBTs can only be understood if there is an environment of respect for LGBTs. They need more materials to be available for public education on LGBT rights and issues.

Bi-Sexual Issues According to Fire

Self

Safe sex issues. Safe sex is a primary health issue bisexuals are concerned about. In our interview with Fire, she asserted that bisexuals find it difficult to address safe sex issues because most of them are not wary about engaging in safe sex. Using the word “scareless” to describe the attitude of bisexuals towards engaging in sexual activities, she alludes to bisexuals having no fear of engaging in unprotected sex. As reflected in her statement below, she additionally cites the stigma of society towards being a “bi” (bisexual), which includes being bigamous or polygamous, as one of the hindrances why bisexuals cannot pursue the goal of being educated about safe sex.

“Well just on the safe sex part a lot of people are scareless (laughs) as you know as scareless as can be ganun talaga (really like that) uhm basically that on the health issues yes uhm and of course there’s also the stigma of you know being bi and being labeled as someone who is bigamous or polygamous gusto sabay sabay lahat lagi (likes all at the same time) (...) it’s still of course important to be educated about what will prevent you from getting anything that you would not want to get as much as possible I think it’s just the same seriously with the LG other LGBTs or the LGTs actually. (p.19)”

Stigma. Stigma, on the other hand, lies at the core of bisexual issues affecting the self as it is often reflected in the labels, characteristics or qualities associated to bisexuals. In her discussion of safe sex concerns quoted above, Fire said that being a bisexual involves being seen

as a person engaging in multiple relationships at the same time, as the words ‘bigamous’ and ‘polygamous’ are used to describe bisexuals.

Relationships and Micro-Contexts

Family

Forced heterosexuality. Within the context of the family, forced heterosexuality emerges as a pressing issue. As Fire shared during the interview with her, families, particularly parents, impinge pressure on bisexuals to transform themselves into being heterosexuals because they are forced to believe that it is possible. Unlike lesbians who are forced into marriage to appear straight to the public and to cover up their real sexual orientation, bisexuals can actually settle for a man they like and marry him. However, not all bisexuals would want to settle down with a man. Fire asserted that this is something families find difficult to understand. Bisexuals are forced to accept that they can actually be married to someone of the opposite sex (‘kasi pwede naman’), without considering whether they would really like to be married to a man. Because of this, bisexuals experience the pressure of having to choose whether to follow what they want or obey what her family tells them to do. Fire stated that sometimes, the pressure bisexuals get from their families cause them get carried away and revert to becoming heterosexuals, as revealed by the quote below:

“if your parents or your family recognize you as a bisexual they would really push for you to go the other way (the other way) I mean and sometimes siyempre madadala (...) ka talaga eh you’ll do it di ba kasi pwede see it’s not like ang experience mo is hindi naman parang lesbian ka tapos pinipilit kang pakasalan itong person na to para di ba magmukhang straight ka or something hindi naman ganun kasama yung ano at least ito sige fine I’m just gonna look for some guy I like kasi pwede naman eh but you see yun sana hindi kasi

puwede eh it can't be like that you have to be free to decide for yourself and that's one thing that you know people should understand na you can't tell us to eh ano eh since ganito ka na, ganito ka na or, or puwede naman palang ganito eh ganito ka na lang see and that's the problem people would really you know do that kasi they think it's okay kasi okay lang sa yo supposedly pero the pressure to be made to choose" (p. 17)

("if your parents or your family recognize you as a bisexual they would really push for you to go the other way I mean and sometimes of course you will also get carried away you'll do it right because you can see it's not like, your experience not like you're a lesbian and then you are forced to get married to this person to look straight or something, it's not as bad though like that, with at least, fine. I'm just gonna look for some guy I like because it's possible eh but you see that hopefully but it can't be like that you have to be free to decide for yourself and that's one thing that you know people should understand that you can't tell us to eh like since you're like this, or, it is possible this way, you can be this way, see, and that's the problem people would really you know do that because they think it's okay with you supposedly but the pressure to be made to choose.")

Also, as shown above, bisexuals receive the same reaction of being pushed to become a heterosexual like gays and lesbians experience the moment they reveal to their sexual orientation to their families. Again, the salience of forced heterosexuality is remarkable, as evidenced by three repetitions of the expression "kasi pwede" (because it is possible), in reference to a lesbian or bisexual being married to a man.

Intimate Relationships

Negotiating and establishing identities. Bisexuals consider engaging in intimate relationships as one of their major issues. Within the context of intimate relationships, bisexuals encounter some difficulties in negotiating and eventually establishing their identity to their partners. It happens that some partners want bisexuals to identify themselves as lesbians rather than as bisexuals. During a one-on-one dialogue, Fire cited her own past experience of being in a relationship with a girlfriend who did not accept her being bisexual. She shared that at that time,

she had to put aside her bisexual identity and put on a lesbian identity in order to please her girlfriend. As a consequence of this, she was identified publicly more as a lesbian instead of a bisexual not just in her relationship with her girlfriend but also in her profession, as affirmed by her response below:

“And at the time that I was writing the Dimlas column I was identifying as a lesbian and at the time I was writing the Friday column I was also identified as a lesbian yeah because I have an ex girlfriend who just hated that I was bi so fine just move it there you know uhm when I was writing for native swish. I was also identified as a lesbian so most of my writing is lesbian identified any literature or uhm fiction it’s lesbian identified.” (p.4)

Peers/friends/barkada

Ostracism in peer groups. In their own friendship circles, bisexuals face issues that are related to the concerns they have concerning the self and likewise the other relationships they engage in. Fire reported that bisexuals are ostracized in their peer groups for their sexual orientation. They are being secluded by their own peers due to the stigma attached to them—being abnormal, polygamous, having sex left and right. With the seeming omniscience of the stigma towards bisexuals, Fire aired that bisexuals are further driven away from their social groups as people avoid them. Again, using a personal story below, she shared an example of how this stigma affects the people’s perception of bisexuals:

“...there are people na I know who have been ostracized for being lesbian or gay or bi even kasi nga feeling nila parang abnormal ka bisexual ka so polygamous ka so you know you’re having sex left and right ayoko na sa yo kasi you know I have I actually know someone who wouldn’t drink from uhm(clears throat) my friend’s glass na lalakeng friend ko kasi bi siya bi yung guy and may other girl and nakikiinom siya sa lahat sa amin pag yung ano lang yung di ba and then pag sa kanya ayaw niya feeling niya she’s gonna get sick .. so parang mas ano for her and sabi ko nga what bothers you about si ganyan si [kon] yung guy and then she said eh kasi ano eh he’s bi so? We would it be the same if you were gay she goes well yeah kasi feeling niya magkakasakit niya pero for her mas mataas

ang risk kasi feeling niya mas maraming sexual partners yung guy na yun kasi bi siya but it's not necessarily true." (p.20)

["...there are people I know who have been ostracized for being lesbian or gay or bi even because again, they feel you're abnormal, you're bisexual so you're polygamous so you know you're having sex left and right. I don't want you anymore because you know I have I actually know someone who wouldn't drink from uhm(clears throat) my friend's glass who is a guy friend because he is bi and another girl and he drinks with everyone of us like when it's her turn (to drink) it seems like she doesn't like it, feeling as if she's gonna get sick .. so it's like what for her. I asked her, "what bothers you about si him (the guy) and then she said eh because he's bi so? We would it be the same if you were gay she goes well yeah kasi because she feels as if she will get sick but for her, the risk is higher because she feels the guy has more sexual partners because that guy is bi but it's not necessarily true."]

Community/Movements

LGBT Movements

Representation. Within the LGBT movements, bisexuals are also challenged by issues in representing themselves. As articulated by Fire, even if bisexuals are recognized in the LGBT movement, the inclusion of B (which stands for bisexual) is "really just a letter", meaning, many bisexual issues are not addressed by LGBT movements. Fire shared her realization that there is a lack of attention towards bisexual issues, because there is an assumption that their issues are similar to that of lesbians and gays. Due to this, they feel taken of granted, as she narrated:

"I think people just take it for granted even bisexuals would take it for granted that way na parang included naman tayo eh kasi issues din natin yan but the problem is there are other issues and it's really more of about your identity as a bisexual it's more of how you would present yourself as a bisexual and more of your advocacy as a bisexual that is, that is the issue because ngayon saling kit lang talaga kami." (p.4)

("I think people just take it for granted even bisexuals would take it for granted that way like we are included because those are also our issues but the problem is there are other issues and it's really more of about your identity as a bisexual it's more of how you would present yourself as a bisexual and more of your

advocacy as a bisexual that is, that is the issue because right now, we're just a tagged along in the group.")

Invisibility of bisexuals. Furthermore, she stated that the fact that bisexual issues are not addressed in the LGBT movements is a reflection of the bisexual community being non-existent or invisible. She even said (as a bisexual), "*kami yung wala pero nawawala kasi kami kasi tinatago niyo kami yun lang naman ang issue ko*" ("we are not included, but we are not included because you are hiding us, that's my only issue"). Although there have been past efforts to address their issues have been made in the past, Fire pointed out that the lack of unity and some issues that were left unsettled in their group caused the breaking up of bisexual organizations like Indigo, as she narrated:

"Indigo Philippines is a break-away group from Dimlas , Dimlas is [likes] of Manila Society it was run by Nina [Recluna] and [Livera] before we're okay it was a, it was almost a bit of a thing going on so all of her core members left her including me yeah so we had some issues." (p.2)

Pressure from LGBT community due to the denial of bisexual existence. Another hurdle faced by bisexuals within the LGBT movements is the pressure they experience from their own LGBT community which has an apparent denial of the bisexual existence. In a dialogue with Fire, she laid out that bisexuals are driven to decide to take on butch identities in the LGBT community because they are told that being a bisexual is a "phase" towards becoming a lesbian, and that this "phase" is marked by confusion of the person identifying herself as a bisexual. As a result, very few bisexuals are strongly bi-identified. Some of them give in to pressure and eventually identify themselves as lesbians, while others become "straight" (p.6). This invisibility of bisexuals also led Fire to speak about encouraging bisexuals to join pride marches as an arduous task, as she figuratively described it to be as hard as "pulling an arm out of somebody" (p. 31-32).

Feminist Movements

Marginalization in the feminist movements. Other than being marginalized in the LGBT movements, bisexuals additionally succumb into marginalization within the feminist movements. In a discussion with Fire about bisexuals in feminist groups, she shared that bisexual issues are not addressed, if at all they are recognized. For instance, within women's groups, advocating strategies to combat violence against women excludes bisexuals. This is shown in her response, saying that: "*there aren't any [in reference to women's groups including bisexuals in their advocacy to fight violence against women] (uhm...) I worked with women's groups for VAW a lot of lesbian groups I help out you know all that*". Fire, during this dialogue with her, also noted that even if bisexuals are said to be included in the LGBT community, their issues are not discussed and unanswered. Oftentimes, their concerns are thought of as the same as lesbian issues.

Public/Social Institutions

Public Spaces

Social stigma. Social stigma, again, plays a crucial role in pinpointing the issues of bisexuals in the social sphere, particularly in public spaces. In the earlier discussion of issues regarding the self, the stigma of society towards bisexuals includes being characterized as bigamous or polygamous, abnormal, or having sex with multiple partners. Within the LGBT community, on the other hand, bisexuals are described as "undergoing a phase or a transition from a heterosexual to a lesbian identity. Meanwhile, in public spaces, all these descriptions of bisexuals converge. In the interview with Fire, she recounted:

"Isang issue na parang people will say na yun nga you're bi kasi you're still deciding (one issue is that people are as if saying you're bi because you're still

deciding) or the other off side is you're bi because you know you're just really promiscuous and you just really want to have a good time with everybody." (p.27)

Bisexuals are "less abnormal". Moreover, in public spaces, Fire indicated that the bisexual identity is seen as more acceptable for heterosexuals because they are viewed as "less abnormal", as people who still have hope to change ("may hope ka pa") because they are stereotyped to act in feminine ways. Other than that, the public expects bisexual females to be faithful to the person they are in a relationship with because bisexuals are seen to be individuals who do not have alternate partners. As told by Fire, people in society perceive bisexuals as "having the chance to live a more convenient lifestyle" once they decide on eventually assuming a heterosexual identity.

Applied Strategies

Community/Movements

LGBT Movements

Joining pride marches. Fire mentioned that joining pride marches has helped bisexuals in asserting their visibility within the LGBT movements. Yet, being secretive and quiet about their identities, she aired that it has been difficult to encourage bisexuals to come out and speak about their issues, let alone be recognized as bisexuals. The fear of bisexuals to put their sexual orientation at the stake of being judged leads to this challenge faced by Fire in organizing a group to represent bisexuals. But with her efforts and the cooperation of some bisexuals, she said that they were able to successfully join pride marches in the past, to represent their group as members of the LGBT community, as Fire recounted:

"2005 or 3 or one of those years we had it in Quezon City so one of those years that was tough it took like I don't know 2000 cups of coffee just to get people to

say yes... Nag march kami mga six or seven tapos but that was uh for me that was, that was one of our best ones and it could've been better (." (p.8)

("2005 or 3 or one of those years we had it in Quezon City so one of those years that was tough it took like I don't know 2000 cups of coffee just to get people to say yes... Six or seven of us marched and then, but that was one of our best ones and it could've been better.")

As shown in the account provided by Fire, the mention of the phrase "*it could've been better*" appears to communicate that although efforts for improving bisexual visibility are made, it still has the potential to grow.

Inclusion in the LGBT movements. Beyond recognition comes inclusion. In the interview with her, Fire further cited that the inclusion of bisexuals in the LGBT movements as a primordial requirement for their issues to be properly recognized and addressed. However, she also said that being actively recognized in these movements mandates a discussion of issues among bisexuals that can be made possible by meeting with bisexual friends through informal gatherings like lunch meetings or coffee sessions. In proposing this strategy to promote bisexual participation in LGBT groups, Fire narrated her experience in organizing a bisexual group in the past, as she shared:

"we used to have a more active group like when they were still here we used to meet up like every month uhm and it wasn't really like we don't really go on drinking sessions (...) for some strange reason that crowd wasn't into that mostly it was just coffee and then we'll talk about issues and stuff like that like what are their issues. I just wanted to know lang naman kung ako lang yung may issues and then different kinds of bisexuals and they would bring their friends." (p.15)

(we used to have a more active group like when they were still here we used to meet up like every month uhm and it wasn't really like we don't really go on drinking sessions (...) for some strange reason that crowd wasn't into that mostly it was just coffee and then we'll talk about issues and stuff like that like what are their issues. I just wanted to know if it's only me who has issues and then different kinds of bisexuals and they would bring their friends.")

Public/Social Institutions

Public Spaces

Fire also enumerated several strategies which have already been employed by bisexuals with the goal of helping the public understand them in a deeper level. In the interview with her, Fire said that the following steps have already taken by bisexuals to build education and awareness in the public sphere: (1) sharing research information, (2) writing in magazine columns or websites, (3) being interviewed for a radio show or a magazine article, and (4) organizing an online bisexual network in the form of e-groups (i.e., yahoo group).

Use of Information and Communications Technology (ICT). As mentioned earlier, Fire articulated that bisexuals have already embarked on using the Internet as one of their channels to foster the public's awareness of bisexual issues. Through information and communications technology (ICT), specifically the Internet, bisexuals are given the opportunity to mobilize fellow bisexuals, even those who want to keep their identities private, in educating the public and making them understand the bisexual experience. Below is a statement from Fire, who personally shared how the Internet serves as a space where bisexuals can be open in sharing their thoughts and experiences:

“they're open (...) well the reason they're open is because it's online so you don't see them and most of them I just know by their email addresses, nicknames but I don't really know them. Although I've posted pictures of myself and so that they know that I'm a real person”. (p.13)

Proposed Strategies

Public/Social Institutions

Public Spaces. Although proposed strategies for addressing bisexual issues are directed at building public education and awareness about bisexual issues in general, they also address concerns bisexuals have in their own LGBT community. For parsimony in discussion, proposed methods provided by Fire in the one-on-one discussion with her are discussed below under the context of public and social institutions.

Educating the public. During the interview with Fire, she mentioned that the key for bisexual issues to penetrate the public sphere is to explain their concerns to people, which includes being thorough and patient in answering their questions about bisexuality, even if it becomes offending at times. She stressed this point by saying:

“I have to explain... my partner was telling me na parang buti you’re so patient in explaining and I said... because if I, the day that I become impatient would be the day you know I’m gonna stop caring about everyone who’s like me and myself I can’t stop caring about that so I have to explain (laughs) all the time paulit ulit ako para talaga akong broken record sometimes and people are so used to it but the good thing is yun nga when people really do process it and are willing to listen... minsan nakakagulat yung questions very it’s very surprising that they will really be very direct na so you haven’t chosen yet? Yung ganun talaga yung parang actually minsan maooffend ka talaga ” (p.14)

(I have to explain... my partner was telling me, like it’s good you’re so patient in explaining and I said because if I, the day that I become impatient would be the day you know I’m gonna stop caring about everyone who’s like me and myself I can’t stop caring about that so I have to explain (laughs) all the time repeatedly like a broken record sometimes and people are so used to it but the good thing is yun nga when people really do process it and are willing to listen... sometimes you will be surprised, the questions are very surprising they will really be very direct na so you haven’t chosen yet? It’s really like that so actually, you will be offended sometimes.”)

According to Fire, educating the public entails not only addressing the questions of the public regarding bisexuality, but also, there is a need to explain thoroughly what bisexuality is about. Bisexuality is not identified through one’s sexual practices, nor is it a gender, in addition to male and female, as other people mistake it to be. According to Fire:

“I can’t deny that there are people who would define themselves as bisexual basically because of their the way that they practice sex so some of them identify as bi because it’s really for them it’s about having variety in having sex with different kinds of people so there are like things people like that and it’s fine.” (p.28)

Clarifying bisexuality as a sexual preference. Fire said that it is deemed necessary to clarify that bisexuality is a sexual preference or orientation, one’s “preference in having a partner”. In relation to this, it is therefore important to let the public know that although bisexuals may choose a biological male or a biological female as a partner when they decide settle down, they want their bisexuality to be treated as something permanent. In verbalizing this point, she said:

“I just want things to be permanent I want to settle down like everybody else well not everybody but like a lot of people would like to do so that’s it but, but that doesn’t erase my preferences at all.” (p.27)

Transgender Issues According to STRAP

The Self

Acceptance. Acceptance of the self is a key issue among transsexuals as it encompasses both their health and their well-being. The need to be in harmony with their bodies is one of the reasons why transsexual women undergo sexual replacement surgery (SRS) and/or hormone replacement therapy (HRT). Based on stories shared by Naomi in a focus-group discussion, transsexual women like her may achieve this ‘harmony with their bodies’ by undergoing a transition of the self. This transition, as she explained, does not necessarily demand a change in their external genitalia. Some transsexual women accept their bodies as they are while some feel the need to undergo sexual replacement surgery and/or hormone replacement therapy for them to

feel synchronized with their bodies. In the one-on-one discussion with her, she expressed this when she said:

“we need to find that [you know-the] harmony, harmony with our body. And that harmony for some people is a transition of their body and for some (...) is just to accept the body and not really fight with the genitals. Coz otherwise you’re also affirming that women are women because of their vagina. So you may not have a vagina, but you can still be a woman because your identity as a female was not defined by the absence or the presence of that vagina.” (p.30)

Passing as a woman. In relation to this issue of ‘self-body harmony’, an ordinary need of going to a public toilet was cited by Naomi as one of the events that make the discord between the transsexual women’s self and body more prominent, as it reflects how well they pass as a woman. Even if transsexual women identify themselves as females, “not passing well as a woman” when they go to public toilets is a contradiction to this identity. Moreover, while this issue is heavily social by nature since it involves other people who make transsexual women feel humiliated by not being identified as they choose to be, it is likewise an issue concerning the self, particularly their health, as going not being able to go to public restrooms makes them more vulnerable to having excretory ailments such as urinary tract infection (UTI), as shared by Naomi below:

“[And] we have a member who was diagnosed with UTI because of the fear of accessing female toilets, pinipigilan niya so-because it’s also self-belief na (she restrains it with so- because of the belief that), “I don’t pass well, I think I will be [red], I think people will know that yeah, I’m trans so just to save myself from the humiliation, I won’t pee even when I need to pee” yung ganun (like that). So that poses a health risk also. Can you imagine a person doing that for years? I used to do that.” (p.18)

Medical and health services. Other than the issue of public toilets, medical and health services are two areas which largely affect transsexuals’ well-being, since gaining access to these renders greater threat to their identity as women. However, because they emphasize the impact of

medicine and healthcare services as provided by institutions present in the transsexuals' social sphere, they will be discussed further in a separate section of this report.

Relationships and Micro-Contexts

Family

The family, as the central unit of the society, has a strong influence on transsexual women's lives. Under this micro-context, coming out, acceptance, and domestic violence are concerns abounding the lives of transsexual women.

Coming out and acceptance. In speaking about coming out, the transsexual women, Joy and Naomi, who participated in a focus-group discussion for this study, agreed that it is important for them to come out as transsexuals and not as gays. In the sharing of Naomi below, she described how she came out to her mother as a transsexual, through a "mother-and-daughter" talk:

"I told her (Naomi's mother) about gender identity, sexual orientation, the difference between gay, homosexuals, trans woman. Tapos iba e, sabi ko sa kanya (And it's different, I told her). At least she understood kasi may historical background kaming dalawa na ganito- (At least she understood because the two of us have a historical background like this-) knowledge on what a trans sexual is, iba talaga siya (it's really different) and then she was very supportive." (p.3)

From Naomi's experience, it is shown that coming out to her mother involved an in-depth discussion on sexuality, which required her to share her academic knowledge about it. Later in her sharing, she also narrated how she came out to her brother, how her brother reacted to her coming out, and how acceptance of her being a transsexual was shown to her by her family.

"even with my older brother, he supported me (...) after me explaining it academically, (...) from then on, I had to like, discuss the issues then, so since I will be presenting the (inaudible) for the women, he start addressing me as her

sister noh, in how to address proper (inaudible) so from then on, he and his wife taught my niece, nephews (to call me) “tita” bata pa naman sila (they are still young) so-- (laughs) from then on, “tita” even with the cousins now, okay naman (it’s ok). Siguro (maybe), [to them] I graduated, I have like a decent work.” (p.3)

As shown in the quote above, being accepted as a transsexual in the family is not an instant process. Again, based on Naomi’s experience, she had to give her family a comprehensive explanation of sexuality before they were able to accept her as she is. However, gaining positive feedback from coming out and eventual acceptance as a transsexual woman in her family, are experiences that are not shared by all transsexuals share. In the same focus-group discussion, Brenda expressed how tired she has become of hiding her identity from her father whom she could not come out to. She recalled how she had a difficult time concealing her identity to “pass as a man” for her father, as shown in her sharing when she said: *“I’m tired na. I can’t hide anymore. Last year, when my father went home, I was still wearing jacket to cover my chest and I would be simpler like-just wear pants and a simple top.”*

Peers/friends/barkada

Coming out and acceptance. Similar to the family, the peer group implicates transsexual women’s life greatly. Coming out and acceptance are the concerns transsexual women find hard to confront when dealing with their friends or barkada. In Joy’s sharing of her experience of transitioning from a man to a transsexual woman, she recalled that friends, especially the ones that they knew for a long time already, call them using their male name. She stated: *“(the old time friends. They call you with your legal name. Like you’re fully dressed and then, hoy! Christian! Halika dito!”* (“hey! Christian, come here!”) Naomi likewise aired the same ordeal, saying that long time friend usually find it hard to accept the transformation she has gone

through, as she narrated: *“For example, me, my long time friends have had difficulty accepting the changes that I’ve gone through.”*

Work

Discrimination. In the work setting, transsexual women particularly face issues of discrimination. Despite fulfilling the requirements or qualifications for the job they are applying for, they are often rejected by the companies they apply to, from the recruitment to the hiring process. In a personal story shared by Brenda, she explained how difficult it was for her to apply for a job:

“On my application. I have to explain to the Filipino recruitment specialist in terms of legal documents, my name would appear as Bryan ganun (like that), I’m a trans woman, in-explain-I have to differentiate. So pero pinapalagay ko muna yung loob nung ano, nung nagi-interview, kung prepared ba sila na [mag seg-way] kami sa ganung discussion (I make sure that the interviewer is prepared for that discussion). Wala namang problem kasi yung HR consultant nila was open to the discussion (there was no problem because their HR consultant was open to the discussion). It’s been very difficult actually-- being a trans woman would not be very easy right now, and because of the [urgency] of the post, they could not fight for it.” (p.7)

Also, the discrimination transsexual women go through in the workplace is exhibited in the preference of employers to hire “desente gays” (decent gays) over them. In addition, the labels attached to them also reflect this discrimination. Brenda identified these specific forms of discrimination against them when she said:

“Another issue is yung (the) marginalization of some of us in a very condescending manner like they would always use the term “baklang parlor” (parlor gay) but that’s not fair diba (right)? Because they are marginalizing transwomen or probably gay men who work in that industry. (...) So they think that if you are a “baklang parlor” (parlor gay) you are loud. But ah-so define

loud, what is the concept of loud? But that is condescending in the first place. Even in the industry, I've heard several times "we do hire gays but we hire desente gays (decent gays). Desente looking gays (decent-looking gays)." (p. 34)

Stereotyping. Besides being discriminated in applying for a job shown above, transsexual women are additionally stereotyped to occupy certain jobs such as that of entertainers in Japan, or of someone having a career in fashion. On the contrary, while they are seen to suit these jobs well, the society in general is not open to having transsexual women in the teaching profession. Brenda, a secondary education graduate, shared her experience of being turned down to teach because of being a transsexual, as she noted:

"It's been actually- I've had the same experience it's been very difficult for me (to-) because my major is secondary education, so I should be teaching in a high school (inaudible) difficult for me to find work. Because most people will second guess the kids and say that "oh the kids are not ready for someone like you." Well let's ask the kids. (laughs). Of course they will never ask the kids because they're thinking for the kids." (p.31)

Sex work as an alternative "job". The absence of jobs where transsexuals can be accepted pushes some of them to engage in sex work. With their need to address their needs in the different aspects of their life, Naomi acknowledged the reality that some transsexuals resort to prostitution, saying:

"... not all transwomen are born rich yet the issues are pressing and many who are unable to find work will also of course go to the most convenient and they will either do sex work so they can earn a lot in a short time or they will buy cheap and endanger themselves." (p.66)

Community/Movements

LGBT Movements

Under the umbrella of LGBT movements, transsexual women, or “transpinays” (as they want to be called) have issues with their misrepresentation by gays, the insensitivity to transsexuals, and finally, the discrimination shown towards them. Although LGBT movements are theoretically intended to advocate the rights and concerns of transsexuals, the focus group discussion conducted for this report revealed that transsexual women’s concerns are not appropriately addressed due to the issues they have within the movements.

Misrepresentation of transsexual women. As iterated by Naomi, local gay scholars misrepresent transsexual women, as they advocate a confusing connotation of the term “bakla”, as it is used to refer to both a gender and a sexual orientation. Given this, the said word, “bakla”, is used to refer to a homosexual and at the same time, it is used to label someone who performs the actions or behavior of someone who possesses a feminine gender. In pointing this out during the discussion, Naomi put it this way:

“Kasi, di po yan sexual orientation, gender [identity] tsaka gender identity po yun (because that is not sexual orientation, it is gender identity). Linawin po natin yun kasi (let’s make it clear because) even these gay scholars, they’ve conflated sexual orientation and gender identity from Marty Manalansan to Neil Garcia to many of those—and even the gay theorist from La Salle, they’ve conflated it. And they think that the “bakla” is homosexual. Bakla is a gender term— So sexual orientation turns—when you call someone bakla, it’s not saying that you’re a [man or] you’re sleeping with another man, it’s because, you’re feminine, you act like a woman, you have a heart of a woman, you have the demeanor of a woman. It’s gender! It’s not sex. And yet these people have confused those two so we have to unpack for them. Okay people! Listen (laughs).” (p.11)

In addition to this response of Naomi, Joy C. responded similarly and said that the term “*bakla*” has come to envelope several associated terms in sexuality. In the focus group discussion, she contended that the term has been conflated due to the misrepresentation of gay

scholars, as she told: “*conflated na yung terms (the terms are already conflated) so that includes the homosexual men and transgender women.*”

Insensitivity towards transsexuals. Another incremental issue transsexual women deal with under the LGBT movement that came out of the focus group discussion is the insensitivity towards them. They feel this insensitivity of those in the movement in the way they are judged depending on how likeable or acceptable they are when they identify themselves as a woman. In her response, Brenda stressed that instead of looking at transsexual women of different types and varying degrees of being a woman, people in the movements tend to compare them to each other, and is judged based on how closely they resemble a woman. In imparting her thoughts, she declared:

“But what we observe, like what I observed, likeability is best tested among us. Like whom among trans women can be more likeable than the others. So how we present ourselves could also be [concluded] to that likeability factor and that factor of acceptability. So sometimes, halimbawa, your audience doesn’t like the way you sound, doesn’t like the sound of your voice, doesn’t like your features kasi parang it’s-matapang masyado yung feature mo (because it’s like your features are so strong). And then there’s another one, another trans woman na mas soft yung feature, mas friendly looking, mas soft yung voice, parang mas nagiging likeable siya over the other (transwoman with a softer feature, more friendly-looking, softer voice, it’s like she is more likeable over the other).” (p.5)

“...if I’m in the room of fellow trans women, one of us will be most likeable, one of us will be least likeable, but that observation will readily surface compared to having 10 different kinds of women, well biological females through and through, [either who] likeability factors also.” (p.5)

Naomi expressed the same sentiment as Brenda, saying that it is almost automatic for people in the movement (like gays) to compare transsexual women, or transpinays, to each other. She cited an example by saying:

“...if a gay man for example meets the three of us and says, “Ay Joy, ikaw ang pinakamaganda sa kanilang tatlo (hey Joy, you are the most beautiful among you three).” “Hoy bakla, wag mo kaming pag-awayin kasi sa aming tatlo, lahat kami maganda. Hindi mo kailangan sabihan na siya ang maganda dahil maganda kaming lahat (Hey, bakla, don’t make us fight because all three of us are beautiful. You don’t have to say she is beautiful because we all are). Will it kill you to say that all three of us are beautiful? Kapal naman ng mukha mo (you have a thick face)!” (laughs) But it’s almost automatic for people.” (p.48)

Condescending attitudes toward transsexuals. In addition to being compared with each other, it also surfaced from the discussion that condescending attitudes within the LGBT movements also influence the transpinays. Again, the labels attached to them mirror that those in the movement are insensitive to the plight of transpinays from one generation to another. For example, being called “x-men” or “transformers” by members of LGBT groups goes show how they are looked down upon by those in LGBT groups. This was brought up by Brenda when she narrated:

“Transformers. I mean, kahit na semantics lang siya (even if it is just semantics), I mean, even if you don’t get lexical about it, [we leave, it becomes in the shoe]. Matagal na kasi yan eh. Noon pa yan, sa movies pa lang, diba or siguro yung mga jokes na diba, nagpasa-pasa, nag-pass on from generation to generation. But it really is condescending. Kasi it’s like telling also-it’s reaffirming to the world na what we are is that what we have transformed (That has been a long time ago. Even before, even in the movies, isn’t it or maybe those joke that are isn’t it, it’s passed from generation to generation. But it really is condescending. Because it’s like telling also- it’s reaffirming to the world that we have transformed).” (p.49)

Discrimination. The last issue within LGBT movements which emerged from the focus group discussions with transsexual women is discrimination. According to the transpinays in this study, discrimination against transpinays is apparent in the way their issues are seen as shallow by the LGBT movements, indicating a seeming dismissal of their experiences. Subsequently, the condescendence they receive from other members of the LGBT movements make them feel

disempowered when on the contrary, they should advocating the empowerment of transsexual women. This grievance was let out by Naomi, when she said: “*Well personally, I will not have a problem if someone all of a sudden identifies as a laptop, but you are assuming that gender issues, the trans people face, are cosmetic and they’re shallow and they do not cost anything and you can just easily dismiss them and you’re doing so with that question.*” (p.35)

Public/Social Institutions

Law

Legal recognition of name and sex change. When it comes to law, the most essential issue concerning transsexuals is to attain legal recognition for their change of name and sex. In a discussion with Naomi, she said that in the Philippines, it is no longer surprising that decisions made on changing names and sex of transsexual women are influenced by religion, particularly Christianity. She likewise pointed out that the decisions of the court are also influenced by homophobic and transphobic attitudes in the Philippines, as she uttered:

“Philippines, no. You would be surprised if you read the decision in Mary’s case. It starts with a quote from the bible, of course the creations part (laughs) and a quote from the Malakas and Maganda myth. So, affirming the gender binary. That was very homophobic. That was very homophobic and transphobic. (It kept resigning to) as “he”, “you’re a man, you’re body is man- made and even if you change your-- your genitals, it doesn't change your sex; you’re still a man. Even if you have a vagina.” (p.6)

Transphobia among legal authorities. To show an example of how apparent homophobic and transphobic attitudes among law enforcers influence decisions on legal name and sex change, Naomi narrated a legal case of a transsexual woman:

“V (Veronica) actually applied for a change of name and sex in her birth certificate. It was approved at the regional trial court level. But we heard that the court of appeals and the solicitor in general have been in connivance constantly checking trans cases like V’s (Veronica’s). So it was, it was overturned.” (p.44)

Medical and Health Services

The health sector is one of the most crucial institutions for transsexual women or transpinays as it is at the heart of their transformation from a being males to becoming females. In this domain, however, transsexuals still encounter issues which make their experiences more difficult. In the sharing of Joy, Joy C., Brenda, and Naomi through a group discussion, intertwined issues on medicines and medical procedures for transsexuals (i.e., Sexual Replacement Surgery, Hormone Replacement Therapy, Facial Feminization Surgery, etc.), pathologization of transsexuals, financial considerations, insensitivity of healthcare workers, discrimination, and the lack of stand among transsexuals in addressing their health concerns emerged as the major concerns of transsexual women.

Medicines and medical procedures for transsexuals. In speaking about medicines and medical procedures for transsexuals, Brenda verbalized that if sexual replacement surgery (SRS) for transsexual women will be supported, it will propagate the medicalization and pathologization of transsexuals, like what was raised in a debate on the results of a study in Sweden. She shared:

“(But) a big fraction (of the Swedish government) also of that study defended that, “if we will continue to sponsor SRS, we are treating, we are medicalizing the trans woman. It means that they must transition to be considered women, so meaning their transition must be at their own choice and must be at their own effort because that is what they would want for themselves. But if the Swedish government would continue sponsoring SRS, it means, we would really want to treat the trans women because for them to be women, they have to transition”. So which is in a way, a reasonable contention also, in fact, a good contention. At least we know that this country is a trans accepting-” (p.21)

In addition to medicalizing transsexualism, the side effects brought about by undergoing medical procedures such as HRT and FFS are important concerns of transsexuals. In the group discussion conducted in this study, Brenda and Naomi shared that as they age, the more hormones they need to combat to maintain their female physical characteristics. Other than that, the side effects of the medicines and the medical procedures they have may differ depending on the age they first underwent those treatments. As said by Naomi, taking hormones to restrain the testosterone when young may induce growth spurts and therefore, young transsexuals who are under this treatment tend to be very tall. Meanwhile, Brenda pointed out that the effect of taking hormones is different if you are a male-to-female transsexual or if you are a female-to male transsexual such that when the person is the former (male-to-female), the effects are reversible. However, if the person is the latter (female-to-male), the effects are irreversible. They also shared that the effects of taking hormones may vary from one person to another. It can aggravate asthma (as in Brenda's case) and may also cause thrombophlebitis or thromboembolism which can lead to stroke.

Financial considerations. The financial difficulty of transsexuals, insensitivity and discrimination that healthcare professionals show transsexuals propel some transsexuals to be under self-medication, which may be dangerous for them. Health professionals are transphobic and turn down transsexuals who seek medical aid. To discuss this issue, Naomi shared a story of a transpinay and her personal experience:

“Kasi (because) (inaudible) medical supervision, it involves a lot of money, kase you have to pay for consultation fee, you have to pay for every laboratory tests and you have to pay regularly for the bills (inaudible).” (p.52)

“Ako (Me), I'm self medicating. I haven't consulted an endocrinologist. Because, 10 years ago when I started to take hormones, I tried to consult one at

the Medical- ano yung tawag dun (what do you call that) medical something- Makati Med and after telling her my issues she said “okay, thank you for sharing but I cannot help you because this is against my belief.” (p.51)

Transsexuals’ lack of stand in medical issues. Finally, the last issue related to medical and health services that was raised by the participants of the focus group discussions is the transsexuals’ lack of stand in addressing their issues. This was identified by Joy C., saying:

“Tsaka parang [inaudible] (and it’s like) we don’t have a stand yet. So parang we don’t have a collective stand regarding this issue so it’s still-it’s being discussed in the globe. So we’re worried about what the future of the transpinays” (p.24)

Public Spaces

Expression of one’s gender, discrimination, and safety are the main issues of transsexuals in the public domain. As mentioned previously in the discussion of issues on the self, going to the toilet is an issue that is both about an individual and social issue faced by a transsexual woman.

Expression of one’s gender. Whereas its individual facet focuses more on the “self-body harmony”, in the social, more specifically public space, the emphasis is more on the recognition or acknowledgement that they are expressing the female gender. Brenda asserted this, as she told in the discussion:

“Let’s say sa mga restaurants or fastfood chains, so siguro minsan they limit the identification of a female sa form, physical form and they forget the physical aspects of your existence so for example, nakita nila na mukha kang babae, they’ll call you ma’am or miss pero when you start talking and you don’t exactly sound a-yung voice mo di kasing taas ng karamihang babae then they’ll shift noh and they will call you sir already. So, that’s an issue also kasi parang you’re telling me na just because of my voice-you heard what my voice sound, I should be a male and not a female pero you did acknowledge na, I’am a female because you initially call me ma’am without hearing me talk (...) and it’s also a concern

of transsexuals kasi medyo nakakasira ng mood. I usually experience that, yung ganung transition.” (p. 13)

(“Let’s say in restaurants or fastfood chains, so maybe sometimes they limit the identification of a female in the form, physical form and they forger the physical aspects of your existence so for example, when they see you looking like a woman, they’ll call you ma’am or miss but when you start talking and you don’t exactlt sound a- your voice is not as high-pitched as most women, then they’ll shift, right and they will call you sir already. So, that’s an issue because it’s like you’re telling me that just because of my voice- you heard what my voice sounded, I should be a male and not a female but you did acknowledge that, I am a female because you initially call me ma’am without hearing me talk (...) and it’s also a concern of transsexuals because it ruins our mood. I usually experience that transition.”)

Discrimination. Discrimination is another poignant issue transsexuals face in the public sphere. From the workplace, public areas (such as toilets), healthcare providers, and even in their own families, which have been discussed above. Transsexuals view discrimination towards them to be coming from all aspects of their lives, and Naomi recognized this by telling: *“What are the issues that we face? Many of course, so personally we experience discrimination in all aspects of life, we experience violence and-of different sorts noh, verbal, physical-”*

Safety. Lastly, transsexuals are also concerned about their safety everytime they enter public spaces. In the example below, Naomi identified being in MRT trains to be unsafe for transsexuals because of untoward behaviour to them, whether they take the male or the female carriages. She said:

“Kasi, I [hate] the male trains sa MRT kasi ang baho, at saka siksikan, saka talagang they would touch you, they would rub against you ganun— So, mas unsafe talaga siya. It’s really more unsafe so you choose the female trains and risk being (suspected to harass women).” (p.19)

[“Because, I hate the male trains in MRT because it’s smelly and jampacked, and they would touch you, they would rub against you, like that— So, it’s really more unsafe. It’s really more unsafe so you choose the female trains and risk being (suspected to harass women)]”

Applied Strategies

The Self

Establishing their own identity. Establishing their identity by looking for a group that advocates their rights is one of the strategies employed by transsexual women to promote their identity. Since the word “bakla” has brought confusion as to their identity, transsexual women have started to label themselves as “trans” or “transpinay”, as shared by Naomi.

Seeking support from organizations helping transsexuals. In response to the “self-body harmony” transsexuals want to achieve, Naomi also imparted that there are western groups that transsexuals can approach to aid them financially in undergoing sexual replacement surgery (SRS). In the local scene, however, she pointed out that it will still take a long time for their organization (STRAPP), as she narrated:

“For example in the west, like there are organizations, they sponsor the SRS of their members or they help their members with their SRS. Of course it has been discussed in STRAPP, but I think we will be old and gray before we’re able to set up a fund (...).” (p.20)

Relationships and Micro-Contexts

Family

Educating the family. Since the family has a strong influence on the life of transsexual women, Naomi implied in the discussion that it is important to educate them and make them more sensitive towards transsexuals. In educating the family, she shared the steps she had to make:

“I told her (Naomi’s mother) about gender identity, sexual orientation, the difference between gay, homosexuals, trans woman. Tapos iba e, sabi ko sa

kanya (And it's different, I told her). At least she understood kasi may historical background kaming dalawa na ganito- (At least she understood because the two of us have a historical background like this-) knowledge on what a trans sexual is, iba talaga siya (it's really different) and then she was very supportive." (p.3)

"even with my older brother, he supported me (...) after me explaining it academically, (...) from then on, I had to like, discuss the issues then, so since I will be presenting the (inaudible) for the women, he start addressing me as her sister noh, in how to address proper (inaudible) so from then on, he and his wife taught my niece, nephews (to call me) "tita" bata pa naman sila (they are still young) so-- (laughs) from then on, "tita" even with the cousins now , okay naman (it's ok). Siguro (maybe), [to them] I graduated, I have like a decent work." (p.3)

Giving of neutral names to children. Naomi likewise mentioned that at present, there are already parents who give their children neutral names so that they will not need to have their names changed if they grow up and face transsexual issues. She said this by sharing:

"We also have friends who are like that now (...) because they know how difficult it is for a trans person to change names, they give their children gender neutral names so they will not have difficulty if they have to grow up and face-have trans issues." (p.2)

Community/Movements

LGBT Movements

Establishing their own identity in LGBT Movements. Having noted earlier that the meaning of "bakla" has been conflated, Naomi mentioned that gays can use the said term to refer to their sexual orientation. The transsexuals, meanwhile, coined their own term, "transpinay". They have also been exerting efforts to be inclusive as possible, according to Joy C., that's why they have allowed transsexual males, or "transpinoy" and the intersex group to join their organization. Brenda further noted that women's groups are also helping them by incorporating their concerns as women's issues.

“So, you (gays) are bakla and and you’re homosexual and we- and we concede that it’s a sexual orientation term because it has become that, it has evolved into that. Now, bakla is homosexual. So, therefore, it does not apply to us so there was a need to coin the indigenous term. So, trans pinay. (p.11)

“Speaking of the movement, if you’re going to look at our name, it’s like-STRAPP, Society of Transsexual Women in the Philippines, but in reality, we want to try to be inclusive as possible. Like for example, we have transpinoy” (p.25)

“Parang (it’s like) we decided to embrace it para (so that) eventually we give birth to a trans pinoy movement. Parang ganun (it’s like that). Not only that, we also embrace the intersex group. Yeah, coz they don’t have their own grouping (...) Intersex issues sometimes overlaps with trans issues.” (p.26)

“If not singlehandedly and as a group and through the help of everyone, like, hopefully, in your case you’re helping us as well. You’re incorporating our issues with women’s issues because our issues are your issues and you know, vice versa also.” (p.27)

Public/Social Institutions

Education

Building awareness in the academic scene. In the area of education, transsexual women in the Philippines have already gained recognition in some academic institutions and have been invited as speakers in certain classes. By speaking before students, they are able to build their awareness and educate them about transsexuals. Based on Brenda’s experience, the talk she gave even became the topic of three blogs.

“Pero (but) sometimes it becomes a staple already na for example in La Salle and Benilde, the same professors would already invite us ganyan. Parang it’s expected na (that) every semester, every trimester, every year. Siguro (maybe) the best part was the talk being [blogged], I was happiest. Siyempre (of course) I’ll search for my name ganyan (like that), baka mamaya may nagmura sa kin (laughs) somewhere sa talk ko (maybe later on, someone is cursing me in my talk). Tapos (then) I found three blogs na (already) one of the blogs was written by a male tas (and) it appears na siguro (that maybe) he is a transsexual male noh (right) and the other one is a gay male, another one is a female. Tapos (then) they blogged about it.” (p.27)

Health Services

Fighting against the pathologization of transsexualism. As previously emphasized, the health sector and the services rendered by it are crucial to the lives of transsexuals. Now, the issue of transsexualism being a disorder, a pathological or medical condition, is being contested since it has ignited discrimination towards them from all aspects of the society. As narrated by Naomi, a global campaign called “Stop Trans Pathologization” is now ongoing to help address the need for transsexualism to be removed from the list of diseases.

“There’s one camp saying, “let’s delicit completely” kasi (because) this is not a mental disorder and so many trans people are happy! They only become depressed because of society; when society starts to oppress them and start closing doors on them, don’t give them-when society starts not giving those jobs, not giving them access to education, health care, and etcetera. But there’s another camp that says, “we classify it but retain it coz there are perks to doing that. Governments are more compelled to sponsor trans health and include it in their national health care plans”. Yeah, because it’s a medical condition or it’s treated aside” (p.21)

“There’s a campaign now, globally, called “Stop Trans Pathologization”. So we want to take out the trans issues out of the framework of disease, disorder” (p.24)

Public Spaces

Transsexuals get into public spaces in their everyday lives. Since they are vulnerable targets of humiliation and discrimination in these areas, they devised some ways to protect themselves.

Educational and awareness-building videos. In the sharing of Naomi during the discussion, she mentioned of a video that was created to enumerate the questions that should not be asked to a transsexual because of its offensive nature. She narrated:

“She made this video. Um, what not to ask a transsexual. It was many people, their etiquette, and their common courtesy gets joined out to the window. That when they meet a trans person, “Are your boobs real? Can I touch it?” “Nagpa-opera ka na (Did you already undergo surgery?)?” “Nagpa-sex transplant ka na (Did you have a sex transplant already)?” Unang-una po wala pong tinatawag na

sex transplant (First of all, there is no such thing called sex transplant) ! (laughs)
Hindi po yun pwede (That is not allowed).” (p.14)

Media exposure. Supplementing the strategy mentioned above, the appearance of transsexuals in television shows also helps them in developing the public’s awareness of transsexual issues, as Brenda recounted:

“Pero (but) it has helped noh (right), yung presence din ni Justine at tsaka ni Rica sa doon sa mga shows (the presence of Justine and Rica in those shows), those are very popular shows kasi (because) at least now, Filipinos have heard the term trans gender. And trans pinay. At least they’ve heard these terms and there’s a representation through them na, “Okay, we need-“ na (to) hopefully noh (right), in the coming months or years there’ll be more representation.” (p.26)

Going to “neutral” restrooms. Meanwhile, to protect transsexuals on the public toilet issue, Naomi said they advise fellow transsexual women to go to establishments that have gender neutral restrooms for them to avoid the hassle of being questioned or humiliated. She said:

“Oo (yes), they’re gender neutral. Even sa ano (in), sa (in) Seattle’s Best. So when we go to malls, we also point to our sisters which bathrooms are safe to access. Tas (then) for example, we went to see This is It at Greenbelt 3[12 o’clock], eh of course, we need to use the toilet and one of us went inside and the janitor told her, “ma’am, pambabae po ito (ma’am, this is for women)”. [Basta she went in] and the janitor chose not to make a fuss.” (p.17)

Proposed Strategies

The Self

Characteristics instead of disease “checklist”. In the area concerning the self, it has been proposed that it is important to identify transsexual women using a “characteristics checklist” but at the same time, stressing the point that the purpose of this checklist is mainly to identify who transsexual women are and not to impose that they have a medical problem. On the other hand,

Brenda said that in counseling transsexual women, it is suggested for them to be made aware of the “likeability factor” as the criteria in which they are judged.

“So if we just probably need to identify who a trans woman is just to inform everyone, “Okay, a trans woman is a trans woman because of the following.” So just to give let’s say, a checklist showing that she indeed identify [cross genderly], then you can retain it there for that purpose mainly a checklist purpose. (p.21)

“Kasi (because) in counseling some trans woman, you can explain along the way a psycho education na (that) you know, likeability is a factor. We cannot really stop and prevent that because gender stereotypes, the binary stereotypes are there. It reigns supreme. We also have to cup the terms with that and live with it. Kasi (because) eventually that likeability enforces you to nurture your insecurities when you can already [deep] your insecurities slowly.” (p.5)

Public/Social Institutions

Education

Being active in academic research and dialogue. In the area of education, engaging in research on transsexual women and joining colloquia or forums are seen to be lucrative strategies for educating people about transsexuals and also for gaining a deeper understanding of transsexuals in the academic realm. Brenda articulated this by narrating her own personal experience:

“Dr. Carlos Garcia coz I said, I actually mentioned na siguro (maybe) it’s about time we become more active in highlighting studies focusing on gender identity- tapos sabi niya (he said) my research was acknowledged because as a research entity ng (of the) graduate school we must allow for diversity but hindi daw i-a-allow ang advocacy (not really allowing advocacy), sabi ko (i said) “we’re not advocating trans sexuality, we’re advocating rights, so if you are transsexual, it’s the person’s right to be a woman.” (p.9)

“(…) a forum of research, a colloquia could actually help facilitate that and the thing is your presenting them with information. In a discussion with a very good friend of mine, my adviser and my research, Dr. [Samuel Ter], when he came over the Philippines, we were talking about our research, he wondered, “why am I so [old psychology school]” ganun. Sabi ko (I said), “I am a transwoman. I share the same concerns as all other transwoman like me; it’s just that I’m in the

field of psychology. I can't change my field radically and singlehandedly. I cannot do away with some practices; we have to slowly do away with it. So, we present them-for example in UST, they're used to quantitative studies but it came up with my research as qualitative, it was one of the few qualitative studies done in UST (...)." (p.9)

"So siguro (maybe), I mean, diba (right) we really have to talk about siguro (maybe), we can be more active. Hopefully, we can open also our forum to the lay people para (so)-and then have more case studies parang (like) -handle with care talaga (really handle with care)." (p.23)

Health Services

Review of how transsexualism is presented. In the health sector, the issue considered to be most essential to transsexuals to address is the pathologization of transsexualism, for it is considered to be another psychological disorder. To counter this, Brenda proposed that there is a need to review how transsexualism is presented, as well as the terminologies used to describe it.

"But it is maintained there as a pathology, as a pathologized condition similarly with (...) schizo type disorders, mood disorders, anxiety disorders, then it will be treated as the same and when you present that to the [lay] people, the lay person will only simplify everything by just calling it a disease diba. So siguro (maybe), take the actual responsibility on how it should be presented, siguro (perhaps) let's review the nomenclature, let's review the terminologies." (p.21)

Public Spaces

Education and awareness-building. Public spaces are venues for stereotyping and discrimination against transsexuals. Given this fact, employing strategies to protect them is a necessity. In focus group discussion conducted for this study, Brenda suggested that people should be educated in a friendly manner about how transsexual women should be addressed in public. Naomi, on the other hand, stressed that the public should be educated that gays and transsexual women are different because gays are men pretending to be women while transsexual women are women.

“Ganun. As long as you’re friendly with a-educating them. I think that would help, siguro sa ganitong instances, pwedeng kang magbigay ng tip na medyo sweeping generalization. Everybody else could present similarly as I do, call us ma’am. Let them correct you if you don’t want to be called ma’am. Para mas respectful kasi it’s appropriate to our-to who we are diba? Hindi naman lahat ng babae mukhang babae talaga. (laughs)” (p.11)

“Like that. As long as you’re friendly with a-educating them. I think that would help, perhaps in these instances, you can give tips that sound like sweeping generalization. Everybody else could present similarly as I do, call us ma’am. Let them correct you if you don’t want to be called ma’am. So that it’s more respectful because it’s appropriate to our- to who we are, right? Not all women look like real women. (laughs)”

“And that’s just one of the proofs that things are changing cause even the pageants are starting to move away from Ms. Gay because we’re not gay, diba (right)? For example, Ms. Gay in the States would be for female illusionists who are really men in their daily lives but they just become women on stage. So, it’s really Ms. Gay, because they’re gay. They are men who sleep with other men. When they join pageants, they’re female illusionist.” (p.12)

Being articulate and standing up for one’s self. To add to those strategies, Naomi also proposed that transsexual women should also learn to be articulate and stand up for themselves when people around them are doubtful. On the contrary, she also realized that they also must learn how to choose their battles in the public sphere, as she points out the toilet issue, saying:

“But, coz me, I know how to defend myself but some people don’t know how to defend themselves. Some of them, they will just cry, they will just accept their embarrassment, their humiliation. And they will just bow down their heads and walk away. But that’s unacceptable noh, in STRAPP. When it’s safe, you ask them to stand up for themselves. But if there’s a lot at stake, you choose your battles.” (p.17)

Being proactive. Naomi, meanwhile, suggested that if a transsexual’s safety is the one at stake, they should just go to a secure place where they can pee when in public areas. She contended that by doing so, transsexuals wouldn’t risk being humiliated in public.

“But if you’re a trans person and you feel you’re not safe, and then just go to Starbucks. Because there, you will safely access the toilets. You give options to yourself kasi diba (because right), when you go out, you just want to be

comfortable, you just want to have fun, minus the hassle of being humiliated in public (...) (p.17)

NEEDS/GAPS/OBSTACLES

The main need and gap to of this action research, is the implementation of the advocacy action plans based on the key findings of the study. Below is a discriptions of the actions plans. Currently, Isis International and Kartini are in the midst of exploring and securing partners from the social movements and donor community for the effective realization of the action plans, a crucial element of an action research.

I. Affinity Building for the Advancement of Sexual Rights: A series of inter-movement dialogues

The results of the research will be share at the dialogue and serve as the springboard for the discussion among the various groups. The dialogue will be framed in the context of respect and understanding, and directed at facilitating and building affinity for each others issues as a social movement.

Local level of dialogues:

- (a) LGBT groups with each other
- (b) LGBT groups with feminist groups
- (c) LGBT groups with feminist groups, and other human rights groups

Regional/International level dialogues:

- (a) Regional/international LGBT networks with each other
- (b) Regional/international LGBT network with regional/international feminist network
- (c) Regional/international LGBT networks with regional/regional feminist networks, and other regional/international human rights network

Outcome: A public statement on the state of LGBT rights locally / regionally / internationally and a declaration to work towards its advancement signed by the various groups who participated in the dialogue.

II. Say it Loud, Say it Proud: Social mainstreaming of LBT issues & concerns through IEC Materials

Development of local IEC materials of three types:

- (a) Visibility Materials e.g. office posters, media articles, sponsored ads, etc.
- (b) Teaching Materials e.g. teaching aids, powerpoint presentations, modules, etc.
- (c) Informational Materials e.g. brochures on intimate violence in same-sex relationships, transgender health concerns, etc.

Target Audiences: Government Offices, Non-Government Organizations, Schools, and Media Agencies

Launching of IEC materials

Launching of IEC materials through talks, lectures, and/or interviews, for instance, talks with GO and NGOs, lectures in schools, and interviews on media shows, that end with the sharing of the IEC materials on LBT issues and concerns.

III. Transforming Research Findings into Multi-Media Campaign Plans

Via the Isis Activist School for Feminist Development Communications, two types of training sessions can be organized to help the Kartini research fellows and/or our respective local networks (i.e. our research respondents) to develop research findings into campaign plans.

The two types of training sessions are:

[1] A training for local groups directed at developing a local campaign.

[2] A regional training directed at developing a regional campaign.

Generally, the training has 4 phases:

Phase 1: Training Needs Assessment & Module Development

Phase 2: Training Proper & Campaign Development

Phase 3: Implementation of the Campaign, Monitoring & Feedbacking

Phase 4: Evaluation & Feedbacking for escalating/snowballing of the campaign

IV. Collaborative LBT Research Projects

Based on the results of the research, a LBT research agenda can be drafted where feminist groups together with LBT groups, can conduct collaborative research studies on specific issues and agendas of the LBT community using feminist research methodology, e.g. STRAP together with Isis can conduct a study on the promotion of international standards of health care for transgendered people.

CONCLUSION

In summary, a comparison across lesbian, bisexual, and transgender women's issues is presented for each life sphere of the ecological model. The shared issues for LBT persons and the issues unique to each group are noted. The issues for the self and relationships or microcontexts are presented first. This is followed by the sphere of work and the sphere of social institutions and macro-contexts. The strategies for these spheres are then presented. The issues and strategies specific to the LGBT movement and to the feminist movement are presented at the end of the section.

Self & Relationships (Micro-contexts)

Shared by LBT persons. Given the overall context of social stigma faced by LBT persons, acceptance of one's gender identity/expression and sexual identity/orientation by the self, by family, and by friends was an issue common to LBT persons.

Unique to lesbians. Lesbians raised the issue of engaging in self-destructive or harmful behaviors like substance abuse and self-mutilation. Most striking were the unique issues of butch lesbians or tomboys including issues with the body (e.g. breastbinding and discomfort with one's body); masculinity (e.g. engaging in negative stereotypical masculine behaviors such as drinking, smoking, and womanizing); and, sexuality (e.g. one-way sex or not wanting to be touched during sex). An unfortunate reality is the systematic rape of tomboys in the community. Also unique to lesbians was the specificity in issues in intimate relationships as seen in the intersection of sexual orientation with gender (e.g. differences in issues of butch and femme lesbians), age (e.g. young and old lesbians), and class (e.g. lesbians and tomboys).

Unique to bisexuals. Issues uniquely raised by bisexuals are being forced to become heterosexual by their families and having to negotiate a bisexual identity in their intimate relationships.

Unique to transgenders. Transgender women or transpinays' unique issues revolve around the body and what they refer to as "harmony with the body". Linked to this is the need to be recognized as one's expressed gender by others, sometimes referred to as "passing as a woman". Also connected to the body are transgender health concerns, e.g. HRT or hormone replacement therapy, FFS or facial feminization, and SRS or sexual reassignment surgery.

Work

Discrimination based on gender identity/expression. The experience of discrimination at work was related to gender identity/expression. In particular, the non-hiring of tomboys (butch lesbians) and transpinays (MTF transgenders) seems primarily based on their expressed gender. Tomboys and transpinays are also often relegated to stereotypical work such as security guards and hairdressers. Tomboys also raised the dress code (i.e. having to dress as a woman) as oppressive. Transpinays reported resorting to sex work given the inability to find work.

Discrimination based on sexual orientation. In general, the experience of discrimination in the workplace on the basis of sexual orientation was raised as a key issue.

Social Institutions (Macro-contexts)

Most prominent among the social institutions and public spheres discussed were the law or legal system, health or medical services, and public spaces, among others.

Law/legal system. Lesbians and transgenders raised the issue of non-recognition of LGBT rights in the law in general and the absence of laws to uphold specific LGBT issues in particular. Also noted was homophobia and transphobia in the legal or court system.

Health/medical services. Lesbians and transgenders had similar concerns with health services in general which they described as inappropriate, insensitive, and inaccessible. The health profession was critiqued for the lack of knowledge and expertise on lesbian and transgender health care. Also, lesbians and transgenders expressed fears and anxieties in seeking healthcare.

Public spaces. Unique to tomboys and transpinays is raising the use of female public toilets as a human rights and health issue, referred to as the “right to pee in peace”.

Unique to transgenders. A unique legal issue for transgenders is the need to recognize name and sex change legally. A unique health issue is the treatment of transgenderism as

pathology by the medical, psychiatric, and psychological professions. Also raised was the inaccessibility of medical services due to the financial costs of medical procedures such as HRT or hormone replacement therapy, FFS or facial feminization, and SRS or sexual reassignment surgery. Transgenders raised the issue of being recognized according to one's gender identity/expression by others when in public, i.e. passing as a woman, and safety concerns in public places.

Implications of shared issues of tomboys and transpinays. At this point, we note the striking similarities in issues raised by tomboys and transpinays that relate to their experience of the body and to their gender identity/expression. A major implication of the study is to further explore the social construction of gender and sexual orientation in Philippine culture, particularly the meaning of the words *tomboy* and *bakla* which are the local terms that have often been used to refer to the (masculine) lesbian and the (feminine) gay man. For instance, is the meaning of tomboy equivalent to lesbian, butch lesbian, or female-to-male/FTM transgender? Are there diverse meanings to the word tomboy depending on the social context? On the other hand, the rejection of this group of transgendered women of the use of the word bakla because of its reference to gay men and their creation of the word transpinay to refer to transgendered women is an important phenomenon. Is the meaning of bakla then equivalent to the male-to-female/MTF transgender, to gay men, or both? How do diverse groups construct the meaning of bakla? A major implication of this study is to explore the social construction of tomboy and bakla in relation to lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) and to further understand the meaning of gender identity and sexual identity vis-à-vis subjective experience.

Possible Strategies

Past and present strategies were analyzed in relation to the life sphere/s they correspond

to and the issues they address. Strategies can be developed to respond to issues of LBT persons in general or to issues specific to a particular group as shared by the participants. Possible strategies are given below.

Self and relationships (Micro-contexts). To respond to issues of LBT persons, their families, and friends, a general strategy is providing LBT-sensitive counseling services. Such a strategy can address the overall issue of acceptance and coming out by the LBT person and one's significant others. Other strategies are peer support groups, hotlines, and education or awareness programs. An implication of these strategies is how to provide direct services to LBT persons and who will provide these services. Another implication is the need to train and sensitize counsellors, psychologists, social workers, and other health professionals on LBT issues. An interesting example of an issue-specific strategy is the "LGBT Prom Night" to provide a space for LGBT youth socialization. Another issue-specific strategy is conducting research on same-sex intimate violence.

Work. A key strategy to address discrimination in the workplace is lobbying for antidiscrimination policies that cover gender identity/expression and sexual identity/orientation. These anti-discrimination policies can be at the national level in the form of laws, at the local level through city or municipal ordinances, and at the organizational level such as company policies. The above has major implications on policy advocacy specific to the workplace.

Law/Legal System. A general strategy to demand for legal recognition of LBT persons is to lobby for anti-discrimination laws. An example of a strategy specific to lesbians is lobbying for inclusion of lesbian women in laws on women such as the Violence Against Women and Children or VAWC law (which succeeded) and the Magna Carta on Women (which unfortunately did not succeed). An example of a law specific to the needs of transgenders is the

lobbying for laws that will recognize name and sex change.

Health Services. A general strategy for social inclusion of LBT persons in health services is to lobby the appropriate health agencies and health professionals for LBT-inclusive health services. A specific strategy to address lesbian needs is asking women's health groups to provide health services to lesbian women, such as giving papsmeears and breast exams to tomboys. Another specific strategy is to conduct research on lesbian health concerns. Specific to transgenders is a campaign to "Stop Trans Pathologization!" Also specific to transgenders are adopting international standards for transgender health care and conducting research on transgender health concerns. An implication of these strategies is the need to train and sensitize medical doctors, nurses, and other health professionals on LBT concerns.

Public Spaces. An example of a strategy directed to the needs of tomboys and transgenders in public places is to advocate for gender-neutral toilets.

General Public. A general strategy to address the general public's lack of understanding of LBT issues is to have massive education, awareness, and information campaigns.

LGBT Movements

LBT organizing. The lesbian activists identified a number of issues in lesbian organizing. In the context of a long herstory of lesbian feminist organizing in the Philippines, the lesbian leaders raised issues in relation to gender (e.g. butch and femme lesbians), age (young and old lesbians), class (e.g. lesbians and tomboys), and politics (feminist and mainstream or tomboy lesbians). The lesbian feminist leaders noted the decline in lesbian political organizing and the lack of a unified lesbian movement or network in the Philippines. The bisexual activist raised the continued invisibility of bisexuals politically and the absence of a bisexual organization. The transgender activists did not identify issues specific to transgender organizing possibly because

of their strong visibility and presence as a transgender organization in recent years.

Bisexual and transgender issues with the LGBT movement. Only the bisexual activist and the transgender activists (and not the lesbian leaders) raised issues with the Philippine LGBT movement. The bisexual activist identified a number of issues with the LGBT movement, namely, the invisibility of bisexuals, the non-recognition of the existence of bisexuals and bisexuality, the lack of representation of bisexuals, and the lack of attention to bisexual issues. In her words, “B is just a letter in LGBT”. The transgender activists likewise noted a number of issues with the LGBT movement such as the misrepresentation of transgenders (e.g. the use of bakla to refer to gay men instead of transgendered women); the insensitivity to transgenders (e.g. comparing transgendered women in terms of “who can best pass as a woman”); condescending attitudes to transgenders of some lesbian and gay activists; and the marginalization of transgender issues. In the words of a transgender activist, their issues are seen as “shallow”.

Strategies for LBT organizing. The lesbian leaders identified a number of strategies specific to lesbian organizing such as reviving or strengthening lesbian political organizing; resolving issues among lesbian feminists or lesbian leaders; and lesbian organizing within the feminist movement. An interesting recommendation is for lesbian activists to align primarily with the feminist movement instead of the LGBT movement. On the other hand, the bisexual activist advocated for the inclusion of bisexual issues in the LGBT movement beyond symbolic representation. The strategy of transgender activists is to establish their own identity within the LGBT movement and for transgenders themselves to represent transgender issues within the LGBT movement.

Feminist/Women’s Movement

Lesbian issues with the feminist movement. Only the lesbian activists (and not the

bisexual activist and transgender activists) raised issues with the feminist movement and expressed their desire to be included in the women's agenda. The lesbian feminists have a long herstory of struggling for inclusion of lesbian issues in the women's agenda and have experienced exclusion or eventually being left out of the women's agenda in key occasions such as the recently passed Magna Carta of Women.

Feminist issues in including LBT persons in the women's agenda. The feminists expressed that women's organizations are supportive of and sensitive to LBT persons. The feminists also expressed their desire to respond to the issues of LBT persons, primarily of lesbians; but acknowledge that they lack knowledge on LBT issues as well as expertise on how to handle LBT issues.

Strategies for the Inclusion of LBT Issues in the Feminist/Women's Movement
Strategies for the inclusion of LBT issues in women's organizations in the Philippines were categorized into six major areas. The strategies that feminists and women's organizations can adopt were matched with the strategies that LBT activists and LBT organizations can advocate for; creating a one-to-one correspondence in the set of strategies for feminists and that of LBT activists.

Strategies for feminists and women's organizations. The recommended strategies for feminists and women's organizations are:

1. to formally recognize LBT persons in their VMG (vision, mission, goals);
2. to develop knowledge and expertise on LBT issues;
3. to develop the sensitivity, skills, and organizational processes on how to handle LBT issues;
4. to conduct research and expand gender analyses to include LBT issues;

5. to provide direct services for LBT persons; and,
6. to engage in intermovement dialogue and collaboration with LGBT activists.

Strategies for LBT activists and LBT organizations. The recommended strategies for LBT activists and organizations are:

1. to call for the formal recognition of LBT persons in the VMG of women's organizations;
 2. to develop IEC (information, education, and communication) materials on LBT issues and to conduct training on LBT issues;
 3. to develop IEC materials on how to handle LBT issues and to conduct training on how to handle LBT issues;
 4. to call for and conduct research on LBT issues and share these with feminist groups;
 5. to advocate for direct services for LBT persons; and, to engage in intermovement dialogue and collaboration with feminists.
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