

PRESS RELEASE



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Being LGBT in Asia

UNDP and USAID to advance understanding of the social and legal environment faced by LGBT people in Asia

Bangkok, 10 December 2012—On this International Human Rights Day, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the United States Agency for International Development, Regional Development Mission Asia (USAID Asia) are launching the first joint regional analysis of the social and legal context of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) people in Southeast and East Asia.

“Being LGBT in Asia: A Participatory Review and Analysis of the Legal and Social Environment for LGBT Civil Society” aims to understand not only the contexts faced by LGBT people; it will also address LGBT organizations, the space they operate in, and their capacity to engage on human rights and policy dialogues. This initiative will examine laws and policies, access to justice and health services, cross-border partnerships, and the role of new technologies to support LGBT advocates.

LGBT people in many parts of Asia live where social and legal environments remain far from inclusive. Understanding the contexts of discrimination, stigma, and rights deprivation on LGBT communities remains a challenge. This innovative joint analysis will focus on engaging and understanding LGBT communities and supporters throughout Southeast and East Asia with a view towards policies that are inclusive and supportive of the human rights of LGBT peoples, especially in the rapidly changing development and social environments in the region.

Over the next 12 months, “Being LGBT in Asia” will utilize innovative and participatory consultations to reach out to LGBT communities. Through discussions and surveys, a clearer picture will emerge on how legal, social, political and health factors impact LGBT individuals and communities, and how these factors affect their rights and capacity to participate in policy and political dialogue with national governments and regional intergovernmental bodies.

“Due to the laudable efforts of local non-governmental organizations and advocates in recent years, the space has opened to contemplate the development, health and human rights challenges specifically experienced by LGBT people in the region,” said Rebeca Grynspan, Associate Administrator of UNDP. “Therefore, we must work together to make human rights truly universal so that the aspirations of millions of LGBT people can add to the diversity and dynamism of Asia in its rapid transition towards socially and economically sustainable and inclusive societies.”

USAID’s 2011 LGBT Assistance Strategy states, “The Administration’s vision is that LGBT, like gender, is a human rights issue in all foreign assistance programming and business practices as well as for operating procedures.”

This regional engagement process will be used to guide UNDP, USAID, multi-lateral organizations, development partners, and governments at all levels to better engage and meet the needs of LGBT communities. UNDP and USAID will also work with LGBT private sector partners and social enterprises, for instance B-Change in Manila and Singapore, to harness the energy and innovation of social media and mobile applications, to develop and create advocacy videos documenting the lived experiences of LGBT across Asia in their languages to enhance knowledge transfer and support the emerging community of practice.

An LGBT leaders' group of senior academics, human rights experts, community advocates and private sector partners from around the region will provide guidance and counsel throughout the process to ensure fully Asian participation and ownership. This group includes Professor Michael Tan, Dean, College of Social Sciences and Philosophy at the University of the Philippines; Dédé Otomo, Adjunct Lecturer, Universitas Airlangga of Surabaya; Ging Cristobal, Asia Pacific Regional Project Coordinator, International Gay and Lesbian Human Rights Commission (IGLHRC); Mohd Zaki bin Mohd Arzmi, M.D., Malaysia Country Focal Point Islands of Southeast Asian Network on Male & Transgender Sexual Health (ISEAN); and Prempreeda Pramoj Na Ayutthaya, a Bangkok-based transgender advocate.

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