



Final Evaluation Report: Support to Strengthen Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender (LGBT) CSOs in Vietnam

Conducted for USAID and UNDP Vietnam

March 2016

List of Acronyms

CECEM	Centre for Community Empowerment
CSO	Community Service Organisation
HCMC	Ho Chi Minh City
IDAHOT	International Day Against Homophobia and Transphobia
IDI	In-Depth Interview
ICS	Information. Connecting and Sharing
ILS	Institute of Legislative Studies
LGBT	Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender
LGBTI	Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender and Intersex
MoJ	Ministry of Justice
PFLAG	Parents and Friends of Lesbians and Gays
UNDP	United Nations Development Program
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
VTC	Vietnam Tele
VTV	Vietnam Multimedia Corporation

Executive Summary

This report constitutes the results of the Final Evaluation of the project Support to Strengthen Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, and Transgender Civil Society Organizations in Vietnam executed by UNDP Vietnam with USD500,000 budget support provided by USAID and USD50,000 provided by UNDP. The Final Evaluation was conducted in the period 15th February 2016 to 17th March 2016. The methodology employed for the evaluation is described in the relevant section of this report.

Commencing in October 2013 and concluding in March 2016, this project sought to strengthen Vietnamese Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) engaged in providing support to lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex (LGBTI) people to address issues relevant to the LGBTI community in Vietnam including the reduction of stigma and the prevention of discrimination and the review of laws which impact negatively on the lives of LGLBTI individuals in Vietnam. The genesis of the project stemmed from the 2013 LGBTI National Community Dialogue and the needs expressed at the time to provide external support for the building of leadership in the LGBTI community in Vietnam in order to respond stigma and discrimination towards LGBTI people. These are articulated in the report titled “Being LGBT in Asia: Vietnam Country Report” Prior to the 2013 national dialogue and in the period following, advocacy work by Vietnamese CSOs on legislative reform with the government had begun (most notably led by iSEE in Hanoi) and this project also proposed to advance progress made in this field, thereby contributing to the reduction of discrimination and the enhancement of the legal rights of LGBTI people in Vietnam.

The Final Evaluation of the project makes numerous Key Findings and Key Recommendations detailed herein. In relation to the Outcomes of the project, the evaluation concludes that these have been met and, in some areas of activity, the project has achieved outcomes beyond what was expected. Both the research and capacity-building components of the project have contributed directly to the achievement of progress in efforts by government and civil society to improve the legal and human rights status of LGBTI people in Vietnam. In respect of the research funded by the project undertaken by ICS (Information, Connecting and Sharing) and iSEE the results of this research provided the evidential basis for the due attention paid to the need for legal reform in Vietnam by government (specifically, by the National Assembly and its legislative research arm, the Institute of Legislative Studies (ILS)) which was nascent at the period immediately before the project commenced. During the life of the project, a number of key reforms to pre-existing laws negatively impacting on the LGBTI community in Vietnam were initiated by the National Assembly. The project provided one important vehicle for the presentation of evidence and for discussion between National Assembly members, LGBTI community representatives and the parents of LGBTI people on the human impact of specific clauses in legislation which variously denied rights to transgender

people, criminalized same-sex marriage and reinforced the stigmatization of LGBTI people by their existence in law.

Through the creation and implementation of a tailored approach to building capacity in partnership with LGBTI groups, the project helped to build sustainable leadership for advocacy and the reduction of stigma and discrimination for LGBTI people via the VILEAD program. An important differentiating factor of this program is the building of capability for LGBTI leaders via a continuum of training, mentoring, consultation and the provision of opportunities for participants to implement their own activities for their respective communities. Instead of approaching capacity building as a series of stand-alone events, ICS and CECM (Centre for Community Empowerment) worked jointly to nurture participants for most of the life of the project and post-graduation interviews with ViLEAD graduates give a strong indication of the sustainable achievements and potential of LGBTI leadership in Vietnam. Furthermore, the capacity building assistance provided for PFLAG assisted this important parent body to make a major contribution to the advocacy and awareness-raising aims of the project.

Directly and indirectly, the project also contributed to the reduction of stigma towards the LGBTI community in Vietnam by supporting public events, social media communication activities, opportunities for national and regional forums for sharing expertise and experience, efforts by parents of LGBTI people to promote acceptance of LGBTI children. The project did not typically “brand” these events nor attribute their success to assistance provided by the project. Rather, these events and activities were very clearly identified with the particular LGBTI groups and CSOs who led them and often with the locations in which they were conducted, giving a strong sense of a national movement for change and the promotion of gender equality for LGBTI people. Some of these activities (e.g. the popular and well-reported Vietpride events of 2015) ran for a number of years prior to the assistance provided by the project. However, the leadership strengthening provided during the life of the project and the concomitant greater confidence achieved by LGBTI leaders and activists contributed to the achievement of this project outcome and the project, in turn, was able to use these events as means of promoting acceptance and understanding of the LGBTI community.

All of the social media products, the printed materials and much of the social media communication generated by LGBTI CSOs and individuals with the support of the project are impactful, professionally produced, unambiguous in their messaging. These have made a demonstrable contribution to helping the LGBTI community promote their desire for equal status and recognition within Vietnam and globally. Videos and television reportage on the project commonly identify instances of stigmatisation and discrimination as part of their narrative but provide a much greater emphasis on how these are overcome, usually as a result of a shift in understanding by parents, colleagues and communities. In the Vietnamese-language news reporting on events such as Vietpride and The Journey of Love, there is a distinctly empathetic voice given toward the LGBTI community and a refreshing absence of moral judgement. Much of the material produced presents the issues faced by gay, lesbian and

transgender people in accessing services, seeking and retaining employment, coming out, stigmatization, the denial of legal rights as well as providing venues for the expression of parental love and support for LGBTI children. The consistent high quality of these materials produced by CSOs with support from USAID and UNDP is a credit to the professional and creative approaches taken by these CSOs and a number of these materials went through extensive consultative processes in their creation.

The multi-stakeholder modality of this project is one of the salient features contributing to its largely successful implementation. UNDP's ability to engage with the Government of Vietnam on a broad range of issues-including issues deemed 'sensitive' which impact upon marginalized groups and individuals-is a key strength of its relationship with the government. The technical and management capacity of UNDP to undertake work with the LGBTI community is an additional major strength brought to the implementation of this project. The LGBTI CSOs UNDP partnered with in the implementation of the project came to it with strong existing relationships with the LGBTI community, experience in successfully and appropriately advocating for legal reform on LGBTI issues, high degrees of technical capacity and commitment to working with and for the LGBTI community in Vietnam. The evaluation found that the nascent attention of the National Assembly on LGBTI issues during the period of the formulation of the project and the intent of USAID and UNDP to support the initiative of the National Assembly was serendipitous. This due attention by a cohort of National Assembly members coincided with the commencement of the project and resulted in suitable platforms for advocacy to occur by LGBTI leaders and their parental supporters with these National Assembly members.

Methodology

In accordance with the Terms of Reference for the Final Evaluation of this project, the consultant liaised with UNDP's LGBTI Project Officer to prepared a schedule for the conduct of the evaluation. Taking a 360-degree approach, the evaluation methodology provided for government, CSO, donor and executing agency review as well seeking input from beneficiaries and stakeholders in three key locations.

The final evaluation commenced on February 18th with a desk review of available project documents from UNDP and the drafting of indicative questions for the planned In Depth Interviews (IDI) scheduled to be conducted in the week commencing 23rd February. These were reviewed by the Project Officer and approved. A Skype conference was also conducted during this period with the UNDP Project Officer to obtain additional background information on the project.

Documents reviewed included: -

Annual Work Plan January 2015 to October 2015; Annual Work Plan 1st January 2015 to 31st March 2016; Terms of Reference for the engagement of international and national consultants; Agreements between UNDP and ICS (9th April 2015), UNDP and iSEE (1st April 2014 and March 2015), Being LGBT in Asia - Vietnam Country Report; documentation of International Day Against Homophobia and Transphobia (IDAHOT) activities; Is It Because I Am LGBT?, draft Annual Reports, PFLAG Evaluation Report, Quarterly Progress Reports for quarters 2-4, 2014; Project Workplan, End of Year Report for the period 1/10/2014-30/9/2015; ICS Proposal for Grant Funding 27th January 2014; ICS Company Operating Licence; Towards Freedom event documentation; social media products, videos and news reportage (see Appendix 1);

The consultant commenced interviews with UNDP regional management and USAID on the 23rd of February. The interview with the regional program management of UNDP was conducted via Skype. This was followed by an in-person meeting with USAID personnel with sectoral responsibility for the project. On the 24th of February, a group interview with northern-based graduates of the ViLEAD program was conducted and an IDI with the Director of iSEE was conducted on the 25th of February and additional project documentation was provided by iSEE. A difficulty occurred in identifying a suitable space for the consultant to meet with PLFLAG representatives in HCMC the following week and a number of efforts by the consultant and Project Officer to secure a suitable space were not successful. However, this problem was eventually resolved with the assistance of ICS in HCMC. An IDI with relevant staff at the ILS office was conducted on the 26th of February.

IDIs were conducted with southern-based ViLEAD graduates in HCMC on 1st of March. An IDI was conducted with a representative of PFLAG in HCMC on the 2nd of March as well with ICS staff. The consultant travelled to Binh Dinh on the 3rd of March and conducted an IDI with a representative of PLFLAG in Quy Nhon on the 4th of March. The consultant travelled to Quang Ngai on the 5th of March and held IDIs with centrally-based ViLEAD graduates and with representatives of PLFLAG. During the period of the conduct of field research, the consultant prepared records of interview and where necessary, cross-referenced mention of specific events, challenges and achievements between interviewees. Documentation of Key Findings and Key Recommendations was completed in the week 7-11th of March and drafts of these submitted to UNDP and USAID for review. The Final Project Evaluation workshop was conducted on the 11th of March with participants from UNDP, USAID, PFLAG, ICS, iSEE and LGBTI groups from Hanoi and HCMC. ILS did not attend. IDIs which could not be scheduled in the previous two and half weeks were scheduled for the week commencing 14th of March. These were with CECM and the UNDP Regional Policy Advisor on HIV and Sexual Minorities and Project Manager of Being LGBT in Asia. Drafting of the Final Report then commenced.

Key Findings

1. The project has engendered positive change in the thinking of lawmakers through the direct relationships it has established between LGBTI communities and individuals and members of the National Assembly. Pre-project, those lawmakers were either people who were yet to be convinced of the need for legislative change to benefit the LGBTI community or lacked awareness of the specific legal, social and health issues faced by members of the LGBTI community. The focus on these issues specifically for the transgender community via dialogue with 13 National Assembly members, facilitated by the Institute for Legislative Studies in HCMC, had a noticeable impact in creating attitudinal change. This focus was, in the minds of some project beneficiaries, not entirely balanced but was the result of a democratic process undertaken by project partners. It was also appropriate given the relative complexity of the issues related to accessing health services, identification as citizens and discrimination experienced by members of the transgender community. Additionally, ICS and UNDP has engaged with the People's Supreme Court on the prohibition of the practice of forced surgery on intersex children and the protection of the gender identity of transgender children within the Civil Procedure Code and has made specific recommendations regarding these practices.
2. The project has helped to create legislative change. The review of the Civil Code continues in 2016 with input already provided from the LGBTI community and the positive engagement of ILS in this process. The decriminalization of same sex marriage through the new Law on Marriage and Family has, in the view of some, placed Vietnam in a relatively better position than some of its neighbours in the normalization of same sex marriage and in advancing public discussion of this issue. The reality is, however, that same sex marriage is not yet legal. Attribution of this project to this legislative change is difficult to quantify but given the level of engagement with government by iSEE on this issue since 2012 and the intensification of that engagement as a result of USAID and UNDP's support to iSEE during the life of the project, it is reasonable to conclude that Activity 3.2 of the project fulfilled its objective. Issues related to the Law on Custody and Detention, particularly as they pertain to transgender people, require further and broader engagement that needs to include law enforcement, detention medical services and courts.
3. Strengthening the capacity of parents of LGBTI community members to conduct outreach and communication work is a major achievement. The work done by ICS to support PFLAG has enabled PFLAG to grow its membership and, most, importantly, engage in public demonstrations of support and love by parents for their children, sending clear and powerful messages about acceptance. The self-stigmatisation by

parents of LGBTI children was mentioned by all parents interviewed: the work done by ICS to help them address this has clearly been useful but given the predominance of this issue in the emotional complexities encountered by parents and children indicates that this was (and remains) an issue that requires particular attention.

4. PFLAG's growth as a result of the project prompted discussion amongst parents as to whether PFLAG should seek status as a CSO or some other form of legal status and this question remains open. There is not yet a consensus amongst the existing PFLAG membership as to whether this should be pursued and consideration of this issue would best be facilitated through an externally-led consultation process and needs analysis.
5. The choice of project partners was entirely appropriate. By electing to work with iSEE and ICS as lead implementing agencies, UNDP enabled CSOs with a strong track record in research, advocacy and implementation of programs partnered with LGBTI groups to bring their expertise to bear on the fostering of a national movement for the promotion of LGBTI rights and equality. Additionally, the ability of iSEE and ICS to work directly with ILS and build productive relationships with National Assembly members, engage with legal experts in reviewing existing legislation affecting LGBTI people adversely, apply evidence-based research findings in dialogues through social and traditional mass media to explain the issues faced by-and achievements of-LGBTI people and lead large-scale public demonstrations of unity and support within and without LGBTI groups through activities such as Vietpride The Journey of Love and BUBU Town, clearly demonstrates that the capacity and project implementation approaches of these partners were fit for purpose.
6. Whilst increased parental support for LGBTI children was evident in the activities undertaken by PFLAG and in events such as the Vietpride marches, the mobilization of support by friends and siblings is clearly not as effective as the involvement of friends and siblings of LGBTI community members in the conduct of public awareness activities was limited.
7. Multiple project partners, UNDP and donor representatives commented that project management in the first phase of the project was problematic. The emphasis placed by the initial Project Officer on the requirements for sub-grantees to receive funding and these processes detracted from the broader communication needs of the project and resulted in problems such as the late notification of project events, some mistakes in marking and branding of materials produced with support from the donor and delays in response to communications. The absences, eventual resignation of the initial Project Officer and the protracted gap in finding a suitable replacement meant that the day-to-day running of the project by UNDP was not to optimal efficiency. However, in the second phase of the project, with the appointment of a new Project Officer, these problems were largely addressed and there is a stronger degree of satisfaction with how

the project has been managed and implemented by UNDP personnel, regular and prompt communication and a higher degree of direct engagement with project partners.

8. The ViLEAD capacity development model has proven to be highly effective and appropriate for the specific needs of marginalized and disparate LGBTI groups as well as for those who had existing capacity before joining the program. Over 2,500 people have been reached through ViLEAD activities including community members, parents, educators, students and members of the Youth Union. ViLEAD graduates demonstrate a high level of engagement both with their respective gender-based communities, with each other and, in many cases in Hanoi and HCMC, with other advocacy and rights-based programs designed to promote the rights of LGBTI people through paid and volunteer employment with CSOs and INGOs working in this space. This is a salient feature of the sustainability of ViLEAD's achievements and kudos is due to those project partners engaged in the delivery of the program. The existence of a mentor relationship for ViLEAD graduates is also one of the project's strong distinguishing points: one of the overriding features of many capacity building programs is that they are often solely defined by the provision of training without ongoing capacity development activities in the post-training period. The inclusion of a mentor relationship between more experience LGBTI activists and leaders for those with less experience helps to ensure the sustainability of the program's achievements.
9. Monitoring of project activities by UNDP personnel was, in some cases, not completed or not undertaken. There is a shortage of monitoring data and written reporting on activities on a quarterly basis for year one of the project as per the project design document. A number documentation means of project monitoring (Lessons Learned, Issue Log, Quality Management Table) were not present in the project documentation provided to the consultant. This is partially explained by the uneven project management in the first phase of the project.

Project Achievements

Output 1: Strengthened organizational and technical capacity of LGBTI community-based groups

The ViLEAD Program

In early 2014, the UNDP Technical Working Group specific to this project invited a number of key CSOs working within the LGBTI community in Vietnam to submit proposals for the implementation of activities designed to fulfil the requirements of the three project

outputs. ICS was selected to implement the ViLEAD capacity-strengthening program. The ViLEAD program developed by ICS and CECM includes thematic technical training workshops combined with field work experience for trainees and is further supported by matching trainees with LGBTI mentors acting as both monitor and supportive provider of technical assistance. During the life of the project, two ViLEAD training workshops were conducted (April 2014 and 2015 respectively) with a total of 22 participants from 18 different LGBTI groups from 15 provinces and cities. The evaluation found that the majority of graduates of the ViLEAD program were able to commence engagement in leading LGBTI community activities at the local level soon after their participation in the first program such as supporting four local Vietpride marches and community awareness activities (in Can Tho, Da Nang, Haiphong and Nha Trang) and effectively manage the small grants they received to support activities critical to the promotion of awareness of what it means to be LGBTI in Vietnam, leading to a reduction in stigmatization of LGBTI people. The experiential learning approach employed by the ViLEAD program, coupled with guidance and input from mentors, enhanced the skills and expertise of these young ViLEAD participants to a degree that enabled them to engage in outreach in formal and non-formal settings with the wider community. By the end of 2015, ViLEAD graduates has reached over 2,500 people in five locations, comprising parents of LGBTI community members, staff and students of schools and members of the Youth Union. The awareness-raising communication activities undertaken by ViLEAD graduates included presentations and discussions on gender diversity in schools, engagement with PFLAG in the sharing of important stories of acceptance and love related to PFLAG members' children, the promotion of transgender rights and the use of social media to promote the understanding of gender diversity.

"I learned what I can do to help other people who are not able to come out, who encounter problems because of their gender" ViLEAD graduate HCMC

Additionally, the evaluation found that during the life of the project and following its conclusion, a majority of ViLEAD graduates sustained their engagement in leadership positions within their respective local LGBT communities. A smaller number are engaged in networking with groups within Vietnam and regionally while some are employed by CSOs or INGOs on programs and projects within and for gender-diverse communities. For example, one transgender graduate and one lesbian graduate are working on Oxfam's Nextgen program. A number of graduates also reported that ViLEAD assisted them to acquire skills in fund raising and project management and one is currently engaged in supporting disadvantaged children in remote areas. Some graduates felt that the ViLEAD program was too brief and that a longer

engagement would have further enhanced their skills once they had built their confidence as leaders after the first training and mentoring program in 2014. The majority also felt that a greater number of participants was necessary. It was also observed by one graduate that the transgender focus of the ViLEAD program was tilted more towards men transitioning to women rather than women transitioning to men and this resulted in them feeling somewhat isolated. The program was also viewed by some as liberating: it did not set benchmark standards for everyone to meet but instead “we emphasized the ability of each individual to achieve their own goals.” The reported strong focus on addressing stigma and discrimination throughout the ViLEAD program was regarded as empowering by many graduates because it assisted them with practical insights into how to address these problems and reduced the common feelings of isolation that are the product of lived experience of both. The evaluation requested copies of the ViLEAD training program curriculum but these were not provided.

The sustainable benefits of the ViLEAD program are clear: this key program component made a radical and appropriate departure from the all-too-common reality of “capacity building” programs being almost solely focused on the provision of training and provided a continuum of engagement for all of its participants in which training was one of a number of inputs. The mentoring relationships inherent in the program design and the opportunities for program participants to design, manage and evaluate their own activities using modest financial support from the project distinguish the program. The continued post-program engagement of its graduates in communication, awareness-raising and advocacy activities are indicators of its ability to sustain the application of knowledge and practical experience for the benefit of the LGBTI community and the community as whole.

Some ViLEAD graduates felt that the geographic focus of the ViLEAD training programs was too orientated towards Hanoi and northern provinces and that there were fewer opportunities for potential trainees from the middle and south of Vietnam to participate. It is also important to note that the number of applications for the program well exceeded the number of places: in 2014, there were 40 applications for 20 places and in 2015, 110 applications for the same number of available places.

The Role of PFLAG

PFLAG formed in 2011 as a loose association of parents of LGBTI individuals in HCMC wishing to support for LGBTI children. The extent of stigma directed towards LGBTI children and their parents in a society where individuals typically assert that homosexual and gender-diverse identities and relationships are not considered socially acceptable underscores both the achievement embodied in the growth of PFLAG as advocates and supporters for the LGBTI community and the need for that advocacy and support to be as public as possible. It also informed the problems parents of LGBTI individuals experienced in reaching out to each other

and the causes of the self-stigmatisation experienced by the majority of parents. At the outset of this project, PFLAG's membership was numbered in the low teens. At the time of the conduct of the final evaluation, this had increased to approximately 70 people.

The evaluation found that PFLAG's capacity and membership has been greatly improved as a result of its engagement with ICS. This is a result of the training inputs provided by ICS (three programs conducted during 2015), guidance in the conduct of advocacy, counselling, support and the opportunities afforded across a number of project activities for PFLAG parents to engage with lawmakers, youth audiences and the wider public in awareness-raising activities. The willingness of PFLAG to learn from experienced also assisted its development during the life of the project. At the core of PFLAG's existence and its engagement within this project is its powerful message of acceptance, tolerance and familial love.

"Our children have to live in society and we need a society that accepts them" 74-year-old mother and member of PFLAG, Binh Dinh

PFLAG received two grants during the life of the project for the support of its work and to assist it develop capacity. The latter was funded because of a strongly-expressed need from PFLAG for assistance in advocacy, IT skills, communication and education materials development, internal management and the conduct of outreach and the evaluation found that these needs had been largely met with technical assistance provided by ICS and CECM.

In 2014 and 2015, PFLAG undertook The Journey of Love. This activity was the main awareness-raising activity PFLAG completed with support from ICS and local LGBTI groups. The first Journey of Love in 2014 was in five cities (Hanoi, HCMC, Haiphong, Da Nang and Can Tho) saw the participation of over 300 LGBTI community members, PFLAG members and members of local Womens' Unions. The Journey of Love created an open and receptive space for parents of LGBTI children to meet other parents, share their experiences and emotions, build local support for the LGBTI community by encouraging parental participation and addressed the cultural isolation felt by many families with LGBTI children. In 2014, the project assessed that the numbers of parents attending events organized locally as part of The Journey of Love was low and reflection by PFLAG regarding this concluded that more needed to be done to convince other parents to attend. In May 2015, via an examination of internal communication problems within PFLAG, problems with the branding of PFLAG and the need to improve PFLAG's organizational ability, lessons were learned and applied in the planning of The Journey of Love for 2015. Subsequently, The Journey of Love was expanded to include Vung Tau, Binh Dinh, Quang Ngai, Thanh Hoa and Hue and benefitted from additional planning and a high level of

engagement by local LGBTI groups in these locations. PFLAG developed an open letter to parents to encourage their attendance and further participation and followed this up with face-to-face meetings with parents as well promotion of planned PFLAG meetings via social media. Numbers of parent attendees in each location typically varied (Vung Tau: 4, Thanh Hoa: 13, Hue: 8, Quang Ngai: 9, Binh Dinh: 4) and some venues were too small to accommodate the total number of attendees. The shared experiences of the second Journey of Love by parents and their children were often powerful, moving and contributed to the coherent message of acceptance and an understanding of the struggle of parents to overcome self-stigmatisation. Local chapters of PFLAG were subsequently established in each location and in Hue, coverage of the event was provided by VTV in Hue.¹ VTV2 also produced a documentary of The Journey of Love as part of a series called “The Puzzle of Life”² and this was broadcast on VTV, VTV2 and VTV4 in the months following.

PFLAG experienced a number of difficulties during the first-year Journey of Love: low attendance at events, an actual (or perceived) lack of organizational ability and a lack of strategic direction. Despite being in existence since 2011, PFLAG worked much more on an interpersonal level than as a public advocate, counselling service and leading organization for the promotion of awareness of LGBTI identity and it would be unreasonable to expect PFLAG to be able fulfil these roles with a high degree of competence in the first year of a two-year project. Efforts by PFLAG, ICS and the UNDP project management team in 2015 addressed these problems and resulted in a more successful Journey of Love as well as improvements in PFLAG’s counselling and support role. The evidence of PFLAG’s evolution into a more capable body is to be found in the significant increase in membership it now enjoys (approximately 70 parents nationally), the improvements in capacity and ability evident in 2015 and 2016 as a result of assistance provided by ICS, progress made towards the establishment of PFLAG as a legal entity and the willingness of a larger number of parents to engage in open and public support of their LGBTI children. The evaluation found that unlike the two major project partner CSO’s engaged in addressing LGBTI issues in Vietnam, PFLAG required a much greater degree of external assistance to enable it to function effectively. The evident improvements in the approaches taken by PFLAG in the second year of the project are remarkable given the lack of a functioning secretariat or office, the disparate nature of its membership (often consisting of a handful of parents in approximately 15 provinces and cities), the demands made upon many parents as spouses, parents of multiple children and stemming from their employment and the fluid state of the mental health of some parents. The latter is given particular mention because of the universal reporting of self-stigmatisation by PFLAG members interviewed for this evaluation. Credit to PFLAG is also due because in the interactions with National Assembly

¹ <http://vtvhue.vn/ban-tin-thoi-su/ban-tin-thoi-su-toi/201506/chuong-trinh-thoi-su-toi-27062015-618736/index.htm>

² <http://bit.ly/hieuvecon>

members regarding legal reform, the voice parents of LGBTI people brought to these contains the gravitas and status that is accorded to parents in Vietnamese society: without the participation of parent voices so obviously in support of their children, the credibility of the persuasive cases made to these National Assembly members would have been lessened.

“I went from stigmatizing people like my child to loving my child more” PFLAG interviewee

“A child’s gender is their natural state. When I would hear people refer to gay men in a derogatory way, it made me feel so bad and it made a difference to the feeling I had about our society” PFLAF interviewee, HCMC

As a result of PFLAG’s engagement with the project, the organization is now in a better position to continue to advocate for the children and parents of the LGBTI community and to manage itself. There are, however, a number of outstanding questions related to PFLAG’s structure and identity are the subject of contention within the group. While PFLAG has established a three-person board of management, it is still to determine if and how it should be registered as a legal entity. There is also a need for PFLAG to continue to further pursue its own identity and funding separate to ICS in the post-project period. PFLAG also exists as a parent body: there is very little recorded participation of other family members and friends of LGBTI people in the activities of PFLAG during the life of the project. Vietnamese society and culture does give primacy to the status of parents within the family and interpersonal relationships with siblings and friends are typically regarded as of lesser status. However, PFLAG would benefit from an ability to demonstrate as broad as possible acceptance of LGBTI individuals within families and communities and a focus on mobilizing relatives and friends is needed.

Raising awareness, building acceptance

Sustaining involvement in (and, in a small number of cases, leadership of) a series of public events designed to assert the rights and identity of the LGBTI community in Vietnam was a consistent achievement of the project. The assistance provided by USAID and UNDP of these events helped to attract additional support (some of it at the diplomatic, government and regional agency levels) that in turn led to these events attracting a high public profile. The BUBU (Be Unique, Be Yourself) Town event on the 17th of May 2015 in Hanoi featured the promotion of rights and services for the LGBTI community, flash mobs, photo exhibitions,

cosplay, music performances, pledges of support from the UN Resident Coordinator and Ambassadors of the United States, Canada, The Netherlands and Sweden and received over 400 signatures to a letter addressed to the Ministry of Justice requesting revision of the Civil Code. The media interest generated by this event is demonstrated in the 14 individual press articles on it and the television reporting of it. It was not within the scope of this project to undertake extensive analysis of attitudinal change amongst the wider public and the acquisition of information resulting from media reportage of high profile events such as BUBU Town but it is reasonable to conclude that the inherent positive messages about LGBTI identity resulting from

“No one was afraid of family members, neighbours or friends seeing their public participation in Vietpride” LGBTI community member, Binh Dinh

such a joyous gathering of the LGBTI community in the north of Vietnam reverberated with members of the intended press readership and television audience.

Similarly, the seminar examining “Core Values and Challenges Facing Vietnamese Contemporary Families” conducted on 25th of June 2015 in Hanoi attracted 91 attendees and over 60 journalists enabled LGTBI CSOs to provide LGBTI perspectives on the questions of family identity for the benefit of government officials and the media. Discussion on the significance of the U.S Supreme Court decision to allow same-sex marriage via a talkshow on the 30th of June 2015 placed an additional spotlight on the issue of the move from decriminalization of same-sex marriage in Vietnam to the legalization of it. There was little press reportage of this event. The reach of the social media campaigns undertaken by CSOs supported by the project helped to generate a large number of recommendations regarding same-sex marriage on the National Assembly website. iSEE produced short video giving guidance on how to lodge recommendations related to the revision of the Civil Code related to gender reassignment that resulted in a noticeable increase in submissions to the National Assembly on this issue.³ iSEE also launched a photo campaign “I Am Vietnamese” featuring LGBTI people and their families two weeks prior to IDAHOT together with a video with the same title. The “I Am Vietnamese” video reached 119,400 people and the photo campaign reached over 387,000 people, indicating high levels of interest in the positive messaging contained in these. Thus, the project’s support of these activities enabled the creativity that is a hallmark of iSEE’s approach to promoting better and broader understanding of LGBTI issues, identity and the struggle for equality by LGBTI people to be applied at a national level. It is difficult to quantify the impact that these examples of communication and information activities have in the changing of

³ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xy6tFogV2Yk>

negative perceptions of LGBTI people and in the reduction of stigma: they are components of consistently well-researched, well-produced, assertive and positive messaging that solidifies the places of the LGBTI community in traditional media and information channels as well as within increasingly crowded social media spaces.

Output 2: Reduced stigma and discrimination faced by LGBTI people in employment and healthcare through initiatives to engage both the public and private sectors

Research into discrimination towards LGBTI people in Vietnam

The fulfilment of this Output within the context of the budget and scope of the project would appear to be beyond the capacity of the project to achieve. The amount of time and resources required to obtain productive engagement of the public and private sectors in employment and healthcare in initially developing an empathetic understanding of the stigma and discrimination experienced by LGBTI people in Vietnam and subsequently progressing towards addressing the complexity of extant issues could never match that provided by the project design as applied. However, the approach taken by UNDP and the relevant CSO partners to the fulfillment of this Output through research, advocacy, regional engagement and public awareness activities made a major contribution to developing and documenting a comprehensive and evidence-based understanding of how stigma and discrimination towards LGBTI people impacts on their ability to obtain and retain employment, access to services such as health and education as well as make a demonstrable contribution towards the fulfilment of Output 3.

In February 2015, iSEE produced the most comprehensive study of discrimination experienced by the LGBTI community in Vietnam to date. The study iSEE published the results of an extensive online survey which elicited 2,363 responses. It included questions regarding LGBTI persons' experience of discrimination in their family life, employment, education, access to health care, housing, utilizing public places and accessing public services. This study is currently only available in Vietnamese. The results represent compelling evidence of the need for continued extensive advocacy, awareness-raising and legal reform work. One third of respondents (31.6%) had experienced one or more forms of discrimination because of their gender in the past year.⁴ The findings of the study are alarming in the extent of familial rejection of LGBTI children (including instances of violence towards LGBTI children, forced medical examinations, demands for children to change their external appearance and dress). 38.2% of respondents reported experiencing discrimination from educators at secondary and

⁴ iSEE 'Co Phai Boi Vi Toi La LGBT?' (Is It Because I Am LGBT?), Hanoi, February 2015, p.6

tertiary levels⁵ and 53.8% experienced bullying and negative reactions from friends. Nearly 30% of all respondents could not find work because of their gender status while 59% of transgender respondents were not able to obtain employment.⁶ The project's support for the conduct of this study is worthy of particular appraisal. The granting of funding to iSEE for this work was entirely appropriate given the extensive social research capacity of this CSO and the key relationships it has built with lawmakers and the LGBTI community. The research methodology employed by iSEE was sound, designed to elicit detailed responses from participants and comprehensive in its choice of issues covered. It would have been enhanced with additional questioning of respondents on their personal ability to cope with instances of stigma and discrimination. The findings contained therein constitute a sound evidential basis for the further development of joint programs and projects designed to bring about change to the almost universal experience of stigma and discrimination encountered by LGBTI people in their pursuit of equal opportunity and access. The report itself is a milestone in providing a quantifiable analysis of the disturbing extent of stigma and discrimination towards LGBTI people present in Vietnam at this juncture. Utilising the full range of findings in this report to assist in advocating for further legal reform and designing specific activities to overcome barriers to employment, education, health services, government services and family-based stigma is the next most logical step in national efforts to improve the status of LGTBTI people.

Another minor research piece conducted by the project was completed by the law firm, N.H. Quang and Partners was a qualitative study of the rights of adoption for LGBTI people. The findings of this study contributed to the body of research findings employed in public discussions on a range of issues impacting the LGBTI community and in the advocacy work undertaken by iSEE with ILS.

Embrace: The Power of Being an Ally

VTC 10 Corporation, a state-owned television company, was selected via a bidding process to produce the 12-minute video "Embrace: The Power of Being an Ally"⁷, a reportage-style documentary film about the community and familial acceptance of an out gay man in a semi-rural area of Hanoi. Screened to an audience of CSO, government and media participants as part of the Viet Nam Family Day events on 25th of June 2015, the video contains interviews with family members, work supervisors and colleagues, powerful footage of PFLAG members counselling parents of LGBTI children and footage of the young man interacting with neighbours free of stigma or prejudice. The messages contained within this video are clearly expressed, positive and demonstrate that the lived experience of stigma and discrimination

⁵ Ibid. p.6

⁶ Ibid. p.6

⁷ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OvVXfUmH2qc>

towards LGBTI persons by the communities and families they live in can be overcome. They are also consistent with the positive messaging contained in other video and social media products supported by the project. However, greater impact would have been achieved if the video was able to be broadcast on public television and planning for broadcast to a wider audience would mean it continues to contribute to the suite of impactful media products of the project. If there was the intention for the video to be broadcast publically, it is not present in the project documentation.

Output 3: Policy dialogue on legal and policy reforms affecting LGBT people conducted with Government and the National Assembly

The Perspective of Government

Attention to the fact that the National Assembly had already commenced examining one important legal issue related to LGBTI rights in Vietnam has already been paid in this report. The initiative to examine the implications of changing the law regarding same-sex marriage by the National Assembly can be traced back to 2012. The project was very timely in its provision of resources to strengthen the capacity of LGBTI CSOs to advocate, connect with government and broaden engagement on a number of important legal issues for the LGBTI community (e.g. transgender rights, the right of adoption of same-sex couples) beyond discussions around the decriminalization of same-sex marriage and the possibility of creating legal reform through the legalization of same-sex marriage. Over the life of the project, the number and nature of the legal issues discussed with government at a number of levels and via a number of fora expanded because of the receptiveness of government to listen and because of the articulate use of both personal experience and research findings by LGBTI advocates for change in their public awareness work as well as their discussions with government. At no point in this evaluation was there any criticism forthcoming of the modus operandi or the nature of the rights issues raised by LGBTI CSOs in their work with government.

The ILS perspective on the engagement with UNDP, ISEE, ICS and PFLAG during the life of the project is critical in understanding how the project was successful in ensuring that the voices of the LGBTI community were heard in the processes undertaken by the National Assembly and relevant ministries that have resulted in Vietnam achieving progress towards a legal environment better orientated towards the needs of the LGBTI community and the needs of individuals in their assertion of equal rights under the law. ILS contributed much qualitative analysis to this evaluation, making it clear that the Institute was very pleased with the degree of positive cooperation it enjoyed from CSO partners and UNDP during the project, that the Institute believed it was important for LGBTI voices to be heard by government in the process of creating legislative change and that the Institute itself undertook something of a journey as a result of its engagement with project as it moved from regarding LGBTI legal rights issues as

‘sensitive’ to seeing those rights as mainstream relative to the rights of all citizens. This was underscored in interview comments by the Director of ILS who also reflected on how his own personal understanding of the issues faced by the LGBTI community in Vietnam improved markedly because of his engagement with these issues.

The series of consultations, meetings between PFLAG, iSEE, ICS and other LGBTI individuals, public events debating and highlighting legal issues for the LGBTI community indicate high level of intensity and frequency in the advocacy work of the project partners with government. The perception of ILS of this engagement was one that acknowledged the commitment and passion of the CSOs engaged on these issues and that regarded their ways of working as advocates as appropriate. Special mention was made of the efforts made by parents from PLFAG in their discussions with ILS in HCMC and of the very public demonstration of gratitude by a cohort of LGBT activists to the decision of the National Assembly to revise Article 37 of the Civil Code to allow gender reassignment surgery in Vietnam and for individuals to change their gender marker in official documentation once surgical procedures are complete.ⁱ ILS also paid attention to the requests of the LGBTI community for additional change to the Law on Family and Marriage: there is an awareness that decriminalization of same-sex marriage may be the pre-cursor to the legalization of same-sex marriage and ILS is working with all relevant offices of government to provide information on what changes are already extant for the codified changes to legislation and what the issues still under consideration are. ILS is also acutely aware of the barriers to employment pertaining to the LGBTI people and regards this as an additional area of further research and possible legislative change. It is important to note that ILS reinforced the importance of parents in advocating on legal issues relevant to LGBTI people in Vietnam: this was the subject of particularly appreciative commentary.

Regional engagement

The second phase of UNDP’s regional Being LGBT in Asia program facilitated engagement with the activities of this project and provided a number of opportunities for regional learning and sharing of experience at the inter-governmental level. UNDP Regional Office concluded that the involvement of the Government of Vietnam domestically and regionally was strong, acknowledged the space of civil society organisations in the resolution of legal rights issues for the LGBTI community and that the Government of Vietnam representatives who engaged on these issues were confident in doing so because they were able to identify a large range of issues affecting individuals and LGBTI communities. In March of 2016, the Acting Director-General of the Ministry of Justice participated with considerable energy in a regional meeting addressing legal rights issues for LGBTI people. Prior to this, there were a number of regional meetings and conferences where issues such as provision for same-sex marriage were discussed in detail. Additionally, the involvement of key LGBTI CSOs from

Vietnam in regional activities created greater integration and closer links between these organisations and other CSOs within the region as well as built links for the exploration of important issues in 2016 and beyond such as the need for improvement in the right of gender recognition.

Challenges

In the executive management of the project, the evaluation found a number of challenges which impacted on the core functions of the project and, in some instances, on the working relationships with CSOs and sub-grantees. The most commonly-mentioned challenges were those related to the management of the project for most of its first year of implementation. USAID observed that the preconditions sub-grantees needed to meet in the preparation of their applications for funding were onerous and delayed the disbursement of funds for activities in year one. This problem was addressed in year two of the project but it meant that the overall deadline for the expenditure of the project budget had to be extended to March 2016. There were also evident communication problems in the communication processes between the UNDP Project Officer, UNDP Regional Office, a number of LGTBI CSOs and sub-grantees for much of the first year of the project. Emails were often not responded to or responded too late, notification of scheduled activities came late to the donor and other invitees (sometimes too late to permit their attendance) and there was a pattern of increasing approved leave from work by the Project Officer as a result of the health and personal challenges he experienced. Following the resignation of the Project Officer, the position was filled by a consultant for some months. UNDP was conscious of the need to not allow the position to remain unfilled and to compensate for the shortcomings evident in the initial months of the project and thus arranged this temporary appointment and worked rapidly to recruit the new Project Officer as quickly as possible. The appointment of a new Project Officer made a significant difference and these shortcomings were addressed to the satisfaction of all project partners.

Some of the tasks assigned to external partners were not completed to the satisfaction of UNDP project management. The Policy Brief on transgender issues was considered to be weak, essentially because it did not engage sufficiently with transgender people in the conduct of the research required. Another small Comparative Study for Law on Anti-discrimination was also assessed as not being fit enough for purpose. Given the considerable differences in the legal framework of Vietnam and those of other states with fundamentally different bases for the creation and application of laws related to anti-discrimination, such a study would have been of limited practical applicability in the context of the processes for legal review project partners were continuously engaged in during the life of the project.

Monitoring of project activities and quantifiable measurement of achievement against the three project outputs was also problematic. There are a number of gaps in the

documentation of monitoring activities of the project (primarily those related to activity logs and quality assurance as detailed in the project document). While quarterly and annual reporting of the project was good, the fact that the absence of most monitoring documentation was not reported in the first year of the project and addressed is a concern. Further, there is little evidence of formal evaluations of training conducted under the ViLEAD program. Post-training evaluation did occur but it was in the form of discussion and there was no documentation of these discussions available.

Key Recommendations

What It Means To Be LGBTI in Vietnam

1. Events supported by the project such as BUBU Town, Vietpride, debates, photo exhibitions and discussion forums and, where possible, mass-media opportunities to advocate on LGBTI issues will attain greater reach and promote greater acceptance of gender diversity if they become regularized and retain their inclusive nature. International experience demonstrates that unified public events promoting the equitable place of LGBTI citizens in respective countries which occur on a regular basis experience year-on-year growth in their breadth and depth of LGBTI and broader community participation and contribute to the equitable treatment of LGBTI people as well as helping to promote understanding and awareness of gender diversity. Vietpride has enjoyed four years of growth and acceptance as a public event celebrating LGBTI identity. These public events do not need to rely heavily on external financial or advocacy support: they are Vietnamese initiatives with appropriate Vietnamese identities but they would benefit from well-targeted external assistance to strengthen their regular implementation.
2. The provision of further assistance to parents and friends of LGBTI people through vehicles such as PFLAG is clearly needed. Regardless of the issue of PFLAG's legal status, the power of the acceptance and provision of familial love for LGBTI children by their parents in a nation which places a high value on family unity and identity is very significant. Conducting outreach work with parents and friends, providing counselling and support, developing communication tools and approaches across multiple platforms ought to be part of a package of comprehensive assistance to build the engagement of parents, friends and other family members in advocating for the LGBTI community.
3. Barriers to employment and service access for LGBTI people remain: assistance to address the stigma and/or discrimination preventing LGBTI people to have equality in these areas needed

Technical Assistance

4. Assistance to train health service providers (public and private) on the implementation of legislative changes to permit medical procedures for gender reassignment and for the protection of the rights of intersex and transgender children is clearly needed. This is a new area of medical assistance for transgender persons and requires a comprehensive approach that includes counselling and support, training in medical procedures, assistance in the correct gender identification of transgender persons electing to undergo gender reassignment and the provision of outpatient support. The project has assisted in the process of legislative change to allow gender reassignment procedures to be conducted. There is also a need to provide for transgender people who do not elect to undergo gender reassignment to be identified by the correct gender marker for their sex. The next logical steps are for external technical and social support providers and public and private health providers in Vietnam to work together to provide support for the enactment of these changes so that transgender people can receive appropriate and transgender-friendly medical services for those wishing to undertake gender reassignment and for assistance to be provided to the relevant government bodies to enable transgender people the right to correctly be identified according to their gender and according to their right to choose to gender reassignment procedures or not.
5. A comprehensive approach to the implementation of changes to laws which affect the gender identity of LGBTI people is and this can be progressed with the broader engagement of relevant ministries such as the Ministry of Justice, Ministry of Labour, Invalids and Social Affairs, Ministry of Public Security and Ministry of Health

Legal Reform

6. UNDP is very well positioned to continue to support work on legislative reform for the LGBTI community both because of the nature and extent of its access to government and because it has recognized and worked with the most effective and organized Vietnamese CSOs promoting LGBTI rights. Further tripartite engagement between UNDP, ISEE and ICS and ILS on legal issues related to same sex marriage/civil union, adoption rights for LGBT couples, legal processing and detention of transgender persons, gender identification and the promotion of the equal status of LGBTI people is needed as is the broadening of this engagement to include additional government ministries such as the Ministry of Culture, Sports and Tourism, Ministry of Health, Ministry of Public Security, Ministry of Labour, Invalids and Social Affairs and agencies as well as the public and private health sectors.

Regional Cooperation

7. Seen from outside, Vietnam's progress on LGBTI rights looks impressive. There is much the LGBTI community in Vietnam can share and there is still much to learn (e.g. advocacy for legal reform): bringing the community into an ongoing dialogue is needed
8. Vietnam's LGBTI community would benefit from greater engagement with the second phase of the UNDO Being LGBT in Asia project.

ⁱ While this change is welcome, the separate issue of transgender persons being able to change their gender marker without the need to undergo gender reassignment surgery is yet to be resolved.

Appendix 1

References

Social Media: Project Videos

Embrace: The Power of Being An Ally <http://bit.ly/hieuvecon>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OvVXfUmH2qc>

I Am Vietnamese <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xy6tFogV2Yk>

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xzIIDvN_EHQ&feature=youtu.be

<https://www.facebook.com/hashtag/nguoikhoixuong>

<https://www.facebook.com/iseevn/videos/508043759351853/>

Webistes

<https://www.usaid.gov/vietnam/vulnerable-populations>

http://www.vn.undp.org/content/vietnam/en/home/library/democratic_governance/right-to-adoption-of-lgbt-viet-nam.html

http://duthaoonline.quochoi.vn/DuThao/Lists/DT_DUTHAO_LUAT/View_Detail.aspx?ItemID=588&TabIndex=6

<http://gendergalaxy.weebly.com/>

News Reportage

<http://vtvhue.vn/ban-tin-thoi-su/ban-tin-thoi-su-toi/201506/chuong-trinh-thoi-su-toi-27062015-618736/index.htm>

Appendix 2

Evaluation Schedule

Activity	Key Contact	Notes
Complete desk review and summarise key findings; develop key questions for IDIs	UNDP Project Staff	
Meet UNDP project staff; confirm schedule for IDIs; meet with USAID; Skype call with call with Nicholas Booth and Edmund Settle from UNDP Bangkok Regional Hub (afternoon)	UNDP Project Staff Laura McKechnie, USAID Hanoi	Meet with Dennis Curry/project staff: 11AM Skype call: 2.00PM (One UN House) USAID: 3.30PM
Discussion with Hanoi-based ViLEAD graduates on their self-development throughout the leadership programme and the impact of the programme	ViLEAD graduates, Hanoi	9.30AM (One UN House)
IDI with ISEE; IDI with MoJ; IDIs with project beneficiaries in Hanoi	Luong The Huy (ISEE) Nguyen Hong Hai (MoJ)	ISEE: 9.30AM MoJ:11.00AM Beneficiaries: 2.00PM (One UN House)
IDI with Institute for Legislative Studies; travel to HCMC	Dinh Xuan Thao	ILS: 9.30AM
Discussion with PFLAG core team on the development of their organizational and technical capacity, including their main activity (Journey of Love); IDI with PFLAG	Dinh Yen Ly	PFLAG: 9.30AM
Discussion with HCM-based ViLEAD graduates on their self-development throughout the leadership programme and the impact of the programme	ViLEAD graduates HCMC	Beneficiaries: 9.30AM (venue TBA)
IDI with ICS; IDIs with project beneficiaries in HCMC	Tran Khac Tung Nguyen Hai Yen	ICS: 9.30AM
Travel to Binh Dinh	1.45PM VN	
IDIs with project beneficiaries in Quy Nhon		
Travel to Quang Ngai; IDIs with project beneficiaries in Quang Ngai	Nguyễn Thị Hồng Diệu Trần Phương Tuyền Kỳ Minh Hải Hà Quý Trinh Võ Thị Minh Hoa Nguyễn Thị Mỹ	Meeting with beneficiaries: 2.00PM Paris Night Café, 238 Tran Hung Dao
Travel to Hanoi	2.15pm Quy Nhon	
Draft initial key findings for Consolidation Workshop; liaise with UNDP staff on workshop logistics	Consultant, UNDP staff	
Consolidation Workshop with key stakeholders for the presentation of initial key findings	Consultant, UNDP Project Staff	Hanoi 1.30PM-4.30PM

Compilation and submission of the first draft report to UNDP for feedback from key stakeholders	Consultant	
IDI with CECEM	Consultant, CECEM staff	Hanoi, 10.30am
Skype conference with UNDP Regional Office	Consultant, UNDP staff	
Completion of final report	Consultant	