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**Asia Regional Forum on SOGIE & GBV**  
**October 5-9th, 2020**

**OUTCOMES REPORT**  
**Updated November 17, 2020**

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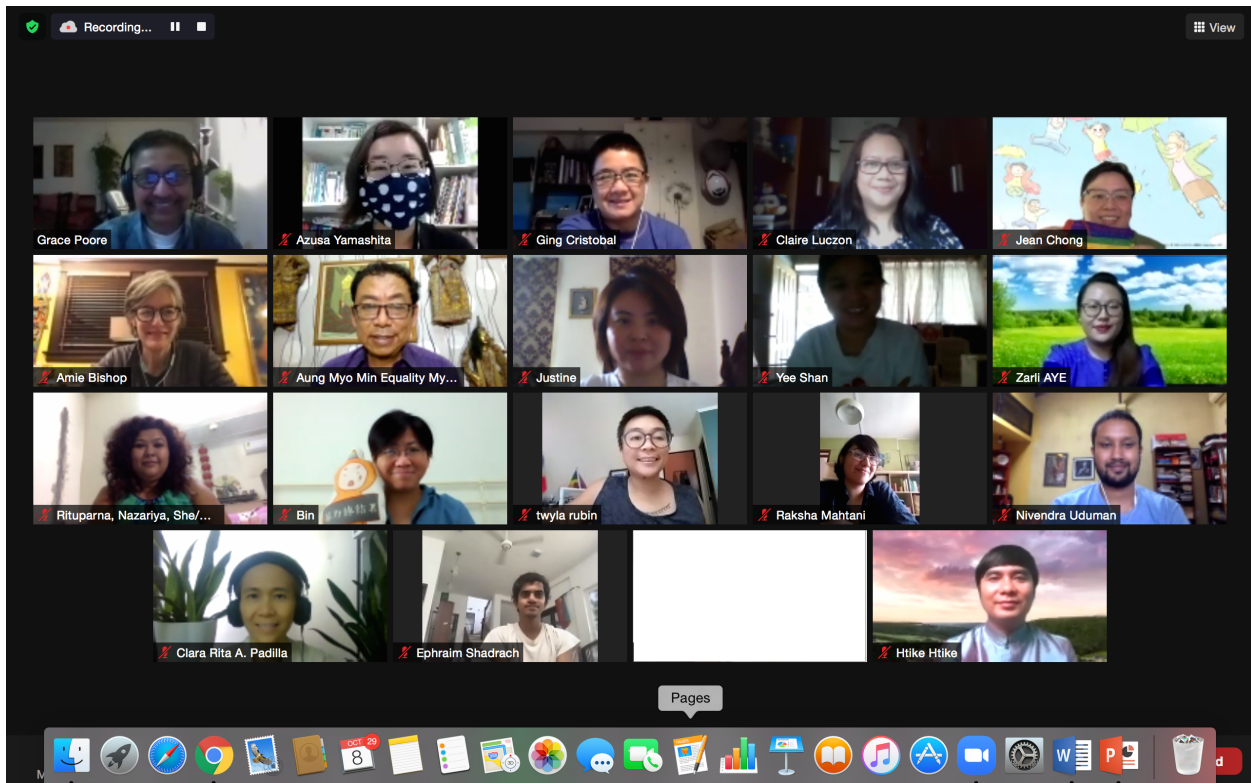
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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In 2018, OutRight received grants from the Australian government and the Human Rights Initiative of Open Society Foundations to lay the groundwork for an Asia regional platform of LGBTI-centered expertise on domestic and family violence (DV/FV) – providing opportunities for ideas and advocacy exchange and linking national anti-DV/FV initiatives to a regional platform on SOGIE and gender based violence (GBV).

On October 5-9<sup>th</sup>, 2020 OutRight and 22 LGBTI advocates working on GBV in 8 Asian countries met online to share country-level good practices for LGBTI protections for DV/FV, advocacy efforts to overcome legal challenges, effective training modules and service protocols. We held dialogues and debates on strengths and limitations of working with police to address LGBTI DV/FV and the implications of broadening our advocacy framework from Violence Against Women to Gender Based Violence. We discussed the implications of shifting away from theories of violence and service models informed by cis-het definitions of domestic violence, women, family, and intimate partnership.



Caption: Some participants of the inaugural Asia Regional Forum on SOGIE & GBV are not on camera for this photo.

At the end of the online regional forum, OutRight received 100% endorsement from forum participants to establish an Asia Regional Network on SOGIE & GBV. The network will regionalize efforts to improve DV/FV protections and services for LGBTI people and bring regional visibility to GBV challenges that LGBTI communities face. It will be a hub of knowledge, good practices, and shared expertise on SOGIE sensitized and LGBTI responsive interventions for GBV. The 24 participants of the forum are the Regional Network's first

members and committed to recommending at least 50 potential new members in the next six months based on criteria identified during the forum.

The regional forum brought partners together in a COVID-19 environment. Since the corona virus pandemic, the new normal is to stay home and switch to online activities. The new normal is also violence in the home, in families and in partnerships with limited options for escape. Many LGBTI people don't even recognize the violence they are experiencing as violence. Pre-COVID the challenge was that despite trainings to sensitize social service providers and DV counselors about SOGIE and DV/FV/IPV, it was difficult for LGBTI people to access trained service providers – there are too few social workers and counselors available and they are usually in bigger cities or certain parts of the country. Another pre-COVID challenge was the stigma of being LGBTI, the distrust of mainstream service providers, and the fear of criminalization – all of which compounded silences around DV/FV/IPV and barriers to seeking help for domestic and family violence. In the COVID environment, where GBV-DV/FV for women in general has risen significantly around the world, LGBTI people are not only experiencing more family and partner violence but also decreased options for escape under curfews, community quarantines, travel restrictions, and increased presence of police/military enforcing lockdowns.

As a Regional Network on SOGIE & GBV, participating members are committed to cross-border sharing of knowledge and practical, replicable strategies to improve and increase LGBTI help-seeking and find ways to talk about mental health in the context of SOGIE and GBV in Asia. There is keen interest in changing the narratives of gender based violence across the spectrum – using feminist LGBTI centered intersectional lenses. The Network shares common priorities to build LGBTI community resilience to deal with GBV-DV/FV and strengthen LGBTI peer support mechanisms at the regional level. It is exciting to see the potential benefits that the Regional Network's expertise and knowledge will bring to national and local efforts to reduce the harms of gender based violence.

In the remaining months of 2020 and in the new year, OutRight will ground and manage expectations for the Regional Network. We will convene online member meetings, online discussion and webinar presentations, and begin rolling out some pilot projects such as setting up the regional information hub.

## **Asia Regional Online Forum to Establish a Regional Network on SOGIE & GBV**

### **Program Objectives**

1. One regional learning and advocacy exchange of experiences, knowledge and best practices that will launch a Regional Network of SOGIE sensitized and LGBTI responsive domestic and family violence (DV/FV) interventionists. The network will serve as an information hub on SOGIE and gender based violence (GBV) in Asia.
2. Map existing laws prohibiting anti-DV/ and anti-GBV in Asia to identify reforms to improve DV/FV protections for LGBTI people.
3. Identify new stakeholder engagement strategies and successful coordinated multi-sector, multi-institutional responses to reducing harms from GBV that can be modeled by LGBTI groups.

OutRight Action International initially organized an in-person regional forum in February 2020 in Quezon City, Philippines. The forum was cancelled due to COVID health crisis, travel restrictions, and lockdown in the Philippines. October 2020 was the earliest opportunity to shift to an online regional forum. Outputs and outcomes of this forum are presented below.

### **A. Regional Forum Outputs Delivered**

1. OutRight convened 22 LGBT advocates in 8 Asian countries for an online regional forum on SOGIE & GBV on October 5-9, 2020. Participants were selected for their knowledge and experience in LGBT rights and gender based violence, including domestic and family violence and intimate partner violence (GBV-DV/FV/IPV).
  - The originally planned 3-day in-person forum in February 2020 was adapted to a 16-hour meeting over 5 days on Zoom.
  - Participants were from organizations that partnered with OutRight on improving DV/FV protections for LGBTI people (China, Myanmar, Philippines, Sri Lanka) as well as individual known to OutRight for their anti-GBV work (India, Japan, Malaysia, Singapore).
  - The online forum program included:
    - 8 country presentations of advocacy strategies, model service protocols, and lessons learned from implementation
    - 3 vibrant debates for challenging each other’s views on important issues for the region, namely, whether we should change our advocacy framework from Violence Against Women to Gender Based Violence; strengths and limitations of engaging with police to improve LGBTI protections for GBV; and the challenges for advocating intersectionality when faced with a situation of “pink-washing.”
    - 5 roundtable dialogues on priority issues that were identified in a pre-forum survey of invitees, which were, law versus reality of DV/FV protections for LGBTI in Asia; LGBTI mental health and DV/FV in Asian contexts; barriers posed by cis-het lens of women’s organizations doing anti-VAW work; and “how we get what we want” from a Regional Network.
    - 6 breakout group discussions on – ways to address barriers to LGBTI help-seeking for GBV-DV/FV; ways to support LGBTI advocates working on GBV; scope of a

Regional Network; current capacity of forum attendees and what they could bring to a Regional Network on SOGIE & GBV; challenges for the Network and some ways to address them; and steps towards formalizing and operationalizing the Network.

“This was a great platform to share country experiences that are struggling. I learn new issues. I never thought about before like the reluctance of women’s groups, traditional feminists who are not supportive of LGBT. I never thought about it before, a struggle within a struggle.”

**Myo Min, Myanmar**

“The enthusiasm and passion was re-invigorating. Sharing of country work was re-invigorating to me personally, especially the changes in laws and policies despite state repression. Very inspiring.”

**Clara Padilla, Philippines**

“I appreciate the depth of knowledge at this forum. It’s hard to have this kind of conversation at the national level.”

**Jean Chong, Singapore**

2. To meet logistical and human resource needs of the online forum:

- OutRight’s Asia Regional Coordinator, Grace Poore and a volunteer forum-planning team of 3 advocates from Sri Lanka, India and China developed a digital and online security protocol that was shared with all participants ahead of the forum. The aim was not to alarm but prepare everyone to take organizational and personal steps to ensure a safe forum experience. At the time of this report, there have been no security issues.
- To ensure secure participation and Zoom operation of forum activities, OutRight hired a designated technician.
- To minimize Internet service disruption, OutRight covered the cost of purchasing upgraded phone data plans for participants in countries that needed it
- Forum participants were offered emotional support by 2 therapists with LGBTI counseling experience via Zoom (with on/off camera options).

## **B. Regional Forum Outcomes Achieved**

1. The main advantage of moving online was having participants from a wider spread of countries, which contributed to a more regionally diverse exchange of advocacy experiences, strategies, and good practices.
2. Participants gained better awareness and understanding of cross border challenges and regionality of LGBTI protection gaps and barriers to LGBTI help-seeking for GV-DV/FV. For instance:
  - Common LGBTI GBV & domestic and family violence intervention gaps
    - Stigma about seeking mental health services
    - Lack of knowledgeable, experienced service providers
    - Abuses and unethical practices of police and healthcare professionals
    - Lack of inclusive/sensitive shelters, court accompaniment, emergency responses
    - Criminalization of LGBT people
    - Lack of effective police & judicial responses; lack of effective alternatives to police
    - Lack of inclusive anti-discrimination laws and anti DV/IPV laws

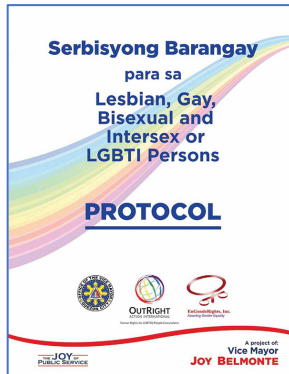
- Lack of safe reporting mechanisms
- LGBTI communities' lack awareness about their rights
- Common LGBTI GBV & domestic and family violence prevention gaps
  - Poor understanding about links between SOGIE-based GBV, misogyny and violence against women
  - Homophobic, transphobic service providers resistant to SOGIE sensitization
  - Police favor reconciliation / pressure victims to return to family
  - Women's groups and VAW NGOs don't consider LGBTI issues relevant/important
  - Criminalization of LGBT people
  - Cis-het VAW framework affects advocacy and protection systems for LGBTI people
  - Poor outreach about availability of GBV services for LGBTI people
  - Not enough LGBTI trained service providers to match demand for services
  - Lack of inclusive anti-discrimination laws
  - Lack of inclusive anti DV/IPV/rape laws
  - LGBTI activists not interested in GBV issues
  - Lack of research on LGBTI GBV and lack of data on services and protections
  - Lack of engagement with families of LGBTI people
  - Lack of religious leaders working to sensitize their peers and faith communities

3. The forum showed there's no one-size fits all model for fighting DV/FV and improving protections for LGBTI people.

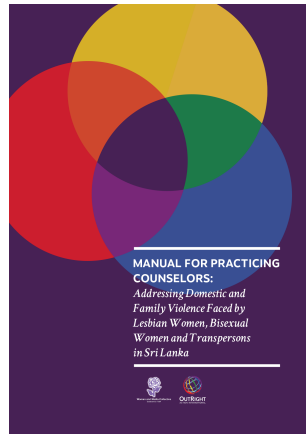
- For instance, while advocates' goals overlapped, pathways for change and good practices varied: legal and legislative advocacy, service trainings, awareness raising with different target audience, alliance building, LGBTI capacity building.

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Using provisions in existing anti DV laws to aid LGBTI people.</li> <li>▪ Educated duty bearers that non-discrimination mandates include LGBTI.</li> <li>▪ Pushed for DV laws to protect adult family violence victims.</li> <li>▪ Pushing for DV law to use non cis-het definitions for women and partnership violence.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Trained DV service providers in psychological 1st aid.</li> <li>▪ Trained LGBTI community leaders in peer support methods.</li> <li>▪ Got service providers to buy into the SOGIE mandate since LGBT don't want DV/FV to be criminalized.</li> <li>▪ Trained practicing certified counselors to work with LGBT people.</li> <li>▪ Increased LGBTI trained counselors in DV/GBV organizations.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Did public education about GBV-DV/FV/rape in LGBTI communities.</li> <li>▪ Did workshops and survivor meetings with lawmakers.</li> <li>▪ Used LGBT friendly media to change the narrative of VAW and DV.</li> <li>▪ Produced data on GBV in LGBTI communities.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Partnering with progressive feminist women's orgs; reject limited interpretation of gender.</li> <li>▪ Advocating a different kind of national DV network that prioritizes support system advocacy when legal system is not inclusive.</li> <li>▪ Working across human rights movements for non-discrimination.</li> <li>▪ Strengthening links between inclusive SOGIE based protections for GBV and eradicating gender inequality.</li> <li>▪ Tapped women's networks providing shelter for DV.</li> <li>▪ Did private community fundraising to rent space for LBT DV shelter.</li> <li>▪ NHRI has nation-wide online platform for receiving complaints. Complainants receive referrals for legal, healthcare and counseling services.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Creating support system for LGBTI advocates working on GBV.</li> <li>▪ Making strong, resilient LGBTI movements rather than relying on the law or waiting for legislation to work.</li> </ul>
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- The shared resources below are the result of 3 varied approaches to addressing LGBTI protection gaps for GBV-DV/FV.



Philippines approach



Sri Lanka approach



China approach

4. One priority issue for forum participants was barriers for LGBTI help-seeking that undermine the impact of protection work and reduce access to relief, redress, and positive outcomes for LGBTI beneficiaries. The table below presents a snapshot of the discussion with recommendations.

<p><b>Structural &amp; cultural barriers for LGBTI help-seeking</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Societal discrimination against LGBTI</li> <li>• Criminalization of LGBT people</li> <li>• <b>No actions are taken against family perpetrators due to cultural norms</b></li> <li>• Discriminatory practices of service providers</li> <li>• Lack of collaboration among protection workers, creating uneven service interactions and experience.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Silencing factors</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Distrust of mental health service providers</li> <li>• Mistrust of public authorities</li> <li>• Limited access to social service providers who are LGBTI sensitized</li> <li>• <b>Fear of exposing abusive parents, partner, another LGBTI community member to criminalization</b></li> <li>• Fear of losing privacy, being outed</li> <li>• Fear of losing community support</li> <li>• Financial dependence on abusive families and no alternative financial supportive system</li> </ul>
<p><b>Internal community barriers</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Absence of community peer support for LGBTI victims</li> <li>• <b>LGBTI people don't realize what they are experiencing is violence, are in denial, normalize violence as coping strategy, blame themselves for violence</b></li> <li>• Prevalence of online violence, Internet user violence</li> </ul>
<p><b>Recommendations for the State</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Build a GBV service resource platform for LGBTI help-seekers</li> <li>• Build online platform for reporting GBV as alternative to in-person reporting</li> <li>• Provide funding to social service organizations so they can programs for LGBTI victim-survivors</li> <li>• Provide funding to set up LGBTI inclusive shelters for GBV</li> <li>• Provide resources for legal first aid for LGBTI GBV victims</li> <li>• Provide livelihood support for LGBTI</li> </ul>



- Enact anti-discrimination laws and policies
- Use Restorative Justice in tandem with criminal justice to protect LGBTI

**Recommendations for the service sector**

- Make LGBTI issues/needs a priority issue for non-LGBT activists working on VAW
- Provide SOGIE & GBV training to facilitate inter-agency service collaboration
- Provide funding for trained personnel to implement training; monitor to see how training is being implemented
- Provide psycho-social counseling to LGBTI to address mental health impacts of GBV, address self-blame, and build their resilience
- Set up LGBTI supportive mental health service provider referral network.
- Provide LGBT inclusive/supportive safe houses/shelters for GBV
- Provide safe, private physical space for LGBTI to report GBV at hospitals, police stations
- Work with families of LGBTI people

**Recommendations for LGBTI Communities**

- Promote LGBTI solidarity with different vulnerable groups within larger LGBTI community. LGBTI must be unified in the goal to protect their community
- Teach LGBTI people that abuse must not be tolerated and abuse must not happen with impunity
- Train LGBTI community groups to provide peer support for GBV-DV
- Train LGBTI advocates psychological 1st aid and GBV mediation techniques.
- Create networks of LGBTI befrienders

5. Evaluation feedback shows that forum participants gained a valuable overview of cross-border challenges and learned some practical information that they are very likely/likely to use for strengthening their efforts to reduce and effectively respond to SOGIE-GBV in their countries.

“The richness of strategies and experiences made me reflect on our strategies in my country. I also had the chance to reflect on the frameworks of GBV versus VAW, that was very good.”

**Twyla Rubin, Philippines**

“I appreciated hearing about law and policy from other countries and see how we can do it in Malaysia.”

**Yee Shan, Malaysia**

“This is the first time I’m meeting activists from the region. I’m really inspired by the work in the barangays and how they mobilized them. And inspired by the Philippines State website for services for domestic violence victims.”

**Ephraim Shadrach, Sri Lanka**

“I liked that a dialogue has taken place around challenging issues, like do we or don’t we work with police. Very practical information was provided, like the frameworks presentation that Grace did. I will be re-visiting the frameworks we’re using in Japan.”

**Azusa Yamashita, Japan**

“I worked for 8 years on GBV and never attended a forum like this. I now understand that even in countries we look to like India and Philippines, they have struggles.”

**Zarli Aye, Myanmar**

6. Participants overwhelmingly said the forum has laid the groundwork for the Regional Network. There was 100% endorsement by the regional forum for OutRight’s proposed Asia Regional Network on SOGIE & GBV. There was agreement that regionalizing our work would bring visibility to LGBTI challenges with GBV-DV/FV and provide support and shared expertise on these issues.
7. On the forum’s last day, 22 country-level LGBTI advocates working on GBV expressed interest in joining the Network. Half of the forum participants committed to recruiting at least 50 potential new members for the Regional Network in the next 3-6 months.

“The network will be a mainframe for GBV activists to talk to each other and not work in isolation.”

**Jean Chong, Singapore**

“There was common ground among us despite governmental and police challenges. And we’re coming up with our own solutions for these challenges as a region.”

**A., Sri Lanka**

“I’m so happy to see that from OutRight’s research on violence against LBT in Asia comes this network. It’s a journey. This forum really brought us together. I’m proud to witness the building of this network.”

**BX, China**

8. Membership criteria for the Regional Network were identified by Forum participants.
  - Individual members only
  - LGBTI advocates with lived experiences of GBV
  - LGBTI advocates working across movements – such as, migrant worker issues, disability rights, sex worker issues, elder/aging issues
  - Non-LGBTI members must already be trained in SOGIE & GBV
  - Allies must be recommended by Regional Network members in that country. They could include LGBT inclusive and supportive representatives from
    - Women’s movement groups
    - Humanitarian groups
    - National Human Rights Commissions
    - National Women’s Commission
    - Human rights defenders of other vulnerable communities – such as, persons with disabilities, ethnic minorities, elders, sex workers, migrant workers
    - Medical professionals and mental health professionals who champion, e.g., banning “conversion therapy”
    - Feminist lawyers who support protections and enabling environments for LGBTI
    - Social workers who champion LGBTI mental health
    - LGBTI supportive experts on GBV in humanitarian crises
    - LGBTI supportive experts on GBV in disaster contexts
9. Some challenges for the Regional Network were identified: language access, COVID-19, existing busy workloads of members, inactive members/people who join but do nothing, online security, switching from VAW to GBV framework, and funding.

10. Results from OutRight’s light mapping of current capacity show that forum participants are not only interested in joining the Network but also ready to contribute skills and time, which is important for operationalizing the Network.

Would like to participate in webinars	Yes - 13 from India, Myanmar, Malaysia, Philippines, Singapore, Sri Lanka	
Can present in webinars	Yes - 5 from India, Philippines, Singapore, Sri Lanka	
Can write opinion pieces	Yes - 5 from Philippines, Singapore, Sri Lanka, India, China	
Can help plan/coordinate in-person regional forum post COVID	Yes - 3 from China, Japan, Myanmar	
Can participate in legal research	Yes - 8 individuals from China, Japan, Myanmar, Philippines, Singapore, Sri Lanka	
Can help develop regional campaigns	Yes - 7 from China, India, Myanmar, Philippines, Sri Lanka	
Can provide written language translation	Yes - 5 from China, India, Japan, Singapore, Sri Lanka	
Can travel to attend in-person regional forum post COVID	Yes - 16 from India, China, Malaysia, Myanmar, Philippines, Singapore, Sri Lanka	
Can connect LGBTI “activists” for Network activities	Yes - 10 from India, Japan, Malaysia, Singapore, Sri Lanka	Maybe - 3 from China, Myanmar, Philippines
Can connect SOGIE & GBV researchers to Network	Yes - 16 from China, India, Japan, Myanmar, Philippines, Singapore, Sri Lanka	
Can translate quarterly newsletter on LGBTI GBV-DV from English	Yes - 5 from India, Japan, Malaysia, Singapore, Sri Lanka	Maybe - 3 from China, Sri Lanka
Is there an audience for English language webinars in your networks?	Yes - 14 from India, Japan, Philippines, Singapore, Sri Lanka	Maybe - China No – Myanmar
How often should Network meet online?	every 4 weeks – most often selected	

### C. Vision For The Network And Steps Forward

#### 1. Immediate next steps —

- OutRight’s report on the forum is disseminated to Forum participants and donors.
- In response to Forum participants’ request for monthly meetings, OutRight is convening the first meeting of the Network on November 13<sup>th</sup> to solidify the network’s role and OutRight’s role, clarify expectations, and identify a calendar of activities.
- As the Regional Network’s secretariat, OutRight will be developing and housing the regional knowledge and expertise hub. The hub will provide access to effective and replicable LGBTI responsive DV/FV service models, anti-GBV legal and legislative good practices, research findings, opinion articles, videos, podcasts, awareness campaign materials, and other shared resources to build a sustainable LGBTI anti-GBV support network of experts in the region.

#### 2. In first quarter of 2021 –

- An Expert Group Meeting (EGM) in Myanmar in collaboration with Myanmar LGBT rights advocates – some of whom are already members of the Regional Network. The EGM is to

- provide expert advice to LGBT-friendly parliamentarians, ministerial allies, women's rights and LGBT rights advocates so that LGBT-inclusive protections are included in the Prevention of Violence Against Women Law. This will be a legislative priority in 2021 under Myanmar's newly seated parliament, which has gained more LGBT allies. Some members of the Regional Network will share model legislation, effective advocacy and their implementation strategies with the EGM.
- A webinar series will begin in January 2021 for current and new Network members and their recommended colleagues. Some webinars will also be open to invited members of the public. Webinars will help expand membership and publicize the work of the Network. Topics for online discussion selected by regional forum participants:
    - How to address the digital divide for LGBTI communities
    - How to ensure intersectionality in the Network's vision and practices
    - Broadening the regional DV/FV frameworks for systems and community change and changing the regional advocacy framework from VAW to GBV
    - How to mainstream LGBTI GBV-DV
    - How to do safe data collection with everyday tools
    - How to do online trainings on LGBTI GBV-DV
    - How to break silences on GBV-DV
    - How to collect sensitive info on LGBT GBV-DV
    - How to sustain mutual aid for LGBTI GBV-DV needs
    - How to support sustainability of LGBTI movements working on GBV
    - How to talk about mental health and GBV in Asian contexts, including resilience of LGBTI groups in Asia working to end GBV
    - How to advocate LBT rights with feminist groups
    - How to fundraise for LGBT-DV work
    - LGBTI GBV in disaster contexts
    - Intersectionality of SOGIESC and disability rights, migrant worker issues, sex worker rights, child rights, elder issues, SRHR

### 3. Longer term activities –

- OutRight is seeking funding for a post-COVID in-person regional forum/ learning and advocacy exchange with current and new members.
- Forum participants identified some pilot projects for the Regional Network. These project ideas will inform and help solidify OutRight's longer term vision for the Network.
  - Create a framework that shifts away from the cis-het lens of gender violence theories and intervention models for violence against women (VAW) and gender equality. Create new tools using LGBTI centered approaches to GBV. This would also be useful for mainstream people working on GBV.
  - Map strategies in Asia that have successfully used existing VAW and other anti-GBV laws to aid LGBTI people. The outcomes of this kind of mapping would add value to advocacy efforts in countries where LGBT people are criminalized, where there is no LGBTI-inclusive legislation prohibiting discrimination, and where there are no VAW and other anti-GBV laws and policies that use inclusive (non cis-het) definitions for women and intimate partnerships.
  - Produce a paper on how NHRIs can take on LGBTI GBV.

- Develop strategies for Restorative Justice as an alternative protection mechanism and how it can be used in tandem with criminal justice measures and processes in Asia for LGBTI GBV-DV/FV.
- Research project with families of LGBTI people to show family attitudes in Asia about LGBTI, the regional trends of family violence and harms, including family-endorsed “conversion therapy,” and families who champion LGBTI rights. Findings will be useful for a regional campaign to stop family violence and conversion therapy.
- Convening of Network members with professional service providers who have been trained on SOGIE and GBV by Network’s members in their countries. The convening is an opportunity for service providers to share good practices, lessons learned, service models, and service experiences with LGBTI clients. Information gathered would inform a study on LGBTI help-seeking behaviors and ways to reduce the barriers they face.
- Provide information and expertise to country level LGBTI groups that are interested in organizing a regional petition to repeal 377 and 365.
- Map LGBTI communities’ experiences with State and NGO responses to environmental disasters, health crises, and humanitarian crises. Bring visibility to the short-term and longer term impacts of COVID pandemic on LGBTI migrant workers, and displacement of LGBTI people in the region. Promote good practices for inclusive disaster responses and humanitarian responses in the context of LGBTI informal sector workers.
- Research on the barriers to LGBTI help-seeking and LGBTI attitudes about GBV-DV/FV. Produce a report with recommendations for use by local LGBTI groups, stakeholders and mental health allies.