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## Being LGBT in Asia:

### A Participatory Review and Analysis of the Legal and Social Environment for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender (LGBT) Persons and Civil Society

March 2013



Secretary of State Hillary Clinton delivers historic speech on the human rights of LGBT persons on International Human Rights Day, Palais des Nations, Geneva, Switzerland, December 6, 2011.

*“U.S. diplomacy and foreign assistance [will] promote and protect the human rights of LGBT persons.”*  
**President Barack Obama**

*“A historic shift is underway...The time has come.”*  
**UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon**

*“The Obama Administration defends the human rights of LGBT people as part of our comprehensive human rights policy and as a priority of our foreign policy [...] The President has directed all U.S. government agencies engaged overseas [...] to ensure that our foreign assistance promotes the protection of LGBT rights, to enlist international organizations in the fight against discrimination, and to respond swiftly to abuses against LGBT persons.”*  
**Secretary Hillary Rodham Clinton**

*“The United Nations Development Programme supports initiatives which promote understanding of the negative impact of homophobia and transphobia, and reduce human rights violations.”*  
**UNDP Administrator Helen Clark**

“Being LGBT in Asia” is a ground-breaking, first-of-its-kind joint analysis undertaken by USAID and UNDP together with grassroots LGBT organizations and community leaders to understand the challenges faced by LGBT people in Asia. It leverages value-added innovations to educate development stakeholders about LGBT-inclusive development. Asian ownership is assured through a Senior (Asian) LGBT Advisory Group.

#### APPROACH

The Review and Analysis methodology examines the LGBT experience in Asia from a Democracy, Human Rights and Governance (DRG) perspective, rather than through historic HIV lenses. It reflects the principles outlined in the USAID LGBT Foreign Assistance Strategy by drawing upon donor collaboration, innovative and participatory approaches to understanding the operating environment, utilizing multimedia and social media technology in new ways to urge creative dialogue, while empowering and educating stakeholders and development partners. The initiative also informs development policy and programming, and provides value added products to a range of USG and UN stakeholders and associated development partners.

#### POLICY OVERVIEW

President Obama and Secretary Clinton have declared that the advancement of human rights for lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) persons is central to the United States’ comprehensive human rights policy and the realization of US foreign policy goals. UN Secretary-General Ban-ki Moon has noted that widespread abuse, violence and discrimination against LGBT persons around the world is a “monumental tragedy – a stain on our collective conscience” requiring renewed efforts to ensure that the human rights of all persons are protected. As a matter of international law and US policy, human rights apply to all persons and that includes LGBT individuals.

President Obama issued a Presidential Memorandum on December 6, 2011 related to international initiatives advancing the human rights of LGBT persons around the world. In that directive, the President stated that “our commitment to advancing the human rights of all [LGBT] people is strengthened when we as the United States bring our tools to bear to vigorously advance this goal.” With that Memorandum the President has instructed “all agencies engaged abroad to ensure that US diplomacy and foreign assistance promote and protect the human rights of LGBT persons.”

In an historic video address to the UN Human Rights Council this year, Ban Ki-moon recalled that it is the duty of the United Nations “to protect the rights of everyone, everywhere”, speaking to LGBT people across the world that “any attack on you is an attack on the universal values the United Nations that I have sworn to defend and uphold.”

CONTINUES >

## **OBJECTIVES**

- *Build a knowledge baseline of the legal, social, political and institutional environments in which LGBT rights advocates and organizations operate while developing an understanding for the capacity of LGBT rights advocates to engage in policy dialogue and community mobilization.*
- *Promote understanding of the human rights of LGBT human persons, the challenges they face in terms of stigma and discrimination and steps toward LGBT-inclusive development within USAID, UNDP and Development Partners through research reports and multimedia products which convey results of the review and analysis work.*

## **SUMMARY OF OUTCOMES**

- *Increased knowledge and understanding on the state of LGBT civil society and LGBT civil society strengthening practices at national and regional levels in Southeast and East Asia, including:*
  - a. Sharing of knowledge on the state of civil society within the participating countries as well as internationally*
  - b. Common understanding of the legal and social environment shared by LGBT stakeholders*
- *Improved understanding of and capacity to advance the human rights of LGBT people and civil society by USAID, UNDP and development partners through LGBT-inclusive development and targeted development programming for LGBT civil society, including:*
  - a. Improved understanding, appreciation and sensitivity of challenges faced by LGBT people in Asia among staff of USAID, UNDP and development partner organizations*
  - b. Greater understanding and knowledge base from which future LGBT-inclusive development programming and targeted support to LGBT civil society can be planned and initiated*

### **For Further Details:**

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## **STRATEGY**

The analysis covers 6 priority countries: China, Cambodia, Indonesia, Philippines, Thailand and Vietnam. In addition to the six priority countries, additional resources and experiences is being drawn more widely from East and Southeast Asia, including Burma/Myanmar, Chinese Taipei/Taiwan, the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region, Japan, Republic of Korea, Malaysia, Singapore, Timor-Leste, regional civil society organizations, academic institutions and private sector partners.

The results of this initiative will educate USAID, UNDP staff and development partners on critical rights issues facing LGBT people, inform decision-making leading to new programming and mainstreaming through existing programming. The methodology engages civil society organizations and utilizes innovative learning processes and social and multi-media resources and applications as a catalyst for creative interaction and to improve understanding of LGBT issues and empower young LGBT leaders.

This initiative is also developing critical networks amongst USAID, UNDP and other development partners' staff and country teams/offices to ensure that UN and USG policies of inclusive LGBT development programming is supported both at country and regional levels. The methods employed ensure participation of the USG interagency, USAID LGBT champions (RDMA and DC-based), and LGBT experts from regional thought centers, such as think tanks, universities and NGOs.

The outcomes of this collaborative effort will not only inform RDMA and UNDP-APRC strategic approaches, but will also result in value-added services and products for RDMA client Missions and Country Offices.

A significant part of this analysis will address the development case for donor cooperation programs in the LGBT context and draw on the experience – and collaboration of civil society, private sector and government where appropriate.

## **TIMELINE**

12 months

## **IMPACT**

The findings from this exercise will bolster the knowledge of USAID/USG and UNDP/UN staff vis-à-vis critical development issues related to human rights of LGBT citizens, and will, as a result of the participatory and innovative nature of its design, result in learning, educating, establishing a baseline, strategizing and empowering participants. Multimedia and social media resources and tools will also be created, which can be used by USAID, UNDP and LGBT stakeholders to engage on LGBT human rights issues. This initiative all also develop an emerging rights-based community of practice, primarily amongst development partners and local organizations involved on the DRG elements of LGBT inclusive development, and advance needed networks within the LGBT civil society and religious community around the region engaged in rights-based advocacy to ensure that all LGBT people enjoy the full range of freedoms and rights envisioned by the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and international law.