

Tactical Shifts, Resilience, & Hope Amidst Hard Times

2020 – Biennial Report
2021



ASIA PACIFIC
TRANSGENDER
NETWORK



Tactical Shifts, Resilience, & Hope Amidst Hard Times

2020-
2021  Biennial
Report

TRIBUTE TO MANUEL DA QUINTA –

TRIBUTE TO MANUEL DA QUINTA **– AN ADVOCATE, MENTOR &** **FRIEND OF THE APTN**



THIS IS A TRIBUTE TO ONE OF THE UNSUNG PATHFINDERS OF OUR TIME; AN UNCOMPROMISING LEAD CHARACTER WORKING IN THE DEVELOPMENT SECTOR WITH HIS HEART CENTRED AROUND THE COMMUNITY AT ALL TIMES. HE WAS A GIANT AMONGST MANY OF US IN THE TRANS MOVEMENT IN ASIA AND THE PACIFIC AND AROUND THE WORLD, BUT YET A VERY HUMBLE AND GROUNDED INDIVIDUAL. A PASSIONATE ADVOCATE OF HIGH COMMUNITY CONSCIOUSNESS WHO REMAINED TRUE TO HIS BELIEFS AND CALLING AS LONG AS HIS HEART BEAT.

Improving the lives of vulnerable communities was his life. The AIDS pandemic and the United Nations were the stages upon which his life played out, the poles around which his life revolved. He taught us many things – too many to list out here, really – but one of the key things we learnt from him was a deep curiosity in understanding the needs of the communities and how we can support through actions, and an unwavering commitment to the process of getting communities to live without fear, stigma and discrimination.

His contribution in the HIV/

AIDS field is vast, but I'd like to specifically point out and emphasise his commitment in supporting the formation and growth of the Asia Pacific Transgender network. He tirelessly championed our cause, like a true advocate and was instrumental in the growth of APTN during our early years. People who knew Manuel often say he would talk about APTN with anyone and everyone, a constant supporter of us wherever he went.

Manuel was a curious advocate, mentor, dedicated community builder, and a fierce campaigner for inclusion of vulnerable communities' voices where it matters. He was unabashed to be the only person in the room to call 'a pot, a pot. He was never one who accepted mediocrity and half hearted intentions. He also reminded us often to see him as an equal partner and not as someone who works in the UN. He showed us the impact we can have when people in a position of power work on the same level as community.

When we walked into any conference spaces with him, we would see that everyone knew him. He would greet everyone with a wave and his signature beaming smile. He would speak to everyone – from the conference volunteers, to members of the communities,

to diplomats – with the same smile, enthusiasm, kindness and generosity.

With his passing away, we have lost an advocate, mentor, friend and a cheerleader. He was our inspiration, and always will be. It is a loss not only for us and the communities, but also for the UN, and personally for many of us in the work of progressing the rights of the vulnerable. For the many who loved him dearly, for whom he was a true friend, he has left us with many lovely memories that we will cherish and life lessons that we will hold dear.

We offer our deepest condolences to his husband Ricardo, his family, friends and his community from around the world. APTN will hold on to Manuel's legacy of goodwill, teachings and memories that will continue to live on.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Joe Wong".

JOE WONG
Asia Pacific Transgender Network
Executive Director

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ACRONYMS

APNSW /

Asia Pacific Network of Sex Workers

APTN /

The Asia Pacific Transgender Network

APCOM /

Asia Pacific Coalition on Male Sexual Health

GAHT /

Gender-Affirming Hormone Therapy

IDAHOTB /

**International Day Against Homophobia,
Biphobia, Lesbophobia and Transphobia**

ILGA /

**International Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual,
Trans and Intersex Association**

KPRA /

Key Population Research and Advocacy

LGBTI /

Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, and Intersex

NHRI /

National Human Rights Institutions

PrEP /

Pre-Exposure Prophylaxis

SOGIESC /

**Sexual Orientation, Gender Identity and
Expression, and Sex Characteristics**

SRHR /

Sexual and Reproductive Health Rights

TDoR /

Trans Day of Remembrance

WPATH /

**World Professional Association
for Transgender Health**

GLOSSARY OF LOCAL TERMINOLOGY

South Asia

BANGLADESH

- Bandhu

INDIA

- Hijra, Kinnar, Jogti, Maitya, Mogha, Aravani, Mangalmukhi, Jogappa, Shivashakti
- Thirunangai
- Koti, Cha, Durani
- Bhai (means 'brothers' and commonly used by transmen)
- Tomboy, Tonna (transman)

NEPAL

- Meti, Kothi, Singaru, Maruni, Fulumulu, Natuwa, Maugiya, Dhuranji, Nechani
- Cha, Durani

PAKISTAN

- Khawaja Sara, Morat, Zanan, Khusra, Hijra

SRI LANKA

- Nachchi, Hijra

East Asia & Southeast Asia

CHINA

- Kua xing bie (跨性别, transgender)
- Xiong di (兄弟, trans men, means 'brothers')
- Jie mei (姐妹, trans women, means 'sisters')

HONG KONG

- Bin-sing-jan and Kwaa-sing-bit

INDONESIA

- Banci, Bencong, Waria, Wandu, Calalai, Calabai, Wadam, Bissu, Transpuan (transwomen)
- Conci (Bugis society has 5 genders, tribal term, similar to Hijra)
- Priawan, Transpria (transman)

LAO PDR

- Kathoey

MALAYSIA

- Transwanita/Mak nyah (transwomen), Thirunangai - transwomen (Indian), Thiruthambi - transman (Indian)
- Kua xing nan - transmen
- Nonya - transwoman
- Pak nyah, Pengkid - transman

MYANMAR

- Sant kyin phet lain ket tho pyu hmu nay htaing thu; Main ma sha (transwoman - derogatory usage but widely accepted by the transwomen community)
- Tomboy (preferable usage by transmen community)
- Acault (transwoman)

PHILIPPINES

- Transpinoy/Transpinay, FTM/MTF
- Bayot, Bayog, Babyalan, Asog, Bantut, Bakla, Binabae (transwoman)
- Tom, Lesbian (transmen)

SINGAPORE

- Ah kua

THAILAND

- Kathoey (transwoman, also used for cisgender gay man)
- Tom (transman, also used for cisgender lesbian woman)
- Pumia, Pumae, Phet tee sam, Sao, Phuying praphet song (transwoman); activists have

started using terminologies like Kkhon (or Phuying, Phuchaai) Plaeng phet ('a person/woman/man who has changed sex')

VIETNAM

- Chuyen gioi, Chuyen doi gioi tinh, Bong lo, Bong lai cai, Dong bong, Chan ciu ciu

Pacific

COOK ISLANDS

- Akava'ine

FIJI

- Vaka lewawa/ Vaka saleawawa, BRASTOS

NIUE

- Fakafifine

PAPUA NEW GUINEA

- Palopa

SAMOA

- Fa'afafine (transwomen)
- Fa'atama (transmen)

TOKELAU

- Fa'afafine (transwoman)

TONGA

- Leti

These terminologies were identified by the participants from the **Regional Partnership Meeting: Transcending agenda on health, rights, and policy in Asia and the Pacific in Bangkok, Thailand in December 2019. The list is limited and relevant at the time it was documented, and is not exhaustive and does not fully capture the different and evolving identities and labels used by trans and gender diverse people in the region.**

CHAIRS OF THE REGIONAL STEERING COMMITTEE

MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIRS OF THE REGIONAL STEERING COMMITTEE

TO SAY THAT 2020-2021 YEAR WAS CHALLENGING IS TRULY AN UNDERSTATEMENT. WITHIN DAYS OF THE WORLD HEALTH ORGANIZATION'S (WHO) OFFICIAL DECLARATION OF COVID-19 AS A GLOBAL PANDEMIC, COUNTRIES AND CITIES AROUND THE WORLD ENTERED LOCKDOWN WITH THE CLOSURE OF SCHOOLS, OFFICES, AND ALL NON-ESSENTIAL BUSINESSES. ACROSS THE WORLD, PEOPLE WERE EXPERIENCING ISOLATIONS AND ADAPTING TO NEW SOCIAL DISTANCING GUIDELINES.

We knew that this would have a wide-ranging impact on the lives of trans and gender diverse communities in Asia and the Pacific region. The Asia Pacific Transgender Network immediately launched our COVID-19 Community Support Fund and worked closely with our country partners to support and monitor the evolving situation presented by COVID-19. We were able to adapt and meet the needs of our communities and provide the necessary information through numerous reports to funders to continuously support our communities.

If asked to describe the years that were in one word, 'inspiring' resonates with me the most.

Inspiring, because it demonstrated the strength of our team and our country partners that regardless of the multitude of challenges faced in their country during the pandemic, they continued to work to provide relief support to our communities whose livelihoods were severely affected by COVID-19.

Inspiring, because we saw the action, the coordination and cooperation of everyone involved in each country to protect and support the survival of humankind.

Inspiring, because despite our differences, we found commonalities in safeguarding people across the world from the pandemic.

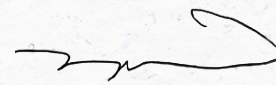
And inspiring, because we saw the kindness in each and everyone of you.

To everyone in the Asia Pacific Transgender Network – the Thai Foundation, the Regional Steering Committee, and the secretariat, thank you for your continuous dedication and passion to build bridges among our communities and the rest of the society. In a world marked by individual 'spaces' and 'prejudice', the work that you are doing allows the most disenfranchised community their dignity and integration into the larger society.

We extend our deepest gratitude to our country partners and community for trusting us enough to work with us and allowing us the platform to be part of their journey.

To all our funders, donors and others who have let us share in their generosity, and on behalf of the Asia Pacific Transgender Network, I offer my sincere gratitude. Thank you for standing by us during the hard times and letting us move forward together to ensure that we leave no one behind.

Thank you,



MITCH YUSOF
Co-Chair, Regional Steering Committee



PHYLESHA BROWN-ACTON
Co-Chair, Regional Steering Committee



MESSAGE FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

MESSAGE FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

THE ONGOING COVID-19 PANDEMIC, ESPECIALLY DURING THE GRUELLING YEARS OF 2020-2021, HAS GREATLY AFFECTED THE LIVES OF TRANS AND GENDER DIVERSE COMMUNITIES, AS WELL AS THE CRITICAL ADVOCACY WORK THAT OUR COMMUNITY PARTNERS DO.

Trans and gender diverse individuals, groups, and organisations – lives were disrupted financially by loss of livelihoods, no access to gender affirming healthcare, and delays for hiv treatment and care due to shortage of healthcare workers and overburdened healthcare facilities, not to mention flights cancellations around the world that hampered the medical plans of trans and diverse peoples outside of their countries. Undocumented trans and gender diverse people, migrants, refugees, and asylum seekers were not able to access government-aided support such as personal protective equipment (PPE) and COVID-related care, and faced huge delays in their relocation and resettlement plans to a third country for safety. Development agencies around the world scrambled to reimagine ways in which communities could be supported and we found ourselves working double time to find out what the most critical needs of the communities were during this period.

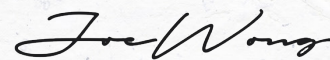
Recognising these predicaments, we issued a

statement directed to national and local governments; National Human Rights Institutions (NHRIs) and the UN Human Rights Bodies; local, regional, and global human rights movements; and donors and funding agencies calling for actions – to ensure healthcare services are to be provided without stigma and discrimination of any kind; to ensure information regarding COVID-19 is accurate, unbiased, timely, and consistent; to ensure state restrictions to curb the spread of COVID-19 are lawful, necessary, and proportionate; and to allow trans-led and trans-inclusive organisations to reprioritise their programmes to address the most urgent needs of trans and gender diverse communities.

In late 2020, we also issued an Open Letter to WHO for SOGIESC-inclusive strategies in response to COVID-19. Together with 19 civil society organisations in Asia Pacific, we urged WHO to include aspects of sexual orientation, gender identity, expression, and sex characteristics (SOGIESC) into their policies, programs, and WHO's response to the COVID-19 pandemic. These combined efforts were hoped to ensure that challenges faced by trans and gender diverse communities were given due attention, and the remaining policies did not add to the exclusion and discrimination experienced by the communities.

We also recognised the importance of mental health, especially in the time of the pandemic when communities felt anxiety and depression due to isolation and being cut off from supportive communities and resources. Our team worked alongside trans and gender diverse groups and individuals in the region to monitor the evolving situation presented by COVID-19 evaluated the impact made through our COVID-19 community support fund. We teamed up with in-country trans and gender diverse groups as well as individuals and identified communities in need and allocated funds, and worked with our national partners to produce the Trans Resilience Report, which shares community-based findings and evidence of support to trans communities. This project is proof that there is strength in numbers and demonstrates that funding organizations should be more involved in similar initiatives to ensure our trans and gender diverse communities and families get all the support and dignified life we all deserve.

In solidarity,



JOE WONG
Asia Pacific Transgender Network
Executive Director



INTEGRATING COVID-19 RESPONSES INTO OUR STRATEGIC FRAMEWORK & COVID-19 COMMUNITY SUPPORT FUND

THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC HAS LAID BARE ALL THE FRAGILITIES IN ALREADY UNEQUAL SOCIAL SYSTEMS, PARTICULARLY THOSE AFFECTING ALREADY-MARGINALISED TRANS COMMUNITIES AND GENDER DIVERSE PEOPLE.

The pandemic also intensified social isolation and exclusion, stigma and discrimination, and reduced access to healthcare, especially gender-affirming care, which further impacted financial and employment security.

Being mindful of this, APTN worked alongside our country partners and trans focal points in the region to monitor the evolving situation presented by COVID-19. From March and May 2020, we conducted online rapid assessment and partner interviews with 13

respondents from 42 countries on the experiences of trans and gender diverse people and organisations to gain a greater understanding of the impact of COVID-19. From this research we found that emerging national public health policies and COVID-19-related restrictions and measures, including physical distancing and lockdowns, have affected their lives and work at the grassroots level.

We integrated the findings and mechanisms of these COVID-19 responses into our **Standing Up for Trans Rights Strategic Plan 2018-2020** to ensure ongoing strategies and interventions align with the experiences and needs of trans and gender diverse people following COVID-19.

FIVE KEY AREAS IN OUR FRAMEWORK

1 Advocacy
Increased monitoring of developments around regressive stances on existing human rights gains and document human rights violations, including violation of civil liberties through authoritative policies.

2 Leadership Building
Increased capacity strengthening in the areas of campaigning, advocacy, and the human rights mechanism through a series of online leadership programmes.

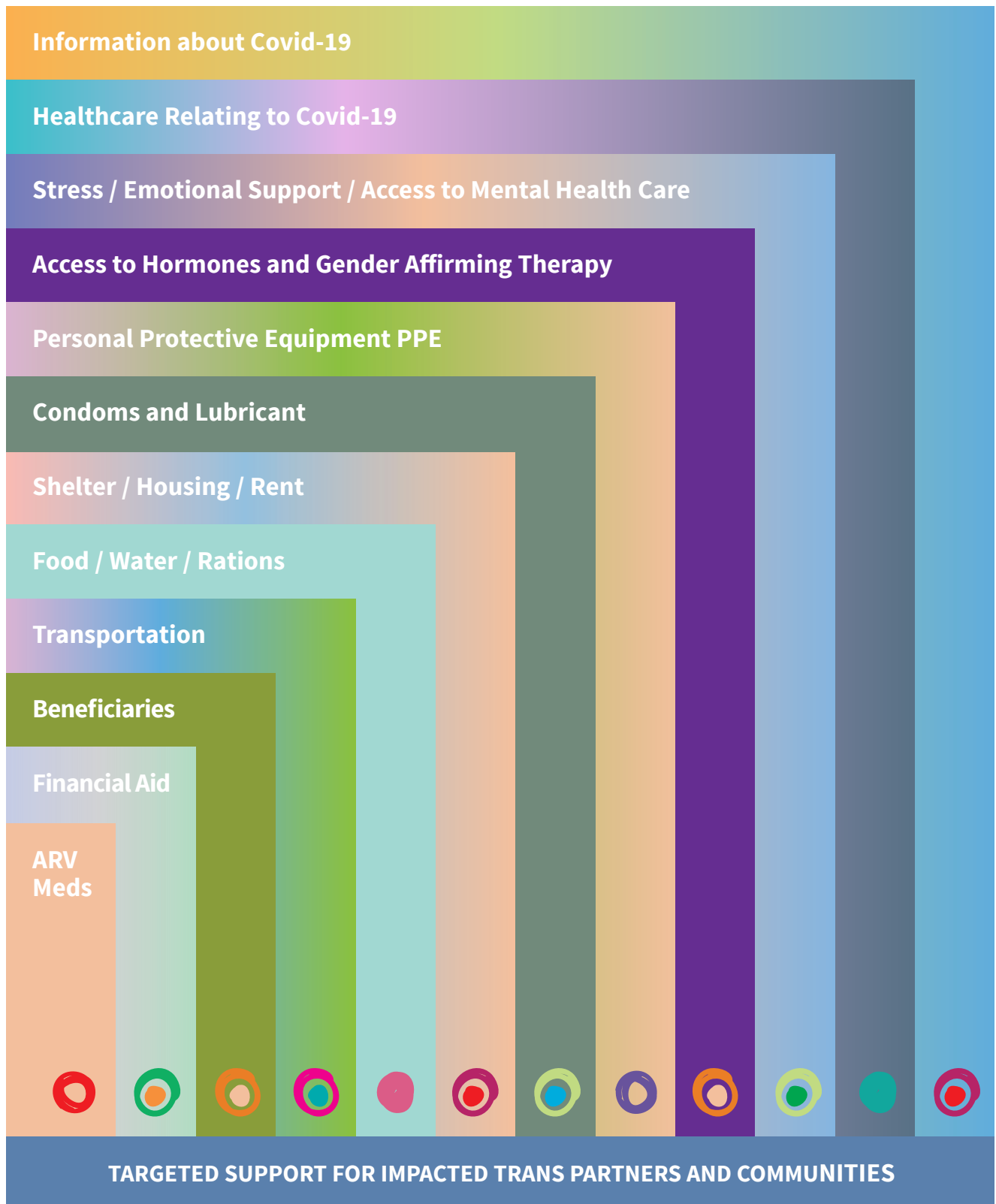
3 Health
Guided peer providers and healthcare providers on the provision of care to trans people remotely and mapping the on/offline health providers providing assistance at this time through a series of health interventions.

4 Strategic Information
Increased access to contextualised, relevant, timely, and accurate information on health and COVID-19 in local languages for trans and gender diverse communities in 14 communities.

5 Emergency Relief Support to Partners and Communities
Increased monitoring of developments around regressive stances on existing human rights gains and document human rights violations, including violation of civil liberties through authoritative policies.

As part of the Strategic Plan, APTN also deployed the **COVID-19 Community Support Fund** to trans-led and trans-inclusive partners and communities whose livelihoods had been severely affected by COVID-19 related measures.

TYPES OF SUPPORT PROVIDED



COUNTRIES AND COMMUNITIES INVOLVED

Pacific



Haus of Kameleon / Fiji



Pacific Sexual and Gender Diversity Network / Fiji & Vanuatu



Hetura National Capital District (NCD) / Papua New Guinea



My Girls Club / Samoa



Tonga Leitis Association / Tonga

Asia



Basera Samajik Sansthan / India



Samabhona / India



Sampoorna / India



GWL-INA / Indonesia



Jaringan Transgender Indonesia (JTID) / Indonesia



Yayasan Serikandi Sejati / Indonesia



SEED / Malaysia



Blue Diamond Society / Nepal



Unity 4 Change) / Nepal



Have Only Positive Expectations (HOPE) / Pakistan



Wajood / Pakistan



LakanBini / Philippines



National Transgender Network / Sri Lanka



Venasa Transgender Network / Sri Lanka



Sisters Foundation / Thailand



Thai TGA / Thailand



It's T Time / Vietnam

HOW WE DID IT



The COVID-19 Responses research and Community Support Fund are among proof of collaborative work amongst trans-led and trans-inclusive organisations in collecting and sharing information, as well as resources to be funnelled to the communities. As the world recovers,

there is a need for funders to step up with their financial support for trans-led and trans-inclusive organisations.

All reports on COVID-19 are available online on weareaptn.com/resources/



ASIA PACIFIC
TRANSGENDER NETWORK
2020 MILESTONES

2020



JANUARY

H, CONFERENCE

WPATH Global Education Initiative

H, DISSEMINATION MEETING

Dissemination meeting on the Trans Health Focus Group Discussion (FGD) Report in Sri Lanka



JUNE

S, SURVEY

APTN Community Survey 2020

H, PROGRAM

APTN COVID-19 Community Support Fund

A, CAPACITY BUILDING

Trans Advocacy Week 2020 Webinar – On the road: Advancing trans and gender diverse depathologization

S, SURVEY

Joint Survey with UNDP Thailand: Impact of COVID-19 on LGBTI Communities Findings

AUGUST

S, CAMPAIGN

Zero Discrimination in the Time of COVID-19

L, CAPACITY BUILDING

#SkillsforChange: Public Campaigning for Advocacy & Social Change

MILESTONES 2020 LEGEND

Pillar:

- A** Advocacy
- R** Research
- H** Health
- L** Leadership Building
- S** Strategic Information
- G** Governance & Organisational Strengthening

MARCH

A, CONFERENCE

Global Equality Fund Stakeholders Workshop

L, PROGRAM

Partner Monitoring Visit: Fiji

A, STATEMENT

A letter to our collective trans and gender diverse movements in response to COVID-19



A, STATEMENT

#SeeUsSupportUs: Recognise the Needs of Trans and Gender Diverse Communities during COVID-19

JULY

A, CAPACITY BUILDING

Trans Advocacy Week 2020 Webinar – Where did the money go? How the COVID-19 crisis drains trans funding worldwide

S, CAMPAIGN

APTn x YouthLEAD's Dignity Amidst COVID-19: Trans Youth Leaders' Stories

L, RESOURCE

Organisational Capacity Assessment Tool (OCAT)

S, CAMPAIGN

AIDS2020: Virtual online poster exhibition

S, RESOURCE

Grindr collaboration: Develop and translate their Gender Identity Resource Center into Tagalog

SEPTEMBER

A , STATEMENT

An Open Letter to the WHO for SOGIESC-inclusive strategies in response to COVID-19

L , CAPACITY BUILDING

APTN Amplifying Trans Advocacy Fellowship 2020

H , CAPACITY BUILDING

Webinar: Transgender Health and HIV in Asia with Tangerine Clinic



NOVEMBER



H , CAPACITY BUILDING

Stronger Together 2020 Summit – KPRA results findings Webinar

S , CAMPAIGN / STATEMENT

Transgender Day of Remembrance 2020

H , CAPACITY BUILDING

The 10th Asia Pacific Conference On Reproductive and Sexual Health and Rights – HIV/AIDS and SRHR in Asia Pacific



OCTOBER

A , ADVOCACY

Universal Periodic Review: A Joint Report on Transgender Issues

H , CAPACITY BUILDING

Webinar: Behind closed borders: Resiliency of trans people amidst COVID-19 with Australasian Society for HIV, Viral Hepatitis and Sexual Health Medicine (ASHM)

H , CAPACITY BUILDING

World Mental Health Day: 'It's everyone's business!' Collaborating to Advance the Mental Health of LGBT Persons

H , CAPACITY BUILDING

'U=U and stigma in the transgender community' during the Asian Stigma & Discrimination Forum

DECEMBER

A , RESOURCE

Transcending Toolkit

H , PUBLICATION

Trans Resilience Report





**ASIA PACIFIC
TRANSGENDER NETWORK
2021 MILESTONES**

2021

JANUARY

H , PUBLICATION

Guidelines for Healthcare Providers on Trans-competent Healthcare Services for Transgender Patients

A , STATEMENT

Joint Statement – SEED & APTN for the social media postings of Malaysian Dr. Shaiful Azad

MARCH

S , PUBLICATION

COVID-19 Trans Resilience: Stories of Hope, Pain and Survival from the Asia and Pacific Trans Movement

S , OPEN CALL

APTN Roster of Trans Artists/Creatives

S , CAMPAIGN

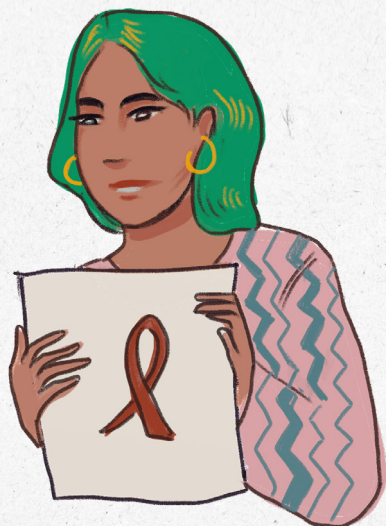
COVID-19 Trans Resilience Campaign

R , PUBLICATION

Conversion Therapy Practices Against Transgender Persons in India, Indonesia, Malaysia and Sri Lanka

R , PUBLICATION

Leave No One Behind: Malaysian Transgender at Risk – A Spotlight Report on SDGs Implementation in Malaysia



MILESTONES 2021 LEGEND

Pillar:

- A** Advocacy
- R** Research
- H** Health
- L** Leadership Building
- S** Strategic Information
- G** Governance & Organisational Strengthening

FEBRUARY

S , PUBLICATION

Look Good, Feel Better: A Trans Masc Guide

S , PUBLICATION

What They Don't Tell You in Sex Ed! – A Resource For Transgender and Gender Diverse Communities on Sexual and Reproductive Health

L , TRAINING

Capacity Strengthening of Healthcare Providers in Nepal



MAY

S , STATEMENT

Solidarity Statement for the passing of Polikalepo Kefu, President of Tonga Leitis Association

A , STATEMENT

Joint Statement for Asia and the Pacific region: Recommendations for meaningful integration of priority needs and concerns of Key Populations in Asia and the Pacific into the 2021 Political Declaration on Ending AIDS

A , STATEMENT

Asia-Pacific Regional Civil Society Statement for the 2021 High-Level Meeting on HIV and AIDS

H , CAPACITY BUILDING

Asia Development Bank IDAHOTB Event: 'COVID-19 and its impacts on trans communities'

JUNE

H, CAPACITY BUILDING

Civil Society Asia Pacific Side Event at the HLM 2021

A, STATEMENT

Trans Advocacy Week 2021: Trans activists worldwide come together during the UN Human Rights Council

A, STATEMENT

Trans Advocacy Week 2021: In support of the Independent Expert on Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity's (IE SOGI) report on gender

A, CAPACITY BUILDING

Feminist and LGBTI Movements: Uniting is Our Strength – Side event at the 47th UN Human Rights Council

S, STATEMENT

Tribute to Manuel da Quinta – An advocate, mentor and friend of the APTN

SEPTEMBER

A, ANNOUNCEMENT

Universal Periodic Review – Singapore support: Joint report on transgender issues

H, CAPACITY BUILDING

WAS key populations symposium: Invited by UNFPA to speak on a panel for 'Community-led services for key populations in the time of Covid –best or only practices?'

NOVEMBER

A, STATEMENT

Statement urging Singapore to Halt Impending Execution of Nagenthiran K Dharmalingam for a Drug Offence

S, CAMPAIGN

Trans Awareness Week 2021 Mini Campaign

A, STATEMENT

Joint Statement: Trans Day of Remembrance 2021 – Together, we fight!

JULY

R, SURVEY

Launch of the Global COVID-19 Research Initiative on Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity (GCRI-SOGI) survey

L, CAPACITY BUILDING

2 Capacity Strengthening workshops for community-led service providers in the Philippines

AUGUST

A, STATEMENT

Joint Statement on Afghanistan: Protect Women, Children, LGBTIQ & Other Vulnerable Persons

H, STRATEGIC INFORMATION

Development of COVID-19 Video

H, WORKSHOP

Copenhagen HRC: Invited by Kaleidoscope Trust to present on 'The Impact of COVID-19 on LGBTIQ+ Communities' at the Copenhagen 2021 Human Rights Forum

OCTOBER

H, CAPACITY BUILDING

Webinar: New PrEP products for Asia Pacific – What do we Need to Know?

H, CAPACITY BUILDING

AsiaPATH – Asian Professional Association for Transgender Health

DECEMBER

G, ANNOUNCEMENT

Happy New Year 2022

G, ANNOUNCEMENT

APTN Team Learnings and Reflections 2021





PILLAR 1: **ADVOCACY**

The ongoing Covid-19 pandemic, especially during the gruelling years of 2020-2021, has greatly affected the lives of trans and gender diverse communities, as well as the critical advocacy work that our community partners do.

AS A TRANS-LED ORGANISATION FIRMLY ROOTED TO MOVEMENT BUILDING, WE BELIEVE THAT QUICK STRATEGIC PIVOTING WAS NECESSARY TO ADDRESS THE INEQUITIES AND INJUSTICE OUR TRANS COMMUNITIES CONTINUE TO EXPERIENCE. AS SUCH, WE BEGAN SEVERAL ADVOCACY INITIATIVES AND ACTIVITIES TO ENGAGE WITH OUR VARIOUS STAKEHOLDERS AND ENSURE THAT THE RIGHTS OF ALL OUR TRANS FOLKS ARE RESPECTED.



ACTIVITIES CONDUCTED

RECOGNISING THE NEED TO ADDRESS THE IMPACT OF COVID-19 ON TRANS AND GENDER DIVERSE COMMUNITIES

Asia Pacific, like many other regions across the world, is witnessing an unprecedented health emergency with the COVID-19 pandemic. The implications of this pandemic will be devastating and long-lasting for those at the margins of the society, including trans and gender diverse people. The pandemic has exposed the alarming fragility and gaps in public healthcare across the region., which can affect marginalised populations more severely, including trans and gender diverse people. Due to overburdened healthcare facilities, the healthcare needs of trans and gender diverse people, including gender-affirming care, are being neglected and postponed indefinitely, especially affecting people living with HIV. Furthermore, with the majority of countries in the region under lockdown, deeply entrenched social and economic inequalities and oppression are more visible than ever, as well as the rise of transphobia and homophobia which leads to increased prejudice, stigma, verbal abuse, and physical violence.

Recognising these predicaments, we issued a statement in March 2020 called **#SeeUsSupportUs: Recognise the Needs of Trans and Gender Diverse Communities during COVID-19 Pandemic** directed to national and local governments; NHRIs and the UN Human Rights Bodies; local, regional, and global human rights movements; and donors and funding agencies. The statement called for actions, among others, to ensure healthcare services are to be provided without stigma and discrimination of any kind; to ensure information regarding COVID-19 is accurate, unbiased, timely, and consistent; to ensure state restrictions to curb the spread of COVID-19 are lawful, necessary, and proportionate; and to allow trans-led and trans-inclusive organisations to reprioritise their programmes to address the most urgent needs of trans and gender diverse communities.

In September 2020, we also issued an **An Open Letter to WHO for SOGIESC-inclusive strategies in response to COVID-19**. Together with 19 civil society organisations in Asia Pacific – such as Asia Pacific Coalition on Male Sexual Health (APCOM), Asia Pacific Transgender Network, Pink Alliance, ILGA Asia, International Women’s Rights

Action Watch Asia Pacific, Youth Voices Count – we sent an open letter to WHO’s Director-General Dr. Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, urging WHO to include aspects of sexual orientation, gender identity, expression, and sex characteristics (SOGIESC) into their policies, programs, and WHO’s response to the COVID-19 pandemic. In this open letter, signatories asked WHO to:

(I) Ensure that the challenges being faced by LGBTQI, MSM, and people and communities of diverse SOGIESC during the COVID-19 pandemic will be given due attention, and policies, programs, and responses are inclusive and do not add to the exclusion and discrimination experienced by LGBTQI people, communities, and families.

(II) Integrate a SOGIESC-inclusive approach in their COVID-19 related guidance documents, situation reports, briefs, strategies, and response.

(III) Work closely with LGBTQI organisations and communities towards more inclusive responses to the pandemic.

ADDRESSING VARIOUS ISSUES AT HIGH-LEVEL MEETINGS

APTN recognises the importance of engagement with the UN Human Rights Council to ensure and promote the human rights of trans people. Therefore, we issued **joint civil society organisation (CSO) stakeholder reports in 2020 for Universal Periodic Review (UPR) for Singapore and Nepal**. This joint CSO stakeholder report was the third UPR for Singapore, highlighting the gaps in the fulfilment of human rights vis-a-vis health, legal gender recognition, social protection, and discriminations experienced by trans people in the education and employment sector. In the process, we held calls with TransgenderSG and Sayoni IndigNation SG to develop the data collection trajectory and provided inputs to the survey questionnaire, as well as to coordinate and complete the drafting and review process, before the submission. The process went similarly for Nepal, as we worked with the ILGA World and Blue Diamond Society (BDS) for technical support to review the report, and coordinate the drafting and review process before finally submitting the final draft.

In 2021, several LGBTQ organisations in Singapore such as Sayoni IndigNation SG, Prout, The Healing Circle SG, Young OUT Here, Oogachaga, Pink Dot SG, as well as APTN, produced 3 different joint reports on transgender issues, violence, and discrimination against LGBTQ persons, and key issues impacting the Singapore LGBTQ community. Some **good news emerged from the 2020 UPR**, which included support for the recommendation

to implement training for healthcare professionals on SOGIESC issues, with the aim of eliminating discrimination in healthcare access; and support for the recommendation to remove all existing obstacles to the registration of LGBTQ+ organisations.

Following Singapore and Nepal, **Papua New Guinea and Samoa also submitted their joint CSO stakeholder reports** for their third UPR in 2021.

Ahead of the 2021 UN High-Level Meeting on HIV and AIDS, regional and national key population networks, organisations, and groups in Asia and the Pacific came together to develop the collective **Asia-Pacific Regional Civil Society Statement for the 2021 High-Level Meeting on HIV and AIDS** to highlight key issues and concerns affecting our communities. Recognising that the COVID-19 pandemic has brought inequalities to the forefront and exposed the fragility of the region, it has especially affected the community of people living with HIV. In 2019, it was estimated that the Asia-Pacific region was home to an estimated 5.8 million people living with HIV. The HIV epidemic in Asia and the Pacific is largely concentrated and spreading within key population groups. Sex workers and sexual partners of key populations, people who inject drugs, men who have sex with men, transgender people, migrants, people in prisons and other closed settings, and young key populations aged 10-24 years are among those most affected.

As such, we called on the Member States to adopt the recommendations in the

Statement and commit to guaranteeing the fundamental human rights of all people, including the right of everyone to the enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of physical and mental health.

- (I) Access to HIV prevention and treatment services.
- (II) Uphold and protect human rights of key populations and vulnerable groups.
- (III) Address and prevent gender-based violence.
- (IV) Responding to COVID-19 and ensuring social protection for all.
- (V) Funding, sustainability, and the meaningful engagement of civil society in the HIV response.

On 7th July 2021, at the 47th session of the Human Rights Council, APTN together with our partners such as CREA, ILGA, Outright, and Association for Women's Rights in Development, hosted a discussion called **Feminist and LGBTI Movements: Uniting is Our Strength – Side event at the 47th UN Human Rights Council**. Recognising that the fight for LGBTQ+ human rights and the fight to advance gender equality are inextricably linked, the occasion brought together women and LGBTQ+ human rights defenders, speaking about the challenges and opportunities created by the crises we face today, as well as sharing reflections on the importance of inclusive and intersectional feminist LGBTI mobilisation.

We conducted a few advocacy engagement initiatives that lasted the entire year of 2021.

One of them was the **written input for UN IE SOGI's report on SDG Goal 3** (to ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages) to be presented at the upcoming 50th UN HRC session held in June 2022.

We also took part in drafting the Legal Expert's Opinion document for strengthening the petition writs of Queer Youth Group in Nepal, as they have fought for the legal gender recognition in the educational certificate and other official documents in court. The document will be submitted in June 2022 before the hearing in July 2022.



FORGING INTERSECTIONAL FEMINIST FUTURES (FIFF) CONSORTIUM

In mid-2021 the FIFF Consortium was proposed by International Women's Rights Action Watch Asia Pacific to eight organisations, including APTN. A three-year project, its focus is on strengthening international movement in Asia as the key to accomplish systematic gender equality. The consortium has three specific results to deliver: strengthened collective understanding of intersectionality and intersectional feminism among the networks, regional and national cross-movement roadmaps for joint advocacy outlining intersectional entry points for collective action towards eliminating gender inequality, and documented good practices and strategies for applying an intersectional approach to eliminating gender inequality in Asia.

Eight consortium partners have different roles. APTN will lead the project country programme in Cambodia and

lead regional and consortium activities, including the workshop to develop the cross-movement advocacy roadmap and communications. Other partners include Asia Pacific Network of Sex Workers (APNSW), ASEAN SOGIE Caucus (ASC), International Drug Policy Consortium (IDPC) Asia, and Special Talent Exchange Programme (STEP).

JOINT STATEMENT ON AFGHANISTAN

We also are horrified to hear of the Taliban-led takeover of Kabul's Presidential Palace and the abrupt collapse of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan's government on 15th August 2021. This situation has raised concerns over human rights and the safety of marginalised groups in the country. Besides LGBTIQ people and people of diverse SOGIESC, women, persecuted religious minorities, journalists, and human rights defenders have come under threat,

and many have gone into hiding out of fear. As such, APTN together with over our 200 partners issued a **Joint Statement on Afghanistan: Protect Women, Children, LGBTIQ & Other Vulnerable Persons** to respect the rights of all people granted by the Constitution of Afghanistan, the international covenants ratified by Afghanistan, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, and international human rights norms, irrespective of their SOGIESC status. The crisis in Afghanistan is complex and difficult, but we remind the international community that it has a moral obligation – particularly those who have played a role in the development of the issue in the first place – to ensure that the political crisis is diffused via a solution that prioritises the self-determination of the Afghan people while protecting vulnerable persons from harm and violence.

URGING SINGAPORE TO HALT EXECUTION FOR A DRUG OFFENCE

On 8th November 2021, APTN together with the Network of Asian People who Use Drugs, the International Network of People who Use Drugs, the Asia Pacific Network of People Living with HIV, APNSW, Youth Lead Asia Pacific, and APCOM alongside 12 organisations and networks, urged the Government of Singapore to immediately halt the impending execution of Nagaenthran K Dharmalingam and calls upon UN entities, the European Union, and all relevant stakeholders to take urgent action. Nagaenthran, a 32-year-old Malaysian citizen, was arrested in 2009, and sentenced to death in 2011 for importing with intent of trafficking 42.72 grams of diamorphine. The Singapore Court of Appeal upheld the sentence in November 2011, and further re-sentencing applications were dismissed. Despite multiple appeals, he would sadly be executed on 27th April 2022.

VARIOUS ACTIVITIES DURING TRANS ADVOCACY WEEK

We held a few webinars in the year 2020 as a way to reach more of our communities and partners when the lockdowns were ongoing. One of them was during Trans Advocacy Week 2020 called **On the road: advancing trans and gender diverse depathologisation**, where we addressed the issues of the journey to full depathologisation, following the historic achievement of the approval of the 11th version of the International Classification of Diseases (ICD-11). After more than 10 years of political mobilisation,

all categories related to trans and gender diverse people were removed from the chapter on mental disorders. The current challenges discussed include the new category of 'gender incongruence' in the ICD-11, and the anti-gender movements who promote re-pathologisation in their battle against what they call 'gender ideology'. Moreover, current challenges faced by trans and gender diverse people around the world in relation to COVID-19 show that the persistence of pathologisation is not only grounded in pervasive institutional cissexism; it is also deeply linked to racial and socioeconomic injustice. As such, there is a need for global and collective initiatives to resist, confront, and dismantle pathologisation today more than ever.

During Trans Advocacy Week 2021 in June, **trans and gender diverse activists from all over the world came together** for the fifth year in a row during the June/July session of the United Nations Human Rights Council, to raise awareness of the human rights situation of their communities with diplomatic missions and UN bodies in Geneva. In the virtual sessions, activists held a series of private meetings with human rights bodies and country missions, as well as engaging in a series of public events to raise awareness of key issues affecting trans communities worldwide. They also addressed the ongoing epidemic of violence against trans women and discussed how specific socio-economic issues are affecting people of diverse gender identities and expressions. Moreover, during the event, it was observed that the activists presented positive

examples of how cisgender and trans activists have long been working together in feminist movements to advance the rights of all women, despite hostile narratives claiming otherwise.

During the same week as well, the Trans Advocacy Week partners made a statement **in support of the IE SOGI's report 'The Law of Inclusion'** in an interactive dialogue with Victor Madrigal-Borloz, the Independent Expert on Protection Against Violence and Discrimination Based on Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity (IE SOGI). The report was released at a time of increased hostility towards trans communities around the world, stemming from anti-trans feminist and LGB activists, as well as right-wing and conservative civil, political, and religious groups, media outlets, and States. These actors have been advocating for a rollback or complete erasure of the human rights of trans people, including calling for the legalisation of conversion therapy for trans people (recognised as a form of torture by the UN), preventing access to bathrooms and single-sex spaces (targeting trans women in particular), and general anti-trans rhetoric that attempts to re-pathologise trans people (which goes against the 2018 World Health Assembly decision to remove trans people from the Chapter on Mental and Behavioural Disorders).

TRANS DAY OF REMEMBRANCE

On TDoR 2021, we take a moment to honour those in our communities who were murdered over the past year. Between 1st October 2020 and

30th September 2021, the Trans Murder Monitoring registered 375 reports of trans and gender diverse people killed worldwide. Trans Day of Remembrance is a tragic reminder of how far cis-hetero-patriarchal normative and other oppressive systems are willing to go to suppress the existence of trans and gender diverse people. For our communities, it is a day when we pause and mourn the deaths of our beloved siblings, whose lives were cut short by violence and hate.

Trans and gender diverse people around the world continue to face tremendous amounts of multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination, stigma, marginalisation, and oppression. Trans people with intersecting identities, including trans women, Black people and people of colour, sex workers, migrants, asylum seekers, refugees, Roma, people with disabilities, and those living with HIV (to name just a few) are even more vulnerable when trans rights are eroded.

Despite the strengthening of our movement in the last decade, which has resulted in greater public awareness and significant legal victories, our communities continue to face high levels of violence, social discrimination, poor health outcomes, economic hardship, unemployment, and homelessness. The COVID-19 pandemic, along with the rise of the anti-gender movements, has made an already difficult set of circumstances more complicated.

Every year, on TDoR, we encourage everyone to join our fight for trans rights.

(I) Share data on anti-trans violence.

(II) Treasure and support trans people who are alive
Educate yourself and others
Volunteer your work to trans groups.

(III) Donate to community services directed at trans people, especially trans people that face intersectional marginalisation

(IV) Hold policy and decision makers accountable

ADDRESSING THE ISSUES OF FUNDING

The current public health crisis caused by the spread of COVID-19, is a global emergency with far-reaching social, economic, and ecological implications for us all. The massive impact of the pandemic on global, national, and local economies, as well as the shift of some donors to the field of humanitarian aid has far reaching and potentially long lasting implications on the funding of trans movements and trans-led organisations across the globe. Trans organisations have been underfunded for decades; few have had the ability to build reserves and will be hit by changes in the funding landscape drastically and quickly. We unpacked these implications in the webinar during Trans Advocacy Week 2020 called **Where did the money go? How the COVID-19 crisis drains trans funding worldwide**, discussing what global and regional donors can do to mitigate some of those issues.

In March 2020, we also

attended the **Global Equality Fund Stakeholders Workshop in Johannesburg**, South Africa, alongside Jonathan 'Lady Gaga' Wala from Hetura NCD LGBT Group in Papua New Guinea. In these sessions, we shared about global trends in the trans movement, safety, security and well-being, challenges being faced by communities, and how these challenges are being addressed.

VARIOUS MONITORING INITIATIVES

Throughout 2020 and 2021, we began various monitoring initiatives. One of them was the development of a monitoring framework called **Hate Crimes Monitoring** to document transphobic and homophobic crimes against trans people in the region. Along with that, we also developed a web map to report the documented incidents to increase the visibility and awareness of these prevalent issues in the region.

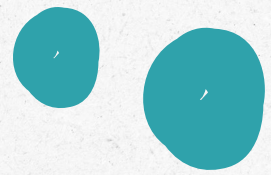
We also took part in **COVID-19 Advocacy and Human Rights Monitoring** as an initiative to monitor human rights violations and to report to UN international human rights bodies. In this exercise, we developed a written submission on COVID-19's impact on human rights of trans and gender non-conforming people in 6 countries in the region as a response to UN Special Procedures call for submission, and contributed to a statement by International Women's Rights Action Watch Asia Pacific (IWRAP-AP) for the 73rd session of the CEDAW committee.



PILLAR 2: **LEADERSHIP BUILDING**

In understanding the different kinds of challenges faced during the Covid-19 pandemic, APTN recognises the importance of leadership building to further expand the capacity of individuals within leadership roles in trans organisations.

LIMITED BY SOCIAL DISTANCING AND LOCKDOWNS, BUT NOT BY THE SPIRIT OF CONTINUOUS MOVEMENT BUILDING, WE BEGAN A SERIES OF INCREASED CAPACITY STRENGTHENING INITIATIVES IN THE AREAS OF CAMPAIGNING, ADVOCACY, AND THE HUMAN RIGHTS MECHANISM THROUGH A SERIES OF LEADERSHIP PROGRAMMES, INCLUDING ONES ONLINE.



ACTIVITIES CONDUCTED

THE LAUNCH OF THE ORGANISATIONAL CAPACITY ASSESSMENT TOOL (OCAT)

APTN has revised its OCAT tool and initiated an organisational assessment with 22 trans-led and trans-inclusive partner groups and organisations in the region. This process started in January 2020 and concluded in September 2020.

The **OCAT** is an inward-looking reflective tool for groups to facilitate a self-assessment on their capacity and identify areas where they may want to focus on strengthening. The tool is based on the review of regional and global tools and best practices. It is also based on APTN's 'Finding Our Voice, Finding Our Place' report, where most groups wanted organisational sustainability such as funding, strong organising, and mobilisation. The regional organisational assessment and capacity development report will serve as a baseline for the continuing organisational development support for partner groups.

PARTNER MONITORING VISIT TO FIJI

With the revised OCAT, **we conducted a scoping/ monitoring visit to Fiji on 9-13 March 2020**. We met project

partners in the country (Haus of Kameleon and Pacific Sexual and Gender Diversity Network) to provide updates on the GEF-DRL project implementation status given the current COVID-19 health crisis. APTN also met with other community partners, who are part of the legal gender recognition (LGR) review and social experience study research process. These community partners include Rainbow Pride Foundation, Strumphet Alliance, House of Colours, and Survival Advocacy Network Fiji. The partners shared about emerging and/ or intersectional issues such as drug use among trans masculine people, mass arrest of sex workers, disability, and mental health.

We met with the Fiji Transgender Network, who shared their plans to be representative of all the divisions in Fiji along with equal representation of trans feminine and trans masculine people. They also shared their ideas on a sustainable livelihood program for trans people. In a separate meeting, APTN met with DIVA for Equality and learned about the change in their leadership and their areas of work and feminist advocacy. They shared their most recent publication: 'Unjust, Unequal, Unstoppable: Fiji LBT women and gender nonconforming people tipping the scales towards justice',

which was cited in APTN's Fiji LGR report.

APTN also conducted courtesy visits to country stakeholders in Suva, Fiji, including .S. Embassy in Suva (Political Affairs and Public Diplomacy), New Zealand High Commission, Secretariat of the Pacific Community – Regional Rights Resource Team, and Fiji Human Rights and Anti-Discrimination Commission.

CAMPAIGNING FOR ADVOCACY AND SOCIAL CHANGE

Public campaigning through engagement with traditional, online, and social media has proved to be a powerful tool to increase awareness and visibility of lived experiences of LGBTI people, to shift the narratives around SOGIESC rights issues in both public and political realms, and to amplify LGBTI advocates' call for action for social change. We thus launched a series of four online workshops from 31st July to 21st August 2020 for trans and gender diverse advocates from Asia and the Pacific to enhance their skills in public campaigning for advocacy.

The workshops included four modules:

One

Introduction to Public Campaigning for Advocacy and Social Change

Two

Crafting Call-For-Action for Public Campaigning

Three

Using Art and Digital Media to Deliver Your Call-For-Action

Four

Safety and Security Tips for Public Campaigning

The workshops featured skilled experts and resource persons from various fields such as Jac sm Kee, Phylesha Brown-Acton, Alok Vaid-Menon, Vincy Chan, queer band Shh..Diam!, and Mumbai-based women's rights non-profit Point of View. In the workshops, one of the prominent issues addressed include the vague boundaries between online and offline, and how it could impact our online speech and expression. As such, it is important for us to create counter-narratives and tactics to own our space.

“The digital is a critical and very important public domain, and one which people in power are putting in a lot of energy and resources to control.”

— Jac sm Kee

Participants were also introduced to methods of designing clear and concise messaging for advocacy campaigns; the role of storytelling, arts, and digital media in public advocacy; and conducting digital security and safety in the context of public campaigning.

We also launched a fellowship program with an aim to support trans and gender diverse human rights defenders from Asia and the Pacific. The fellowship, called **Amplifying Trans Advocacy Fellowship**, took place through an online course from 15th September to 20th October 2020. Trans and non-binary fellows, who demonstrated an interest in engagement and advocacy efforts in progressing trans rights, came from all over Asia and the Pacific. Selected fellows also received a small grant to implement their advocacy interventions centred around international human rights mechanisms, as well guidance and technical support from APTN as they implement their advocacy interventions.

CAPACITY STRENGTHENING INITIATIVES

APTN and our partners never tire of advocating for a trans-inclusive society across the regions especially Asia and the Pacific. This also includes providing awareness and capacity for healthcare providers in the region. In February 2021, APTN presented a virtual **capacity strengthening workshop** for healthcare providers in Nepal with the aim to create an affirming and inclusive environment for trans people and understanding depathologisation. The



presentation also included a video explaining the local context in Nepal.

The capacity strengthening workshops were also extended to community-led providers. In July 2021, APTN conducted two virtual capacity strengthening workshops for community-led service providers in the Philippines from 3 clinics (Lakan Clinic, Victoria by LoveYourself, and Lily by LoveYourself). On top of the objective to create an affirming and inclusive environment for trans people and understanding depathologisation, the presentation included an introduction to SOGIESC.



PILLAR 3: **HEALTH**

During the Covid-19 pandemic, we worked to identify the best strategies to advocate for health access to our communities. We also worked to combat stigma and reduce harmful practices that affect our communities.

AT THE SAME TIME, WE CONTINUED TO REFLECT ON HOW WE CAN DO BETTER TO ALLEVIATE THE HARDSHIPS THAT COMMUNITIES WERE EXPERIENCING AS THE PANDEMIC CONTINUED TO RAVAGE THROUGHOUT THE ASIA PACIFIC.



We also recognise the importance of mental health, especially in the time of the pandemic when communities felt anxiety and depression due to isolation and being cut off from supportive communities and resources. It is vital to APTN that all of these initiatives were conducted with absolute care to the wellbeing of our partners, staff, and communities, all while not being distracted in this whole journey of advocating for trans rights in all spaces — national, regional, as well as international.

“[...] we have to reimagine how to support communities in need of financial, health, and peer support [...] not only having to identify the best strategies for access to health, we also have to work in combating stigma and reducing harmful practices.”

ACTIVITIES CONDUCTED

HIGHLIGHT OF THE LOCKDOWNS: THE RESILIENCE OF THE COMMUNITIES

In May 2021, Raine Cortes, APTN's Project Coordinator, joined as the resource speaker at the **International Day Against Homophobia, Biphobia, Lesbophobia and Transphobia (IDAHOTB) 2021: The Face of LGBTQI Exclusion in the COVID-19 Pandemic**. The theme of the year was 'Together: Resisting, Supporting, Healing', focusing on the impact of COVID-19 on sexual and gender minorities and policy responses in order to support lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and intersex (LGBTI) people mitigate the worst effects of the pandemic. Raine joined other distinguished speakers from, among others, the Asian Development Bank, World Bank, University of Massachusetts Amherst, and APCOM.

In her speech, Raine spoke of the work APTN had been doing in response, and monitoring the effects of COVID-19 on trans and gender non-conforming communities in the Asia Pacific region. Finding relief support was the biggest challenge — APTN was able to reprogramme the channelling of the fund distribution to community-based organisations and trans-inclusive communities

in Southeast Asia, South Asia, and the Pacific. These funds were used to provide support in healthcare, paying rent, hormones, and to support organisations to continue operating.

A committee-led monitoring of the COVID situation and the impacts on trans communities was also implemented, resulting in the **Trans Resilience Report**, which shared the stories and experiences of trans communities over the years. The COVID-19 impacts, as highlighted in the report, covers different factors such as: how healthcare for trans people become less of a priority because of the refocusing to COVID-19 interventions, the inability to import hormones and supply chain disruptions, and the cancellations of gender affirming surgeries and appointments.

“Amidst the stories of pain and survival, there is a glimmer of hope, as this truly highlights the resilience of the trans communities in the region.”

— Raine Cortes



Following the IDAHOTB, APTN was also invited to talk at the Asia Development Bank IDAHOTB event on 'COVID-19 and its impacts on trans communities'. We also developed a video on the plight and lived experiences of trans individuals during COVID-19, as well as featured interviews with APTN members and partners, and profiled partner organisations and the vital work they have been doing to combat COVID-19's effects in trans communities.

THE CONTINUITY OF FUNDING

Through a COVID-19 rapid needs assessment, partner organisations of APTN expressed concerns about continuing to work for their communities, caring for their health and safety, and at the same time, managing the financial and emotional strain of the pandemic on their organisations and their own well-being. As a result of this assessment, APTN stepped up to provide support to trans and gender diverse communities through APTN COVID-19

Support Fund. It aimed to fill gaps by equipping groups severely impacted by COVID-19 to respond to needs identified on the ground, so it can help meet community realities and sustain their organisations' operations and functions. As of 10th June 2020, almost \$70,000 USD has been distributed to 21 community groups across 13 countries.

"[...] greater financial investments and support are needed to address the structural and systematic barriers trans and gender diverse people face."

PARTNERSHIP PREVAILS

We could not have done the work that we do without the support of our partners from all around the region.

To strengthen the work with partners in Sri Lanka, the APTN SPM team travelled to Colombo on 20-22 January 2020 to participate in **a series of dissemination meetings** organised by The Family Planning Association of Sri Lanka to present the findings from the Trans Health Focus Group Discussion (FGD) Report and Gender Review, as well as the Review of Key Population Package of HIV Services. APTN presented the key findings from the FGD report, which looked at three key sections: HIV-related healthcare services, transition-related and gender-affirming healthcare services, and general healthcare services.

In November 2020, Raine Cortes participated in the Hội nghị Cộng đồng Lgbtiq Cùng Vươn Xa – Stronger Together Summit 2020 and presented the findings from our **Key Population Research and Advocacy (KPRA)** study together with our country partner at SCDI. At the summit, participants took a look at the joint issues and statements established since Summit 2019, recognised changes with community contributions to each issue, and identified and prioritised issues to solve in the future. The KPRA result presentation outlined trans-led research focused on gaps and challenges trans people experience while accessing healthcare, including HIV prevention and treatment services, and gender affirming healthcare.

APTN was also invited by Kaleidoscope Trust to present on **'The Impact of COVID-19 on LGBTIQ+ Communities'** at the Copenhagen 2021 Human Rights Forum. This included multiple planning sessions, a

pre-recording, and an actual live presentation on the day of the event.

Towards the end of 2021, APTN was invited by UNFPA to speak on a panel for **'Community-led services for key populations in the time of Covid – best or only practices?'** at the World Association for Sexual Health Key Populations Symposium.

ENGAGEMENT WITH HEALTH PROVIDERS

In January 2020, alongside over 150 healthcare providers in Hanoi, Vietnam, APTN attended the **World Professional Association for Transgender Health (WPATH) Global Education Initiative Conference**. While there, APTN developed an interactive session, engaging local healthcare providers on their current knowledge and understanding of trans issues. Our Executive Director, Joe Wong, sat on two panels regarding mental health, which had seen a sharp rise in the midst of COVID-19. For supporting the Gender Equality Index and improving access to trans healthcare worldwide through education, WPATH also awarded APTN with a 'Recognition of Collaboration'.

ADDRESSING STIGMA AND DISCRIMINATION FOR HIV

We found that in the midst of addressing the inequities of healthcare services and access experienced by trans people in the region, the communities had also been experiencing a great deal of stigma and discrimination, not only from within the society, but perhaps just as internalised. This stigma was even more exacerbated when a trans person is

diagnosed with HIV, despite the many advances in the field that shows it is now a treatable condition.

The Asian Stigma & Discrimination Forum, taking place on 14th October 2020, aimed to reduce stigma and discrimination with regards to HIV testing and diagnosis, as well as improving testing and links to care. APTN SPM presented the findings on **'U=U and stigma in the transgender community'** at the forum, where they consulted trans communities from almost 15 partners in Asia and the Pacific to provide their input. The presentation focused on topics such as the understanding of trans communities on U=U, existing U=U campaigns for trans people and trans PLHIV, stigma on U=U among trans communities, and the key messages on U=U as well as recommendations from the community.

As part of the initiative to destigmatise people with HIV and to celebrate the achievements of HIV health developments and communities, APTN also participated at the **Civil Society Asia Pacific Side Event** at the United Nations High-level Meeting on HIV and AIDS 2021 in June. The side event showcased the strength of the communities, featuring speakers from different countries throughout Asia and the Pacific, celebrating their innovative and effective HIV and COVID-19 response, and also presenting the lessons they have learned along the way.

MENTAL HEALTH IS EVERYONE'S BUSINESS

Besides the mortality and morbidity related to the

pandemic, the economic slowdown, poor healthcare responses, and lockdowns have resulted in historically marginalised communities including LGBTI+ bearing the brunt of this catastrophic event.

During World Mental Health Month in October 2020, APTN with UNDP Thailand and Equal Asia Foundation launched Mental Health of LGBTI+ persons Month with a virtual webinar called **World Mental Health Day: 'It's everyone's business!' Collaborating to Advance the Mental Health of LGBT Persons**. This featured a panel discussion, community sharing, and a roadmap for collaborative action. From the webinar, a need was found to adopt an intersectional approach that includes all stakeholders, including policymakers, healthcare providers, academics, as well as the for-profit and non-profit sectors. While we need to strengthen the supply side of the mental health ecosystem of LGBTI+ persons, it is also important to lessen the demand by destigmatising mental health.

“There is a need to adopt an intersectional approach [to address mental health] that includes all stakeholders, including policymakers, healthcare providers, academics, as well as the for-profit and the non-profit sector.”

PUBLICATIONS OF RESOURCES, GUIDELINES, AND MODULES

APTN has also been producing a series of health modules and guidelines to better guide peer providers and healthcare providers on the provision of care to trans people. One such initiative is the **Guidelines for Healthcare Providers On Trans-competent Healthcare Services for Transgender Patients**, produced in January 2021. In the guidelines, topics covered include: understanding SOGIESC, how to create a welcoming and safe clinic, primary and preventive healthcare, sexual health, reproductive health, cancer screenings, gender-affirming care, as well as mental health.

The guidelines were designed to provide a better understanding of the experiences trans people face as they navigate their way through accessing health services. It also helps increase knowledge about trans-inclusive health services in order to create positive healthcare experiences for trans people and ensure their right to the highest attainable standard of health. This includes ensuring that healthcare meets the Availability, Accessibility, Acceptability, and Quality framework set out in international human rights standards.

ENGAGEMENT AND EDUCATION CONTINUE ONLINE

The pandemic lockdowns and social distancing did not deter movement work from continuing to take place. In September 2020, **APTN co-moderated a webinar on Transgender Health and HIV**

in Asia alongside Tangerine Community Health Clinic by Institute of HIV Research and Innovation (IHRI). This webinar featured advocates, doctors, and other experts from organisations around the region and beyond, such as LoveYourself in the Philippines and Blue Diamond Society in Nepal, and provided updates on transgender health and HIV.

In October 2020, in line with the International Day of Action for Trans Depathologisation, APTN and partners, Australasian Society for HIV, Viral Hepatitis and Sexual Health Medicine (ASHM), IHRI, and Family Health International (FHI 360) hosted a webinar called **Behind closed borders: Resiliency of trans people amidst COVID-19 with ASHM**, facilitating cross-country sharing of health practices, policies, and laws, including pathologisation that continues to deprive trans people access to gender-affirming and general healthcare.

As part of the efforts to increase awareness on the usage of PrEP (pre-exposure prophylaxis), APTN also organised a webinar called **'New PrEP products for Asia Pacific – What do we Need to Know?'** Taking place on 7th October 2021, the webinar discussed evidence supporting long-acting injectable drug cabotegravir (CAB-LA) from the successful HPTN 083 Study in Thailand and Vietnam, while also discussing implications for combination prevention and other future PrEP products. Representatives from key population communities also shared their views on how they envisioned PrEP as an HIV combination prevention strategy going forward.

The years also found us attending and organising virtual conferences. One example was the Asian Professional Association for Transgender Health (**AsiaPATH on 18-19 November 2021**), the first virtual transgender health conference in Asia to increase healthcare providers' knowledge and understanding of transgender competent care. The health conference discussed the broader transgender health and human rights situations faced by communities and shared successful models, practices, and lessons learned in the region. This conference was made possible with funding support from The U.S. President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief, the US Agency for International Development, and through the EpiC Project, managed by FHI 360.





PILLAR 4: RESEARCH

On 11th March 2020 WHO announced the Covid-19 outbreak as a pandemic. We at APTN knew that this would have wide ranging impacts on the lives of people in the trans and gender diverse community and the critical work they do across Asia and the Pacific region.

THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC HAS STARKLY REVEALED THE VAST SOCIAL, ECONOMIC, AND HEALTH DISPARITIES EXPERIENCED BY TRANS AND GENDER DIVERSE COMMUNITIES EVEN FURTHER. THROUGHOUT THE YEARS OF 2020 AND 2021, WE BEGAN MULTIPLE RESEARCH ACTIVITIES TO ASSESS THE SITUATION, CLOSE THE GAP, AS WELL AS DOCUMENT THE JOY AND RESILIENCE OF OUR COMMUNITIES.



ACTIVITIES CONDUCTED

375 TRANS AND GENDER DIVERSE PEOPLE WERE REPORTED MURDERED IN THE YEAR 2021

For many of our trans siblings, being true to ourselves has always been a resistance in itself. In many parts of Asia and the Pacific, trans and gender diverse people face high rates of gender-based violence, which occurs in public life, but also in private spaces, including their homes, at the hands of family members and intimate partners. What do we do with this information knowing our communities are exposed to many forms of violence, and even worse, being murdered?

In conjunction with International Trans Day of Remembrance, Transgender Europe (TGEU)'s Transrespect versus Transphobia Worldwide (TvT) research released the 2021 update of **Trans Murder Monitoring (TMM)** Report. This is a project we did together with TGEU and 30 other partner organisations, as well as numerous trans activists and researchers from more than 100 countries in all six world regions. The research project systematically monitors, collects, and analyses reports of homicides of trans and gender diverse people worldwide, and updates of the results are published on the TvT website.

“The data shown on the monitoring project shows a worrying trend, especially when it comes to the intersections of misogyny, racism, xenophobia, and hate towards sex workers.”

These intersections show in the majority of victims being Black and migrant trans women of colour, and trans sex workers. 2021 is set to be the deadliest year for trans and gender diverse people since the project began collecting data, with 375 recorded murders between 1st October 2020 and 30th September 2021. This represents a 7% increase from the 2020 update, which was already a 6% increase from the 2019 update. These numbers are just a small glimpse of the reality on the ground. The majority of the data was collected from countries with an established network of trans and LGBTIQ organisations that conduct the monitoring. In most countries, the data is not even systematically collected. There is still a lack of systematic monitoring of hate violence or reports of murdered trans

and gender diverse people on a national, regional, or international level. Most cases continue to go unreported, or when reported, receive very little attention. Understanding the gravity of this situation, APTN will continue to work with our partners to address this underreporting through various projects to monitor and raise awareness of the extent of human rights violations committed against trans and gender diverse people in Asia and the Pacific.

ADDRESSING ISSUES OF CONVERSION THERAPY

Trans and gender diverse people in Asia and the Pacific have long been subjected to conversion therapy practices. Over the year of 2020, we began preparations for an overall regional research framework on conversion therapy and its impacts on the trans communities. The activities over the year included the coordination of the recruitment and implementation of a national and regional research team, and various research components in four countries (India, Indonesia, Malaysia, and Sri Lanka).

In March 2021, we launched **the ambitious yet much needed research paper where we studied the various forms of conversion therapy practices** being implemented against

trans and gender diverse people in India, Indonesia, Malaysia, and Sri Lanka, on 31st March 2021.

Together with our country partners from said countries, this evidence-generating project explored how trans and gender diverse people in these countries have been subjected to conversion therapy practices by documenting their personal narratives and lived experiences. It also looked into how the existing national legal, policy, and programmatic frameworks create an environment in which these harmful practices can thrive.

The study found out how religion and socio-cultural values had a hand in fuelling or promoting interventions aimed at changing an individual's gender identity and expression, and/or sexual orientation, and how these interventions manifest in familial or communal spaces. The evidence presented in this research initiative was informed by data and insights collected through interviews with members of trans communities, health professionals, legal and policy experts, academic and religious scholars, and activists.

These country snapshots feature key findings of the research and offer a preliminary reflection on the driving factors and actors behind conversion therapy practices in each of the four countries. They also present recommendations for relevant legal, policy, and programmatic change to address conversion therapy practices and provide protection to trans and gender

diverse individuals against these harmful interventions.

DOCUMENTING LESSONS, COMMUNITY, JOY, AND RESILIENCE

The pandemic has been a trying time for all, especially for the trans community. Many of us are further displaced from our support and resources, as physical distancing measures prevent trans and gender diverse communities from accessing these vital resources to sustain mental health and social support, which was easily accessible from their peers and trans organisations pre-COVID. In the pandemic, they also reported being further excluded from healthcare services, getting access to hormones, and gender-affirmative healthcare – experiencing disrespect, lack of privacy and confidentiality, and in many cases outright refusal of care.

The lack of legal gender recognition laws across the region also highlighted the exclusion and rejection of our communities from essential government social protection schemes aimed to alleviate hardship. Trans individuals and communities reported exclusion from services due to the incongruence of identity documents and physical presentation. Trans families were also not recognised by the state, limiting access to conventional family-based government subsidies and relief programmes. Stigma and discrimination also have a profound impact on the availability of formal employment opportunities. This means that trans people are often forced to work in high-risk and insecure formal

economies, such as sex work, entertainment, and begging. In some countries where informal sector jobs like sex work are criminalised, trans people in public spaces are often met with violence or encounters with law enforcers. They are then charged with violating laws such as 'cross-dressing', loitering, and public nuisance, impacting trans people's safety.

“This has been the first emergency situation that we have worked in. And our very first experience of a crisis at the scale of the community. The inequalities within our communities have never been more sharply visible. The collective grief, despite which we have had to go on delivering the project, without the possibility of mental health support, has also been a first. Witnessing ‘human survival’ so close to home, has been an absolute first.”

– Sampoorna, India

Understanding the increased barriers and challenges the COVID-19 pandemic presented, we set up the **Trans Resilience Report** in December 2020 as a way to document our processes, how our partners work, as well as the results and findings from our community-based monitoring of the situation.

The partners were from Basera Samajik Sansthan (India), Blue Diamond Society (Nepal), Jaringan Gaya Warna Lentera Indonesia (GWL-INA), Haus of Khamaleon (Fiji), Have Only Positive Expectations – HOPE (Pakistan), Hetura National Capital District (NCD) (Papua New Guinea), IT'S T TIME (Vietnam), Jaringan Transgender Indonesia (JTID), LakanBini Advocates Pilipinas (Philippines), My girls club (Samoa), National Transgender Network (Sri Lanka), Pacific Sexual and Gender Diversity Network, Pertubuhan Pembangunan Kebajikan dan Persekitaran Positif Malaysia (SEED), Samabhabona (India), Sampurna (India), Sisters Foundation (Thailand), Thai TGA, Tonga Leitis Association, Unity For Change (U4C) (Nepal), Venasa Transgender Network (Sri Lanka), Wajood (Fiji), and Yayasan Srikandi Sejati (Indonesia).

The report used a mix of monitoring and reporting methods to ensure accurate data to increase our understanding of the changing context for trans communities and organisations: increased limitations in access to healthcare, further financial insecurity, increased human rights violations. Despite these increased barriers and challenges, we shared how our partners have been able

to step-up to provide much needed support to their communities. These findings, stories, and experiences of trans communities demonstrate an urgent need to guarantee the inclusion of transgender and gender non-conforming people in efforts to fight COVID-19 and its effects. The report outlines stories, findings, and experiences of trans communities – ranging from the reflections on the various impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on trans communities in Asia and the Pacific; to building sustainable trans-led organisations through the many pillars of advocacy, leadership building, health, strategic information, and relief support; as well as providing a set of recommendations of actions for different stakeholders to address the impact of the pandemic on trans and gender diverse communities.

The effort did not stop in the year 2020. In July 2021, we launched the **Global COVID-19 Research Initiative on Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity (GCRI-SOGI) survey**, to investigate the ways in which LGBTQ+ individuals, activists/advocates, and organisations have been affected by the shifting landscape brought on by the COVID-19 pandemic.

This initiative was done with the Equal Opportunities in the Global COVID-19 Research Initiative on SOGI (GCRI-SOGI) Team, made of a global research initiative launched by a collective of 21 LGBTQ+ organisations from across the globe. As a vulnerable and marginalised community, we recognise that the unique experiences of LGBTQ+ individuals may

not be effectively captured or reported upon. This initiative hopes to understand how our communities have been affected at the individual, organisational, and sociopolitical levels.

MAKING AN EFFORT TO UNDERSTAND THE KEY POPULATION

In 2020, APTN together with country partners worked towards the launch of our **KPRA Project**, a trans-led research focused on gaps and challenges trans people experience while accessing healthcare, including HIV prevention and treatment services and gender affirming healthcare. Throughout the year, APTN coordinated with country partners to develop advocacy strategies, campaigns, and briefs; and

“The speakers always provided a very interesting input and perspective. The workshops seemed to be planned in a very structured and detailed manner which facilitated in making the online workshop smooth and fun”, on the aspects of the workshop that they found most interesting/useful.”

drafted the factsheets, reports, and campaign materials.

“Authentic voice framework, storytelling, digital security, risk matrix, doing activism/advocacy in a way that respects and affirms our humanity,” on specific knowledge/skills that they gained from the workshops.”

For the project, online workshops on public campaigning and advocacy were held between 31st July to 21st August 2020 as part of the KPRA initiative and APTN’s COVID-19 programming framework. The workshop series aimed to build the capacities of trans and gender diverse advocates working on SOGIESC issues on public campaigning, and to support their ongoing and future advocacy work.

The series featured a diverse range of speakers and resource persons who delved into different aspects of public campaign implementation. The workshop series was a success, with many appreciating the structured and detailed manner of the workshop design and content, as well as the diversity of the resource persons, participants, and content.

“It was very meaningful to me that many of the speakers that were invited were non-binary people, that even the facilitator was non-binary. That we had a lot of chances to listen and hear and explore the non-binary perspective and it is the first time I’ve attended a workshop (series) that at parts put the non-binary lived experience at the forefront (rather than at the side).

It made all the difference and I really hope APTN moves forward centralising non-binary people and perspectives.”

NOW IS THE TIME, MORE THAN EVER, TO LEAVE NO ONE BEHIND

APTN, together with Malaysian trans activists, launched the first-ever trans-led civil society spotlight report on 17th March 2021, as the Asian

Pacific governments convened for the regional review of SDGs implementation at the 8th Asia Pacific Forum on Sustainable Development (APFSD). The spotlight report, called **Leave No One Behind: Malaysian Transgender at Risk – A Spotlight Report on SDGs Implementation in Malaysia** highlights the systemic discriminations and prejudice experienced by trans and gender diverse persons in Malaysia and sheds light on the government’s lacklustre response to include trans and gender diverse persons in its 2030 Agenda implementation strategies.

EMBARKING ON MAPPING PROJECTS

In 2021, we initiated several mapping projects. These include **Violence Against Trans Persons in the Last 10 Years: Regional Mapping Report and NHRI Mapping Report**. Mapped areas:

- (I) Affirmative policies and regulations, and other relevant interventions implemented by NHRIs in 12 priority countries in the last 5 years to promote SOGIESC rights.
- (II) Research implemented by the NHRIs to gather evidence on human rights violations experienced by trans persons in their respective countries in the last 5 years.
- (III) Monitoring interventions implemented by NHRIs on the human rights situation of trans persons in their respective countries in the last 7 years.



PILLAR 5: **STRATEGIC INFORMATION**

Covid-19 has increased challenges for our partners and communities to cope with the situation, as we grappled with the myriad of news updates and mitigated further spread of the news amidst the unknowns and concerns of health and daily lives.

UNDERSTANDING THAT WE WERE EXPERIENCING A GREAT DEAL OF ANXIETY, FEAR, AND UNCERTAINTY FROM THIS PANDEMIC, AND MINDFUL OF THE CHALLENGES THAT IT WILL POSE TO THE MOST MARGINALISED AMONG US, APTN DECIDED TO PUT TOGETHER A LIST OF RESOURCES ON COVID-19 INFORMATION THAT MIGHT BE USEFUL TO THE COMMUNITIES AND PARTNERS.



ACTIVITIES CONDUCTED

A LETTER TO OUR COLLECTIVE TRANS AND GENDER DIVERSE MOVEMENTS IN RESPONSE TO COVID-19

The first time we heard of the announcement of COVID-19 outbreak as a pandemic from WHO, we immediately understood the gravity of this news and what might follow for the trans communities and movements that we cherish the most. The pandemic made even more evident the disparities of social, economic, and health issues. Trans people are at more risk because of higher rates of underlying health conditions like HIV which lead to low immunity. Additionally, trans people were experiencing increased difficulties getting access to hormones and gender-affirmative health care. Trans communities would further be isolated and experience poverty due to lack of family support and higher rates of unemployment in formal sectors. This would be further exacerbated in the pandemic. This was a time when collectivity, solidarity, and humanity matter more than ever.

Understanding the need to prioritise our communities, **we issued a letter to our communities and movements**, offering an avenue to unload their challenges and offer help as the effects of COVID-19

intensified. In solidarity, we also put together a list of resources for them to be able to access easily and freely on our website.

UNDERSTANDING THE IMPACT OF COVID-19 ON OUR COMMUNITIES

More than just providing resources, we also began a few initiatives to figure out the current situations of our communities in the pandemic. One of them was the **Joint Survey with UNDP Thailand on the Impact of COVID-19 on LGBTI communities**, launched on 30th June 2020. From the survey, it was found that most of the respondents were most affected by the lockdown and travel movement restrictions.

“Restrictions on travels have prevented transgender people from travelling to other provinces or to healthcare facilities to maintain their supply of hormones. They have to get them [the hormones] from their friends or from the market.”

– Anon Survey Respondent

The respondents also reported loss of income/jobs or forced to go on unpaid leave, further exacerbating their financial precarity. Many also said the isolation and the inability to socialise outside had led to an increase of their mental health issues. Furthermore, due to the unalignment of their gender identity in official documents, many respondents also mentioned they were unable to receive any COVID-19 related government assistance. Results from the survey showed the need for more support interventions to assist trans and LGBTI communities in Thailand to adapt and recover from the crisis.

STORYTELLING AS A WAY TO SHARE EXPERIENCES FROM OUR COMMUNITY MEMBERS

We also understood the power of stories to illustrate the plight of trans communities in the region. As such, with the support of UNAIDS, the Asia Pacific Transgender Network (APTN) and Youth LEAD worked together to increase the visibility and voices of trans and gender diverse youth leaders throughout Asia and the Pacific through a programme called **Dignity Amidst COVID-19: Trans Youth Leaders' Stories**. Starting 31st July 2020, we began publishing six stories of trans youth leaders who are making a difference in their communities. These young

leaders come from a diverse range of countries and cultures across Asia and the Pacific, but are all working to improve the lives of trans and gender diverse communities amidst COVID-19.

Amar Alfikar of Indonesia

"I've been working with religious communities to promote acceptance of trans people and also share and explain the positive effects that religion can have in trans people's lives. I hope that my work and my story encourages more young individuals and communities to accept other people's beliefs and gender identities."

Dit Mangang of India

"I want to create awareness in society regarding the inclusion and social acceptance of intersex people in the educational system and institutions. Education is a powerful tool to transform and influence societies, throughout education we can influence our communities and build safer environments for trans people."

Jun Ho Gregory Kim of Samoa

"I feel grateful to be a young activist and to represent my community. I acknowledge the hard work and effort that was done by our predecessors. Their efforts have not gone to waste; it paved the way for us, the younger generation, to carry forward their legacy. The fact that I can be a part of the dialogue around the improvement and betterment of young Fa'afafine and Fa'atama is something I am proud of."

Rawitcha Sukdipreechakul (Garfield) of Thailand

"Most of our clients are not aware of what HIV is and the importance of getting tested. As a health worker, I look for innovative ways to encourage testing. I believe that creativity plays a key role in this, such as finding ways to incentivise people to get tested so that we can provide them with the necessary support. This is why we decided to develop a creative campaign; providing them with information related to HIV and STIs through the distribution of beauty products and hormones."

In 2021, after closely monitoring the evolving situation due to COVID-19 with our country partners and trans focal points in the region, we presented our findings in a series of stories of the trans individual's lived experiences throughout the pandemic called COVID-19 Trans Resilience: Stories Of Hope, Pain And Survival From The Asia And Pacific Trans Movement. In the series, five themes were shared, namely HIV care, gender-affirming hormone therapy (GAHT), mental health, financial security and social protections, and human rights.

The project was also part of APTN's COVID-19 Trans Resilience Campaign report where we profiled our partner organisations and the vital work they have been doing to combat COVID-19's effects in trans communities, as well as featured articles and insights from experts in various fields from mental health to human rights.

FIGHTING AGAINST DISCRIMINATION IN MANY FORMS OF RESOURCES AND TOOLKITS

For those most vulnerable to HIV – including people living with HIV, gay men and other men who have sex with men, transgender people, sex workers, people who use drugs, young people, migrants, and prisoners – who are already facing challenges and disenfranchisement from the wider community, the hardships they face in employment, accessing healthcare, household settings, livelihood and social protections have only been exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic.

At the same time, civil society and key population networks report alarming instances of human rights violations and growing concerns about the rise in discrimination targeting vulnerable groups and health care professionals. In light of this rise of discrimination in Asia and the Pacific, UNAIDS has partnered with regional networks, including Asian Network of People who Use Drugs (ANPUD), APCOM, the Asia Pacific Network of People Living with HIV (APN+), APNSW, APTN, International Community of Women Living with HIV Asia Pacific, Youth LEAD, and the Inter-Agency Task Team on Young Key Populations to develop a social media package and a set of key messages for advocacy as part of the initiative for **Zero Discrimination in the time of COVID-19**.

Drawing on the lessons learned from the HIV response, the campaign urged people to act with kindness, not stigma and discrimination, and

respect people living with HIV, key populations and people affected by COVID-19.



In July 2020, we presented 4 abstracts as part of our **AIDS2020: Virtual online poster exhibition**. These e-posters encompassed subjects like barriers to accessing HIV, gender-affirming, and other healthcare services, in 11 countries around Asia and the Pacific – one of which is a trans-led and driven research on the availability, accessibility, and barriers to HIV, gender-affirming and other healthcare services for trans people.

In December 2019, APTN hosted a regional partnership meeting that examined the current state of transgender affairs, from health, to human rights, to policies, and discovered models and strategies for advancing where we are, to where we want to be, leading to collective building. As a result of this, we published **Transcending Toolkit**, a report and manual intended to be an easy-to-use guide for trans or gender and sexual diverse community organisations to learn about the experiences of trans communities across the Asia and Pacific region, and to utilise the tools within their own workshops or meetings. Additionally, the guide can also be used by non-trans

organisations to learn about the experiences of the trans communities and their trans colleagues.

We also collaborated with Grindr, the world’s largest social networking app for LGBTI people, to develop and translate their **Gender Identity Resource Centre into Tagalog**. The Gender Identity Resource Centre has been a space to provide answers to frequently asked questions by both transgender and cisgender users of the app about trans people, gender identity, sexuality, and safe sex practices. Now that the information has been translated into Tagalog, users have more access to local knowledge and resources specific to the people in the Philippines.

During **Trans Awareness Week** in November 2021, we understood this was an opportunity to promote education, advocacy, activism, and bring more visibility to the community in order to address our myriad of challenges. As such, we shared some of our communities in the region, highlighting their challenges, understanding their work and activities, and outlining ways to connect and support them in order to help increase their impact.

These communities involved

are Basera Samajik Sansthan (India), Unity for Change (UFC) (Nepal), It’s T Time (Vietnam), Sanggar Swara (Vietnam), Oogachaga (Singapore), Haus of Kameleon (Fiji), Venasa Transgender (Sri Lanka), LakanBini (Philippines), SEED Foundation (Malaysia), SISTERS Foundation (Thailand), LGBT Centre Mongolia, CHIAs (Laos), Blue Diamond Society (Nepal), Fundasaun CODIVA (Timor Leste), Pacific Sexual and Gender Diversity Network, and Tonga Leitis’ Association (Tonga).

As part of this week, we also produced **two videos on the queer and trans-affirmative mental healthcare**, specifically for online resources.

VARIOUS RESOURCES ON SEXUAL HEALTH FOR TRANSGENDER AND GENDER DIVERSE COMMUNITIES

In the pandemic, we produced a number of factsheets and resources for the community to easily access and educate themselves towards more informed decisions. For example, we received many questions regarding GAHT from both trans masculine and trans feminine folks. We then created factsheets called **I am trans masculine and I think I want to start using testosterone! What should I know before I begin?**



and **I am trans feminine and I think I want to start using hormones! What should I know before I begin?** to provide a brief overview of the benefits, side effects, and risks about starting hormone therapy. The factsheets are intended to help them understand how hormones work, the changes they might expect including side effects and risks, and other frequently asked questions to make informed choices before undergoing GAHT.

We also understand the anxieties trans masculine folks experience in order to appear more masculine. In February 2021, we published a guide called **Look Good, Feel Better: A Trans Masc Guide** to help them navigate their gender expression. This short guide was packed with information on non-medical ways that some transgender men choose to change their appearance in order to feel more comfortable, confident, and safe, outlined into a few sections such as terms to know, how to travel safely, how to use binders and packers, as well as a Stand-to-Pee device.

On Valentine's Day 2021, we shared a resource called **What They Don't Tell You In Sex Ed! – A Resource For Transgender And Gender Diverse Communities On Sexual And Reproductive Health** that attempts to answer frequently asked questions about dating, sexuality, and pleasure, and also comes with helpful tips on sexual and reproductive health. This resource was divided into three main sections. In the first section, we discussed and unpacked the terminologies frequently

used in this factsheet. In the second section, we curated tips for safe and pleasurable sex. Then in the third section, we compiled information to answer commonly asked questions about reproductive health of transgender and gender diverse persons and their fertility choices.

FIGHTING FOR OUR RIGHTS TO LIVE AND OUR RIGHTS TO BE RESPECTED

In memory of our trans and gender diverse family members whose lives were taken away, we issued a Joint Statement on **Trans Day of Remembrance** with our partners in November 2020. The month was particularly painful for many trans people.

Trans Day of Remembrance reminds us of how normative and oppressive systems strive to erase us, to eradicate our existence. This date reminds us that violence towards one of us is violence towards all of us. It reminds us of the urgency and importance of building more self-aware, resilient, and connected trans movements.

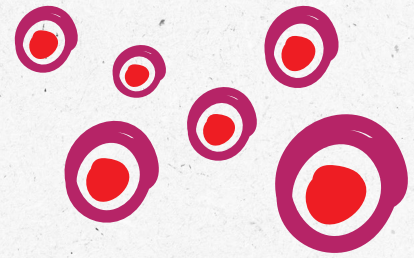
It is not enough that we are in one another's thoughts; we have to be in one another's actions. It is also a reminder that we will not let anyone stop us from fighting for our dignity, caring for our communities, and celebrating our lives. To our trans siblings around the world, you are not alone. We are in this together.



PILLAR 6:
GOVERNANCE &
ORGANISATIONAL
STRENGTHENING

Any organisation will rise better to its potential when their people feel empowered, valued, and supported.

ON TOP OF THE INITIATIVES TO FURTHER EXPAND THE CAPACITY OF OUR COMMUNITIES AND PARTNERS IN THE MIDST OF THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC, APTN AS A TRANS-LED REGIONAL NETWORK RECOGNISES THE NEED TO SUPPORT AND LISTEN TO THE NEEDS OF OUR INTERNAL STAFF, WHO ARE JUST AS AFFECTED BY THE PANDEMIC AS EVERYBODY ELSE.



We began several initiatives to strengthen the organisations from within, so we can continue to serve our communities in all levels throughout.

ACTIVITIES CONDUCTED

REALIGNING OUR INTERNAL POLICIES AND PROCEDURES TO ADAPT TO COVID-19

When WHO announced the COVID-19 outbreak as a pandemic, it also marked the period of uncertainty not just for the communities, but also for our internal team who now had COVID-19 at the forefront of our thinking at the time.

Taking this into consideration, APTN issued a **COVID-19 Guidance for Staff and Board Members** as a means to outline the organisational measures we took to deal with the global health crisis. In the document, we outlined the organisational measures, and general tips for staying connected during the lockdown and social distancing. We also called for more empathy, humanity, and compassion during this precarious time, as everyone was dealing with many forms of difficulties – ranging from our broken health systems; loss of livelihoods; lack of basic supplies like clean water, food, and sanitisation – in dealing with the pandemic. Understanding that guidelines are never to be a static

document, we decided that the document would be an evolving document that would be continuously updated as the situation changes, and we welcome contributions and suggestions from our team as we monitor the situation closely.

We also launched the **APTN Community Survey 2020** in June 2020 to review the progress made towards the Strategic Framework (2018 – 2020) to see the difference our work has made since the beginning of 2018, and to develop our plans for the future. Noting the diversity of our communities, the survey was available in English, Bahasa Indonesia, Hindi, and Thai. With the survey, we hope to come out of this process with a better understanding of what we have achieved, what our priorities should be in the future and how we can improve our work.

We also realised the need for an internal policy update, given the momentous change of how the organisation operated in the pandemic. In November 2020, we also engaged KPMG Advisory to work with us on **updating the existing policies and developments** to reflect the current processes in the areas of Human Resources, Travel Expenses, and Subgrants. The project approach went through five stages: understanding the business, identifying gaps, updating and/or developing

draft policies and procedures, discussing draft policies and procedures with management, and finally delivering the new updated policies and procedures to the management.

CHECKING IN WITH THE TRANS COMMUNITY, ALLIES, AND STAKEHOLDERS

The uncertainties of COVID-19 provided great challenges for us to move ahead, and what better way to gauge than to check with our communities, allies, and stakeholders on their situations and their goals ahead to better support their needs. As such, we developed the **APTN Inception Report** to do so with two goals in mind:

- (I) To consult with the trans community and allied stakeholders regarding the network's results, achievements, and future priorities;
- (II) To develop a limited retrospective results framework for the 2018-2020 Strategic Plan, Standing up for Trans Rights, and ensure understanding of its usages amongst APTN staff members.

The report was developed with a few methodologies in place, including desk review, AGM participation, staff questionnaire, community survey, and stakeholder

consultation. At the end of the journey, we provided key points of analysis and recommendation within both components of the strategic planning process and content. For each of the three pillars, we also came up with a results framework and indicators – which include prioritisation of wellbeing, building community trust and capacity within the network, improved organisational capacities, and more work towards the recognition of LGR – for us to track and assess our 2020 progress.

In the end, the report was hoped to be able to extract valuable insights from our communities, allies, and stakeholders, and to be able to establish and adopt good practices moving forward.

APTN NEW WEBSITE LAUNCH

In 2019, the WordPress Special Projects Team reached out to APTN, offering to provide pro bono web services covering the full costs and lifetime maintenance for the APTN website. This happened to coincide with APTN's 10 year anniversary. Along with Endoh Collaborative, a feminist digital agency based in Canada, APTN worked with WPST to develop and implement the website from February 2020 to May 2021.

LEARNING FROM SUCH TUMULTUOUS YEARS

The continued pandemic has made us rethink priorities and look at challenges in a different light. Many of the APTN staff and community had to find ways to cope – away from their communities, loved ones, and their chosen families. It

was difficult not being able to connect physically with the many trans folks around the region when the borders were closed. We had to go back to the drawing board for the implementation of our strategic plan and rework plans multiple times with the ongoing crisis and pandemic. While we may not be working physically as much as we used to, everyone developed a professional intimacy with each other and often checked in on each other's well-being.

In a **2022 New Year message** from Joe Wong, our Executive Director spoke of the initiatives APTN had undertaken to support our team and community, ranging from work-from-home allowances, mental health support, and medical care.

Throughout the years of 2020-2022, APTN had also reflected on the cultural values of the organisation, listened to what needed improvement, and learned from each other how we can foster a healthier and more balanced workspace and personal life. The team had also seen the expansion of advocacy and finance teams throughout the years 2020 to 2022 to meet the growing needs of the organisation. We also brought together 7 regional partners in Asia and the Pacific in a joint project to strengthen regional responses amongst drug users, sex workers, woman living with HIV, people living with HIV, youths, men who have sex with men and gay men, and SOGIESC communities to meet the growing needs of the organisation.

To be able to create more sustainable operations and

support for local organisations, we would also launch a fundraising campaign by the end of 2022 in order to engage and expand our donor base to the private sectors. In the coming three years, we will exchange learnings and strengthen our networks' capacity in a joint partnership with the trans network in Africa, sexual and gender diversity network in the Pacific, and Youth network in the Asia Pacific.

“2021 has taught me patience, vulnerability and openness. As an organisation, we've learned that culture-building must be a collective and consistent effort to keep the organisation healthy, safe and happy — more so as we move into making remote work a part of the working culture in achieving together, having collective responsibility and being supportive of every individual.”

– Joe Wong, Executive Director

APTN TEAM LEARNINGS AND REFLECTIONS 2021

Patcharin Nadum

**Finance, Administration
and HR Manager**

“Approaching the second year of the pandemic, we are still continuing to work from home. This situation made it challenging to coordinate on some important matters, and I am learning how to take care of myself and make a better balance between work and life balance. I also learned to be a leader this year. Last year, I worked as an officer to support the Accounting and Finance matters of the organisation. This year, I led the new officers that joined my department and trained them as a manager.”

Suwimol Changprung

**Finance, Administration
and HR Manager**

“For me, COVID-19 is one of the biggest challenges in 2021; we had an experience last year to face a similar situation but unfortunately, COVID-19 continues to worsen. This year I had less catching up with family and friends, but gladly I found a way to support them. Working remotely is not easy for me but I tried my best to manage as it is my responsibility.

I learned more about project budget reporting. I am also improving APTN’s accounting to a digital system. With that, we printed fewer documents and were able to save papers.”

Jas Pham

**Knowledge Management
and Operations Manager**

“This year has been probably the most challenging year at APTN. I think I got more used to the pandemic, but I faced other unexpected challenges in my work and had to quickly adapt and learn to respond to new situations I never faced before. Hopefully, all went well in the end, but I definitely feel like I need more time to catch up and take care of myself and my well-being.

This year was another very intense year of learning and growth, both personal and career-wise. I shifted to a new role, handling new responsibilities while supporting core projects. Additionally, I’m also helping new staff to join and make space for those who are leaving. We have many unexpected partnerships and opportunities, I’m looking forward to embracing all of them and helping APTN to grow even further.”

Erik Nadir

Communications Officer

“Prior to joining APTN, I was one of the fellows in APTN’s 2020 fellowship programme. I could say that the fellowship changed my life as a trans nonbinary person. It helped me realise what I want to do in my career. Now that I am joining APTN, I am so grateful to work in the field that I really want.”

Cole Young

Program Officer (Health)

“COVID has continued to disrupt the lives and work of trans communities and organisations across the world. It hasn’t been easy, but our partners, community members, and team have pushed through the challenges in order to continue doing vital work for trans health, trans rights, and trans communities.

Over the last two years, I have been working on our Trans Health and Rights Module and the projects are almost ready for release. I hope when we share these resources early next year, they will be useful in educating trans individuals and their health care providers about trans health and wellbeing.”

Chongon Tantavanich (Bay)

Admin and HR Officer

“This year, I had a big loss, my loving father passed away. Because of this, I realise that life is short, and anyone could be dying, especially during COVID-19. It made me think that we need to always be mindful and live our life to the fullest. Nevertheless, I am glad that I can stay closer with my family and work from home. We spend more time together after working hours.”

Nhuun Wannapong Yodmuang

Senior Human Rights and Advocacy Officer

"2021 shows how unjust this world is. Seeing that trans friends have struggled to live & serve during the COVID-19 pandemic is heavy-hearted. It has reminded me why I do what I do, and I need to do it better.

Being a part of diverse groups to hold the states accountable to women and trans people is my biggest achievement this year. I have joined several advocacy movements of feminists and trans people in local, regional, and international spaces such as CSW, UNCTAD, and UNHRC."

Madhura Chakraborty

Human Rights and Advocacy Manager

"Amid the pandemic and growing economic and political fundamentalisms, the emergence of trans-exclusionary feminism and its co-option of feminist discourse to serve the right-wing, anti-trans agenda is concerning and disheartening. At the same time, I have hope because trans voices are being raised in protests everywhere and are becoming harder to ignore.

I have been learning and growing in and with my work. My contribution has been bringing fresh perspectives that enable the exploration of newer avenues to advocate for intersectional trans rights."

Raine Cortes

Senior Project Manager

"This year has been a journey of ups and downs, and a mix of emotions. Playing a bigger role within APTN and having more responsibility also entails its own challenges, coupled with health-related concerns and the passing of three family members. This year made me take a step back, reassess and reprioritise where and what I am doing now, and recognise that my holistic health is above all else. This has been a journey of almost four years, and I remain to be full of gratitude to APTN, as I embark on the next chapter of my life called 'change'.

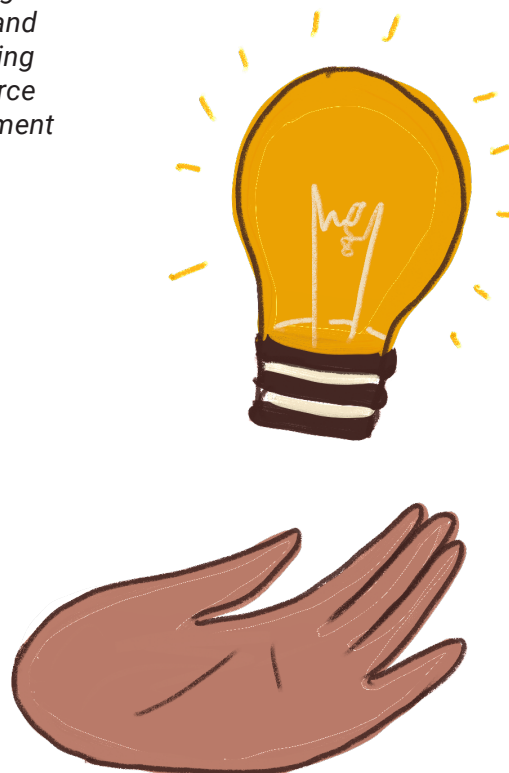
2021 marks my almost four years with APTN; a year that marks my official assumption to a bigger role as Senior Project Manager. With this position comes greater responsibility, and I have continuously managed several projects of APTN (i.e. DRL-GEF, GF-SKPA, KPIF-EpiC) and supported others (i.e. RCF, OSF, FIFF, UNAIDS). Keeping track of all these projects and at the same time contributing to the organisation's resource mobilisation is an achievement in itself."

Marli Gutierrez-Patterson

Project Officer

"There continue to be so many unknowns with COVID but again and again, we've seen local organisations were the first responders and lifeline for so many. Thankfully, foundations responded by allowing more flexible funding but as inequity continues to grow, I want to see more support for the emotional well-being of individuals that are leading these responses.

Showing up and reaching out to others has been so important for my well-being this past year. Taking the opposite action of what I was feeling (lonely, tired) and connecting with another person to whom I can listen and relate was the most meaningful and best way to remind myself of the strength of teamwork and give meaning to my days."



THE ASIA-PACIFIC REGION IS HOME TO MORE THAN ONE-HALF OF THE GLOBAL POPULATION. AMONG THE WORLD'S TEN MOST POPULOUS COUNTRIES, SIX — CHINA, INDIA, INDONESIA, PAKISTAN, BANGLADESH, AND JAPAN — ARE LOCATED IN ASIA AND THE PACIFIC.

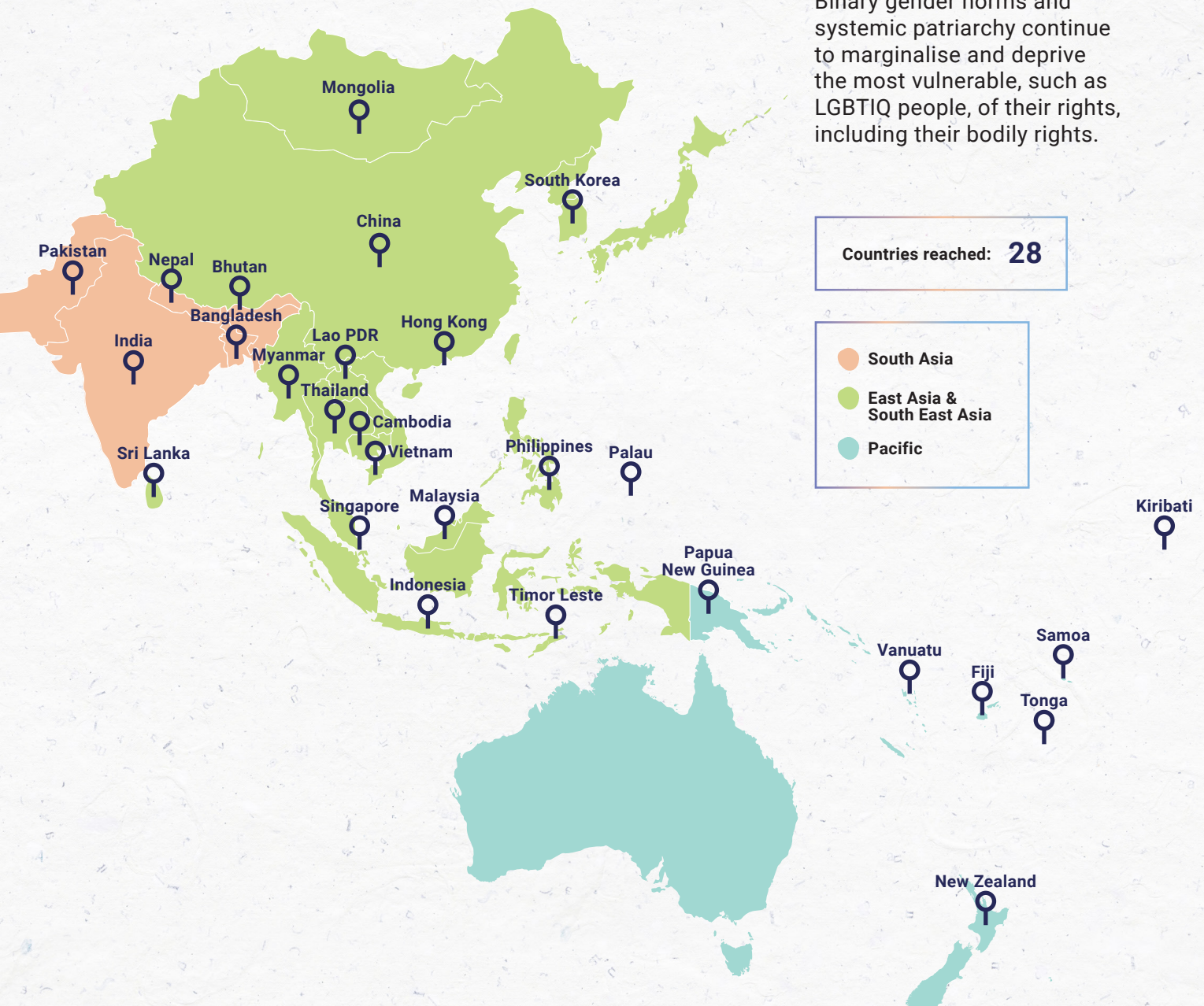
Asia-Pacific is diverse, and while economic and social development have led to increased life expectancy, in many countries in the region, women and young people, including LGBTIQ people, remain poor, are unable to

access health services and education, and experience high rates of unemployment.

The region has also seen the rise of populist authoritarian governments with civil society experiencing increased control,

ensorship and shutdowns in many countries. Human rights defenders, journalists, and academics are attacked or arrested under sedition laws, and national security acts in many countries silence dissenting voices.

Binary gender norms and systemic patriarchy continue to marginalise and deprive the most vulnerable, such as LGBTIQ people, of their rights, including their bodily rights.



ABOUT



ABOUT US

US

THE ASIA PACIFIC TRANSGENDER NETWORK (APTN) IS A TRANS-LED ORGANISATION THAT ENGAGES WITH A RANGE OF PARTNERS ACROSS ASIA AND THE PACIFIC TO SUPPORT, ORGANISE, AND ADVOCATE FOR FUNDAMENTAL HUMAN RIGHTS INCLUDING GENDER IDENTITY, ACCESS TO JUSTICE AND LEGAL PROTECTIONS, AND COMPREHENSIVE GENDER-AFFIRMING POLICIES AND HEALTHCARE.

Over the course of a decade, APTN has grown to become a credible voice for transgender people in Asia and the Pacific, working to ensure that their rights and needs are represented politically, socially, culturally, and economically. The network serves as a platform for transgender people to advocate for access to health, legal gender recognition,

legislative reform, social justice and human rights, and to share information and strategies with one another.

APTN addresses transgender-specific issues including vulnerability to gender-based violence, stigma and discrimination, risks for HIV infection, and health issues stemming from an almost

complete lack of access to appropriate health and medical care. In this region, the terms transgender and trans are frequently used as umbrella terms to describe people whose gender identity is different from their assigned sex at birth, including those who have not sought gender-affirming health services.



OUR MISSION & VISION

& VISION

MISSION

To enable trans and gender diverse people in the Asia Pacific region to organise and advocate across many areas that affect our lives. These include legal gender recognition, health, societal attitudes, stigma and violence, and our right to freedom of movement, education and social protection.

VISION

“A society that upholds, respects, and protects the diversity, safety, equality and dignity of trans and gender diverse people.”

CORE VALUES

Some of our core values at APTN:

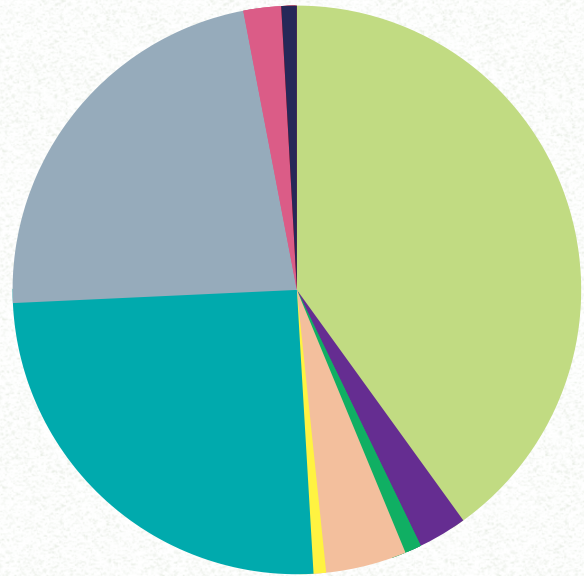
- 1/ Culturally sensitive**
- 2/ Gender empowering**
- 3/ Gender affirming**
- 4/ Power sharing**
- 5/ Respect for equal rights and opportunities**
- 6/ Unity and inclusivity**
- 7/ Respect for linguistic and cultural diversity**
- 8/ Innovative creation and drive**
- 9/ Pride and dignity**
- 10/ Accountability and leadership**

AUDIT REPORT

Figures are in USD.

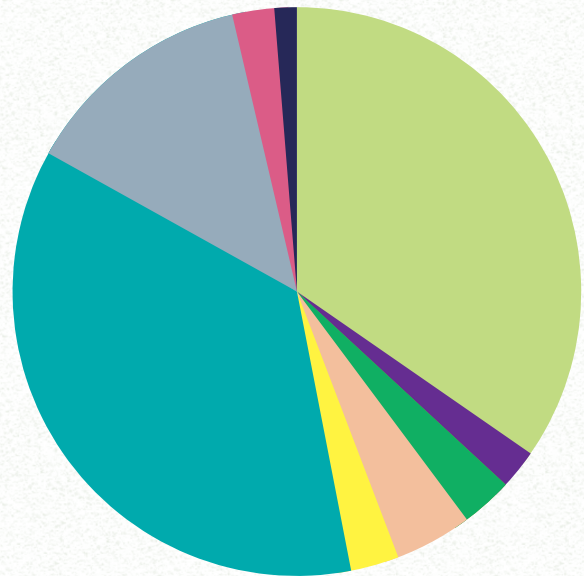
APTN ANNUAL FINANCIAL REPORT 2020

● Personnel	\$392,024.62
● Occupancy	\$27,179.54
● Communications	\$9,197.88
● Travel, Conference, Workshop, and Events	\$44,973.08
● Equipment and Supplies	\$6,972.15
● Professional Services	\$246,662.22
● Subgrants	\$222,397.19
● Other Expenses	\$20,956.01
● Depreciation Charges	\$8,619.37
<u>Total Expenditures</u>	<u>978,982.06</u>



APTN ANNUAL FINANCIAL REPORT 2021

● Personnel	\$339,496.13
● Occupancy	\$21,923.67
● Communications	\$28,645.32
● Travel, Conference, Workshop, and Events	\$43,091.31
● Equipment and Supplies	\$26,913.13
● Professional Services	\$354,161.18
● Subgrants	\$129,954.91
● Other Expenses	\$23,361.08
● Depreciation Charges	\$12,484.16
<u>Total Expenditures</u>	<u>980,030.89</u>



TACTICAL SHIFTS, RESILIENCE, & HOPE **AMIDST HARD TIMES. 2020-2021 BIENNIAL REPORT**

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