

BEST PRACTICES GUIDE ON **ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT FOR LGBTI COMMUNITIES**

COC Netherlands

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INTRODUCTION

Globally, LGBTI people face multiple challenges to accessing employment opportunities, maintaining their livelihood, achieving financial security. In their families, LGBTI members may experience rejection and therefore not benefit from the support they need to complete their education and enter the job market. In schools, LGBTI students can be harassed or threatened, causing them to drop out and lose the opportunity to gain the skills they need to thrive in the workplace. Even with an education, LGBTI job applicants may experience rejection on the basis of their sexual orientation or gender identity. Once they enter the workplace, LGBTI employees may experience stigma and discrimination or can be fired because of their sexual orientation or gender identity. Laws to protect the rights of LGBTI people in the workplace are often not in place, or, if they are in place, are not enforced. Members of the LGBTI community who decide to start their own businesses also face multiple challenges, including lack of access to the skills-building opportunities they need to start and run a business, absence of family or social support structures, and weak or no access to financial capital. As a result, LGBTI people are often disproportionately affected by poverty,¹ and the exclusion of LGBTI people from full participation in economic activities also means that countries do not develop as quickly as they could.²

Purpose of this Guide

There are many programs that work to support LGBTI communities in the Global South, but very few programs that specifically work to reduce poverty and improve access to work for LGBTI people. There is also limited data or documentation of the barriers that LGBTI people face in the world of work. There is, however, a growing recognition of the pressing

- 1 Badgett, Durso & Schneebaum (2013), *New Patterns of Poverty in the Lesbian, Gay and Bisexual Community*, Williams Institute. <https://williamsinstitute.law.ucla.edu/publications/lgb-patterns-of-poverty/>
- 2 M.V. Lee Badgett, Andrew Park & Andrew Flore (March 2018), *Links between Economic Development and New Measures of LGBT Inclusion*. <https://williamsinstitute.law.ucla.edu/wp-content/uploads/GDP-and-LGBT-Inclusion-April-2018.pdf>; M.V. Lee Badgett, Sheila Nezhad, Kees Waaldijk & Yana van der Meulen Rodgers (2014), *The Relationship between LGBT Inclusion and Economic Development: An Analysis of Emerging Economies* <https://www.usaid.gov/sites/default/files/documents/15396/lgbt-inclusion-and-development-november-2014.pdf>; S.N. Nyeck and Debra Shepherd (December 2019), *The Economic Cost of LGBT Stigma and Discrimination in South Africa*, <https://williamsinstitute.law.ucla.edu/wp-content/uploads/Impact-LGBT-Discrimination-South-Africa-Dec-2019.pdf>

need to proactively address poverty among LGBTI people. Taking this reality into account, COC decided to include a specific focus on socio-economic empowerment within its PRIDE programme, in order to build the capacity of its partner organisations on this topic and to facilitate knowledge sharing between partner organisations already tackling this issue in their programming.

In this context, the goal of this guide is to provide community-based organisations (CBOs) that are already working with LGBTI communities in the Global South with guidance about the types of economic empowerment activities that can be undertaken and how to go about starting them. The guide is straight-forward and practice-oriented, and is illustrated with real-world examples of economic empowerment work that is already underway in LGBTI communities worldwide. These examples are also broadly instructive for those already working in the economic empowerment field, but who may not yet be working with LGBTI communities, because they show how LGBTI communities have already been integrated into, or proactively engaged in, existing economic empowerment programmes.

Focus of the Guide

Many aspects of LGBTI people's lives impact their experience in the workforce. This Guide focuses on challenges and programming that is specific to the work environment. However, other programming is equally important. Key challenges that impact LGBTI people's work experience can include severance of family ties (being thrown out of their home by their family); homelessness; hunger; violence, and high levels of mobility. Many of the NGOs/CBOs working with LGBTI communities in developing countries are already working on addressing these issues. These issues are not explicitly discussed in this Guide, but the Guide acknowledges the vital role they play in the lives of the LGBTI community and the ways in which they impact LGBTI people from accessing work and their workplace experience.

How the Guide was Developed

This guide is specifically geared to support COC Netherlands partners working in the Global South. To ensure that the needs, interests, and national contexts of the partners were accurately taken into account, an on-line survey was developed and distributed to partners. The survey questions are included in Annex 1. In addition, qualitative interviews via Skype or WhatsApp were carried out with those partners who had already begun to develop or implement economic empowerment activities.

To identify good practices in economic empowerment programming for LGBTI communities, a literature search was carried out using on-line searches and also by posting on relevant listserves. Qualitative interviews via Skype or WhatsApp were carried out with individuals who were engaged in or knowledgeable about economic empowerment programming.

How the Guide is Organised

The Guide is organised into the following chapters:



Chapter 1: **Getting a Job**



Chapter 2: **Making the Workplace LGBTI-friendly**



Chapter 3: **Starting a Business**



Chapter 4: **Providing Targeted Support for Especially Vulnerable People**



Chapter 5: **Advocacy**



CHAPTER 1: GETTING A JOB

LGBTI people face many challenges in the job market. This chapter introduces the key challenges to getting a job and steps that NGOs can take to help LGBTI people successfully enter the job market.

The key barriers LGBTI people face to getting a job are:

1. Lower levels of education and literacy than the general population
2. Lack of job-related skills
3. Discrimination in hiring practices
4. Businesses' lack of information about the talent in the LGBTI community

Support Education

Incomplete schooling and low levels of literacy make it difficult for LGBTI people to get a job. Although weak education systems impact everyone, LGBTI youth face specific difficulties: They may withdraw from school because they face stigma and discrimination from both teachers and school mates. In some cases, parents may refuse to pay school fees if they find out that their child is LGBTI, effectively forcing children to drop out of school.

What can CBOs do?

1. Support LGBTI youth who are facing stigma, discrimination or violence in school or in their families by:
 - i. Developing and delivering a sensitization training on diversity and LGBTI for school administrators and teachers. If similar training programs are already in place, integrate LGBTI sensitization into existing trainings.
 - ii. Working with the families of LGBTI youth to support family reconciliation and educate family members on LGBTI issues.
 - iii. Providing safe housing options for LGBTI youth who have been thrown out of their families.
 - iv. Paying school fees for LGBTI youth whose families refuse to support them.

- v. Holding LGBTI youth support group meetings to help them stay in school.



GOOD PRACTICE

There are very few examples of CBOs working with educational institutions on LGBTI stigma and discrimination. However, one CBO in Guyana successfully provided a training to adult education associations geared to reducing stigma and discrimination towards LGBTI people. (COC Partner)

Build Job-Related Skills

CBOs can improve the chances of LGBTI people to successfully get a job by building job-related skills. There are three key steps that NGOs can take:

1. Find out what job skills LGBTI people want and need to be successful in the job market
2. Provide vocational training
3. Work with existing programs to include LGBTI people in existing vocational training courses

Find Out What Work Skills the LGBTI Community Wants and Needs

Many CBOs that work in LGBTI communities already have an idea about the areas of work that interest their target groups. For example, a COC partner in Ghana reports that the majority of their clients are interested in video and photo editing, dress-making, or make-up artistry.

In order to make sure to effectively address the skills gaps and to respond to the interests in the LGBTI community, CBOs can conduct a training needs assessment (TNA). The TNA methodology can include a survey, face-to-face interviews, and/or focus group discussions. The findings of the TNA can be used to develop appropriate vocational training materials.



GOOD PRACTICE

A COC Partner in Malawi conducted a training needs assessment (TNA) among men who have sex with men (MSM). The goals of the TNA were to:

- Establish priority technical skills training areas among the target group
- Establish expectations of the target group before training
- Establish expectations of the target group after training
- Establish risks that may influence dropouts during the training

The data was collected through one-on-one interviews, Focus Group Discussions (FGD) and Key Informant Interviews, using a structured questionnaire.

A total of 40 MSM in four districts, 10 MSM in each district, participated in the TNA.

Develop and Conduct Vocational Training

Based on the results of the training needs assessment, CBOs can develop and provide vocational training programs to build the capacity of LGBTI people to enter the workforce. Skills can include direct trade-related skills, and also, important “soft-skills” such as interpersonal communication. In addition to formal training, NGOs can set up mentoring programs in which young LGBTI people are mentored by adult members of the community.



GOOD PRACTICE

A CBO in Iraq set up safe spaces where LGBTI community members can build their capacity and develop their CVs and resumes.

In Ghana, a COC partner provided vocational training to LGBTI people in fashion design including developing a shortlist of people to approach for support in the fashion business, and providing intensive training under LGBTI fashion designers who are well established in Cape Coast in the Central Region of Ghana.

In Guyana, a COC partner provided a “job readiness” training for LGBTI focused on skills to make them marketable, such as personal development, inter-personal communication, financial management, work habits, and CV preparation. The CBO also conducted mock interviews, to help trainees prepare for the interview process.

Identify training opportunities and include LGBTI people in them

Where it is safe to do so, CBOs can identify existing training opportunities, and provide sensitization to the organisations and leaders of those trainings, in order to ensure that LGBTI people are included and respected.



GOOD PRACTICE

In Nicaragua, CBOs supported by USAID actively worked to include LGBTI people in existing economic empowerment and workforce development programming by including LGBTI youth in a program called Technical Vocational Education and Training Strengthening for At-risk Youth.

In Malawi, a COC partner worked with a government regulatory body called the Technical, Entrepreneurial and Vocational Education and Training Authority (TEVETA), to provide a career and business development training for the LGBTI community . The training provided technical vocational skills to 80 MSM as plumbers, tailors, and electricians. The trained MSM were provided with accredited certificates from TEVETA which will open opportunities to employment access and business start up.

In Guyana, NGOs supported by USAID implemented a program called **Skills and Knowledge for Youth Employment (SKYE)** that worked to reduce crime and violence among high risk youth from diverse backgrounds, in part through workforce training and access to microfinance. A key component of the project was life skills training. During project implementation, leaders became aware that there was conflict between some youth, and that LGBTI youth did not have the supportive classroom environment they needed to thrive. As a result, the implementers adapted the curriculum to include training on the importance of accepting differences among people and having respect for people of all identities. Implementers found that these trainings reduced conflict among the participants and offered a more supportive environment for LGBTI youth.

Reduce discrimination and other barriers to hiring LGBTI people

LGBTI people may experience difficulties getting a job due to stigma and discrimination. This may especially be difficult for people with gender non-conforming expressions. Although CBOs and LGBTI community members often report these difficulties, not much research has been conducted to document the extent of the problem. One study in Thailand, conducted by the World Bank Group, surveyed both LGBTI and non-LGBTI respondents and found that more than one-third (37.4 percent) of non-LGBTI survey respondents believed that it is

acceptable for employers to discriminate against LGBTI individuals.³ The World Bank study also found that job and work discrimination varies across occupations and sectors. The police and law enforcement, the military, and religious institutions were particularly inaccessible for LGBTI people. By contrast, agriculture, retail, and beauty and wellness are more accessible. The study noted that because of greater stigma in some professions, LGBTI people may find themselves segregated into particular professions in the labour market, and may experience low professional mobility.

To reduce discrimination and other barriers that LGBTI people face to getting an job, CBOs can:

1. Work with trade unions, businesses and government to remove legal and administrative barriers LGBTI people face
2. Help businesses set up systems to proactively hire LGBTI people
3. Work to address workplace discrimination and change internal business practices (this strategy is discussed in the chapter on the Workplace)

Work to Remove Legal and Administrative Barriers

In some countries, LGBTI people may face specific legal or administrative barriers that directly impact their ability to get a job.

To address these barriers, CBOs can directly lobby governments and businesses.



GOOD PRACTICE

In Pakistan, CBOs conducted advocacy that led to the introduction of The Protection Act of 2018, which established the right of transgender people to get a national ID card that shows their chosen gender. A national ID card is needed to get a job, and before the Protection Act passed, transgender people whose national ID card did not match the gender which they presented, could not legally be employed. Therefore, the introduction of the Protection Act eliminated a significant hurdle to employment.

In Mexico, a LGBTI group funded by USAID successfully lobbied corporations to remove the question on whether or not an applicant had been incarcerated. A history of incarceration disproportionately impacted LGBTI sex workers, especially transgender sex workers.

3 World Bank Group, Economic Inclusion of LGBTI Groups in Thailand, 2018. <http://documents.worldbank.org/curated/en/269041521819512465/pdf/124554-WP-PUBLIC-LGBTI-Report2018-full-report-English-23March.pdf>

GOOD PRACTICE



Obtaining identification cards is especially difficult for transgender people. Transgender people need government issued personal identification to access formal employment and financial services. USAID/Guatemala's implementing partners worked with the Guatemalan National Registry of People (RENAP) to update their [Protocol for Public Support](#) to issue personal identification documents that reflect transgender persons' gender identity. Transgender people were allowed to present themselves in photographs for identity documents in a way consistent with their gender identity, rather than the sex assigned at birth. RENAP also held diversity and sensitivity trainings with 337 personnel responsible for issuing identification documents to avoid discrimination when assisting LGBTI customers. This limited intervention worked within the existing legal framework to change RENAP's approach to providing services to LGBTI people, and it is likely to increase the number of LGBTI people who seek the personal identification that is needed for greater participation in society and the economy.

Proactively hire LGBTI people

LGBTI CBOs can develop partnerships with local businesses to creatively expand opportunities for employment in the LGBTI community.

GOOD PRACTICE



In 2017 India's first radio taxi⁴ service by the LGBT community – '**Wings Rainbow**' – was established in Mumbai.⁵ It was the result of a partnership between a travel agency, Wings Travels, and Humsafar Trust of Mumbai, a community of LGBT individuals. Under this initiative, members from this LGBT community apply for a learner's license, and complete their training to get the All India Driver's License. During the period up until they get their permanent driving license, they receive customer etiquette training for a better end user experience.

Another approach is called impact sourcing. Impact sourcing is an inclusive employment practice through which companies in global supply chains intentionally hire and provide career development opportunities to people who otherwise have limited prospects for formal employment. One way to build these connections is to link corporate recruiting offices with local LGBTI CSOs.

4 Radio taxi means a taxi service run by dispatcher.

5 Wings Rainbow – Mumbai Launches India's First LGBT Radio Cab Service, Life Beyond Numbers, January 22, 2016. <https://lifebeyondnumbers.com/wings-rainbow-lgbt-cab-service/>

Improve Business Awareness about LGBTI Talent

There are a number of innovative ways in which CBOs can work to showcase LGBTI talent to prospective employers. Two good practice examples are (1) developing a database of LGBTI talent for employers to search and (2) holding an LGBTI Job Fair or Business Summit.



GOOD PRACTICE

A Database of LGBTI Talent

To combat labour market discrimination, LGBTI groups in Mexico developed a database of LGBTI talent, including skills, education and work experience, and provided it to private sector corporations to support hiring qualified members of the LGBTI community. The database was developed under an initiative called “Talento Diverso,” which also helps LGBTI individuals to build employment skills.

LGBTI Job Fairs

In Latin America and South Asia, CBOs have organised job fairs that showcase the talent in the LGBTI community.



GOOD PRACTICE

Colombia LGBTI Business Summit

In Colombia, a CBO supported by USAID hosts an annual LGBTI international business summit which includes a series of conferences, forums, panels, and trainings focused on the LGBT market niche. The CBO also established working relationships with partners in the Dominican Republic and Mexico to promote the development of businesses, ventures, and products and innovations aimed at the LGBTI community.



GOOD PRACTICE

India LGBTI Job Fair

Pride Circle (<https://thepridecircle.com/>), is an organization founded in 2017 to promote the inclusion of LGBTI people in the workforce. In July 2019, Pride Circle organised India's first ever LGBTI job fair. Goldman Sachs, Ford, Uber, Accenture, and Intel, as well as big Indian companies such as Godrej — a family-owned conglomerate — and luggage maker VIP Industries, were among dozens of employers that sponsored the fair and offered jobs. It was hard to get companies to sign up when Pride Circle first started. Since then, it has grown from four members to more than 700, distributed across ten Indian cities. The organization started as a platform for people from the LGBTI community to meet and discuss challenges they faced in the workplace, by hosting "safe space" groups in Bangalore. It then began organizing workshops at companies around the city to raise awareness. The RISE job fair — an acronym for Reimagining Inclusion for Social Equity — attracted more than 450 candidates, exceeding the event's 350-person capacity. The ones that secured a place had a chance of competing for around 250 jobs at 35 different companies. Pride Circle wants to double the number of cities it operates in by 2020, and hold similar job fairs in Mumbai, New Delhi and Kolkata with the aim of facilitating at least 2,000 hires over the next two years. The organization is also using the job fair to showcase small businesses run by people from the LGBTI community, and has created a résumé database for employers. Another LGBT group, Six Degrees, hosted a job fair "celebrating diversity across different genders, age brackets, disabilities and sexualities" in Mumbai. <https://www.cnn.com/2019/07/12/business/india-first-lgbti-job-fair/index.html>



CHAPTER 2: MAKING THE WORKPLACE LGBTI-FRIENDLY

Situation

Stigma and discrimination in the workplace can make it difficult or impossible for LGBTI people to thrive in work environments. LGBTI people can experience stigma and discrimination from co-workers, managers, and leadership. As a result, some may feel they must hide their sexual orientation and gender identity, in order to keep their job. The United Nations has recognised this dynamic as a form of violence against LGBTI people:

One of the types of violence faced by LGBT people ... is the inability to be themselves in their workplace, in the environments in which they live, express or should fully express their citizenship.

~International Labour Organisation, UNAIDS, UNDP, 2015
The Promotion of LGBT Rights in the Workplace

Many companies lack regulations on non-discrimination, including non-discrimination based on race, gender, sexual orientation and gender identity. Even when such policies exist, they may not be adequately enforced. As a result, LGBTI people may not be promoted to management or leadership positions. Some may leave the workforce altogether. Making workplaces LGBTI-friendly is therefore a critical component of economic empowerment for the LGBTI community.

The right to work is one of these human rights that have to be assured to LGBT people. It's not just about having access to jobs and work stability, but it is also about the right to an inclusive environment where

everyone is able to fully develop their potential, with no barriers or obstructions to their career, with respectful treatment, equality and liberty to express themselves with no constraint or violence.

~International Labour Organisation, UNAIDS, UNDP, 2015

The Promotion of LGBT Rights in the Workplace

There are not many studies that document the impact of stigma and discrimination on LGBTI people's experience in the workplace. One study in the United States⁶ found that 46% of respondents to a 2018 Human Rights Campaign survey⁷ said they are not open at work about their LGBTQ status. Another recent study, conducted in Thailand by the World Bank, included a survey of 2,302 LGBTI people, and documented the lived experience of discrimination in the workplace:

- 40 percent said that they were harassed or ridiculed at their workplace for being LGBTI
- 24.5 percent were told not to show or mention they were LGBTI
- 20.9 percent said that they were overlooked for a promotion because of their sexual orientation and/or gender identity

~Source: World Bank Group, Economic Inclusion of LGBTI Groups in Thailand, 2018

What should workplaces do to become LGBTI-friendly?

10 Business Commitments to Promoting LGBT Rights

The United Nations has set out 10 steps that businesses can take to promote LGBT rights in the workplace.⁸

1. Commit – CEO and executives – to respecting and promoting LGBT rights
2. Promote equal opportunities and fair treatment of LGBT people
3. Promote a respectful, safe and healthy environment for LGBT people
4. Sensitize to and educate on LGBT rights
5. Encourage and support the creation of LGBT affinity groups
6. Promote respect for LGBT rights in communication and marketing
7. Promote respect for LGBT rights in planning products, services and customer service
8. Promote professional development actions for LGBT people

6 <https://www.shrm.org/resourcesandtools/legal-and-compliance/employment-law/pages/creating-lgbtq-inclusive-workplace-policies.aspx>

7 <https://www.hrc.org/blog/hrc-report-startling-data-reveals-half-of-lgbtq-employees-in-us-remain-clos>

8 The 10 Commitments of a Company to the Promotion of LGBT Rights are part of a manual with a title that translates to "The commitments of companies to LGBT human rights" from Instituto Ethos, launched on December 10th, 2013, available at <http://www3.ethos.org.br/cedoc/o-compromisso-das-empresas-com-os-direitos-humanos-lgbt/#.VIOWqDHF-Sp> in Portuguese.

9. Promote economic and social development of LGBT people in the value chain
10. Promote and support actions aimed at LGBT rights in the community

What can CBOs do to make workplaces LGBTI-friendly?

Make businesses aware of the benefits of having an LGBTI-friendly workplace

Having a diverse workforce has been shown to improve innovation and productivity in the private sector. CBOs that work with the LGBTI community can work with the private sector to educate businesses on the benefits of having an inclusive workforce. Concrete steps that NGOs and CSOs can take include:

1. Develop a database or network of local businesses that would be most receptive to learning about the benefits of a diverse workforce, including, as relevant, the names of sympathetic managers and other leaders with their contact information.
2. Use available resources and data, or adapt resources to local context as needed, to make the business case for an LGBTI-friendly workplace.
3. Develop and offer short educational and awareness-raising seminars or workshops for employers to address misconceptions, raise receptivity and demand for LGBTI employees and sensitize employers on the need to make workplaces LGBTI-friendly
4. Develop partnerships with international organisations to further sensitize businesses on the benefits of an inclusive workplace.



GOOD PRACTICE

Identifying LGBTI-Friendly Businesses

In Columbia, NGOs supported by USAID developed expanded networks that created valuable institutional partnerships. By leveraging these networks and engaging allies, an LGBTI chamber of commerce identified local businesses that would be inclusive to LGBTI employees. Engagement with such businesses helped each business reflect on their roles, and prioritize LGBTI-inclusive hiring practices. A business leader in Colombia reported:

“Finding the Chamber’s support has allowed not only meeting companies from the LGBT community and carrying out excellent negotiations, but also to contribute so that when LGBT people that are looking for more dignified jobs, they see the bank as another alternative. Today I can say that I am a person that has initiated a new path towards studying human rights and that, thanks to initiatives like these, I have seen the great opportunities that the LGBT community has thanks to entrepreneurial people that I keep in my heart today as great friends.”

– Chief of personnel, bank in Colombia

GOOD PRACTICE



In Ghana, an LGBTI Chamber of Commerce held a round table discussion on business and human rights, which included LGBTI entrepreneurs and representatives of the business community. The interaction was productive for all participants: LGBTI entrepreneurs participated in discussions on financial matters such as developing a business plan, getting a loan and strategies for negotiating the world of international business; and business community representatives learned about the talent in the LGBTI entrepreneur community and several became Pride supporters.

GOOD PRACTICE



In March 2016, UNDP organized a global dialogue with almost 200 private sector participants, highlighting the business case for inclusion of LGBTI people in the world of work. The process was informed by three national executive dialogues in China, Indonesia and Thailand, and organized with the Economist Events and ILO.

Help businesses to develop non-discrimination workplace policies on sexual orientation and gender identity

Globally, many businesses have already developed and adopted non-discrimination policies that include sexual orientation and gender identity. NGOs and CSOs that work in the LGBTI community can work with businesses in their community to develop workplace non-discrimination policies or else to incorporate sexual orientation and gender identity into a company's existing non-discrimination policy.

Concrete steps that NGOs and CSOs can take include:

1. Collect good practice examples of inclusive workplace policies that include SOGIESC, in the local language.
2. Share the good practice examples with local businesses.
3. Organise a workshop for businesses of inclusive workplace policies.



GOOD PRACTICE

WorkPlace Pride is a not for profit foundation dedicated to improving the lives of LGBTI people in workplaces worldwide. The foundation strives for a world of inclusive workplaces where LGBTI people can truly be themselves, are valued and, through their contributions, help to lead the way for others. Their business members are committed to LGBTI-inclusive workplaces and many operate globally. The list of members can be accessed at : <https://workplacepride.org/members/>

Key Elements of Non-Discrimination Workplace Policies that Include SOGIESC

According to the International Labour Organisation, UNAIDS and UNDP, workplace non-discrimination should include:

1. Policy on and practices of non discrimination of LGBT people in recruiting and selection
2. Revised tools and procedures for the assessment and identification of potential employees
3. Include commitment to equal opportunities and fair treatment to LGBT people in the dialogue, capacity-building, follow-up and performance appraisal of managers.
4. Revise or implement policies, norms and procedures – considering sexual diversity – to promote equality and fair treatment in terms of benefits and other career development practices for employees.
5. Implement or improve complaint channels.
6. Define anti-discrimination measures.

Train and educate employers and staff

Even when inclusive workplace policies are in place, stigma and discrimination may persist, associated with lack of awareness among company staff and managers. NGOs and CSOs can help by partnering with companies to provide the needed training.

Much work has already been done in this area, so that good practice examples are already available and training materials have been developed. NGOs and CBOs can utilize those examples and materials, adapting them as needed to the local context.

The International Labour Organisation, UNAIDS and UNDP developed a training manual for businesses, *The Promotion of LGBT Rights in the Workplace*, which can be downloaded at https://unaids.org.br/wp-content/uploads/2016/01/2015_ManualPromocaoDireitosLGBTTrabalho_EN_V2.pdf.

GOOD PRACTICE



Training Businesses

The ILO, UNAIDS, and the UNDP undertook a campaign for [LGBTI workplace inclusion in Brazil](#)⁹ as a part of the UN's global [Free & Equal](#)¹⁰ campaign. One of the training manuals¹¹ developed under this project has now been used to train over 100,000 employees at over 30 large companies on LGBTI workplace inclusion.

GOOD PRACTICE



A Friendly Biz Certification Program

In Columbia and Mexico, LGBTI Chambers of Commerce supported by USAID has successfully established a "Friendly Biz" certification program, which provides trainings for businesses on building inclusivity for LGBTI individuals. The training programs help businesses see diversity as an asset that can enhance growth. The certification makes businesses more attractive workplaces for LGBT workers. The Chambers of Commerce also began a program called "Diverse Talent" to help connect LGBT job seekers with these LGBTI-friendly and safe work environments.

9 http://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---americas/---ro-lima/---ilo-brasilia/documents/publication/wcms_496601.pdf

10 <https://www.unfe.org/>

11 https://unaids.org.br/wp-content/uploads/2016/01/2015_ManualPromocaoDireitosLGBTTrabalho_EN_V2.pdf



CHAPTER 3: STARTING A BUSINESS

Situation

Starting their own business is an option that many LGBTI people may be interested to pursue. For some people, working for themselves may be preferable to employment in a workplace where they experience stigma and discrimination, and/or barriers to getting a job. Other people may simply prefer to be self-employed. For some, it may be preferable to work remotely, particularly trans and gender non-confirming people who experience some of the highest levels of discrimination.

LGBTI people face specific challenges to starting their own business:

1. **Skills:** In many countries, stigma and discrimination keep LGBTI people from completing their education or acquiring the skills they need to start a business.
2. **Finance and Administrative Barriers:** Accessing the finance needed to start a business can be especially challenging for LGBTI people. A high incidence of family rejection, poverty and homelessness in LGBTI communities means that LGBTI people lack access to the collateral needed to secure a loan and do not have access to the networks requirement to find a guarantor for a business loan. In some contexts, banks or micro-lending institutions may themselves discriminate against LGBTI people, and deny otherwise qualified LGBTI entrepreneurs a business loan, simply on the basis of their sexual orientation or gender identity. In countries where same-sex relationships are criminalised, banks can deny loans on the basis of "criminal activity." Government licensing agencies may also deny qualified LGBTI people a business license, based on their SOGIESC.
3. **Networks:** LGBTI people may be isolated from the networks needed to build and grow a business.

What can CBOs do?

Build Relevant Skills

CBOs can **organise vocational training workshops** in areas in which the community members have expressed an interest. Before the workshop, CBOs should assess the areas in which the community has an interest, either using informal methods, such as asking community members about their vocational interests during regular CBO activities, or more formally, by conducting interviews or running a survey. Some vocational areas in which LGBTI community members have expressed an interest include cooking, food businesses, beauty, sewing, floral arrangement, and pastry-making.



GOOD PRACTICE

A project in Malawi provided vocational training. After the training was completed, each trainee was assigned to a mentor to serve as an apprentice. After six months, the trainee's skills were assessed, and upon testing, the trainee received a government certificate to practice the trade. Tools of the trade were provided to assist the trainee to begin their business. (COC Partner)

CBOs can **pair people who job coaches** – who are members of the LGBTI community experienced in the workplace and/or with relevant skills. CBOs can also seek out coaching and mentoring opportunities for LGBTI community members with businesses via trainee or internship positions.

Besides organising their own trainings and initiatives, NGOs can consider **engaging with existing vocational or other business training opportunities** to make them more LGBTI-friendly and support members of the LGBTI community to participate in such training opportunities.

Finally, NGOs can **explore existing vocational training opportunities for the LGBTI community** in their country and region. Such initiatives do exist already in some countries. For example, a program supported by USAID, called the LGBTI Global Development Partnership 2013-2020, trained over two thousand individuals through conferences, workshops and virtual trainings, covering topics such as business development techniques, how to make a business plan, digital technology, international trade and commerce and working with multinational corporations. The project works in 14 countries in four regions: Latin America and the Caribbean, Sub-Saharan Africa, the Balkans, and South Asia.

CBOs may also want to encourage LGBTI community members to consider **starting businesses in areas that are “outside their comfort zone.”** This can help to ensure that LGBTI people are free to explore whatever business opportunity they want, and that the LGBTI community avoids becoming “siloed” into particular businesses.



GOOD PRACTICE

Destination Equality

The Mossier Social Action and Innovation Center in Minneapolis works to empower the global LGBTQIA+ community by implementing projects that improve well-being and economic empowerment. One of the most exciting and innovative projects Mossier has supported is called Destination Equality (<https://destinationequality.org/>). Destination Equality is dedicated to increasing economic stability and social access to the LGBT community across the Caribbean. It is an encyclopaedia for LGBT tourism. Destination Equality showcases organizations in-country that are open to taking LGBTI visitors and creating activities for travelers. Organizations can charge a fee and travellers get the chance to learn about the LGBTI community in that country while also supporting them economically with their dollars. The goal is to partner with companies in the hospitality industry who will advertise through Destination Equality in hopes that travelers will then book their trips with companies that have made a commitment to supporting the LGBT community. Source: <https://www.mossier.org/>

Strengthen access to finance in the LGBTI community and address administrative barriers to starting a business

NGOs can **work with lending institutions that are specifically dedicated to improving the LGBTI community's access to finance**. Micro Rainbow International (MRI), for example, provides financial resources to LGBTI people who are excluded from accessing formal financial services and wish to start a small business; MRI also facilitates access to employment, training, mentoring and coaching for LGBTI people in poverty.



GOOD PRACTICE

The Non-profit Enterprise and Self-sustainability Team, (www.NESsT.org) published a report, *End of the Rainbow*, which outlines ways to increase the sustainability of LGBT organizations through social enterprise. A social enterprise is an organisation that uses business strategies to make changes in society for the better. In 2011, NESsT launched *Galeforce Capital*, the first global initiative dedicated to supporting LGBTI social enterprises and enterprises creating economic opportunity for marginalized LGBTI people and organizations. Galeforce Capital helps LGBTI groups plan for, launch, or expand social enterprises by offering financial and business development assistance. Galeforce Capital also provides opportunities for global entrepreneurs to investing in LGBTI-owned businesses.

NGOs can also **work with existing lending institutions**, such as banks, credit unions, or other micro-lending organisations in their country to improve knowledge and understanding of the LGBTI community, explain why lending to LGBTI-run businesses makes good business sense, and address and reduce stigma and discrimination. To do this, NGOs can include members of lending institutions in community activities and organise training or sensitisation workshops for lending organisation staff.



GOOD PRACTICE

Pairing Trainers

A project in Malawi “paired” trainers: One trainer had a technical skill in micro-lending, the other had a skill in working on economic empowerment with lesbians. This allowed the training to be appropriately geared to the target group. (COC Partner)

NGOs may also explore opportunities to **partner with interested donors** to help facilitate linkages between LGBTI organisations and lenders.



GOOD PRACTICE

The LGBTI Global Development Partnership program, supported by USAID, organised an event in 2017 called the “Connecting Business Conference” in the Dominican Republic. Participants included the U.S. National LGBT Chamber of Commerce, and representatives from Scotia Bank and Google who provided information and training to small business owners on tools and resources available through their companies. The project’s implementing partners also encouraged LGBTI entrepreneurs and SMEs to partner with one another and provided platforms for making business-to-business connections that facilitate access to finance.

NGOs can also **capitalise on existing support systems** for LGBTI people, where such systems exist, and use those systems to help LGBTI people meet the requirements that lending institutions set for obtaining a business loan. For example, in Pakistan, a trans organization has utilized the existing “guru-chela” relationships to work with gurus to convince them to serve as guarantors for loans to LGBTI entrepreneurs.

Where it is not possible to find a way for LGBTI entrepreneurs to access finance through formal lending institutions, NGOs can seek funds for lending, and build their own capacity to administer micro-loans.



GOOD PRACTICE

An CBO in Malawi received training from a lending institution to capacitate them to administer a micro-lending program themselves, rather than working through a bank. (COC Partner)

Building networks

Business networks are critical to entrepreneurs' success, and LGBTI entrepreneurs may lack the access they need to existing networks.

NGOs can help to **link LGBTI entrepreneurs to existing networks**. For example, a COC partner in Malawi linked their project which was working with lesbians, with existing women's networks. NGOs can also work with existing business networks, such as Chambers of Commerce, to raise awareness of LGBTI entrepreneurs, reduce stigma, make existing business networks LGBTI-friendly. Membership can help LGBTI business people establish credibility, increase visibility in the community, create networking opportunities, and increase the political and social influence of chamber members.

NGOs can **help LGBTI entrepreneurs build the networks they need**. This can be something as simple as identifying a safe space for LGBTI entrepreneurs to meet.



GOOD PRACTICE

A project in the Dominican Republic set up "safe-spaces" for LGBTI to talk about businesses and to teach the technical aspects of running a business or working in business. Safe-spaces were in restaurants and in tech companies. (USAID supported)

In some countries, it may be possible to establish formal LGBTI business associations, such as LGBTI Chambers of Commerce.



GOOD PRACTICE

Under the LGBTI Global Development Partnership (supported by USAID), the U.S. National LGBT Chamber of Commerce established LGBTI chambers of commerce in six countries. The Chambers of commerce provide mentorship opportunities to LGBTI business owners, and provide training on identifying entry points, processes for registering a business, working with multinational corporations, and establishing business-to-business connections.



GOOD PRACTICE

The Colombian LGBT Chamber of Commerce, helped hundreds of LGBTI and allied businesses overcome barriers and thrive. POKEM, a Colombian small business that produces and sells organic lip balms, established new markets and outreach opportunities as a member of the Colombian LGBT Chamber of Commerce. The owners of POKEM, an LGBTI community member and his father, accessed resources and trainings that supported the development and execution of their business and marketing plans, which helped them to surpass their sales goals and compete in new markets. As a result of connections and services provided by the Colombian LGBT Chamber of Commerce, POKEM gained a broader network of LGBTI-owned and LGBTI-friendly businesses in its own supply chain, helping it to meet its own diversity and inclusion goals.

Strengthening Access to Markets

LGBTI businesses may face barriers that prevent them from supplying to large companies. They may have short business track records or insufficient human resources to connect with large companies.

NGOs can help LGBTI businesses to connect with larger companies as suppliers. One way to do that is to initiate or link up with a **supplier diversity program**. Supplier diversity programs give minority-owned small and medium enterprises an opportunity to secure contracts with major companies and corporations as qualified suppliers. Becoming a supplier opens markets for LGBTI businesses and also increases investment in those businesses. Many multinational corporations, including **IBM**, work to include minority-owned businesses, including those owned by LGBTI people, in their supply chains, as a part of their commitments to corporate social responsibility. **The UN Standards of Conduct for Business** that address LGBTI discrimination list hundreds of corporations who have shown support.¹²

To help LGBTI businesses link up with large companies as suppliers, NGOs can do research to find out which large companies working in their country have supplier diversity programs and then work to ensure that LGBTI businesses access those programs. To help LGBTI businesses increase their visibility to companies with supplier diversity programs, NGOs can work to set up a “third party certification system.” Alternatively, NGOs can work with large businesses to set up supplier diversity programs that explicitly include LGBTI suppliers.

12 <https://www.nglcc.org/blog/ERC-LGBTI-inclusive-economic-growth>



GOOD PRACTICE

The LGBTI Global Development Partnership developed an international LGBT supplier diversity initiative which certifies LGBTI owned businesses as “LGBT business enterprises” (LGBTBEs). Once The National LGBT Chamber of Commerce certifies a business, it is easier for it to build relationships with corporations and generate business and clients.

Another way that NGOs can support LGBTI businesses as suppliers is to create an international supplier registry. Under the LGBTI Global Development Partnership, over 80 LGBTI businesses were registered in an international supplier registry. That registration system is online, and LGBTI business owners create interactive profiles and network with other small businesses and corporations.



BEST PRACTICE

Supply Chain: Embedding LGBT equality into procurement practices and supply chain management

Simmons & Simmons LLP, is a large international law firm with offices in Europe, the Middle East, and Asia. It has a strong record of actively supporting the LGBTI community. For example, Simmons & Simmons requires potential suppliers to answer a set of questions during the tender process, including specific questions about equality and diversity. They also require potential suppliers to submit a copy of their diversity and inclusion policy. Simmons & Simmons audits its suppliers every year to make sure they uphold their diversity policies. If suppliers do not have a diversity trainings, Simmons & Simmons works with them using briefing sessions and sharing best practices. It has developed a practical guide, providing tools for companies looking to implement a similar approach, including sample audit questionnaires and event programmes, tips on measuring impact and other useful resources.

Guide for companies: Stonewall and Simmons & Simmons, “Embedding LGBT Equality into Procurement Practices and Supply Chain Management,” Stonewall, 2016, https://www.stonewall.org.uk/system/files/simmons_simmons_-_embedding_lgbt_equality_into_procurement_practices_and_supply_chain_management.pdf

Source: UN Human Rights Office of the High Commissioner, Tackling Discrimination Against Lesbian, Gay, Bi, Trans and Intersex People: Standards for Business, September 2017 <https://www.unfe.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/09/UN-Standards-of-Conduct.pdf>

CHAPTER 4: PROVIDING TARGETED SUPPORT FOR ESPECIALLY VULNERABLE PEOPLE



LGBTI people are themselves diverse, and NGOs need to take that diversity into account when developing and implementing economic empowerment programs. In most countries, stigma, discrimination and poverty is highest among the transgender population. A study in Thailand,¹³ for example, found that transgender people reported the most frequent and severe discrimination and exclusion in society and that lesbians reported worse outcomes than gay men. This showed that transgender people are most likely to have their job applications refused because of their SOGIESC (77%) , followed by lesbians (62.5%), and gay men (49%). Similarly, 60 percent of transgender people reported experiencing job discrimination in contrast to 29 percent of lesbians and 19 percent of gay men. The same pattern—the highest discrimination against transgender persons followed by lesbians¹⁴ and then gay men—also emerged across accessing government services, education and training, life or health insurance, and financial products as well as renting property. The only exception was buying real estate, where lesbians experienced the most discrimination, followed by transgender persons and gay men.

Although there is limited or no quantitative data, transgender people in South Asia appear to fare better than lesbians and gay men, due in part to a cultural acceptance of transgender hijra, and widespread intolerance of same-sex relationships between women and between men.

Reports from some countries in sub-Saharan Africa indicate that gay men and trans-men can move up socially and in terms of employment, because they are often not identified or recognized as such in the public space, and can therefore avoid discrimination by hiding their gender identity and/pr sexual orientation. However, female identifying people including lesbians and trans-women have a more difficult time, particularly trans-women,

13 World Bank Group, Economic Inclusion of LGBTI Groups in Thailand, 2018. <http://documents.worldbank.org/curated/en/269041521819512465/pdf/124554-WP-PUBLIC-LGBTI-Report2018-full-report-English-23March.pdf>

14 Aksoy, Carpenter, and Frank (2016), analyzing individual-based labor force participation data, record a penalty for lesbians in the labor market but not for gay men. (Aksoy, Cevat G., Christopher S. Carpenter, and Jeff Frank. 2016. "Sexual Orientation and Earnings: New Evidence from the UK." Working Paper, European Bank for Reconstruction and Development, London).

because their SOGIESC is more readily identifiable and depreciated, exposing them to greater discrimination.

The differences in the experiences and contexts of lesbians, gay men, and trans-gender people mean that NGOs and CBOs may have to develop different economic empowerment approaches for different populations. Some NGOs may chose to focus on the most hidden and vulnerable populations. Others may chose to focus on those populations that are easiest to approach and are less vulnerable.

CHAPTER 5: ADVOCACY



Many aspects of LGBTI people's social and legal environment impact their ability to find work and their experience in the workplace. This chapter addresses two critical areas that directly impact economic empowerment programming: Laws and societal norms. It further discusses opportunities to work with donors and financial institutions.

Laws

Discriminatory laws limit LGBTI people's ability to work. Most notably, lack of legal protections for LGBTI people in the workplace, mean that they can be fired with no recourse, and an absence of laws to prevent discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation and gender identity leave LGBTI people without legal protections in the workplace. The lack of legal workplace protections for LGBTI people often leads to workplace discrimination and exclusion from the formal economy. For transgender people, laws that prevent them from obtaining identification documents that correspond with their gender identity keep them from being able to apply for jobs and financial services. Laws that make it difficult for migrant workers to work legally disproportionately impact LGBTI communities, because LGBTI people are particularly likely to migrate in order to avoid discrimination or violence from their families.

When laws change, LGBTI people's access to work tends to improve quickly. For example, changes to the laws in India and Pakistan have led to substantive changes in LGBTI access to the workplace. In Pakistan, the Protection Act of 2018 established the right of transgender people to get a national ID card with their chosen gender – eliminating a significant hurdle to employment. Also, the government committed to include LGBTI people in the new national poverty alleviation program, EHSAAAS (launched in March 2019), which will provide access to business loans. In India, the law that made same-sex relationships illegal, "Section 377," was struck down in 2018, since then, LGBTI people have moved openly into the workplace in India. Transgender people have won important legal rights in South Asia. For example, in 2014 India's Supreme Court recognized transgender as a legal third gender and in 2015, the government of Nepal amended its laws to allow citizens to choose third gender on their

passports, allowing them to obtain identification that is identity-affirming and removed one barrier to applying for loans and jobs.

What can CBOs do?

Advocacy for legal change is an important component of any economic empowerment programming in LGBTI communities. This includes advocacy to decriminalise same-sex relations and remove criminal provisions used to target transgender people such as cross-dressing laws and public order laws. Advocacy in support of law to protect LGBTI people from discrimination in the workplace are equally important.



GOOD PRACTICE

In Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH), USAID helped local LGBTI CSOs advocate for the first intersex-inclusive anti-discrimination legislation in the Western Balkans through [Equality for All](#), a civil society coalition working against discrimination. In Sarajevo, Equality for All evaluated the existing legal framework and implementation of the law and drafted a position paper outlining 16 major shortcomings and proposals for addressing each of them. The coalition worked closely with the BiH Ministry of Human Rights and Refugees to support the drafting of amendments. The amended law, adopted by the BiH Parliament in July 2016, explicitly covers SOGIESC, uses the correct legal terminology in local language and explicitly states “sex characteristics” as a prohibited ground for discrimination. This reform will likely reduce the barriers for LGBTI people to obtaining employment and financial services essential to entrepreneurship and small business creation.

Social Environment

Social attitudes, superstitions, gender norms and stereotypes and religious beliefs or customs can directly impact LGBTI people’s economic status. For example, in some countries, some people believe that LGBTI people are evil, and therefore do not deserve to have the rights to education and work. If something bad happens in the workplace, LGBTI employees can be blamed. In some workplaces, employers may discriminate against LGBTI people on the basis of religion.

To address these challenges, CBOs should engage in advocacy work with religious leaders, and other leaders who influence societal belief systems.

Donors and Financial Institutions

Many donors and financial institutions may already have socio-economic empowerment programs targeting specific segments of the population, such as rural women or farmers. Micro lending for women, for example, is a well-established intervention in many countries.

While these programs do not exclude LGBTI people, they also generally do not explicitly include this community or may not be LGBTI-friendly.

CBOs can advocate or otherwise work with these organisations to explore opportunities for LGBTI inclusion and to educate and support these organisations to become proactively LGBTI-friendly.

CONCLUSION

This guide is explicitly geared to helping CBOs working with LGBTI communities to integrate socio-economic empowerment activities into their programming. The guide is intended to be useful and practical and provides many examples of real-world solutions. It introduces strategies for finding and getting a job, making workplaces LGBTI-friendly, and starting your own business. It recognises the critical role of intersectionality and the ways in which some populations, often trans-gender people, may be particularly disadvantaged in the world of work, and suggests ways to address those challenges. More than anything, this guide is intended as a tool and a reference, and was developed in the hope that it will help the LGBTI community and the CBOs that work in it, to successfully bring economic empowerment into CBO programming and the lived experiences of LGBTI communities everywhere.

ANNEX 1:

RESOURCES

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