Being LGBT Young People in Vietnam: Life on the Streets and the Light through the Crack

A Summary of Research Findings
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Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam

July 2015
The Being LGBT Young People in Vietnam: Life on the Streets and the Light through the Crack research was done by Save the Children in Vietnam and the Institute of Social and Medical Studies. All data, empirical evidence, and findings in this report were collected and analyzed from questionnaires, interviews, and focus group discussions with LGBT street children and youth and key stakeholders in Ho Chi Minh City in 2015.

This findings summary, together with the full research report, is available at http://bit.ly/lgbtyoungpeoplevn or http://tiny.cc/lgbtyoungpeoplevn

This report was edited and reviewed by Nga L.H. Nguyen.
Rebecca Aguilar-Francis and Hung M Duong contributed to editing the report.

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Globally, governments, organizations, and the public have committed their efforts to protect and ensure the rights of all children and youth. Over the years, many important promises and commitments have been made to give children a safe and secure childhood. However, the community of LGBT young people is still left behind. We have an obligation to listen to these young people and open meaningful conversations on how we can protect all children and youth regardless of their gender identity, sexual orientation, or gender expression (SOGIE).

Save the Children proudly presents the Being LGBT Young People in Vietnam: Life on the Streets and the Light through the Crack findings summary. This report hopes to provide NGOs, child and youth rights advocates, policy makers, service providers, and the public as well as any person or organization committed to the protection and equality of all children and youth with a better understanding of the situation facing LGBT young people in Vietnam. We strive to contribute good evidence for effective program planning and implementation of children’s rights, especially in relation to the rights to gender identity and sexual orientation, and the diversity and equality of all genders and sexualities.

The view expressed in the report faithfully reflects evidence from an enormous body of work by the researchers and editors. The team has made sincere efforts to release a factual, balanced, and honest scientific report, bringing out the opportunities and challenges in the country and formulating recommendations for the future. We take this opportunity to congratulate all those associated with the study. Efforts such as these will go a long way towards ending discrimination against vulnerable young people in Vietnam and globally.

This research was produced with technical guidance from the Child Rights Governance team at Save the Children in Vietnam, from the expertise about street children and youth, LGBT, and LGBT young people of
Nguyen Quang Le and Nga L.H. Nguyen. An Ha Nguyen provided assistance with data collection coordination.

We would like to recognize the tremendous contribution, hard work, and scientific integrity of our research partner, the Institute of Social and Medical Studies, and their team, Nam Truong Nguyen, Jessica Chapman, Linh Thi Nguyen, Thinh Toan Vu, Yen Thi Pham, and Anh Lan To.

We would also like to thank the following social workers and youth leaders of Save the Children’s LGBT Street Youth project for their help coordinating interviews and data collection: Anh Thi Ngoc Le, Phuc Hong Nguyen, Tri Thanh Nguyen, Ky Ky, Yuki, Tu, and Kiet Tuan Nguyen.

Our gratitude extends to the Norwegian LGBT Organization (LLH) and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Norway for their financial support.

Finally, the research could only be made possible because of the brave participation of many vulnerable LGBT street children and youth and social service providers in Ho Chi Minh City (HCMC). Their voices will be heard.

We hope that all of us will take this opportunity to consider how this report can help inform our work to further equal rights for all children and youth in Vietnam and other countries and transcend current roadblocks. There is a crack in everything, but that’s how the light gets in.

Save the Children works for children’s rights. We deliver immediate and lasting improvements to children’s lives worldwide without discrimination.

**Gunnar Andersen**  
*Country Director*  
*Save the Children*  
*July 2015*
LGBT young people in Vietnam face a great deal of discrimination and hardship at the family and community level as well as with the society at large. Being LGBT is highly stigmatized in the Vietnamese culture, and there exists a lack of social services along with an insufficiency of health awareness and access. Many LGBT young people migrate out of their communities to the cities where they live and work, seeking a means to not only transcend poverty, but also to find an accepting community, or simply to extract themselves from oppressive discrimination from their families and communities to live independently and freely. However, once they migrate to urban areas, the challenges that LGBT young people face are often detrimental to their psychological and physical well-being. LGBT young people are subjected daily to discrimination and aggression of all forms. LGBT young people, particularly transgender children and youth, face discrimination from everyday interactions with people on the streets, from the police force, in their work places, and in their places of sleep. At times, this discrimination is in the form of microaggressions and verbal harassment, while in other cases, it manifests as physical and sexual violence. Due to a lack of awareness and available social services that can help support these young people, LGBT children and youth become even more vulnerable and are faced with barriers blocking them from not only upward mobility but also from simply being able to live their lives free from inequality and violence. In order to better support LGBT young people in Vietnam, the significant differences that exist among children and youth who are broadly defined as LGBT need to be taken into consideration. The types of discrimination that the youth face, the risk and vulnerability factors that lead to and are caused by living on the streets, as well as the differences that exist for SOGIE variances greatly affect the kinds of services and support that are needed and should be available for these young people. Continued advocacy efforts are also needed for the rights of this population to be recognized in Vietnam. These include ensuring social service staff is well trained and knowledgeable about SOGIE issues, and service providers develop and implement non-discriminatory and inclusive policies and practices. Besides social service providers, schools and workplaces are key areas where efforts are needed most to guarantee that the rights of this population are protected and their growth supported. This study, done by Save the Children in Vietnam and the Institute of Social and Medical Studies, paved the way for more empirical research on the topic. The first of its kind in Vietnam, it provides the most thorough data collection to date (July 2015) on the needs and discrimination facing LGBT young people in Vietnam, particularly those living on the streets. The results provided greater details on the cross-cutting issues of discrimination, showing that compared to other children, LGBT young people in Vietnam are at increased exposure to vulnerability, hate crimes, and discriminatory practices of all forms.

Key research areas:

- What pushes LGBT young people to the streets? What keeps them there?
- Life as vulnerable LGBT young people: discrimination, unmet needs, and violence and hate crimes
- Transcending from street life and other vulnerability of LGBT young people
Which LGBT young people live on the streets?

The LGBT street youth community is diverse both in terms of demographic and experiences. The community is made up of those born biologically as female and male, with males being the majority. The LGBT street youth are comprised mostly of transwomen and youth who identify as gay. Most LGBT street youth surveyed live on the streets between one and five years, and a considerable amount of them stay beyond the fifth year. There are many factors contributing to their experiences living on the streets, such as poverty and social oppression. Some have little or no ties with their families back at home, or have limited or no access to viable social services, a problem perpetuated by only 40% of LGBT street youth having an official ID. Their migrant status pushes them into a further vulnerable position.

What pushes LGBT young people to the streets?

LGBT young people leave their communities for a multitude of reasons, with some being more prevalent than others. A relatively high percentage of youth interviewed in this study reported that discrimination, neglect, and abuse from their families were the main determinants to leave home and wished to find a more accepting community to be part of. However, many youth remain close to their families, and for these youth, wanting a free and independent life as well as to escape poverty was the greater determinant.

The study also noted differences in motives for LGB versus T respondents. For LGB respondents, the need to escape poverty was the more predominant factor for leaving their home. Conversely, for transgender youth, accessing a more free and independent life was the main driving factor.

Life as vulnerable LGBT young people

Discrimination on the streets

The protection of people on the basis of SOGIE does not require the creation of new or special rights for LGBT people. The legal obligations of states to safeguard the human rights of LGBT and intersex people are well established in international human rights law on the basis of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and agreed upon within internal human rights treaties. However, institutionally, sexuality is regulated in many different ways, including protections related to nondiscrimination and the protection, or lack of protection, from violence or harassment. LGBT youths experience inequality on different levels including but not limited to 1) intergroup discrimination, 2) intragroup discrimination, 3) unavailability and inaccessibility of social services, and 4) violence and hate crimes.
Intergroup discrimination

Social discrimination further marginalizes LGBT street youth. Intergroup discrimination can manifest in forms of daily microaggressions, police hostility, employment discrimination, and workplace violence. These forms of discrimination render LGBT young people incapable of attaining sustainable livelihood and social mobility.

Police hostility highly aggravates the living conditions of LGBT street youth. Those without proper ID can get in trouble with the public police forces. The distrust that stems from this antagonistic relationship can also prevent LGBT street youth from seeking help or safety from the police.

Discrimination from employers as well as violence from co-workers and customers also jeopardizes LGBT young people’s employment and income stability, while alienating them in their workplace. This can create serious psychological impacts on their sense of self-worth and well-being.

Intragroup discrimination

The LGBT community is not homogenous. However, the term LGBT is often used as an umbrella term encompassing a wide-range of issues faced by sexual minorities. While the term can be useful for knowledge sharing, it is criticized for neglecting the diversity of lived experiences of those who are marginalized because of their sexuality. In order to provide effective and tailored services to the LGBT community, it is critical to understand that discrimination also exists within the community itself, and that this intragroup discrimination only intensifies the hardship those youth face.

In our research we looked into intragroup discrimination between members of the LGBT community. Our analysis suggested that LGBT young people who had little or no contact with their families were significantly less likely to think inclusively toward other groups as compared to their LGBT peers who have high contact with their families. A possible explanation for this difference might be that LGBT youth with little family contact take to the streets to find an accepting community. Thus, they may be more protective of their own sub groups and more exclusive towards outside groups. These youth present a classic case of collectivistic culture relevant to the Vietnamese culture, with high in-group loyalty and out-group exclusion, even if the out-groups are other LGBT youth.
Hindrance from social service providers & unmet needs

LGBT young people have been found to experience a great deal of discrimination when trying to access social services (medical services, sexual and reproductive health, social support and counseling, protection services, legal service, and social mobility services). Their barriers to comprehensive social service include, but are not limited to, unawareness of specific services based on particular needs, lack of finance to pay for services, lack of transportation, not having an ID card, negative and discriminatory attitudes from service providers, fear of disclosing personal information of their SOGIE, as well as lack of time. These can all be results of structural, institutional discrimination stemming from low level of education, poverty, and phobia against sexual variance, whether or not they are perceived as such by the LGBT youth themselves.

Unfamiliarity of services seems to be the leading reason why LGBT street youth don’t access services in times of need. LGBT street youth are often unequipped in knowledge of different services and procedures to access and utilize these services. In order to better inform LGBT young people about the availability of support, social services programs tailored for LGBT young people should be provided by governmental and non-governmental agencies.

Another daunting reason why LGBT street youth are lagging in utilization of social services is their lack of financial capability to afford these services. Due to a lack of understanding of the LGBT community’s needs, a gap of social mobility and employment service provision hinders LGBT street youth from generating income to pay for social services.

Employment and training programs ought to address the needs of LGBT young people on the street. Also, LGBT-specific nondiscrimination employment laws should be enacted to facilitate LGBT street youth in maintaining financial stability. In order to create a safe space and provide respectful service for LGBT young people, service providers need to address the attitude which is pushing these youth away or instilling in them a fear to disclose personal information.

Violence and hate crimes

Violence and hate crimes are a living reality for most LGBT young people. A high percent of young people from our study reported experiencing physical, psychological, and sexual harassment specifically because of their LGBT identity on a daily or weekly basis. Many times, the young people from our sample didn’t think the experience was serious enough to disclose to anyone. This can lead to heightened stress and mental health issues, while perpetuating the cycle of violence inflicted on LGBT young people on the streets.

Transgender youth seem to experience more psychological and sexual harassment than LGB youth. This might be due to their gender expressions further rendering them targets of hate crimes and sexual violence. An alarmingly high percentage of respondents reported cases where LGBT young people were forced to perform sexual acts with customers or their significant others, and most of the time it is precisely because they are perceived to be LGBT. These findings suggest that LGBT young people’s knowledge and practice of consent as well as the nature of their romantic/sexual relationships are heavily compromised by their working conditions, and being LGBT also puts them at heightened risks of being sexually assaulted. Hence, providing mental health and relationship counseling for LGBT street youth should be considered an important focus for social services providers.
What keeps LGBT young people on the streets?

Though conditions youth face while living and working on the streets can be detrimental to their physical and psychological well-being, most youth do not return home. Their reasons for staying on the streets vary significantly depending on their relationship with their families, or a lack thereof, as well as whether they identify as LGB or T. Those without a strong family or community network would not return home simply because they felt that they had found a group on the streets where they felt they belonged.

Once on the streets, the length of time spent living on the streets correlates with the probability of LGBT youth not returning home. Once the youth from our sample reached the stretch of three months to a year living on the streets, the percentage of LGBT young people who continue to live on the streets escalated, indicating their tendency to remain longer on the streets once they’ve reached one year. Thus, to support and motivate LGBT young people to get off the streets, social services providers should implement timely interventions between the three months to one year mark.

Transcending street life: Support for LGBT young people

Friendship as the building block of social support networks

Research examining children and youth as social actors brings young people out from the margins to focus on them as capable agents in their own right, with varied lives and diverse experiences.33-36 This study aims to understand varied experiences of the LGBT young people population, including their social support networks, in order to provide much needed data to create effective outreach strategies for tailored programs and services.

The data suggests that the most significant supporters for LGBT street youth are friends, significant others, mothers, and co-workers/pimps. Among these supporters, the friendships the LGBT young people create are considered to be the most valuable. The level of contact an LGBT young person has with their family is also an important determinant of where support stems.

Family and gender issues

Transgender young people were found to be more willing to provide informational and emotional support to their significant others compared to the LGB group. Most importantly, almost two-thirds of LGBT young people, regardless of the amount of family contact they sustain, provide more support (physical and financial) to their mothers than their fathers. This raises questions of gender-based influences in family relationships and sources of familial support for LGBT young people. In particular, this finding suggests a stronger bond between LGBT young people and their mothers than with their fathers. This might be influenced by gender roles and division of labor in the family, as well as heteronormative influences on parent-child relationships. As a result, social work programs addressing the needs of LGBT young people and their families need to take into account this gender-specific imbalance in family structure.

Peer education and social work program

Social workers appear to be a reliable source of knowledge for LGBT young people, while friends are the ones these youth seek in times of emotional, physical, and financial needs. Successful social programs will utilize the already established networks of friendship that LGBT young people on the streets have to mobilize their capability and livelihood, using peer support and education. By tapping into their connections with friends, social service providers can holistically support LGBT street youth with maintaining their physical and emotional well-being while transitioning out of the streets.

Finally, more longitudinal research should be implemented in order to assess the needs and desires of LGBT street youth for social workers and government officials to fully comprehend them. LGBT street youth-led and peer education initiatives should also be at the forefront of all programming efforts. Given their strong
bond of their friendships, LGBT young people on the street are likely to be one another’s best anchors and scaffolds in improving their living condition, advocating for their rights and needs, as well as providing one another with physical, emotional, informational, and financial support.

**Desire to transcend**

According to our study, almost all of the young people in our sample have dropped out of school, and about half of them wish to return. This number should call our attention to LGBT young people’s desire to rise above daily discrimination and transcend their current constraining living situations. More initiatives need to cultivate a catalytic environment where LGBT young people can deliver their narratives, address the needs and dreams of their community, and converse with stakeholders about future goals and initiatives. By empowering themselves through voicing their narratives, LGBT young people living on the streets can be ambassadors for the diverse needs of the LGBT community at large, adding another dialogue in the discourse of LGBT rights and empowerment.

**Recommendations summary**

Integrated and concerted efforts among strategic implementation and advocacy partners will help enforce and sustain momentum for shifting the deeply entrenched norms and prejudice regarding LGBT and LGBT young people. General recommendations for all related stakeholders as well as the LGBT community are:

1. **Raise awareness among families of LGBT young people to encourage acceptance of their LGBT children.**
2. **Address root causes of discrimination by advocating for equal and discrimination-free school environment.**
3. **Develop and support efforts to end violence and hate crimes against LGBT young people.**
4. **Increase the availability and accessibility of social services targeting and tailoring to the specific needs of LGBT young people.**
5. **Foster upward mobility initiatives focusing on providing social mobility.**
6. **Assist LGBT young people to obtain proper legal papers.**
7. **Acknowledge that LGB and T persons have different needs.**
8. **Avoid using labels and use participatory methodologies in program design and implementation.**
9. **Acknowledge gender equality as the basis of sexual equality.**

This report also includes specific recommendations for central authority, NGOs, schools, and the LGBT and LGBT young people’s community.
BACKGROUND

Tens of thousands of vulnerable young people are living and working on the streets in Vietnam. The majority of these children have migrated to major cities from other places. Commonly considered “second-class citizens” both socially and legally, street children and youth lack access to social services such as health care, shelter, education, and livelihood, and suffer severe child rights violation.

A recent study implemented by Save the Children in Vietnam (2012) showed that many of these young people self-identify as Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, or other nonconforming sexuality (LGBT). Due to stigma placed on their sexual identity, this group of young people is at even higher risk for discrimination which they face from their family members, community, and society at large. Currently, they are not adequately protected by policies, community systems, or family support networks. In addition, they are further subjected to risky situations through detention, institutionalization, and physical and psychological abuse. Most of them lack identification documents and the registration papers necessary to have access to formal education, health and protection services, and are unable to find safe housing or work opportunities. As a result, they commonly experience hunger, violence, abuse, physical health risks, psychological risks, and social isolation.

Their difficult situation is further exacerbated because of societal homophobia and transphobia, as the Vietnamese culture is not yet accepting of nonconforming sexuality, especially in young people. Rejection and severe hostility from those around expose them to heightened risks of mental illnesses, violence, poverty, and especially homelessness and life on the streets. Discrimination against LGBT young people manifests itself in the forms of physical, psychological, and sexual abuse. This reality pushes many LGBT children and youth to the streets, and ultimately, along with other factors, prevents them from leaving the streets.

The Committee on the Rights of the Child issued a report in June 2012 urging Vietnam to take all necessary measures towards nondiscrimination of children. The Committee noted serious concern that laws and practices in the country continue to discriminate against children, and the persistence of both direct and indirect discrimination against children in vulnerable situations. These vulnerable LGBT young people living on the streets urgently require collaborative and tailored interventions to protect and promote their rights. Combating discrimination against LGBT young people will act as a preventative measure safeguarding LGBT children and youth from living on the streets.

In an effort to support tailored interventions protecting the rights of vulnerable children, this research was conducted to provide an in-depth understanding of the forms of discrimination LGBT young people face from their families and the communities where they come from and when living on the streets, as well as the difficulties LGBT young people face when trying to access social services. This research is part of a larger effort and ongoing work by Save the Children to promote the rights and nondiscrimination of LGBT young people in Vietnam.
DEFINITIONS

Discrimination

There is an increasingly accepted and preferred approach to thinking about SOGIE in terms of ‘sexual rights.’ It provides a conceptual framework for ensuring impositions are not made on what it means to be LGBT and that sexual rights are no less important than other basic human rights.\(^1\)\(^4\)\(^6\) While mobilization around sexual diversity is not new, linking different sexuality issues together into a broader framework of ‘sexual rights’ is a strategy, which only began to gain strength and visibility at the international level over the last decade. The World Health Organizations (WHO) working definition, given below, is an example of the strides which have been made in this area. It states:

“Sexual rights embrace human rights that are already recognized in national laws, international human rights documents and other consensus statements. They include the right of all persons, free of coercion, discrimination and violence, to the highest attainable standard of sexual health, including access to sexual and reproductive health care services; seek, receive and impart information related to sexuality; sexuality education; respect for bodily integrity; choose their partner; decide to be sexually active or not; consensual sexual relations; consensual marriage; decide whether or not, and when, to have children; and pursue a satisfying, safe and pleasurable sexual life.”\(^8\)

The definition provided by the WHO shows how sexuality is not just about sexual relations but is influenced by a number of different factors. Cornwall, Correa and Jolly (2008) highlighted these cross-cutting issues in their argument that “sexuality is about a lot more than having sex. It is also about the social rules, economic structures, political battles and religious ideologies that surround physical expressions of sexuality.”9

Sexual rights violations create hunger (discrimination leads to fewer job opportunities and therefore lower salaries and underpaid and risky jobs), insecurity (physical aggression against LGBT people, homelessness), lack of power (police abuse, lack of access to services, lack of legal protection), limitations in access to health care (discrimination in hospitals on the basis of sexual orientation, lack of qualified staff), and limitations in access to education (bullying in schools, limited access to sexuality education).\(^10\) A human rights based approach in thinking about sexual diversity offers the opportunity to recognize the interdependence of sexual rights with rights to health, housing, food, employment, and social mobility opportunities.

It is within this context that discrimination against LGBT young people is examined and the term SOGIE is used in this research. Specifically, we look at the availability and accessibility of social services and the ability of this population to participate fully in social and economic opportunities, the forms of violence and abuse they face while living on the streets from their peers and the authorities, and the kind of discrimination youth experience from their families, communities, and service providers.

Sexual orientation, gender identity, and gender expression (SOGIE)

**Sexual orientation** refers to the gender of whom a person is sexually or romantically attracted to, including same-sex, opposite-sex, both same- and opposite-sex among other orientations of attraction. Terms such as lesbian (woman attracted to women), gay (man attracted to men), bisexual (a person attracted to both women and men), polysexual (a person attracted to multiple genders), pansexual (a person attracted to all genders, regardless of gender), asexual (experiencing no sexual or romantic attraction), or heterosexual (a woman attracted to men, or a man attracted to women), among others, are used to define a person’s sexual orientation.\(^13\)

**Gender identity** refers to a person’s internal, innate experience of their own gender, their private sense of being a man, a woman, or any other gender variance on the gender spectrum, which includes agender (not having a gender identity), genderqueer (an identity not matching with conventional woman or man gender), and gender-fluid (gender identity varying over time) among others.
Transgender is often used as an umbrella term that is broadly utilized to describe people with gender identities which differ from their biological sex. These people may or may not have gone through sex reassignment procedures including sex reassignment surgery (SRS), and may or may not express their gender differently from the convention norms of their sex assigned at birth. Cisgender refers to when one’s gender identity matches with their sex-assigned-at-birth. A ciswoman is a person born as female and identifies as a woman. A cisman is a person born as male and identifies as a man. Gender expression refers to a person’s external manifestation in the way they dress, talk, or behave on the femininity-masculinity spectrum, and might be independent from their gender identity and/or sexual orientation. Coming out signifies self-disclosing one’s sexual identity to other people.

Street children & youth

In this study, we follow the working definition of the street child adopted by the United Nations (UN): “any [child] who has not reached adulthood, for whom the street (in the widest sense of the word, including unoccupied dwellings, wasteland, etc.) has become [their] habitual abode and/or source of livelihood, and who is inadequately protected, directed, and supervised by responsible adults.”

Our classification of street living status among LGBT young people is informed by Terre des Hommes’ seminal study on street children in HCMC conducted in 2000 and the United States Agency for International Development (USAID)’s definitions of street children. The three factors defining the categories we use to understand street living status are: 1) current living and working situation, 2) place where youth usually sleep, and 3) level of contact with family members. Our classification of street living status among LGBT young people has been updated in order to reflect the situation that street children and youth in Vietnam face today.

A Those with little-to-no contact with their families
LGBT young people who mostly live and sleep on the streets, with no home and no family support most of the time.

B Those with some or high contact with their families
LGBT young people who live and work on the streets with their families, who suffer from economic hardship and often must support themselves with high-risk work; LGBT young people who either live at home most of the time or visit their families regularly, but spend most of their days and some nights on the streets because of poverty or abuse at home; LGBT young people from other provinces who work on the streets, but sleep off of the streets, often in rented rooms with other young people.

LGBT street youth’s level of contact with their family is an important indicator of the degree of support that they have and their vulnerability.

We use the definition of children, those under 18 years old, as outlined by the Convention of the Rights of Child and the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA)’s definition of youth, those between 15 and 24 years old. Data are not presented by age of respondents, but discussed broadly as young people or children and youth, referring to those who are less than 24 years old. The terms “young people” and “children and youth” are used interchangeably throughout this report.

Social services

The social services examined include medical, sexual and reproductive health, social protection services such as food and housing, social mobility services; emotional support/counseling services, education support services, legal aid services, and services providing support in job training.
Both quantitative and qualitative methods were employed using a descriptive study design. Social workers (SWs) from Save the Children’s LGBT Street Youth project were recruited and trained to participate in the study as peer interviewers (PIs) for quantitative data collection. They also conducted a mapping exercise that was used to design the sampling frame. Qualitative data were collected using in-depth interviews (IDIs) and focus group discussions (FGDs). Interviews and discussions were conducted by trained researchers with experience in qualitative data collection.

The sample size for the quantitative component of the study was 138 youth, age 15-24. For the qualitative data, 13 youth participated in IDIs, 3 FGDs with 17 youth were conducted and 6 stakeholder interviews were completed.

Quantitative data were collected on self-identification, demographic characteristics, living situation, support networks, basic needs and violence experienced when living on the streets, awareness, availability, and utilization of social services including: social support, social protection, legal, medical, educational, and employment as well as discrimination faced by youth from service providers, their families, and the communities they are part of. Qualitative data focused on assessing the youth’s experiences and needs and eliciting recommendations for future programming.

All data were collected with informed consent, high confidentiality, and tight quality control. Data were gathered throughout HCMC.

As the study involved children, extreme attention was paid to ensuring their rights and protection were upheld. The design and methodology of the study was approved by the IRB (No. IORG 0006663) at the Institute of Social and Medical Studies. All participants were given the contact information of Save the Children counselors for follow-up support if needed.
FINDINGS

Which LGBT young people live on the streets?

Self-identification

- Biological sex/sex-assigned-at-birth:
  - Male 79.70%
  - Female 20.30%

- Gender Identity:
  - Transmen 14.5%
  - Transwomen 42%
  - Ciswomen 5.8%
  - Cismen 37.7%

- Sexual Orientation:
  - Lesbian 16.7%
  - Gay 52.2%
  - Bisexual 29.7%
  - Straight 1.4%

Education

- High school: 15.90%
- Primary school: 27.60%
- Secondary school: 47.80%
- No school: 8.70%

Length of time living on the streets (N=119)

- <1 month: 3.4%
- 1-3 months: 10.1%
- >3 months - 1 year: 10.1%
- >1 year - 5 years: 26.9%
- >5 years: 7.6%
- Don’t remember: 38.9%

Hometown

- Ho Chi Minh City: 25.5%
- Other: 73%

Means for earning money

- Sell sex: 56.3%
- Other: 43.7%

Owning an identity card (ID)

- 38.9%

(10.5%) of transgender, 87.9% LGB (P<0.001) own an ID
FINDINGS
Which LGBT young people live on the streets?

What pushes LGBT young people to the streets?

Reasons for LGBT young people to leave home

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reason</th>
<th>Group A</th>
<th>Group B</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Poverty</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Social oppression</td>
<td>39.1%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Discrimination and stigmatization</td>
<td>17.4%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Physical abuse by family members</td>
<td>10.9%</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Social isolation</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Abandonment by parents</td>
<td>8.7%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Perceived social rejection</td>
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<tr>
<td>Fear of physical or emotional abuse</td>
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Youth’s perceptions of family’s acceptance

Less than half of respondents reported believing that their families would accept them for who they are (42.8%); that they could speak openly about their SOGIE to their families (42.8%); or that their families would try to understand them (41.6%). Among all respondents, close to half reported believing their parents would be or are ashamed or embarrassed by who they are (38.4%-47.1%).

About a third of LGBT young people surveyed said they felt emotionally (34.8%) or were physically (26.8%) abused by their families.
Life as vulnerable LGBT young people

Daily discrimination

Intergroup discrimination: discrimination against LGBT young people from other groups
Vulnerable LGBT young people were found not only to face discrimination from their families and the communities where they come from but also in their daily life and in their regular interactions on the streets.

Microaggression
Microaggression conveys subtle discrimination LGBT young people encounter every day, and can be conscious or unintentional. Microaggression has negative effects on the youth’s mental well-being and sense of self-worth.

“People... often look or glance at me disgustingly. They even insult me as if I were a bad person.” (gay, 18+)
“People... laugh at me... Either they turn away or stare at me as if I were a strange creature.” (gay, 18+)
“Once I went into a bar filled with gay and lesbian people, but the bar manager told me that I was a 'revealed' gay, so I was not allowed in... She said that revealed gays or lesbians misbehave.” (transgender, 18+)

Police hostility
The data suggests that this group is particularly targeted by the civil defence, which includes physical violence, while not being able to go to the police for help.

“If there are a group of homeless people and one of them is transgender, the police will surely come and arrest the transgender first.” (transgender, 18+)
“People working on the streets depend on their relationship with gangsters. When others take revenge on them, they don’t inform the local authorities because they are both victims and law breakers. And I think that if we inform them, they will ignore us firstly because we are in a low social position, and secondly because they consider us to be second-class citizen... Even when I was beaten and insulted by the police, I could do nothing.” (gay, 18+)

Employment discrimination
LGBT young people experience being denied employment because of their look.

“Once I applied for a position as a waiter in a restaurant, but they questioned my ability to serve and carry things with my effeminate mannerisms. In the end, they didn’t hire me.” (gay, 18+)
“In some places where I ask for a job, they told me that transgender people can’t be employed there. They say they only employ true boys and true girls.” (transgender)
They also experience discrimination and harassment in the workplace.

“*In the boutique [where I worked]…the other staff bullied me. When I was busy arranging clothes, they kept throwing more at my face and shouted “do it.”…Then they speak ill words about me loudly so I could hear, and they even set a trap on me*”. (transgender)

“When I worked in a restaurant, a customer told me that if I served him, he would pay me some tips immediately. He pushed my head down to his cratch.” (gay, 18+)

Violence at the workplace was found to be a problem with significant psychological impact on LGBT young people.

“In the boutique… the other staff bullied me. When I was busy arranging clothes, they kept throwing more at my face and shouted “do it.”… Then they speak ill words about me loudly so I could hear, and they even set a trap on me”. (transgender)

“When I worked in a restaurant, a customer told me that if I served him, he would pay me some tips immediately. He pushed my head down to his cratch.” (gay, 18+)

Intragroup discrimination: discrimination among communities of LGBT young people

The data suggests that day-to-day discrimination experienced by LGBT young people living on the streets is different depending on whether or not the youth have the support of their families. Only 31.1% of Group A reported feeling safe among their community on the streets compared to 60.2% of Group B (P<0.01).

While the majority of LGBT young people feel a sense of cohesion with the LGBT community at large (73.7-81.4%), the data suggests the transgender community is more inclusive and welcoming of other sexual minority groups compared to the LGB community. Significantly more T than LGB respondents reported believing the LGB community considers transgender and intersex young people as part of their community (88.5% vs. 58.3%, P<0.001) and that the transgender community considers young people who are LGB as part of their community (80% compared to 55%, P<0.01). In contrast, data suggest that gay youth feel that they are treated differently by transgender youth, who they say look down on them.

Differences in class within the transgender community are believed to exist between youth who are able to have SRS compared to those who are not.

“*Transgender youth who become more beautiful after SRS will be better friends… They are in the same group to show off their class… Those who have [SRS] often look down on us… They think that as long as we haven’t changed our sex, we are still boys, and we make them look bad.*” (transgender)
Unmet needs
Self-reported basic needs

Self-reported basic needs (percentage of LGBT street youth interviewed)

Significant differences were found correlated with the amount of family contact LGBT young people sustain in their life. Significantly more youth in Group B than Group A reported having a safe place to sleep at night (71% vs. 48.9%, P<0.05), having enough food (67.7% vs. 40%, P<0.01), and that they are able to get the information that they need about their health (44.1% vs. 24.4, P<0.05).

Social services: Availability, awareness, and accessibility

Availability
Our qualitative data findings show that currently, there are no social services dedicated to serving the LGBT street children and youth community. There are a growing number of organizations working on LGBT issues, some of which provide advocacy and networking opportunities, while others provide services such as family counseling and legal advice regarding marriage, as well as referalls for where healthcare and vocational traning. These services, however, do not have the capacity and have not been developed under a mission to serve vulnerable LGBT young people.

While social support and mobility services are becoming more avaialble to the LGBT community at large, social services that are made avaialble to the street children and youth population in particular were found to focus on prevention of HIV and sexually transmitted infections (STIs) and not other services.
Awareness: Percentage of LGBT street youth interviewed who have needed vs. known and used social services

Emotional support/counseling services

- Needed counseling services: 53.1%
- Used counseling services: 5.1%

Education

- Dropping out of school: 89.9%
- Wanting to return to school: 44.4%

Social protection

- Needed a protection service: 32.1%
- Used a protection service: 14.5%

Social mobility services

- Needed social mobility services: 68.8%
- Used social mobility services: 23.6%

Legal aid

- Needed legal assistance: 32.1%
- Used legal assistance: 14.5%
**Accessibility**

Barriers to accessing specific social services include:

**Medical services:** not having enough money to pay for treatment (30.8%), not having transportation available (10.3%), attitudes of service providers (7.7%), and fear of having to disclose personal information about their SOGIE (7.7%).

**Sexual and reproductive health:** unaware of where they could get such services (22.4%), lack of money to pay for such services (21.2%), accessible transportation (14.1%), not having enough time (14.1%), and not having an ID card (9.4%).

**Social support and counseling:** unaware of where they could receive social support and counseling services (20.4%), fear of having to provide personal information (9.7%), fear of having to provide personal information about their SOGIE (7.5%), not having enough money (12.9%), a lack of time (9.7%).

**Protection services:** unaware of a social protection service (44.9%) and a lack of an ID card (10.2%).

**Legal services:** unaware of a legal service that they could access (23.9%) and not having money (15.6%).

**Social mobility:** not having enough money (27.8%), unaware of a social mobility service (23.5%), and not having an ID card (11.3%).

**Other challenges:** being treated differently when using social services by staff who have negative beliefs towards them, attitudes of the service providers, a lack of confidence in service effectiveness (particularly vocational training).

Specifically, the qualitative data collected highlights the negative psychological impact that trying to get an education or training can have on transgender youth when institutions and service providers require gender conformity.

However, if service providers treat LGBT young people with equal respect, LGBT young people report positively and feel encouraged to utilize the services.

“*The staff is very easy-going and has good manners... If I forget [disease prevention practices], they will repeat them for me. In general, the services reserved for LGBT are not provided to any other groups. This makes us less afraid. Using those services is very comfortable. We can freely share and express our natural gender.*” (gay, 18+)

**Violence and hate crimes**

“I am safe from physical harm”

“I am safe from psychological harm”

LGBT youth's experience with all forms of violence was found to have negative effects.
Physical violence

**Experienced physical violence**
with or without a weapon

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Weapon</th>
<th>58%</th>
<th>54%</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>because of being LGBTQ+</td>
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</table>

A high percent of LGBT young people who recently had been physically violated reported having had this experience at least once a month. Similarly, the majority of those who had been assaulted with a weapon (38.9%) reported repeated experiences.

20.5% among LGBT young people who experienced being hit/kicked in the last 12 months reported this violence from a police officer. The civil defense force was also found to have hit or kicked (5.1%) or used a weapon (5.6%) against respondents who reported having experienced violence in the last 12 months.

Psychological harassment

**Experienced emotional harassment**
Bullying, threats, isolation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Threat</th>
<th>65%</th>
<th>71%</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>because of being LGBTQ+</td>
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</table>

Significantly more respondents who were transgender experienced psychological harassment, including being threatened, blackmailed, or having their property damaged or stolen, in the last six months compared to LGB respondents (76.9% vs. 50%, P<0.01) across all forms.

Significantly fewer LGB respondents reported believing their experience with psychological violence was a result of being known to be LGB compared to transgender respondents who were more likely to believe the harassment was because they were known to be LGBT (78.3% vs. 56.7%, P<0.01).

Sexual harassment

**Experienced sexual harassment**
Verbal, physical, and rape

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Violence</th>
<th>73%</th>
<th>10%</th>
<th>91%</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>because of being LGBTQ+</td>
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Significantly more Transgender respondents than LGB reported having had this experience (83.3% vs. 60%, P<0.01).

A high percent of youth were found to have been forced to perform sexual acts on a daily basis (38.2%) or several times per week (23.6%). In addition, a high percent of the sample were found to be touched inappropriately on a daily (30.7%) or weekly (30.7%) basis. Clients were most often reported as the perpetrator of these sexual harassment acts. A high percent of youth also reported being touched inappropriately by their lover (14.5%) or forced to perform sexual acts for their lover (21.8%).

Many LGBT street youth were found not to tell anyone about their experience with this form of violence because they felt that doing so would not be effective, or because they did not believe that the incident that they experienced was serious enough.
What keeps LGBT young people on the streets?

Among respondents in Group A, significantly more LGB respondents, compared to Transgender respondents, reported not returning home because they wanted to escape poverty (53.9% compared to 5.3%, \( P<0.01 \))

Similar to the quantitative findings, the qualitative data highlights the fact that many LGBT young people do not want to return home because they want their independence and to be a part of a community that accepts them.

"I meant to return home but my father told me not to come home until I had given up my bad habits. He said to me, 'you were born a girl, why are you like this? You must become normal or you will not be my daughter any longer.'" (lesbian, 18+)

"I don’t want to go back home because…I really don’t want the neighbors to gossip about me and how I date other girls." (lesbian, 18+)

For some, despite their parents attitudes, they hope to return home and show their families that they were wrong about them and prove that they are capable human beings.

"I hope one day, when I earn enough money, I will return home to take care of my mother. I will prove to her that I am not a deviant". (gay, 18-).
Transcending street life and other vulnerabilities of LGBT young people

Friendship as the building block of social support networks

Across all forms of support, friends of LGBT young people are repeatedly reported as the number one resource. They provide significantly more physical (44.9%), financial (44.9%), emotional (60.1%), and information (44.2%) support to LGBT youth than any other social relationships including the youth’s significant others, mothers, and co-workers and pimps.

In response to violence, regardless of the type of violence experienced, LGBT young people were found to most commonly report their experience to a friend/acquaintance (33.3%). They most commonly reported that the person whom they told provided them with emotional support (71.4%).

Many LGBT youth were found not to tell anyone about their experience with psychological harassment. Nonetheless, among those who did make a report, the majority was found to tell a friend or acquaintance (45.7%), and the most common response among those that told someone about their experience was to provide emotional support (59.1%).

Similarly, our research found that for youth who do tell someone about their experience with being sexually harassed, the person they tell most commonly provides them with emotional support.

The qualitative data collected supports our quantitative findings, highlighting the important role that friends play in providing a social support network. LGBT youth respondents explained:

“We often gather together for small talk, if anyone of us has something wrong, we will share with each other to relieve our feelings. We are very honest and sincere with one another; we share all things. It allows us to get our nerves down so that we can understand each other more…Friends often help each other a lot in life.” (lesbian)
The desire to connect with friends and other peers also show in the purpose of LGBT young people who are internet users (80.4%). They report going on social media (76.9%) and chatting platforms (47.2%). Close to none uses the internet to access information (0.9%).

LGBT young people are also the most generous when it comes to supporting their friends. Far beyond what they would do for other close relationships such as significant others, coworkers & pimps, and mothers, many LGBT youth respondents had provided physical (66.7%), financial (55.8%), emotional (60.9%), and informational (51.8%).

The qualitative data collected on support provides, is similar to the quantitative findings. LGBT young people are very willing to provide financial support to those that are in similar positions as themselves:

“When [my friends] come and say that they are hungry, I’d buy them food and drinks.” (transgender, 18+)

“When I have money, I help [my friend], and when I don’t, he helps me. Only the three of us in our group truly befriend and help each other out. Sometimes someone needs money to pay for bathing water, we give it to them too.” (gay, 18+)

Many transgender youth talked about the emotional support that they provide to their friends, despite the difficult and emotionally taxing issues that these youth often support their friends with.

“In this respect, I have to sit and endure a lot. They keep talking and I can’t stop them in the middle…Sometimes I’m very tired of listening. I give them some advice then, and suggest them to think over and control their bad temper.” (transgender, 18+)

“My girl friends need to talk to me…whenever they have troubles. They come to me crying, holding me tight, then talking and talking about things I can’t understand. I only comfort them and tell them not to be sad, to take it easy because nowadays boys are all don juans. Don’t cry…” (lesbian, 18+)

One youth explains how she is not able to rely on her family, but tries to provide support to her community on the streets.

“The members in my family like my aunt never help me…I help [the lesbians] just because their gender is the same as mine. They are too wretched since their families force them to get married. But how can we get married with straight men while we are LGBT people?” (transgender, 18+)
Peer educators & social workers

Nearly half of the sample had spoken with a PE or SW ever (48.6%). The majority had spoken with a PE or SW within the last year, with 31.8% having spoken to one in the last month.

Topics most commonly discussed with a PE or SW

LGBT young people on the streets reported minimal physical, financial, and even emotional support from PE and SW, but PE and SW are their great source of information, with 31.2% youth receiving this kind of support from PE and SW. The majority (89.6%) find PE and SW to be either useful or very useful.

In addition to friends, LGBT youth respondents also discussed social workers as important people in their social support networks.

“Thanks to [a SW’s name]’s great support in preparing records and providing information about scholarships as well as about life, I am able to learn English, eat, and know more about what it means to be an LGBT.” (gay, 18+)

Education

44% LGBT youth respondents who had dropped out showed interest in wanting to go back to school.

Significantly more youth in Group A reported needing administrative assistance to return compared to those in Group B (36.4% vs. 9.1%, P<0.05).

Significantly more transgender respondents were interested in going back to school compared to LGB respondents (54.8% vs. 29.4%, P<0.01). Significantly more youth in Group B were interested in going back to school than youth in Group A (50.0% vs. 30.6%, P<0.05).

Nearly half of respondents reported having a career as a goal for their future (44.5%) and many (19%) also aim to be in a position of economic stability in the future.
The research findings on discrimination and vulnerability facing LGBT young people in Vietnam provide ample evidence of an alarming problem, but also positive opportunities to intervene and establish equality and protection for these deprived children and youth. An effective strategy will work concurrently with families and individuals at the community level, child- and youth-led groups, child- and youth-focused NGOs, community-based organizations, the social work system, legal advocates, and government agencies at the institutional level. They can be in the LGBT community as well as allies. LGBT organizations are the most strategic partners, as it is important to align LGBT young people's issues with the LGBT movement in Vietnam and the world as a whole. Resources can be drawn from both inside and outside the country.

The study indicates the need for an integrated approach so that the process of changing social norms and furthering protection of this vulnerable group is supported through:

1. Engendering institutional and organizational changes to formally recognize all variance of genders and sexualities as well as commit to support LGBT young people and to uniformly fulfill all of their rights;
2. Empowering the group of LGBT young people among other children and youth, building up their sense of self and community;
3. Raising awareness in the communities and families and fostering an inclusive environment by creating positive messages involving different forms of advocacy and media; and
4. Establishing and improving targeted social services for LGBT young people, especially social work and social mobility services.

General recommendations

1. **Raise awareness among families of LGBT young people to encourage acceptance of their LGBT children**

There are significant differences across the board among LGBT children and youth who are in regular contact with their families and those who have little to no contact. The former group generally report better physical and mental well-being, and stronger social support. Many families can be abusive, and it might not be of the best interest of the child or youth to encourage them to return home at all cost. Therefore, efforts should focus on working with the families to reduce abuse of all forms against their LGBT family members, preventing them from leaving home in the first place, and/or making it more feasible for them to return home if they wish.

2. **Address root causes of discrimination by advocating for equal and discrimination-free school environment**

Invest in establishing LGBT-friendly educational environment. Support for LGBT students, faculty, and staff involves ensuring that the attitudes generating homophobia and transphobia are challenged in all areas of the school, from schools’ policies, procedures, and curriculum, to training and advancement opportunities.

3. **Develop and support efforts to end violence and hate crimes against LGBT young people**

The data collected in this study suggests LGBT young people, particularly LGBT street children and youth, experience a great deal of violence and hate crimes in their daily life. There is a need for comprehensive anti-discrimination policies and anti-hate crimes clauses in all laws to protect the rights of the LGBT community, and reporting mechanisms for violation of such legislations. Efforts should focus on advocating for the development and implementation of these legislations and support organizations that work to ensure they are upheld. Monitoring mechanisms need to be established to ensure that this population is not targeted by hate crimes and discrimination, and action is taken against those who violate anti-hate crimes and anti-discrimination policies.
4. Increase the availability and accessibility of social services targeting and tailoring to the specific needs of LGBT young people

Help LGBT young people find appropriate social services through referrals to inclusive resources in the community, while continuing to advocate and ensure these services are available. Ensure that all materials provided to LGBT young people at these services are affirming of LGBT and include information that are inclusive of LGBT. Work with service providers to ensure their services are non-discriminatory. These efforts should include: Adopting policies prohibiting discrimination and harassment, protecting confidentiality of information on children and youth, establishing a safe and affirming service environment, developing LGBT cultural competency among staff, involving staff and volunteers with expertise serving LGBT youth, and encourage partnership among service providers serving the LGBT young people to share resources and references.

5. Foster upward mobility initiatives focusing on providing social mobility

Support for this population should not only look at helping them meet their basic needs but also provide them with self-efficacy support that will empower them and provide them with greater agency. Specific areas of focus should be offering job training and mentorship programs in addition to identifying employment and volunteer opportunities in LGBT-friendly workplaces, and improve LGBT-friendliness at the workplace to retain LGBT employment. Every effort should be made to support LGBT young people who they wish to go back to school, and to encourage them to remain in school.

6. Assist LGBT young people to obtain proper legal papers

Another important factor to improve school attention, employment and social mobility in general is for all LGBT young people to obtain the ID card. More free and accessible services should be developed to provide LGBT young people support in obtaining the ID.

Simultaneously, when applying for the national ID, transgender youth above 14 years old should have the right to have their papers accurately reflect the gender with which they identify.

7. Avoid using labels and use participatory methodologies in program design and implementation

Sexual orientation and gender identity are dynamic constructs and those working to serve this population should be cautious in assigning labels to adolescents’ sexual orientation, because this may evolve over time. Service providers should ask adolescents how they self-identify, and should be guided by the youth’s language and self-concept. To ensure that needs are met, youth should be involved the program development and implementation processes.

8. Acknowledge that LGB and T persons have different needs

While the term LGBT is often used to advocate for sexual minorities, initiatives to support this community should recognize that there are different needs between LGB and T persons. In particular, it is important for service providers, advocates, and practitioners working with this population to recognize that transgender youth will have diverse experiences and ways of talking about their self-identity.

Furthermore, trans-related terms need to be used appropriately, and assumptions about the sexual orientation of transgender people avoided. It is also important that those working with and supporting this population address transgender youth by the names and pronouns they prefer. It is acceptable and encouraged to politely ask a youth about their preferred pronouns, which can be female, male, or gender neutral.

9. Acknowledge gender equality as the basis of sexual equality

Recognize the intersection between gender equality and sexual equality. Sexual equality can never truly be achieved without combatting gender inequality. Combat sexism and gender inequality issues in concurrent with LGBT work. Avoid perpetuating gender stereotypes and gender roles.
Specific recommendations

Recommendations for central authority

1. Formal recognition of all variances of genders and sexualities, including but not limited to lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and intersex. Ratify the civil law acknowledging the rights of transgender persons.

2. Raise awareness of LGBT young people’s issues in governmental agencies. Establish anti-discrimination based on gender and sexuality clauses in the education, labor, health care, and public security laws.

3. Make firm commitment to combating hate crimes against LGBT, in particular LGBT young people.

4. Ministry of Education and Training to adopt anti-bullying of LGBT students and inclusive policies in schools, and provide comprehensive sexual education with LGBT knowledge for students.

5. Ministry of Labor, Invalids, and Social Affairs and Ministry of Education and Training in liaisons with universities to increase funding for social work programs and train social workers to work with LGBT young people.

6. Ministry of Health to provide and promote scientific knowledge about the psychological and physiological health of LGBT young people, and discontinue all public and privately-run conversion therapy services aiming to change one’s sexual orientation or gender identity.

7. Ministry of Public Security to adopt a more friendly and supportive approach to interacting with LGBT young people living on the streets.

8. Local wards and local Women’s Union chapters to work with families of LGBT young people to eliminate domestic violence and increase acceptance of these children and youth in the families.

9. Youth’s Union to lead and participate in awareness and outreach campaigns promoting the rights and well-being of LGBT youth people.

10. Continue strengthening systematically government-civil society cooperation, in particular rights-based NGOs and other sectors of civil society working with and for all children, including LGBT young people.

Recommendations for non-governmental organizations

1. Establish and maintain an LGBT- and child-friendly environment in the organization. Such efforts should include, for example: organization’s written policies providing guidance on working with LGBT and LGBT young people, LGBT competency training for all staff, and inclusive physical environment and materials (such as gender-neutral bathrooms and intake forms).

2. Create a partnership network with like-minded NGOs working for the rights of LGBT young people. Reach out to those not yet focusing on this group. The network should concentrate their resources and work together on a unified, structured national strategy.

3. Develop evidence-based programming, and increase available data through research. Utilize participatory and child-led research. Address violence and hate crimes against LGBT and LGBT young people as systemic issues and not separated incidents.

4. Adopt the child- and LGBT-participation approach. Empower the voice of LGBT young people. Involve LGBT young people in all aspects of programming, particularly advocacy and decision-making.

5. Support LGBT youth-led initiatives, especially those addressing gender and sexual equality. Build capacity and provide technical guidance for these initiatives.

6. Make committed efforts to ensure and improve gender equality. Integrate gender and sexual equality indicators into all programming.

7. In conjunction with civil society networks, advocate with national policy-making and legal bodies to recognize the right of transgender persons, allowing them to amend the sex designation on their birth certificates according to their self-identity.
**Recommendations for schools**

All schools should implement an equal opportunity policy with a section on inclusivity of LGBT students, parents, faculty, and staff, which involves all members of the school community in its development. It should cover all aspects of school life, with key elements including:

1. School’s mission and vision statements explicitly refer to an anti-bullying strategy and equal opportunity policies. The issue of bullying should be the focus of primary and lower secondary schools.

2. Gender- and sexuality-inclusive curriculums.

3. Staff training on homophobia, transphobia, and sexism, and training on how to challenge such behaviors in the school setting.

4. Proper supervision of school site where bullying occurs, and procedures to achieve and monitor systems to provide consistent responses to homophobic and transphobic bullying. Set up mechanisms to collect and analyze information on incidences of bullying, and regulate follow-up actions.

5. Counseling services that are capable of supporting students when they are experiencing issues developing their sexuality; with the opportunity to bring together families and students to discuss LGBT issues.

6. Development of a school-wide initiative to challenge the use of offensive, homophobic, transphobic, and/or sexist language.

7. Use positive peer influence and involvement from students to promote inclusion of LGBT schoolmates.

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**Recommendations for the LGBT community and LGBT young people**

1. Speak up. Advocate for yourself.

2. Strengthen your own social support network. Build connections. Help others, and accept help from others. Reach out to those in need.

3. Support the peer education system and the youth leaders. Learn, get trained, and become a peer educator or a youth leader.

4. Take conscious and active effort to build your own capacity to better your life as well as to become more effective advocate for yourself and your community.

5. Realize that strength is in solidarity. Acknowledge and overcome differences among yourselves to foster unity across different groups within the LGBT community.

6. Mobilize within your own community. Stand up together to create the power needed to engender changes in the society.

7. Every one of LGBT young person has the right to be respected and a fulfilling, happy life. Trust yourself, live your colors. Be brave. Pursue life, meaning, and freedom with determination and without fear. Sometimes the world will feel like too much to bear, but you really can find joy, because **who you are is Beautiful**.
REFERENCES


Join hands with us and Vietnamese LGBT young people on this journey to a world celebrating the diversity and equality of all genders and sexualities. A world kinder for all.

Save the Children works for children’s rights. We deliver immediate and lasting improvements to children’s lives worldwide without discrimination.

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