

FINAL CONSULTANCY REPORT

On the

**“Assessment on the perceptions & attitudes
of employers towards the LGBTQ++ community”**

and

**“A situational analysis of the
LGBTQ++ community in the workforce”**

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ACRONYMS

ACTED	Agency for Technical Cooperation and Development
COVID-19	Corona Virus Disease
ILO	International Labor Organization
IDI	In-Depth Interviews
HRW	Human Rights Watch
LGBTQ++	Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, and Queer or Questioning
MSM	Men Who Have Sex with Men
NGO	Non-governmental Organization
SIDC	Soins Infirmiers et Développement Communautaire
SOGIE	Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity Expression
UN	United Nations
UNDP	United Nations Development Program
USAID	Joint United Nations Program on HIV/AIDS
WFP	World Food Program

1. ABSTRACT

Members of the LGBTQ++ community in Lebanon continue to endure social stigmatization and discrimination impeding their ability to fully exercise their human rights and as a result, their accessibility and employability at the workplace are hindered. In order to deal with these obstacles, an assessment was carried out to explore the perceptions and attitudes of employers towards the LGBTQ++ community at the workforce and the workplace environment policies. Also, a situational analysis of the LGBTQ++ community at the workforce was carried out to obtain an overview of the human rights violations they face at the workforce and barriers to work opportunities.

In-depth interviews were carried out with a total of 16 private sector HR managers/employers and 13 members from the LGBTQ++ community. Results revealed that the majority of the employers expressed favourable and accepting attitudes and perceptions towards the LGBTQ++ community at the workforce, and mentioned that there are no issues in employing a member of the community as long as they abide by the rules and regulations of the workplace. Despite not having any formal anti-discriminatory policies in place, most employers deemed their workplace as inclusive and are open to learn more about how to making it inclusive to the community. On the other hand, while documenting the experiences of the members of the LGBTQ++ community, they reported facing various forms of human rights violations at the workplace, both verbal and non-verbal from either management and/or co-workers and disclosed the challenges they faced in accessing work opportunities. It is worth mentioning that the workplace within which the interviews were conducted, were the same industries mentioned by the community as places they were discriminated against.

One primary recommendation from the assessment is to train employers and raise their awareness about the rights of the LGBTQ++ and on the benefits of having an inclusive and diverse work environment, as well as to shed light on ways and tools to secure this environment. Another major recommendation is to empower members of the LGBTQ++ community through building their skills, capacities, and educating them on their human rights, as it is seen as integral to support their access and or retain job opportunities.

2. BACKGROUND

2030 Development Goals:
**“No one should be left behind
and no human right ignored”**

An assessment of perceptions and attitudes of employers towards the LGBTQ++ (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, and Queer or Questioning) community cannot be completed in isolation. Acquiring and understanding the perceptions of the general public and addressing them requires tackling the prevalent/prevaling culture and attitudes in any given country. Research and data reflects that LGBTQ++ people all over the world continue to experience exclusion and violations of their human rights across various settings including social, health and workplace settings. The level of discrimination, mistreatment and in some cases violence, based on their sexual orientation and gender identity, varies from one region to another and from one country to another.

The pressure to “fit in” in society, as a result of the maltreatment and prejudice this group faces on a social or professional level, negatively impacts their mental and physical wellbeing. Therefore, individuals from the community try to fit in either by hiding their identity, pretending to be someone they are not, or by choosing to seclude themselves from society.

The various data collected worldwide also indicate that what LGBTQ++ people want, and are entitled to, is dignity to live their lives free of stigma, violence and discrimination, and to be able to reach their full potential and contribute to their families, communities and countries.

Based on data collected from a UNDP national survey that aimed to document experiences of discrimination and social attitudes towards LGBTQ++ individuals in Thailand, results revealed that there was widespread discrimination in entry to the job market, presenting barriers for LGBTQ++ applicants in the hiring process (UNDP, 2019). A significant number of participants reported that job advertisements excluded them based on their sexual orientation and gender identity expression (SOGIE) and that hiding one’s SOGIE, especially in early stages of employment, was reported to be common (UNDP, 2019).

Employment discrimination signifies that LGBTQ++ individuals hold lower-paying jobs and are more likely to be unemployed than non-LGBTQ++ individuals for doing the same work and/or holding the same qualifications. In a review conducted in the USA, the Netherlands, the UK, Sweden, Greece, France and

Australia, gay and bisexual men earn 11% less than heterosexual men holding the same qualifications (Klawitter, 2015).

Similarly, per a joint UNAIDS/ILO/UNDP statement published in 2015, on the promotion of LGBTQ++ Human Rights in the Workplace: “The right to work is one of the basic human rights that have to be assured to LGBTQ++ 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” (UNAIDS et al., 2015).

Other studies also suggest that some people with particular gender identities or sexual orientation experience more discrimination than others; in particular transgender people. There seems to be a lack of official data on the size of the trans individuals’ workforce and on the discrimination and inequality this group faces relative to the mainstream population (Nadal et al., 2014). Because transgender individuals face discrimination on systemic, institutional, and interpersonal levels, many transgender women particularly view the sex work industry as their only viable career option (Nadal et al., 2014).

What seems to be certain though is regardless of the country or the region where some data collected through surveys took place, results revealed that the productivity, opportunities for career advancement and the ability to contribute as active and respected members of the workforce are still severely compromised. What is certain too is that many companies are still unaware of the value and benefits of having an inclusive workplace to the LGBTQ++ community in the workplace.

Existing Work Barriers to Accessing Employment Opportunities for LGBTQ++

Many LGBTQ++ workers are unaware or misinformed about their rights or the procedures to follow when these rights have been violated (ILO, 2016). Employers as well often lack this information and are confused about how to address LGBTQ++ workplace rights issues, because of the lack of clear policies or guidelines and the shortage of human and financial resources (ILO, 2016). Transgender people seem to have it tougher and face incredible barriers as job applicants.

In 2013 the ILO initiated the Promoting Rights, Diversity and Equality in the World of Work (PRIDE) project aimed at addressing discrimination against LGBTQ++ people in the workplace. Preliminary research was

conducted in nine selected countries including Argentina, Hungary, Thailand, Costa Rica, France, India, Indonesia, Montenegro and South Africa (ILO, 2013). Initial results showed that, while legislation and national policies to protect LGBTQ++ employment rights may be in place, they are often poorly applied and discrimination and violence remain cause for real concern. The study showed that discrimination against LGBTQ++ individuals may occur for a variety of reasons, including the possibility that they express their identity and sexuality in ways that do not conform to behavior and expectations traditionally associated with their sex (ILO, 2013). It is therefore a clear form of gender-based discrimination. It is necessary to bear in mind that workers may face workplace discrimination and exclusion despite constitutional and legislative protections.

Existing International and National Laws, Policies and Studies

When people are not able to be themselves in the workplace, a lot of energy and time is wasted in hiding their sexuality.

Worldwide, homophobic and trans-phobic attitudes, often combined with punitive laws and/or lack of effective legal protection against discrimination, continue to expose many LGBTQ++ around the world to serious violations of their human rights.

Seventy-three UN Member States continue to criminalize same-sex relationships and many criminalize trans people (The Independent, May 2016). “Eight countries punish such acts with a death sentence. Most UN Member States lack effective protection from discrimination on grounds of sexual orientation, fewer still protect the rights of trans people and very few have taken measures to protect intersex people. In a handful of countries, governments are actively pursuing measures that would further restrict the rights of LGBTQ++ people — including curbing activism and banning cultural events.”

Very few countries legally recognize the gender identity of transgender people, and only two countries provide legislation aimed at protecting the rights of intersex people. Even in countries where punitive laws have been abolished and social attitudes are changing, LGBTQ++ people continue to be excluded from many spheres of life and continue to experience stigma, discrimination and violence.

“Governments/parliamentarians are more likely to become advocates for the rights of the LGBTQ++ community once they understand the gravely negative impacts on human rights and sustainable human development caused by discrimination against and the exclusion of LGBTQ++ people. They should also be aware of the benefits that inclusive processes and promoting freedom and equality can create to the individuals, to the community and to the country” (UNDP, 2017).

The international response to human rights’ violations based on sexual orientation and gender identity has been fragmented and inconsistent. To address these deficiencies, the International Commission of Jurists and the International Service for Human Rights, on behalf of a coalition of human rights organizations, have undertaken a project to develop a set of international legal principles on the application of international law to human rights violations based on sexual orientation and gender identity to bring greater clarity and coherence to states’ human rights’ obligations. Following a meeting of 29 distinguished experts from 25 countries met in Yogyakarta, Indonesia, in November 2006, the **Yogyakarta Principles** on the Application of International Human Rights Law in relation to Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity were adopted (Please refer to Annex I).

The Arab Region

The results available in the Arab region come almost exclusively from studies in Lebanon—even more specifically, from within certain areas of Beirut. That makes it difficult to understand what the situation is like in some Arab countries or whether what researchers know from these studies can be applied elsewhere.

According to Hady Naal, a research assistant at the American University of Beirut’s Global Health Institute, “talking about the wider Arab world is complicated and differ from one country to another. One cannot put Saudi Arabia or Egypt or Lebanon in the same sentence when it comes to addressing this subject. Every country deserves its own examination. However, there seems to be a bit more acceptance in Tunisia and Morocco compared to places like Saudi Arabia and the U.A.E..... But to be honest, it’s very hard to say that with confidence because I haven’t seen much, if any, research from those countries.”

However, a report by the Human Rights Watch in 2018 exploring LGBTQ++ activism and rights in the Arab region revealed the different legal aspects with regards to same-sex conduct in 19 countries (HRW, 2018). With regards to the laws in place, most Arab states abide by strict laws against homosexuality whereas

others prohibit same-sex sexual relations or transgender expression as a derivative from a particular state-sanctioned interpretation of sharia (Islamic law) (HRW, 2018). From a legal perspective, almost all Arabic-speaking countries in the Middle East and North Africa region criminalize forms of consensual adult sexual relations which can include sex between unmarried individuals, adultery and same-sex relations (HRW, 2018).

Lebanon

In Lebanon, the presence and misinterpretation of article 534 by authorities is still playing a major role in determining the fate of the LGBTQ++ community. Despite the Lebanese law not condemning homosexuality, it however refers to sexual acts as “against nature” and is punishable up to one year of imprisonment. According to the National Coordinator of Helem, a local NGO supporting the LGBTQ++ community: “In practice, this article has been arbitrarily used to arrest Men Who Have Sex with Men (MSM), as well as lesbians with different interpretations by the judges, however policemen have the right to arrest homosexuals at any time”. However, during the past few years, three judges challenged Article 534 with respect to the LGBTQ++ community whereby one judge claimed that “homosexuality is a personal choice, not a criminal offence” (HRW,2018).

Nonetheless, members of the LGBTQ++ community in Lebanon continue to face oppression and marginalization on a social, professional and interpersonal level, hindering their ability to fully access their human rights. An overview of the LGBTQ++ human rights violations across Lebanon are summarized in annex (II).

However, Lebanon witnessed an unprecedented change for sexual and gender rights’ activism, with several developments exposing the early beginnings of a shift in perceptions, attitudes, and reactions. While triumphs and tangible achievements remain sporadic and rare, the socio-cultural topography facing activists working on sexuality and gender in Lebanon today is starkly different from that of 2004 during the early days of an LGBTQ++ rights’ movement.

Activists have begun to notice an increased frequency of promising developments, witnessed through landmark legal rulings, amended organizational policies, relatively positive media coverage, and increased activism and visibility. This is noticeable by the efforts of this project and assessment, which aims to voice out the struggles of the LGBTQ++ community at the workforce and explore means of enhancing employability and bring about a more inclusive work environment for these individuals.

With respect to employment, the crippling economic crises Lebanon is witnessing left many unemployed, including the LGBTQ++ community and the emergence of the COVID-19 pandemic further exacerbated their financial and living conditions. “Some LGBTQ++ people who hold low-income jobs in the informal sector, retail and service industries, and the gig economy, cannot perform their jobs remotely and are out of work. Others may lose their livelihoods as businesses struggle to stay afloat” (HRW, 2020).

3. THE PROJECT AND THE PARTNERS

Soins Infirmiers et Développement Communautaire (SIDC) and ACTED are implementing a 2-year project funded by the European Instrument for Democracy and Human Rights entitled “Enhancing The Inclusivity of the LGBTQ++ Community In Workplaces In Lebanon”. The 3 main objectives of the project are:

Objective 1: To improve workplaces by making them more inclusive and responsive to the human rights and fundamental freedoms of the LGBTQ++ community in Lebanon

Objective 2: To empower the LGBTQ++ community to seek and maintain employment based on their personal preferences and professional goals.

Objective 3: To facilitate change and challenge social norms, perceived roles of individuals and prejudices that exist in societies leading to stigma, discrimination and human rights violations of LGBTQ++ at the workplace.

About SIDC

SIDC’s mission is to commit to providing equitable access to healthcare and improve the quality of life of key populations in partnership with them through harm reduction and healthcare services, advocacy, networking, and capacity building for NGOs at the national and regional level.

About ACTED

ACTED’s mission is to save lives and support people in meeting their needs in hard to reach areas. ACTED develops and implements programs that target the most vulnerable amongst populations that have suffered from conflict, natural disaster, or socio-economic hardship. ACTED’s approach looks beyond the immediate emergency towards opportunities for longer term livelihoods reconstruction and sustainable development.

It is worth mentioning that during the drafting of the project objectives, SIDC conducted a rapid pilot survey with 22 individuals from the LGBTQ++ individuals to assess the needs of the community, the struggles to access or sustain employment and the incidences of discrimination they faced at the workplace. Results revealed that 27% of the participants stated they were subjected to stigma because of either their gender identity or sexual orientation. The most common abuses reported were hostile jokes and verbal harassments and 25% of the participants that stated they faced discrimination were laid off work. In response to the stigma faced at their respective work, 40% said they remained silent. The 3 main fields of work mostly facing such lack of inclusivity mentioned in the assessment, were the educational, sales and medical fields.

Finally, more than half of the participants favored the implementation of a project that aims to address and reduce stigma and discrimination at the workplace faced by the LGBTQ++ community in Lebanon. Also, they highlighted the need for a project that seeks to help their integration at the workplace.

4. METHODOLOGY

Objectives and rationale

In consultation and collaboration with SIDC, it was deemed logical to start first with the LGBTQ++ community to collect and assess data that reflects cases of stigma and discrimination that have been experienced in the workplace. This gave us an overview of the industries the individuals are engaged in and the types of discrimination faced. Based on the findings, some small to multi-national companies have been selected to assess their perceptions and attitudes towards this group. The goal of the findings and recommendations are for the stakeholders to use them in their work, be it for advocacy, awareness, training, services or legislation.

The data collected and analyzed were a result of the in-depth interviews with the LGBTQ++ community followed by interviews with selected employers from diverse industries. This went hand in hand with taking every opportunity to ask acquaintances and friends about their views on the subject in order to better understand the views and perceptions of the general public as well.

METHODOLOGY

A qualitative study design was employed for this assessment to feed into the set objectives. Accordingly, In-Depth Interviews (IDIs) have been carried out with members of the LGBTQ++ who had experienced discrimination in the workplace through purposive sampling, as well as, private sector employers to explore their perceptions and attitudes of the LGTBQ++ community in the workforce.

An online survey was developed in both English and Arabic for the LGBTQ++ community consisting of closed and open-ended questions. However, since the response rate was very low (3 responses only), it was not possible to base the analysis on the online survey.

An interview guide was formulated in both English and Arabic for both the LGBTQ++ and employers to improve the value of the data collected and meet the objectives of the assessment. Topics covered in the LGBTQ++ guide included last/current employment setting, participants' experiences of prejudice and discrimination at the workplace, participants' coping mechanism and reporting mechanism when exposed to discriminatory incident, participants' awareness and knowledge on their rights as members of the LGBTQ++ community.

As for employers, topics covered in the guide included their knowledge and definition on stigma and discrimination, participants' attitudes and perceptions towards the LGBTQ++ community in the workforce, the presence of any Equal Employment Opportunities (EEO) and anti-discriminatory policies at their workplace, and participants' views on the benefits of having an inclusive work environment/culture.

Recruitment of participants from the LGBTQ++ community was conducted through SIDC's network and word of mouth. Inclusion criteria for participation included: being a member of the LGBTQ++ community and having experienced a human rights' violation at the workplace.

The list of potential private sector companies was developed according to the field of work mentioned by the LGBTQ++ community and where their right to work was abused or violated. This potential list was accompanied with a letter for the HR to explain the purpose of the project, and in case of interest, a follow up was done to receive the name of the person to contact to conduct the interviews. The process consisted of an initial phone call to brief the HR manager about the objectives of the assessment and to check their willingness to participate. This was then followed by an email outlining the main topics that will be addressed

during the interview. The email had a letter (**Annex VI**) as an attachment with more details about the 2 year project on *“Enhancing the inclusivity of the LGBTQ++ community in workplaces in Lebanon”*.

Eligible participants were identified and consented for participation to assure that all the information provided will be used for the purpose of this assessment while maintaining confidentiality, anonymity and privacy. Some interviews were recorded, and others were not, thus notes were taken during the interviews. The average time to complete the interviews were 30-45 minutes.

Data collection was carried out between June 2020 and August 2020. All interviews were conducted in Arabic with both the LGBTQ++ community and employers. Interviews with the LGBTQ++ community took place at SIDC premises whereas interviews with private sector employers were conducted via Zoom, per their safety protocols due to the COVID-19 outbreak in Lebanon.

Data of both assessments was then analysed by reoccurring themes and emerging patterns. Interesting quotes that were expressed by the participants during the interviews were stated through respecting their confidentiality and anonymity.

Ethical Consideration

Ethical considerations were observed during this research assessment. The participants signed an informed consent form (**Annex VII**) that indicates that their participation is voluntary and they have the right to withdraw from the study at any stage if they wish to do so. The privacy and anonymity of the respondents were also mentioned. The participants also consented to the fact that the interview will be audio-taped and their names and other identifying information will be kept confidential.

Challenges

The timing of the implementation of this project coincided with the COVID-19 outbreak, the crippling economic crisis, the struggling companies for survival and the soaring unemployment rates. This affected obtaining consent from companies to participate in this assessment. Add to that the Beirut port explosion which fueled the already persisting socioeconomic situation and left many with no shelter, food and finances. This caused a considerable disruption in the work flow and rendered working on this activity at the bottom of the list of priorities.

Limitations

There are several limitations to this study, as it is mostly qualitative in nature. As such, the results are not generalizable and do not necessarily reflect the attitudes and perceptions of the private sector employers towards the LGBTQ++ community. On the other hand, results presented a glimpse of the opinions of a sample of employers belonging to different private sector companies which resulted in recommendations to foster inclusive work environments. In addition, there was a very low response rate (only 3 filled the survey) with regards to the online survey for the LGBTQ++ community which may have come as a result of a lack in motivation or incentive to fill the survey.

Also, some participants in the assessment may have experienced social desirability when interacting with the interviewer; some employers may have showed more acceptance of the LGBTQ++ community than others in order to depict a positive representation of their company. Nevertheless, the sample was diverse enough for a qualitative study in order to allow for certain patterns to appear across the responses of the participants.

Finally, the idea that some of the employers that were reached refused to participate after being invited may have several indications. For instance, it could be due to holding stigmatizing attitudes, and lack of tolerance and acceptance towards the LGBTQ++ community, or simply that they were unavailable. Also, it may be that those who agreed to participate were more tolerant and accepting of LGBTQ++ individuals, and thus may have omitted the opinions of employers who potentially are prejudiced towards the LGBTQ++ community.

FINDINGS- LGBTQ++ individuals

The below themes emerged from the processing of data pertaining to the situation of the LGBTQ++ community at the workforce. The results of these interviews indicated that the LGBTQ++ interviewees faced prejudice, stigma and discrimination at their workplaces and most, if not all, faced arbitrary expulsion as well. This had an impact on their overall well-being and on their financial conditions.

1. Interviewed participants' characteristics

A total of 10 individuals (N=10) belonging to the LGBTQ++ community residing in the Beirut, Mount Lebanon and Bekaa regions participated randomly in the situational analysis.

Four homosexual males, one homosexual female and eight transgender women participated in the assessment. The group was from different nationalities: Lebanese, Syrians, Iraqis and Palestinians. Their educational backgrounds varied from reaching technical school to holding a master's degree. With respect to their living and financial conditions, the majority assessed it as below average with bad financial conditions.

2. Members of the LGBTQ++ community face challenges to employment opportunities:

In general, all participants reported facing difficulties in finding and/or accessing job opportunities, despite being skilled or educated enough to perform the tasks. In fact, throughout the past 3 years, the participants were engaged in various industries including: beauty/cosmetics, manufacturing and construction, government and public administration, agriculture, food and natural resources, and education. The positions held included a hairdresser, office boy, administrative assistant, school teacher, supermarket assistant and a janitor. However, not maintaining their jobs came as a result of a combination of their SOGIE being discovered and the persisting economic crisis in the country.

Despite all participants expressing having faced challenges to employment opportunities, participants who identify themselves as Transgender, in particular, are struggling the most in finding a job. They admitted resorting to sex work to either complement their poor income or as a means of making a living. Transgender participants stated that their appearance and behavior gives away their gender identity which many find unacceptable.

3. Members of the LGBTQ++ community face human rights violations at the workplace

All the participants reported having experienced various kinds of prejudice at the workplace from both management and co-workers with more than half expressing it occurred during working hours. The types

of violations were both verbal and non-verbal and ranged from: mocking, insults, hostile jokes to harassments, violence, sexual assaults, with-held payments and arbitrary expulsions. Additionally, some are having to endure triple discrimination as a result of belonging to the LGBTQ++ community, being HIV positive and a refugee/migrant. Being constantly subjected to these violations and prejudice impacted them in all aspects, especially on their mental health.

"I attempted suicide 3 times. Once I walked across a very busy road with my eyes closed hoping to be hit by a car"

M, a 28 year old homosexual

All of the participants shared the same belief of wanting to fit in, live in dignity, be treated like human beings and be judged by their performance at work and not by their looks, gender identity or sexual orientation. They echoed that they want to be hired and respected in the workplace on the basis of their competencies and that their SOGIE does not determine their ability to do the job.

"If there was a pill that would make me fit in, I would take it now."

- M a 28 year old homosexual

4. Members of the LGBTQ++ community do not believe in reporting an incident:

The majority of the participants stated that they didn't bother reporting the incident neither to the HR nor to the person in charge at the workplace. The individuals lacked faith that reporting will bring them any justice even in the presence of rules and regulations in place. Furthermore, all participants feared losing their jobs as a result of reporting the incident of violation.

"The laws do not make a difference. It's the attitude of people that count."

K, a 35 year old transwoman

Non-Lebanese members of the LGBTQ++ community, in particular migrants, also stated not reporting an incident of discrimination at the workplace out of fear of being expelled from work, as they do not have legal papers on hand. On the other hand, the minority of participants who had more confidence and did speak up and report, were less harassed.

"My strong personality helped me to deal with discrimination. I have no fear and that helps. I am confident having strong skills."

S, a 32 years old transwoman

5. Most members of the LGBTQ++ community are not aware of their human rights:

All of the participants are unaware of their human rights and their rights not to be discriminated and to live in dignity since they are “criminalized by the law”. They do believe that as members of the LGBTQ++ community, they “in theory” should have human rights, but since they do not have the freedom of fully exercising them either in Lebanon or in any other Arab country due to various reasons among which the socio-cultural, political and legal context they do not bother and “think” that they have rights. In addition, and due to absence of protective anti-discrimination legislations, participants were unable to access these rights. Almost half of the participants had not heard of the UN Declaration of Human Rights and did not believe that they are entitled to these rights as any other human being for the same above mentioned reasons. At the workplace, participants viewed themselves as the “weakest link”.

6. Suggestions of making workplaces LGBTQ++ friendly and inclusive: :

The participants’ views regarding making the workplace more LGBTQ++ inclusive were explored. They ranged from fining employees when caught insulting or harassing an LGBTQ++ individual at the workplace to enforcing anti-discrimination policies at the workplace in order to foster inclusivity and diversity. Additionally, they deemed educating the public about the LGBTQ++ community and their right to work as crucial, ignorance and misconceptions are embedded within people’s minds which fuel fear, and in turn, discrimination. Finally, in order to highlight the professional skills and capabilities of members of the LGBTQ++ community particularly transgender, the participating interviewees suggested producing short videos through an awareness raising campaign.

“As a trans woman I have this advice to the LGBTQ++ community and in particular to transgender: don’t bring your sexual desires to work. Instead show your skills and what you are capable of”.

S, a 32 year old transwoman

FINDINGS- Employers

The overall outcome of this assessment ranged from a café that hosts LGBTQ++ events and want to be seen as supporters of the LGBTQ++ community to those who are against any “un-natural” behaviour. What seems to apply to all is that an inclusive work environment has a lot to do with the attitude of the management towards this group.

Most of the interviewed participants seem to have an inclusive work environment, but no formal anti-discrimination policies in place. This somehow did not align with the feedback received from the in-depth interviews that were conducted with the LGBTQ++ individuals. The below themes sum up the input of the employers who participated in this assessment:

1. Interviewed participants' characteristics

Sixteen HR managers/team leaders/HR assistants were interviewed whom represented the following industries:

1. A multi-national supermarket chain
2. Agriculture Development company (with a factory in the Bekaa Valley)
3. A big Lifestyle Retail company (with 12,000 employees in all branches and operating in 16 countries)
4. Cafes/Restaurants (a total of two)
5. A cosmetics and perfumes company
6. A virtual art gallery
7. A recruitment agency

2. Employers' knowledge and definition on stigma and discrimination

All the participants held similar definitions and conceptions of what stigma and discrimination are in general which they jointly believe stem mainly from cultural, societal, racial and religious aspects whether in Lebanon or in the Arab region.

"Discrimination still exists in some parts of Lebanon and the Arab region. The level of education and open mindedness, having been outside Lebanon play a role. Religion plays a part. In other countries where religion does not play a big role, there is less discrimination." - **HR Assistant, Human Resources Outsourcing Company**

The majority consider that cultural and environmental factors along with a lack of knowledge and awareness can fuel discrimination.

“Discrimination can be caused by the person’s background, culture, stereotypes and the way we perceive others. It has to do with culture more than education. The environment also plays a role which usually shapes our thinking and perception of others.” – HR executive of a poultry company

Generally speaking, the participants had a clear understanding of the groups that are most likely to face stigma and discrimination in the workplace which include people with disabilities, non-Lebanese employees, people living with HIV, etc. They were also aware of the different and common types of discrimination at the workplace. For instance, one employer stated that currently, due to the economic crises, the priority for recruitment is given to Lebanese national applicants only.

The general consensus among the employers was to hire the right person for the right position as a means to reduce any potential stigma and discrimination at the workplace

“We do not discriminate when it comes to employing people except if their condition does not match the job requirements. For example, I cannot hire someone who suffers from seizures to operate on a mixing machine. In this case, we place them somewhere where they can work in a safe environment.” -Owner of a cosmetics and perfumery company

3. Employers’ perceptions and attitudes towards the LGBTQ++ community

Overall, participants mostly held favourable or accepting perceptions and attitudes of the LGBTQ++ community and were aware of the challenges they face on an interpersonal and societal level.

“My perception about LGBTQ++ community is that they are normal people who happen to have different sexual orientations and gender identities.”- HR Executive at a poultry company

Only one HR manager wasn't aware of the community and admitted to having to look-up the term LGBTQ++ prior to the interview. Despite so, some still believe that this community is marginalized and is still seen as unacceptable in Lebanon.

*"In Lebanon, most people are still not OK with the LGBTQ++ community but it depends on the area; they believe it's a kind of sickness (it's haram) and are not ready to do anything about it. Beirut is more accepting compared to other Lebanese cities and regions"- **Manager of a café/restaurant***

However, not all of the participants were aware of the challenges that members of the LGBTQ++ community face in the workplace. Some were rather surprised to hear stories of mistreatment of members of the LGBTQ++ community in the workplace and cases of attempted suicide.

Yet, there seems to be a lack of awareness/understanding of the behaviours and needs of the LGBTQ++ community and more so with trans genders and how to deal with them. A few indicated that some religious beliefs play a role in people being judgmental and in turn show stigmatizing and discriminatory attitudes towards this group. Furthermore, several participants shed light on the detrimental consequences that stigma and discrimination can have on LGBTQ++ individuals with one employer stating:

*"Discrimination can push this group to go into drug use and sex work"- **HR Manager at a lifestyle retail company***

On the other hand, with regards to employing members of the LGBTQ++ community, there seems to be a misconception among a few employers as it is seen as an "encouragement to this un-natural behaviour".

*"I personally cannot encourage their behavior. I am against any "un-natural" sexual behavior even between heterosexual couple." - **Café owner***

In contrast, the remaining employers expressed their openness to employing members of the LGBTQ++ community, emphasizing that SOGIE and work qualifications and skills are two different things.

*"I would never hesitate employing an LGBTQ++ individual. I base my selection on the person's performance skills and experience"- **HR Manager of a poultry company***

One employer even stated that they consider themselves “gender blind” and apply this approach throughout their recruitment processes.

In order to shift the common misconceptions and prejudgements held by the general public and in turn the employers towards the LGBTQ++ community, the participants believe that the change has to come from the bottom up. To start by educating the children at schools, the parents as well as the police force and to explain to people that having different SOGIE is not a disease and has nothing to do with religion. Raising awareness should also involve altering common misconceptions such as the false belief that members of the LGBTQ++ community are rapists, paedophiles and obsessed with sex. This will be a challenging task as some stated.

“The general public look upon the LGBTQ++ community as rapists. There is a kind of homophobia.” - Coordinator – Virtual art gallery

4. Presence of anti-discrimination and equal employment opportunity policies at private sector companies

Almost all of the interviewed employers had an inclusive work environment, but with no formally written anti-discrimination policies in place. One employer stated having 2 approaches for non-discrimination at work which entail preventative measures that ensure incidents of violations are avoided and corrective measures are taken in case such incidents occur. Another mentioned having internal written policies for prevention, sexual exploitation and harassment.

Several employers stated that their companies are considered equal employment opportunity companies as they provide equal opportunities for all as one of them implied:

“We are EEO employers. What matters is whether the applicants qualify for the position. We have written policies on recruitment”- HR Manager, lifestyle retail company

All employers were nevertheless willing to learn more about how to formally have and integrate anti-discrimination policies in their workplace through a collaboration with SIDC in its future activities.

“We are more than happy to carry out some awareness sessions for our staff if you supply us with the material and support.” – HR Manager at a cosmetics & perfumery company

One employer particularly stated that he would ensure that such policies would protect all individuals from discrimination and harassment at the workplace.

The majority stated that they base their selection on the person's performance, skills and experience that matches the job requirements. Some indicated that it would be difficult for them to hire an LGBTQ++ individual, especially a transgender, if the job requires customer interaction. The reason behind such a decision is to avoid exposing this group to stigma and discrimination from co-workers and/or the clients.

“Employing a trans at my café would cause a problem as their looks and behaviour is very obvious. I worry about him being discriminated against. It will also complicate things for me in particular the relationship of the team among each other. I don't have to do it... it is an extra headache for me” – Owner of a café

In contrast, others did not view the employment of a transgender individual as an issue as long they comply with the company's rules and regulations as one employer stated:

“I have no problem with a transgender person applying for a job. This is how they were born. However, there are certain rules that apply to everyone and that we have to follow. There are certain behavior and dress code that have to be acceptable by our customers.” HR Director at a cosmetics and perfumery company

Even though the employers were unanimous when it comes to the existence of policies and procedures at the workplace to reduce any potential act of discrimination, however, the way of reporting and protecting the whistle-blower were not mentioned during the interviews.

5. Presence or absence of a reporting system in the workplace

The majority of the employers have an informal reporting system with the preferred method of reporting an incident of discrimination or harassment either to the focal point or to the HR manager. Some even stated that it is unnecessary to develop a clear reporting system as they have never experienced such incidents. On the other hand, one employer stated that their policies are clear on the subject of harassment, whereby corrective actions are taken reaching up to dismissal. Their reporting system

consists of a “whistle blowing” policy where an employee can anonymously report an incident directly to the HR and to the audit department.

6. Employers’ perceptions on the benefits of an inclusive work environment

All participants believed that having an inclusive work environment is an added value to their company’s overall work environment, as well as, visibility with some praising the skills and proficiencies that many members of the LGBTQ++ community hold. One employer particularly stated:

*“LGBTQ++ people tend to be very creative and they would fit well into certain positions and industries. They are very committed, punctual and have a good artistic taste.”- **Coordinator, virtual art gallery***

While the majority believe that their work environment is inclusive for all, they stated that they would like to see the LGBTQ++ individuals “tone down their mannerism in order to draw less attention to themselves and fit in”. They also indicated that this group needs to comply with rules and regulations of the workplace, including the dress code applicable for the relevant position. Concluding, a compromise from both the employers and employees belonging to the community must be reached to respect one another and the workplace.

7. Impact on inclusiveness and diversity in Lebanon if in position of power:

Almost all participants agreed that if they were in a position of power, they would first start with awareness and education on human rights and the right to equal employment for everyone, to bring about tolerance and acceptance towards the LGBTQ++ community in order to foster inclusiveness and diversity at the workplace.

*“Our society is in denial. We raise our kids on “right” and “wrong” when we need to make them aware of different choices.” - **Coordinator – Virtual art gallery***

One employer suggested advocating for the separation of the state from religion, whereas another believes that we need to seek the help of the influencers in our society to raise public awareness about embracing diversity.

"I believe we have to seek the help of the influencers in our society: religious leaders, political figures, etc. They are the ones who for years have kept control over the masses."

Coordinator – Virtual art gallery

Another employer stated that he would publish statistics on the number of the LGBTQ++community in our society to portray that these individuals are undeniably part of the population.

However, the consequences of such propaganda are inevitable. As one employer put it, we have to be prepared for resistance and challenges when it comes to changing the laws - whether from religious leaders, political parties, the police force and others.

5. General discussion

In a nutshell, the outcome of this assessment was a reflection of the mosaic nature of the Lebanese society and its culture. There was a no “one size fits all” type of outcome as the responses of the employers varied in the spectrum from the majority claiming to be LGBTQ++ “allies” to the conservative approach of businesses who do not wish to be labelled as supportive of their activities. On the other hand, the employers’ interviews revealed that Lebanon is witnessing some unprecedented change in regards to perceptions, attitudes, and reactions towards the LGBTQ++ community, in particular in the capital city, and the young generation is more tolerant and understanding towards individuals from the LGBTQ++ community.

The stories shared during the in-depth interviews with the LGBTQ++ individuals highlighted the fact that they are a marginalized group in Lebanon but the level of discrimination, mistreatment and in some cases violence, based on their SOGIE varied from one city to another and even within the same city. Furthermore, religion played a vital role in fostering the judgmental attitude towards the LGBTQ++ community. Misconceptions, the lack of knowledge, and awareness about the needs of and the challenges faced by the LGBTQ++ community seems to also produce stigma, discrimination and in turn mistreatment. The employment discrimination seems to be closely related to the perceptions and attitudes of the general public, and what seems to make a work environment more inclusive and LGBTQ++ friendly is the approach of the management and the verbal and non-verbal policies they have in place.

Transgender individuals seem to be the ones who experience the most stigma and discrimination as their gender identity is apparent from their appearance and behavior. They experience exclusion (at home as well as at work) and this leaves a negative impact on their physical, emotional, economic and psychological well-being.

This assessment also shed some light on the issues of those who face triple discrimination: being LGBTQ++, being HIV positive and being a migrant which also explains the reason why they choose not to report any incident of mistreatment. As a result of the current economic crisis, some employers are choosing to employ Lebanese nationals which leaves the migrants out of work and more vulnerable.

Many LGBTQ++ workers are unaware or misinformed about their rights and/or the procedures to follow when these rights have been violated. Employers as well often lack this information in addition to personal lack of knowledge and awareness about the LGBTQ++ community. Some are unsure how to address LGBTQ++ workplace rights issues, because of the lack of clear policies or guidelines, having different priorities, and/or the shortage of human and financial resources.

In brief, anti-discrimination policies that safeguard employment and economic opportunity, are rare or non-existent. Thanks to the efforts of the LGBTQ++ activists, organizations, and their allies, some tangible progress and important gains have been accomplished towards shifting perceptions, attitudes and reactions. However, the events starting October 17, 2019, followed by COVID-19 outbreak, reaching the most recent devastating Beirut explosion on August 4th, have pushed nearly one out of three Lebanese into unemployment, while one in five saw their salary being reduced. Data presented earlier have been collected by a World Food Program (WFP) survey targeting the Lebanese population, Syrians and the Palestinian refugees. Findings showed that 44 percent of Palestinian respondents and a staggering 64 percent of Syrians reported the inability to have emergency stocks, mainly due to unaffordability. Needless to say that the LGBTQ++ community was part and parcel of the nationwide survey.

On a more positive note, the October 17, 2019 uprising gave the LGBTQ+ community a place to be in public without fear and with a newfound degree of safety and belonging. They took to the streets with the same demands as fellow protesters – dignity and equality, transparency and accountability. “The revolution was the first time I did not censor myself, because I felt that I am not alone in my pain.” -M a 26 year old lesbian reported to the Human Rights Watch.

Despite the strides made in the revolution for LGBTQ++ rights’ acceptance into society, “LGBTQ++ people will continue to live on the margins unless the Lebanese government repeals article 534 of the penal code, which punishes same-sex relations”, Human Rights Watch said. “The government needs to introduce legislations that protect LGBTQ++ people from discrimination and upholds their fundamental rights to dignity, bodily autonomy, socioeconomic mobility, and freedoms of expression, association, and assembly.”

6. RECOMMENDATIONS

The assessment was structured to reveal the amount of knowledge and level of awareness among the LGBTQ++ community and the HR managers when it comes to the challenges faced by both in the workplace in order to build upon them to foster an inclusive working environment. The aim behind developing this report with the recommendations, is to be used throughout the implementation of this 2 year project and will help SIDC and ACTED determine the topics of their future trainings, awareness campaigns, programs and services.

Per the findings and evidence, recommendations are suggested at four levels: individual, workplace, community and governmental level.

Recommendations at the individual level:

1. For the LGBTQ++ Community:

a. Empowering the LGBTQ++ community to seek, access and maintain employment

LGBTQ++ individuals, like all employees, should be informed about their legal, employment rights, responsibilities and most importantly their right to work in a non-discriminatory work environment. Doing so, will increase LGBTQ++ individuals' knowledge on labor law as well as equipping them with the needed competencies to sustain employment, to access work opportunities and know where and when to seek legal support in response to any challenges that are faced.

b. Scaling up the professional skills and capacities of the most vulnerable groups among the LGBTQ++ community

Members of the LGBTQ++ community have undergone different circumstances which affected various aspects of their life such as completing their education and accessing job opportunities. As such, it is imperative to guide those LGBTQ++ individuals who lack adequate knowledge and skills to develop and/or build new skills such as technical capacities, in order to expand their employment opportunities in various work industries and sectors. In order to effectively so, it is recommended to assess the market needs and accordingly build the capacities of these LGBTQ++ individuals.

c. Enabling the LGBTQ++ community to face and fight incidents of discrimination and prejudice at the workplace

Incidences of harassment and discrimination towards members of the LGBTQ++ community have been shown to be common at the workplace across various sectors and industries. To protect themselves from unfair treatment and responding to human rights' violations at the workplace, members of the LGBTQ++ community should be equipped with the needed knowledge and capacities to ask for their rights and fight such incidences through seeking support, speaking up or if the situation requires, seeking legal assistance and guidance.

Recommendations at the workplace level

1. At the employee level

a. Endorsing acceptance and understanding of the LGBTQ++ community among personnel

Sensitizing employees on SOGIE, gender issues, and on respecting diversity through targeted diversity trainings programmes is key. Doing so, enhances and develops positive attitudes and relationships between LGBTQ++ co-workers and plays a role in the fight against widespread homophobia and prejudice towards LGBTQ++ employees. Shedding light on human rights and showcasing the range of issues and violations faced by LGBTQ++ especially in the workplace is also needed to bring about acceptance. Such topics and matters can be done integrated within HR training programs and delivered towards employees.

b. Addressing and minimizing stigmatizing practices at the workplace

Employees have a role in identifying, reporting and ameliorating stigmatizing and discriminatory practices at the workplace especially those subjected to LGBTQ++ co-workers. As such, it is integral that employees receive relevant trainings on reporting such incidences using a clear complaint mechanism set in the workplace. For this matter, the person(s) responsible for receiving the mentioned complains, HRs and management for example, should be trained accordingly to comprehend, analyse, investigate and respond to the case accordingly, with the necessary objectivity and respect to the basic human rights.

2. At the employer level

a. Educating employers on SOGIE and gender issues

In order to bring about a favorable change in the common misconceptions and negative attitudes and behaviors of employers towards the LGBTQ++ community in the workforce, it is crucial that employers receive training on SOGIE and gender issues as mentioned above. This will allow employers to shift their focus towards the competencies of LGBTQ++ employees and understand how to handle the stigma surrounding the community, particularly in the cases of gender conforming individuals and other vulnerable groups, in order to create an integrated and accepting work environment.

b. Promoting fair and equal treatment of all staff, respect and integration

- **Building the capacities of employers on LGBTQ++ related stigma and discrimination at the workplace and human rights**

To address the obstacles preventing equal access and retention of employment for the LGBTQ++ community in the workforce, provision of capacity building trainings towards employers on human rights and the right to work for all with a focus on LGBTQ++ rights is key. This will in turn enable higher recruitment and retention opportunities for the LGBTQ++ community in the workforce. Furthermore, provision of a session that highlights the means and benefits of promoting gender inclusive work environment will enable employers to eliminate discriminatory practices at the workplace.

- **Endorsing a culture of diversity and inclusivity among employees at the workplace**

Employers focusing on maintaining a workforce culture that embraces diversity and equality, one that reflects their values and principals will in turn encourage creativity and enhance productivity and efficiency. As such, employers should strive to build equal employment opportunities, manage performance fairly, and tackle workplace harassment and discrimination by taking the needed measures. This will in turn result in a more loyal, engaged and productive workforce.

3. At the organizational policy level

a. Promoting an inclusive workplace environment for all

To ensure that members of the LGBTQ++ community feel comfortable and safe at work, it is essential for the workplace environment to nurture diversity and inclusivity for all. Clearly defined and protective policies should be enforced, which must include an adequate complaint system, to assure this. Moreover,

creating a work culture where there is a clear commitment to promoting and protecting the rights of all the employees should also be fostered.

b. Precluding discrimination at the workplace

Setting a clear anti-discriminatory policy which strictly prohibits all forms of harassment and discrimination at the workplace is integral to prevent violations. In addition, placing a reporting system in place is essential to protect employees from any complaints of stigma and discrimination at the workplace. In this way, appropriate measures will be taken accordingly to tackle such incidents whereby ensuring the rights of the employees are secured. For effective implementation, all staff should be trained on the policy itself to feel confident enough to report any such incident.

Recommendations at the community level

1. Fostering partnerships and networking between different key stakeholders

Engaging with human rights defenders and organizations working on LGBTQ++ issues and with other sectors (trade unions, businesses, and relevant government departments) is essential to develop coherent and concerted programs and policies to protect and promote the rights of the LGBTQ++ community. Additionally, nurturing a culture of collaboration among Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) and other stakeholders, such as media representatives will help promote inclusiveness and acceptance through positive representation of the LGBTQ++ community and voicing out their struggles and violations.

2. Addressing misconceptions and prejudices among the general public towards the LGBTQ++ community

Combating social stigma, misinformation, myths and stereotypes as well as addressing misconceptions and prejudice about gender roles, sexual orientation, gender identity and expression, and sex characteristics is key to address many of the prejudices faced by the LGBTQ++ community. Ensuring that the general public has access to accurate and correct information through awareness raising campaigns also helps highlighting discriminatory incidences into the public domain as a serious human rights issue.

Recommendations at the governmental level

1. Addressing gaps in existing legislative and policy frameworks relating to LGBTQ++ and other key populations' rights at the workplace

Push for legal and policy reforms through lobbying and advocacy efforts with policy makers and key stakeholders is necessary to bring about equity to the rights of the LGBTQ++ community in the workplace and ameliorate any challenges to accessing and retaining workplace opportunities. This can entail developing and setting a comprehensive anti-discrimination legislative framework which prohibits discrimination and harassment on the basis of gender and sexual orientation. Enforcing such anti-discriminatory policies across private and public sector workplaces will help ensure protection of all LGBTQ++ employees against incidences of harassment and discrimination in the workplace.

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7. APPENDICES

Annex I

The Yogyakarta Principles

Principles on the application of international human rights law in relation to sexual orientation and gender identity.

Principle 1 The Right to the Universal Enjoyment of Human Rights

Principle 2 The Rights to Equality and Non-Discrimination

Principle 3 The Right to Recognition before the Law

Principle 4 The Right to Life

Principle 5 The Right to Security of the Person

Principle 6 The Right to Privacy

Principle 7 The Right to Freedom from Arbitrary Deprivation of Liberty

Principle 8 The Right to a Fair Trial

Principle 9 The Right to Treatment with Humanity while in Detention

Principle 10 The Right to Freedom from Torture and Cruel, Inhumane or Degrading Treatment or Punishment

Principle 11 The Right to Protection from all Forms of Exploitation, Sale and Trafficking of Human Beings

Principle 12 The Right to Work

Principle 13 The Right to Social Security and to Other Social Protection Measures

Principle 14 The Right to an Adequate Standard of Living

Principle 15 The Right to Adequate Housing

Principle 16 The Right to Education

Principle 17 The Right to the Highest Attainable Standard of Health

Principle 18 Protection from Medical Abuses

Principle 19 The Right to Freedom of Opinion and Expression

Principle 20 The Right to Freedom of Peaceful Assembly and Association

Principle 21 The Right to Freedom of Thought, Conscience and Religion

Principle 22 The Right to Freedom of Movement

Principle 23 The Right to Seek Asylum

Principle 24 The Right to Found a Family

Principle 25 The Right to Participate in Public Life

Principle 26 The Right to Participate in Cultural Life

Principle 27 The Right to Promote Human Rights

Principle 28 The Right to Effective Remedies and Redress

Principle 29 Accountability

Annex II

Overview of human rights violations that members of the LGBTQ++ community are subjected to:

- In May 2019, the Ministry of Telecommunications blocked access to the Grindr app, which is mainly used by gay and trans men.
- In July 2019, church leaders called on the organizers of a festival to cancel the appearance of the band Mashrou' Leila (an alternative Arabic rock group), saying its songs were “offensive to religious and humanitarian values and Christian beliefs”. The statement triggered a social media storm accusing the band of propagating sexual perversion and a protest threatened violence against the band and its fans. The Ministry of Interior failed to announce that it would protect the band and its fans, while the judiciary failed to investigate those who incited violence. The festival’s organizers cancelled the band’s appearance, stating they were forced to do so “to prevent bloodshed and maintain security and stability”.
- On September 29, 2018, the General Security attempted to shut down the annual NEDWA conference of the Arab Foundation for Freedoms and Equality, which works to advance LGBTQ++ and other human rights.
- On May 15, 2016, activists took part in a protest outside the Hbeish police station in Beirut demanding the release of four transgender women and calling for the abolishment of article 534 of the Lebanese Penal code.

Annex III

Online Questionnaire To the LGBTQ++ community

“A situational analysis of LGBTQ++ at the workforce”

1. Demographics:

a. Age

- 18 to 25
- 26 to 30
- 31 to 35
- 36 to 40
- 41 to 45
- 46 to 50
- 50 +

b. What is your gender identity?

- Male
- Female
- Trans woman
- Trans man
- Genderfluid
- Nonbinary
- Other: Please Specify

c. What is your sexual orientation?

- Homosexual
- Bisexual
- Queer
- Asexual
- Other: Please Specify

d. Nationality

- Lebanese
- Non-Lebanese

e. Residence

- Beirut
- North
- Akkar
- South
- Nabatiyeh
- Bekaa
- Baalback
- Mount Lebanon

2. Educational background

What is your level of education?

- I can read and write
- Primary school
- Secondary school
- High school
- Baccalaureate
- Technical school
- University (Bachelor degree)
- University (Master degree)
- University (PHD)
- Other: Please specify

3. Living/financial Conditions

What would you consider your living/financial conditions to be? (In regards to quality of life and access to basic needs)

- Under the poverty line
- Harsh living conditions
- Average living conditions
- Good living conditions
- Great living conditions
- Rather not say

4. Work Conditions

- **Have you been employed for the last 3 years or are currently employed?
(Full time, part time, consultancy work)**
 - Yes
 - No

- **If yes, in what type of industry?**
 - Banking
 - Agriculture, Food and Natural Resources. Architecture and Construction
 - Arts and Communications
 - Education and Training
 - Government and Public Administration
 - Hospitality and Tourism
 - Health
 - Manufacturing
 - Beautician/hairdresser
 - Science, Technology, Engineering
 - Other, specify

- **If yes, how would you rate your current work culture?**
 - Non LGBT inclusive
 - Somewhat LGBT friendly
 - LGBT friendly work environment
 - Not sure

5. Barrier (s) to employment

- **If no, what were the main barrier(s)/reasons that stopped you from finding a job?**
 - The current economic crisis
 - I had many rejections in the hiring process
 - I cannot find a suitable job
 - I don't have enough credentials
 - My sexual orientation/gender identity
 - I don't like my line of work
 - I have a disability: please specify
 - I have health issues: please specify
 - Other: please specify

- **Would you willingly disclose your gender identity or sexual orientation at your current workplace? (Multiple choices allowed)**
 - No, because it is my private life
 - No, for fear of mistreatment and discrimination
 - No, for fear of being fired
 - Yes, but I would tell only a few
 - Yes, I feel they would understand
 - Yes, and I have already disclosed my gender identity/my sexual orientation
 - Not sure

6. Prejudice at the workplace:

- **If you are currently employed, are you experiencing any employment prejudice because of your gender identity or your sexual orientation?**
 - Yes
 - No
 - Sometimes
 - Rather not say

7. Prejudice experience

- **What kind of prejudice were subjected to?**
 - **Verbal:** Offensive language, jokes, threats, insults, gossip, ridicule
 - **Nonverbal:** face expressions, grins, laughter, seclusion, aversion
 - **Cyber:** texts, emails, offensive comments/posts on social media
 - **Physical:** punching, kicking, pushing, throwing something
 - **Psychological:** mistreatment, insults, verbal and non-verbal abuse
 - **Other:**
- **If yes, who was the perpetrator?**
 - Co-worker/colleague
 - Management (administration, HR staff)
 - Others, please specify
- **If yes, where did the incident occur?**
 - At work
 - After work
 - At a work social gathering
 - Other, please specify

8. Report of incident

- **If yes, have you ever reported a case of harassment or discrimination in your workplace?**
 - Yes
 - No
 - Not always
 - Didn't know what to do

- **If yes, who did you reported to?**
 - Management
 - Organization
 - The police
 - Told a friend or family member
 - Others, please specify

- **If yes - what happened as a result of reporting the incident?**
 - Disciplinary action was taken
 - A report was filed, but no disciplinary action
 - Nothing happened
 - Don't know – didn't follow up

9. Unreported incident

- **If no, why didn't you reported it?**
 - Fear of intimidation or ridicule by perpetrators
 - Fear of losing my job
 - Did not want to reveal my sexual orientation and/or gender identity
 - Didn't know how or where to report it
 - Nothing would happen or change: 'it happens all the tim
 - Too much trouble, no time
 - Dealt with the problem myself, with help from family or friends
 - Because I was too emotionally upset to report it
 - I wouldn't get any sympathy or understanding
 - Other reason(s)

10. Impact of prejudice in the workplace

- **Do you believe rejection/discrimination has an impact on your:**
 - Physical health (illness, obesity, high blood pressure, etc)
 - Mental health (depression, anxiety disorders, loss of self control, loss of self-confidence, lack of concentration, etc)
 - Productivity/creativity
 - Use of substances (alcohol, drugs)
 - Financial situation
 - Other

- **Are you aware of :**
 - your rights as an LGBTQ++ person?**
 - Yes
 - No
 - No sure
 - any existing anti-discrimination legislations?**
 - Yes
 - No
 - No sure
 - a support organization that offers advice?**
 - Yes
 - No
 - No sure

11. What would make a workplace more LGBTQ++ friendly and inclusive?

- a. Strategies and policies that foster inclusivity and diversity
- b. Enforcement of anti-discrimination laws
- c. Relevant resources and a supportive referral system in case of mistreatment incidents
- d. Public figures in politics, business, sports, etc. speaking openly in support of LGBTQ++ people
- e. More visibility of the LGBTQ++ people in media, sports, arts etc.
- f. Training on the rights of LGBTQ++ people addressing police, teachers, nurses, the media
- g. More acceptance and tolerance by religious leaders
- h. Raising awareness of the general public based on basic human rights
- i. More awareness on the value of LGBTQ++ equality to the employee and to the company
- j. Other, please specify.....

Annex IV

IN-DEPTH INTERVIEW guide to the LGBTQ++ community

“A situational analysis of LGBTQ++ at the workforce”

12. Demographics:

a. Age

- 18 to 25
- 26 to 30
- 31 to 35
- 36 to 40
- 41 to 45
- 46 to 50
- 50 +

b. What is your gender identity?

- Male
- Female
- Trans woman
- Trans man
- Genderfluid
- Nonbinary
- Other: Please Specify

c. What is your sexual orientation?

- Homosexual
- Bisexual
- Queer
- Asexual
- Other: Please Specify

f. Nationality

- Lebanese
- Non-Lebanese

g. Residence

- Beirut
- North
- Akkar
- South
- Nabatiyeh
- Bekaa
- Baalback
- Mount Lebanon

13. Educational background

What is your level of education?

- I can read and write
- Primary school
- Secondary school
- High school
- Baccalaureate
- Technical school
- University (Bachelor degree)
- University (Master degree)
- University (PHD)
- Other: Please specify

14. Living/financial Conditions

- **With the current economic crisis, tell me about your living/financial conditions in terms to quality of life and access to basic needs.**

15. Work Conditions

- **Have you been employed for the last 3 years?**

- Yes
- No
- Currently looking for work

• **If yes, in what type of industry?**

- Banking
- Agriculture, Food and Natural Resources.
- Architecture and Construction
- Arts and Communications
- Education and Training
- Government and Public Administration
- Hospitality and Tourism
- Health
- Manufacturing
- Beautician/hairdresser
- Science, Technology, Engineering
- Other, specify

• **If yes, how was the process of applying and being interviewed?**

–

• **If yes, tell me about how you felt at your current/ past work?**

–

• **How was your interaction with management and co-workers?**

–

- If you are not employed, what do you believe were the problems?

–

–

- In your opinion, what are the reasons that stop you from disclosing your gender identity or sexual orientation at your workplace?

16. Prejudice in the workplace:

- From your current or past experience, what do you know about “employment prejudice” in the workplace towards the LGBTQ++ community?

–

- Have you personally experienced any prejudice whether while applying or while working?

If yes, tell me more about it (kind of prejudice, who was the perpetrator and how did you react)

If you did not experience such prejudice, was there anything you did to prevent it?

-

-

17. Reporting an incident

- what do you normally do when this kind of incidents happen at work?

-

18. Not reporting an incident

- What prevents you from reporting such incidents?

19. Impact of prejudice at the workplace

- How does discrimination and prejudice at the workplace affect you? On many levels

20. Your rights as an LGBTQ++ person

- Tell me what you know about the UN Declaration of Human Rights?

“All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights.

- Where can an LGBTQ++ person go for support and advice?

-

21. If you were the CEO of a company, what would you do to champion LGBTQ++ inclusive and equality work environment?

22. If you were a member of Parliament, what would you do to champion LGBTQ++ inclusive and equality work environment?

23. In your opinion, what would make a workplace more LGBTQ++ friendly and inclusive?

- Strategies and policies that foster inclusivity and diversity
- Enforcement of anti-discrimination laws
- Relevant resources and a supportive referral system in case of mistreatment incidents
- Public figures in politics, business, sports, etc. speaking openly in support of LGBTQ++ people
- More visibility of the LGBTQ++ people in media, sports, arts etc.
- Training on the rights of LGBTQ++ people addressing police, teachers, nurses, the media
- More acceptance and tolerance by religious leaders
- Raising awareness of the general public based on basic human rights
- More awareness on the value of LGBTQ++ equality to the employee and to the company
- Other, please specify.....

24. Other comments

Annex V

Employers' in-depth interview guide

“Assessment on perceptions & attitudes of employers towards the LGBTQ++ Community at the workforce”

Name of organization:

Number of employees:

Date established:

Contact details for follow up:

Name of interviewee:

Position of interviewee:

1. Awareness about stigma and discrimination

- What is your definition of “stigma and discrimination” in general and in particular in the workplace”?
- Who do you think are the ones who most face stigma and discrimination in the workplace? And why?
- Would you consider your company to be a “non-discrimination” employer?
 Yes No Not sure
- Would you have a problem hiring someone based on the following?
 Race /color Age
 National origin / ethnicity Sex / gender identity / sexual orientation

Religion

Medical history

If not, why not?

- **In your company, are people able to report a case of discrimination?
If yes, what are the measures you take to deal with the perpetrator and the victim?**

2. Awareness about EEO and Non-Discrimination policies

- **What is your definition of “inclusivity” in the workplace?**

- **Are you aware of EEO (Equal Employment Opportunity) and non-discrimination policies in the workplace?**

If yes, do you have such policies in your company? and would you care sharing with us an overview of your policies?

If not, would you consider having such work policies?

Yes

No

I will consider it

- **How do you envision incorporating the principles of non-discrimination in your existing HR policies? Please tick one or more of the following:**

Make a strong commitment from the top. When the most senior management assumes responsibility for equal employment issues and demonstrate a commitment to diversity, they send a strong signal to other managers, supervisors and workers.

Conduct an assessment to determine if discrimination is taking place within the company.

Set up a non-discrimination policy establishing clear procedures on non-discrimination and equal opportunities and communicate it both internally and externally.

- Provide training for managers, supervisors and employees to help raise awareness and encourage people to take action against discrimination and to treat each other respectfully and objectively.
- Support on-going sensitization campaigns to combat stereotypes.
- Address complaints, handle appeals and provide recourse to employees in cases where discrimination is identified.

3. Awareness about the LGBTQ++ community

- **What do you know about the LGBTQ++ community in Lebanon?**

- **What are your fears and concerns when it comes to hiring someone from the LGBTQ++ community who is highly qualified for the job and meets all the requirements?**

- **If you find out that one of your employees belongs to the LGBTQ++ community, would your attitude and work relationship change with him/her? And in what aspect?**

- **What do you know about the challenges this community faces in the workplace? (applying, in the workplace and after leaving)**

- **What terminology should you use in the policy to reflect an inclusive work environment?**

4. Awareness about the benefits and challenges of having an inclusive work environment/culture

Do you think the contribution of members of this group to the labor force is restricted to specific industries?

**Do you believe there are benefits of having an inclusive work environment?
If yes, what are they?**

**Do you believe there are challenges/barriers of having an inclusive work environment?
If yes, tell me more about them**

Annex VI

Letter to Employers

Beirut, 7 July 2020

Subject: Request to hold an interview with the HR manager/executive director as part of an assessment

Dear Sir/Madame,

I trust this finds you well.

Soins Infirmiers et Développement Communautaire (SIDC) is a local non-governmental not-for-profit Lebanese organization that was established in 1987 and officially registered 9/AD in 1992. SIDC envisions a Lebanese society in which all individuals, especially vulnerable populations, fulfill their right to health through their active participation in making informed choices, adopting and promoting healthy behaviors and realizing their potentials. SIDC commits to providing equitable access to healthcare and improve the quality of life of key populations in partnership with them through harm reduction and healthcare services, advocacy, networking, and capacity building for NGOs at the national and regional level.

ACTED is an international humanitarian NGO, founded in 1993, which supports vulnerable populations affected by humanitarian crises worldwide. Present and registered in Lebanon since 2008, ACTED has provided continued support to vulnerable communities, addressing the immediate needs of the affected population. ACTED is also implementing long-term development interventions, such as infrastructure rehabilitation, stimulating livelihoods development, and supporting state and non-state actors for improving service delivery and social stability through collective development planning. Our projects seek to address multiple humanitarian and development needs through community-based approaches adapted to each context.

SIDC and ACTED are implementing a 2-year project funded by the European Instrument for Democracy & Human Rights (EIDHR) entitled ***“Enhancing The Inclusivity of the LGBTQ++ Community in Workplaces In Lebanon”***. This project is spanning from January 2020 to the end of December 2021 and aims to promote and protect the rights of LGBTQ++ individuals in Lebanon by increasing their employability and accessibility to the workplace.

With reference to the above, Ms. Dalal Farah Baird, the research consultant on behalf of SIDC and ACTED, is in the process of conducting an assessment with employers of private sector companies to better understand their views and perceptions towards the LGBTQ++ community and their work environment policies and the extent to which they are inclusive. This will help us at the end of the project to open a discussion about the labor law and to suggest at later stage an activity to make it more inclusive and free from stigma and discrimination and supportive for all people with all their diversities.

The results of these assessments will be documented in a report which will be used throughout the implementation of the project to raise awareness about the barriers to access employment faced by members of the LGBTQ++ community and to determine the industries on which the focus should be for the trainings.

Your participation in this assessment and your input will be very valuable to us. Rest assured that all the information provided will be dealt with total confidentiality and will be used only to achieve the objectives of this project.

You may choose one of the following ways for the assessment:

1. A zoom meeting
2. Face to face assessment to be conducted at your offices

We very much look forward to hearing from you soon.

Warmest regards,

Nadia Badran

SIDC Executive Director

Annex VII

Informed consent

“Enhancing the Inclusivity of the LGBTQ++ Community in Workplaces In Lebanon”

Soins Infirmiers et Développement Communautaire (SIDC) and ACTED are implementing a 2-year project funded by the European Instrument for Democracy and Human Rights entitled *“Enhancing The Inclusivity of the LGBTQ++ Community in Workplaces In Lebanon”*.

The overall objective of this project is to promote and protect the rights of LGBTQ++ people in Lebanon by increasing their employability and accessibility to the workplace as well as to assess the perceptions and attitudes of employers towards the LGBTQ++ community.

In order to achieve our goals, we are conducting interviews with a diverse number of people from that community who have experienced some form of discrimination, mistreatment or violence in their workplace, the way they have reacted to such acts and whether they reported them.

Your participation is very valuable and is completely voluntary. You have the right to withdraw or stop your participation at any time you wish without any consequences. If at any time you do not feel comfortable, we can stop the interview as well. Also, you can decide not to answer specific questions if you wish. If you decide not to participate in the study at all, that will have no adverse consequences on you.

All information provided during this interview will be used for the purpose of this project and will be dealt with total confidentiality. Your name or any personal information you share during the interview will not be used during report write-up.

This study involves audio-taping the interview with the interviewer. Neither your name nor any other identifying information will be associated with the audio-tape or the transcript.

If you have any questions regarding the study, you can ask now. If you have any questions or complaints around the study at a later stage, you can get in touch with Miss Rania Ramlawi,

This consent has been fully read and explained to me by the interviewee.

I consent to participate in this interview

Signature of Participant:

Signature of Interviewer:

Print Name:

Print Name:

Date:

Date:

Annex VIII

The benefits of LGBTQ++ inclusion to the employer and to the country

I believe the first question that could cross the mind of the management of any company is “what’s in it for us” before they consider having LGBTQ++ inclusive strategies and policies.

A study by Michaela Krejcová titled “The value of LGBTQ++ equality in the workplace” published in 2015 came up with the following benefits that the management and the HR department should consider:

Customer loyalty	The study also cited the customer loyalty and buying power of the LGBTQ++ market. Additionally, customers are likelier to leave businesses who have cases of discrimination made public
Less stress and more productivity	Having robust inclusion strategies in place for LGBTQ++ staff make sense from a business perspective as well as a moral standpoint. This is because all employees will feel less stressed and more productive as respected members of a cohesive team.
Benefits for the individuals	According to the survey conducted by the Williams Institute, LGBTQ++ friendly workplaces will lead to the improved health, increased job satisfaction, better relationships with co-workers and supervisors, and greater work commitment among the LGBTQ++ workers.
Benefits for the business	Lower legal costs related to discrimination lawsuits as well as lower health insurance cost, through improved health of employees. Gain a larger market share among the LGBTQ++ consumers. The buying power of LGBTQ++ consumers is rising (20% increase from 2006 to 2012).
Cost to the company	According to the Level Playing Field Institute, more than 2 million professionals and managers leave workplaces each year due to unfairness, costing U.S. employers \$64 billion annually. 13% said their experience strongly discouraged them from recommending their employer's products or services.
Big savings to the economy	A study in the US by Out Now titled ‘LGBTQ++ 2020 – LGBTQ++ Diversity Show Me the Business Case’ found that the US economy could save \$9 billion annually if organizations implemented more effective inclusion policies for their LGBTQ++ staff. This is partially attributed to avoiding costs from stress

		and ill-health associated with LGBTQ++ staff who need to hide their identity at work or experience discrimination.
Increase productivity	in	When LGBTQ++ staff are 'openly out' to all, businesses see a 15 to 30 per cent increase in productivity and retention rates improve by 10 per cent, (Chris Mackinnon, Lloyd's General Representative – Australia)
Staff retention		LGBT staff who are able to be openly out in front of their colleagues are more likely to remain in their current position than the ones who are not.
Emphasis on talent and skills		Some companies acknowledge that their employees need to focus on making the most of their talent and skill, rather than worrying about losing their job to discrimination.
Brand loyalty		Nearly nine out of ten (87 %) LGBT adults said they are likely to consider a brand providing equal workplace benefits (Harris Interactive in 2011)