



## CHANGE STORY 5:

# BUILDING A RESILIENT MOVEMENT BY SENSITISING THE MEDIA ON LGBT ISSUES IN INDONESIA

## A PARTNER CHANGE STORY BY ARDHANARY INSTITUTE, JAKARTA, INDONESIA

### THE PROBLEM

The LGBT movement in Indonesia has experienced a government crackdown through arrests, discrimination, and violence, which has affected the community's ability to access HIV and SRHR services. A study by the Ardhanary Institute in 2012 showed the LGBT people were concerned that the majority of the media's coverage of LGBT issues was not factual. This was a serious problem, as the media was a major channel for normalising hatred toward LGBT people and providing a space for anti-LGBT figures – such as State officials, academics, religious leaders, public figures, and politicians – to voice their views. The media also tended not to check information with LGBT people or impartial academics or experts, leading to imbalanced news coverage which was also harmful to the LGBT community. The massive nonfactual coverage about LGBTIs strengthened negative public opinion about LGBT people.

### THE ACTIVITIES

To address this issue, the Ardhanary Institute decided to develop a strategy to sensitize the media on LGBT issues, with the aim of the media becoming LGBT allies by publishing accurate news coverage. To do this, Ardhanary Institute worked to raise the capacity of media personnel on covering LGBT issues. First, a guide for journalists was developed in 2015, evaluated in 2016, and updated and republished in 2018. The guide formed the basis for the training journalists. A training in 2016 was followed by a second training in 2018, which was attended by 24 journalists from 15 media outlets in 12 cities. After each training, the journalists followed three-month intensive fellowship program where they were mentored in producing accurate news on LGBT issues. Ardhanary Institute also met with 31 editors, to build their commitment to publishing factual content, as even if journalists are writing accurate stories, the coverage will not be published without approval by the editors. Finally, journalists were welcomed on an education visit to BtG partners GWL INA and Suara Kita in 2018, to create a safe space for dialogue and provide an opportunity to correct inaccurate assumptions that the journalists may have had about LGBT people. They also discussed the challenges experienced by Indonesian LGBT people, and how to collaborate and campaign for the rights of LGBT people.

Bridging the Gaps is an international HIV programme with a focus on the health and rights for LGBT people, sex workers and people who use drugs, currently operating in fifteen countries. For more information on the programme, visit [www.hivgaps.org](http://www.hivgaps.org).

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Health and rights  for key populations

## THE CHANGES

Since this project first began in 2016, the media that participated in the capacity building have gone on to produce factual news coverage about LGBT people in 10 media channels. The editors and the journalists involved agreed not to interview or write about anti-LGBT politicians. Instead, they used LGBT people who could articulate their rights as their news sources, and focused on producing objective coverage and highlighted LGBT role models. Overall, the coverage they generated reflected the voice of LGBT people in Indonesia. In addition, a collaborative network was established between the media and BtG partners in 13 provinces.

## LESSONS LEARNED

This change story illustrates the importance of collaborating with the media. In the increasingly harsh environment for LGBT, Ardhanary Institute learned that partnering with the media can help reducing and counter the negative narrative that perpetuate stigma and discrimination. A joint-movement with the media (editors and journalists) and a journalist organization (AJI) was created to produce accurate and fair coverage on LGBT issues, as well as encouraging the establishment of dialogue between LGBT people and journalists.

This experience also showed that LGBT organisations can play a key role in changing negative media representations and creating positive narratives. To do this, organisations need to: 1) share their knowledge and information with journalists to make them more informed on LGBT issues; and 2) facilitate meetings and direct dialogue between LGBT people and journalists to enable changes in their perspectives and personal values.

Ardhanary Institute attended the 2019 Bridging the Gaps Learning Institute to share this story and, in the process, they learned that this media sensitisation strategy can also be relevant for other key populations. Organisations in other countries, such as in Kenya, had unsuccessfully tried to employ a media engagement strategy, as some journalists who participated continued to publish stigmatizing news. At the Learning Institute participants discussed why Ardhanary Institute's strategy had worked, and concluded that it was because it went beyond media engagement. Editors and journalists completed training and made commitments, before Ardhanary Institute facilitated interactions with LGBT people.

This experience inspired Ardhanary Institute to further share the lessons it has learned. There are plans to make the guidance available in English and to publish a collection of the factual news stories produced by the participating journalists in Bahasa Indonesia and in English.

“Being a fellowship journalist, actively participating in all of the activities totally changed my view on LGBTIQ. I [now know that] HIV is a shared problem, and anyone is at risk of HIV when they practice unsafe sexual behaviours. I also started to think: how can I positively share LGBTIQ issues with the public? Especially, because LGBTIQ issues have now become central issues discussed in almost every layer of the society, LGBTIQs become very vulnerable to violence and persecutions, both by members of society and by the authorities. It must not be easy.

I decided to make a news story about people who are living with HIV for World AIDS Day. I tried to show society that HIV is not the end of everything. I also tried to engage people to see HIV as a collective problem, not only LGBTIQ's problem. I used the data from the Ministry of Health to show the high rate of HIV/AIDS rate among heterosexuals and women. It showed that the HIV/AIDS rate was closely related to people's awareness of sexual and reproductive health in their sexual practices, not to people's identities.”

– Ervan Wahyudin, television news producer, RTV (Rajawali Televisi)

