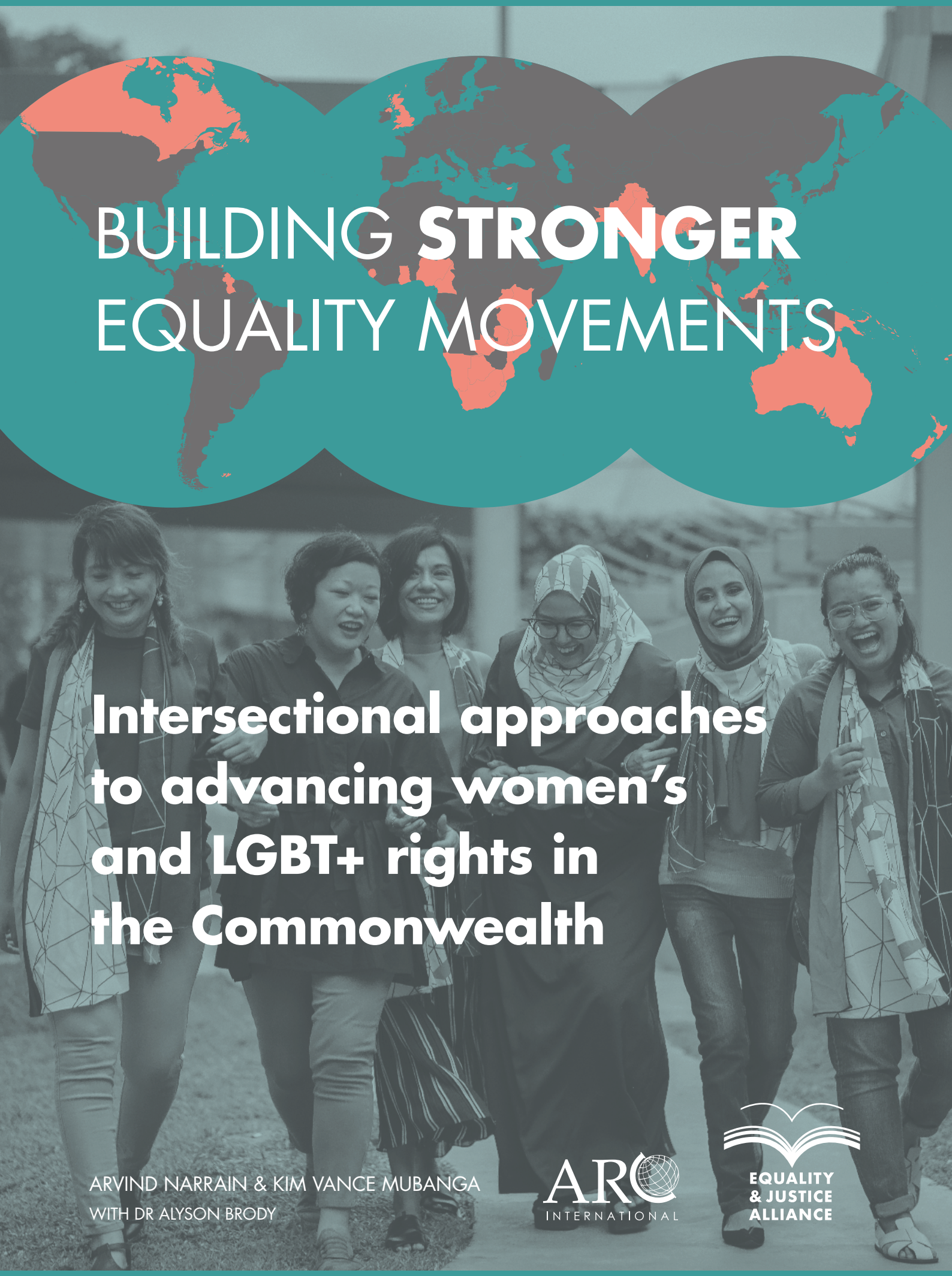

BUILDING **STRONGER** EQUALITY MOVEMENTS

Intersectional approaches to advancing women's and LGBT+ rights in the Commonwealth

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WITH DR ALYSON BRODY

ARC INTERNATIONAL

EQUALITY & JUSTICE ALLIANCE

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ABOUT ARC INTERNATIONAL

Since 2003, ARC International has been advancing human rights related to sexual orientation, gender identity/expression and sex characteristics (SOGIESC). ARC plays a unique role in facilitating strategic planning around LGBTI issues internationally, strengthening global networks, providing research, analysis and tools for LGBTI and allied movements, and enhancing access to UN mechanisms. ARC has played a key role in the development of the Yogyakarta Principles and Yogyakarta Principles +10, on the application of International Human Rights Law in relation SOGIESC.

ABOUT THE EQUALITY & JUSTICE ALLIANCE

The Equality & Justice Alliance is a consortium of international organisations with expertise in advancing equality, addressing the structural causes of discrimination and violence, and increasing protection to enable strong and fair societies for all Commonwealth citizens, regardless of gender, sex, sexual orientation, or gender identity and expression. The members of the Alliance are the Human Dignity Trust, Kaleidoscope Trust, Sisters for Change, and The Royal Commonwealth Society.

For more information, visit:
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CONTENTS

DEFINITIONS OF CONCEPTS AND TERMS

Asexual

An asexual person is not sexually attracted to men or women.

Bisexual (or *bi*)

A person whose sexual and/or romantic orientation may involve people of more than one gender.

Cisgender (or *cis*)

A person whose gender identity is consistent with their sex assigned at birth.

Cisnormative/Cisnormativity

The assumption or belief that everyone's gender identity is always consistent with their sex assigned at birth and the organisation of the world on that basis.

Demisexual

Demisexuality refers to people who only experience sexual attraction after making a strong emotional connection with a specific person.[1]

Eunuch

A derogatory term for a man who has been castrated.

Family violence

Family violence is defined as a pattern of abusive behaviours by one family member against another. This includes: physical abuse (abuse involving contact intended to cause feelings of intimidation, pain, injury, or other physical suffering or bodily harm); sexual abuse (any situation in which force or threat is used to obtain participation in unwanted sexual activity); verbal abuse (a form of emotionally abusive behaviour involving the use of language); and economic abuse (a form of abuse when one family member has control over another's access to economic resources).

Gay

A person whose gender identity is male whose sexual orientation is toward other people whose gender identity is also male. Gay may also be used as an umbrella term to refer to all homosexual people regardless of their gender identity.

Gender diverse

Used as an umbrella term in this report for people who are gender non-conforming, gender queer, gender neutral, third gender or whose gender identity and/or gender expression does not accord with binary norms in other ways.

Gender expression

A person's way of communicating culturally defined traits of masculinity or femininity (or both, or neither, or another gender) externally through physical appearance (e.g. through the use of clothing, accessories, hairstyles, and the use of cosmetics), mannerisms, ways of speaking, and behavioural patterns in interactions with others.[2]

Gender identity

Each person's deeply felt internal and individual experience of gender, which may or may not correspond with the sex assigned at birth, including the personal sense of the body (which may involve, if personally chosen, modification of the bodily appearance or function by medical, surgical or other means) and other expressions of gender, including dress, speech and mannerisms.[3]

Gender non-binary

Non-binary people feel their gender identity cannot be defined within the margins of gender binary. Instead, they understand their gender in a way that goes beyond simply identifying as either a man or woman. Non-binary can be defined as identifying as either having a gender which is in between or beyond the two categories man and woman, as fluctuating between man and woman, or as having no gender, either permanently or some of the time.[4]

Gender-based violence

The term gender-based violence (GBV) refers to any harmful act that is perpetrated against a person's will and that is based on socially ascribed (gender) differences between females and males. The nature and extent of specific types of GBV vary across cultures, countries and regions. Examples include sexual violence, including sexual exploitation/abuse and forced prostitution; domestic violence; trafficking; forced/early marriage; harmful traditional practices such as female genital mutilation; honour killings and widow inheritance.[5]

Heteronormative/ Heteronormativity

The assumption or belief that everyone is or should be heterosexual and the organisation of the world is on that basis.

Heterosexual

A person whose sexual orientation is towards people of the opposite gender as themselves (assuming binary gender norms).

Hijra

Hijra is a transgender community which exists in India with a long lineage and history. Most hijras in India live in groups that are organised into seven houses (gharanas). Each house is headed by a nayak (leader) who appoints gurus, spiritual leaders who train their wards (chelas) in badhai (dancing, singing and blessing), and protects them within and outside the community. It is a system that replicates matriarchy, creating interdependence between the ageing guru and the chela who has been cast out of her family. Disputes among hijras are decided within the community by the nayak and senior gurus acting as lawmakers.[6]

Homosexual

A person whose sexual orientation is towards people of the same gender identity as themselves.

Intersectionality

The concept that overlapping identities such as gender, race, class, sexuality, ability and other differences contribute to systematic oppression, discrimination and interaction with others. It is also a term for ways of working together to seek justice holistically to address these complex forms of discrimination.

Intersex

A person born with sex characteristics (including genitals, gonads or chromosome patterns) that do not align with medical and social norms for female and male bodies.

Jogappa

The Jogappas are one of the least known transgender communities in South India. They are 'possessed' by the goddess Yellamma and regarded as holy women. Their gender identity and expression reflects this. Jogappas occupy a respected, priestly position within society – people seek their blessings and appease Yellamma through them. They are a direct link between society and the divine. However, owing to their identity and gender expression, they also transgress the binary norms of gender and sexuality held sacrosanct by societies everywhere in India.[7]

Kothi

Kothi is used across South Asia with local variations. Kothis often see themselves as non-English speaking, with a feminine homosexual identity distinct from the gay/bisexual identity which tends to be the expression of English-speaking homosexual/bisexual males. Kothis largely belong to the non-English speaking lower middle-class and feel their marginalisation (due to lack of access to resources/information/ employment etc.) in terms of language, education, socio-economic status as well as sexuality. In other words, though a kothi can be described as a male homosexual who takes a feminine role in sex with other men, the kothi construct is not only a sexual/gender identity but also a socio-cultural one specific to the South Asian context.[8]

Lesbian

A person whose gender identity is female whose sexual orientation is towards other people whose gender identity is also female.

Pansexual

Pansexuality is characterised by sexual desire or attraction that is not limited to people of a particular gender identity or sexual orientation. They can be attracted to males, females, transgender people and those who identify as non-binary (not female or male).[9]

Queer

A reclaimed term increasingly used as an umbrella term for people of all kinds of sexual and gender diversities, and sometimes used to imply a more radical perspective. Queering may also be used to refer to acts outside of sexual and gender diversity issues, where a binary or norm is challenged. Queer has also been used as a slur, predominantly against gay men, and is still understood as a slur by some gay men. For this reason, the term queer is avoided in this report where possible.

Sex assigned at birth

Official registration of one's sex after birth, on the basis of male or female genitals. This assignment may or may not align with the individual's own sense of gender identity as they grow up.[10]

Sex binary

The stereotypical categorisation of bodies as male or female, based on sex characteristics, and the organisation of the world on that assumed norm.

Sex characteristics

Genetic, hormonal and anatomical characteristics of bodies, configurations of which are used for stereotypical categorisation of bodies as male or female.

Sexual orientation

A person's capacity for profound emotional, affectional, and sexual attraction to, and intimate and sexual relations with, individuals of a different gender, or the same gender or more than one gender.[11]

Shivasakthis

Shivasakthi is one of the traditional transgender identities in India. It has been defined as "males who are possessed by or particularly close to a goddess and who display feminine forms of gender expression, typically located in Andhra Pradesh."[12]

Third gender

A person who has a gender identity that is neither male or female. Third gender people may also demonstrate fluidity within their gender identity and may occupy social roles typically associated with one or more gender identities. Third gender identities are usually culturally specific, and third gender people may or may not identity as transgender.

Transgender

A person who identifies themselves: "in a different gender than that assigned at birth. They may express their identity differently to that expected of the gender role they were assigned at birth. Trans/transgender people often identify themselves in ways that are locally, socially, culturally, religiously or spiritually defined."[13] Some transgender people are binary, their gender identity being the opposite to that assigned at birth, while others may identify as non-binary trans masculine, non-binary trans feminine, or in other ways. Transgender is sometimes used as a broader umbrella term, including those whose gender identity matches their sex assigned at birth, but whose gender expression is at variance with social norms or who otherwise challenge gender norms in their behaviour.

Trans man

A transgender person assigned female at birth but whose gender identity is male.

Trans woman

A transgender person assigned male at birth but whose gender identity is female

ACRONYMS

ASWA	African Sex Workers Alliance
BQDX	Black Queer DocX
CEDAW	Convention for the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women
CHOGM	Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting
COP	Conference of the Parties
CSOs	Civil Society Organisations
DAWN	Development Alternatives for Women With a New Era
ECADE	Eastern Caribbean Alliance for Diversity and Equality
EJA	Equality and Justice Alliance
FWF	Fiji Women's Forum
GBV	Gender-Based Violence
HIV/AIDS	Human immunodeficiency viruses/ acquired immune deficiency syndrome
HRDs	Human Rights Defenders
LEGABIBO	Lesbians, Gays and Bisexuals of Botswana
LGBT+	Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender +
LGBTI	Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, intersex
LGBTIQ	Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, intersex, queer
NGOs	Non-Governmental Agencies
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
SOGI	Sexual orientation and gender identity
SRHR	Sexual and reproductive health and rights
UN	United Nations
WAR	Women Against Rape
WID	Women in Development
WHER	Women's Health and Equal Rights Initiative

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Equality and Justice Alliance (EJA) is committed to advancing equality and promoting equal protection of the law for all Commonwealth citizens, regardless of gender, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression. Established in 2018 by a consortium of international NGOs, the EJA is looking to effect social change in Commonwealth countries by supporting Commonwealth governments, civil society organisations and other stakeholders to reform laws that discriminate against women and girls and LGBT+ people, many of which are remnants from the time of British colonialism. An important part of this work is strengthening intersectional movement-building between women's and LGBT+ activists and organisations.

As such, in March 2019, EJA commissioned Arc International to undertake this multi-country research into intersectional movement building, as part of the series *Building Stronger Equality Movements*. The report is based on a literature review and case studies gathered through in-depth interviews with leading activists from feminist and LGBT+ organisations in Asia, the Caribbean, Africa and the Pacific region, that are all taking an intersectional approach to movement building.

This report asks:

- what do we mean by an intersectional approach to movement building?
- what is the added value of an intersectional approach that brings activists from these different movements together around shared concerns?
- what challenges do intersectional approaches present for activists and organisations?
- what good practices and lessons arise from their experiences of working in intersectional ways?

The paper starts by outlining the Commonwealth context with regard to women's and LGBT+ rights, with a focus on the colonial legacy of homophobic, gender normative and gender inequitable legislation and attitudes that continue to influence public consciousness and attitudes even in countries where laws have been repealed. Through the rich personal accounts of feminist and LGBT+ activists in Botswana, India, Nigeria, the Caribbean, Fiji, Antigua, Saint Lucia and Zambia, the paper highlights the vital role of women's and LGBT+ rights movements for offering alternative visions of gender equality, tolerance and freedom of expression, with a focus on intersectional ways of working.

The paper draws on the work on Kimberlé Crenshaw, noting that the concept of intersectionality is both a conceptual framework that highlights multiple discriminations associated with gender, race, class, sexuality and ability, and an action of working together to seek justice in holistic ways. The activist narratives articulate what intersectional alliances mean in practice.

Key messages include an intersectional approach **facilitates a more inclusive approach to gender-based discrimination**. The potentially transformative value of feminism as a unifying platform and set of principles for all those marginalised or undermined on the basis of gender and/or sexuality was articulated by queer organisation Black Queer DocX (BQDX) in Botswana and the LBQ organisation WHER (Women's Health and Equal Rights Initiative) in Nigeria. In all the countries represented, solidarity and communities of mutual support have emerged out of the shared struggle against patriarchy and discrimination. Notably, in many cases, women's organisations have provided a safe and inclusive space for the articulation of lesbian and bisexual women's needs and concerns.

However, the study revealed that **blind spots still exist within the feminist movement that require attention**. A notable issue is that of membership and recognition of transwomen in women's organisations, since attitudes often remain ambivalent, with unresolved debates around the complex issue of who can and should participate in 'female solidarity' and spaces, particularly strong in the narratives from the Zambian, Nigerian and Caribbean activists, who noted that trans women have played a less integrated role in intersectional alliances with the women's movement.

Another key message is that intersectional alliances can enable the **building of a critical mass of activism against gender-based discrimination and violence**. Chayanika Shah, of the Indian queer feminist LBT collective LABIA, talked about the power of intersectional solidarity between feminist and queer groups whose joint campaigning helped bring about the abolition of section 377 of the Indian Penal Code, which criminalised consensual same-sex sexual acts.

Intersectionality also enables the capturing and representation of **complex identities and meeting complex needs, as well as allowing the identification of common ground** with other groups who have shared experiences of power abuse and marginalisation. Cases from Zambia and India illustrated this point through discussions of support provided by LGBT+ groups to sex workers lobbying for their rights and recognition. Intersectionality also enables a wider recognition of our shared human vulnerability. The issue of climate change, in particular, raises the question of what we have in common.

The activists also outlined practical strategies for effective intersectional movement building. Otibho Obianwu from WHER in Nigeria talked frankly about tensions and differences of priority that can prevent LGBT+ and women's organisations from working together effectively but was positive about the potential to move past such challenges. She discussed how shared concerns about sexual health and reproductive rights provide a unifying platform for intersectional working in Nigeria. A Zambian trans activist talked about the value of finding new, more inclusive terms for discussing issues of gender and sexuality – for example not talking about sexual orientation but about what it means to be gender non-conforming.

Several activists mentioned the importance of **openly calling out any tensions or differences of opinion and making space and time for negotiation and constructive discussion around shared priorities**. Another critical point was the **importance of formally establishing working principles, relationships and roles and of identifying a common vision** at the outset of any intersectional alliance building process. For example, the Eastern Caribbean Alliance for Diversity and Equality (ECADE) developed a shared vision document that resonated with both women's groups and LGBT+ groups as it included a focus on abortion (not necessarily a priority for LGBT+) as well as broader issues of anti-discrimination and health care. This helped build a strong, sustainable working relationship between the two groups.

1 Introduction

In 2018, at the Commonwealth Heads of Government meeting (CHOGM), UK Prime Minister Theresa May expressed deep regret for Britain's role in instituting laws that discriminate against women and girls and lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT+) people, many of which remain in effect today. Mrs May also offered the UK government's support to Commonwealth countries that wanted to reform these discriminatory laws. To catalyse this process, the two-year Equality and Justice Alliance (EJA) programme was launched with the overarching aim of providing support to countries seeking to address the systemic discrimination faced by women and girls and LGBT+ people. The Alliance is a consortium of four international NGOs: Human Dignity Trust, Kaleidoscope Trust, Sisters for Change and The Royal Commonwealth Society.[14]

The EJA recognises the vital role movements play in asserting, demanding and realising rights, and in challenging discriminatory laws and policies. It views intersectional forms of collective organising as particularly effective for facilitating gender-transformative social and political change. Driven by these convictions, the EJA is supporting coalitions of Commonwealth civil society organisations to work intersectionally and conduct collective advocacy. It has facilitated dialogue and knowledge sharing between civil society, government and other relevant stakeholders in order to build a better understanding of international standards and best practices. It has also provided technical legal assistance and expertise to Commonwealth governments seeking to reform discriminatory laws, combat violence against women and girls, eliminate hate crimes and increase access to justice. The commonalities across laws, legal systems and histories of the countries formerly under British colonial rule make this a particularly revealing and useful exercise. Lessons and insights often have relevance for different Commonwealth countries and there is the potential for good practices and strategies to be adapted to diverse contexts.

As part of the programme, the *Building Stronger Equality Movements* series has been produced. The series explores the connected issues of intersectionality, intergenerational ways of working and backlash in the context of collective organising for LGBT+ and women's rights movements. Grounded in the perspectives and stories of activists in Commonwealth global south countries, the papers highlight good practices as well as challenges in building movements for more inclusive, gender equitable societies.

This paper – the first in the series – aims to demystify the topic of intersectionality, asking what it means for LGBT+, women's rights and gender equality activists in Commonwealth countries, identifying challenges and mapping good practices for working in intersectional ways. It is hoped that the paper will inspire others to converge and integrate into more cohesive movements, as well as support and inspire those who are already engaged in intersectional movement and alliance building.

1.1 Approach to this paper

The paper draws from two main sources:
1) available literature and research on intersectionality, with a focus on Commonwealth countries of the global south; and
2) case studies gathered through in-depth interviews with leading activists from feminist and LGBT+ organisations in Asia, the Caribbean, Africa and the Pacific region, that are all taking an intersectional approach to movement building. Rich personal observations from each case study informs the analysis throughout the paper, shedding light on questions of what intersectionality means for organisations working on the ground. The accounts highlight benefits and challenges involved in doing intersectional work as well as some effective, tried and trusted approaches. As such, reading each of the case studies has the potential to trigger new ways of thinking and working.

The organisations who participated in the study are:

Black Queer DocX (BQDX)

Black Queer DocX (BQDX) is an autonomous collective of queer feminists based in Gaborone, Botswana, who work towards societal transformation and the development of more inclusive, just and holistic communities. BQDX uses feminist approaches and processes to mobilise others, especially queer women, around a shared agenda of social, cultural, economic and political transformation for equality and the realisation of human rights for all. BQDX is motivated by fairness, justice and equity and strives to keep issues of gender, social class, sexual orientation, race and ability at the forefront. The interview for this study was with Kukhrana Ukhra Ashula, Chantal Forte, Botho Maruatona and Marathuma Tabaye from BQDX.

The Fiji Women's Forum

The Fiji Women's Forum (FWF) was formed in 2012 to bring together diverse women's groups, towards the shared aim of increasing women's participation in leadership. The groups put aside their differences and worked together to increase women's participation in the Fiji national elections held in 2014. The forum believes the under-representation of women in all spheres is directly linked to many of the challenges that women face. What is specific to the Fijian context is not just the diversity of identities and experience within the country, but also the very particular experience of eight years of military rule. The diverse social movements had to respond to military rule as one of their prime challenges and the Fiji women's movement took this issue up strongly. The Fiji Women's Forum believes that the full representation of women at all levels is fundamental to the long-term sustainability of peace and democracy in Fiji. Mamta Chand, a member of the FWF, was interviewed for this study.

Women Against Rape (WAR)

Women Against Rape (WAR) is a national non–governmental organisation based in Antigua, which was formed in response to the unprecedented reported number of rape cases in Antigua and Barbuda in 2007. The organisation's mission statement is: promoting inclusive health parity and victim justice through advocacy, education and direct services geared towards women and families affected by sexual violence. This mission is rooted in the values of equality, justice, partnerships and trust. WAR advocates for a coordinated response to the prevention and management of gender-based violence (GBV), including sexual violence, and for the realisation of gender equality in Antigua and Barbuda. WAR sees gender inequality and GBV as a pervasive human rights violation. Alexandria Wong, the president and programme officer of WAR, was interviewed for this study.

Eastern Caribbean Alliance for Diversity and Equality

The Eastern Caribbean Alliance for Diversity and Equality (ECADE) is based in St. Lucia and represents 26 organisations across nine countries in the Eastern Caribbean. Organisations representing the lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex community are the core membership of ECADE. An independent umbrella organisation, ECADE works with human rights groups to strengthen institutional capacity and provide a platform to strategise and work towards equality within the sub-region. The organisational mission is to strengthen regional capacity for the defence and full recognition of human rights through the promotion of intersectional collaboration, training, network expansion, development of grassroots human rights defenders (HRDs) and organisations and sensitisation of policymakers, legislators, government and service providers. Kenita Placide, the executive director of ECADE, was interviewed for this study.

Women's Health and Equal Rights Initiative

The Women's Health and Equal Rights (WHER) Initiative is a non-governmental, not-for-profit organisation based in Nigeria. WHER was established in 2011 with the aim of promoting a deeper conceptual knowledge of sexuality, gender identity and sexual orientation. WHER's goal is to advance and promote the well-being and equal rights of LBQ women in Nigeria by addressing the health and psychosocial effects of the dual discrimination (homophobia and sexism) faced by LBQ women and their under-representation in the LGBT+ and women's rights movements in Nigeria. It provides access to health and other support services to LBQ women through research, education, training, advocacy, empowerment and other direct services. WHER also collaborates with other LGBT+ and civil society organisations (CSOs) to advocate for changes in policies and legislature to achieve equal rights for LGBT+ people. Otibho Obianwu, the director of programmes, was interviewed for this study.

*Trans and Intersex Organisation, Zambia**

The organisation interviewed promotes and protects the rights of young transgender and intersex communities in Zambia through outreach and practical support. It offers peer support groups, parent support and skills development, such as sport and art, as well as psychosocial counselling. It aims to build a strong transgender and intersex movement through youth-targeted training and capacity building, and advocates for policies and institutional practices that recognise and respect the human rights of transgender and intersex people.

In 2014, the organisation released their first book, comprising stories, poems and narratives of trans people living in Zambia, their families and allies. In 2016, they developed a programme that recognises that, despite having common agendas around the issues of access to health, the trans movement in Zambia and the feminist movement were not working together to strengthen their advocacy. Through this programme, young feminists are better able to raise the issues of trans people, built on a much greater understanding of their lived realities.

LABIA

LABIA is a queer feminist LBT collective based in Mumbai, India. It began as Stree Sangam in 1995, then changed its name to Lesbians and Bisexuals in Action in 2002 before changing its name to LABIA in 2013. LABIA's activities have involved networking with individual queer women and queer groups in India and in other countries, campaigning for the rights of marginalised genders and sexualities, and organising feminist and people's movements with other marginalised groups. LABIA intends to further this activism and sees *Scripts*, a magazine published once a year, as a vibrant space for multiple conversations between queer/feminist/activist/creative voices. Chayanika Shah, a member of LABIA, was interviewed for this study.

* Following a deterioration in the security situation for LGBT+ people in Zambia, the activist interviewed requested that all identifying information of themselves and their organisation be removed to ensure their safety.

Ondede

Ondede is an Indian human rights organisation formed in 2014 that works on women's, children's and LGBT rights in intersectional ways. Ondede aims to speak out and fight for the rights of gender non-conforming, transgender men and women, *kothis*[15], *jogappas*[16], Shivasakthis, and also focuses on lesbian, gay, bisexual, pansexual, demi-sexual and asexual groups. Ondede also addresses issues of GBV, including domestic violence, experienced by these groups. The organisation works in intersectional ways with the child rights movement, the women's rights movement, class and caste minorities movements and religious minorities. Akkai Padmashali, the founder of Ondede and a transwoman who has been an important figure in LGBT+ activism in the Indian context, was interviewed for this study.

1.2 Paper structure

The first half of section two considers the implications of historical and legislative legacies on gender equality and LGBT+ rights in Commonwealth countries in the global south. By contrast, the second half focuses on the personal journeys of gender equality and LGBT+ activists who have played key roles in movements and organisations which have challenged prescriptive social norms and discriminatory laws and systems in Antigua, Botswana, the Caribbean, Fiji, India, Nigeria and Zambia. Section three asks: what do we mean by intersectional approaches in the context of gender equality and LGBT+ activism, and what is their added value for movement building? The section is informed by activists' narratives and insights, as well as by existing research and literature. Section four outlines good practices for enabling inclusive, effective intersectional movement building, with a focus on practical strategies for overcoming potential challenges. Section five concludes the paper and sets out some key recommendations for donors and policymakers that could inform fundraising and lobbying.

2 Intersectionality in the Commonwealth

2.1 The Commonwealth and its colonial legacies

The Commonwealth is a voluntary association of independent countries which is largely united by a history of British colonialism. It spans Asia, Africa, the Americas and the Caribbean, the Pacific and Europe. It has 53 member states, three of which are in Europe, 13 in North America and the Caribbean, 19 in Africa, seven in Asia and 11 in the Pacific.

The Commonwealth was conceived with the idea that nations formerly under British administrative rule could come together as sovereign equal nations and work together to define and achieve shared priorities. However, in many cases the colonial past continues to shape the lives of people living in formerly British-ruled countries, particularly through legislative or cultural changes that imposed British colonial values that served to oppress or marginalise those opposed to British colonial values and rule. This common lived experience based upon a colonial past provides a link between all the nations of the Commonwealth and structures the trajectories of social movements in the global south. This legacy of colonisation also continues to influence social and gender norms as well as legal systems and the processes that reinforce them. For example, in India a vestige of British rule is the common law system, which stipulates that marriage, divorce, adoption and inheritance are to be regulated by the (customary) local laws known as Anglo-Hindu and Anglo-Mohammedan laws.[17] The legacy of this system has led to the predominance of customary laws, which often reinforce gender and caste inequalities.[18] Another vestige of colonial law which seriously undermines women's rights and bodily integrity is the failure of the Indian Penal Code to recognise rape in marriage. The law states: "Sexual intercourse by a man with his own wife, the wife not being under fifteen years of age, is not rape."[19]

British colonial law also imposed moral codes based on rigid gender binaries and normative Christian ideals about sexual identities and opposite-sex relationships. This contradicted accepted practices in many pre-colonial countries where more fluid gender identities were accepted as normal. For example, among the Nnobi in Nigeria, biological sex did not always correspond to binary ideas of male and female gender norms, enabling women to take on roles typically associated with men.[20]

The imposition of British discriminatory legal structures, codes and processes on colonised countries normalised and reinforced prejudice against LGBT+ people in many countries. Anti-sodomy laws still exist in 34 of the 53 members of the Commonwealth. One striking example was Section 377 of the Indian Penal Code, under which same-sex relations were described as unnatural offences, with punishments including life imprisonment. According to Human Rights Watch:

> "Section 377 was … a model law in more ways than one. It was a colonial attempt to set standards of behaviour, both to reform the colonised and to protect the colonisers against moral lapses. It was also the first colonial sodomy law integrated into a penal code – and it became a model anti-sodomy law for countries far beyond India, Malaysia and Uganda. Its influence stretched across Asia, the Pacific islands and Africa, almost everywhere the British imperial flag flew."[21]

Colonial era laws have also criminalised indigenous expressions of gender identity. For example, in India, under section 377, *hijra*[22] who appeared "dressed or ornamented like a woman in a public street … or who dance[d] or play[ed] music or [took] part in any public exhibition, in a public street … [could] be arrested without warrant and punished with imprisonment of up to two years or with a fine or both."[23]

The introduction and implementation of homophobic laws was often part of a broader process of influence, through which imported British social and religious norms and attitudes were gradually subsumed into the national consciousness of many colonised countries.

A growing number of Commonwealth countries, including India, have repealed these homophobic laws. In many other countries like Ghana, Jamaica and Zimbabwe, the laws continue unchanged. However, others, including Nigeria, Uganda and Brunei, have increased their stringency.[24] In 2000, Uganda's Penal Code Amendment (Gender References) Act changed the relevant sections of the penal code to refer to "any person" instead of "any male" to ensure that lesbian acts were also criminalised.[25] A harsh anti-homosexuality law was subsequently introduced in 2014, although LGBT+ activists have campaigned for its invalidation. Nigeria's Same-Sex Marriage (Prohibition) criminalises the cohabitation of same-sex couples, banning public displays of same-sex affection, and imposes 10-year prison sentences on those who operate or support gay clubs, societies or organisations.[26]

At the CHOGM, UK Prime Minister Theresa May expressed "deep regret" that discriminatory laws criminalising same-sex relations and failing to protect women and girls continue to affect the lives of many people.

> "I am all too aware that these laws were often put in place by my own country. They were wrong then, and they are wrong now. As the UK's Prime Minister, I deeply regret both the fact that such laws were introduced, and the legacy of discrimination, violence and even death that persists today."[27]

2.2. From identity forming to movement building – LGBT+ activist stories

Against this backdrop of discriminatory legislation is a history of activism by LGBT+ groups and individuals in different Commonwealth countries, exemplified by stories of *becoming* – forming personal and collective identities – from those who informed this study.

Akkai Padmashali, Ondede, India

Akkai is an Indian transwoman who has been an important figure in LGBT+ activism in the Indian context. She shared the story of her long history with LGBT+ activism, beginning as a sex worker on the streets of Bangalore. She became part of various activist initiatives in Bangalore and founded the group Ondede which works on women's rights, children's rights and LGBT+ rights. A prominent part of LGBT+ activism, Akkai has become part of a larger voice against right wing politics which seeks to control not only how people look and dress but what they eat and who they choose to worship. Of great importance in Akkai's activist and personal journey is the decision to file a petition challenging Section 377 in the Supreme Court. By filing the petition Akkai demonstrated why the battle against Section 377 intimately concerns the transgender community as well. Akkai's life and struggles embodies in a deep sense a form of intersectional politics. According to Akkai:

> "Activism begins with the personal struggle with identity, be it your sex or your psychology. When you realise you're a feminine person at the age of six, seven years, but you are educated to behave like a boy in that manner. When I expressed this feminine character before my parents there was so much resistance to accept this so-called feminine character.

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Young people in India attend a pride parade in support of repealing Section 377.

I used to try to be like a girl within the four walls by stealing my sister's slippers and wearing her dress, and after seeing the girls in the class I wanted to know how to my tie hair like them and to apply make-up, lipstick etc. These were behaviours which I was practising. My parents were so strict. My father was a disciplinarian and he was abusing me whenever I tried to be like a girl. I began to think that something was wrong with me. That low self-esteem resulted in me trying to commit suicide twice at the age of 11 and 12. But after my second attempt I decided not to die. Acknowledging and accepting myself and that I am perfect. To me that's why activism began from the age of eight. It's not you coming to the public and claiming you are an activist. I think the personal becomes political, this is what the feminist slogan speaks strongly about."

When she was a teenager Akkai left home and became a sex worker, where she encountered abuse at the hands of customers, local mafia and the police. At the age of 16 or 17 she joined Sangama, an Indian organisation that works to raise awareness, promote understanding of sexuality, sexual preference and gender identities, and to support LGBT+ groups directly. This enabled her to gain knowledge of the transgender community and the diversity of sexual identities. In 2014, she established her own organisation – Ondede – which means convergence.

Alexandrina Wong, WAR, Antigua

Alexandrina is the current president and programme office for WAR, an organisation located in Antigua. She talked about how WAR came into existence:

> "We came into being just over 10 years ago, in response to an unprecedented number of sexual assaults and rapes of women. This was being experienced as a home invasion. It was occurring at night and by masked bandits. In some of our smaller villages there was this fear and concern. Some of the attacks were very brutal – in some cases knives and even guns were used. One woman was shot twice and narrowly escaped death. So, three young female attorneys contacted me and said: 'We need to do something.' We met and talked. Then we developed a strategy and I was asked to lead the organisation. We launched WAR with a radio interview, calling on the government, the police, religious people and communities to understand the depth of the harm that was taking place in our villages and how our families were being devastated, not only physically but also emotionally and psychologically."

Kenita Placide, ECADE, Caribbean

Kenita, the executive director of ECADE, talked about her personal journey to activism:

> "I am the last of five girls, but never really conformed to girl-like or lady-like behaviour. I was into all sporting activities especially football. So, I think this was the first challenge. I have been male-presenting and this has challenged people in terms of how they see me and how they relate to me. I've always been asked to behave like a girl or dress like a girl, and I always wondered what that meant, because I was just dressing the way I felt comfortable and it was not associated with my sexuality.
>
> There are two major reasons why I became an activist. Between 2005 and 2006 two of my friends, who used to organise social events for the LGBT community, were murdered in St. Lucia. We started speaking out to raise awareness of the injustice. We felt that these were hate crimes and that the murder investigation was not taken seriously because the victims were gay men. But one of the key reasons that got me into activism was feeling that there was a need for other young people, like myself at the time, to know that suicide was not the only option and there were other people like them whose sexual orientation was different, who were also born into religion and faith."

Anonymous trans activist, Zambia

> "I am the founder of a youth-led organisation in Zambia working on trans and intersex issues, legal access or reform, economic empowerment, entrepreneurship and also peer to peer support. How did I get into activism? I think around 2006 there was a regional call to have trans activists begin mobilising in southern African countries as well as eastern Africa. Around 2008, we had the first trans convening which was organised by Gender Dynamics and International Gay and Lesbian Human Rights Commission (IGLHRC) at that time. So, after that convening, we all went back to our various countries and we began mobilising and also creating a safe space for trans individuals. First and foremost we are trans feminist as an organisation and that basically means we recognise the inequalities of gender, identity and expression embodied by trans and intersex persons.

We are also open to working with other marginalised groups, other sexual minority groups and other gender minority groups. We are interested in building LGB partnerships and we work with young feminist women as well as other key actors who advance our objectives."

Mamta Chand, FWF, Fiji

Mamta explained:

"I joined the Fiji Women's Rights Movement (FWRM) as a volunteer in 2004 and as a result was encouraged to apply for FWRM's Young Women in Leadership Programme, part of the Emerging Leaders Forum (ELF) in 2005. ELF provided the opportunity for critical thinking, unpacking and demystifying patriarchy with a feminist lens, thus contributing towards aspiration for activism."

Chayanika Shah, LABIA, India

Chayanika Shah is with the collective LABIA in Mumbai. She began her activism with the feminist organisation Forum Against Oppression of Women (FAOW) based in Mumbai and has been involved in the struggle against Section 377 of the Indian Penal Code since its inception. The beginning of Chayanika's activism coincided with the emergence of the modern women's movement in India. The women's movement emerged as a response to the brutal rape of a 16 year-old girl by two police officers inside a police station. What angered women around the country was the fact that the police officers were exonerated of the charge of rape by the Supreme Court of India. In Chayanika's words:

"The Forum Against Oppression of Women began as the Forum Against Rape and it began in response to a letter written by four legal educators on the acquittal of the police officers for the rape of Mathura.[28] Mathura is a 14 to 16 year old tribal girl, who was raped by policemen in the police station. The Supreme Court adjudicated and said that this woman was used to sex, because she had sex with her boyfriend repeatedly. Therefore, the policemen could not have raped her. The judgment triggered an open letter written by the four law professors. That letter became something that catalysed many women in groups in various parts of the country to come together to speak of rape as a political issue. They began with, firstly, asking for changes in the law and, secondly, going and protesting against every case of rape that was being reported in the newspaper. My first protest was when a six-year-old girl was raped by a policeman in Kurla station police station. That was the first protest I attended and I still have visual memory of it.

"The Forum Against Rape began by actually talking about rape, writing about it, and developing the understanding that rape is […] not about sex but about power. So, Forum Against Rape was one of the first organisations to have been formed at that time. While we were based in the women's movement our engagement with issues was much broader. I personally got more engaged in the [opposition to the coercive] population control policies and work around health and that coincided with lots of struggles around development issues […] we were involved in the anti-big dam agitation. [In our activism], issues of caste, issues of religion and in mid '90s issues of sexualities, these three have become more predominant in the last 30 years. In the first 10 years we were more involved in understanding women as a political category, and specific issues of women such as how does one understand the personal politically. But in the next 20 years, activism has been more around intersections of gender and sexuality with caste, religion and of course capital."

3 Understanding an intersectional approach in the context of gender equality and LGBT+ movement building

3.1 What do we mean by an intersectional approach to movement building?

Across the world, radical, political and social justice movements have been at the forefront of advocating for rights and fundamental freedoms. The freedom movements in the former colonies, the civil rights movement, the labour movement, the women's movement, and many more have won hard-fought victories which have been realised in legal and normative frameworks.

Feminist and women's movements[29] have fought against gender-based oppression and discrimination, from the first wave of feminism which resulted in women's suffrage to the second wave of feminism which asserted the rights of women to work and unionise. During the second wave, African American female activists called for existing feminist frameworks to reflect the multiple forms of discrimination they experienced on the basis of their race, gender, segregation, slavery and class.

At the same time, the aftermath of the freedom movement in the former colonies during the 1950s and 1960s also enabled women to draw attention to how the experiences they faced went beyond the dimensions of race, class and gender, to encompass imperialism, capitalism, religion, caste, tribe, and ethnicity and many other facets. The Third World Women's Alliance inspired by the struggles of African American women brought together women of colour to challenge discriminatory structures – local and global. The women in development (WID) approach championed by the Third World Network and Development Alternatives for Women with a New Era (DAWN) was also taken up by women in the former colonies and the global south to ensure that the voices of women of colour found a place in feminist frameworks and the broader women's movement.

The work of the black feminist legal scholar Kimberlé Crenshaw coined the term intersectionality in a 1989 article.[30]

Her work built on existing critiques of mainstream feminist thinking and practice to demonstrate the compounding discrimination experienced by African American women based on their gender and race.[31] Surveying a number of cases in which courts disallowed the claims of black female plaintiffs, Crenshaw found that sex discrimination was being understood through the experiences of white women, while race discrimination was being understood through the experiences of black men. The experiences of black women were not being taken into account and were being subsumed either under the experiences of white women (gender) or under the experiences of black men (race).

Crenshaw argued that rather than seeing forms of oppressions in parallel, it is vital to conceptualise systems of oppression as intersecting, interlocking and multiple in nature. She notes that: "The problem with identity politics is not that it fails to transcend difference, as some critics charge, but rather the opposite – that it frequently conflates or ignores intragroup differences. In the context of violence against women, this elision of difference in identity politics is problematic fundamentally because the violence that many women experience is often shaped by other dimensions of their identities, such as race and class."[32]

According to Crenshaw, intersectionality:

1) is premised on multiple violations which require varying policy, legal and social interventions to mitigate and respond to these forms of discrimination

2) understands there will be intra-group differences and makes place for multiplicity within a given identity category

3) highlights the sometimes conflicting positions which emerge when people are within two marginal identity categories

4) highlights the mechanism by which coalitions can be built across identity categories.

These four dimensions of intersectionality have been enormously influential for academic research and activism. Understanding commonalities to advocate for diverse and responsive laws, policies and programmes has been much reflected upon within the women's movement and women's programming, with calls for holistic rather than compartmentalised programming to support the political, social, economic and cultural reality of women's lives and to fuel the political nature of agendas across women's movements.[33] The intersectional standpoint has brought attention to marginal voices within the women's movement, such as Dalit women in India, who have articulated the invisibility of their concerns within the mainstream feminist movement as well as within the Dalit movement.[34]

Queer theory has also drawn on intersectionality to disaggregate the L-G-B-T-I-Q in the lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, intersex and others (LGBTQI+) movement, particularly in relation to gender and gender identity and expression. This has enabled reflexivity on power dynamics, visibility and voice within the LGBT+ community. For example, bisexual, trans and intersex individuals and groups may suffer multiple forms of marginalisations based on gender identity, gender expression and sex characteristics. Intersectionality has also provided a lens for understanding how LGBT+ identities intersect with class, race, region, disability, caste and gender, which can generate further layers of marginalisation. These approaches help to amplify the diverse experiences of LGBT+ people while not detracting from the common agendas of the LGBT+ movement.

An intersectional analysis of women's and/or LGBT+ groups calls for an understanding of nuanced and multiple co-existing forms of oppression so that *nobody is left behind* – a principle which the majority of governments have agreed to uphold under the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). International law is gradually responding to this call with the introduction of the Yogyakarta Principles – a set of international principles which underpin a more consistent application of international human rights law to issues of sexual orientation and gender identity which was established in 2006 by a distinguished group of international human rights experts.[35] It took another ten years for the follow-up Yogyakarta Principles+10 to further recognise gender expression and sex characteristics as co-equal markers on which discrimination is experienced.[36] The importance of recognising intersectionality has also been explicitly recognised by the United Nations. The UN Independent Expert on Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity (SOGI) is explicitly tasked by the Human Rights Council to "address the multiple, intersecting and aggravated forms of violence and discrimination faced by persons on the basis of their sexual orientation and gender identity".[37]

However, some find the notion of intersectionality problematic. Critics have argued the "recognition that multiple identities have an influence on one's social position and lived experience"[38] has long been part of lived identities for people faced with multiple forms of discrimination and marginalisation, such as trans or disabled women. Intersectionality has also been critiqued as being unable to fully capture the complexity and fluidity of identities.[39]

3.2 What is the value of an intersectional/ intergenerational approach for movement building and activism?

Drawing on the narratives and insights of the activists who inform the study, this section considers ways in which intersectional approaches can promote more effective movement building that leads to positive, sustainable changes in gender norms, inequitable power relations and legislative shifts. It also highlights some of the inherent challenges that may be encountered during the intersectional journey. Section four goes on to outline some practical strategies activists have implemented to mitigate or overcome these challenges.

3.2.1 Facilitating a more inclusive approach to gender-based discrimination

An intersectional approach can help identify commonalities of oppression in different movements. This can strengthen the case for a wider, more inclusive approach to gender-based discrimination, resulting in, or as a result of, alliances between organisations and movements.

Some proponents of an intersectional approach have argued that feminism is too narrow and unrepresentative, targeting only the rights and needs of middle-class white women.[40] However, the constructive linkages between feminist and LGBT+ movements and ideologies indicate that being a feminist means not only "[looking] at patriarchy and gender but also at other structures of domination such as caste, class, sex, ethnicity, race, religion etc., that intersect to produce multiple forms of subjugation, not only for women but also for men and sexual minorities".[41]

Activists from BQDX in Botswana and WHER in Nigeria discussed the importance of feminist values and philosophy in the politicisation of LGBT+ identities and concerns within their organisations.

CASE STUDY

BQDX as an organisation based on feminist and intersectional philosophy

"We first and foremost identify as a feminist organisation. We are guided by feminist principles in ways of working and we try to be mindful of those principles in the work that we do, in how we engage with people and with communities that we work with. We also recognise women who are doing the work but don't have the feminist language necessarily or the English terminologies that are associated with feminism and its principles. We have women working in rural communities in some of the countries that we live in. So what we are trying to do is to bring, or honour, those women and the work that they are doing already in their communities.

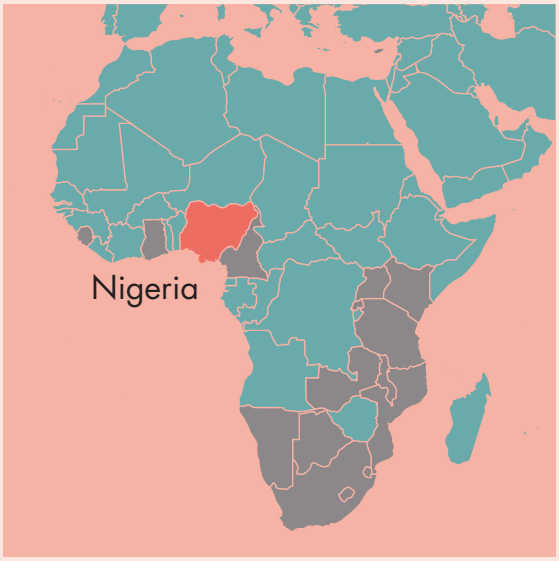
"We are also structured as an organisation in such a way that we do not have any hierarchies in our management and in our structure. So, we try to really ensure that as much as we preach feminism, we live it. And I think for us that is the most important thing, because we have seen that even in feminist spaces there is a lot of patriarchy operating. Power dynamics that play out all the time. And we really are trying to create a space where we all hear each other and understand each other and we can progressively work towards a common goal.

"One of us identifies as a Stiwanist, which is the kind of African feminism that focuses on social transformation. It was birthed in Nigeria by a woman who recently passed away.[42] Within the local structure it still works because it's based on social transformation and a lot of conversations we have is based on what is reformist and what is transformative within our movement. And you know reformist work is still legitimising the institution of patriarchy, so it is met with less resistance than transformation. We still do work that in different contexts could be reformist. But we also have a long-term aim of creating what is transformational."

Source: interview with members of BQDX

CASE STUDY

Affirming links between LGBT+ rights and feminist values – WHER



"WHER is a non-profit, feminist organisation focused on the issues of lesbian, bisexual and queer women in Nigeria working to advance the rights and also promote the health and well-being of LBQ women in Nigeria. We've essentially done work around both the representation of women in the LGBTI movement as well trying to work in the women's rights movement and ensure representation of LBQ women in the women's rights movement.

"From the outset we wanted the organisation to reflect feminist values. We are working for gender equality and we also understand that the LGBTI struggle is rooted in that. That is the feminist theoretical thinking behind it and we believe that the other structures of inequality are rooted in patriarchy, whether it is economic justice or other issues that marginalised groups are facing both within Nigeria and globally. We root everything in a feminist understanding. From the beginning we knew that we are women who sit across not just these two movements as LBQ women, but also have other identities that have been marginalised in our context. One particular feminist principle that we took on early was that even within the community we don't focus on those with the most privileges but those who are the least privileged. In terms of our values, our work is participatory and we try to ensure that other women can express their issues for themselves not necessarily that we are the mouthpiece of our community. But instead we try to build a community so that we can all stand and challenge these injustices together.

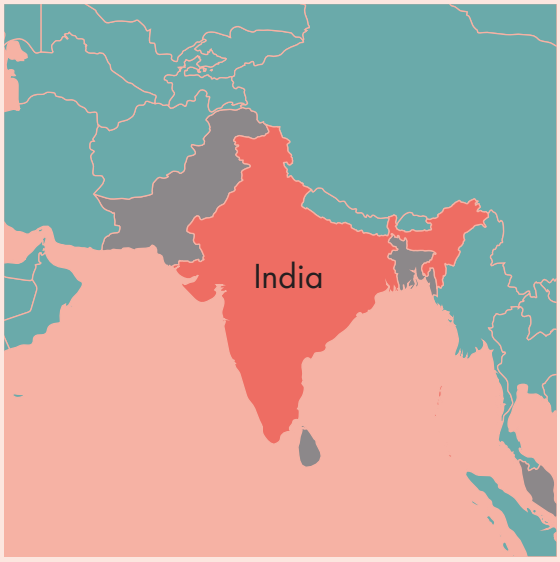
"Our feminism did not necessarily come from knowledge of feminist theory which was learnt in school. It was experiential and came from growing up as women in this particular culture and understanding the injustices that women and other marginalised people face. The founding of this organisation comes from the founder's experience of multiple marginalised intersecting identities in Nigerian society and an organic experience and understanding of how unjust the world is. Our experience finds a home in feminist theory."

Source: interview with Otibho Obianwu

The activist narratives illustrate how, in many cases, women's organisations have provided a safe and inclusive space for the articulation of lesbian and bisexual women's needs and concerns. This has helped create an enabling environment for the birth of LGBT+ organisations, while engagement with the feminist movement has enabled some LGBT+ organisations to redefine their visions of equality and dignity. Chayanika Shah from LABIA talked positively about the relationship between the feminist/women's movement and the queer movement.

CASE STUDY

The feminist movement as the birthplace of the queer movement (LABIA)



"The women's movement had looked at women's sexuality and had spoken about lesbian issues since the time I remember. So, its early '80s that the first conversation around sexuality in women's movement happened. Within the women's groups there was a knowledge of who were in lesbian relationships. It is an open thing and very much part of the conversation. So for example, my relationships were not hidden from the groups and collectives that I was part of.

"In fact as part of the women's movement when the Bhopal police woman case (when two police women who choose to get married were dismissed from their jobs)[43] happened in 1987, some of us did respond to it, questioning how could they lose their jobs [...] we did not engage with the issue of queerness or their lesbian relationship beyond the fact that them losing their jobs for such reasons was a violation of their human rights. Since the question of sexuality for lesbian women did come up from time to time within the feminist movements, we felt that there was need for a separate group to raise it. [However] the ground that allowed for the making of the collective, was the space within the women's movements. The collective, [Stree Sangam] would not have been formed if it had not got linked to the women's movement. This ground was prepared from '87 onwards in various conversations. I don't think those conversations were easy. But the conversations happened. And they were not necessarily steered by those who were lesbian. They were steered by many others as well. It was a part of a larger feminist consciousness and not part of the identity-based understanding alone."

Source: interview with Chayanika Shah

However, the journey of the two movements together has not been smooth.[44] One of the first opportunities for global engagement around issues of sexuality was in 1975, at the first UN World Conference on Women in Mexico. This pivotal moment brought together lesbians from the north and south who engaged with the feminist movement on issues of sexual orientation and fostered the development of networks that were to play a key role throughout the International Women's Decade to follow.[45]

Building on the experiences of Mexico City, and the mid-decade World Conference on Women in Copenhagen, the first Latin American and Caribbean Feminist *Encuentros* conferences[46] were held. Following these *Encuentros*, an increasing number of lesbian feminist groups began to organise throughout Latin America. They have continued to demand that lesbian oppression and homophobia be understood as issues for the whole movement and not only issues affecting a sexual minority.

Around the same time (1978), the European-based International Gay Association (IGA) was founded during the conference of the Campaign for Homosexual Equality in England. One of the aims of the organisation was to maximise the effectiveness of gay organisations by coordinating political action on an international level in pursuit of gay rights and to apply political pressure on governments and international institutions. Between 1980 and 1986, lesbian women increasingly participated in the activities of IGA and in 1986, the organisation changed its name to the International Lesbian and Gay Association.[47]

The UN Third World Conference on Women, held in Nairobi in 1985, marked the first time that lesbian rights were included in a UN official meeting. Self-identified lesbians from all regions spoke at a press conference and issued a "Third World lesbian statement" that challenged the notion that this was a white, western issue. By the time of the UN World Conference on Human Rights in Vienna, in 1993 global women's networks and activism had developed into coordinated movements to bring women's and lesbian perspectives into mainstream UN activities. Three NGOs working on sexual orientation and gender identity issues were accredited to the world conference, marking the first time that NGOs working on these issues were recognised at a UN event.

All of these developments set the stage for the Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing in September of l995 – widely considered a watershed moment in promoting gender equality and lesbian and gay rights. Eleven explicitly lesbian or lesbian and gay organisations were accredited to the conference. One of the highlights of the Fourth World Conference was the address by Beverley Palesa Ditsie, an openly gay South Africa anti-apartheid and LGBT+ rights activist,[48] about the importance of including lesbian rights in discussions about the empowerment and uplifting of women. She argued that addressing the concerns of all women means recognising discrimination based on sexual orientation is a violation of basic human rights.[49]

Despite enormous progress in creating alliances between LGBT+ activists and the feminist movement in the past decades, challenges remain. An issue raised by members of BDXQ is the decentralisation and fragmentation of the mainstream women's movement in recent years. According to the activists interviewed:

> "I am not sure that we can say that we still have an existing mainstream women's movement. Prior to the Beijing conference in '95, we had a very strong and active women's movement, but post Beijing this appeared to fizzle out a little bit with women operating in smaller and smaller pockets depending on their interests […] I think it also queers the definition of what mainstream is, because for the most part the women's movement in Botswana is deeply decentralised. It is characterised by actors and organisations supporting actors. There are people who are engaging and utilising their privilege, utilising their networks to amplify the voices of other queer women and queer persons."

Chayanika Shah also remarked on the shrinking space for bringing together different constituencies around common concerns and goals:

> "The women's movements had a tradition of having autonomous conferences which started in the 1980s. We had seven of them. The last was in 2006 in Calcutta. After that, we haven't had any. So, that space which was a much broader space is also not there. We need to create a space urgently to talk about the many things which are happening now including the recent case of sexual harassment against the Chief Justice of India."[50]

A Hijra woman in India. When faced with the question of whether membership should be open to gender diverse people, many women's organisations have been required to interrogate binary notions of women and men.

Another vital point is that blind spots still exist within the feminist movement that require constant attention and re-negotiation. When faced with the question of whether membership should be open to transgender, intersex and other gender diverse people, many women's organisations have been required to interrogate the (often unspoken and implicit) binary notions of women and men on which they are often constituted. Attitudes often remain ambivalent, with unresolved debates around the complex issue of who can and should participate in female solidarity and spaces, and unanswered questions about the boundaries of feminist struggle.[51]

Narratives from the Zambian, Nigerian and Caribbean activists reflected the tensions and contradictions that can undermine intersectional working relationships between the women's movement and LGBT+ activists. Some of the activists discussed specific challenges faced by transgender people who have played less of an integrated role in intersectional alliances with the women's movement.

Kenita Placide from ECADE gave a very personal perspective:

> "I think for a very long time I have not necessarily labelled myself. But I think a lot of the work I do has labels by extension. I do believe that one has to be a feminist. To be a feminist is not to call yourself a feminist but to actually live by feminist values. By living on these values, you understand that the social justice work you take on is the protection of women and girls. And by extension I think part of the conversation that has been missing is how do we prevent our boys from inheriting a toxic masculinity? There are certain core values that I think are important to challenge social norms.
>
> "I have through the years placed myself in the position that I worked with a number of feminist organisations and feminists themselves even if they were uncomfortable with my sexuality. When I started doing LGBT organising I found that a number of people, feminists and people in the women's movement distanced themselves from me. Because I think once you start wearing your sexuality on your sleeve, in addition to other things there is an automatic 'I don't necessarily want to be associated with that or people will think I am that too.'"

3.2.2 Building a critical mass of activism against gender-based discrimination and violence

An intersectional approach can help create solidarity for addressing different forms of patriarchy, discrimination and gender-based violence. This can lead to a critical mass of activism and support to raise awareness of these issues, to challenge repressive colonial histories and laws and to influence meaningful changes to laws and other axis of power.

While colonial-era laws in many countries have undermined the rights and freedoms of women and LGBT+ people, gender inequalities are perpetuated through multiple spheres of power. A significant common strand between LGBT+ and feminist activists is the experience of repressive forces which claim to represent tradition, family and nation. In many Commonwealth countries – and in other parts of the world – non-normative expressions of both women and LBGT+ persons are controlled and policed by societal codes, including prescribed gender roles, stereotypes and expectations. A central insight of feminism is that the oppression of women often begins in the intimate sphere of the family.

The role of the family has also been documented as a central pillar in the oppression of LGBT+ persons. Implicit forms of gender-based discrimination in the home can turn into explicit forms of violence that include physical, sexual and psychological abuse against women, girls and LGBT+ people. According to one recent study:

> "Usually it is in the family that the crisis starts: it includes house arrest by the family as well as physical, mental, emotional, verbal and sometimes sexual violence in the name of correcting LBT persons. Sometimes members of the family do help the LBT person but then they are also subjected to violence if their role is revealed. Physical violence is high in these cases. The family not only perpetrates violence, but also takes away all the support systems and forces LBT people out of education and employment. Often LBT persons are forced into heterosexual marriages."[52]

Social taboos and the fear and shame often associated with GBV means that cases happening within the family are rarely reported or spoken about, despite their prevalence. At the legislative level, ideas about protecting the sanctity of family relationships mean that domestic violence laws are often inadequate or fail to be implemented when they are most needed. Additionally, in many countries domestic violence laws only recognise violence against women and girls, failing to take into account LGBT+ experiences of abuse. There are also notable gaps in legislation to protect LGBT+ people as well as women and girls from gender-based assaults in public places and institutions, or to prosecute the perpetrators.

Bringing about changes to laws regulating sexual violence – for example in relation to the criminalisation of marital rape, the introduction of measures to address child sexual abuse and recognition of hate crimes aimed at LGBT+ individuals – has been a challenge in most of the Commonwealth countries.[53] Yet, examples from India, Botswana and Antigua illustrate how intersectional forms of organising can be instrumental for creating public awareness around these typically hidden issues, making them difficult for governments to ignore.

CASE STUDY

Intersections between the women's movement and queer movement on sexual assault laws in India

Chayanika Shah talked about the power of intersectional solidarity between feminist and queer groups whose joint campaigning helped bring about a monumental legislative and social shift when Section 377 of the Indian Penal Code, which criminalised consensual same-sex sexual acts, was abolished by the supreme court.[54] She also shared her experience of working with members of the women's movement, child rights groups and queer rights groups to call for revisions to sexual assault laws and definitions in India.

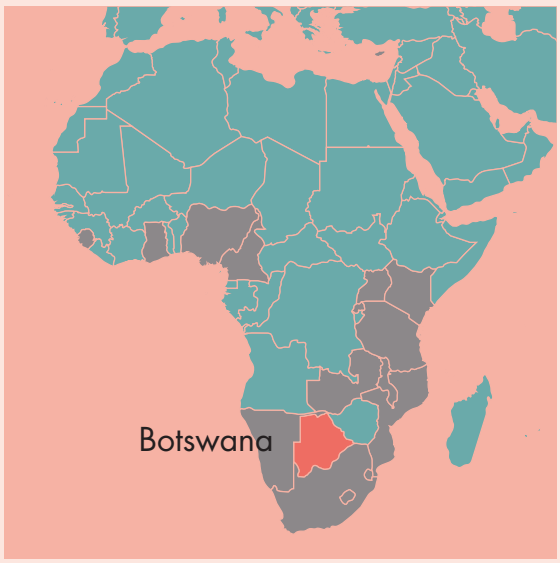
"In 2000, we had this discussion here in Bombay where we got the child rights groups, women's rights groups, and queer groups to come and speak on sexual assault laws together. I don't think we've had a meeting like that since, where we got these three different sets of people to talk about it. Across the board everyone said that we must have an expanded definition of sexual assault and Section 377 must go. In that discussion, we had a difference of opinion with the child rights group on the age of consent.

There was also a difference of opinion with some of the gay groups who walked out of that meeting as they wanted gender neutral rape laws. Everybody else said that the rape laws should not be gender neutral other than in custodial situations. This was the first meeting in which we had trans women in the discussion. So, it was a more nuanced discussion around gender.

"In the women's groups present there also, I don't think there was hesitation to look at assault of others beyond cis women but equating the two experiences is a difficult thing to accept. So it was agreed that only in custodial situations should the law be gender neutral. In any other situation, we said no we can't relax it, because then, women will suffer. That is the position women's groups took in 2001. By the time we came to 2013, and the submissions before the Verma committee,[55] we did arrive at some consensus. When we said that the victim can be gender neutral in all situations, but the perpetrator has to be male. That's a position we have held onto since then."

CASE STUDY

The intersectional work of BQDX



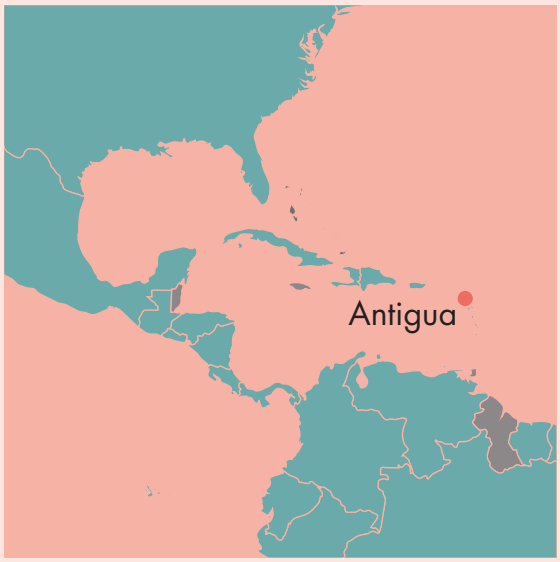
Members of BQDX explained how their organisation has worked in collaboration with members of the women's movement and LGBT+ activists to engage with and influence key national, regional and global processes such as the preparation of Convention for the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) country and shadow reports.

"We've done a bit of international advocacy. For example, in the past year we did a shadow report for CEDAW. We also did a statement for the Universal Periodic Review. And then a statement for the African Commission. So that's some of our international advocacy work. We have also worked locally with various movements – the LGBTI movement, the women's movement and other collectives of human rights organising. So, we have been part of collaborative work of documenting or recommendations basically to hold the state accountable on issues around domestic violence and GBV, violence against women and how we would like the government to consider femicide as a state of crisis in our country. So that's part of our work.

"For us as a movement we need to also work locally to start finding the commonalities. Because a lot of the time we have not been able to come together in that sort of intense way. We are able to recognise the commonalities and work on those together. So, it is important for queer women especially to claim that network and commonality and co-creation of that space."

CASE STUDY

Collective mobilising at community level on GBV in Antigua



Alexandria Wong from WAR talked about how her organisation worked together with LGBT+ groups, local communities and other constituencies such as migrants and sex workers to collectively mobilise people around the issue of GBV as well as providing a point of contact and direct support to survivors of violence.

"I came into contact with some other persons in communities who were willing to work along with us. Well, coming into contact not for the first time, because I worked as a district nurse midwife in the communities so I have a very broad based network system in the community which I called upon, some of whom were members of the LGBT community.

"How did we work together? We will have an event in the street and bring awareness to the issue of what is meant by gender-based violence. Who is being affected? What are the root causes of violence against people generally speaking? And so we coordinated on those areas and then that kind of strengthened what we did.

"We offered psycho-social support, that is one of the core activities of our work. So persons experiencing conflict in their relationship would be referred to us. We would offer support and look at relationship issues and so on and so forth. Further than that we accompany people to the station to make a police report. We will do that both for LGBT and hetero-normative persons. So that is how the work, the interconnectedness of the work continues.

"When you were moving beyond just responding to a very extreme violent situation that was occurring and started to look more at prevention you sort of adopted more of a GBV analysis and then that brought in a broader group of people that were experiencing violence.

"The other intersection of our work was with the migrant population, especially persons whose first language was not English, who were experiencing challenges. Their primary challenge was accessing health care services or when they go to report an incident of domestic GBV to the police, because of the language barrier, lots of times they were not treated fairly. And so that brought in another group of people and we started working together. Quite a few of them are sex workers. So we serve that population as well."

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Young people on the streets in Tonga.

3.2.3 Capturing complex identities and meeting complex needs through intersectionality

An intersectional approach means people are more likely to be represented holistically rather than as singular beings. It provides a means to reflect the multiple overlapping (and sometimes contradictory) identities – including gender, age, race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, social status – of which humans are constituted, and the different axis of discrimination they may encounter. It also provides a wider lens for identifying and meeting the complex needs of individuals, families and communities, going beyond the siloed, single issue approach of many services, infrastructure projects and social development programmes.

Manta Chand from FWF revealed how her involvement in a leadership programme provided her with the tools to unpack her own experiences of discrimination and how this personal journey planted the seeds of activism:

> "I am a young brown woman of Indian descent, from a lower socio-economic background, with English as a second language and a low level of education who has also experienced racism and prejudice. The need to prove self-worth was determined by the preconceptions from the society. At the same time racism, on the basis of being a descendent of indentured labourers, occasionally raises the question of belonging, not by self, but by society. However, the feminist journey has contributed to claiming of the self and challenging biases."

For Chayanika Shah, her work with different groups and organisations has deepened and broadened her perceptions of sex, gender and sexuality in ways that have increased her empathy and respect for others and strengthened her feminist beliefs.

CASE STUDY

Rethinking gender, LABIA

"I think I have learned a lot about feminism from sex workers and trans people. My feminism has got enhanced through conversations with trans people. From trans people I have learnt that gender is not fixed. It's not linked to the body and it is assigned to everybody. Whatever gender you choose to be, all of us are making that choice. So, the more I fit in, the more I need to think. So if I cannot answer the question, why I am a woman, I have no business to ask somebody how they know they are trans, and whatever gender they say they are. So I think this changes the frame of gender and sexuality completely. If you disassociate gender and body and if you say gender is not fixed, and that gender is assigned by society.[54]

"A child is born and gender is assigned and you grow with whatever the material conditions of that gender. To me, sex is a redundant category, actually gender is the relevant category. Once you say body and gender are not co-related, then you are saying – okay, any child is being assigned a gender and brought up that way. So, all the intersex community is saying is that their problems are distinct from cis people and the trans people. Sometimes they are trans themselves, so they have those additional problems, but if they are cis also, they have different problems. That's why they want to be recognised as a separate community. If we speak of sex then we have to speak of male, female and intersex. The minute you say male, female, intersex you break the normative understanding of male and female and between man and woman or masculine and feminine. So then where does this intersex go? So even by articulating the presence of an intersex, in the male, female sex category you have already broken the connection between sex and gender."

3.2.4 Finding common ground with other groups and issues

Some of the activists talked about the potential of intersectional approaches for identifying common ground with other groups who have shared experiences of power abuse and marginalisation. This was particularly evident in the case of intersectional alliances formed between LGBT+ activist groups and groups of sex workers campaigning for rights and recognition.

A trans Zambian activist noted:

> "The general concept of sex workers in Zambia is female sex workers, and there is a group which is affiliated with the African Sex Workers Alliance (ASWA) which is based in Nairobi and they have branches in a lot of countries. In Zambia they have a branch that works really closely with us, because we have trans women who are open about their work and they are members of [the network of sex workers] as well as our community members."

The ideological rift between some members of the women's movement and the sex worker movement has been well documented.[57] Chayanika Shah reflected on the potential for intersections and shared learning between sex workers' struggles and the women's movement:

> "If I look at the sex worker's struggle, one thing that it does is help me understand the realities of the sex worker's lives, how it is, how they are negotiating and what is happening to them. But this is just one part of their contribution. When VAMP from Sangli did a manifesto, they compared marriage and sex work.[58] They looked at what a married woman and sex worker have in common and what is different between them. It was a very powerful document. So, they are telling us to look at marriage differently, they are telling us to look at sex differently. That sex is always a transaction, it could be for money, it could be for status, it could be for security, it could be for love, it could be for any reason. There is always some give and take that's involved in sex. If we do not bring all of this to challenge our understanding of each of these issues and institutions, then we are the ones who are losing. So, I feel more and more, this is what the interaction of centre and margin has to be. I can't get defensive, as a cis woman, as a non sex worker, as a person who comes from a certain caste and class. Defensiveness is absolutely the wrong response of all of these. I think I have learnt a lot about feminism from sex workers and trans people."

While intersectionality has been about exploring the specificities of what makes us human including the experiences of race, caste, gender and sexuality, there is also the growing recognition of human vulnerability on a global level. In some ways the climate question raises the question of what we have in common – what are the issues that unite us in our humanity?[59] As the climate emergency affects the global eco-system, certain people and regions are more vulnerable than others to its effects, including those living in poverty who are reliant on subsistence crops, residents of small island nations and coastal regions and others at the margins of development. Many are calling for climate justice – addressing the existing discriminations based on class, race, caste, sexual orientation, gender identity and gender that deepen inequitable distribution of resources, and which are tied into the agenda of saving the planet itself.[60] The experience of BQDX illustrates the potential of forging these linkages.

CASE STUDY

Thinking and working beyond the sexuality lens – linking climate change, youth and LGBT+ issues

"For the most part queer experiences tend to be looked at through a sexuality-based lens and the lens of patriarchy. However, there are other forms of economic and climate justice and social justice movements that still speak to your queer experiences. Working outside BQDX, we have developed a wider perspective. One of us was part of the FRIDA and the Young Women for Climate Justice programme on storytelling and was able to develop conversations around young feminist and queer and trans youth in Africa that are mitigating climate changes in very decentralised structures. By writing these stories for us and sharing them with part of the global south, disseminating it at COPs 24 and 25 and[61] previously also the Congress of the Youth, we were able to amplify our visibility and voices through cross collaboration.

"On an international level in the international development space it allows us to partner and network with people from other countries of the global south and parts of the global north that do have shared experiences. Those very networks end up becoming bridges in heightening our conversations but also in developing social cohesion that we can take best practices from outside other countries and then implement them in ours. Consequently, there is a value of knowledge that emerges through networks that supersedes the knowledge that one has if one was not networking. For us the cross pollination of knowledge is important."

Source: Interview with members of BQDX

4 Practical strategies for achieving intersectionality in movement building

Section 3 outlined some of the benefits of forging intersectional alliances or of working in intersectional ways on specific issues. However, the narratives also reveal tensions that can arise while trying to create consensus between organisations that may have very different priorities and opinions despite also sharing concerns and seeing the value of coming together. These tensions may be compounded by complex power dynamics between organisations or individuals, or within organisations where certain voices are more dominant than others or where there are diverging views on whose voices and concerns the organisation should represent. Some of the organisations discussed their own experiences or good practices for addressing or minimising these challenges.

4.1 Ensuring gender diverse people are represented within feminist organising

Otibho Obianwu from WHER articulated some of the tensions and contradictions that can arise in intersectional working relationships between the women's movement and LGBT+ activists.

However, she talked positively about the potential to move past these challenges, discussing how shared concerns about sexual health and reproductive rights are beginning to provide a unifying platform.

Kenita Placide raised the importance of ensuring gender diverse people form an integral part of intersectional forms of organising, finding ways to see past differences:

> "I think one of the critical aspects was also how do you agree to disagree, but yet work together collaboratively. Almost all of our conferences it has always been about women, bisexual and trans people. We never eliminated any aspect of trans, it has always been inclusive. Also, we have always brought allies to the table. For me it has been powerful because even with our allies they never felt they needed to identify as an ally. It has just been an inclusive space that allows everybody to exist without feeling left out. So, as we moved forward, we noted that our fifth conference which was held in St. Lucia actually gave an opportunity for another set of people to have a caucus. The trans persons who came together had a caucus which has now given birth to what is now called United Caribbean Trans Network. The United Caribbean Trans Network is now putting together their own policies as a regional network. We can actually go back and see some of the improvements that have happened around the region have come out of the women's conference. Many of the lesbian trans organisations have come up or have been birthed by the women's conference."

A Zambian activist discussed the importance of bringing together young feminist women and trans women into shared spaces and how to navigate those dynamics:

> "One of the agreements we had was that if we partner with them, we would ensure that the trans women were part of the conversation that was taking place in Zambia. The highlight was the creation of a women's working group which had trans women, lesbian women and female sex workers as well as women who were living with HIV. I would say that was a pioneering of a different kind of conversation around what it means when we are talking about gender and issues around expression and identity which went beyond one's sexual orientation or one's biological makeup. I would say that was a conversation around what it means to be gender non-conforming."

CASE STUDY

Challenges with finding a home in the women's movement – WHER

"We began our work by creating a home in the LGBTI movement. But we always knew that we were also a part of the women's movement. It's not that it was not hard creating space for women in the LGBTI movement but at least we had allies. However, with respect to the women's movement in Nigeria, it isn't necessarily feminist. It isn't working in an intersectional, feminist way and doesn't necessarily want to be tainted by sexual rights issues that relate to LBQ women's issues. So, we knew that that would be a struggle. In the very beginning of the life of WHER, we had applied to be part of the Nigerian Feminist Forum and didn't get a response.

"Over time with the criminalisation of LGBT+ organising we also had to be careful about which organisation, even women's organisations, we could be visible to, so that that they did not put us at risk.[62] I worked (in my non-activist work) more broadly in sexual and reproductive health and rights issues and I could sense that some of the groups working in this space were friendlier. Their work actually reflected feminist principles and so we started to reach out to these groups and got invited into some of the activities they were doing. For example, one of the organisations in Nigeria that works on young people, particularly young women's sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR) issues, had a social media campaign in April for Sexual Assault Awareness Month and invited us to be one of the groups that was part of the whole Twitter storm and the whole Twitter discussion for a week. Our task was to raise issues like sexual violence and rights violations targeted at LBQ women and LGBT persons in general. We were able to use their platform to talk about how we all struggle in different ways.

"In March of this year the first women's march was held in Abuja. You know the women's marches have been going on around the world, but Nigeria has never participated in it. So, we had the first such march with other women's groups as well. Even though it wasn't huge in terms of the numbers of people present, it was the predecessor of what we are seeing now.[63] A few months ago a family planning provider in the country who actually provides safe abortion services was raided by the police. Abortion is illegal in Nigeria, with the exception of when the health of the mother is under threat. There was a statement that was put out from the group condemning the raid and demanding that the state stops this.[64] I think this informal group of Nigerian feminist activists and organisations is a great platform for a different kind of feminist organising in the country and can reinvigorate the women's movement and make it more feminist. We are seeing the fruits right now. Depending on how it goes we could see more benefits. And maybe when LBQ issues come up next time we will have more solidarity from this group and the women's movement around that.

"In the Nigerian context we need to push the envelope on issues like sexual rights and looking at women's sexuality holistically. There is a Nigerian queer feminist who shared with me something that is I think key for feminist movement building. She said that it is important that the women's movement in Nigeria shouldn't turn into a space only for privileged women trying to navigate issues of domestic equality in their households or workplace. Feminism has to go beyond that to combatting all structures of oppression."

Civil society leaders from the Eastern Caribbean discuss advancing equality for women and girls and LGBT+ people in the region.

however a trans activist from Zambia was clear about the need for reflexivity and self-awareness around the role of trans men in feminist movements, and for reflection:

> "Transfeminism for me as a trans man is about owning my identity and being conscious of what privilege comes with that identity. I can exist as I am, and not take advantage of my privilege. I know – I can be in a room and I will have access to spaces to which a female cis gendered woman would not have access to. As a trans man, while I embrace my identity, I also have to ensure that as far as the equality that we are trying to achieve, I am part of making that happen and not hiding behind my identity and my privilege [...] It's okay that we have different views, but the issue is also of recognising oppression regardless of the identity that you carry on your shoulder and recognising the effects of patriarchy. We have to be conscious about issues of hierarchy. There were accusations that southern Africa has had trans men leading the movement. Southern Africa has now seen the emergence of trans women led organisations. That's what I meant by evolution, when we ensure that we don't replicate what the patriarchal society has done in the past."

4.2 Reconciling differences and facilitating consensus

Mamta Chand highlighted the need for organisations to create spaces for negotiation and constructive discussion around shared priorities:

> "I think that the most critical thing for other stakeholders like donors and funders is to hear us. It's not telling us what to do or how to do it, it's sitting down and having that open dialogue by asking us – what do you want to do? What are your priorities? What are your issues? How do you go about negotiating those spaces? What are your priorities that you want to talk about but due to multiple issues or challenges you are not able to do it? So that's I think the first step in working smartly together. Another thing is those stakeholders need to be feminist or understand feminism or intersectionality or the local specificities of issues. Those two for me would be the most important one because I think that ripples towards implementation and other processes."

Kenita Placide also talked about the strategic value of investing the time to create a common vision for movements working together. She explained how ECADE developed a shared vision document that resonated with both women's groups and LGBT+ groups as it included a focus on abortion (not necessarily a priority for LGBT+ groups) as well as broader issues of anti-discrimination and health care. This helped to strengthen the women's groups' struggle for the right to abortion as well as creating a fund of goodwill among women's groups for LGBT+ rights and issues. This broader vision helped build long term solidarities between the two groups.

Alexandria Wong from ECADE/WAR in Antigua talked about the importance of formally establishing working principles, relationships and roles and of identifying common agendas at the outset of any intersectional alliance building process.

> "We had a recent meeting at St Vincent's, that brought together women's organisations and LGBT groups, after which a multi-strand approach to mental health, sexual and reproductive health and rights and anti-discriminatory advocacy was launched. The issue was who is going to be on the board, who is going to be committee members. [There was a question about whether] women's rights groups [who] are not necessarily allies should be on the board. [This was resolved through discussion]. We spent a lot of time trying to understand each other's challenges and speaking about how we could work together or may have worked together in the past. We did a lot of group work. We were able to discuss issues and were able to agree on what issues we would like to address going forward. For me that was a plus.
>
> "In the meeting we fixed common agendas about areas we were all committed to working on in intersectional ways. The three areas were abortion, health and well-being and anti-discrimination. We have identified leaders for each of the topics. And so people have decided which thematic area they are going to work on. We have a mixture of groups in each thematic area."

Alexandria Wong also pointed out the enormous value of brokering the pooling of information and the creation of other linkages between NGOs and public service providers, such as health systems as a means to strengthen support for LGBT+ communities:

> "There's another project that my organisation did recently, working with representatives of the MSM (men who have sex with men) population. That was fostering relationships among NGOs and linkages with the formal health system. We did a number of things. We were able to develop a different kind of reform. We also worked on a directory of friendly services where we reached out to a number of service providers and asked them if they would be willing to serve the members primarily of the LGBT population, and also people with HIV at low or no cost. We have put together that directory so that we can tell members from key populations, if they need particular services, who they should go to."

Another point raised by members of BQDX was the potential restrictions that can accompany formal registration and the need to weigh up the benefits and drawbacks of doing so:

CASE STUDY

Moving beyond the constraints of registered organisations

"It is very important for other stakeholders to not police us or micromanage us in what we do with our work. We are not claiming that we are speaking on behalf of all the queer women or all the bisexual women or all the lesbian women in Botswana. But we have an idea of what is needed, and we try by all means to assess the needs of the people we are trying to represent. Since we work on feminist principles, we try to not replicate the systems that we are fighting all the time. If we are going to register an organisation, that has implications. It means we need a board of directors. It means we need all of these structures that always, even in the most feminist organisations, turn out to be very patriarchal.

"The thing with registration is that it is an assimilation into a system we say has been deeply divisive, deeply oppressive to us. For example LEGABIBO (Lesbians, Gays and Bisexuals of Botswana) was the first LGBTI organisation to be registered in Botswana. It was only registered in 2016 even though it was formed in '98. And part of the reason why it took so long for LEGABIBO to register was that LEGABIBO has to enter into this system that has its own rules about the kind of work you can do, the kind of language you can use when you register. You have to be willing to compromise on those values and principles because you come out and say clearly this is the work you do. You have a system that tells you no, you can't use that word, you can't use those words, you can't do it that way. So, then it essentially limits the kind of work you want to do because now we have to conform to this system. For us, the message is consistently out there which is that we want funder support, but we will not register. We are presenting a different narrative which is not the norm. We don't want to buy into the system."

5 Conclusion

This paper has made the case for the value of intersectional approaches to movement building. The rich documentation of eight organisations from diverse regions of the Commonwealth has shed light on the question of what intersectionality means for organisations working on the ground. The examples indicate that intersectional approaches ensure diverse voices, needs and experiences are represented within gender equality struggles, enable a critical mass of action around shared concerns within different constituencies and, ultimately, create maximum impact.

The powerful narratives from LGBT+ and feminist activists helped to articulate clear synergies between the LGBT+ struggles and the women's struggle for social change, respect, recognition, equality and emancipation. Yet, it is important to recognise that each organisation has its own specific history and journey in bringing together different issues under an intersectional lens. In the case of LABIA, activism on LGBT+ rights has been linked with the struggle to address GBV more broadly. WAR also began by addressing the issue of rape, moving on to bring LGBT+ experiences and voices into their understanding and approach. The example of Ondede illustrates the complex interplay of trans groups within feminist spaces and the ongoing negotiations around definitions of feminism. By contrast, ECADE has been committed to addressing both women's rights and LGBT+ rights from its inception and has built a common agenda based upon that understanding. BQDX also began as an organisation with a feminist philosophy addressing queer concerns.

What is clear is that in settings where often not only the state but also society is hostile to any expression of LGBTI rights, alliances are vital. Having such alliances strengthens the narrow support base of LGBT+ groups in hostile terrain and ultimately can contribute to the emergence of a strong LGBT+ movement grounded in a more powerful emancipatory vision. Experiences outlined in the paper indicate that alliances between the feminist and LGBT+ movement (and in some cases with other movements on issues such as climate change, GBV and sex work) can not only play an instrumental role in shifting social and cultural patterns of stereotypical behaviour on a deep, sustained basis, but can also offer practical opportunities to share resources and information. The case studies also revealed the value of intersectionality for fostering reflexivity around issues of power and hierarchy that may exist within organisations as well as externally. All eight organisations showed a willingness to re-think long held positions, looking inward and raising questions about internal hierarchies or power differentials.

Importantly, intersectional movement building can create spaces and frameworks for representing both the complexity of being human and the multiple, compounding forms of discrimination around gender, race, ethnicity, class, ability and sexuality that may be experienced by one individual. At the same time, while intersectionality enables exploration of the specificities of human experiences, it also enables a wider recognition of our shared human vulnerability. The issue of climate change in particular raises the question of what we have in common.

However, the paper pointed out the paradox of exclusions replicated by some intersectional alliances, where certain identities – such as transgender or intersex – are considered other to a movement's self-image, while transgender feminism may not sufficiently address the historical and contemporary violence directed against cisgender women. The paper offers possible strategies for moving past these and other points of divergence and dissonance within movements. However, a clear message is the need to verbalise and make visible these complexities and tensions, confronting them in order to achieve (a negotiated) unity and acceptance, and the potential transformative power this can bring.

Finally, it is vital to remember that truly intersectional alliances are not only strategic but are based upon deeper and wider shared values. As the examples from Commonwealth countries indicate, it is through this sense of having a commonality of vision that LGBT+ and women's rights groups are able to come together under a far more inclusive and representative feminist narrative. As Kenita Placide noted, however hard one may have to work to build these alliances, their value lies in this common grounding vision.

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[46] The Latin American and Caribbean Feminist Encuentros are gatherings of feminists from the region that have been taking place in different countries every two or three years since 1981. The Encuentros are an opportunity to meet and exchange ideas and perspectives, identify problems that affect women's rights and to develop and share feminist practices. https://globalfeministjourneys.com/event/the-first-latin-american-and-caribbean-feminist-encuentro/

[47] Note: In 2008, in response to its commitment to fight discrimination based on gender identity, the full name of the organisation became the International Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans and Intersex Association.

[48] Born in Soweto at the height of apartheid in 1971, Ditsie was an anti-apartheid and LGBT rights activist. She was one of the founding members of GLOW, South Africa's first multiracial and political lesbian and gay rights group. During the drafting of South Africa's constitution, Ditsie was at the forefront of arguing for protecting people from discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation – the first constitution in the world to do so.

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[57] Fundamental disagreements centre around whether all prostitution is inherently exploitative and whether the term sex work normalises the continued abuse of (sexual) power by men against women. (see Horn, J., (2013) and Shah, S.P., (2011). *Sex Work and Women's Movements.* New Delhi: CREA.

[58] 'Sex workers movement is going on – it has to go on. We believe the questions about sexuality that we are raising are relevant not only to us sex workers but to every man and woman who question subordination of all kinds within the society at large and also within themselves. This movement is for everyone who strives for an equal, just, equitable, oppression free and above all a happy social world. Sexuality, like class and gender after all makes us what we are. To deny its importance is to accept an incomplete existence as human beings. Sexual inequality and control of sexuality engender and perpetuate many other inequalities and exploitation too. We are faced with a situation to shake the roots of all such injustice through our movement. We have to win this battle and the war too for a gender just, socially equitable, emotionally fulfilling, intellectually stimulating and exhilarating future for men, women and children'; Sex Workers' Manifesto. (1997). First National Conference of Sex Workers in India 14-16 November 1997, Calcutta. https://www.nswp.org/sites/nswp.org/files/Sex%20Workers%20Manifesto%20-%20Meeting%20in%20India.pdf

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[63] The activists marched "for women and girls who have suffered discrimination and violence on the basis of their gender." Otibho noted that "the National Legislature, the Gender and Equal Opportunities Bill sponsored by Senator Abiodun Olujimi presented an opportunity to provide a comprehensive legal framework that will rectify the historical and present imbalances that privilege men over women and boys over girls in Nigeria. However, the Bill has suffered unprecedented setbacks. On two occasions, the Nigerian Senate had given excuses to frustrate the passage of the GEO Bill, by cancelling the public hearings. This shows how issues affecting women and girls do not matter to the Nigerian Senate. Early drafts of the Bill were progressive, as it included key issues such as: reproductive rights, which include Nigerian abortion laws to include cases of rape and incest, as well as guaranteeing access to contraceptives for family planning; affirmative action in education, workplace and political arena; challenging child, early and forced marriage by reaffirming the age of marriage for all persons (male and female) at 18 years among others. Unfortunately, subsequent versions of the Bill have been watered down and faced backlash due to cultural and religious grounds. Hence, the need to promote our advocacy to eliminate the injustices and inequality against girls and young women." As can be seen, the demands include abortion rights. Abuja Women's March for Gender Equality. (January 17, 2018). Abuja, Nigeria. https://www.evanigeria.org/abuja-womens-march-for-gender-equality/

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"We are working for gender equality and we understand that the LGBTI struggle is rooted in that ... from the beginning we knew that we are women who sit across not just these two movements, but also have other identities that have been marginalised in our context."

Otibho Obianwu
WHER

EQUALITY & JUSTICE ALLIANCE

ARC INTERNATIONAL