



ASIA

ANNUAL REPORT 2018

CATALYST

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# ANNUAL REPORT 2018

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## LETTER FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Dear Friend,

Asia Catalyst is used to struggle. Our partners on the ground – sex workers, lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender people, people who use drugs, and others – are fighting for their lives in places where laws, policies, and social norms conspire against their dignity, health, and very survival. We support these communities in their work, day-in day-out across Asia, to end violations of human rights.

Yet this work is increasingly threatened. Asia Catalyst faces serious roadblocks to maintaining support for grassroots groups in the political context we now find ourselves. Often, we cannot talk about or promote the work we do, which limits our ability to attract press, fundraise, and grow our network. Working in an era of repressive NGO laws and regimes translates into greater risk to our partners and staff: they may face interrogation and detention if they're not careful. Our staff are frequently warned not to do certain things if we do not want to get shut down. How and where partners can safely gather is a serious concern. This limits to our ability to share the fruits of our labor with you, and to use this work to inspire others.

So with this report, we invite you to enjoy what is presented while considering what may have been omitted. Please understand, in this era of authoritarian rule, sometimes we cannot publicly share information about or even photos of

**“IMAGINE WHAT BEING SILENCED DOES TO THOSE BRAVE ACTIVISTS ORGANIZING FOR EQUALITY AND CHANGE.”**



## LETTER FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR (CONTINUED)

the work we do. Please consider the risk to our partners and staff if we crossed the bounds of what's deemed safe. Imagine what being silenced, rendered invisible, or constantly operating on the defensive does to those brave activists organizing for equality and change.

Asia Catalyst believes that a vibrant civil society, active in policymaking, is essential – but this vision is shared by so few of the governments where we work. Whether it's being criminalized for being gay, denied healthcare because one sells sex or uses drugs, or forced into sterilization as a woman living with HIV, there are so many rights violations to be addressed across the region. Community-led activism is at the core of the response, and governments should be supporting, not quashing, civil society participation.

The grassroots groups we train, mentor, and support are the last line of defense for millions of marginalized and unfairly criminalized individuals. So we soldier on, motivated by their activist/survivor attitude and the wins they pull out of seemingly impossible circumstances. We push on, knowing their kindred spirits form a global community that we are proud to be part of and support.

Thank you for being part of this critical mission. We hope you are inspired by their resilience – and ours – and continue to stand by us in the coming years.

**Karyn Kaplan, Executive Director**

**“COMMUNITY-LED  
ACTIVISM IS AT THE CORE  
OF THE RESPONSE, AND  
GOVERNMENTS SHOULD  
BE SUPPORTING, NOT  
QUASHING, CIVIL SOCIETY  
PARTICIPATION.”**

# 01 HOW ASIA CATALYST EMPOWERS GRASSROOTS ACTIVISTS

**TRY IS AN LGBT RIGHTS ORGANIZATION THAT PARTICIPATED IN OUR INTENSIVE PROGRAM AND BEGAN EXPOSING AND CHALLENGING THE UNFAIR ARRESTS OF LGBT PEOPLE IN MYANMAR.**

*We followed TRY's work over 18 months to show how our program works, and what capacity building, training and mentoring a generation of grassroots activists means in practice.*

## JULY & AUGUST 2017

TRY's leaders attended our 1st workshop on organizational management, human rights frameworks, and national human rights mechanisms. Through the workshop, they identified the illegal arrests of LGBT people in Mandalay as the most pressing rights violation and the issue they wanted to address.

## OCTOBER & NOVEMBER 2017

At our 2nd workshop, we trained TRY's staff on how to document rights abuses. They created questionnaires to collect evidence of the arrests of LGBT people and received financial support for this project.

## DECEMBER 2017 & JANUARY 2018

TRY trained 15 people from the LGBT community to conduct more than 100 interviews. We coached them through a mapping exercise to identify hotspots of LGBT arrests in Mandalay. Twenty people shared their experiences being arrested, detained, going to trial, and in prison. They described how their lives changed because of the arrest.

## FEBRUARY 2018

With Asia Catalyst's help, TRY verified and analyzed their data. People were arrested in public for "just being there" and were never given a chance to contact family members or lawyers for help. Many were subject to physical, verbal, or sexual abuse while arrested or detained at the police station.

## MARCH 2018

TRY's leaders attended our 3rd workshop – devoted to advocacy – and created a plan to stop harassment and arbitrary arrests of LGBT people in Mandalay.

## APRIL & MAY 2018

Asia Catalyst helped TRY draft a policy paper asking government officials to issue guidelines on the rights of LGBT people and people under arrest, and urging police to respect those rights. TRY shared its findings with other LGBT organizations and developed a joint advocacy strategy to make sure their voices would be heard by police, local officials, and members of Parliament.

## HOW ASIA CATALYST EMPOWERS GRASSROOTS ACTIVISTS (CONTINUED)

01

### JULY 2018

TRY and its partners began their advocacy campaign, meeting with Mandalay's Public Affairs Committee and the Minister of Home Affairs, asking for help in stopping the arrests. They held a panel on justice for the LGBT community with lawyers, journalists, and members of Parliament demanding a change to the legal statutes that give so much discretionary authority to police and lead to abuses of power.

TRY met with Mandalay's Chief of Police and shared which stations were the worst offenders in terms of arresting and abusing people. They asked the Chief to instruct police officers on the need to respect people's rights and grant them due process.

### AUGUST - DECEMBER 2018

TRY worked with the Mandalay Paralegal Network to put together a first-of-its-kind team designed to help LGBT people who have been arrested. They received funding from Tharthi Myay Foundation for six months based on the strength of the evidence in their policy paper.

During this period, TRY set up people in each township to monitor arrests and

touch base with the legal team once a month. TRY volunteers visited police stations to see whether people are still being arrested. In one instance, TRY found out a police officer had tried to extort a bribe from someone for their freedom and was able to hold the officer accountable. Now, with the help of the legal team, when someone is arrested for being LGBT, they are usually released the next morning.

To help continue their fight for justice, TRY submitted proposals to five different global organizations and received funding from the Gender Equality Network and Local Resource Center.

**According to TRY's leaders, as a result of the Cohort Training Program, they are:**

- **MORE SKILLED AT ADVOCACY**
- **MORE ABLE TO GET THE ATTENTION OF POLICE CHIEFS AND POLITICIANS USING THE EVIDENCE THEY COLLECTED**
- **MORE VISIBLE IN THE COMMUNITY**
- **BETTER ABLE TO SECURE FUNDING**



# REPORTING ON DETENTION 02

## CENTERS FOR SEX WORKERS IN CAMBODIA, MYANMAR, THAILAND, AND VIETNAM

*In June 2018, we published a summary of the laws and procedures governing sex work and which fuel the troubling use of sex worker detention centers: "Legal Review on Detention Centers of Sex Workers in Cambodia, Myanmar, Thailand and Vietnam."*

### **IN THE VAST MAJORITY OF COUNTRIES IN ASIA AND ACROSS THE GLOBE, SEX WORK IS CRIMINALIZED.**

Sex workers are routinely harassed and arrested by police. People can be detained for months at a time for "treatment" or "rehabilitation," and detention centers are rife with abuses from forced labor to emotional and physical violence.

In China, Asia Catalyst has been a leading force in dismantling the "Custody and Education" system, targeting female sex workers.

Following a series of advocacy campaigns led by civil society, lawyers, academic, and government officials, in late 2018, the Chinese government started the legal process to abolish its "Custody and Education" system.

Meanwhile, Vietnam closed down its detention centers for sex workers in 2012. But governments in other parts of Asia continue to operate these detention centers.

Asia Catalyst worked with the Cyrus R. Vance Center for International Justice to examine the laws around detaining sex workers in Cambodia, Myanmar, Thailand, and Vietnam.

## SOME OF OUR KEY FINDINGS:

01. **SEX WORK IS PROHIBITED** in three of the four countries. In all four countries, sex workers are subject to crackdowns and raids by police or security guards in public places.
02. **SEX WORKERS ARE ARRESTED AND CHARGED** under a range of laws, including laws on prostitution, human trafficking, and public nuisance.
03. Cambodia and Thailand still impose **DETENTION** and rehabilitation on sex workers. Myanmar is proposing a revised law to do the same.
04. **THE DETENTION OF SEX WORKERS IS OFTEN ARBITRARY AND LACKS A CLEAR LEGAL BASIS.** There are no consistent guidelines on how police can treat or interact with sex workers. People are often denied the right to a defense, legal assistance, a fair hearing, or any real opportunity to challenge their arrest.
05. **THESE PRACTICES VIOLATE COUNTRIES' OWN LAWS AND A NUMBER OF INTERNATIONAL TREATIES AND CONVENTIONS THEY HAVE SIGNED ONTO.**

Until our report, there was almost no documentation of conditions in detention centers or information on how the detention process works.

More research is needed to document the treatment of sex workers and their experiences in detention centers – and sex worker groups desperately need financial and technical resources to advocate for and protect their rights.

Asia Catalyst will continue to support sex worker organizations across the region to fight against arbitrary detention and other rights violations.

**“SEX WORKER GROUPS DESPERATELY NEED FINANCIAL AND TECHNICAL RESOURCES TO ADVOCATE FOR AND PROTECT THEIR RIGHTS.”**

The full report can be downloaded from:  
<http://asiacatalyst.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/08/Legal-Review-of-De-tention-Centers-.pdf>

# Q&A WITH KHINE SU WIN - MYANMAR PROGRAM OFFICER

03

## WHAT ARE SOME THINGS THAT MAKE MYANMAR UNIQUE, FROM A HEALTH & HUMAN RIGHTS PERSPECTIVE?

As part of the democratic transition, the government is figuring out its approach to human rights and public health. For example, it is creating new drug policy, reforming the "Prostitution Act," and putting forth a new HIV law that aims to protect people living with HIV and at-risk populations from discrimination in healthcare and employment. Because the government has pledged to respect and protect the rights of marginalized populations, representatives from the LGBT, HIV, and sex worker communities have the chance to take part in the process of legal reform.

## WHO ARE THE FOUR GROUPS THAT JUST COMPLETED ASIA CATALYST'S TRAINING PROGRAM? HOW DID YOU FIND THEM?

We worked with the **Myanmar Positive Women Network**, **TRY** (an LGBT rights group), the **Right to Health Action Myanmar** (a sex worker-led organization), and **Youth Empowerment Team** (an organization of people who use drugs).

We put out a call for applications through our partners, UN agencies, international NGOs, and donors. We selected these four CBOs working on the rights of women, LGBT people, sex workers, people living with HIV, and people who use drugs.

We looked for groups with real community representation among their staff, some experience with local or national advocacy, a desire to evolve, and two years' history in the community. Finally, we selected groups that were using evidence-based approaches but wanted to strengthen their documentation and strategic advocacy.

In 2017/8, we had seven groups to choose from; in 2019 we had more than three times as many apply.

## WHAT ARE SOME OF THE ISSUES THAT WOMEN LIVING WITH HIV ARE UP AGAINST?

Myanmar Positive Women Network wants to promote prevention of mother-to-child HIV transmission and full access to sexual and reproductive health services. They've documented abuses such as forced sterilization, unsafe abortions, having their HIV status disclosed, and limited access to sexual and reproductive health information. Ultimately, they want to change the way they're treated by healthcare providers, and influence policy on sexual and reproductive health.

## Q&A WITH KHINE SU WIN - MYANMAR PROGRAM OFFICER (CONTINUED)

03

### TRY IS A MORE ESTABLISHED GROUP - WHAT DID THEY GET OUT OF ASIA CATALYST'S PROGRAM?

TRY led a project with us to document human rights violations of LGBT people and advocate with the Minister of Home Affairs and police to stop arresting LGBT people. Most people here are unaware that LGBT people have legal rights. TRY organized legal services for LGBT people, and the police have begun cooperating with them. They got funding for their legal support team based on their work with us. Also, their findings will be part of the Universal Periodic Review reporting on Myanmar in 2020, which the current government really pays attention to. That could lead to removing parts of the penal code used to target and harass LGBT people, and the adoption of comprehensive anti-discrimination laws.

### WHERE IS THE FIGHT FOR LGBT RIGHTS IN MYANMAR TODAY?

The most pressing issue is ending the arrests. Three transgender women were arrested at a temple festival and charged with a vague statute in which a person lacks a "satisfactory" reason to be outside after sunset; that's "satisfactory" in the eyes of the police, of course. They had not done anything wrong. They were taken to the police station without being given any reason for their arrest. They weren't allowed to contact a friend or family member, and stood trial the next day without a lawyer. They ended up in prison for three months.

All of this, of course, sends a message: that trans people are second-class citizens and they should think twice before going out in public and asserting their true identities. There is no legal recognition of their gender identity; there is no same-sex marriage. In addition, trans women are the butt of jokes in pop culture like films, where they are almost always portrayed as idiots or hungry for sex.

### WHAT DOES THE "RIGHT TO HEALTH" MEAN FOR THE RIGHT TO HEALTH ACTION NETWORK?

It means sex workers must have equal access to public healthcare, especially HIV and sexual and reproductive health services. Currently, sex workers often have personal information about them disclosed. They're mistreated by providers, some of whom demand money for testing (though it is free for everyone else), put them in separate rooms, or verbally abuse them.

In addition, the "Prostitution Act" allows police, "pimps," and clients to exploit the vulnerability of sex workers and inflict violence on them from torture and rape to murder. Police use condoms as evidence of prostitution so sex workers are afraid to carry condoms with them.

### HOW DID YOU PERSONALLY COME TO THIS WORK? WHAT KEEPS YOU GOING?

I love working with the community. I have been working with HIV-affected populations since 2012. They teach me how to stay strong and be optimistic, even on the worst days. The funniest day I've had on the job was getting a makeup and styling lesson from a transgender woman. First, she showed me every detail patiently, but quickly realized I couldn't follow instructions and gave up. She also shared stories of her love life and taught me what language to use regarding LGBT issues.

***I truly believe in the bottom-up approach where the community is at the center of the human rights response.***

***And here in Myanmar, there are real opportunities during this political transition period.***



# INTERNATIONAL AIDS CONFERENCE - AMSTERDAM

Asia Catalyst attended the 22nd International AIDS conference this July in Amsterdam. This year's theme was "Breaking Barriers, Building Bridges."

Our Executive Director, Karyn Kaplan, moderated the International Treatment Preparedness Coalition's plenary. "**From Cape Town to Amsterdam: How far we've come and the state of activism today**" focused on challenges in securing access to HIV treatment around the globe.

Karyn also organized a symposium on "**Civil Society Under Threat**" with Open Society Foundations and the International HIV/AIDS Alliance (now Frontline AIDS), where we demanded the conference organizers consider key communities' ability to participate in AIDS2020 and relocate the conference from the United States. Activists from Russia, Hungary, Kenya, Philippines, and Venezuela participated.





04

**INTERNATIONAL AIDS CONFERENCE - AMSTERDAM (CONTINUED)**

Photo: Steve Forrest / IAS

Khine Su Win, our Myanmar-based Program Officer, presented on our work to help end discrimination against key populations in Myanmar, stressing the importance of scaling up grassroots self-advocacy. She provided translation for Aye Myanmar Association, one of our partners, so they could participate in the Global Network of Sex Work Projects' meeting and present our joint work on legal services for sex workers.

We spent a lot of time in the dynamic, activist-run "Global Village," where issues like violent policing practices towards female and transgender sex workers and the health impact of drug and HIV policies were intensively discussed, and planned and impromptu demonstrations took shape.

Throughout the conference, we raised our voices to politicians and policymakers in attendance, protesting, alongside our colleagues, pricing and patent barriers to HIV treatment and discriminatory policies blocking access to key interventions. A highlight was when sex worker activists disrupted a meeting of Parliamentarians from the US, UK, and the Netherlands to demand decriminalization of sex work to help combat the HIV epidemic. Peter Sands, new head of the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis, and Malaria was willingly "held hostage" in a show of support.



# LAUNCHING A TRANSGENDER LEADERSHIP PROGRAM

**In 2017, Asia Catalyst launched a new program to bring together and support transgender activists.**

Throughout the year, we conducted three consultations, learning that many trans leaders working to organize locally run headlong into discrimination, legal trouble or intimidation, and a lack of resources.

We realized a program to support activists in leadership, community-building, and advocacy was desperately needed. We put out a call for applicants through our networks and eventually selected six people, all of whom are transgender and half of whom were just starting to be active in the fight for trans rights.\*

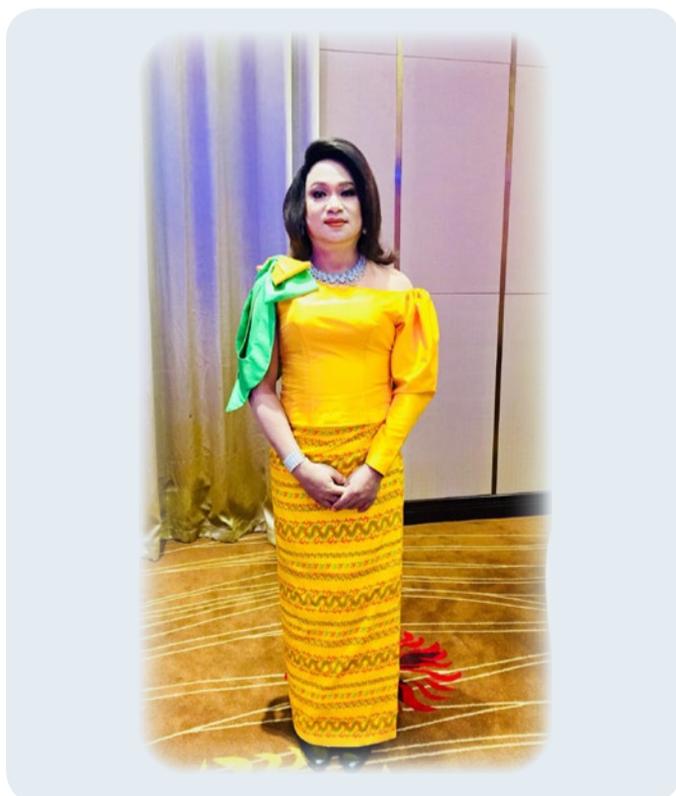
**YING** is a student and volunteer who had transitioned a year earlier, and her organization's founder was part of a groundbreaking lawsuit against a private healthcare company for gender discrimination.

**YI** wanted to start a transgender project and support group at his community-based organization.

**YE**, a volunteer with a national LGBT organization, dreamt of opening a support space for transgender people but was struggling with the late-night calls she'd get from neighbors needing support and how to make time for her own mental and physical health.

In January 2018, we officially began the program, using our assessment tool to learn more about everyone's needs. Most participants had no reference for what a grassroots organization looks like, much less how to run one or raise money for it, so we focused on how to build an organization – from how to understand your community's needs and design a workplan to best practices on fundraising, budgeting, and global advocacy.

After each workshop, we gave each person one-on-one coaching and individually tailored sessions to make sure they got feedback and support as they came up with project proposals, worked to apply models of change to their goals, and got to work.



\* Names have been changed to protect people's privacy and safety.

## LAUNCHING A TRANSGENDER LEADERSHIP PROGRAM (CONTINUED)

# 05

For our emerging leaders, it was a valuable opportunity to connect with one another in a safe place, participate in events like Trans Visibility Day, build community regionally, and see how the movement for trans rights has evolved in neighboring countries.

We visited a sex worker group and local transgender rights organization, and the visit sparked the idea of starting a Transgender Museum in the next 20 years. Everyone said that learning from experienced leaders and visiting established transgender organizations gave them a new confidence to bring their new skills back home. And that the program helped foster connections and relationships they knew would fuel their work.

The takeaway is that community works takes time. But three members of our first generation of program graduates have already hit the ground running:

**XI** established his own organization to provide psychological support for transgender people and is working on a model to provide counseling to the trans community and train counselors to understand the issues, language, and sensitivity this requires.

**YU**, who had long volunteered for people living with HIV and LGBT youth, secured major funding for trans rights work for the first time, and began a public education campaign to increase visibility of trans people through online courses and a transgender-themed magazine.

**LINNER**, as the first transgender full-time staff person at the local sexual health and development center, launched a project to interview transgender people and capture their stories.

**“EVERYONE SAID THAT LEARNING FROM EXPERIENCED LEADERS AND VISITING ESTABLISHED TRANSGENDER ORGANIZATIONS GAVE THEM A NEW CONFIDENCE TO BRING THEIR NEW SKILLS BACK HOME.”**

# KNOW IT, PROVE IT, CHANGE IT...

# 06

## NOW: SHARE IT!

**Share It!**  
Advocacy Experiences  
of CBOs

The graphic features a central keychain with three keys: a red key with Thai text, a red key with 'KNOW IT, PROVE IT, CHANGE IT', and a yellow key with Chinese text '了解·証實·改變'. Surrounding the keychain are icons for a smartphone, a radio, a person speaking, a group of people, and an envelope, all connected by red curved lines. The Asia Catalyst logo is at the bottom.

Since 2006, we have worked with more than 250 grassroots groups across Asia to build vibrant organizations, challenge human rights abuses, and lead advocacy campaigns for change. We have mentored hundreds of emerging activists and community groups facing violence, discrimination, and criminalization.

One crucial way we ignite activism in Asia is by working with our partners to create tools to empower communities working for change.

With Thai and Chinese activists, we developed *Know It, Prove It, and Change It: A Rights Curriculum for Grassroots Groups* to introduce the human rights framework and skill up on how to document rights abuses and run advocacy campaigns. The free online manuals have been translated into Burmese, Chinese, and Thai.

This year, we are proud to introduce *Share It!: Advocacy Experiences of CBOs*, a collection of successful advocacy case studies from our partner advocates, many of whom participated in Asia Catalyst's year-long rights training program. Their campaigns reflect a range of right to health issues faced by marginalized groups in Cambodia, China, and Myanmar and address challenges while presenting key takeaways and other lessons.

Share It! is designed as a learning tool to inspire and empower other activists using real-world stories.

**KNOW IT:  
THE RIGHTS  
FRAMEWORK**  
Know It | Prove It | Change It  
A Rights Curriculum for Grassroots Groups

Keychain graphic with Thai, English, and Chinese text.

Logos: ITAG, asia catalyst, Donggen Centre for Human Rights Education and Action.

**Prove It:  
Documenting Rights Abuses**

Keychain graphic with Thai, English, and Chinese text.

Logos: asia catalyst, ITAG, Donggen Centre for Human Rights Education and Action.

**CHANGE IT:  
ENDING RIGHTS ABUSES**  
Know It | Prove It | Change It  
A Rights Curriculum for Grassroots Groups

Keychain graphic with Thai, English, and Chinese text.

Logos: ITAG, asia catalyst, Donggen Centre for Human Rights Education.

07

## WHY AIDS IS STILL AN ISSUE IN ASIA - Q&A WITH RICO GUSTAV

*Excerpts from our interview with Rico Gustav, Executive Director of the Global Network of People Living With HIV (GNP+). GNP+ advocates for, and supports fair and equal*

*access to treatment, care and support services for people living with HIV around the world.*

*Rico is a longstanding activist in the region and friend of Asia Catalyst.*

## WHY AIDS IS STILL AN ISSUE IN ASIA (CONTINUED)

# 07

**Given all the prevention and treatment breakthroughs, why is HIV still an issue for our region? What's stopping help from getting where it's needed?**

I call myself someone living with HIV, but to be honest, I am not *only* living with HIV, I am also a drug user, working in stressful environments, which makes mental health an issue. At one point, I was homeless with no stable income. I am a father, a political activist, many other identities.

This intersectionality is what the global AIDS response has been missing for the last two decades, and for a reason: it requires the political willingness and resources to develop an intersectional response.

While this is widely acknowledged, global leaders took it as a mandate to integrate everything into health systems. But that is not the point that we have been trying to make. Health does not exist in isola-

tion. Look at justice systems that criminalize people who desperately need services to protect themselves. Look at economic systems that make it hard for people to afford medicine or take off work to see a doctor. There are so many systems that affect a person's health. It all boils down to one objective: ensuring health is a right, and not a privilege enjoyed by some.

**What is your vision for HIV advocacy in Asia? Where do you think we could be by 2020? 2025?**

It's time for people living with HIV in Asia to engage more in national budget advocacy to increase investment in health rights and HIV, and to make sure that countries are investing in real solutions: rights-based, community-led responses. We need more tools to do budget advocacy by 2020. Then by 2025, we should see an increase in resources and effectiveness.

## WHY AIDS IS STILL AN ISSUE IN ASIA (CONTINUED)

07

Right now there are increasing rights violations against people affected by HIV. Populist politics are more popular than ever in Asia. During elections, we see candidates going after drug users in Philippines, men who have sex with men in Indonesia, sex workers in Thailand. Advocacy for the rights of key populations is at a tipping point. Either the public starts to buy into human rights for all of us, or they will start pushing the hatred to a more extreme level.

### **Global funding for HIV/AIDS continues to be cut and consolidated. What impact is this having?**

The worst impact at the moment is in certain regions – Eastern Europe and Central Asia (EECA), Latin America and the Caribbean, Asia and the Pacific. One reason is *our* failure to hold donors accountable to their commitments to focus on key populations. In EECA, we have seen countries unable to procure life-saving antiretroviral medicines one month after the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria (the Global Fund) “transitioned out.” We have seen governments drop funding for services to key populations almost immediately after losing eligibility.

The question we have to ask is: how do we increase the size of the pie, instead of fighting among ourselves and again creating a fragmented response? How do we insist governments and donor countries allocate more money towards health for the poorest and most marginalized?

### **How would you make the case for resources to flow to Asia and the Pacific?**

One of the most discouraging things was when I visited Bucharest and met with HIV activists there. The Global Fund took Romania out of eligibility in 2011 so the HIV response there no longer receives Global Fund support. But the struggle for people

living with HIV in Romania is very real. The government can't procure antiretroviral meds; services for drug users have closed down.

Donors forget that the Global Fund is not only about countries, it is about people. And if we cannot ensure that the Global Fund is truly global, we should probably change the name to something else – 'cause we won't be able to end diseases if we are only looking at economic indicators that don't reflect the lives of people living with HIV, TB, or malaria.

### **What tools do activists need? What role can organizations like Asia Catalyst play in propelling change?**

We have to start engaging the public again; with new technologies, we can do that cheaply and easily. I am not talking about developing apps or running Facebook campaigns or Instagram promotions. We need to sit down and think strategically about how we can re-engage the public and mobilize them.

We have been so busy responding to fires, we never make time to sit down and really think about this. Global financing, decreasing political commitments – it all boils down to politicians not thinking HIV is sexy. But if people can watch Kim Kardashian eating in a restaurant for an hour, I'll shoot my left thumb if those of us who've been working on this issue for 15 years can't put the spotlight on HIV or key populations in the media!

**“WE NEED TO SIT DOWN AND THINK STRATEGICALLY ABOUT HOW WE CAN RE-ENGAGE THE PUBLIC AND MOBILIZE THEM.”**



**A SNAPSHOT OF SOME OF THE BIGGEST LAW AND POLICY CHANGES THAT AFFECTED OUR WORK IN 2018.**

## **SEX WORKER RIGHTS**

After years of reporting by Asia Catalyst and relentless advocacy by our partners, China vowed to close many of its sex worker detention centers. This would give sex workers back their freedom and strengthen rule of law: currently, women are often held for up to two years without due process. The bad news is that the laws are still on the books and could be resurrected at any time.

Myanmar is working to change its “prostitution” law – replacing it with a “three strikes” system, in which one would have to sign an agreement vowing to refrain from sex work upon first arrest, pay a fine the second time, and possibly be sent to a “rehabilitation” center upon the third arrest. The current bill falls short of decriminalizing sex work, but would put an end to prison time for sex workers. It is still in early stages; sex worker groups are trying to strengthen it with measures for real services and rehabilitation for women, instead of detention.

## **CIVIL SOCIETY**

Since China’s “Overseas NGO (ONGO) Law” took effect in 2017, the number of ONGOs has plummeted, from 7,000 groups when President Xi Jinping took power to fewer than 400 registered under the new law. It

is having a major chilling effect on huge swaths of civil society.

The crackdown on civil society is a growing global phenomenon. Nearly 150 restrictions on civil society – limiting groups’ ability to conduct advocacy, disseminate information, or access global funding – have been proposed or adopted since 2012. In Asia and the Pacific, 15 countries have passed restrictive laws targeting NGOs.

## **LGBT RIGHTS**

In Taiwan, voters rejected same-sex marriage in a series of referendums, a blow to the LGBT community and those who hoped it’d become the first place in Asia to allow same-sex unions. A law to recognize same-sex couples through civil unions is likely to pass in 2019 as the government has until May to implement a court ruling saying it is unconstitutional to deny same-sex couples the rights associated with marriage.

In a landmark case in India this year, the Supreme Court struck down Section 377 of the Penal Code, which criminalized same-sex sexual relations. This was a huge victory for LGBT people. Activists celebrated in the streets. “Queer lives

have... been lit up and instilled with renewed pride,” wrote advocate Vivek Divan, who worked on the case.

Elsewhere in the region, including in Singapore and Myanmar, section 377-style laws still stand. In Myanmar, LGBT people are routinely targeted, harassed, and arrested in public places, according to recent testimony gathered by Asia Catalyst partners. Mandalay-based LGBT group, TRY, documented a number of unlawful arrests, most recently concerning three transgender women at a festival who, police claimed, lacked a “satisfactory” reason to be out after sunset.

Same-sex sexual relations are still criminalized in at least 67 countries and territories globally, including in half of the countries that comprise the Association of Southeast Asian Nations.

**“QUEER LIVES HAVE ... BEEN LIT UP AND  
INSTILLED WITH RENEWED PRIDE”**

## **HIV POLICY & FUNDING**

In 2018, a number of countries moved to change discriminatory laws. The Philippines lowered the age of consent to 15, for HIV testing without parental consent. Myanmar is considering a new law to protect people living with HIV from discrimination in healthcare and employment.

But across the region as well as globally, the vast majority of funding for harm reduction still comes from international donors and is rapidly receding as key funders revise eligibility criteria and countries “graduate” to new income classifications. Governments are unprepared and perhaps unwilling to fill funding gaps left by organizations such as the World Bank and the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria.

## **DRUG POLICY**

Thirty-three countries around the globe still impose the death penalty for drug offenses. Malaysia, in a major turnaround, joined the 142 countries banning capital punishment – unlike its neighbors Thailand, Vietnam and Singapore.

Extrajudicial killings of people allegedly involved with drugs were on the rise, especially in the Philippines where the official death toll from President Duterte’s anti-drug campaign reached 4,500 by July 2018; civil society groups estimate the true number could be as high as 20,000.

Today 11 countries in Asia, including China, Cambodia, Malaysia, Myanmar, the Philippines, Thailand, and Vietnam still use laws to forcibly detain people who use drugs.

In more encouraging news, Thailand became the first country in Southeast Asia to legalize the use of marijuana and kratom, for medicinal use and research. More progressive drug policy is being introduced in Myanmar, where a narcotics law makes specific reference to “harm reduction” and “human rights.” Critics of the law say it is “unbalanced” because people caught with even a small amount of drugs can serve 5-10 years in prison.

The number of needle and syringe programs increased in India, Malaysia, Myanmar, and Vietnam. Very few harm reduction programs are designed by or for women, however, despite the fact that Asia is home to an estimated half of the world’s 3.8 million women who inject drugs.

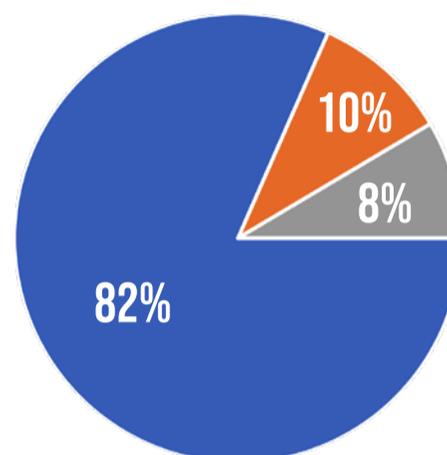
# FINANCIALS AND SUPPORTERS

# 09

## STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL POSITION

|   | 2018           | 2017           |
|---|----------------|----------------|
| <b>ASSETS</b>                             |                |                |
| Cash and Cash Equivalents                 | \$ 462,311     | \$ 298,437     |
| Grants and Contributions Receivable       |                | 194,047        |
| Contracts receivable                      | 35,772         | 24,088         |
| Prepaid Expens ^ Other receivables        |                | 6,187          |
| Prepaid subgrant expens                   | 5,822          | 36,065         |
| Property and Equipment, net               |                | 1,331          |
| Security deposits                         | 5,163          | 20,093         |
| <b>Total Assets</b>                       | <b>509,068</b> | <b>580,248</b> |
| <b>LIABILITIES &amp; NET ASSETS</b>       |                |                |
| <b>LIABILITIES</b>                        |                |                |
| Accounts Payable and Accrued Expense      | 20,306         | 23,491         |
| Grants Payable                            | 30,000         | -              |
| <b>Total Liabilities</b>                  | <b>50,306</b>  | <b>23,491</b>  |
| <b>NET ASSETS</b>                         |                |                |
| Unrestricted                              | 405,765        | 184,741        |
| Temporarily Restricted                    | 52,997         | 372,016        |
| <b>Total Net Assets</b>                   | <b>458,762</b> | <b>556,757</b> |
| <b>TOTAL LIABILITIES &amp; NET ASSETS</b> | <b>509,068</b> | <b>580,248</b> |

## WHERE THE FUNDS WERE UTILIZED:



**PROGRAM & ADVOCACY**

**FINANCIAL & ACCOUNTABILITY  
MANAGEMENT**

**FUNDRAISING & DEVELOPMENT**

## STATEMENT OF ACTIVITIES

|                                       | 2018              |                           |                   | 2017              |                           |                   |
|---------------------------------------|-------------------|---------------------------|-------------------|-------------------|---------------------------|-------------------|
|                                       | Unrestricted      | Temporarily<br>Restricted | Total             | Unrestricted      | Temporarily<br>Restricted | Total             |
| <b>REVENUE &amp; SUPPORT</b>          |                   |                           |                   |                   |                           |                   |
| Grants and Contributions              | \$ 368,032        | \$ 110,000                | \$ 478,032        | \$ 69,889         | \$ 659,918                | \$ 729,807        |
| Contract Revenue                      | 262,853           |                           | 262,853           | 293,790           |                           | 293,790           |
| Donated Goods and Services            | 65,876            |                           | 65,876            | 158,310           |                           | 158,310           |
| Miscellaneous Income                  | 6,242             |                           | 6,242             | 7,034             |                           | 7,034             |
| Net Assets released from Restrictions | 429,019           | (429,019)                 | -                 | 370,378           | (370,378)                 | -                 |
| <b>Total Revenue &amp; Support</b>    | <b>1,132,022</b>  | <b>(319,019)</b>          | <b>813,003</b>    | <b>899,401</b>    | <b>289,540</b>            | <b>1,188,941</b>  |
| <b>EXPENSES</b>                       |                   |                           |                   |                   |                           |                   |
| Program Services                      | 730,908           |                           | 730,908           | 651,432           |                           | 651,432           |
| Supporting Services                   |                   |                           | -                 |                   |                           | -                 |
| Management & General                  | 108,210           |                           | 108,210           | 94,390            |                           | 94,390            |
| Fundraising                           | 71,880            |                           | 71,880            | 144,415           |                           | 144,415           |
| <b>Total Expenses</b>                 | <b>910,998</b>    | <b>-</b>                  | <b>910,998</b>    | <b>890,237</b>    | <b>-</b>                  | <b>890,237</b>    |
| <b>Change in Net Assets</b>           | <b>221,024</b>    | <b>(319,019)</b>          | <b>(97,995)</b>   | <b>9,164</b>      | <b>289,540</b>            | <b>298,704</b>    |
| <b>NET ASSETS, BEGINNING OF YEAR</b>  | <b>184,741</b>    | <b>372,016</b>            | <b>556,757</b>    | <b>175,577</b>    | <b>82,476</b>             | <b>258,053</b>    |
| <b>NET ASSETS, END OF YEAR</b>        | <b>\$ 405,765</b> | <b>\$ 52,997</b>          | <b>\$ 458,762</b> | <b>\$ 184,741</b> | <b>\$ 372,016</b>         | <b>\$ 556,757</b> |

**FINANCIALS & SUPPORTERS**  
**(CONTINUED)**

**09**

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