REPORT
On The Caribbean Regional Dialogue on
LGBTQI+ D.A.T.A.

SEPTEMBER 15-16, 2022

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Introduction

We're steeped in an era that demands data-driven solutions – yet for LGBTQI+ people, most published research sits on bookshelves and behind academic firewalls, detached from the processes that drive change. On September 15 and 16 in Barbados, civil society convened first-ever discussions to finally connect the dots between research and policy, titled "**Driving Analytical, Transformative Action**" (D.A.T.A.) with participation of leaders from across the Caribbean.

For the first time, our organizations launched public discussions on LGBTQI+ data, rights and inclusion, in close collaboration with UNDP and Parliamentarians for Global Action, and supported by USAID, FirstCaribbean International Bank, PwC, and more. We presented on 12 themes (e.g. labor, poverty, de-colonialisation of modern British judiciary colonialism, migration, and more[1]), as a result of a surge of LGBTQI+ research, with a focus on economic inclusion and livelihoods. We then had more than 100 experts conduct policy discussions while keeping those realities in mind.

These unprecedented roundtables included participants from across 6 key sectors, comprised of governments, the private sector, economic development, regional and international human rights systems, academia, and civil society, specifically:

- 5 MPs from across the region, including 2 Speakers of the House
- The Inter-American Commission on Human Rights' Commissioner on the Rights of LGBTI Persons
- The U.N.'s Independent Expert on Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity
- Large companies, including the CEO from FirstCaribbean International Bank
- The World Bank, IDB, Caribbean Development Bank, and the IMF
- Bilateral aid agencies, 3 embassies, and the European Mission
- Economists, academics, and dozens of LGBTQI+ leaders

Why Roundtable Discussions driven by Data?

In the Caribbean, there is a unique and unprecedented body of national and regional LGBTQI+ research – a diversity of knowledge showing the challenges that the community faces, including their systemic challenges and lack of livelihoods, and more. Altogether, this represents a robust perspective on LGBTQI+ people.

Yet, dissemination of these products has often been limited to one-off webinars, which limits its ability to be seen and to enact change. Namely, this impedes the ability of organizations and others to develop national and transnational advocacy frameworks, which could turn findings of available research into effective policy actions, or even to reform interventions and create commitments to targeted budget allocations. Therefore, governments, companies and economic development institutions easily ignore this knowledge, and it remains largely untouched – an on-going cycle that remains unable to fuel the transformative action that's needed.

Transformative Action

Since there is no central structure or institution to drive an analytical and transformative policy process, this has left a vacuum in leadership that will continue to allow the community to be left behind. In response, our organizations (**UniBAM**, **ECADE**, **Eolas Consulting**, and **Colours Caribbean**) created new

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[1] See: http://lgbtqicaribbeandata.org/agenda.html
[2] https://pancap.org/pancap-documents/caricom-model-anti-discrimination-bill/

spaces for dialogue and interventions, directly driven by data and knowledge. We left Barbados with definitive outcomes that we're now developing into a plan to implement at the national-level.

Moving forward to Drive Analytical, Transformative Action (D.A.T.A.)

As we move into the next phase of programming, three main components stand out as crucial.

First, it's clear that LGBTQI+ people need greater economic inclusion and livelihoods. Cognizant that traditional advocacy has focused on civil and political human rights, these approaches can't secure the financial security that an economic inclusion and livelihoods agenda can actualize. There was a demand from participants to develop the practical tools and standards to access better work, income, social safety nets, and financial well-being, among others. We're now developing the connections between civil society, ministries of finance, economic development institutions and companies on a commitment that dismantles systemic practices that amplify poverty, and toward economic security for those on the margin.

Second, the Caribbean is now witnessing a powerful "turning of the tides" for the community. In just the last couple of months alone, both Antigua and Barbuda as well as St. Kitts and Nevis have decriminalized same-sex intimacy – with strong indications that more countries will do the same. In particular, the roundtables revealed overwhelming demand for de-colonialization, especially of The Privy Council (JCPC) – comprised of judges from the UK's Supreme Court and effectively the last remnant of British colonialism still holding power in eight independent Caribbean countries. And in fact, on LGBTQ+ rulings, most senior judges in the JCPC are responsible for hindering progress and have never in its history delivered a decision to further the equal rights of LGBTQI+ people, and have even reversed judicial progress regarding said rights delivered by judges domestic to Caribbean countries. The D.A.T.A. roundtables revealed this and other demands to hurry the pace of change and from the perspective of Caribbean leaders. We're now tapping into that pace of change and working to build on the innovation, ingenuity and resilience of the community.

Finally, economic development institutions, the private sector, and governments must all keep up with this pace of change. For example, the World Bank, IDB, CDB, and CARICOM, among others, all operate to address health, climate change, economic integration and research – yet consistently overlook LGBTQI+ people and their (in)ability to access programs. This has reinforced a system of development that continues to leave LGBTQI+ people behind. If all of these sectors and institutions are to remain effective and help build sustainable growth, then they must seriously consider LGBTQI+ people and work toward impactful programs and inclusion.

This report summarises the keynote speeches, data presentations, and discussions from the two-day series of roundtable policy discussions. It provides a comprehensive overview of what the data show about the region's LGBTQI+ community, highlights areas of concern identified by participants, and presents all recommendations on how to turn knowledge into transformative action. For more information on the D.A.T.A. Roundtables, please visit the site: **lgbtqicaribbeandata.org** and for readers who want a more abridged look at the recommendations from the roundtables, please skip to the Appendix at the end of this report.

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Launch and Welcome

The conference was opened by Veronica Cenac, Attorney-at-Law and human rights, HIV/AIDS, and LGBTQI+ activist.

Cenac noted that the conference addressed a necessary frontier for the Caribbean's LGBTQI+ community—the economic effect of discrimination and marginalisation, not just on the community but also on the entire region.

She indicated that LGBTQI+ exclusion costs the region between US$1.5-$4.2 billion, or 2.1-5.7% of GDP, every year, as outlined in the Open for Business report, '*The Economic Case for LGBTQ+ Inclusion the Caribbean*', undertaken by conference organiser, Philip R Crehan. Of this, about US$423-$689 million, or .07-.95% of GDP, is lost in the tourism sector alone. The statistics show that LGBTQI+ exclusion is harmful both to members of the community and the wider region. Not only does it contribute to brain drain, but it also discourages LGBTQI+ travellers from choosing the Caribbean as a destination. As a result, the region loses access to the talent, skills, and knowledge that exist in among LGBTQI+ people, showing that homophobia and transphobia are also economic and business imperatives, in addition to being great human rights challenges.

"'**Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere**,'" Cenac told the audience, quoting Dr Martin Luther King Jr. "**Whatever affects one directly affects all indirectly**."

Kenita Placide, Executive Direction of the Eastern Caribbean Alliance for Diversity and Equality (ECADE), continued the welcome remarks. She explained that the idea for the conference came out of the need to collect and present data that accurately represents the stories of those within the LGBTQI+ community. In conversation between Philip R Crehan (Eolas Consulting), Caleb Orozco (United Belize Advocacy Movement/UniBAM), and Dr Leonardo J Raznovich (Colours Caribbean), there was the clear idea to lead these roundtables and finally connect research to policy interventions.

She remarked that the pandemic further highlighted the need to understand and contextualise the data. Placide remarked that COVID-19 "**told a sad story**" in regards to LGBTQI+ people by creating more challenges to their well-being and livelihoods. As a result, ECADE and other civil society organizations (CSOs) had to work harder to help their clients cover basic needs. The pandemic "**showed us [that] many LGBTQI+ people sit below the poverty line**," she said. Despite assumptions to the contrary, she emphasised, many within the community do not have access to basic services.

Placide asserted that solving the problem involves a "**multi-layered, multi-sector approach**", with civil society and grassroots organisations working alongside government, private sector, and individuals. "**The project is unpacking what we have, what we know, and what we are missing**," she continued. "**This movement is looking at using statistics as an advocacy pool at the domestic, regional, and international levels.**"

She concluded by stating that the focus of the conference is connecting the dots. "**It means translating [the data so] that even the person who sits by the road can have a conversation about the impact of [these issues] on themselves, their neighbours, and their communities.**"

Welcome Remarks: Honourable Arthur Holder, Speaker of the House of Representatives, Barbados

Barbados' Speaker of the House, His Honour Arthur E. Holder, began his address by affirming that all human rights are important to the Government and people of Barbados. He congratulated the conference organisers, noting that the conversation about the rights and inclusion for LGBTQI+ people in the Caribbean is both timely and long overdue.

He cited the Caribbean Court of Justice (CCJ) case ruling in the plaintiffs' favour in *Quincy McEwan, Seon Clarke, Joseph Fraser, Seyon Persaud and the Society Against Sexual Orientation Discrimination (SASOD) v The Attorney General of Guyana*. Holder indicated that it and other verdicts "**sum up how far the courts are prepared to go to ensure that fundamental rights are protected**". He quoted Justice Saunders' statement on the judgment which read, in part:

> A society which promotes respect for human rights is one which supports human development and the realisation of the full potential of every individual… [T]he expression of a person's gender identity forms a fundamental part of their right to dignity. Recognition of this gender identity must be given constitutional protection." Holder noted that the Justice Saunders' comments set the framework for the conference's two days of dialogue and "gives us the space to not highlight these matters but…to address them.

He continued:

> The objective of the next two days is to provide a platform to bring human rights practitioners to showcase their data-driven research and findings in the Caribbean. We will be privileged to what the data is saying, and this is important to help us understand the realities of the LGBTQI+ community. These exercises create space for practitioners to provide recommendations to improve understanding that equality and inclusion can lead to effective formulation of strategies to transform the livelihoods of this community at regional and national levels.

Holder concluded by indicating Barbados' Ministry of Labour and the Third Sector passed the Employment (Prevention of Discrimination) Act in 2020, that "**seeks to protect all persons from employment discrimination**". He also noted that before transitioning to a Republic, his government approved the Charter of Barbados that dictates:

> "**all persons are born free and are equal in human dignities and rights, regardless of race, faith, class, cultural and educational background, ability, gender or sexual orientation**."

"**The government of Barbados is greatly honoured to be part of this important event**," he remarked. "**And I anticipate a very fruitful and rewarding two days of deliberations**."

Keynote 1 – Dr M.V. Lee Badgett, Professor of Economics, University of Massachusetts Amherst

Dr Badgett, Professor of Economics at the University of Massachusetts Amherst, gave the first keynote. Her speech focused on the ability of data to show the full spectrum of the experiences of LGBTQI+ people. She noted that statistics are also important to helping experts and decision makers understand the barriers many LGBTQI+ people face and to develop the solutions to overcome them.

Many people in the general population who "**live relatively good lives**" in spaces where they see themselves represented, she said, often do not see the strains of "**thinking about interactions with other people**". They also cannot relate to the hyper-vigilance of many LGBTQI+ people, who often cannot be open about who they are. She noted that this hyper-vigilance often affects health and wellness outcomes. For example, in the region, the levels of anxiety and depression are 3-6 times higher among LGBTQI+ people than the general population, and 1 in every 2 transgender people has faced threats of harassment and violence, research shows.

Data also allow researchers and activists to show governments, funders, the private sector, and other organisations that these issues affect everyone, she said. It gives experts and policy makers a roadmap and shows what they must work towards in terms of safety, political participation, and other areas of concern, she remarked.

The data show that the region is not adequately including LGBTQI+ people in the aforementioned areas. As a result, those who have the skills, knowledge and creativity required to move the Caribbean forward are not able to contribute and be productive.

> Yet, if the data are not available, Dr Badgett asserted,
>
> "**it's hard to convince people that the problem is real, big and must be addressed**"

Citing '*The Economic Case for LGBT+ Inclusion the Caribbean*', Dr Badgett also referenced the brain drain that causes LGBTQI+ people with higher levels of education and income to leave the Caribbean for other countries. 25% of survey respondents reported their reason for leaving was to live more openly. In the face of the COVID-19 pandemic and challenges such as climate change, Dr Badgett explained, that is not a price the region can afford to pay.

She also described the symbolic and practical ways in which data allow LGBTQI+ people to be counted. Being statistically counted, Dr Badgett said, is one of the most important indicators of inclusion and showing that the community matters.

Roundtable 1: Violence Against LGBTQI+ People and Access to Justice in the Caribbean – Alessandra Hereman and Caleb Orozco

Defining Violence

In her presentation, Alessandra Hereman emphasised that much of the violence against LGBTQI+ people in the Caribbean is physical as well as written and verbal, and also proliferated systemically. As a result, the injuries they face can be social, psychological, material, or physical. Although traditional definitions of violence focus on physical assault, members of the LGBTQI+ community also experience intimidation, threats, verbal abuse, and harassment.

Hereman noted that violence is also structural, in that it is imbued and perpetuated via colonial laws and institutional policies. Because the justice system has a colonial foundation, the researcher argued, it is difficult for LGBTQI+ people to access justice. She also stated that cultural norms and values are used to justify homophobia and transphobia.

Mapping Violence Against LGBTQI+ in the Caribbean and Regional Studies

Unfortunately, because most research focuses on the physical definition of violence, many datasets do not represent the magnitude and myriad of violence against LGBTQI+ people, Hereman stated. One reason is that many LGBTQI+ people fear retaliation from reporting the violence they experience—retaliation from society and law enforcement alike. As a result, many statistics are underrepresented.

Hereman cited the 'From Fringes to Focus' study that highlighted how LBQ women and transmasculine people negotiate spaces to avoid violence. The research was the first of its kind to focus on this demographic within the community, and thus presented important findings on a group of people who are often overlooked. Hereman referenced the study's findings, noting that each subgroup faces discrimination because of their sexual orientation and gender identity, and faces specific challenges regarding how they navigate through their own spaces as well as spaces within the wider LGBQI+ community and in society.

Local Research and Findings

In 2020, Hereman and Dr Nastassia Rambarran conducted a qualitative study on the needs of trans and gender non-conforming people in Guyana.

The participants stated that they received discrimination in all aspects of their social lives. They reported being asked intrusive questions and passed over for promotions at work. At school, they received harassment from both students and teachers. Most of the respondents noted that they must carefully navigate public spaces (including public transportation) to avoid discrimination, particularly in terms of how they act and dress. Many reported that their social lives were extremely restricted due to actual and anticipated harassment.

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The study also found that trans women are overrepresented in the informal economy (including domestic labor and sex work), which highlighted other challenges this group faces, such as a lack of safety, sub-par working conditions, and low wages.

Hereman also referenced research she conducted with the Society against Sexual Orientation Discrimination (SASOD) on work-related discrimination against Guyana's LGBTQI+ community. The research focused on the correlation between participants' sexual orientation and gender identity and expression (SOGIE) and the discrimination they faced at work or in workspaces.

Respondents noted that the constant discrimination and violence altered their mental states. Many reported having depressive and suicidal thoughts and not wanting to attend work. They stated that to be successful at work, or just keep their jobs, they had to tone down or conceal their identities. For example, the gay men who were surveyed noted that they must "**adopt a semblance of masculinity to fit in at work**".

Reporting and Access to Justice

Hereman said that violence against LGBTQI+ people affects their willingness to report incidences. One survey respondent spoke about their concept of justice:

> …I felt is as though we don't have no [SOGIE] rules or regulations to govern the LGBT community, to guide them, to protect them for employment. So, I was thinking none of that in place that is why I never really follow it up to make a complaint or anything.

Guyana, like many other Caribbean nations, does not explicitly protect LGBTQI+ people from discrimination or violence. As a result, most members of the community do not report crimes. Many feel that doing so puts them at greater risk for future violence and discrimination.

Effects of Social Marginalisation

The researcher noted that facing constant violence, stigma, and discrimination affects LGBTQI+ people's livelihood, security, and health outcomes. It means that their basic needs—such as housing, food, safety, and education—are not met.

Due to the structural nature of the violence they face, LGBTQI+ people, especially those who are transgender or gender non-conforming, often have limited access to education. Hereman noted that many drop out of or are forced to leave school at early ages due to bullying and violence from teachers and peers. As a result, they often resort to sex work to support themselves and their families. Unfortunately, she noted, the disparities and insecurity continue into their work. Research shows that transgender sex workers typically earn less than their cisgender counterparts.

Policy Recommendations

Hereman stated that the region's LGBTQI+ community has contributed to decades of research on topics such as HIV/AIDS, gender and sexuality, health and safety, violence and discrimination, and economic and social inclusion. However, the researcher queried what is being done with the data. "**LGBTQI+ people [are not] data repositories**," Hereman asserted. "**Action is an important part of the research process**."

She made three recommendations for policy and legislation development based on the research: amend, enact, and educate.

Amend. The first recommendation required countries to include sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression and sex characteristics (SOGIESC) to existing anti-discrimination laws. Hereman referenced CARICOM's Model Anti-Discrimination Bill, developed through the Pan Caribbean Partnership against HIV and AIDS (PANCAP), as an example of what these policies would look like. The bill, which was released in 2010, "**seeks to provide for the protection of persons against discrimination, including discrimination involving harassment, victimisation and vilification on the grounds of [HIV status], [sexual orientation], [lawful sexual activity], [disability], [gender] and [status as an orphan]; and to provide for related matters**"[2].

Enact. In the second recommendation, she encouraged legislation that would:

- allow gender markers on official identification (national ID cards, passports, etc.) to accurately reflect citizens' gender identities
- criminalise hate crimes
- decriminalise diverse genders and sexualities.

Educate. The final recommendation focused on sensitisation and training. Hereman noted that despite legislative and policy changes, many members of society, including those in law enforcement, still hold traditional views regarding gender and sexuality. "**It's important to work at the grassroots level,**" Hereman said. "**[At] the structural and institutional level [it] is relatively easy to change laws and policies but at the individual level, where there are perceptions and prejudices and biases, it's difficult**." The researcher recommended that countries implement training that "**simultaneously [addresses] negative attitudes and perceptions that shape homophobia and transphobia**".

Beyond Violence: Imagining a Just Society for LGBTQI+ Caribbean People

In addition to the recommended policy and legislation changes, Hereman outlined what an inclusive, equitable society would look like for LGBTQI+ people in the Caribbean. The researcher identified five pillars: inclusion, participation, accessibility, accountability, and healing justice.

Inclusion: In this pillar, LGBTQI+ people are included in census data, demographic and population health studies, and other statistical surveys and research. She noted that currently, LBQ and trans women are excluded from studies on violence against women. This omission allows politicians, lobbyists, and

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[2] https://pancap.org/pancap-documents/caricom-model-anti-discrimination-bill/

decision makers to argue that there is no evidence of discrimination against LBQ and trans women, which makes it harder for them to report abuse and receive justice.

Participation: The researcher remarked that LGBTQI+ representation is often limited to certain spaces or roles. However, it is necessary for the community to move past token representation to active participation in the region's political, social, and cultural life, she said. "**No window dressing**," Hereman asserted. "**We want LGBTQI+ persons to be actively participating in spaces**."

Accessibility: Hereman noted that although many social systems—education, employment, housing, and healthcare, etc.—are available in the region, they are not accessible to members of the LGBTQI+ community. As a result, an equitable societal model must allow LGBTQI+ people unrestricted, discrimination-free access to these systems.

Accountability: This pillar requires a two-part system: (1) those that violate human rights must be held accountable, and (2) proper reporting systems must be in place to address these violators. Hereman asserted that the reporting and redress mechanisms must deal with perpetrators at all levels— individual, organisational, and governmental.

Healing justice: At the centre of this societal reform is the understanding that justice and healing must go hand-in-hand, she said. An equitable society requires that those who were harmed be given the support to heal from their trauma. Hereman stated that decolonisation, which informs much of the work that must be done, couldn't happen without stakeholders facing, and correctly addressing, the trauma that exists because of structural and societal practices.

Key Issues

During the discussion, participants raised two main issues regarding violence, discrimination, and the justice system: inadequate data on the problems that Caribbean LGBTQI+ people face and judicial inequality that exists as part of the region's colonial legacy.

Lack of Adequate Data

Participants stated that the available data does not reflect the full dimension of violence suffered by LGBTQI+ people in the region. Due to fear of repercussions or the belief that nothing will be done, victims often do not report abuse—even to civil society organisations (CSOs). As a result, several noted, victims have the burden of finding help. When victims source justice outside of the official channels, governments and CSOs cannot collect or show the required data. This means that not enough official information exists to show the full picture of the violence.

One attendee opined that one of the reasons for this lack of data is that LGBTQI+ people are expendable to the state. "**We don't exist in unemployment data. We don't earn income. We don't even exist in most censuses**," they said. "**Yes, we have constitutions, but we don't have a way to use [them] to our benefit. Because we have no laws, we have no protection. Many governments' fundamental rights apply to straight people only… Sex workers, people with disabilities, etc. are expendable**."

Another participant agreed: "**The state isn't collecting data in the census; the identity categories aren't there. We're not reflected in the crime data. One of the challenges is being able to identify and quantify hate crimes because the state doesn't capture crimes based on sexual identity**."

Judicial Inequality as a Colonial System

While many attendees agreed that there is not enough data on the region's LGBTQI+ community, others opined that the existing data is not being used to its full potential. Many linked that lack of action to the colonial justice system.

One commenter stated, "**justice [wasn't] designed to be accessible… Every single aspect of the [justice] system is predicated on the exclusion of sexual and gender diversity. The decision to demonise sex and gender was designed to 'other' and set up the idea that certain people are inferior**."

Another participant corroborated that point: "**We cannot emphasise more the impact of criminalising sexuality. [It] was implemented to oppress… It's institutionalised based on discrimination**."

Outside of the LGBTQI+ community, another participant noted, the sense that justice is only accessible to certain citizens prevails within wider Caribbean society. They remarked, "**when we look at the context within which we live, there's an issue with people not believing that the justice system works for them. So, LGBTQI+ people have that feeling as well**."

Recommendations

Participants recommended several ways to (1) increase accessibility, (2) use data to inform policies, and (3) increase inclusion.

The recommendations were to:

- urge governments to include LGBTQI+ people in national surveys, studies, and other data collection exercises (i.e., collect SOGIESC information along with other relevant human characteristics or demographic data)
- advocate for LGBTQI+ issues in the context of other issues of national importance (climate change, poverty and access, healthcare, economic development, etc.)
- use education to combat stigma and allow young queer people to feel seen and supported in the school system
- activate citizens who do not identify as members of the LGBTQI+ community by getting them see how SOGIESC exclusion affects them as well
- sensitise teachers, community leaders, members of the criminal justice system, and healthcare workers about LGBTQI+ issues so that they can address violence adequately, help lower stigma and discrimination, and treat members of the community with dignity and respect
- hold governments and policy makers accountable for not doing what they should be to protect and include LGBTQI+ people
- address the needs of those in the community before—or, at the very least, as part of—data collection exercises (for example, due to economic inequality, some LGBTQI+ people do not have cell phones, access to the internet, safe transportation, etc. These needs must be addressed as part of research initiatives).

Roundtable 2: Health and COVID-19 and Policy Options – Dr Nastassia Rambarran and Saskia Perriard

During her presentation, Dr Nastassia Rambarran referenced several regional studies that indicate how policy options affect the healthcare services LGBTQI+ people can access, especially in light of the recent COVID-19 pandemic.

HIV and Stigma

The first studies she referenced dealt with prejudice and its impact on how men who have sex with men (MSM) and trans women access HIV prevention or treatment healthcare. MSM and trans women are two groups considered to be "key populations" within HIV treatment and work, and as they overlap with some of the demographics within the LGBTQI+ community, are important to address and detail the challenges they face. She noted that despite the regional progress in HIV work, double stigma surrounding positive HIV diagnoses and being LGBTQI+ still severely inhibits advancements in both areas.

Healthcare

Dr Rambarran gave an overview of several healthcare access studies. The research illustrated how heterosexual, cisgender healthcare workers treat LGBTQI+ people, yet are often not sensitised to their unique issues and challenges.

She noted that the largest of the studies, 'From Fringes to Focus', investigated the realities of lesbian, bisexual, and queer women and transmasculine people in Barbados, Belize, Guyana, Haiti, Jamaica, St. Lucia, Suriname, and Trinidad and Tobago.

The researcher reported that of the 1018 respondents,

**12% RECEIVE FEWER SERVICES,
7% WERE CALLED INSULTING NAMES AND
25% OF WOMEN HAD NO ACCESS TO HEALTHCARE**

because they couldn't afford it and were denied services based on their sexual identities and orientation".

AUTHORS: ALIBEY, R., BISNAUTH, T., BOSCHMAN, S., DOORSON, S., EFUNYEMI, I., JOSEPH, E., LEWIS, D., MOHAMMED, R.A., MOSES, M., NEIL, K., RAMBARRAN, N., SMALL, O., STEWARD, S., ST. VIL, D. LEARN MORE: INTERNATIONAL.COC.NL/FROM-FRINGES-TO-FOCUS/

A 2019 study titled, '"*We're Going to Leave You for Last Because of How You Are": Transgender Women's Experiences of Gender-Based Violence in Latin America and the Caribbean*', focused on the gender-based violence (GBV) trans women face in healthcare and education, and during police encounters. The research, led by Michele Lanham and conducted in Barbados, Trinidad, El Salvador, and Haiti, showed that 83% of trans women experienced GBV in healthcare. The abuse was often emotional, Dr Rambarran noted. However, many respondents also experienced deeper degrees of violence, such as denial of services.

In Guyana, similar research highlighted that healthcare staff neglected and ignored trans women due to their sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression and sex characteristics (SOGIESC). The study, *'Desires for Care and Access to Services Among Transgender Persons in Guyana'* by Rambarran and Hereman, showed that trans women faced discrimination, invasive questions, and confusion during interactions with healthcare workers. Another study conducted in Jamaica, *'Social-Ecological Factors Associated with Having a Regular Healthcare Provider Among Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender Persons in Jamaica'* by Lacombe-Duncan et al., indicated that being cisgender was directly correlated with better healthcare and less discrimination.

Overall, she stated, due to the lack of basic knowledge about LGBTQI+ people, healthcare providers treat all patients the same and thus overlook specific and unique concerns. She remarked that they often do not realise or acknowledge the disparities among individuals or address individual concerns. Dr Rambarran noted that all four studies recommended sensitivity training, both at the undergraduate and postgraduate levels, for healthcare staff.

Mental Health and Substance Abuse

Dr Rambarran's presentation also looked at mental health and substance use.

She noted that in one study, '*Adapting the Psychological Mediation Framework for Cisgender and Transgender Sexual Minorities in Jamaica: Implications from Latent Versus Observed Variable Approaches to Sexual Stigma'* by Logie et al., more than 9 in 10 respondents (91%) reported depressive symptoms. Findings also indicated that external and internalised sexual stigma had significant direct and indirect effects on depressive symptoms. These depressive symptoms were also positively correlated with the direct and indirect internal and external stigma faced by LGBTQI+ people.

In the 'From Fringes to Focus' study, she stated, 15% of LGBTQI+ patients reported clinical anxiety diagnoses, while 16% were diagnosed with clinical depression. Dr Rambarran highlighted that "**15% of the women suffered from clinical anxiety and, despite these numbers, [fewer] than half of these patients were receiving treatment**". Additionally, suicidal thoughts were shown to be at a high of 61%, with more than half (36%) of those diagnosed with depression having attempted suicide. The data showed that very few respondents who were experiencing mental health issues accessed support services.

In addition, the studies showed that substance abuse among LGBTQI+ people was high. When asked about their alcohol and drug use specifically, the LBQ and TM samples indicated that more than 1 in 3 (39%) reported having an alcoholic drink on a daily or weekly basis. Additionally, 44% indicated that they had, or still, use drugs. 15% indicated that they used drugs less than monthly, 8% used monthly, 7% used weekly, and 14% used daily or almost daily. The type of drugs they used could not be determined from the data.

In '*Syndemic Experiences, Protective Factors, and HIV Vulnerabilities Among Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender Persons in Jamaica'* conducted by Logie et. al. in 2019, of 911 respondents, approximately 87% had depressive symptoms and almost 23% reported binge drinking.

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Body Image

Dr Rambarran also referenced her co-authored study with Dr Skye Maule-O'Brien and Dr Karen Naidoo, titled *'My body. My politics. An exploration of body image and health in Barbadian sexual minority women'*. The findings showed that "**many [respondents] had complicated relationships with food**". These relationships, which Dr Rambarran noted are likely the result of "**layered events and identities**", were rooted in the three things: (1) the interconnection of desire and presentation as it related to body image, (2) how respondents distanced themselves from a cultural Western influence, and (3) how respondents grappled with local body ideals.

Gender Affirming Care

The researcher discussed two studies that dealt with gender affirming care. In the first, *'From Fringes to Focus'*, Dr Rambarran stated, "**175 persons identified as trans and 95% indicated that they were currently medically transitioning or using [testosterone] consistently. 45% of the sample had pap smears and 17% had an abortion**". While 31% of respondents reported severe period pains, only 21% were tested for polycystic ovarian syndrome (PCOS) or endometriosis.

The second study, Rambarran and Hereman (2020), highlighted that 31% of respondents were using hormones that were neither prescribed nor supervised by medical professionals. The study also showed that "**a minority of trans women wanted vaginoplasty, almost half of the trans women did not want tracheal shaving, and a slight majority didn't want voice surgery. Most trans women wanted facial-feminization surgery but none of the trans men or GNC individuals [did]**," Dr Rambarran noted.

Sexual and Reproductive Health

In Jamaica, '*Contextualising Sexual Health Practices Among Lesbian and Bisexual Women in Jamaica: A Multi-Methods Study*' by Logie et. al., conducted on lesbian and bisexual women's health illustrated that more than half reported a lifetime sexually transmitted infection (STI) test and 6.1% of these reported an STI diagnosis. Dr Rambarran remarked that quantitative results demonstrated that the longer it took for the respondent to take an STI test, the more likely she was to have faced depression, sexual stigma, and forced sex. The study also indicated that "**one-fifth [of the respondents] reported ever selling sex**," which is another significant determinant of lower health outcomes.

These results showed that sexual health practices among lesbian and bisexual women in Jamaica are associated with intrapersonal, interpersonal, and structural factors, Dr Rambarran noted. The data also emphasised the need for multi-level interventions to improve sexual health, she said, and advance the sexual rights of LGBTQI+ people.

COVID-19

Three studies have examined LGBTQI+ people in the Caribbean with regard to COVID-19 and health outcomes. In its report, Kaleidoscope Trust looked at organisational needs during the pandemic in 2021.

The study found that 93% of respondents were concerned about the wellbeing of staff and volunteers and 78% were concerned about being unable to provide support to users of the services.

OutRight Action International also conducted a study on COVID-19's effects on the regional LGBTQI+ community. In direct relation to health outcomes, their research showed that respondents had an overall reluctance to seek healthcare and reported symptoms of increased isolation and anxiety. Dr Rambarran noted that additional findings from the study could be used to show correlations between other themes that also affect heath such as:

- the devastation of livelihoods and rising food insecurity
- elevated risks of family or domestic violence
- concerns about elevated societal stigma, discrimination, violence, and scapegoating
- instances of abuse of state power
- anxiety about organisational survival
- the need for community support and unity.

Key Issues

During the discussion, participants raised several issues that exist within the healthcare system because of inequality, stigma, discrimination, and violence. The concerns included:

- the lack of information available on mental health, substance use, gender affirming care, sexual and reproductive health, trauma and violence, cancer, and chronic non-communicable diseases
- stigma from healthcare providers
- the correlation between facing stigma, discrimination, and violence as an LGBTQI+ person and poor mental health
- the predominance of HIV related research on MSM and trans women, but very little on HIV in relation to LBQ women and trans masculine people
- the need for LGBTQI+ inclusion in pre- and in-service training for healthcare professionals and other staff
- the lack of information on intersex people
- missing information from studies conducted by agencies that do not release their findings
- structures that support subsections of the community but not the entirety and diversity of the entire LGBTQI+ community.

Non-Communicable Diseases (NCDs) and LGBTQI+ Research

In addition, attendees spoke about how other intersections of health affect the LGBTQI+ community. One delegate noted that NCDs should be a high target area for research and activism in the Caribbean. They stated that they came to the realisation while developing a framework for a healthy snack company. "**Economic empowerment and health and nutrition cannot be discussed separately,**" they said.

Another participant agreed: "**Diabetes and hypertension [rates are] very high [in] St. Lucia and there is not much data on that. There should be some focus on that. Obesity as well**." They encouraged researchers to include diabetes, NCDs, and cancer in their studies.

Recommendations

Attendees recommended steps that policy makers, advocates, and funders could take to mitigate the identified issues.

Training and intervention: Healthcare officials need to be trained and sensitised on LGBTQI+ issues and needs. In addition, an intervention must be made to provide basic services for LGBTQI+ people, particularly food and mental health support and counselling. This would impact the high levels of anxiety, depression, and substance abuse in the LGBTQI+ community.

Public sector reform: Governments must do more monitoring and data collection on the LGBTQI+ community. Outreach and screening of LGBTQI+ people must also become a priority. In addition, activists and officials should conduct more consultations and collaborations. These can contribute to regulatory improvements, prevention, and direct care.

Private sector reform (social franchising)[3]: A network of private providers must be contracted to develop a for-profit, revenue-neutral business model that is run by and employs LGBTQI+ community members. The success of this initiative would likely encourage other private sector organisations to invest in the community as well.

Economic development: There needs to be a cost analysis of interventions and programmes geared towards the community. Researchers and policy makers must also focus on social determinants of health, health impact assessments, and micro-economic policies. With this data, it will be easier to show how investing in LGBTQI+ people will contribute to community-level and overall national economic development outcomes.

Expand data collection outside of the usual countries: Organisation of Eastern Caribbean States (OECS) countries are often not involved in many studies, said one attendee, which means that those who have relevant knowledge—specifically on less-researched territories—are not sought out. "**Stop using Jamaica, Guyana, Trinidad, [and] Belize [only], because other countries are not being represented**."

Use data to highlight positive stories: One commenter suggested that "**people have the perception that LGBTQI+ persons suffer from a lot of substance abuse and they are poor**". As a result, they stated, "**we need to [highlight] positive… stories [about LGBTQI+ people]**".

Enable LGBTQI+ people to take care of themselves and each other: "**The majority group is very resistant to taking care of [the LGBTQI+] minority**," one participant noted. Their suggestions were to:

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[3] Social franchising is "the application of commercial franchising methods and concepts to achieve socially beneficial ends" (International Franchise Association's Social Sector Task Force, 2014). The model is used to ensure that underserved and key populations receive increased and equitable access to water, healthcare, education, sanitation, housing, food, and other social services.

Reverse the mainstreaming. Enable the people in the minority to provide services for everybody. Give minority groups the tools to provide health services to their own community [and] help themselves. Make use of the fact that people in the minority group have the cultural competence to better themselves. [Create] solutions to provide people with the healthcare. Do away with the policies and just start doing!

Increase LGBTQI+ representation in healthcare: In response to the stigma that LGBTQI+ people face in a healthcare setting, a community health centre in New York requires 51% of its board to be LGBTQI+. This is crucial to making sure that patient' needs are being met and that the office is a safe space for LGBTQI+ people. Similarly, a representative from USAID noted that the organisation helped to create India's first transgender community health clinic run by trans people. One participant noted that representation not only improves the quality of the community, but also the quality of services the community receives.

Move beyond HIV to other health needs: The USAID representative stated that the organisation is "**working to determine how we will incorporate LGBTQI+ issues into other sectors…and how to go about finding solutions to that work**". They also noted, "**there are needs beyond getting HIV treatment that trans persons need… We have been able to expand beyond HIV treatment, care, and prevention to provide better health needs to the community**."

Roundtable 3: Defining LGBTQI+ Livelihoods – Philip R Crehan and Dr Lee Badgett

Philip R Crehan presented research from his study *'The Economic Case for LGBT+ Inclusion in the Caribbean'*, supported by Open For Business in 2021, and Dr Lee Badgett guided dialogue on how to articulate and define "LGBTQI+ livelihoods". The presenters used studies and the participant's ideas to highlight the importance of understanding the LGBTQI+ community's current livelihoods and using that information to create an agenda for advocacy, built on economic inclusion and promoting their socioeconomic livelihoods.

The Macroeconomic Cost of LGBTQ+ Exclusion

Crehan summarised the findings of the aforementioned economic study, while also citing other research. The data shows the effects of institutionalised and cultural stigma, discrimination, and violence on all aspects throughout the lifetime. The study looked at the following areas:

Family | education | health and COVID | housing | employment | financial services | migration and "brain drain" | violence | justice | tourism | occupational segregation | and economic recovery.

Family

Crehan stated that 46% of the LGB sample and 57% of the trans respondents reported being excluded from their families. These numbers were almost three times higher than those reported by non-LGBTQI+ participants (18%).

As a result, LGBTQ+ respondents had lower mental health and financial outcomes. They also reported being disowned, kicked out of their homes, coerced into heterosexual relationships, and made to undergo conversion therapy.

Education

Respondents also indicated that they faced discrimination and violence while at school.

57% of LGB and 68% of the trans sample reported persistent bullying from both peers and teachers, Crehan noted.

Participants also reported lower mental health outcomes because of the stigma they faced in school. Many noted that they had less access to school activities and programmes than their peers. They also indicated that their peers, as well as authority figures, expected them to act like the sex they were assigned at birth even when it did not match their gender identity.

Health

As with family and education, LGBTQ+ people also reported disparities and lower outcomes regarding their overall health compared to the general population.

Crehan stated that respondents were three times more likely to live with depression and anxiety due to stigma and discrimination.

Citing other research on LBQ women and transmasculine men that found, as a result of real or anticipated stigma, only half of the LBQ women and transgender men sampled disclose their sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression and sex characteristics (SOGIESC) to medical professionals.

Returning to the economic research, Crehan noted that stigma and discrimination LGBTQI+ people face also diminishes their mental health throughout the course of their lives.

Employment

LGBTQ+ people also experience negative outcomes in the labour market.

Overall, his economic research captured a wage gap showing that, on average, LGBTQ+ people earn

11%+ less..

when using the data from Belize in comparison to general population data from its state statistical agency. Respondents reported labour market discrimination, occupational segregation, and exclusion during the hiring process

19% FOR LGB PEOPLE AND 26% FOR TRANS PEOPLE VS. 11% OF THE NON-LGBTQ+ SAMPLE

This exclusion results in unemployment, a lack of promotions, termination, diminished opportunities, and a lack of access to their partner's benefits for those in relationships.

Again citing the data from the research on LBQ women and transgender men, the economic disparities are greater, Crehan stated. 34% responded that they could only sometimes cover their basic needs. In addition, only about half (53%) had full-time work; 22% worked part-time, while 22% worked without compensation.

Turning toward the guided discussion, Dr Badgett noted that the distinction between employment and unemployment is not always clear-cut. Some respondents who fell into the 'unemployed' category work in the informal sector. "**Do we consider that employed, self-employed, or unemployed**?" Badgett queried. "**We need to [re-evaluate] our definitions**."

Violence

When asked whether they have experienced physical or verbal violence, Crehan cited his economic study that found 46% of LGB and 59% of trans respondents answered affirmatively. Crehan then pointed

out that these numbers were in stark contrast to the 5% of the non-LGBTQ+ sample who reported experiencing violence.

Respondents also reported that they are unlikely to seek justice or report the abuse they face. Only 14% of LGB participants and 17% of the trans sample indicated that they reported acts of violence. Many respondents noted that their reluctance to seek justice from authorities was related to discriminatory laws and stigma, as well as a lack of trust in the state.

Among those who have lower socioeconomic status, the prevalence of violence is higher. Yet, they are also the least likely to report violence to the authorities. Crehan noted that this is in keeping with data on gender-based violence against (straight and cisgender) women, and is one of the first times that this is empirically captured for LGBTQ+ people.

Defining an LGBTQI+ Livelihoods Agenda for the Region

Dr Badgett guided a discussion and asked attendees to outline what good livelihoods would look like for the region's LGBTQI+ community.

Some suggestions included:

- enough income and means to cater for their basic human needs: shelter, food, clothing, healthcare, etc.
- happiness
- the ability to navigate society—walk down a public street, take public transportation, etc.—without facing discrimination and undue stress based on their SOGIESC
- equal access to basic state services, such as healthcare and education, with human dignity and security
- the ability to live with dignity and freedom.

Key Issues

Participants noted that along the journey to creating a society where LGBTQI+ people are fully included, several challenges stand in the way of true equality and equity.

Defining the Community

One delegate asserted that redefining the terms 'human' and 'humanity' are crucial to the work community activists do daily. "**Being… seen as human is the precursor [to accessing] resources,**" they said. The underlying issue, the commenter noted, is a lack of access to humanity – i.e. society has fuelled such sigma toward the community that it can treat them as inhuman. This exclusion extends to data collection, they argued: "**The data doesn't exist because we weren't considered a part of the colonial global exercise… We need to agree that LGBTQI+ people are human, which means that their LGBTQI+-**

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ness isn't the only thing they're experiencing difficulties [with]. **We shouldn't have to drop those other intersections in order to discuss how [they] affect us**."

Economic Inequality Among LGBTQI+ Activists

One attendee observed that, due to the nature of their work, many activists struggle to secure sustainable income. The advocates in the room were asked whether they receive salaries from their CSOs or non-governmental organizations (NGOs). Most responded that they do not. "**How can we promote [employment availability] and no one in the [civil society or non-governmental] organisations is getting a salary?**" the delegate asked.

This economic instability also affects activists' ability to adequately care for themselves. As one participant noted, many NGOs are founded and led by members of the LGBTQI+ community. Most activists face the same stigma, discrimination, and violence they are fighting against. Due to the inequality many of them face, they often struggle to complete tasks necessary to moving their organisations forward, such as opening bank accounts (specifically trans or gender non-conforming people who cannot get documentation with their preferred gender markers and chosen names) and getting access to resources and funding.

Donor Issues

The activists also spoke about donor accountability and how that affects their organisations' sustainability. One noted that "**[funding organisations] engage in what they care about and that's where the money goes**". Donors, participants opined, "hold hands" with governments and, as a result, prioritise political needs over those of the LGBTQI+ community. This leads to many problems for CSOs and the communities they serve.

Advocacy organisations sometimes struggle to pay administrative and overhead costs because grants and other funding opportunities limit the money that can be directed to those areas. Several leaders said that many grants allow fewer than 10% of funding to be allocated for staffing needs. One stated that it feels like "**you're being marginalised [even] within the fund that you're applying for**".

Despite fewer funding opportunities, many NGOs are using social enterprises to fund their work and supplement donor funding. However, attendees noted, many funding agencies do not support NGOs that have social enterprises. As a result, NGOs must choose between accepting donor funds that come with caveats or pursuing risky but potentially viable, independent income streams.

Access to Basic Services

One activist highlighted the gaps between what funders will support, what governments want, and what communities need. "**We still carry the burden to create community models for healthcare, food, shelter, etc.,**" they said. "**We're reduced to our HIV needs and we forget that we need to eat. We have**

one of the highest mortality rates in the region and, even after over billion dollars [in funding], we still don't have a policy cascade that looks at our needs."

What is "Work"?

Referencing the data point that examined employment, the participants discussed the notion of "work". "**How do we redefine** *work***, and what kind of work do we value?**" one asked. Another noted, "**understanding work is very important… Governments don't understand sex work but [many] trans people have to do it because they were thrown out of school or didn't finish school. For the trans community, their livelihoods are different**."

One opined "**we can't talk about sex work with governments in the Caribbean because it's illegal. It's the only way [many trans people] can feed themselves. They don't even have the basic education to have other employment**."

Another participant noted, "**if we value sexual labour and sex work, we can shift the way we view work**".

Recommendations

Participants made several recommendations for using the data to improve LGBTQI+ livelihoods.

Re-evaluate how services are delivered to LGBTQI+ people. Ensure that protocols are followed and all parties (funders, governments, CSOs, NGOs, etc.) are held accountable for funding relevant programmes and initiatives.

Hold donors accountable. Some participants stated that CSOs should refuse funding if donors do not allow them to pay for administrative costs or fund projects that are relevant to their clients and the wider community.

Donors and governments must collaborate more closely with CSOs to ensure that they are meeting the LGBTQI+ community's needs. This includes providing funding to cover organisations' administrative and staffing costs and allowing CSOs to choose how to disperse grant funds.

Lobby the government to support LGBTQI+ equality by creating inclusive public sector employment policies and workspaces.

Engage with the private sector to create more inclusive, diverse work environments.

Ensure that funding creates employment opportunities for members of the community who do not work with CSOs full-time (e.g., stipends for short-term projects, etc.).

Use the data to create sustainable micro- or macro-level programmes to employ members of the community.

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Hold the development sector accountable to inclusion. Many economic development organisations partner with governments that engage in practices of exclusion, which stifles their ability to effectively work with LGBTQI+ people.

Encourage donors and funding agencies to hire more community members and activists. Development organisations should rely more heavily on people who are intimately affected by the issues and can suggest strategies that will effect change. As one participant noted, working with the community directly can help development be more effective.

Lobby governments to decriminalise sex work.

Create social enterprises so that when funding is unavailable or insufficient, CSOs can sustain themselves.

Urge insurance companies and governments to recognise same-sex couples so that partners can get access to benefits, pension, insurance pay-outs, etc.

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Roundtable 4: Who Gets Counted and Who Counts: Challenges of Data Capture and Analysis of LGBTQI+ Population Groups in the Caribbean with a Focus on Education and Implications for Human Capital – Taitu Heron and Karin Santi

"**No data; no problem. No problem; no solution**." This quote exemplifies the sobering reality of what inadequate data representation means for the LGBTQI+ community and other marginalised groups. In this session, development specialist, Taitu Heron, reinforced the importance of data and data collection in helping organisations identify and solve problems more effectively. Data, the researcher noted, determines who will be factored in and who will not. These decisions depend on two things: *how* the data is collected and *why* it is collected.

Heron made the point that "**laws and standards are put in place to strengthen data collection and this process is fundamental to not [only] identifying but also describing social, economic, and environmental conditions which governments and stakeholders are unaware of**". Statistics are instrumental to planning, governing, and developing societies, including people, institutions, and businesses, she said. In short, if a democracy is to be progressive, then statistics and data collection are fundamental.

Data Collection, the Legal System, and Inclusion

Heron stated that data models in the Caribbean "**follow the structure of the United Nations Fundamental Principles of Official Statistics (UNFPOS), which provide 'a solid basis for all ethical and quality-related conceptual documents throughout the world'. Adherence to these principles is a necessary precondition for good practices in official statistics**."

However, Heron pointed out that data collection models can sometimes be inept and therefore inaccurate. One example is the fact that "**the data collection models in the Caribbean highlight household models of nuclear families: mother, father, and children**." Theron noted, "**while this has been expanded to include extended families as well as male-headed households and female-headed households, there has been no consideration of alteration to show LGBTQI+ households**". This puts LGBTQI+ people at a disadvantage because are not being factored into representations of what Caribbean families look like.

The researcher also mentioned data access and data and the law. Very little primary data is available online, she noted, and the little data that can be found is not always easily accessible. On the other hand, when data is successfully collected, it is often done in accordance with legal guidelines, particularly in the case of vital statistics. As a result, the statistical structures and other constitutional conditions ultimately define and, in some cases, affect the rights, definitions, and protections of citizens.

In addition, Heron stated, critical decisions are made based on the information gathered from the population. This comprises influential data such as births and deaths, and demographics including annual income, occupation, and language. Thus, the socio-economic, political, and cultural progress of a country is determined by the data presented. This has real-life consequences for the groups that are

excluded and unrepresented and often means their experiences and issues are neither evaluated nor taken seriously, she said.

The researcher pointed out the implications of using out-of-date methodologies and inconsistent practices, as well as the failure to include new practices and groups. When people are omitted, she said, "**this has an effect on other primary surveys including, education, and labour surveys and surveys of living conditions**". These methods of data collection also fail to address gaps in the research.

Heron stated, "some of the readily accessible data, extracted from secondary sources such as academic papers, journals, research reports, do not include LGBTQI+ members and are therefore not always 100% accurate sources of information where LGBTQI+ people are concerned". She also noted, "**due to the legislation in place, definitions of 'sex' are a problem, as there is little to no room to expand categories to include LGBTQI+ people**".

Heron also discussed sampling, and remarked it "**is a problem as it also uses data from the categories established by the census**". However, she noted that independent research can combat this issue: "**An independent researcher who controls the sample can extend the categories to include LGBTQI+ people**." Heron noted that this inclusion is necessary because data on the issues LGBTQI+ people face is crucial to understanding these problems and ultimately uncovering solutions.

Human Capital and Economic Development

In addition to inclusion in data collection, Heron stated, accumulating human capital is important to LGBTQI+ people because it is a contributor to economic growth and social development. She highlighted the correlation between more education, better employment, and greater earnings. She cited research from the World Bank, which suggests "**delivering better outcomes in children's health and learning can have a profound effect on incomes of people and countries with returns far into the future**".

She also referenced the Human Capital Index (HCI), which measures countries' current productivity levels and the expected productivity of the next generation of their workers. The index shows that due to significant human capital gains, Trinidad and Tobago and Jamaica are now the highest-ranking Caribbean countries. However, the lack of comparable data does not allow researchers to measure the productivity and additional factors of other regional territories. Once again, she stated, the lack of data presents a problem and excludes regional communities from adequate representation.

Heron noted that investment in ensuring "**international machinery is robust and up-to-date**" is instrumental, as the absence of fully functional and contemporary processes prevents adequate data collection and increases the reliance on secondary data. She said that "**the periodic surveys which need to be happening every two to three years, along with 10 year surveys, are not happening and this is why the gaps exist**".

In the face of this omission on the part of NGOs and governments, Heron highlighted the importance of CSOs as data collectors and analysts. If not for their efforts, she asserted, there would be no data available on LGBTQI+ people. She stated that governments' priority is on accumulating data for coastal management, culture and creative sectors, energy management, and unpaid work. However, expanding

categories to include and better showcase LGBTQI+ people is either very low on their list of priorities or not considered at all.

Exclusive and Unequal Caribbean Education Systems

This exclusion trickles down into the education systems, Heron noted. Just as statistical methods and machinery must be updated to give more accurate accounts, "**there is also a desperate need for transformation to align with the needs of educators, learners, the labour market and entrepreneurial innovation,**" Heron said. According to the researcher, after more than 20 years, "**the education model remains unchanged and therefore unable to meet the demands of the 21st century**". She added, "**while governments invest in education and are seen as committed to educational development, school systems still mirror inequality, exclusion, and discrimination. Moreover, conformity is praised over innovation and creativity and this directly affects human capital**."

Human capital relies on an innovative and creative population that can solve their own problems in the occupational world. Heron noted that the opposite is happening in the region. The education system does not align with the requirements of human capital as it "**teaches [students] how to follow the same set of instructions to get a job**".

She also argued that it is not modelled after what is in demand from employers—creativity, innovation, and business ownership. "**There is a mismatch with persons exiting the education system and entering into labour markets,**" she said, "**and there is insufficient research to highlight this lack of alignment**."

While the statistics are supposed to help government make improvements to the school system, this is not occurring. Heron indicated that "**statistics on enrolment rates, completions, drop-out rates, number of teachers, quality of schooling […] is not accessible. This information does not exist because of how the data is collected**."

She also noted that the information that is collected fails to "**include differences in sex, gender, sexual orientation and gender identity**". Researchers assume that the learners are heterosexual and cisgender, which leaves LGBTQI+ students to navigate secondary school in a space that does not represent them, their issues, their needs, nor how their academic performance is affected. "**How do we begin to work with educators to look at curriculum which disadvantages LGBTQI+ members and reform it to create inclusive spaces?**" she asked. She stated that discrimination and stereotyping affect how LGBTQI+ learners enter the workforce and, ultimately, their capacity for maximum productivity.

Heron closed by stating that before the COVID-19 pandemic, there were human capital deficits between children in the Caribbean and countries in the Global North. According to the World Bank's 2020 Human Capital Index, regional children can only expect to achieve 55% of the full productive potential a child is expected to attain. "**If we have limited data on LGTBQ+ citizens, what are the implications for human capital and how we are attaining full productivity?**" she asked. "**If we see what the limited data already tells us, is everyone really being counted? If we follow the policy rhetoric of education ministries across the region–'leave no one behind'–what does that mean when the reality tells a different story? What do we do to count?**"

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Key Issues

Karin Santi guided a discussion among participants, who noted two ways in which inadequate data collection and exclusionary research practices harm LGBTQI+ people.

One participant stated that while the term 'other' (in relation to 'male', 'female', 'other') is broadly used to describe those who do not fall on either side of the gender binary, it is not specific enough. Researchers who want to adequately capture LGBTQI+ experiences must take this into consideration during their data design and collection.

Another attendee highlighted that in many countries, "**LGBTQI+ members are criminalised simply for existing**" and are therefore excluded from many social systems. As a result, the challenges they face are not shown in data.

Participants also discussed how power plays a role in who gets counted and who does not and what solutions exist to help solve the problem.

One noted, "**to make non-institutionalised populations institutionalised, power forces have to be contested**". They continued: "**The prevalence of the 'straight, white person' and 'nuclear families' needs to be contested and this will be the starting point for institutionalisation [the action of establishing something as a convention or norm in an organisation or culture]**."

Another attendee agreed. They noted that contesting power is reliant on the language of who is contesting it. The commenter stated, "**a shift from adversarial dialogue to thoughtful conversation needs to happen**".

In addition, participants stated that the public must be made aware of LGBTQI+ issues so that members of the community do not have to "**prove that they are deserving of equality, basic rights, and everything they are excluded from**".

Recommendations

In addition to the above discussions, participants recommended the following actions.

Start with data collection: The reliance on secondary sources can decrease when more studies are done with a focus on LGBTQI+ people in education, the workplace, etc. This approach must be research-based and thorough to ensure that LGBTQI+ people are included.

Separate sex from gender in data design, collection, and analysis.

Train educators: Teachers must be (re)taught and (re)trained on how to be more sensitive to LGBTQI+ students.

Partner with insurance companies: Activists should urge insurance companies to allow LGBTQI+ people and their families to access the benefits and healthcare that cisgender and heterosexual people receive. Participants noted that if insurance companies move in a direction that is pro-LGBTQI+, this would likely have a positive effect on other businesses and cause them to revise their exclusive policies and procedures.

Lobby regional governments: Activists must continue to engage government regarding constitutional and educational reform. Governments dictate how their countries run and where money is allocated. As a result, it is instrumental that common ground be found between government officials and LGBTQI+ advocates so they can discuss and agree on solutions to the issues the community faces.

Create connections with other marginalised groups: Like the LGBTQI+ community, people with disabilities are often omitted from studies on healthcare, education, and employment. Both groups are victims of stigma, discrimination, and exclusion. The LGBTQI+ and disabled communities must work together to agitate for equal rights for each group.

Learn from others' best practices: The statistical bureaus in Canada and Australia have added more representative categories to their research initiatives. These changes include aggregated and disaggregated LGBTQI+ population groups in primary data collection surveys, beginning with the census. More focus must be placed on how these governments and agencies sought out and implemented solutions. With more solutions-oriented data, regional activists can gain more progress in solving the problems LGBTQI+ persons face.

Lobby for more funding: Collecting data and changing data methodologies is expensive work. Regional governments (and some donors) are not always eager to put money into research on LGBTQI+ issues. However, to have proper machinery and the necessary resources to execute the research, collect data, and compile and present the facts, funding is necessary. Activists must continue to urge governments to invest in LGBTQI+ issues.

Build partnerships: Collaborations allow those with common agendas to form a starting point to work on problems. These links must be made across sectors and among NGOs. Advocates must build partnerships with academic institutions, research centres and consultants, and NGOs that address educational rights and disabilities.

Engage the private sector: Even if governments are reluctant to support or help, many private sector organisations will invest in the community once they can see evidence of how LGBTQI+ inclusion can contribute to GDP. Activists must use available data to show the private sector how much the global LGBTQI+ community can contribute to their local economies.

Incorporate vulnerabilities into data collection and analysis: Data collection methods should account for the increased vulnerabilities LGBTQI+ people face just by existing in a heteronormative and cis-normative context. Researchers must also highlight how susceptible LGBTQI+ members are to discrimination in education, employment, and healthcare.

Increase LGBTQI+ representation in government: Members of the LGBTQI+ community should be given more opportunities to take part in elective politics and serve as government officials. The community members who have access to the highest levels of local and regional decision-making would be able to help the community and effect change from the inside out.

Roundtable 5: The Privy Council (JCPC) Hinders the Progress of LGBTQI+ Rights in the Caribbean Region – Dr Leonardo J Raznovich and Dr Kimahli Powell

During his presentation, Dr Leonardo J Raznovich examined how the region's judicial progress on LGBTQI+ issues is often hampered by favourable decisions to progress rights being overturned or negative decisions being upheld by the Privy Council (JCPC). Referencing the historical connection between the Caribbean and the UK, he mentioned that many of the views regional countries hold on the LGBTQI+ community are directly descended from colonial ideologies. "**Criminalisation, discrimination, and segregation in the English-speaking Caribbean… are a direct consequence of the anti-LGBTQI+ colonial laws exported to the region by the UK**," he said. However, he also noted that several regional courts had recently ruled favourably on cases brought by LGBTQI+ activists regarding discriminatory laws. Despite the progress at regional level, all those cases were overturned when they reached the Privy Council during the appeal process.

He noted that in a recent study, entitled 'The human right to respect sexual orientation and gender identity in the Caribbean and Latin America - Current situation and perspectives'

where he and co-researcher ER Zaffaroni analysed regional cases involving LGBTQI+ issues, the data showed that the JPCP has

"STOPPED PROGRESS REGARDING LGBTQI+ RIGHTS MADE BY CARIBBEAN ISLANDS OVER THE PAST 15 YEARS".

Dr Raznovich referenced a 2018 speech by former UK Prime Minister Theresa May in which she apologised for the anti LGBTQI+ colonial laws stating that they "**were often put in place by my own country. They were wrong then, and they are wrong now**." She continued: "**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**." The apology coincidentally took place while Dr Raznovich and his co-researcher were conducting the study.

However, Dr Raznovich argued that the JCPC "**renders [her] apology meaningless**" in that it "**appears to perpetuate the anti-LGBTQI+ colonial laws by upholding their constitutionality**". The UK's formal position is that the government recognises and embraces members of the LGBTQI+ community, as noted after the presentation by a representative from the British High Commission of Barbados. Yet, as Dr Raznovich explained during his presentation, the most senior British judges sitting in the JCPC are often not in line with this claim as evidenced by their rulings, particularly in relation to Caribbean countries.

How the JCPC Perpetuates Discrimination

In 2007, the Court of Appeal of Trinidad and Tobago (COATT) found that the Equal Opportunity Act 2000 was unconstitutional because it excluded sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression and sex characteristics (SOGIESC) from legal protection in breach of the equal protection clause of the Bill of Rights. The JCPC reversed that decision. In its the ruling, the JCPC did not address the COATT's decision; instead, the judges found that it was not unconstitutional on other grounds. Dr Raznovich noted:

> "This was a constitutional case. The issue was whether the Equality Act 2001, by excluding expressly from its scope SOGIESC within the meaning of 'sex', was in breach of the equality clause of the bill of rights. The [COATT] said yes. [However], the JCPC did not answer the question. Instead, they focused on whether Parliament was the right forum to determine whether a section of the population should be protected from discrimination or not."

How the JCPC Perpetuates Segregation

Dr Raznovich then referenced *Day and Bodden-Bush v. The Governor of the Cayman Islands* and used it to illustrate how the JCPC perpetuates segregation through their rulings.

In 2018, Day and Bodden-Bush, a lesbian couple, applied for a marriage licence. The Deputy Registrar denied their application. In response, they challenged the constitutionality of the country's Marriage Law, on which the decision was based, in the Grand Court of the Cayman Islands. The court found that their constitutional rights to private and family life, freedom of conscience, freedom to manifest their belief in marriage, and freedom from discrimination in the enjoyment of their rights were violated. The court then used its constitutional power to modify the Marriage Law and amend the definition of marriage to "**the union between two people as one another's spouses**".

However, the Deputy Registrar and Attorney General appealed. The Court of Appeal of the Cayman Islands (COACI) reversed the Grand Court's decision on the grounds that the country's constitutional provisions for marriage does not require same-sex marriage. Although the COACI declared that Day and Bodden-Bush were constitutionally entitled to a legal protection that is functionally equivalent to marriage, the couple were not satisfied and took the case to the JCPC.

The JCPC upheld the Court of Appeal's ruling, dismissing the plaintiffs' appeal. The JCPC's judgment, Dr Raznovich explained, found that LGBTQI+ people are not entitled to equality, entrenching segregation on grounds of sexual orientation—an immutable personal characteristic—at the constitutional level.

How the JCPC Perpetuates Criminalisation

The research also noted that the JCPC "**endorse[d] criminalisation and discrimination in perpetuity of LGBTI people, which sets laws back to 1967**". In *Chandler v The State*, the plaintiff was sentenced to death by hanging, the mandatory sentence for murder in Trinidad and Tobago. Chandler appealed the judgment, which was upheld by the COATT, although it was later commuted to life imprisonment.

Chandler and his legal team took the case to the JCPC arguing that the mandatory death penalty is unconstitutional in that it inhibits individuals' rights not to be "**deprived of life, liberty, and security except by due process of law**", found in Section 4 of the country's 1976 Constitution. Their argument also relied on Section 5, which prohibits the imposition of cruel and unusual punishment, including the mandatory death penalty. The courts, including the JCPC, agree that mandatory death penalty infringes all these constitutional clauses. However, the mandatory death penalty falls under Section 6 of the constitution, commonly referred to as the "general savings clause", which had been interpreted by the JCPC in *Boyce v the Queen* [2004] UKPC 32 to provide absolute immunity to colonial laws from any constitutional challenge for breach of the bill of rights, regardless of how "inhumane or degrading" they are.. This decision of the JCPC was found by the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (IACHR) to be in breach of international law (*Boyce v Barbados* ACHR Series C no 169 of 20 Nov 2007) and was reversed by the Caribbean Court of Justice (CCJ) for Barbados and Guyana in three decisions between 2018 and 2022.

The JCPC, notwithstanding these precedents, unanimously dismissed Chandler's appeal on grounds of *stare decisis* (i.e., confirming the decision in 2004). Part of their reasoning rested on the notion that altering a law protected by the savings clause would affect all existing laws. "**To accept the appellant's interpretation**," they said, "**would be to alter the basis upon which the government and people of Trinidad and Tobago have conducted their affairs since 1962 and to introduce considerable uncertainty into the law**"[4]. *Chandler,* Dr Raznovich explained, is now a binding precedent and perpetuates the harm for which former Prime Minister May apologised in 2018 by upholding the enforceability of colonial laws, which includes criminalisation and discrimination of LGBTQI+ people.

Dr Raznovich remarked that the JCPC had competing authoritative choices. The JCPC could have returned to its own decision in *Roodal v Trinidad and Tobago* [2003] UKPC 78, a decision less than a year earlier, in which the judges construed the general savings clause differently to the decision in 2004, holding that the "general savings clause" may prohibit the court from relying upon the bill of rights of the constitution to *invalidate* a colonial law, but it does not prohibit the court from modifying the law to bring it into conformity with the constitution where possible. The JCPC could have also, taking into consideration the 2007 decision of the IACHR, followed similar reasoning as the CCJ. The JCPC instead preferred to ignore them and to choose an outcome that led to restricted expansion of rights, favoured criminalisation and discrimination, and enforced "inhumane or degrading" colonial laws.

Dr Raznovich also pointed out a seeming double standard in the UK's handling of LGBTQI+ cases when it comes to Caribbean countries and overseas territories. He noted that based on the savings clause, the 1533 anti-sodomy laws instated in England by Henry VIII would be immune from constitutional scrutiny by the judiciary of an independent nation *in perpetuity*. Yet, the United Kingdom repealed buggery laws for England and Wales in 1967.

In linking *Chandler* to the LGBTQI+ community's rights, Dr Raznovich noted that many anti-LGBTQI+ laws fall under the savings clause in Caribbean countries that use the Privy Council as the final court of

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[4] Case details: Chandler (Appellant) v The State (Respondent) No 2 (Trinidad and Tobago) [2022] UKPC 19 On appeal from the Court of Appeal of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago - https://www.jcpc.uk/press-summary/jcpc-2020-0051.html#:~:text=On%2017%20August%202011%20the,the%20%E2%80%9C1925%20Act%E2%80%9D).

appeal. Trinidad and Tobago alone has 27 laws that deal with discrimination, according to the country's former Attorney General.

The ruling sent the message that "**it doesn't matter how inhumane or degrading the colonial laws are, the judiciary cannot touch them**," he stated. Moreover, "in the case of certain countries, it means that colonial laws never die" after the decision in *Pinder v The Queen* (an appeal from Bahamas), with the effect that parliaments of these nations can repealed colonial law but "reinstate" them anytime and that reinstated colonial law regains its full status of "colonial" hence the judiciary cannot touch them by effect of the "general savings clause".

Why the JCPC is Wrong as a Matter of Principle

Dr Raznovich asserted that the JCPC's rulings are wrong in principle. He stated that in '*Attorney General for Bermuda v Ferguson and others*', the judges reversed the unanimous judicial bench of the jurisdiction. The first judgement had been from the Bermuda Supreme Court, which ruled that the removal of the right to same-sex marriage unconstitutional on the grounds that it interfered with LGBTQI+ citizens' freedom of conscience. On appeal, the Bermuda Court of Appeal upheld the lower court's ruling on the basis that the country's Domestic Partnership Act, which allows same-sex couples in domestic partnerships to receive rights similar to married heterosexual couples but outlawed same-sex marriage, was based on religious reasoning and, therefore, unconstitutional.

The JCPC's reversal hinged on two main points:

- the observation that Bermuda's constitution does not prohibit discrimination on grounds of sexual orientation
- the view that the Bermuda legislature's constitutional mandate to facilitate peace, order, and good government allowed lawmakers to pass religious motivated legislation and thus to prohibit same-sex marriage since most Bermudians are against it.

Dr Raznovich argued that in reversing the unanimous judicial bench of Bermuda, the JCPC "**[cancelled] the principle of equality and [brought] in religion to justify it, [giving] the majority the right to impose their religious view over the minorities**". The JCPC, Dr Raznovich asserted, allowed Bermuda to "**segregate in perpetuity a minority based on an immutable personal characteristic (i.e., sexual orientation) and yet protect religious views or political ideas, which are choices and are changeable**". In effect, the JCPC rescinded the secular principle of law. Iranian authorities would be delighted with such an outcome, Dr Raznovich added.

He also asserted that the JCPC worked against the principles of devolution and self-governance, which are central in the relationship between the UK and its overseas territories, by reverting every single judge in Bermuda that construed their constitution to respect equality and human dignity.

The second reason rests on a legal principle called the *living tree* "**which established that constitutions are organic and must be read and construed in a 'large and liberal' manner to adapt to changing times**". In other words, the principle states that constitutions must be interpreted within the context of current society and not the context of when they were drafted or amended.

This doctrine was first introduced by the JCPC in 1929 when it overturned a Canadian court's ruling that women were not included in the definition of "persons" according to the British North America Act. The JCPC's ruling allowed women to become members of Canada's Senate; a year later, the country swore in its first female senator. Dr Raznovich noted, if the JCPC had ruled in Canada as it had in Bermuda, "**we'd probably have a different conclusion there**".

Moving Forward

In conclusion, Dr Raznovich noted that the JCPC has "**never delivered a decision to further LGBTI rights in the Caribbean**". In fact, he asserted, it actively intervened and "**stopped in its tracks every instance of regional judicial progress regarding LGBTQI+ rights delivered by Caribbean home-grown judges in the last 15 years**".

He closed his presentation by offering two suggestions on how to navigate this issue.

First, he asserted the UK government must restrict access on appeal to the JCPC to governments "**who are unable to convince their own Caribbean judges of the atrocities they want to do**" but then go to London and get permission from the UK judiciary. Dr Raznovich stated that the JCPC was created by the UK Parliament and hence "**the UK Parliament must step in and say that [their] judges will not hear appeals on matters of human rights if [those governments] are not able to convince their own judges**". This process could be done by amending Section 3 of the Privy Council Act 1833 to exclude "**appeal(s) from Governments on matters decided by the final court of appeal of the jurisdiction in favour of expanding the rights of the bill of rights of the constitution**".

He also noted that the JCPC comprises foreign judges from an extra-continental court. He argued that if a government cannot outsource legal matters to another parliament and claim to be independent, then logically it cannot outsource constitutional judicial determination and claim to be independent either—particularly when the foreign appellate court "**puts those countries in collision with human rights as the JCPC is doing in Trinidad and Tobago and Jamaica**". Dr Raznovich stated that it might be "**time for the OAS to reconsider the status within the OAS of countries who rely on foreign extra continental judicial power to make decisions for clearly not fully independent countries**".

Key issues

Jamaica and the Savings Law Clause

After the presentation, a Jamaican activist asked Dr Raznovich whether the country's LGBTQI+ advocates would have a case if they took their government to court. Noting that their legislation has a savings clause, the commenter questioned whether the work they have been doing to prepare a legal case would result in a favourable verdict. "**Where do we go from here?**" they queried.

In response, Dr Raznovich stated that in Jamaica, the "**colonial laws have been crystalised for eternity by the JCPC [rulings]**". As a result, just like in the Bahamas, JCPC judgments would be based on protecting the colonial laws rather than interpreting the constitution in a way that allows for equal human rights.

The JCPC and Parliament

Another participant noted that effectively the JCPC has done nothing to protect or advance the rights related to SOGIE. They asked two questions: What does that mean for strategic litigation? What does that mean in terms of the role of parliament?

Dr Raznovich noted that the judges on the JCPC, admittedly, do not understand the bill of rights or constitutional system because the UK does not have a codified constitution. This is what Lord Bigham explained in a judgment in 2007. As a result of their lack of understanding, they often treat the court and rulings as administrative law, rather than constitutional law. Dr Raznovich also stated that, in the case of the Cayman Islands specifically, lawyers are not trained in British colonial law. This, he said, puts the attorneys at a disadvantage because they do not have the necessary training to develop arguments that will effectively challenge the law when cases reach the JCPC.

In terms of parliament's role, he noted that the differences between how the UK and Caribbean parliaments are structured affects how the JCPC rules. In the UK system, he stated, there is "parliamentary supremacy", which means that the Supreme Court will not interfere with matters decided on by the parliament. In essence, as they are the same judges, "**the JCPC has decided as if because colonial laws were passed during the times of the British Empire, they should also be exempted from judicial scrutiny, giving governments absolute impunity to act as they wish, even inhumanely, if their actions are the consequence of enforcing 'inhumane and degrading colonial laws'**".

However, in the Caribbean, the constitution is supreme and the judiciary in charge of controlling the constitutionality of laws enacted by parliament. "**The decent and independent step**," he stated, would be for "**parliament [to] repeal the savings clause**". Failing that the matter has to be discussed and settled in international fora because the British judiciary is failing to understand the role of a constitutional court.

Trinidad and Tobago and the Savings Law Clause

A delegate from Trinidad and Tobago stated that the country's attorney general gave "**verbal commitments about convening a council to revise the definition of 'sex'**" in the constitution. The activist asked Dr Raznovich for advice on working towards changing the definition strategically.

Again, Dr Raznovich noted that because of the savings law clause and Trinidad and Tobago's use of the JCPC, chances are that any such motions will not be enough in relation to the colonial laws that discriminate against LGBTQI+ people. Moreover, the word 'sex' itself has been construed by the British courts as excluding SOGIE. However, he encouraged the activist to include sexual orientation to ensure that the right is protected.

Roundtable 6: Accessing Development Financing – Philip R Crehan and Justus Eisfeld

In this presentation on economic development financing, the presenters discussed the potential for LGBTQI+ organisations to begin and navigate economic development institutions in their advocacy. In this, they focused on the Multilateral Development Banks (MDBs), especially the Caribbean Development Bank (CDB), Inter-American Development Bank (IDB), and the World Bank. Specifically, the presenters advocated for more inclusive programmes and spaces tailored to helping LGBTQI+ people, with the idea that these economic development institutions can do much more to include LGBTQI+ people into their data collection efforts, consultations, programmes, and resource mobilization strategies.

Historically, civil society organisations have been very effective in engaging regional and international institutions to advance the human rights of LGBTQI+ people – with significantly less collective advocacy geared toward navigating economic development institutions. Crehan stated that there has been:

> A tremendous amount of advocacy for LGBTQI+ organisations navigating human rights systems. Years ago, these same organisations learned how to successfully navigate institutions like the UN and the OAS, and we now have better expectations, mechanisms, and processes to support the human rights of LGBTQI+ people and from the perspective of their treatment by the state. We should now learn how to collectively navigate the multilateral development banks and use their mechanisms and processes to better include LGBTQI+ people and work with them on an agenda that prioritises our economic inclusion and livelihoods.

Examining the Multilateral Development Banks (MDBs)

Crehan noted that although institutions like the World Bank and IDB (and to a lesser extent, the CDB) historically focused only on macroeconomic growth and neoliberal economic integration, recently they have moved toward country-led agreements that focus on human development and the socioeconomic drivers of poverty, including an approach to promoting gender equality and social inclusion outcomes. He said that shift has created an institutional environment in which the banks can—and are expected to—now address the economic development impact of homophobia and transphobia. This has given even more recent impetus for the World Bank and IDB to incorporate policies that prohibit LGBTQI+ exclusion from its processes, as well as working with its clients (governments) to mitigate homophobic and transphobic policies that formally exclude LGBTQI+ people.

Yet, the bulk of these policies from the World Bank, IDB, and other development institutions tend to be minimal and have not been operationalised at the country-level and throughout the region.

Thus, Crehan stated, there remains a lot that an organised based of organizations can do to elevate and amplify this advocacy pathway.

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In addition, he noted that the banks' data collection from governments could be a key aspect of effecting policy changes for LGBTQI+ people. "**We talked about the need for state-run data… and [inclusion] into census and state diagnostics. One way that we could do that is with support from the development banks [and for them] to say to their clients, to the governments, 'We want to see [LGBTQI+ representation] in those diagnostics because this is matter of inclusive economic growth'.**"

Participants' Remarks

Participants included representatives of the MDBs, as well as the governmental funders of those institutions, and LGBTQI+ organisations. Some key issues that emerged were how the MDBs and organisations can better work together to ensure that funding gets to the community.

Equal Access to Funding

At the start of the discussion, one participant queried whether (1) the MDBs give money specifically to governments and (2) the funds could be given directly to organizations (and, by extension, the LGBTQI+ organisational community. Crehan responded that the funds are predominantly given to governments through loans or grants. The governments, in turn, are tasked with ensuring that the funds are appropriately allocated to programs as well as NGOs and CSOs. Some funding initiatives, he stated, also provide targeted ways for the community to receive resources, such as through dedicated portfolios or private sector programmes.

Justus Eisfeld commented on funding for NGOs and shared how leaders can move resources from the organisations to the people. He noted that "**getting money into communities…means getting money [to] people who want to start a business, making it possible for them to get a loan from wherever they need to get a loan from, [and funding] schooling for people working to finish their [education]**". Eisfeld also discussed an example of a community in Buenos Aires, Argentina, where trans women run a school staffed by teachers provided by the government. "**The school is a safe space for trans women to learn, but at the same time they get the quality education because the teachers are… provided by the government,**" he said. Eisfeld also stated, "**it's important to continue investing in CSOs because they're the backbone of our communities and at the same time we also have to look beyond just CSOs [to] investing in queer communities in a larger sense**".

A participant noted that although access to funding is an issue, problems also arise regarding what funders permit organizations to do with the money they receive. "**A lot of the times the funds are available,**" they said, "**but you are not able to do the groundwork needed because you have so many stipulations and requirements to follow that you're doing what the funder wants but not what's needed on the ground.**" They stated that the conversation "**needs to be more about tailoring the access and the funds so that the people who are on the ground doing the work can use the funds the way [the community needs] and not the way you're told to use it [because then] it still doesn't reach the populations that it's intended to reach**".

One participant suggested that lending institutions instruct governments to give a percentage of all funding directly to organizations and NGOs that serve LGBTQI+ people. Governments, they noted, often borrow with the intent of investing in physical infrastructure and other development; however, they stated, these initiatives do not benefit LGBTQI+ people directly. "**We as CSOs can [lobby]—not to the governments, but through agents—to the World Bank and IDB. For example, if the IDB is giving money**

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to Guyana [we can advocate for] 50% of employees to be women or [for the project to] have a gender bias [in favour of women]. The same thing goes [for the LGBTQI+ community. The project] must have an LGBTQI+ balance of beneficiaries".

One delegate referenced the Global Fund's (GF) Country Coordinating Mechanism (CCM). They noted that the GF "**realised that the key populations were still key populations because governments didn't prioritise them. So, the GF was able to create parts of the mechanism [that state] where the biggest chunk of the money [goes] is still decided at country level by the governments… but there's also money that's reaching the key populations whether or not the governments want it to**". They continued: "**If the GF can do it, why not others?**"

Data Collection

Census data, which one participant noted is economists' preferred data set, does not currently capture the LGBTQI+ people in any country in the region. They stated that despite the push for more data, the available data must be made accessible to the community while still being useful to economists. Using organizations is an integral part of that strategy, they asserted. "**The community organisations know what's going on, how people end up in poverty, and what we will help them get out of poverty. They know because they talk to their constituents. That's data that's very valuable and hard for institutions to get access to but crucial to design programmes that actually work.**"

Another commenter stated that LGBTQI+ advocates could use infrastructural projects and developments as "**an entry point to advance policy and get data**". They queried whether funders could require governments to include LGBTQI+ identifiers in the census to access funding. "**They're big on data and we know they'll collect info on ethnicity, race, gender, etc. so why not sexual orientation and gender identities?**", they asked.

One delegate noted that innovative data collection is one step in the process of getting necessary support from funding institutions. Once the data is collected and submitted to decision makers, they noted, "**that's where the conversation around policy comes in. What are the policy initiatives that are going to be developed?**" They stated that CSOs do not always have to find ways to direct funding straight to the LGBTQI+ community but they could "**find ways to reduce barriers that LGBTQI+ people face in accessing certain things. Maybe we don't need a whole new mechanism; maybe we need to make mechanisms accessible.**"

Crehan noted that the development banks are more likely to receive permission to conduct small surveys than to "**do something larger like national census building or working with a statistical agency**". Those, he stated, require "**government demand and interest**". Educating CSOs on how governments can work with the MDBs is key to being able to conduct these major initiatives, he asserted, noting that there are several guides available on how activists can navigate these bilateral relationships. "**The LGBTQI+ community has done a really good job of understanding the [United Nations] and [Organisation of American States]. If we could do that with development, the sky is the limit... It's a matter of connecting those dots and seeing what's possible.**"

Funders and Governments

A representative from the United States Department of Treasury provided further insight into how banks allocate funding. "**The banks require the countries to ask for the specific help that they wish for**," they explained. However, they remarked "**before, and especially now in a COVID-19 environment, a lot of countries are unwilling to stretch out into the social infrastructure spaces when they are simply trying to meet budget obligations, energy needs, [etc.] for their countries**". As a result, social programmes, including those that would benefit LGBTQI+ people most, are not high on countries' priority lists. The representative noted that donors cannot provide funding for issues the governments have not identified. "**As much as I am a person with a voice who can push for these issues**," they told the activists in the room, "**until your representative governments ask for this kind of funding as part of what is available at the bank, then each country will only have a specific envelope available to them that's based on a lot of different aspects, like debt sustainability and how much they've borrowed for other programmes.**" They noted that the CSOs must lobby their respective governments to "**prioritise the livelihoods and lives of LGBTQI+ populations**" and ask for funding that would benefit the community.

Another delegate, a representative from a global economic institution, agreed. "**At the end of the day**," they said, "**it's about priority setting of the countries receiving the funds [because] we subscribe to the philosophy of using national systems and priorities. Countries themselves have to set the priorities.**"

A representative from the World Bank added that the institution has made improvements to its funding frameworks over the years by working in tandem with CSOs. They also stated that the Bank has "**mechanisms and measures in a loan [approval] to ensure that a minimum set of engagement is done [with key populations]**". However, they also noted that despite these improvements, gaps still exist and several areas can be improved. Responding to another participant's comment about how often organizations are only contacted in the late stages of the implementation process, the World Bank representative stated, "**the fact that consultations are rushed to approve a process definitely shouldn't be the case. And the spirit of having robust consultation frameworks within the environmental and social frameworks of the Bank is precisely to avoid this rushed process that used to be much more common in the past**".

The World Bank representative also noted that the organisation has grievance mechanisms available to the public to encourage dialogue between funders and citizens. However, they admitted, "**the problem is that the public doesn't know that mechanism exists**". Funders must take responsibility for this oversight, they stated, adding that:

> A consultation may not be enough to explain the project. These are very complex… It takes a lot to explain the implications, benefits, the potential impacts. So, informing our counterparts—and not just governments but CSOs—about how these grievance mechanisms work is fundamental. It cannot be just an email. There are communities that don't have access to internet. It has to be written down [or given via] oral communication. [It requires] trusting people on the ground that can relay that information.

As they continued, the representative also noted that there is no "**explicit investment**" in the LGBTQI+ community from many funders. "**There's work and research**," they stated, "**but it's true that extra steps that have been done with other communities, such as Indigenous people… and people with**

disabilities **[have not been taken for the LGBTQI+ community]**". They stated that the next phase must "**follow from the good experiences [with other communities and be] built on more inclusive data collection that leads to more systematic engagement in projects**".

"**When we talk about what it means to really access investment funding**," another participant said, "**one of the things we have to ask is, 'How to do we ensure that those funds are actually being appropriately allocated to vulnerable communities**?'". Referencing the World Bank's grievance mechanisms and their implementation deficit, the commenter stated, "**I think that that happens as the result of there not being proper internal policy around ensuring that these communities are being heard and no proper mechanisms or relationships that have been established to bring these people into the room**".

Crehan noted that some funding organisations have safeguards in place that benefit vulnerable populations and 'harder to reach' groups. The safeguards, he noted, use consultations and gender diagnostics to develop policies that prevent discrimination and ensure equal and equitable access to the key populations. "**The IDB has a standalone safeguard on gender and SOGIESC which places a responsibility between client (the government) and lender (the IDB) to make sure that there is equal access**," he noted. "**It's an incredible standard that exists when it comes to gender and LGBTQI+ people that we should really be exploring.**"

The History of Lending and Borrowing in the Caribbean and Latin America

One participant said that stakeholders must "**take into consideration that there are uncomfortable histories related to lending and borrowing [in the region and] aspects that have been abusive and exploitative**". They noted Jamaica's relationship with the International Monetary Fund (IMF) as one of the most well-known examples of what can happen when borrowing goes wrong. "**In this region**," they stated, "**there's fear around accessing these institutions and these mechanisms because of the learned experience of hardship following such relationships**".

A representative of a funding agency corroborated this point:

> I had an interesting conversation with office of the special envoy for LGBTQI+ people in Argentina. When I asked how we can support [them] in terms of working with the Bank, she said, "We don't want any more debt" because of the issues they've had with the IMF that ruined the economy for a decade. They're adamant about not taking on any more debt. The issue of debt is one that you have to carefully consider in each country and in each country's context.

Another participant also noted that the legacies of "**colonialism, slavery, and the neo-colonial mandate of globalisation—which have shaped a lot of the economic policy in the region—[have] made it difficult for us to have meaningful conversations around what it means to spread wealth meaningfully because we aren't asking the question 'Where did this wealth come from?**'." They continued:

> Until we ask where the wealth came from, we can't have conversations about loans, because there's something almost insulting about me having to ask for my ancestors' money. [We must acknowledge that the] money is not earned from these countries having been in these positions of power accidentally; it is through exploitation and violence. I have to ask you back for my money to borrow and then pay interest.

LGBTQI+ Labels and Representation

A delegate noted that all official government intake forms provide only 'female' and 'male' as gender choices, stating:

> What have we done about it and what do we intend to do about it? We need to stop the complete erasure of the LGBTQI+ community! And if we're going to negotiate with the government whether rights, social contracting, or whatever it is, that is one of the major points that we need to make with them. And we need to make it with the donors and funders as well. If they're really interested in gender equality and helping the LGBTQI+ [community] to move forward to the 2030 agenda, these are the nuances we need to address.

Another participant agreed, noting that the language around the community's label(s) is often used by local governments as an excuse to hinder progress.

> All societies had their indigenous ways of understanding gender and sexuality and that has to be incorporated into the metrics…. There are words and terms and language that has been erased. To some extent, we have to acknowledge that the governments aren't asking for funding for these things because they see them as "white people ting". [They say], "We don't want this white people ting in this space and have to deal with that." As long as they see it as an external intervention and not an indigenous problem, they can continue to deny that the problem exists…

> We have to think through the ways in which we locally understand our identities. [We must] say, "Well alright, you don't want to put *that* [lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, etc.] on the form, well then put *this* [indigenous term]. Because maybe that might make you a little bit more inclined to actually finally realise, "Well, these people exist". Maybe you will put *bulla man* on the form because that's the word you're using; that's the word you know.

Moving Forward

One participant discussed how regional organizations can strengthen their inter- and intra-national advocacy structures.

> At the national level it's clear that there's an important need to develop the national advocacy framework [and] look at what our governments are doing in relation to partnership with bilateral and multilateral institutions. It's clear there's a huge knowledge gap [and no] understanding of what that relationship is… The Caribbean, being a lot of small island states with a lot of small CSOs, will have to take advantage of the synergies we have in regards to the mechanisms we're working with—whether it's the working group for the World Bank and SOGIESC, the Organization of American States' [Coalition of LGBTTTI and Sex Workers Organizations from Latin America and the Caribbean], or The Commonwealth Equality Network.

The delegate noted that these coalitions are also necessary to help stop funders from taking advantage of organizations. "**The Global Fund access [the countries] to give them their ideas and they ignore them 95% of time. What's left is that they leave you with crumbs to see that you are represented, you are consulted, and you should shut up**." They also stated that activists must "**learn the political game and navigate the political dishonesty when it comes to engaging [some donors]**".

Recommendations

Learn how to engage the development banks: Crehan ended the session by encouraging activists to create relationships with World Bank, IDB, and CDB country offices in their respective countries. He noted that the information on how governments and funders work together, what projects are being funded, and what priority areas have been identified are all public information.

Hold governments accountable regarding the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development: One participant said, "**It's important to keep agenda 2030 in mind and that the goal of our governments includes the promise to leave no one behind and reach those who are further left behind first**," they said. "**And those who are furthest left behind are usually in that position because their governments abandoned them**."

Conduct consultations with stakeholders: Advocates and governments must initiate conversations with development banks that will encourage them to invest in LGBTQI+ concerns and activities.

Lobby governments to include LGBTQI+ people in funding requests: When applicable and safe, governments should ask banks for funding specifically for LGBTQI+ issues; otherwise, funds will not be directed toward LGBTQI+ concerns and will be overlooked and perhaps excluded.

Roundtable 7: Poverty and Accessing Labour Markets – Liesl Theron and Alexus D'Marco

In this presentation, Liesl Theron and Alexus D'Marco gave a brief overview of several studies that looked at poverty, employment, and the LGBTQI+ community. For each of the three studies referenced, they broke down the socioeconomic results and used them to explore the realities of what work looks like for respondents and the community at large.

From Fringes to Focus

Theron outlined the '*From Fringes to Focus*' study, which was conducted between April 2019 and December 2020. Eight Caribbean countries were included in the project: Barbados, Belize, Guyana, Jamaica Haiti, Saint Lucia, Suriname, and Trinidad & Tobago. The researchers collected data from 1050 participants who identify as either transmasculine or lesbian, bisexual, or queer women.

The study explored the specificities of unemployment and alternative sources of income within the LGBTQI+ community. Theron noted that although the presentation focused on regional outcomes of the socioeconomic section, in the study report, the data was also disaggregated by country, sexual orientation, and gender identities.

The researchers asked respondents if they made enough money to provide for their basic needs every month. 34% of respondents indicated that they could usually cover their expenses, while 31% stated that they can always or sometimes fully support their needs. Only 4% indicated that they could never cover their basic monthly needs.

Participants from Haiti reported the highest level of unemployment (57%), while their counterparts in Trinidad and Tobago and Jamaica reported 30%.

Suriname followed with 21% and Guyana and Belize each had a 16% unemployment rate. Barbados had a rate of 14% and St Lucia came in at 11%, the lowest out of the sample.

Overall, 53% of the target population was fully employed. However, the other 47% struggled to meet their basic needs and financial obligations. As a result: 13% said that they hustled, bargained, and sold recycled goods or second-hand clothing; 13% had more than one job; 8% performed sexual favours for money; and 5% said that they engaged in unlawful/criminal activities.

Theron noted that those who fell into this category gained their income as part of the 'informal sector', which is often overlooked. The results from the study, Theron asserted, should make researchers reconsider the definitions of the terms 'employed' and 'unemployed' and consider "**Who is included and who is not?**".

Discrimination at Every Turn

The next study Theron referenced was the draft report *'Over-policed. Under-protected'* by UCTRANS and OutRight Action International. This research looked at the experiences of trans and gender diverse people in Trinidad and Tobago, Jamaica, The Bahamas, Guyana, Haiti, Barbados, Suriname, the Dominican Republic, St. Lucia, Aruba, and Belize.

24% of respondents in this study indicated that they were employed full-time, while 42% considered themselves unemployed. Theron noted that because the research was conducted during the COVID-19 pandemic, the rates might not reflect those from pre-pandemic times. The study's unemployment rate was almost four times higher than the average unemployment rate in the region during the same period. Theron compared the unemployment rates from '*From Fringes to Focus*', '*Over-policed. Under-protected*', and the UN global statistics. The studies showed that unemployment was higher among the region's LGBTQI+ people than in the general population. While 23% of the '*Fringes*' sample and 42% of the '*Over-policed*' sample indicated that they were unemployed, the UN reports a comparatively low 9.1% worldwide rate.

The Economic Case for LGBTQ+ Inclusion

The final study Theron discussed was '*The Economic Case for LGBT+ Inclusion in the Caribbean*' conducted by Open for Business.

The study's results showed that combatting homophobia and transphobia has both societal and economic benefits for regional countries, as well as significant costs when LGBTQ+ exclusion is advanced by the state. As evidenced by the data, discrimination and stigma harm both the LGBTQ+ community and wider society alike. LGBTQ+ exclusion costs the English-speaking Caribbean between US$1.5 and US$4.2 billion per year (between 2.1% and up to 5.7% of regional GDP). Exclusion can be seen in health disparities, labour output, diminished human capital, constraints on tourism, migration and brain drain, and experiences of violence. By analysing those themes and collected data, the researchers were able to demonstrate both the social and economic costs they carry.

In particular, the section on workplace perspectives provided insight into how LGBTQ+ people navigate the work environment and the challenges many of them face because of stigma and discrimination.

Theron highlighted a key finding from the research: gender norms continue to be a barrier in the workplace and, as a result, LGBTQ+ people must hide their identities to get hired or remain employed. This stops them from not only being able to fully express themselves, but it also prevents them and their spouses from receiving employment benefits that heterosexual couples can access. Individuals who do not operate within the binary, heteronormative system are denied numerous benefits that others can access.

More than 50% of the business leaders who took part in the research noted that LGBTQ+ people's presentation and expression of non-normative sexual orientation and gender identity was the most common reason for exclusion in the workplace. As Theron noted, this means that employment options are only available for members of the LGBTQ+ community but usually only once they pretend to be cisgender and heterosexual. This continues to fuel occupational segregation of LGBTQ+ people as well as drives labour market discrimination against them, as the economic report found.

Observations and Recommendations

At the end of the presentation, Theron gave several recommendations that would address the highlighted issues.

LGBTQI+ organisations must advocate for programmes and projects that focus on the economic challenges faced by members of the community, specifically queer women and transmasculine people. Projects should generate income, encourage entrepreneurship, and build employability. CSOs and local chambers of commerce could partner on such projects.

Governments must implement safe school policies to protect LGBTQI+ students and provide them with opportunities to access education past high/secondary school. Research shows that there is a clear link between education levels and employment prospects. As the studies presented showed, LGBTQI+ people face higher rates of unemployment, which can be traced back to the higher rates of early school dropouts.

Advocates, governments, and funders must acknowledge the psychological strain on trans and gender non-conforming people who struggle with their SOGIESC while facing violence and stigma from those around them. Theron noted that this recommendation has a direct link to both education and employment. The researcher argued that decision makers must place special emphasis on inclusive psychological support as part of the solution.

She noted that although LBQ women also experience these challenges, the experiences of trans and gender non-conforming people can often be more extreme, showing the need for dedicated strategies and interventions.

Hold law enforcement agencies accountable for protecting the rights of LGBTQI+ people. Even though LGBTQI+ people face high levels of harassment, violence and discrimination, few report these violations to law enforcement or seek aftercare – often due to the worry that law enforcement will treat them with disrespect or even harassment. Law enforcement workers must learn how to treat LGBTQI+ people with dignity and respect and take their concerns seriously, and begin to process their claims with professionalism and to the utmost standard of the law.

Implement strategies from the Yogyakarta Principles. This document comprises a set of principles on applying international human rights law to issues relating to SOGIESC. The authors, a group of human rights experts, developed and unanimously adopted the principles in 2006; the document was updated and supplemented with 10 more principles in 2017. Principal 12 addresses the right to work: "Everyone has the right to decent and productive work, to just and favourable conditions of work and to

protection against unemployment, without discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation or gender identity." The document goes on to state that governments must:

- "take all necessary legislative, administrative, and other measures to eliminate and prohibit discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity in public and private employment
- eliminate any discrimination based on sexual orientation or gender identity to ensure equal employment and advancement opportunities in all areas of public service".

Theron noted that activists and decision makers could use the Yogyakarta Principles to help develop inclusive policies.

Lobby governments to allow LGBTQI+ people's preferred gender markers to be changed and recognised on official documentation and identification. Referencing the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights' (IACHR) *Report on Trans and Gender Diverse Persons and Their Economic, Social, Cultural, and Environmental Rights* (2020), Theron noted that institutional and societal failure to acknowledge gender identity is one of the main obstacles that Caribbean trans people face. Those whose gender identities do not match their identification often cannot access education or work opportunities, which contributes to the cycle of poverty. Theron emphasised that prior medical procedures such as gender affirmation surgery, hormonal therapy, or sterilisation should not be required for the gender marker changes to be made.

Further, the IACHR report referenced the Yogyakarta Principles' assertation that governments must "ensure that official identity documents only include personal information that is relevant, reasonable and necessary as required by the law for a legitimate purpose". The principles' authors recommend eliminating sex and gender identification from passports, birth certificates, identification cards, and driver's licences.

Use toolkits as a guide to aid in policy development. Several regional and international organisations have released toolkits, guides, or best practice lists that can be used for developing inclusive policies. Theron referenced four that can be used to help regional activists and decision makers do the same:

- Global Action for Trans Equality's (GATE) policy brief *'Linking Sustainable Development Goals to Trans Work'*
- GATE's *'Report on Poverty: Impact on Trans and Gender Diverse Communities'*
- GATE's *'The SDGs & Trans Engagement: A Toolkit'*
- CAISO's *'Finding an Equal Place at Work: The Model LGBTI+ Workplace Policy for Trinidad and Tobago'*.

Link Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) to trans and gender diverse advocacy. Theron noted that 'Leave no one behind', the theme of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and SDGs, automatically encompasses the LGBTQI+ community, most of whom are excluded from national and international development initiatives. Discriminatory laws, projects that do not adequately address their needs, and negative social attitudes all negatively affect community members' individual and collective progress. The devastating effects—such as lower income, worse health outcomes, and lower education levels—are experienced by LGBTQI+ people globally. "**As a result**," Theron argued, "**poverty…will never be eradicated until no one is left behind, including LGBTQI+ persons**."

What Poverty Looks Like in the Caribbean LGBTQI+ Community

At the end of the presentation, Alexus D'Marco asked participants, "**What does poverty look like to you?**". Responses included:

- barriers to accessing education
- being bullied out of continuing primary or secondary school
- the inability to get a job in formal sectors
- worrying about being able to support themselves once they can no longer (or do not want to) work
- the incurred cost of private transportation (taxis, rideshares, etc.) in lieu of cheaper public options due to fear of discrimination and violence
- the lack of access to the same support and services as cisgender and heterosexual people
- the inability to enjoy equal rights and opportunities
- limited or no options, which increases the poverty gap because wealth is dependent on options
- the availability of options but not having access to them
- the inability to provide for basic needs such as food and shelter
- desperation
- going out at night and hoping for enough customers and money to pay rent, buy food, and take safe transportation home
- the inability to open a bank account due to the lack of necessary income documentation
- the inability to adequately care for self
- the inability to access healthcare
- higher rates of chronic disease
- the fear of being poor
- dependency and a lack of resources on individual, community, regional, and global levels
- a created hierarchal system where those at the bottom do not have the luxury to think about what they want beyond the basic needs
- a fabrication of depravation and concepts such as scarcity of resources and overpopulation.

Participants' Recommendations

D'Marco also asked how advocates, policy makers, and funders can respond to and break these classes of poverty and generational cycles.

Recommendations included:

- look at the root cause of poverty, including systematic and systemic injustices
- demand accountability from funders and refuse to work with any who impose inappropriate restrictions or do not have queer and trans Caribbean people on their teams
- stop allowing (outside) individuals to take the community's data, use it for their own purposes, and make money from it
- demand reparations (in all its forms: knowledge, money, artifacts, etc.) from the countries that benefitted from the transatlantic slave trade
- engage in more south-to-south connections and collaborations and build networks
- debunk myths and correct misinformation about the region and its people
- get Caribbean leaders and politicians to stop accepting subpar treatment on behalf of the people they represent
- when necessary, make good trouble, take action, and use non-traditional paths to get what activists and the community need, want, and deserve
- take personal responsibility for self and others in the community (hire counterparts when possible, invite others to take part in opportunities, etc.)
- let people with lived experiences lead the conversations about the issues
- build sustainability and self-sufficiency within organisations and the community to fill funding and other support gaps
- acknowledge limitations and understand where activists' responsibilities stop and governments' obligations begin
- look for international or regional companies (banks, retailers, commercial enterprises, etc.) that have LGBTQI+ policies and work with them to see what aspects of those practices can be accessed by the local community
- use or create research tools that are informed by the community's structure and needs
- demand adequate payment for research collection for all involved (data collectors, respondents, admin, etc.).

In closing, one participant noted, "**we must be deliberate and intentional. If we're not deliberate, they'll take advantage and if we're not intentional, they will circumvent us**".

Roundtable 8: LGBTQI+ Tourism Perspectives: The Economic Case for LGBTQ+ Inclusion in the Caribbean – Donnya (Zi) Piggott and Liam Rezende

In the final roundtable of the first day, researcher Zi Piggott spoke about how LGBTQI+ inclusion can benefit the region's tourism industry.

The research presented, taken from '*The Economic Case for LGBT+ Inclusion in the Caribbean*', indicated that welcoming more LGBTQ+ visitors into the region would not only create more inclusive regional societies, but also contribute to the region's economic growth. The report stated that LGBTQ+ tourists spent USD $689 million annually. As a region, being able to tap into this segment of the tourism market would encourage economic stimulation, create much-needed jobs, and provide other opportunities for local goods and services providers.

Structural and Societal Barriers to LGBTQ+ Tourism

However, before the region can fully benefit from this growing market, legislative and societal changes must take place so that LGBTQ+ people and their allies feel safe and welcomed in Caribbean spaces. The study showed that 18% of LGBTQ+ travellers refuse to travel to the region due to two things: regressive laws and perceived homophobia and transphobia from destination countries. Millennial and Gen Y travellers, especially, prefer destinations that represent them and align with their values.

60% OF LGBTQ+ TRAVELLERS STATED THAT THEY WERE LIKELY TO TRAVEL TO A CARIBBEAN COUNTRY THAT WELCOMES LGBTQ+ PEOPLE, BUT ONLY AFTER THAT COUNTRY ADOPTS A PRO-LGBTQ+ LAW.

Conversely, Piggott noted that business stakeholders should examine these findings, both for tourism purposes and economic growth.

Despite the high number of travellers willing to visit LGBTQ+-safe Caribbean countries, the study showed that 25% of LGBTQ+ travellers were concerned about facing humiliation and intimidation when traveling to the region, which is significantly more than when traveling to other countries. In addition, 40% of the data set was concerned about anti-LGBTQ+ violence. Piggott noted that "**when [individuals] go on vacation with [their] partner, [they] want to avoid these situations whether it is with immigration or at a hotel. To feel humiliated or intimidated there is a real concern.**"

Piggott noted that, like any other group of travellers, LGBTQ+ people travel to enjoy themselves and explore local communities. Rather than remaining in the confines of their hotel, LGBTQ+ travellers want

to experience the local culture, spaces and scenes, and thus spend money in the economy. The researcher added that this "**augurs well for what tourism could be if it was more inclusive**".

LGBTQ+ Spending Power

Piggott noted that "**the high-spending traveling segment is heavily indexed with LGBTQ+ people**", implying that data shows that LGBTQ+ travellers spend more than heterosexual and cisgender travellers. "**While the larger portion of spending is collected by larger businesses**," Zi said, "**LGBTQ+ business could benefit smaller communities and tourism overall**."

Data shows that LGBTQ+ people have fewer children than the general population and, as a result, might have more expendable income as well as time to travel more. LGBTQ+ people are also less risk averse "**[due to] always having to be alert and aware of themselves**". Piggott noted that LGBTQ+ people were among the first to travel as the world started to re-open after the 2020 and 2021 lockdowns in the face of the COVID-19 pandemic.

LGBTQ+ Friendly Businesses

In response to this steadily growing tourism market, some local companies are already making changes to their operational policies. Piggott noted that in the early 2000s, Sandals began to allow same-sex couples to stay in its resorts and enjoy the same benefits as heterosexual couples. Virgin Atlantic has also proudly supported the LGBTQ+ community and created inclusive company policies and initiatives. This included hosting a successful pride event in 2019 and sponsoring other pride events around the world. In addition, the airline has begun to carry out inclusive training in the Caribbean, conducted by organizations from the region.

In attendance, a company representative of Virgin Atlantic said: "**We've done a lot and are proud of it. Inclusion and accepting without discrimination is one big part of our operation's policies**". One conference attendee, a frequent traveller, affirmed this: "**Virgin [Atlantic] has always been a leader in terms of being progressive**". The airline representative noted that the company also focuses on empowering staff. They explained, "**there are four networks dedicated to empowering women, and a pride network which is really large and important in the organisation. It's not just for LGBTQ+ members but also the allies**."

Piggott noted that in light of the data, the tourism sector should be investing in LGBTQ+ people and "**align[ing] themselves with local LGBTQI+ communities, as there is much to be gained**" from collaboration.

Key Issues

Participants noted that despite the data that shows how important LGBTQ+ inclusion is in the region, two main issues slow progress in this area:

- the contributions of LGBTQ+ enterprises and spending are not collected, and thus not allowed to be disaggregated in official statistics, which means the full impact of their work is not accounted for
- at least 40% of LGBTQ+ travellers are concerned about LGBTQ+ violence. Local communities, particularly trans and LBQ women, have to grapple with this fear of violence every day.

Observations

Data collection: LGBTQ+ people are a crucial part of the tourism industry, which is unknown to most—even tourism officials. A large percentage of LGBTQ+ travellers are higher-than-average spenders, particularly in destinations that are perceived to be inclusive of the community. These facts are unknown because there is little to no data to back up these claims. As a result, global research must be conducted to compare the spending habits of LGBTQ+ people vs. travellers in the general population.

Training: In-depth sensitisation training must be done with tourism practitioners to facilitate economic and social progress. Training should include both LGBTQ+ people and others to sensitise them to the issues community members face and encourage them to advocate for improvements in multiple services, including education, healthcare, and law. The more information is provided to the general population, the more they can understand the experiences of the region's LGBTQ+ community.

Private sector collaborations: Research shows that LGBTQ+ people are willing to spend between 20-25% to stay in a destination that welcomes them. These figures should be presented to the private sector to show them how beneficial investing in the community could be. Governments would also be encouraged to get involved if the private sector begins to invest, which will positively affect funding for LGBTQ+ people and initiatives. Both sectors must be targeted and approached with relevant data.

Engage journalists: The media must be informed of the positive impact that LGBTQ+ people have on tourism. Regional journalists, through their media outlets, can disseminate data on how integral both local and international LGBTQ+ people are to the tourism market. Through their work, they can also advocate for more inclusivity.

Participants' Remarks

After Piggott's and Rezende's presentation, the participants in the session discussed the implications of LGBTQ+ people's interactions with the tourism sector, both as providers and consumers.

One attendee noted that if a destination or tourist spot does not welcome them, they remove themselves and their spending from the space. However, they noted that welcoming spaces have a competitive advantage—both for them individually and the wider LGBTQ+ community. They acknowledged that getting regional governments to see the financial advantage of embracing such equality would be a challenge.

Another participant stated that in their country (Jamaica), citizens understand the economic benefits of being accommodating to LGBTQ+ people, particularly when dealing with tourists. The attendee stated, "**Jamaicans understand the commercial value of being gay-friendly when they're dealing with white**

people. They understand the fact that there is a higher net worth and a potential benefit when dealing with black gays and white gays."

Piggott stated that "**[LGBTQ+ persons' contribution to tourism] cannot be pushed by the government and unless it comes from the private sector, it will not happen**". Just as the community advanced human rights through the courts, the same must be done through private sector partnerships with community-based organisations. They reiterated that "**there's a need for lots of training and the local communities are capable of meeting this need. The private sectors therefore need to liaise with these communities to facilitate training and the services they can offer**."

Keynote 2 – Victor Madrigal, UN Independent Expert on Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity

Victor Madrigal-Borloz, the UN Independent Expert on Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity (SOGI), delivered the second keynote. In his speech, he explained why data is important to the well-being and rights of LGBTQI+ people and how it has been useful to him and his UN Mandate.

A large part of this Mandate is to acknowledge the "**diversity of LGBTQI+ people**". Part of that diversity also exists in the way that people in the community experience discrimination and violence. Unfortunately, he noted, researchers "**have no real idea of how many people are hurt or killed every day because of their gender identity or sexual orientation**". As a result, data is necessary to understanding how violence affects LGBTQI+ people. "**You cannot carry out the analysis of gender violence unless you take into account gender identity and sexual orientation**," he asserted. "**Those who ignore the Mandate are arguing that it is a not an issue. The only way to combat that [view] is [with] evidence**."

Data and the 'Dark Room Effect'

Madrigal-Borloz gave an example of how evidence can help bring LGBTQI+ people and the issues that affect the community into focus. He said:

> "When we started the rapporteurship, we realised there was [no] evidence in relation to the killing of trans women… We took it upon ourselves… to mine news and civil society reports for key words that would tell us the person was gender diverse. We called it the 'dark room effect'. Just like one blank page when placed in appropriate liquid, when given the right catalysts, places an image before your eyes that is as evident as reality itself. We saw the bodies of trans women and men and gender diverse persons coming from the blank pages. There were hundreds and thousands of bodies. That is the transformational effect of choosing to understand reality that one hasn't done in the past."

He went on to explain, "**when states deny the violence and discrimination or even the presence of LGBTQI+ people, they're ignoring the reality of the LGBTQI+ population**".

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Governments and decision makers, he said, must take measures to identify the root causes of human rights violations and use that information to eliminate stigma and discrimination. They can do so by adopting data mechanisms and designing systems that will bridge gaps. Madrigal-Borloz outlined four ways decision makers can implement these changes:

- non-discrimination
- participation (clear mechanisms that allow room at the table, a microphone when dialogue is taking place, and, most importantly, an acknowledgment of the kind of expertise that comes from working with communities and key populations)
- empowerment
- accountability (mechanisms through which those that need to follow obligations will be held accountable for answering to those obligations).

State-Based Issues with Data Collection

Madrigal-Borloz then noted that one of the state's fundamental duties is to implement and create best practices of data collection. However, he stated, CSOs are doing most of the work when it comes to gathering data and compiling reports. He acknowledged that victims and survivors probably feel more comfortable reporting violence to CSOs, rather than to the systems that perpetrate the violence towards them, prosecute them for reporting it, or dismiss their claims. As a result, "**no state is fulfilling their responsibility to take these measures in a compelling way**," he said.

With regard to data collection and storage, he noted that criminalisation also presents challenges by raising concerns about LGBTQI+ people's privacy, identity, self-determination, and security. In the case of negligence or mistakes, disclosed information can multiply the harm done to LGBTQI+ people.

Advocates and others must also grapple with detrimental reliance—what happens when one government provides or guarantees protection and the subsequent government reverses or removes those protections. Madrigal-Borloz referenced the case of trans people who served in the US military under Obama and were encouraged to disclose their status, only to be threatened with being precluded from service under the following administration's policies.

He also cautioned that governments sometimes use data to carry out violence, such as when it's used for surveillance and arrests. When this happens and stigma and prejudice are rampant, he said, victims are less likely to report abuse. "**Fear of prosecution, persecution, stigma, and reprisals are at the root of this hindrance**," he stated. He recounted an instance where he and his team wept as they destroyed decades of data in response to the threat of a government injunction. Situations like this and others, where data is either destroyed or not collected all for fear of government interference, "**render the community invisible to lawmakers**," he said.

Lack of Data and LGBTQI+ Invisibility

Madrigal-Borloz stated that the lack of data renders the community invisible to policy makers, reinforces patterns of negation, and perpetuates the adoption of irrational state policy. This is especially so in

contexts where there is criminalization of LGBTQ+ people. "**In the context of negation, perpetrators feel motivated and enabled to suppress or punish diversity,**" he said. As a result, he noted, data that comes from states or systems with those views is usually unreliable, unsystematic, and biased.

Madrigal-Borloz referenced the two most recent reports released by his office that brought this issue into sharp focus.

The first report dealt with the right to the highest attainable level of health, especially articulated under Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 3, that states must ensure healthy lives and promote well-being. For this report, his team carried out a survey on countries that include sexual orientation, gender identity and expression, and sex characteristics (SOGIESC) information in their SDG review processes. No more than 9 countries included the information in a systematic way; 4 of those were heavily informed by data and reports generated by civil society organizations (as opposed to being led by the state).

The most recent report outlined the disproportionate impact of armed conflict on LGBTQI+ people. Data from a case study in Sierra Leone showed that as many at 257,000 women and girls were subjected to sexual violence because of the conflict. Yet, there was no data on men and boys in relation to SOGIESC, nor was there any on the causal factors related to the sexual assaults of lesbian, trans, or intersex women. He noted that this lack of quantitative data is very problematic, since "**we know that during armed conflict, SOGIESC are among the prime elements that are instrumentalised to harm persons**".

Madrigal-Borloz stated that his work led him to adopt several guiding principles for data collection and management that honours human rights:

- Do no harm.
- Carry out considerations of risk assessment.
- View self-determination as respect of the ability to determine one's own identity in relation to SOGIESC.
- Honour privacy and confidentiality, which establish a personal sphere where a person may determine when or how personal information is disclosed. This principle is heavily guided by consent.
- Engage in lawful use, which means that the data must be gathered and used to an objective that is not only lawful but also predetermined by law when it is gathered by the state. There must also be safeguards for non-detrimental reliance.
- Encourage participation where impacted communities maximise the designs of the systems.
- Apply transparency and accountability to:
  a) the subjects of data collection who must give full and informed consent, and
  b) the public, including policy makers who must have access to all relevant information to understand the data and its significance to the discussion.
- Practice impartiality, which is essential for the credibility of data and which state statistical agents say must be free from indirect or direct external influence, free from conflict of interest, and consistent with their functions and duties.

He noted that a consistent finding among several of his studies shows that "**the barriers created by criminalisation, pathologisation, demonisation, and stigmatisation hinder accurate estimates regarding how many people worldwide are affected by SOGIE-based violence and discrimination**". Thus, gathering data on demographic, economic, and cultural characteristics, along with literacy,

employment, voting patterns, exposure to hate speech, hate crimes, and discriminatory acts is a key element of states' ability and responsibility to prevent, prosecute, and punish violations of human rights.

Madrigal-Borloz closed by remarking that under the SDGs, states must create policies and practices that ensure no one gets left behind. Failure to do so and choose instead to stay ignorant of the situation is "**tantamount to state violence**," he said. Whether to examine the problems LGBTQI+ people face is a political choice, he asserted, that has "**real consequences on real persons who are impacted in their real lives**".

Keynote 3 – Colette Delaney, CEO, CIBC FirstCaribbean International Bank

On the beginning of the second day, the CEO of CIBC, Colette Delaney, delivered a keynote address and expressed the bank's support for the conference and LGBTQI+ people. Since she first read the concept note of this event, she said, it was clear that it would bring together those with relevant research and knowledge to effect change through analytical and policy development.

Delaney, who is the first female CEO of the regional financial institution, noted that as one of the largest employers in the region, their diverse staff also includes LGBTQI+ people. As a result, it's important to her and her team that their policies and practices cover all employees. She said that while they know there is tension between religious and cultural beliefs and the acceptance of full legal rights for people of all genders, inclusion is part of the bank's workplace culture. As part of this exercise, Delaney noted that the bank has a "**zero-tolerance**" policy for discrimination or bullying based on sexual orientation, gender identity and expression, and sex characteristics (SOGIESC).

"**Policies that embrace the community are part of our raison d'etre to create a positive work experience for all our people and ensure that each and every team member is able to thrive,**" she declared. "**It's important to be on the right side of history and help shape the future for the LGBTQI+ community**

Despite the bank's inclusive policies, their LGBTQI+ employees tend to remain silent, Delaney noted. Although some of the company's executives are openly gay and the leadership team has offered to create safe spaces for LGBTQI+ employees, the CEO stated that no one has taken up the offer. She acknowledged that this silence is most likely due to the fear of facing discrimination, stigma, or violence. However, Delaney indicated her hope that with time, discussions that promote awareness and understanding will provide for a greater integration of LGBTQI+ people into mainstream society.

Delaney stated that many companies in the region, including hers, are willing to provide support to LGBTQI+ employees, but cannot do so due to the lack of proper legislative and institutional policy frameworks. For example, in many countries, the bank cannot provide healthcare benefits for same-sex couples because insurance companies do not provide inclusive policies. Also, if an employee passes away and was in a same-sex partnership, the bank cannot always provide a pension to their spouse.

In addition, the lack of legal inclusion means that the bank cannot offer products and services designed to meet the needs of LGBTQI+ people. Delaney stated that the bank would welcome the opportunity to

offer products such as loans to cover gender-affirming surgeries, surrogacy for same-sex families, and bank accounts with individuals' preferred names and pronouns. As soon as the legal frameworks are in place, she stated, the bank is willing to develop these products and services and offer financial support to LGBTQI+ employees.

She also acknowledged that due to stigma and marginalisation, many LGBTQI+ employees are leaving the Caribbean. "**This is something we can ill afford in this post-pandemic era when the region needs to marshal all its talents for stimulating economic growth**," she said.

Delaney ended her speech with a quote from the former US President, Barack Obama: "**Change will not come if we wait for some other person or if we wait for some other time. We are the ones we've been waiting for. We are the change that we seek**."

Keynote 4 – Commissioner Roberta Clarke, Rapporteur on the Rights of LGBTI Persons, Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (IACHR)

Roberta Clarke, Commissioner to the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (IACHR), gave the fourth keynote speech. Her speech addressed de-colonisation as a path to securing rights for the region's LGBTQI+ people. In doing so, she acknowledged the Caribbean as "**ground zero**" for a past marked by "**unequal exchange… oppression, and racism**". This history, she said, "**resulted in the impoverishment and domination of peoples in the West Indies and other parts of what we call now the Global South for the purposes of profit accumulation in European centres**". "**Because of this past**," she continued, "**Caribbean people have deeply felt aspirations for fairness, justice, and equality**."

However, she questioned why—even though many Caribbean countries are decades into independence and decriminalising same-sex sexual acts only requires amending laws by a simple majority—so little has been done to move the needle forward. She quoted Jamaican attorney, Tracy Robinson, who spoke of the "**stickiness**" of discriminatory colonial laws. Robinson noted that colonial laws have become owned and indigenised by post-colonial people. Rather than being the result of the "**alien legacy of colonialism**", these laws now signify the long-standing beliefs of the region, she said.

These beliefs, Clarke noted, mean that Caribbean people must self-reflect and hold themselves accountable. Although progress has been made with healthcare and education, she stated that many in the region still face violence, poverty, exclusion, inequality, and harm—especially "**those who live within restrictive, harmful social and gender norms**".

Clarke linked this discrimination to the violence and socioeconomic exclusion LGBTQI+ people face. She stated that it is also the driving force behind the work activists and allies have undertaken to "**shift the high politics of the state (discrimination in laws and policies and in state practices) and the deep politics of culture**".

In her speech, Clarke singled out and celebrated regional LGBTQI+ advocates and activists who fought and won legal battles against their countries' legislatures on discriminatory laws:

- Caleb Orozco in Belize
- Jason Jones in Trinidad and Tobago
- Jamal Jeffers in St Kitts and Nevis
- Orden David in Antigua and Barbuda
- Angel Clarke, Gulliver McEwan, Peaches Fraser, and Isabella Persaud in Guyana.

Clarke also commended the CSOs involved in the cases:

- in St Kitts and Nevis, the SKN Alliance

- in Antigua and Barbuda, Women Against Rape (WAR) and the Eastern Caribbean Alliance for Diversity and Equality (ECADE)
- in Guyana, the Society Against Sexual Orientation Discrimination (SASOD).

> "All of you who have launched litigation and your allies are dissolving...the 'stickiness' of colonial laws," she said. "We are indigenizing human rights in the way that reflects the yearning of our peoples for fairness and non-discrimination... I'm not saying that there's full cultural consensus on this, but we are on a pathway from which there will be no regression."

The Commissioner also applauded the judges who presided over the cases. By entering a consent order, Justice Robertson gave an "**admirable example of executive leadership**," said Clarke. "**The Antigua & Barbuda government saved the [LGBTQI+] community further anxiety… saved the court's time, and saved taxpayer dollars**," she noted. "**In other words, they did not put up any fight on this. They said, 'Criminalisation violates our constitution'**."

She also referenced the "most inspiring quotation" from Justice Saunders, President of the Caribbean Court of Justice (CCJ), in his judgment on *McEwan and Others v. Attorney General of Guyana*:

Difference is as natural as breathing. Infinite varieties exist of everything under the sun. Civilised society has a duty to accommodate suitably differences among human beings. Only in this manner can we give due respect to everyone's humanity. No one should have his or her dignity trampled upon, or human rights denied, merely on account of a difference, especially one that poses no threat to public safety or public order. It is these simple verities on which this case is premised.

"**This decolonisation in the substantive law [was] made possible through the decolonisation of the administration of our justice institutions**," Clarke stated. "**These jurisprudential developments have been made possible by judicial officers who are citizens of this region**," she said, "**and are also in constant interaction with the populations they serve**." She also noted that six of the seven current Caribbean Court of Justice (CCJ) judges were trained at The University of the West Indies (UWI).

Clarke remarked that, in addition to the decolonisation of substantive law and administration of justice, Caribbean people must commit to the "**decolonisation of the relational dynamics between all of us who are collaborating on social justice**". In addition to examining how racism affects donor and international NGO relationships with people in the Global South, she stated, regional activists must hold space for open and honest dialogue about power and how it is experienced, as well as create a culture of being open to critique. Discussions should also address how many activists do not receive payment for their work. She asserted that decolonisation should include the acknowledgement of indigenous experiences and expertise and incorporate indigenous methods into human rights and development work. Clarke noted that this work is an important way to "**ensure there's no colonial stickiness in the practices of defining…genders or gatekeeping […] through the power of money**".

She also stated that respect for marginalised groups must underpin the principles of how actors in the development space interact with each other. This foundation will ensure that LGBTQI+ voices shape the narratives and drive action and transformation, she said. In the region, levels of poverty, restrictive gender stereotypes, and discrimination all "**deepen the experience of exclusion and lack of opportunities… and drive intergenerational poverty**". Among LGBTQI+ people, that exclusion also translates to being denied access to quality housing, being forced out of school because of bullying, having to work in the informal economy, and being denied social services and protection.

Clarke stated that the poverty that resulted from unequal relationships between the Caribbean and countries in the Global North is part of the region's colonial legacy. "**We become independent and were left to figure out what's next,**" she said. "**There was no resource transfer. We were left independent with the majority [of our citizens] illiterate and resilient but without basic universal healthcare, or primary, tertiary, or secondary education.**"

In the decades since, Clarke pointed out, "**we've pursued economic development but not on our terms**". This growth, she acknowledged, has not come without its challenges. She referenced a speech by Barbados Prime Minister, Mia Mottley, to the US Congress on how 'de-risking' in the banking sector—to prevent money laundering—makes it challenging for Caribbean people to access basic financial services, such as opening an account or investing. This difficulty, Clarke noted, is an example of "**the macro-economic framework that reinforces inequalities between and within our countries**".

That power dynamic continues today in the form of inequitable trade relationships that has left the region reliant on exported food—even foods that Caribbean countries once produced—and impacts their economic resilience. Clarke asserted that those who "**have benefited from the gross inequalities don't have the moral high ground. Those who benefit from these legacies must give back and pay forward—not as aid but as reparations, redress, and remedy**". She stated that LGBTQI+ advocates and activists, regional governments, funders, and other interested parties "**must all work together against the tides of discrimination**".

Clarke ended her presentation with a quote from Trinidadian activist and researcher, Élysse Marcellin: "**The politics of identity is not enough to deliver the intersectional justice that LGBTQI+ persons demand and deserve.**"

Roundtable 9: Perspectives from the Private Sector – Jimmy González and Donnya (Zi) Piggott

In his presentation, Jimmy González, Director of the Dominican Republic LGBT Chamber of Commerce (CCLGBTRD), spoke about how CSOs can form collaborations with private sector organisations to help accomplish their strategic goals.

He began by highlighting the current situation in the Dominican Republic. In August of 2021, the Dominican Congress approved a modification to the country's Penal Code that excludes gender identity and sexual orientation as grounds for discrimination. The amendment also states "**there shall be no discrimination where the service provider or contractor bases its refusal on the grounds of religious, ethical or moral conscientious objection or on institutional requirements**"[5]. González noted that this decision was made despite large-scale research that finds SOGIESC-based discrimination is very common – for example, González noted that a 2020 UNDP report found that:

97%

OF PEOPLE THAT PARTICIPATED IN THE SURVEY HAVE SUFFERED SOME FORM OF VIOLENCE RELATED TO THEIR SEXUAL ORIENTATION OR THEIR GENDER IDENTITY

Strategy and Activism

González asserted that 'strategy' needs to be the driving force behind any advocacy and legislative activities, particularly when the private sector is involved. He said that the CCLGBTRD focused on building a community to help drive their initiatives, programmes, and activism. This community, he told the participants, should be made up of people "**who help you to move. The ones who give the [introductions] to the companies [and] to the government and is your voice**."

From this community, advocates can then create groups of interest, which will allow them to speak to the media, businesses, and the public as a unified body. Groups of interest, he stated, also allow advocates to raise funds, plan activities, and collaborate with each other and allies.

González said that building communities and creating groups of interest are integral to the movement and noted that those who are fighting against the rights of LGBTQI+ people use the same strategy. He

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[5] Dominican Republic: Activists and the LGBTI+ Community Fight for the Senate Not to Approve the Penal Code That Excludes Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity as Grounds for Discrimination – https://raceandequality.org/english/dominican-republic-penal-code-excludes-sexual-orientation-as-grounds-for-discrimination/

stated that anti-LGBTQI+ activists use their interest groups to lobby governments and spread their messages throughout society. He argued that LGBTQI+ activists should do the same.

However, González cautioned against using social media or public networks to share too much information about the planning or idea stages of activities or initiatives. "**Conservatives are always looking at our networks, our social media**," he said. "**So, when we go to talk about whatever you are doing you are giving them the tools that they would need to go to lobby in that area. So be careful. Try to advertise only when you achieve something**," he suggested.

He also warned against speaking about the negative experiences of activist work. "**Be careful not to talk about the bad parts of your fight,**" he said. "**Instead speak out more about the positives as this gives less ammunition for others who many want to harm the movement**."

Another part of the CCLGBTRD's strategy is collaborating with other groups, especially those that would not normally work with LGBTQI+ organisations or causes. González encouraged other activists to do the same. "**When you work with others**," he said, "**it makes you stronger**."

Moving Forward: Working with the Private Sector

After building communities and creating interest groups, González stated that activists should "**look for opportunities and solutions**" when seeking to work with private sector companies. Advocates should structure proposals so that allies can feel included and see the benefits of partnering with LGBTQI+ organisations.

He noted that one way to do so would be to engage with businesses that have received bad reviews on social media, especially regarding their treatment of LGBTQI+ people. "**Go to them with a solution**," he said. This could include sensitivity training or suggesting that they hire members of the community. "**The private sector is different from the government**," he noted, "**and they like to get something back. It is business. You have to have this relationship in mind**."

González suggested that advocates can also highlight the economic costs of discrimination. In hiring, for example, he noted that "**when a company has a problem, especially problems inside (e.g., discrimination, abuse, etc.) the people go to another sector or business**". Business leaders then have to spend money and time to redo the hiring process. Activists can offer to conduct sensitivity and non-discrimination training with businesses to increase employee retention and boost motivation and morale.

Some of the easiest targets for collaboration, he said, are international companies that already have company-wide policies on discrimination, equality, diversity, and inclusion. Although the businesses may be worried about a local response, González suggested that activists focus on the company's position as an international body that must follow guidelines set out by their C-suite executives. As an example, he stated that he once travelled to a company's headquarters in Mexico to ensure that a collaborator followed company policy.

He recounted: "**We [began] to work with a company and they [said], 'No, we are not interested in doing that'. [I said], 'These are [your] inclusion and diversity policies'. And they began to talk [in circles]. So, I went to their headquarters in Mexico**." After meeting with González, some of the leaders

travelled to the Dominican Republic to speak with the local head of the organisation about adhering to and supporting the company's diversity and inclusion policies.

Although he acknowledged that actions like this "**take a lot of work**," González asserted that "**is something we have to do because we are trying to make things better for the community**".

He also gave a series of suggestions on how to structure and approach proposals.

The first: make beautiful presentations (PowerPoint, videos, etc.) to hold the listeners' attention and keep them engaged. He stated that, if necessary, activists should use allies who are good with graphic design to help with this part of the process. "**Look good**," he said. "**Try to give them a good image of what you are doing. Give a good presentation, add value to the company and for sure they will take that presentation and do something with you**."

González also encouraged advocates to change the narrative. Always be positive, he said. "**Forget about the violence, forget about the debts and death**," he suggested. "**Talk positive**." He encouraged activists to highlight the good things that the community can do for the businesses. "**Talk about the money, talk about how much they will spend on travel, talk about how much they will spend on the different things [after] the positive changes that we [make]**." In short, he urged activists to focus on what benefits the CSOs can bring to the businesses.

Another way advocates can get attention from public sector collaborators is by having a cause. "**People identify with causes**," said González. "**For example, this is our cause: 'We work for a world of equal opportunities for all people'**." He pointed out that the CCLGBTRD "**used the direct 'we', 'us', 'you' and 'me'**" and used collaborative language like "**everybody**" to signify "**the world**" for their statement. He also noted that they spoke of opportunities to evoke the idea of the possibilities that exist from collaboration and equality. "**Try to use this kind of language**," he told the participants in the room.

He added that advocates might also have to change their language to form better relationships with the business community. "**Forget about everything you have learnt as an activist and begin to change the narrative**," he asserted. "**Look for interpreters within the community because businesspeople know how to talk business languages**." Use individuals who can engage with people in different sectors, communities, and classes, he suggested.

González also urged activists to be intersectional. He stated that they should work with, invite, and bring all the minorities to the table, because "**we are all minorities**". He remarked that advocates must "**connect with others and find a way to work with them**".

CCLGBTRD's Private Sector Projects

González stated that the CCLGBTRD is currently working on several programmes and initiatives with the country's private sector.

The first is 'Useful Employment'. González stated that LGBTQI+ people in the Dominican Republic are unemployed. To encourage business owners to consider hiring them, he and his team created a list of community members, along with their skills and talents, to share with local businesses.

In the second, '*Empresa Diversa*', the CCLGBTRD works with companies who need diversity training, even those who already have diversity policies in place. González noted that many international companies have policies that state that a certain percentage of initiatives and projects should have local involvement, be developed or facilitated by local companies, or be created by minority businesses. The CCLGBTRD not only uses those policies to their advantage, but they also share with other CSOs how to do the same.

The CCLGBTRD also has a social enterprise that assesses local companies' inclusion and diversity rates, creates training programmes for their employees, and provides certification once the company goes through the project successfully. González shared a breakdown of the programme structure.

First, they conduct a diagnosis so that they can assess the diversity within the company. They survey the employees to get a sense of employees' SOGIESC and demographic information. They also ask what participants want to learn from the CCLGBTRD programme.

Next, they conduct pre-training, which involves getting to know the company's leaders, checking their policies, looking at their goals, etc.

After the pre-training, they create a customised work-plan based on the company's needs, structure, and products or services. They get the company leaders' input as part of this process to assure it aligns with their overall goals and mission.

He noted that they also invite CSOs to take part in different training and sensitisation activities. In addition, they create business resource groups (BRGs), which are composed of the LGBTQI+ employees. These groups are responsible for ensuring that the company adheres to the work plan.

At the end of the first year, they measure the businesses' diversity and inclusion scores. The process uses advanced analytics that allow them and the businesses to identify and fix gaps as they go along and then see an overall picture of the project. If the business successfully completes its work plan, it receives a certificate from the CCLGBTRD.

González noted that the programme and process requires "**a lot of meetings and approvals**". Companies must have an adequate budget for the project and share that with the CCLGBTRD for their approval before the work begins.

As he summed up, González recounted a success story. After three years of trying to engage one of the biggest companies on the island, the CCLGBTRD was able to add them to a project cycle. He stated that the company's executives are pleased with the programme and their organisation's progress.

In closing, González reiterated to attendees the importance of building a community, being kind and honest in their presentations, and being mindful of the way that they approach companies and organisations. He concluded by saying, "**Change does not come overnight…[it] takes time. But, with a consistent, continued effort, these positive changes [that we are aiming for] will come**."

Recommendations

Participants gave several recommendations on how regional CSOs can implement CCLGBTRD's strategies in their own work:

- LGBTQI+ organisations should continue to focus on forming progressive relationships and connections with people and companies that can help effect a positive change on policies that affect the community at large.
- Advocates must identify the ways that the championed cause can add value to companies, such as updated policies encouraging growth in their bottom line.
- Advocates must identify and create connections with allies, in these companies and groups that share the same values, and work with them to amplify their voice.
- Community members must discover creative ways to offer solutions to target companies to show how working with the community can solve issues that they may be experiencing.
- Advocates must find ways to work with the private and public sectors to allow for progress in the community.
- Those involved in the work must work together and protect others from backlash that they could face from the wider community.
- Advocates should consider entrepreneurship opportunities as another means of intensifying their voices and generating income for the movement.

Participants' Remarks

Several attendees gave suggestions regarding how LGBTQI+ people and organisations can work with allies in the public sector to accomplish their goals.

One participant suggested that LGBTQI+ advocates should have connections with influential persons within companies that are willing to adopt a zero-tolerance policy when it comes to violence and discrimination. Advocates can propose policies, in keeping with their goals, that are beneficial to the community. The commenter encouraged the participants to find a forum that can bring these issues to the table to be addressed, also suggesting that activists should explore the roles of both the private and public sectors in the cause. The participant stated that, among other things, these sectors have much to offer the community in terms of positively affecting wealth distribution, setting the tone for how the community approaches issues close to them, and promoting an intentional decrease in the discriminatory practices and policies that harm the community.

Another participant encouraged advocates to be strategic in their approach, ensure that their voices remain strong, and continue to work towards changing damaging narratives.

Another participant recommended that LGBTQI+ people should create organisational spaces where others can feel safe sharing their experiences, thoughts, and common interests. The commenter stated that positive work environment changes were observed after they spearheaded the creation of similar policies in their company.

One delegate suggested that it is sometimes necessary to effect change privately, so as not to appear as if there is a bias towards a specific issue or policy, especially if the initiation of change is made by someone who holds immense power within an organisation.

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Roundtable 10: Decolonising Global Finance and Partnerships – Dr Nikoli Attai, Dr Angelique V. Nixon, and Billie Bryan

De-colonising Funding

Dr Attai's presentation explored research he conducted on: (1) the ways that international funding, and particularly money and support, limited the activism possible during the time of the study, (2) how queer, particularly trans, communities negotiate and resist violence and push against societal gender dynamics, (3) legislation that impacts the community, (4) drag pageantry, and (5) how queer people co-opt urban night spaces in Guyana and Trinidad and Tobago. He noted that the data provided opportunities to understand queer movements and the conflicts that many CSOs have with funders and people in the communities.

The researcher shared quotes gathered from regional activists during the research. Many of them centred on:

- navigating funders' restrictions on programming
- moving past viewing the community through an HIV/AIDS lens
- dealing with bureaucracy from governments and funders
- infighting among activists and community members
- intersectionality and how that negatively affects queer women and transmasculine people
- a lack of trans focus from funders
- the inability for community members to meet their basic needs despite the funding available for programming and initiatives.

He asserted that a top-down funding approach hampers activists' ability to "**decolonise how [they] approach working with and in communities**". The researcher noted, "**international funders continue to look at the region as an underfunded place**".

Stereotypes about the Caribbean being one of the most homophobic global places, assumptions about high rates of HIV among trans people, the idea that all trans people engage in sex work, and the notion that LGBTQI+ people must "go away to be gay" are perpetuated by advocates and funders in the global north. He asserted that these stereotypes fail to consider how Caribbean LGBTQI+ people navigate these spaces, create communities, and defy homophobia. "**The Gully Queens [of Jamaica] are a poster child for queer impossibility,**" he remarked.

With regard to financial resources, the findings indicated that activists felt that they had to negotiate their clients' needs with the funders' requirements. Respondents indicated that they wanted to be able to choose how to spend funds beyond medication and capacity building to, for example, provide safe housing and other necessities. However, many stated that because queer communities do not receive financial or other support from the government, they felt compelled to take the money despite spending restrictions.

Based on his research, Dr Attai made several recommendations on how to de-colonise funding:

- focus on those 'in the trenches', specifically non-cisgender people who do not fall within the bounds of respectability politics or feel ostracised from both the LGBTQI+ and wider communities
- pay more attention to what can be learned from sex workers, 'down low' men, trans people, working class people, etc.
- examine what some of the spaces tell us about negotiating queerness and how those who enter those spaces do it
- prioritise voices from the margins
- remind funders that those who are most intimately connected with these issues know the most about themselves and their experiences
- let international funders know that activists and LGBTQI+ people see straight through colonial practices
- insist that donors fund opportunities on the community's terms and not the other way around
- do not allow outsiders to fix broken systems in ways that leave the community out
- do not allow outsiders to define the community's genders and gender identities
- listen to the silenced but not silent voices across the region
- ask questions of the community to understand what they are experiencing and the kinds of agency they have.
- Dr Attai ended his presentation with a call to action:

> "Go in the trenches, roll up our sleeves, go on the block, see where trans women are, and let these spaces inspire us to inform and inspire our work."

Participants' Remarks

Dr Another commended Dr Attai on his comment that activists should "**foster unlikely solidarities**". The commenter noted that many CSOs lean on similar organisations rather than supporting and building alliances with organisations that are not doing the same work or in the same space. "**Colour your world**," she said. "**Don't shut out anyone. There are no 'other' people. We are all involved in this work. I commend you for giving that recommendation and I hope my colleagues take note of that**."

One participant asked Dr Attai about the use of the word "co-opt" regarding how queer and trans people navigate certain spaces in their larger communities. "**When I go to the bar to lime, I don't feel like I'm co-opting the space**," the participant asserted. "**When we're liming in our own countries and spaces and corners, is it really co-opting?**"

In response, Dr Attai noted that the study participant herself viewed what she was doing as occupying a space she does not fit into neatly. As a trans woman entering a hyper-masculine, misogynistic space, she did so with a willingness and desire to claim the space as her own. "**She would say she wants to 'go lime with the butch boys today'**," he stated. "**In this instance, with this specific person who's working class and trans and doesn't want to pass as too feminine, [I'm speaking] in terms of how they stand out but also own the space**."

Another participant spoke about the LINKAGES project that was referenced during Dr Attai's presentation, which, they asserted, had caused division in the community. "**The money was given to cis[gender and] het[erosexual] people and then they wanted us to [work] underneath them to go and find the people to get tested**." The participant noted that remuneration was based on how many positive HIV tests each tester received, which they described as "**very uncomfortable**" and "**disgusting**". Organisers also disregarded the trans experience, according to the participant. Referring to late activist Brandy Rodriguez, the participant noted that after she recounted challenges trans people face in terms of going to clinics or other medical spaces for testing, the head of the project asked whether trans women could dress according to their assigned gender identity to mitigate the issue.

CAISO-Astraea Partnership

Director of CAISO: Sex and Gender Justice, Dr Angelique V Nixon, gave participants an introduction to the organisation and its most recent funding project with the Astraea Lesbian Foundation for Justice.

Dr Nixon noted that in the early days of CAISO, (founded in 2009), the organisation faces challenges in building capacity because international funding was often tied to a specific project and outcomes. However, she said, founder Colin Robinson challenged funders' restrictive requirements and questionable politics. The team also worked internally to ensure that the organisation's practices were sustainable and efficient. As they grew, the team focused on increasing their support to other LGBTQI+ organisations in Trinidad and Tobago.

In 2019, CAISO and Astraea partnered to create a responsive grant scheme for LGBTQI+ organisations in the region. Although Robinson passed away in 2021, Dr Nixon said that they work they had done in the years immediately prior to his death helped guide the new partnership with Astraea. "**Our values…guided our creation of this mechanism**," she said. "**We went to Astraea to say, 'This is what we want to create and why'**."

The grant scheme, which had just completed its second round of funding, prioritised LGBTQ+ women-led organisations. The call for projects focused on wholeness, justice and inclusion and, importantly, ensuring that the organisations could meet their basic needs. "**We wanted to make the [application process and] funding as easy as possible**," Dr Nixon said. "**[The organisation] doesn't have to be registered [to apply]; they just have to have a bank account**." A regional panel of diverse, multi-lingual activists and community members chose the grant winners and provided those who were unsuccessful with comprehensive feedback on their applications. Dr Nixon stated that CAISO gets 20% of the funding to handle their own administrative and capacity building needs, which, she noted, is important to running an organisation and exemplifies Astraea's unique approach to working with regional organisations.

Dr Nixon stated that the grant is the culmination of longstanding relationships with funders who listen to LGBTQI+ people and community leaders. "**That's key to how we can transform and make a difference in the complicated funding landscape**," she remarked. She also noted that CAISO made it a point to have an easy-to-access application and update process. This includes:

- a simple check in and reporting mechanism

- flexibility regarding the overall project (participants can change focus during the one-year period) or money allocated to specific aspects of the project
- easy-to-use budget templates for both applying and reporting
- application feedback from panellists.

To date, she stated, the grant has funded 14 regional organisations.

Participants' Remarks

One participant who applied for a CAISO-Astraea grant noted that the process was user friendly, easy, and made members of their organisations feel "**proud to be trans**".

However, the commenter also noted that many of the funding opportunities that are available to the trans community are linked to HIV and require individuals to be positive before they can access other services or resources. "**I'm really concerned about that**," the participant said. "**The prevalence might be high but not all of us want our lives or livelihoods to be surrounded by HIV… We're still at the point where there is the availability of medicines but not the jobs to help us feed or house ourselves. We can take all the medicines we want but we have nowhere to put them or nothing to eat**."

The delegate asserted that donors must move away from the stereotype. "**I can be HIV positive [or] have other illnesses but don't put me in a box. Donors who are in the room, please hear me. I don't only represent myself; I represent others who don't have a voice in my country**."

Roundtable 11: Same Region, Different Perspective: Analysis of Regional Attitudes Towards Homosexuals – Peter Wickham and Kenita Placide

During his presentation, researcher, author and moderator, Peter Wickham, noted: "**…within the Caribbean, there are strong opinions about persons from the LGBTQI+ community; some positive and some negative**". Wickham stated that he and his colleagues chose to study Caribbean nationals' attitudes towards members of the LGBTQI+ community, particularly same-sex attracted people, to determine the root of the negative opinions and discover whether the attitudes can be addressed and changed.

Tolerance & Acceptance vs. Hate

The first data set explored participants' views about whether they "hated", "tolerated", or "accepted" same-sex attracted people. Wickham noted that in the five years between 2013 and 2018, the region became more inclined to accept or tolerate same-sex attracted people rather than hate them.

He also acknowledged that these terms are "loaded" and might mean something for one person and something else to another. The words were chosen, he said, because they triggered reactions from respondents that the researchers could capture and quantify. In addition, he noted that although acceptance and tolerance were analysed, the study's focus "**was largely looking at hate because it's easier to isolate**".

The second data set captured levels of homophobia (quantified as "hate"). Findings showed that St Vincent and the Grenadines (SVG) had the highest hate data percentage (38%), which Wickham stated was an improvement from 53% in 2013. No other countries had a significant decline. However, regional percentages dropped by 9%. Wickham attributed part of this shift to SVG's large percentage drop.

Gender-Based Violence

The researcher noted that in the same study, participants were asked whether it would be acceptable for men to hit their wives in certain circumstances (e.g., if she burned the food, abandoned the children, cheated, etc.). Respondents in SVG had the highest likelihood to tolerate gender-based violence (GBV) in 2013.

He recounted that during one of the focus groups in the country, many of the men indicated that their belief that they could physically mistreat their wives stemmed from their religious convictions. They pointed to God and the Bible as the authorities that gave them headship over their households, including the ability to "**deal with their women how they see fit**".

Wickham stated that researchers did not include GBV in the 2018 study, so there were no results to compare.

Discrimination and Violence

The study also captured data on how respondents felt about discrimination and violence against sexual minorities. Researchers asked participants if they considered violence against sexual minorities to be discrimination. In 2013, 68% of the sample considered it discrimination, while in 2018, 62% held the same view.

Wickham noted that people might state that they "hate" gays and support colonial laws against same-sex sexual acts, but this rarely translates into the acceptance of physical violence against LGBTQI+ people. The researcher called this the "discrimination contradiction".

While 28% of total respondents stated that they "hate" LGBTQI+ people, only 22% believe that it is acceptable to discriminate against the community because of their SOGIESC. In Trinidad and Tobago, the gap was even wider: 36% 'hate' but only 15% believe that discrimination is acceptable.

Wickham stated that Christianity and other religious beliefs could explain this disparity. He said that he noticed the contradiction in conversations with people who often say that, because of their religious beliefs, they cannot condone same-sex love; however, they do not believe LGBTQI+ people should face discrimination. In Wickham's words, they are "**not homophobic; just Christian**".

Legislative Contradiction

The research also showed that there is a legislative contradiction in the region. While many respondents stated that they accept or tolerate gay people (58%), many still support colonial laws against same-sex acts (44%). This trend could be seen in individual countries as well. In Guyana, 58% indicated tolerance and acceptance but 53% wanted the country to maintain the laws. Barbadian respondents indicated a tolerance and acceptance level of 67% even though 54% support the laws. The findings showed a disparity of 79% and 10%, respectively.

Decriminalisation

With regard to decriminalisation, researchers asked respondents how much the legislative change would affect their lives. 61% of respondents stated that there would be little to no effect. Of all the countries, SVG was the only one whose "little or no effect" percentage (44%) was below half. The study did not

delve into what respondents feared the negative impacts would be, Wickham noted. It also did not analyse why, despite knowing that decriminalisation would not affect their lives, so many in the region are against it. Wickham stated that this area is one that would benefit from more research.

Summary

In summarising the study's results, Wickham stated that the data showed how dominant Christian views are across the region. Although they presented with varying degrees of intensity, Christian beliefs are seen by many as the basis for morality. He noted that many participants used phrases such as "**hate the sinner, not the sin"** and stated that they have "**no opposition**" to LGBTQI+ people but they "**do not agree with the lifestyle**".

Participants also felt strongly about being "**forced to accept the lifestyle**" through popular media, proposed legislative amendments, or other changes to their value system.

However, as a whole, they also indicated that they believed everyone "**should have the right to live, work and contribute to the economic prosperity of the nation, regardless of sexual orientation or any other factors**".

Wickham also noted that attitudes shifted based on groups. Women were more accepting than men; younger people were more accepting than women; and Hindus were more accepting than Muslims and Rastafarians. In addition, the data showed that people who have gay friends or family members were also more likely to be accepting.

Recommendations

Make connections with religious groups and people. In his presentation, Wickham noted that one of the key strategies they used, at late activist Colin Robinson's insistence, was to have churches on board in both conventional and unconventional ways. He stated that when they first released the data from the study, they did so in a church in Trinidad and Tobago. In Guyana, they invited the Archbishop of the Anglican church to be on the panel. He urged other activists to consider working with religious leaders in their advocacy strategies.

Link decriminalisation to other oppressive colonial laws that affect other rights (e.g., buggery laws also refer to heterosexual people).

Highlight data that shows the changing views of the region to garner political support. Many regional politicians support human rights but will not say so publicly out of the fear of what it would mean for their campaigns. Advocates should use the data on the region's changing views of LGBTQI+ issues to show politicians and other decision makers that the region is becoming more accepting and get them to show public support for decriminalisation and other human rights issues.

Take countries to international court to challenge the laws. Many Caribbean countries have signed on to treaties and agreements that state that they must honour human rights. Activists can use these

agreements to bring cases against their governments. "**The churches have access to legislation**," one participant said, "**but you have access to the world, which is moving in a different direction**."

Appeal to the OAS for suspension of Jamaica, Trinidad and Tobago, and any other OAS states that use the Privy Council (JCPC) as their supreme court.

Get assistance from people in the diaspora who have been able to effect political or legislative change in their countries. Learn from what they were able to accomplish and ask them for assistance in the work done regionally.

Identify political allies (both regionally and internationally) and use them to the community's advantage.

Acknowledge the biological imperative. One participant noted that many people in the region have "**a stringent belief in what we can call the biological imperative [the idea that heterosexuality is the only way the species can continue]**". They stated that activists must find ways to let the public know that the LGBTQI+ movement and non-heterosexual relationships are not a threat to heterosexual relationships or marriage.

Use information from failed initiatives to figure out what can be done better.

Look at the religious movements and use their strategies to the community's advantage.

Facilitate discussions and create sensitivity training for families as part of decriminalisation initiatives. Although human rights judgments benefit the community, they may have negative implications for those who live with homophobic family members, for example. Decriminalisation efforts should account for this backlash and include initiatives to help mitigate any negativity or backlash the community may face.

Participants' Remarks

Homophobia and Gender-Based Violence (GBV)

One participant noted that the high levels of tolerance did not shock them for GBV in SVG. "**When you said that there were the highest homophobic values in SVG,**" they told Wickham, "**I immediately made that connection. [SVG] has some of the highest rates of domestic violence in the region. What comes through in homophobic attitudes is hatred of femininity. The hatred of femininity and the hatred of women are deeply connected**."

Anti-Rights Advocates

Several participants stated that churches and anti-rights fundamentalists have been quietly getting support for their agenda from decision makers, rather than using public advocacy.

One stated that a religious group in their country met with Cabinet members to present their case on why certain laws should be upheld or amended (buggery, abortion, etc.). They also noted that several

high-ranking officials in their country's legal system, including the acting chancellor of the judiciary and the head of their local university's legal department, are members of a fundamentalist Christian group.

One referred to the religious groups as "emissaries" sent by the Global North, noting that some had also met with their country's president as well.

Another agreed, stating that the LGBTQI+ advocates should consider "**the success of the Christian fundamentalist advocacy approach and what we can learn from it**". They noted, "**there's a way in which the public advocacy hasn't worked in our favour [for] substantial human rights-based changes in the law**". Referring to what the religious groups are doing, the commenter said, "**[They are targeting] high level government. They take our ministers and legal individuals to camps and conferences. It's indoctrination**."

They further stated that the fundamentalists "**go behind doors and [hold] meetings with parliament**" to get laws changed or added. LGBTQI+ advocates should be doing the same, they argued. "**Are we drafting legislation and giving it to government or are we waiting for government to write it?**" they asked. "**The churches are writing the legislation. That is what is making it easy [for legislatures] to pass things overnight. [Legislatures] didn't write [the laws]. [It] was given to them!**" The commenter stated that LGBTQI+ activists must create and use connections in the same way.

"**Even the drafters are part of this movement**," said another participant. They noted that their country's 2011 constitution "**did some very damaging things**" to human rights. The new constitution, they noted, says that discrimination cannot be based on whether one is "male or female". Neither 'gender' nor 'sex' was used, which the activist noted was a strategic choice on the fundamentalists' part. The wording makes it virtually impossible for human rights proponents to make legal arguments against the constitution based on SOGIESC. "**They were very clear. [They were] trained by the anti-LGBTQI+ movement [that] told them what to do and gave them the language**."

Legislation and Decriminalisation

One participant stated that homophobia, misogyny, and racism all have the same colonial, patriarchal roots that have "**dominated our societies throughout the centuries**". They noted that racism and homophobia, in particular, stand "**shoulder to shoulder**" in the judiciary of the UK, which is evident in the Privy Council (JCPC) rulings that have been handed down in the region. Those views do not bode well for countries like Trinidad and Tobago and Jamaica, who still use the JCPC. However, they noted that countries like Guyana, Dominica, and Barbados can "**see a light at the end of the tunnel**" because their appellate court, the CCJ, has ruled in favour of human rights several times.

They also noted that the objection to decriminalisation is partially based on the notion that the law would negatively affect the family structure. However, they remarked that single mothers head many Caribbean households, while others are composed of grandparents raising grandchildren or aunts and uncles raising nieces and nephews. "**These are families as well**," they stated, "**but different from the traditional model. If [we're] threatening the family model, what do [they] mean by 'family'?**" They went on to say that the "**real fight here is not about the archaeological laws. The fight is about equality**."

One participant stated that decriminalisation, in many countries, will also benefit heterosexual couples. "**The sexual offenses laws… [also] deal with sexual intercourse between man and woman**," they said. "**Most heterosexual couples don't know that they are part of the target of the government**."

Another activist said that they believe the objections to decriminalisation come from the fear that same-sex marriage will quickly follow. Media often makes that link, they noted, which makes it difficult to garner support for decriminalisation. In response, they stated that they have gone to great lengths to make it clear to the public that equal marriage is not part of their organisation's agenda.

Data and the Law

One participant noted that the data was instrumental in their country's legal win against decriminalisation. The group used data from Wickham's study, as well as qualitative research on LGBTQI+ lived experiences from a Human Rights Watch report, to build and win their case.

Backlash from the Public

Wickham asked conference attendees how they navigate public backlash. In response, one activist noted that immediately after the decriminalisation case in their country, which they were heavily involved in, they wrestled with thoughts of what people, especially their fellow church members, would think of them. They admitted that they were in a better mental space after having dealt with the emotions, but they also expressed concern for other activists. "**How are you managing and how are you going to manage when the judgment [in your country] comes about?**" they asked.

A participant who heads an advocacy organisation said that they do wellness checks with community members. For those who are involved in any type of legislative or public advocacy, they also conduct security checks and, where necessary, provide extra security measures, such as cameras. They also create safety plans for the litigants and activists to follow in the event of a security breach.

Marriage Equality

Although activists agreed that marriage equality is one of the movement's goals, many also stated that it is not one of the most pressing issues for the community currently.

Wickham linked this to the wider regional context, noting: "**in the Caribbean, we're not as much into marriage as people may think**". He remarked that in Barbados, most people are born out of wedlock. "**Marriage is seen as a middle class vehicle for achieving different objectives,**" he said, "**and it's not something the average person aspires to because they don't think it's important. If you want to have a child, you have a child. Or you have sex, get pregnant, and decide to keep the child. That is more likely to be the conversation**."

Another participant agreed, noting that the regional marriage rate is 28%.

One participant stated, "**even people in the LGBTQI+ community don't really want marriage**".

Roundtable 12: Migration and Brain Drain – Dr María Amelia Viteri and Dr Kimahli Powell

Dr María Amelia Viteri presented on the factors that lead to high migration rates among the region's LGBTQI+ community. She provided context with findings from the report, '*The Economic Case for LGBT+ Inclusion in the Caribbean*', alongside other research.

Common Challenges in the Caribbean for LGBTQ+ People

Family and Education

Outside of the effects on the economy, violence and exclusion also affect LGBTQ+ people in their homes and with their families. Dr Viteri noted that this ingrained familial violence negatively affects their well-being, socioeconomic status, and mental health. This discrimination, coupled with what they receive outside of the home, also decreases LGBTQ+ people's ability to accumulate human capital. This, she noted, is because many are forced to leave home or school at a young age, which limits their education and job prospects.

Health Disparities

Members of the community are also affected by legal, institutional, and attitudinal barriers that create disparities, increase economic costs, and lower productivity. Discrimination and exclusion do not exist in a vacuum; they trigger other barriers to well-being. This is particularly evident in health outcomes, Dr Viteri stated.

In just two dimensions of health—depression and anxiety and HIV—Dr Viteri noted that discrimination and exclusion costs between USD$699 million and USD$2.1 billion, or 0.9-2.8% of regional GDP, and as captured in the report, 'The Economic Case for LGBT+ Inclusion in the Caribbean'. The systemic barriers LGBTQ+ members face often limit their access to information on HIV prevention, safe sex practices, and supplies. Thus, they are more vulnerable to HIV but less likely to have access to testing and treatment options.

> **In fact, these barriers against LGBTQ+ people in work often lead to significant wage gaps – in fact, the report found that the**
>
> ## LGBTQ+ SAMPLE EARNED 11% LESS THAN THE GENERAL POPULATION
>
> **when examining data from Belize. Due to all of these challenges, she stated that labour market discrimination against LGBTQ+ people leads to a loss of up to 0.37% of the region's GDP (USD$272 million), as found in The Economic Case for LGBT+ Inclusion in the Caribbean.**

Labour Market Discrimination

LGBTQ+ people also face discrimination in the employment sector. The same legal, institutional, and attitudinal barriers that create challenges in healthcare exist in the workplace, Dr Viteri noted. For example, transgender people in the Caribbean cannot receive official documents or identification with their preferred gender marker. These barriers make it difficult for LGBTQ+ people to find and sustain formal sector work, especially those who are trans or gender non-conforming.

Violence

Dr Viteri stated that violence is the foundation of all these issues. She noted that the Caribbean has a culture of discrimination that manifests in different types of violence against the LGBTQ+ community. Alessandra Hereman mentioned in an earlier presentation that violence can be physical, psychological, or political, she remarked. As a result, combating violence motivated by homophobia or transphobia is an important concern for human rights activists.

She also noted that LGBTQ+ people often experience a diminished socioeconomic status due to the toll of the multiple forms of violence they face daily. Research shows that violence against the region's LGBTQ+ community costs between .51% and 1.6% of the region's GDP (USD$383 million to USD$1.2 billion), according to The Economic Case for LGBT+ Inclusion in the Caribbean report.

Tourism

The Caribbean regional economy is heavily dependent on tourism. However, the region's anti-LGBTQ+ sentiment negatively affects its tourism profits, she stated. Data shows that the exclusionary practices cost the region up to USD $680 million (0.93% of regional GDP) per year, also according to the aforementioned economic report. This includes lost revenue from both global LGBTQ+ people and cisgender and heterosexual people who do not want to visit countries with anti-LGBTQ+ laws, policies, and stigma. Dr Viteri noted that 145 survey respondents described why they would not travel to the region. Of that sample, 133 referenced anti-LGBTQ+ laws and stigma as a reason. However, 60% of the sample indicated that they would visit a country, but only after the government passed pro-LGBTQ+ policies.

Gender Identity Laws

Dr Viteri remarked that most regional countries do not have laws allowing trans and gender non-confirming people to use their preferred gender markers. This limits access to healthcare, education, and work for members of the community. The lack of gender identity laws also increases violence for trans individuals who are jailed or imprisoned in facilities that do not correspond with their gender identities.

Equal Marriage

Over the last five years, several countries in Latin America have passed laws allowing same-sex couples to get married, Dr Viteri said. However, most countries in the Caribbean still do not have legal provisions for same-sex marriages or unions. As a result, people in same-sex or non-heteronormative relationships cannot access their joint estates, list their partners as their spousal beneficiaries on health or life insurance, make medical decisions on their partners' behalf, or access their partners' pensions.

Migration and Brain Drain

Overall, Dr Viteri said, these figures show how deeply each of these issues affects well-being. Many LGBTQ+ people who left the region have pointed to the discrimination and violence they faced as a large part of their decision to migrate. Punitive laws and stigma have real consequences and economic costs—not only in terms of the loss of money, but also because of the loss of the human capital, she stated. Discrimination also reduces the likelihood that those who left will ever return to the country of their birth or residence. She noted that many LGBTQ+ people who leave take the opportunity to escape in hopes that they will find a more welcoming space, contributing to significant social and economic losses in the region, a Brain Drain.

Steps Forward

Dr Viteri noted that attracting and retaining innovative talent companies could help mitigate the region's LGBTQ+ brain drain.

Diverse, inclusive companies are more innovative, have higher levels of employee motivation, and can compete for the most talented employees, she said. Some countries have invested in diversity, equality, and inclusion (DEI) because they recognise its benefits, including increased profits, better problem-solving, more creativity, and increased employee satisfaction, motivation, and productivity. Companies that show genuine commitment to diversity and inclusion also have higher levels of customer loyalty and brand appeal.

Conscious companies, including those that hire and embrace LGBTQ+ people, are more likely to attract consumers who want to do business with ethical, responsible brands. In addition, she said, the companies can benefit from the LGBTQ+ community's local, regional, and global spending power.

By working with companies that are interested in or already encourage inclusion, activists can create more employment opportunities for members of the LGBTQ+ community as well. "**If we…help these organisations and governments understand how they can win**," Dr Viteri noted, "**then we can work at different levels to increase equality and well-being**."

Key Issues

The session's moderator, Dr Kimahli Powell, Executive Director of Rainbow Railroad, opened the discussion with a series of questions:

- "People are leaving and we know the cost but what does that mean?"
- "Who has left the Caribbean—temporarily or otherwise—and why?"
- "Have you ever considered leaving? Why or why not?"

Participants then discussed the questions along two separate mind-sets: those who have left (or plan to) and those who have no plans to. Their reasons are below.

Participants Who Do Not Plan to Leave

Those with no plans to leave the region spoke about needing to carry forward the work, not only for themselves but also for the next generation.

One participant asked plainly: "**How will there be change if everybody leaves?**" They went on to say that that despite the challenges, they are not leaving their country:

> Belize was the first [Caribbean country to decriminalise same-sex acts] … I not going to the America or Canada where I don't understand the freedom and never learned the history. I staying [sic] in Belize. Freedom not free [sic]. Where in the world you can sit and mope and have justice? Just because Trinidad [decriminalised homosexuality that] don't mean [anything] to the politicians… We all have to put in the work… I want to stick it to the system even with the price. And I stood up for the system. They threatened but I stick it home [sic]. And I didn't go somewhere I didn't know. Freedom not free. I am staying home.

Another participant agreed:

> Some people want to go where the table is already made so they will run away from the discomfort and danger of living in our society and being who we are. But when will it ever change if we don't stay and change it? … I choose to be in my country because I know things have to change. And I have to lead the change. I can't expect to go somewhere else and lead somewhere else. Wherever you go, you'd be making a contribution but you can't make it at home if you're not at home. It's important to stay to make sure that more people, especially younger ones, will have a better experience because of the sacrifices others like me have made.

One participant stated that they want to be part of the change in the system:

> I don't… want to leave because I need to see my community going where we want to go and what we want to achieve. We've achieved many things in Belize and we probably don't see it. I don't want to leave my country because it's in a unique place considered Central American and Caribbean and influenced by both. Myself and my partner were the first openly gay couple in the country that moved around the country with no harassment. We need to challenge the system… It is my passion to see my community in my country go from point A and reach the finish line. I'm a born Belizean and I will die Belizean. For things to happen you need to challenge

the system. If I need to die as an LGBTQI+ in my community, I will do it. Because I want the other generations to have the freedom and what I didn't get. I'm willing to die for my country and my community so they can reach where Americans, Canadians, and [the community in] Amsterdam [has. I want] them to have the same freedom and privilege.

Participants Who Left or Plan to Leave

Those who left or are planning to leave gave several reasons for their decision, including bettering their mental health, feeling safer, being able to indulge in necessary self-care, and having access to more economic or academic opportunities.

One participant noted that while they plan to leave, they will only do so once they feel that the movement has progressed enough:

I do want to leave but I stay because where the movement is now, it needs me. Do I intend to stay forever? No. Am I putting things in place so someone else can take over? Yes. While I am doing this work, everything that affects other trans people affects me. I have to think of my physical and mental health and where I am in terms of my journey and what I want to achieve. I don't want to do this work forever because it's tiring and outside of the people who want to kill me, my community is difficult to work with. I love my country and I want to see it be a better place for me and others, but I won't let it kill me. [I] want to make sure that while I'm doing the work, I don't let it kill me.

I think people need to mindful of the different contexts that people live in. Your reality might be from different from somebody else's. I'm a fat, Black, trans woman. My experience isn't the same as his. Migrating is difficult for anybody. The fact that somebody has to make the decision to leave their country is a hard one and it means that something must've been the catalyst for that. I've done my part and I've worked for Jamaica. [I'm the] first trans person to be accepted to university and first to get gender affirming surgery. And if I say I'm ready [to go], I'm ready because I've worked.

Another mentioned the lack of community as the main reason behind their decision to leave:

There's no community [in my home country]. I've been doing this for six or seven years now and I've never felt at home but [I was] never more isolated than when I came out. I tried to build up the community but I was stabbed in the back or betrayed. So, for my sanity, I had to leave—for my safety, wellbeing, and mental health. For all the work I've been doing for so long, it wasn't doing me any good. I'm doing much better [now]. I'm sleeping better, I'm eating better, and I have a better sense of community. I tried very hard to make that happen [at home] but it's not there for me. And I'm doing better work now that I'm taking care of myself. You have to put self-care high up on your list of priorities if you're doing the work. It's physically and mentally and financially taxing.

Another noted that despite trying to build a community, the hostility they received both in and outside of the community took its toll:

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I tried to build community and got dragged into the isms that exist in the community itself and the hostilities that exist in wider Jamaican society… At one point, it became real for me to recognise that I'm not good to anybody unless I'm good to myself. The mental and financial toll of trying to build community [affected] me. And I had to leave just to be able to live to today. The work I do, I get to do [where I live now], and it has helped me to contribute more to Jamaica than staying.

One participant stated that leaving the Caribbean is not always necessary. Sometimes, they said, leaving the country is a better option and can give a needed change of perspective:

You may not always leave the Caribbean to go outside. The grass is not always greener. I know several people who will say the grass isn't greener [outside of the Caribbean]... I visited Trinidad [and Tobago] to experience a community for the first time because I always had difficulty coming into the community in Barbados. It's only through my experiences in Trinidad that I see how important it is to be part of a community and organising work. And I've come back to do that. I've always felt like I'd be forced to leave the region to be happy. You have to come and do the work even if it's hard. It's funny that even going to somewhere else in the Caribbean that had all those pride events, had the decriminalisation, had the public spaces, was so much better for my mental health. And that's something I want to see [in Barbados] and get it happening.

Another attendee mentioned that being part of the LGBTQI+ community is not their only impetus to leave the region:

Are there other confounding variables that might help to account for why somebody chooses to leave? My queerness is one component, but it isn't the only reason. One of the main reasons is that I can't do a PhD here. My partner has UK citizen so consideration for me is going and getting married and staying there long enough to get citizenship. We homogenise stories in a way that blurs context. Marriage equality isn't always the solution. We focus on queer politics in a very specific and sometimes myopic way. Marriage equality might help queer people but we might do better to remove the barriers that exist if you're not married. The common law legislation is helpful and it would be helpful if it would open it to same-sex couples. That's an entry way to create some stability. As a result of global north perspectives, we're constantly competing for funding on specific issues and goals that will allow us to sustain the work we're doing. We have to think about marginalisation and how liberation from those liberates all of us.

One participant noted that while being LGBTQ+ does not affect them the way it does other members of the community, their uncertainty about whether they can plan for their future (which includes having children) is central to their decision to leave:

Being LGBT has never necessarily been an issue. I was working for the national paper, I came out, and I wasn't treated differently at work. It was a good experience. I believed in staying in Jamaica and helping to create an environment that's safer for the community. [I was] looking at areas outside of the community and advocacy and getting funds allocated. Now I'm more minded to migrate… I have certain goals for myself that I don't think I'll be able to accomplish in Jamaica. I can't see how I can accomplish it now because of the political situation and I don't have enough faith in the political system to address the problem. I look at my future and I think of if I can plan five or ten years [in Jamaica]. How would I have children, etc.? So, when I think

about all these other things, that's where my thoughts shift to 'I want to migrate'. Because these are things that are important to me. I wouldn't want to put all [this effort] in the movement and then see that I didn't accomplish the other things because of activism. If I get to certain age and don't have them, I'll be miserable.

Sacrifices All Around

Two participants spoke on the difficulties that surround both decisions and how important the ability to migrate is to human rights.

"**As a proud gay Trini that grew up there**," one said, "**we have to be careful not to perpetuate this harmful narrative that people who leave don't care about their countries and aren't interested in progress. Whether you choose to stay or leave or have no choice, you're making sacrifices. There are sacrifices**."

Another agreed, stating: "**as human rights defenders, we must be cognisant that the right to migration and asylum is the right of our community members. We often forget that. In my context, a lot of young people are migrating and that's their right as it relates to climate change and education. They have that right**."

The Migration Myth

Several participants noted that stigma and discrimination against LGBTQ+ people is not exclusive to the Caribbean nor the Global South. They also stated that despite reports that paint the USA, Canada, and the UK as places where Caribbean LGBTQ+ people can live freely, each country has its own issues regarding discrimination, stigma, and violence.

Dr Powell acknowledged this, stating that "**when we talk about migration, in many instances we're taking about folks who seek asylum, but we know that's not the only way there's migration. People migrate through their own economic means and in places of their own choosing**."

One participant referenced a Rainbow Railroad article published in a Barbadian newspaper in 2019 where the author "**painted a Canadian utopia of what is going to happen [when asylum seekers migrate]**". The attendee read an excerpt from the article where the author, speaking to two lesbians who were seeking asylum, said, "**Let me get you some mittens and a parka and get you into a warm bed**". The attendee stated:

> The myth of Canada was built on indigenous people… and our nurses going to build your economies. It was built on the multiple Jamaicans who are without voice and without rights on your federal programme. So, this cute idea of this saviour coming to rescue us with parkas and mittens is built on our blood and our bodies. When we think about what do *you* do to create safe spaces, you need to tell a different story of the Caribbean… I'm calling you in not out. Tell the complexity of the queerness that exists here as opposed to 'We flee, we run with the clothes on our backs' [even though] now we're in Canada where we work at McDonald's or in a call centre with two degrees.

Dr Powell responded to the participant and admitted that "**we have to call out the privilege [and white saviour complex] of the organisation that I inherited**". He also stated that "**being a refugee is not fun and there are a lot of challenges**" that exist as part of the migration process.

Another participant stated that activists who are still in the Caribbean must consider the lives and experiences of those who left or who want to leave. "**We have to respect people's needs**," they said. They continued:

> The asylum narrative of what you have to do to stay in Global North countries can be demoralising and sometimes, you have to say stuff that is untrue about where you come from… You have to paint the unliveable narrative to get the asylum. And there's punishment wrapped up in that process… We [must] encourage [asylum agencies] to stop those practices because they're harmful and perpetuate this idea that we're coming from unliveable spaces.

Defining and Examining the Notion of 'Brain Drain'

As part of the discussion, participants discussed the term 'brain drain'.

Philip R Crehan stated that the research he led for the economic report categorised brain drain as the benefits the host country receive from the migrants' human capital and wealth. "**What we found was that economic migrants [those who had a choice to leave] had initially more human capital to do so… When they got to host countries, they were able to turn that into wealth in significantly more ways than those in the region could**," he stated. "**Wealth grew and human capital thrived. For us, that's brain drain because the [host country soaks] up what the community brings which is a loss to the region**."

One participant noted that the metrics used to define brain drain are capitalist. "**Measuring brain drain in relation to educational level immediately leaves out the people who are refugees because they are amongst the poorest and most vulnerable and expelled from primary schools early**," they commented. "**I know that those values represent a part of the picture because they represent competencies but I am haunted by my own inability to reflect value on the humanity of people who are refugees and asylum seekers and don't represent value in the terms of capitalistic production**."

A participant asked Dr Powell whether there is data available that addresses the educational qualifications of people who have sought asylum from Rainbow Railroad or have left the region due to mistreatment. "**Is it that we're losing LGBTQ+ people who have particular skillsets and qualifications?**" the commenter asked. "**Where can I find that data?**"

Dr Powell stated that while the organisation started the process to disaggregate their data, they did not have educational information available. Much of the initial data collection and analysis was focused on vulnerability rather than socioeconomic status or education, he said. However, he noted that the current data collection and analysis methods included outcomes such as the refugees' education status before they left their home country and their status once they settled in Canada.

Observations

Participants noted that whether activists or members of the community leave or stay, several things must change to make the region a safer, more comfortable space for LGBTQ+ people. Their recommendations included the following.

Use narrative therapy to shift perspectives within the community. For example, one participant stated, **"I am gay and my boss cannot expand his mind. That's *his* limitation, not my problem**."

Advocate for funding that will allow CSOs to create safe spaces for members of the community.

Create closer connections between the diaspora and the local community. Some Caribbean countries are considered high income and do not qualify for multilateral or bilateral aid. Since funding for those countries is limited, having community members work remotely for organisations run or owned by members of the diaspora would be beneficial.

Re-examine the notions of "work", "employment", and "highly-skilled". Make sure that definitions include individuals in the creative and informal sectors. Any new definitions must include qualitative data, not only quantitative data.

Collaborate with private sector organisations that are willing to champion the cause and work with the community.

Keynote 5 – Honourable Valerie Woods, Speaker of the House of Representatives, Belize

In her keynote address, the Honourable Valerie Woods, Speaker of the House of Representatives in Belize, discussed how parliamentarians can use their platforms to advocate for their constituents' human rights. Woods is a board member of Parliamentarians for Global Action (PGA), an international network of 1200 legislatures from 136 countries "**who inform and facilitate concrete actions by parliamentarians in all regions of the world to advocate for human rights, democracy, gender equality, climate justice**". As part of their mandate, PGA "**seeks to mobilise parliamentarians as human rights activists to ensure that every human can reach their highest potential free from discrimination**".

Woods stated that data is critical to policy interventions and strategic litigation. She referenced the handbook, *'Advancing the Human Rights and Inclusion of LGBTI People'*, which was released by PGA in 2017 and revised in 2022. The handbook, she said, is a valuable tool for parliamentarians who want to champion diversity and intersectionality in legislation. The document provides guidance on how parliamentarians can use global and regional human rights frameworks to:

- commit their governments to ensure LGBTQI+ human rights, inclusion, and legal protection
- find an entry point that will enable them to act and promote the rights of LGBTQI+ people
- use their roles—legislative, representative, and oversight—to protect LGBTQI+ human rights and ensure inclusion
- work with communities and allies across political divides to frame laws, shape political frameworks, and lead campaigns for LGBTQI+ constituents' human rights
- apply lessons learnt from fellow ministers who were successful in their advocacy.

The handbook includes checklists on laws, bills, and policies that address the human rights of LGBTQI+ people. Parliamentarians are encouraged to use the lists to gauge: (1) where their countries stand in terms of recognising the LGBTQI+ community's human rights, and (2) whether their governments have the legal tools and policies to protect rights based on SOGIESC.

Another PGA resource, the myths vs. realities table, uses research to debunk myths and spread awareness about the realities LGBTQI+ people face in terms of violence, discrimination, and stigma. The table provides brief but comprehensive responses to common misconceptions and denigrating comments often made about LGBTQI+ people. In the preamble, parliamentarians are encouraged to reach out to local organisations for further guidance on how to appropriately address and respond to such statements. It also calls on them to engage with CSOs regularly and hold dialogues to understand the issues the LGBTQI+ community faces and improve governments' legislative and policy responses.

Woods remarked that "**building broad alliances and employing smart political tactics… is an urgent matter**" necessary to empowering women and girls and creating systems that keep LGBTQI+ people safe from violence and discrimination. She also stated that lawmakers must consider the intersectionalities of race, socioeconomic status, and level of education, among others, as they work to effect change.

She continued:

> Democracy presupposes genuine representation, participation, and partnership between all of us regardless of our background, gender identity or expression, or sexual orientation. [It] covers a broader spectrum of principles including those of equality and non-discrimination, full enjoyment of fundamental human rights, civil and political participation in public and private spheres, and dignity and inclusion for all.

The task is a serious one and, she admitted, parliamentarians have more work to do. "**The journey can and likely will be long,**" she said. "**You will probably go through some valleys, but there will be some hills**."

Recounting a recent achievement in the fight for equality, Speaker Woods announced that as part of Belize's current constitutional reform, the review commission responsible must include one member from an LGBTQI+ organisation. "**That is an accomplishment**," she said.

Despite the progress in that area, she stated that, unfortunately, the Equal Opportunities Bill has yet to make it to the country's Senate floor. "**There's still a lot of work to do**," she observed. "**It's still an effort that many CSOs and partners are working on**."

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> **"But with spaces like these and opportunities where we can bring together parliamentarians, civil society, members of the LGBTQI+ community, researchers, the business sector… we get the opportunity to discuss the issues and ideas for actions, strategies and recommendations for solutions,"** she said. **"I remain an optimistic ally. We can improve the pace… We can see the change that we want to see because we are being that change and bringing that change."**

Keynote 6 – Jay Gilliam, Senior LGBTQI+ Coordinator, USAID

The final keynote speech was delivered by Jay Gilliam, Senior LGBTQI+ Coordinator at the U.S. Agency for International Development's (USAID). Gilliam commended the organisers and attendees on the conference, stating that their work and presence "**helps our community be seen and recognised**".

Gilliam stressed the importance of the conference's theme of using data to validate the lives, challenges, and experiences of LGBTQI+ people. For decades, he noted, the US media portrayed the gay community using white, cisgender, affluent men who lived in urban cities. Gilliam noted that these portrayals did not represent the Black and Brown trans women and men in the LGBTQI+ community.

> "**It wasn't until we got better data that we saw economic and social disparities of our communities and the needs in them compared to heterosexual citizens of the community,**" he said. "**The data validated our lives and experiences and strengthened the way we advocated for our needs.**"

However, research helped change that narrative. He noted that USAID has internal guidelines on how to conduct consultations that prioritise safety and security. These guidelines ensure that their data collection processes are respectful of both researchers and respondents. The principles also assist global USAID staff with how to "**thoughtfully and sensitively reach out the LGBTQI+ groups and make informed [funding] decisions that will support [the community's] goals and priorities**".

As part of that mandate, Gilliam stated that USAID is also honouring intersectionality across LGBTQI+ communities. He outlined the concept of inclusive development, which guides how the organisation creates programmes, initiatives, and funding opportunities based on the intersections of race, SOGIESC, physical and mental abilities, age, ethnicity, and mental health needs. "**We are advancing a vision of inclusive development that sees the full person [through our Inclusive Development Hub],**" he said.

Gilliam noted that one way the Biden-Harris administration does so is by nominating political appointees that are reflective of communities that often do not have representation at the government level. In addition, he said, the administration has shared its unequivocal support for advancing LGBTQI+ human rights around the world. He quoted President Joe Biden, who stated that "**every person should be treated with respect and dignity and should be able to live without fear, no matter who they are or whom they love**".

Data collection, storage, and analysis are integral aspects of this initiative. While many USAID-funded projects in the Caribbean rely on comprehensive research received from or through CSOs, he

acknowledged that these processes are not always easy or simple for the regional organisations to perform.

He empathised, stating that USAID also grapples with adequate data storage and disaggregation, especially in countries that already recognise a third gender or are capturing data beyond the binary gender system. Many of USAID's data collection methods still only focus on SOGIESC in relation to key populations. This, Gilliam said, means that they sometimes have a limited ability to conduct their programmes, which restricts the community's access to initiatives and polices developed with them in mind. Coupled with the exclusion LGBTQI+ people face when trying to access mainstream social benefit systems, legislative protection, and legal recognition of their relationships and families, this gap further limits rights and access to essential services. In response, he said, USAID hired a subject matter expert to help them develop and implement solutions. He stated that training will be rolled out within the next year.

Gilliam reiterated the importance of data collection and referenced the UNDP-funded project '*Being LGBTI in the Caribbean*' or BLIC. He noted that, along with new insights into the realities of LGBTQI+ people in the region, the project also supported inclusive surveys that led to a "**ground-breaking report on intersex experiences**". In the next phase of the project, Gilliam announced, there will be "**explicit focus on economic support for trans women through our holistic intervention that seeks to support inclusive public and private policies**". Over two years, he stated, USAID will donate USD $2 million to create activities that will "**support trans women to help develop, leverage, and acquire skills and credentials to fully participate in the workplace**". The phase will:

- provide psychosocial services for trans women
- map regional laws and policies that inhibit trans people's participation in decent work
- build better capacity of trans sensitization
- support LGBTQI+ organisations for advocacy campaigns.

He noted that initiatives like BLIC are possible only through regional advocates' engagement throughout the development process, which leads to better outcomes. "**I'm grateful to everyone's efforts here in the Caribbean on this work**," he stated. "**You're setting an example for USAID and our entire global LGBTQI+ community on how to do this in collaboration and with urgency and purpose**."

He concluded with a quote from gender development specialist and researcher, Taitu Heron: "**No counting; no problem. No problem; no solutions**."

"**That might be the case now**," he said, "**but I'm so glad we're driving together towards a future where we are accounted for, have more clearly stated the problem, and are advancing solutions to solve them. Know that USAID is in solidarity with our Caribbean friends and partners**."

Wrap Up – Simone Harris and Melissa Dacres-Jones

During the last session, Simone Harris and Melissa Dacres-Jones summarised the roundtable sessions and asked participants to share actionable steps that all participants (from 6 sectors) could take away from the meeting and use to create policies and drive strategies. The moderators asked participants to identify how they could take away what they heard at the roundtable sessions and use it to drive strategies and policies in their home countries.

Defining 'the Region'

Before the moderators requested strategies, they asked participants to outline what countries are included in the umbrella term "the region".

One respondent stated that they think of the region as "**CARICOM from Jamaica, Bermuda, Bahamas, and coming down. I also think of Belize, Guyana, and Suriname—former colonies. Sometimes we extend that to Latin America as well**." Another indicated that the definition should include the English-, French-, Spanish-, and Dutch-speaking countries.

For another, the term is about mind-set as much as it is about geography: "**It all has to do with everybody coming together under one common goal with the same mind-set wanting to achieve the same thing**." They stated that their organisation conducts meetings and workshops in multiple languages "**so that when the message goes across, everyone understands what's being said and can take away something… It's one Caribbean and that should be our goal**."

Navigating Data Collection and Analysis Issues

Attendees noted that there are several issues with data collection and analysis in the region.

Many organisations and governments are unaware of how to effectively use data, so it sits dormant after it has been collected and analysed.

Bigger Caribbean countries receive more research than others. This is often due to language barriers or the country's size or infrastructure for research. However, this disparity in data collection affects how the data gets generalised and which experiences are considered representative (even when they are not).

It can be difficult to ensure that data collection is authentic. If incentives are offered in exchange for participation, the data sets can be skewed by people who are not part of the target but who want access to the incentives. Researchers must pay attention to their data collection methods to ensure the information they shared is not skewed.

Research required for academic purposes does not always align with the research that activists need to do their work. As a result, many CSOs are collecting data that they cannot use just so they can access funding to cover operational costs or support other initiatives.

Using Data Effectively

The moderators asked the audience to think about what information and strategies they were taking back to their countries. "**What are we doing in our spaces to make sure that the needs we have are being met**?" they questioned.

Recommendations and action steps included:

- move away from the quantitative views of the community and gather more qualitative research
- pay closer attention to who is collecting data and why
- create a data repository where organisations, advocates, funders, governments, members of the community, and other interested parties can go to access available data. This platform should aggregate the data and collate a list of best practices of disaggregation and analysis
- take regional governments to court (through the OAS) if they refuse to protect human rights
- present the data in formats that can be shared with members of the community (for example, one researcher noted that they presented femicide statistics using cut-outs of women's figures)
- consider individuals who fall outside the parameters of the LGBTQI+ labels that the community uses (men who have sex with me (MSM) but are not gay, women who have sex with women in response to trauma such as rape or abuse, young people who are navigating their identities, etc.) and use research to get a better understanding of their experiences
- collect data that can be used in litigation and negotiation to show discrimination and violence
- design research projects and methodologies that are specifically geared towards advocacy and litigation
- conduct more training with organisations on the need and relevance for data (including "big data") and why good research is important to advocacy
- foster greater collaboration between organisations and research institutions
- let community members know what is happening in the country and what the research means for them as individuals and a group (employment figures, health disparities, etc.).

Moving Forward

As the session closed, several participants indicated their desire and plans to take what they heard during the conference a step further.

A representative from a global accounting firm stated that they would take the information from the conference back to their employer to encourage them to have these conversations among staff. The commenter noted that the company would be interested in having a representative from a local organisation speak with team members. He also noted that the company would be willing to work with the organisations to create a safe space for employees to speak up about issues they may be facing without fear of repercussion from peers or the company.

In reference to participants' calls for donors to work more closely with organisations, a delegate from an international funding organisation noted that the government representatives, donors, diplomats, and leaders from across the diaspora had been challenged by the presentations and participants' comments during discussions. "**We have to ask ourselves what we'll do differently**," the delegate stated. "**[We]**

have to make sure this message doesn't stop here… We as groups that benefit from these conversations have to make something from that."

Another noted that the roundtable session was the first of many. "**The conversation of data collection, which was minimal, has become a priority,**" they stated. "**How are we using it? How do we ensure we're always telling our story? How do we ensure our story is told** *by* **us and not** *for* **us. We must not just be present for ourselves but we're creating spaces for others. And where a space at the table isn't necessarily available, we walk with our own chair and still come in**."

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Conclusion

The first D.A.T.A. Roundtables convened LGBTQI+ civil society organizations, governments, the private sector, economic development institutions, representatives of regional and international human rights institutions, and academics – from around the region and world – to discuss LGBTQI+ data and how it can be used to create more inclusive policies and interventions. 12 main themes were discussed in separate roundtables, with a through-line of how to create a framework that prioritizes LGBTQI+ economic inclusion and livelihoods.

Participants provided robust observations for actions that can shape domestic and regional advocacy frameworks, with the idea to operationalize at the country level. Their recommendations provided ways that all stakeholders and sectors can work towards making the region a more safe, inclusive space for LGBTQI+ people that also allows them to thrive socioeconomically. These data-driven strategies, buoyed by success stories and best practices, range from short- to long-term solutions that can be carried out in practical ways by civil society, governments, the private sector, and economic development institutions. Across the 12 themes, the recommendations in-text and in the Appendix (below) cover a range of experiences and areas of expertise. The D.A.T.A. roundtables are just the beginning. We're now tapping into that pace of change and working to build on the innovation, ingenuity and resilience of the LGBTQI+ community in the Caribbean.

APPENDIX – List of all Recommendations and Observations to Emerge in Roundtables

Roundtable 1: Violence Against LGBTQI+ People and Access to Justice in the Caribbean – Alessandra Hereman and Caleb Orozco

Researcher's Recommendations

Hereman made three recommendations for policy and legislation development based on the research: amend, enact, and educate.

Amend. The first recommendation required countries to include SOGIESC to existing anti-discrimination laws. Hereman referenced CARICOM's Model Anti-Discrimination Bill, developed through the Pan Caribbean Partnership against HIV and AIDS (PANCAP), as an example of what these policies would look like. The bill, which was released in 2010, "**seeks to provide for the protection of persons against discrimination, including discrimination involving harassment, victimisation and vilification on the grounds of [HIV status], [sexual orientation], [lawful sexual activity], [disability], [gender] and [status as an orphan]; and to provide for related matters**"[6].

Enact. In the second recommendation, she encouraged legislation that would:

- allow gender markers on official identification (national ID cards, passports, etc.) to accurately reflect citizens' gender identities
- criminalise hate crimes motivated by one's SOGIESC
- decriminalise diverse genders and sexualities.

Educate. The final recommendation focused on sensitisation and training. Hereman noted that despite legislative and policy changes, many members of society, including those in law enforcement, still hold traditional views regarding gender and sexuality. "**It's important to work at the grassroots level**," Hereman opined. "**[At] the structural and institutional level [it] is relatively easy to change laws and policies but at the individual level, where there are perceptions and prejudices and biases, it's difficult**." The researcher recommended that countries implement training that "**simultaneously [addresses] negative attitudes and perceptions that shape homophobia and transphobia**".

Participants' Recommendations

Participants recommended several ways to (1) increase accessibility, (2) use data to inform policies, and (3) increase inclusion.

The recommendations were to:

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[6] https://pancap.org/pancap-documents/caricom-model-anti-discrimination-bill/

- urge governments to include LGBTQI+ people in national surveys, studies, and other data collection exercises (i.e., collect SOGIESC information along with other relevant human characteristics or demographic data)
- advocate for LGBTQI+ issues in the context of other issues of national importance (climate change, poverty and access, healthcare, economic development, etc.)
- use education to combat stigma and allow young queer people to feel seen and supported in the school system
- activate citizens in the general population by getting them to see how SOGIESC exclusion affects them as well
- sensitise teachers, community leaders, members of the criminal justice system, and healthcare workers about LGBTQI+ issues so that they can address violence adequately, help lower stigma and discrimination, and treat members of the community with dignity and respect
- hold governments and policy makers accountable for not doing what they should be to protect and include LGBTQI+ people
- address the needs of those in the community before—or, at the very least, as part of—data collection exercises (for example, due to economic inequality, some LGBTQI+ people do not have cell phones, access to the internet, safe transportation, etc. These needs must be addressed as part of research initiatives).

Roundtable 2: Health and COVID-19 and Policy Options – Dr Nastassia Rambarran and Saskia Perriard

Participants' Recommendations

Training and intervention: Healthcare officials need to be trained and sensitised on LGBTQI+ issues and needs. In addition, an intervention must be made to provide basic services for LGBTQI+ people, particularly food and mental health support and counselling. This would impact the high levels of anxiety, depression, and substance abuse among LGBTQI+ people.

Public sector reform: Governments must do more monitoring and data collection with LGBTQI+ people. Outreach and screening of LGBTQI+ people must also become a priority. In addition, activists and officials should conduct more consultations and collaborations. These can contribute to regulatory improvements, prevention, and direct care.

Private sector reform: A network of private providers can be contracted to develop a for-profit, revenue-neutral business model that is run by or employs LGBTQI+ people. The success of this initiative would likely encourage other private sector organisations to invest in the community as well.

Economic development: There needs to be a cost analysis of interventions and programmes geared towards the community. Researchers and policy makers must also focus on social determinants of health, health impact assessments, and micro-economic policies. With this data, it will be easier to show how investing in LGBTQI+ people will contribute to economic development.

Expand data collection outside of the usual countries: Organisation of Eastern Caribbean States (OECS) countries are often not involved in many studies, said one attendee, which means that those who have relevant knowledge—specifically on less-researched territories—are not sought out. "**Stop using Jamaica, Guyana, Trinidad, [and] Belize [only], because other countries are not being represented**."

Use data to highlight positive stories: One commenter suggested that "**people have the perception that LGBTQI+ persons suffer from a lot of substance abuse and they are poor**". As a result, they stated that "**we need to [highlight] positive… stories [about LGBTQI+ people]**".

Enable LGBTQI+ people to take care of themselves and each other: "**The majority group is very resistant to taking care of [the LGBTQI+] minority**," one participant noted. Their suggestions were to:

> Reverse the mainstreaming. Enable the people in the minority to provide services for everybody. Give minority groups the tools to provide health services to their own community [and] help themselves. Make use of the fact that people in the minority group have the cultural competence to better themselves. [Create] solutions to provide people with the healthcare. Do away with the policies and just start doing!

Increase LGBTQI+ representation in healthcare: In response to the stigma that LGBTQI+ people face in a healthcare, a community health centre in New York requires 51% of its board to be LGBTQI+ people. This is crucial to making sure that patients' needs are being met and that the office is a safe space. Similarly, a representative from USAID noted that the organisation helped to create India's first transgender community health clinic run by trans people. One participant noted that representation not only improves the quality of the community, but also the quality of services the community receives.

Move beyond HIV to other health needs: The USAID representative stated that the organisation is "**working to determine how we will incorporate LGBTQI+ issues into other sectors…and how to go about finding solutions to that work**". They also noted that "**there are needs beyond getting HIV treatment that trans persons need… We have been able to expand beyond HIV treatment, care, and prevention to provide better health needs to the community**."

Roundtable 3: Defining LGBTQI+ Livelihoods – Philip R Crehan and Dr Lee Badgett

Participants' Recommendations

Re-evaluate how services are delivered to LGBTQI+ people. Ensure that protocols are followed and all parties (funders, governments, civil society organisations, etc.) are held accountable for funding relevant programmes and initiatives.

Hold donors accountable. Some participants stated that organisations should refuse funding if donors do not allow them to pay for administrative costs or fund projects that are relevant to their clients and the wider community.

Donors and governments must collaborate more closely with organisations to ensure that they are meeting the needs of LGBTQI+ people. This includes providing funding to cover organisations' administrative and staffing costs and allowing organisations to choose how to disperse grant funds.

Lobby the government to support LGBTQI+ equality by creating inclusive public sector employment policies and workspaces.

Engage with the private sector to create more inclusive, diverse work environments.

Ensure that funding creates employment opportunities for members of the community who do not work with organisations full-time (stipends for short-term projects, etc.).

Use the data to create sustainable micro- or macro-level programmes to employ members of the community.

Work to ensure LGBTQI+ inclusion in the economic development sector. Many economic development institutions partner with governments that engage sometimes upholds the exclusion of LGBTQI+ people, which stifles their ability to effectively work with them and include them into economic development programming.

Encourage donors and funding agencies to hire more LGBTQI+ people. Economic development institutions should rely more heavily on people who are intimately affected by the issues and can suggest strategies that will effect change. As one participant noted, working with the community directly can help development be more effective.

Lobby governments to decriminalise sex work.

Create social enterprises so that when funding is unavailable or insufficient, CSOs can sustain themselves.

Urge insurance companies and governments to recognise same-sex couples so that partners can get access to benefits, pension, insurance pay-outs, etc.

Roundtable 4: Who Gets Counted and Who Counts: Challenges of Data Capture and Analysis of LGBTQI+ Population Groups in the Caribbean with a Focus on Education and Implications for Human Capital – Taitu Heron and Karin Santi

Participants' Recommendations

Start with data collection: The reliance on secondary sources can decrease when more studies are done with a focus on LGBTQI+ people in education, the workplace, etc. This approach must be research-based and thorough to ensure that LGBTQI+ people are included.

Separate sex from gender in data design, collection, and analysis.

Train educators: Teachers must be (re)taught and (re)trained on how to be more sensitive to LGBTQI+ students.

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Partner with insurance companies: Activists should urge insurance companies to allow LGBTQI+ people and their families to access the benefits and healthcare cishet people receive. Participants noted that if insurance companies move in a direction that is inclusive of LGBTQI+ people, this will likely have a positive effect on other businesses and cause them to revise their exclusionary policies and procedures.

Lobby regional governments: Advocates must continue to engage government regarding constitutional and educational reform. Governments dictate how their countries run and where money is allocated. As a result, it is instrumental that common ground be found between government officials and LGBTQI+ advocates so they can discuss and agree on solutions to the issues the community faces.

Create connections with other marginalised groups: Like LGBTQI+ people, people with disabilities are often omitted from studies on healthcare, education, and employment. Both groups are victims of stigma, discrimination, and exclusion. These two groups can better work together to advance equal rights and inclusion.

Learn from others' best practices: The statistical bureaus in Canada and Australia have added more representative categories to their research initiatives. These changes include aggregated and disaggregated LGBTQI+ people in primary data collection surveys, beginning with the census. More focus must be placed on how these governments and agencies sought out and implemented solutions. With more solutions-oriented data, regional activists can gain more progress in solving the problems LGBTQI+ people face.

Lobby for more funding: Collecting data and changing data methodologies is expensive work. Regional governments (and some donors) are not always eager to put money into research on LGBTQI+ issues. However, to have proper machinery and the necessary resources to execute the research, collect data, and compile and present the facts, funding is necessary. Advocates must continue to urge governments to invest in LGBTQI+ people.

Build partnerships: Collaborations allow those with common agendas to form a starting point to work on problems. These links must be made across sectors and among organisations. Advocates must build partnerships with academic institutions, research centres and other important institutions.

Engage the private sector: Even if governments are reluctant to support or help, many private sector companies will invest in the community once they can see evidence of how LGBTQI+ inclusion can contribute to their business operations and outcomes. Advocates must use available data to show the private sector how much the global LGBTQI+ community can contribute to their local economies.

Incorporate vulnerabilities into data collection and analysis: Data collection methods should account for the increased vulnerabilities LGBTQI+ people face just by existing in a heteronormative and cisnormative context. Researchers must also highlight how susceptible LGBTQI+ members are to discrimination in education, employment, and healthcare.

Increase LGBTQI+ representation in government: Members of the LGBTQI+ community should be given more opportunities to take part in elective politics and serve as government officials. The community members who have access to the highest levels of local and regional decision-making would be able to help the community and effect change from the inside.

Roundtable 5: The Privy Council (JCPC) Hinders the Progress of LGBTQI+ Rights in the Caribbean Region – Dr Leonardo J Raznovich and Dr Kimahli Powell

Researcher's Recommendations

The UK government must restrict access on appeal to the JCPC to governments "**who are unable to convince their own Caribbean judges of the atrocities they want to do**" but then go to London and get permission from the UK judiciary. This process could be done by amending Section 3 of the Privy Council Act 1833 to exclude "**appeal(s) from Governments on matters decided by the final court of appeal of the jurisdiction in favour of expanding the rights of the bill of rights of the constitution**".

The OAS should reconsider the status of the independent countries who rely on foreign extra continental judicial power to make decisions for them.

Roundtable 6: Accessing Development Financing – Philip R Crehan and Justus Eisfeld

Recommendations

Engage with development banks: Crehan ended the session by encouraging activists to create relationships with World Bank, IDB, and CDB country offices in their respective territories. He noted that the information on how governments and funders work together, what projects are being funded, and what priority areas have been identified are all public information.

Hold governments accountable regarding the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development: "It's important to keep agenda 2030 in mind and that the goal of our governments includes the promise to leave no one behind and reach those who are further left behind first," they said. "And those who are furthest left behind are usually in that position because their governments abandoned them."

Conduct consultations with stakeholders: Advocates and governments must initiate conversations with development banks that will encourage them to invest in LGBTQI+ concerns and activities.

Lobby governments to include LGBTQI+ people in funding requests: The representative governments must ask banks for funding specifically for LGBTQI+ issues; otherwise, funds will not be directed toward LGBTQI+ concerns and will be used for other developments, physical infrastructure improvements, or other key populations.

Roundtable 7: Poverty and Accessing Labour Markets – Liesl Theron and Alexus D'Marco

Researcher's Recommendations

Lobby governments to allow LGBTQI+ people's preferred gender markers to be changed and recognised on official documentation and identification. Referencing the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights' (IACHR) "Report on Trans and Gender Diverse Persons and Their Economic, Social, Cultural, and Environmental Rights (2020), Theron noted that institutional and societal failure to acknowledge gender identity is one of the main obstacles that Caribbean trans people face. Those whose gender identities do not match their identification often cannot access education or work opportunities, which contributes to the cycle of poverty. Theron emphasised that prior medical procedures such as gender affirmation surgery, hormonal therapy, or sterilisation should not be required for the gender marker changes to be made.

Further, the IACHR report referenced the Yogyakarta Principles' assertation that governments must "**ensure that official identity documents only include personal information that is relevant, reasonable and necessary as required by the law for a legitimate purpose**". The principles' authors recommend eliminating sex and gender identification from passports, birth certificates, identification cards, and driver's licences.

Use toolkits as a guide to aid in policy development. Several regional and international organisations have released toolkits, guides, or best practice lists that can be used for developing inclusive policies. Theron referenced four that can be used to help regional activists and decision makers do the same:

- Global Action for Trans Equality's (GATE) policy brief *'Linking Sustainable Development Goals to Trans Work'*
- GATE's *'Report on Poverty: Impact on Trans and Gender Diverse Communities'*
- GATE's *'The SDGs & Trans Engagement: A Toolkit'*
- CAISO's *'Finding an Equal Place at Work: The Model LGBTI+ Workplace Policy for Trinidad and Tobago'*.

Link the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) to trans and gender diverse advocacy. Theron noted that 'Leave no one behind', the theme of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and SDGs, automatically encompasses LGBTQI+ people, most of whom are excluded from national and international development initiatives. Discriminatory laws, projects that do not adequately address their needs, and negative social attitudes all negatively affect community members' individual and collective progress. The devastating effects—such as lower income, worse health outcomes, and lower education levels—are experienced by LGBTQI+ people globally. "**As a result**," Theron argued, "**poverty…will never be eradicated until no one is left behind, including LGBTQI+ persons**."

Roundtable 8: LGBTQI+ Tourism Perspectives: The Economic Case for LGBTQI+ Inclusion in the Caribbean – Donnya (Zi) Piggott and Liam Rezende

Researcher's Observations

Data collection: LGBTQI+ people are a crucial part of the tourism industry, which is unknown to most—even tourism officials. A large percentage of LGBTQI+ travellers seem to be higher-than-average spenders, particularly in destinations that are perceived to be inclusive of the community. Yet these claims need to be verified empirically, since there is little official data on LGBTQI+ tourists. As a result, global research must be conducted to compare the spending habits of LGBTQI+ people vs. travellers in the general population.

Training: In-depth sensitisation training must be done with tourism practitioners to facilitate economic and social progress. Training should include both LGBTQI+ people and others to sensitise them to the issues community members face and encourage them to advocate for improvements in multiple services, including education, healthcare, and law. The more information is provided to the general population, the more they can understand the experiences of the region's LGBTQI+ community.

Private sector collaborations: Of the research that does exist, it shows that LGBTQI+ people are willing to spend between 20-25% to stay in a destination that welcomes them. These figures should be presented to the private sector to show them how beneficial investing in the community could be. Governments would also be encouraged to get involved if the private sector begins to invest, which will positively affect funding for LGBTQI+ people and initiatives. Both sectors must be targeted and approached with relevant data.

Engage journalists: The media must be informed of the positive impact that LGBTQI+ people have on tourism. Regional journalists, through their media outlets, can disseminate data on how integral both local and international LGBTQI+ people are to the tourism market. Through their work, they can also advocate for more inclusion.

Roundtable 9: Perspectives from the Private Sector – Jimmy González and Donnya (Zi) Piggott

Researcher's Recommendations

- Build a community.
- Create interest groups.
- Collaborate with other groups, especially those that would not normally work with LGBTQI+ organisations or causes.
- Reach out to businesses to offer them sensitisation training on LGBTQI+ issues.
- Be positive and shift the narrative of activism as constant or only hard work. Further develop mutually beneficial programs for companies as well as LGBTQ+ people, i.e., work toward the "business case for LGBTQI+ inclusion".

Participants' Recommendations

Participants gave several recommendations on how regional CSOs can implement CCLGBTRD's strategies in their own work:

- LGBTQI+ organisations should continue to focus on forming mutually beneficial relationships and connections with people and companies that can help effect a positive change on policies that affect the community at large.
- Activists must identify the ways that the championed cause can add value to companies, such as updated policies encouraging growth in their business operations.
- Advocates must identify and create connections with allies, in these companies and groups that share the same values, and work with them to amplify their voice.
- Community organisations must discover creative ways to offer solutions to target companies to show how working with LGBTQI+ people can expand their business operations.
- Advocates must find ways to work with the private and public sectors to allow for greater LGBTQI+ inclusion.
- Those involved in the work must work together and protect others from backlash that they could face from the wider community.
- Advocates should consider entrepreneurship opportunities as another means of intensifying their voices and generating income for the movement.

Roundtable 10: Decolonising Global Finance and Partnerships – Dr Nikoli Attai, Dr Angelique V Nixon, and Billie Bryan

Researcher's Observations

Based on his research, Dr Attai made several observations on how to decolonise funding:

- focus on those 'in the trenches', specifically non-cisgender people who do not fall within the bounds of respectability politics or feel ostracised from both the LGBTQI+ and wider communities
- pay more attention to what can be learned from sex workers, 'down low' men, trans people, working class people, etc.
- examine what some of the spaces tell us about negotiating queerness and how those who enter those spaces do it
- prioritise voices from the margins
- remind funders that those who are most intimately connected with these issues know the most about themselves and their experiences
- let international funders know that activists and LGBTQI+ people see straight through colonial practices
- insist that donors fund opportunities on the community's terms and not the other way around
- do not allow outsiders to fix broken systems in ways that leave the community out
- do not allow outsiders to define the community's genders and gender identities

- listen to the silenced but not silent voices across the region
- ask questions of the community to understand what they are experiencing and the kinds of agency they have.

Dr Attai ended his presentation with a call to action: "**Go in the trenches, roll up our sleeves, go on the block, see where trans women are, and let these spaces inspire us to inform and inspire our work**."

Roundtable 11: Same Region, Different Perspective: Analysis of Regional Attitudes Towards Homosexuals – Peter Wickham and Kenita Placide

Researcher's Recommendations

Make connections with religious groups and people. In his presentation, Wickham noted that one of the key strategies they used, at late activist Colin Robinson's insistence, was to have churches on board in both conventional and unconventional ways. He stated that when they first released the data from the study, they did so in a church in Trinidad and Tobago. In Guyana, they invited the Archbishop of the Anglican church to be on the panel as they spoke about the findings. He urged other activists to consider working with religious leaders in their advocacy strategies.

Conduct more research into how individuals in the region believe decriminalisation affects them. Wickham stated that although the findings showed that respondents believe decriminalisation will have negative effects, his team did not investigate what those negative effects would be. The study also did not analyse why so many in the region are against decriminalisation even though they admit that decriminalisation would not affect their lives. Wickham stated that this area is one that would benefit from more research.

Participants' Recommendations

Link decriminalisation to other oppressive colonial laws that affect the country's citizens and citizens' rights (e.g., buggery laws also refer to heterosexual intercourse).

Highlight data that shows the changing views of the region to garner political support. Many regional politicians support human rights but will not say so publicly out of the fear of what it would mean for their campaigns. Advocates should use the data on the region's changing views of LGBTQI+ people to show politicians and other decision makers that the region is becoming more inclusive and get them to show public support for decriminalisation and other human rights issues.

Take countries to international court to challenge the laws. Many Caribbean countries have signed on to treaties and agreements that state that they must honour human rights of all people (regardless of their SOCIESC). Advocates can use these agreements to bring cases against their governments. "**The churches have access to legislation,**" one participant said, "**but you have access to the world, which is moving in a different direction**."

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Appeal to the OAS for suspension of Jamaica, Trinidad and Tobago, and any other OAS states that use the Privy Council (JCPC) as their supreme court.

Get assistance from people in the diaspora who have been able to effect political or legislative change in their countries. Learn from what they were able to accomplish and ask them for assistance in the work done regionally.

Identify political allies (both regionally and internationally) and use them to the community's advantage.

Acknowledge the so-called "biological imperative". One participant noted that many people in the region have "**a stringent belief in what we can call the biological imperative [the idea that heterosexuality is the only way the species can continue]**". They stated that activists must find ways to let the public know that LGBTQI+ people are not a threat to heterosexual relationships or marriage.

Use information from failed initiatives to figure out what can be done better.

Look at the religious movements and use their strategies to the community's advantage.

Facilitate discussions and create sensitivity training for families as part of decriminalisation initiatives. Although human rights judgments benefit the community, they may have negative implications for those who live with homophobic or transphobic family members, for example. Decriminalisation efforts should account for this backlash and include initiatives to help mitigate any negativity or backlash the community may face.

Roundtable 12: Migration and Brain Drain -— Dr María Amelia Viteri and Dr Kimahli Powell

Observations

Participants noted that whether activists or members of the community leave or stay, several things must change to make the region a safer, more comfortable space for LGBTQI+ people. Their observations included:

Use narrative therapy to shift perspectives within the community. E.g., "**I am gay and my boss cannot expand his mind. That's *his* limitation, not my problem**."

Advocate for funding that will allow CSOs to create safe spaces for members of the community.

Create closer connections between the diaspora and the local community. Some Caribbean countries are considered high income and do not qualify for multilateral or bilateral aid. Since funding for those countries is limited, having community members work remotely for organisations run or owned by members of the diaspora would be beneficial.

Re-examine the notions of "work", "employment", and "highly-skilled". Make sure that definitions include individuals in the creative and informal sectors. Any new definitions must include qualitative data, not only quantitative data.

Collaborate with private sector companies that are willing to champion the cause and work with the community.

Wrap Up – Simone Harris and Melissa Dacres-Jones

Participants' Recommendations

Recommendations and action steps included:

- pay closer attention to who is collecting data and why
- create a data repository where organisations, advocates, funders, and other stakeholders can go to access available data. This platform should aggregate the data and collate a list of best practices of disaggregation and analysis
- take regional governments to court (through the OAS) if they refuse to protect human rights
- present the data in formats that can be shared with members of the community (for example, one researcher noted that they presented femicide statistics using cut-outs of women's figures)
- consider individuals who fall outside the parameters of the LGBTQI+ labels that the community uses (men who have sex with me (MSM) but who are not gay, women who have sex with women in response to trauma such as rape or abuse, young people who are navigating their identities, etc.) and use research to get a better understanding of their experiences
- collect data that can be used in litigation and negotiation to prove discrimination and violence
- design research projects and methodologies that are specifically geared towards advocacy and litigation
- conduct more training with organisations on the necessity and relevance of data (including "big data") and why good research is important to advocacy
- foster greater collaboration between organisations and research institutions
- let community members know what is happening in the country and what the research means for them as people and a group (employment figures, health disparities, etc.).