

Impact of Anti-Gender Opposition on TGD and LGBTQI Movements

Asia* Report

*** (excluding Central Asia)**

2023



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This publication is a regional report that is part of a larger report entitled "[Global Report on the Impact of Anti-Gender Opposition on TGD and LGBTQI Movements](#)". The Global Report is a comprehensive study on the impact of anti-gender (AG) opposition on the human rights of trans, gender-diverse, and LGBTQI individuals worldwide. This regional report focuses specifically on the impact of AG opposition in the Asia (excluding Central Asia) region.

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About GATE

GATE is an international advocacy organization working towards justice and equality for trans, gender diverse and intersex communities. Rooted in our movements, we work collaboratively with strategic partners at the global level to provide knowledge, resources and access to international institutions and processes. Our vision is a world free from human rights violations based on gender identity, gender expression and sex characteristics. Our strategy is to transform the landscape of global advocacy, knowledge creation and resource distribution through critical inclusion of trans, gender diverse and intersex movements at all levels of political, legal, and socio-economic processes.

Find out more about GATE by visiting www.gate.ngo

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Glossary

AG

Anti-gender: The anti-gender movement is an international movement which opposes what it refers to as “gender ideology”, “gender theory”, or “genderism” (Kováts, Eszter, 2016)

BIPOC

Black, Indigenous and People of Color

Centrist

Someone who supports the center of the range of political opinions

Far-Right

Includes “persons or groups who hold extreme nationalist, xenophobic, racist, religious fundamentalist, or other reactionary views”

Gender-Critical

Believing that sex is a fact of biology that cannot be changed, and doubting the idea of gender identity (a person’s feeling of being male, female, or another identity, especially when this is different from the sex they were assigned at birth)

Left-Wing

Political parties, groups or people who believe that wealth and power should be shared among all parts of society

LGBTQI

Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans, Queer, and Intersex

LGR

Legal gender recognition

Mixed

The group's ideological stances are not homogenous; they are mixed between left-wing and right-wing stances

PWDs

Persons with disabilities

Right-Wing

Political parties, groups or people that have traditional opinions, and who believe in low taxes, the private ownership of property and industry, and less aid to the poor

TGD

Trans and gender diverse

TGDI

Trans, gender diverse, and intersex

Trans-Exclusionary Radical "Feminists" / TERFs

A radical wing of feminism that rejects the assertion that trans women are women, the inclusion of trans women in women's spaces, and trans rights. (The word "Feminists" has been placed in quotation marks to highlight how the TERF movement does not subscribe to the generally accepted definition of feminism, which is a movement primarily about gender equality).

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Analysis of Survey Data

Introduction

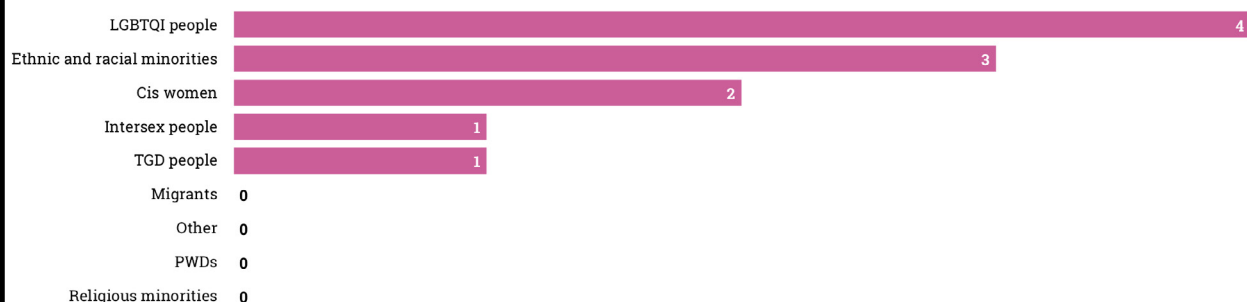
For a general introduction to the Survey completed by respondents, including positionality, data collection methods, and who took part in the Survey, please refer to the [Global Report](#).

The next few pages provide an analysis of the Survey data for the Asia region, excluding Central Asia, followed by a breakdown of the data by country. For an analysis of the Central Asia region, view the [Eastern Europe and Central Asia \(EECA\) Report](#).

AG Actors

Respondents indicate that in the Asia region, some members of AG groups are in the government, and governments and AG actors have coordinated communication. Respondents categorized AG actors as right-wing or mixed on the political ideology spectrum. The lack of proper investigation of alleged crimes committed by AG actors have been a challenge in the past year.

AG groups have targeted the following groups in the past year:



AG actors in the Asia region focus on abortion, marriage, “western ideas”, “incorrect upbringing”, family-centered population policy, and political correctness in public communication to spread and gain support for their agenda. Respondents indicate that some AG actors coordinate with each other and sometimes engage in physical violence directed at vulnerable groups.

In the past year, have these groups been growing stronger in terms of the following?



Respondents believe lack of political will, and the general failure to hold perpetrators accountable / lack of police effectiveness to be the main barriers to countering AG opposition in their contexts.

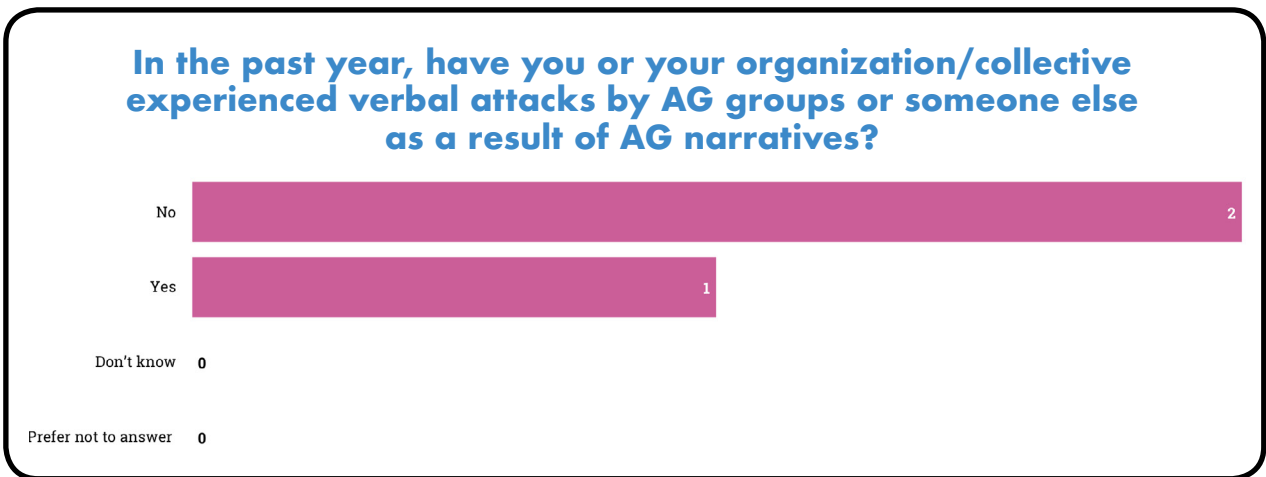
Impact on TGD/LGBTQI Communities

The respondents believe that the human rights situation for TGD communities has not changed or has improved in their contexts in the past year.

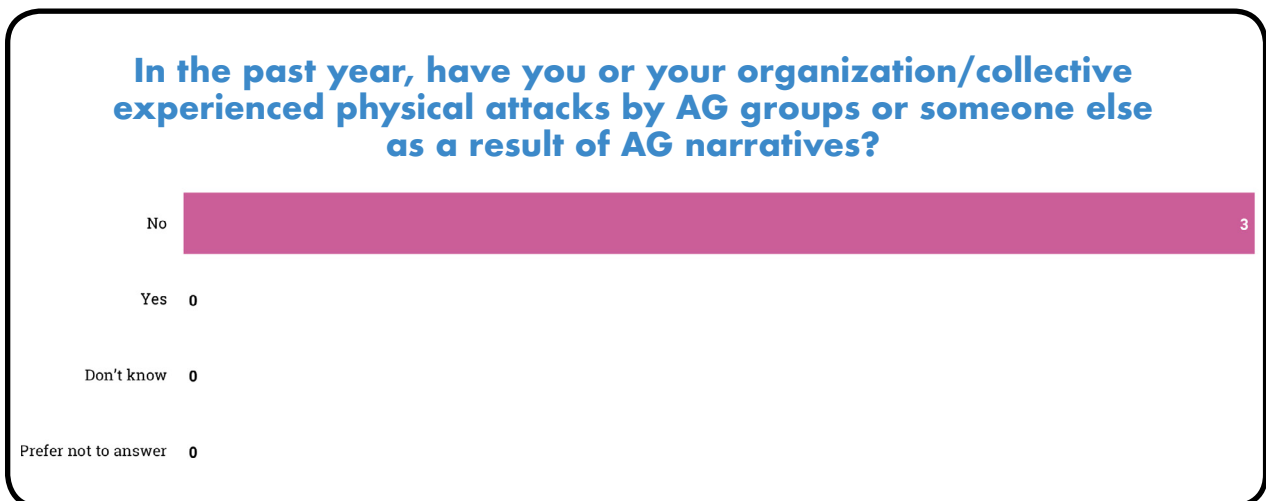
In the past year, the situation for TGD groups has:



According to respondents, TGD and LGBTQI activists and their organizations/collectives sometimes receive verbal abuse.



Respondents indicate that there has been no physical abuse by AG actors in the past year.



Threats by AG actors have not been reported in the Survey.

AG opposition results in challenges to TGD/LGBTQI and wider human rights activism, with psycho-emotional stress and/or burnout being the leading issue experienced by activists. 1 Respondent reports that this stress has translated into internal conflicts within the organization among the staff/board/volunteers. Besides stress, problems organizations face are the necessity to cancel events, and fewer community members accessing services. Respondents also report that AG opposition has not translated into any significant challenges for their organizations/collectives.

Based on Survey responses, it is unknown whether AG actors have managed to influence policies and legal developments impacting TGD communities.

Role of the Media

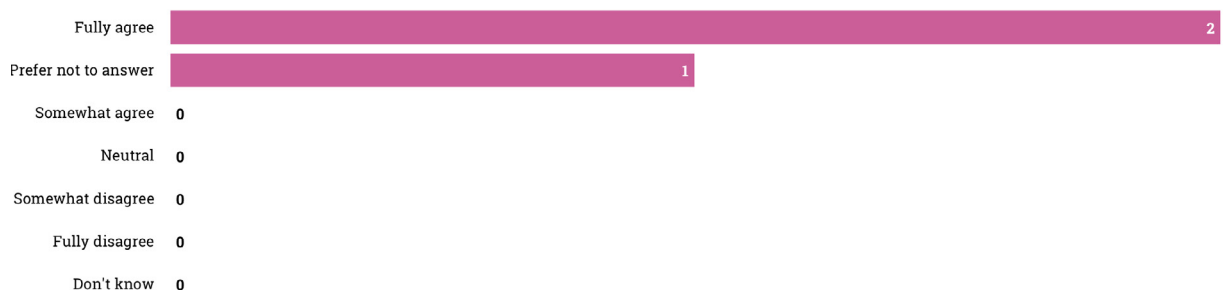
AG groups in the Asia region engage in the creation and spread of fake news relating to TGD communities, using FaceBook, Instagram, Twitter, and TikTok to spread their message and interact with their audiences.

In most cases, their social media posts are reported to the social media platforms, but most of the time reports get ignored, and content rarely gets taken down. Respondents' experience shows that social media platforms are the main sources of AG opposition, including mobilization, and these platforms enable homophobic and transphobic hate to spread by not sufficiently implementing rules and removing false and misleading information or other activities from their platforms.

In my experience, social media platforms are the primary means for AG mobilization



In my experience, social media platforms are not sufficiently enforcing their rules to prevent harmful and/or fake news from spreading and/or violent actions from being planned



The pages that follow provide a breakdown of the data from the Asia region by country.

Bangladesh

AG Actors

According to the respondent, AG actors are present in Bangladesh, some being government actors, and government and AG groups have coordinated communication. Information about their funding is unknown. They target the LGBTQI community and are categorized as mixed on the political ideology spectrum. The respondent reports that AG actors are growing in terms of the number of people participating in their events, funding, and ability to shape political decisions and impact policies.

Impact on TGD/LGBTQI Communities

The respondent believes that the human rights situation for TGD communities has been improving in the past year.

No other information was reported by the respondent in the Survey.

Mongolia

AG Actors

The respondent indicated that some AG actors in Mongolia are in the government and their crimes are rarely investigated. They target ethnic and racial minorities, and LGBTQI people and use “Western ideas”, “incorrect upbringing”, family-centered population policy and political correctness as their main discursive topics to spread and gain support for their agenda. They are categorized as mixed on the political ideology spectrum. Information about their coordination is not known to the respondent. AG groups have publicly harassed and humiliated certain individuals (public naming and shaming).

The respondent indicates that the main barriers to counteracting AG opposition have been lack of proper legislation, lack of political will, and general failure to hold perpetrators accountable / lack of police effectiveness.

Impact on TGD/LGBTQI Communities

The respondent believes that the situation for TGD groups has not changed in the past year. The respondent reports that AG groups have engaged in verbal attacks on these communities:

“When people shame a member of the LGBTQI community who publicly came out, I reminded them to mind their own business as he/she is not a laughing stock. I was attacked virtually via social media. As a gender trainer, I always battle with cis men who think gender mainstreaming is harmful practice for culture and traditions.”

This incident was not reported to the police. Physical attacks or threats were not reported in the Survey.

The respondent indicates that the following resulted from AG opposition in the past year: fewer community members accessing services, psycho-emotional stress and/or burnout experienced by staff/volunteers/board, and internal conflicts.

Role of the Media

AG actors engage in the creation and spread of false information about TGD communities. They use FaceBook as their main channel for communication with audiences. While their posts have been reported and considered by FaceBook, the content was not taken down. The respondent fully agrees that social media platforms are the primary means for AG mobilization and that social media platforms are not sufficiently enforcing their rules to prevent harmful and/or fake news from spreading and/or violent actions from being planned.

Nepal

AG Actors

The respondent reports that some AG actors are in the Nepalese government. Information about their funding is not known. AG actors target ethnic and racial minorities, cis women, and LGBTQI communities and use citizenship, abortion, marriage, and sexual expression as their main discursive topics to spread and gain support for their agenda. Information about their political ideology or coordination among various AG actors is not known to the respondent. According to the respondent, AG actors have been growing in terms of the number of people supporting them on social media, and their ability to shape political decisions and impact policies has strengthened.

Impact on TGD/LGBTQI Communities

The respondent believes that the human rights situation for the TGD community in Nepal has not changed in the past year. Verbal and physical attacks or threats were not reported in the Survey. The LGBTQI organization the respondent is affiliated with did not experience any challenges due to AG opposition in the past year. According to the respondent, AG actors have not been able to influence any policies that target TGD communities in Nepal.

The respondent reports lack of political will, government siding with AG actors, and lack of interest from international organizations to be the main barriers in counteracting AG opposition.

Role of the Media

The respondent reports that AG actors engage in the creation and spread of false information relating to TGD communities and use FaceBook, Instagram, Twitter, and TikTok to communicate with audiences. While some of their posts have been reported and the reports were considered by social media platforms, the content was not taken down. The respondent somewhat agrees that social media platforms are the primary means for AG mobilization and fully agrees that the social media platforms are not sufficiently enforcing their rules to prevent harmful and/or fake news from spreading and/or violent actions from being planned.

Thailand

AG Actors

According to the respondent, AG actors are present in Thailand and the government and AG actors have coordinated communication. Information about their financing, coordination between various actors, or their political party affiliations is not known by the respondent. Ethnic and religious minorities, and the LGBTQI community were reported as targets of AG actors by the respondent. AG actors were categorized as right-wing on the political ideology spectrum.

Impact on TGD/LGBTQI Communities

The respondent doesn't believe that the human rights situation for TGD communities in Thailand has changed in the past year. Verbal or physical attacks or threats were not reported in the Survey. The respondent indicates that as a result of AG opposition, the organization had to cancel events, and staff and volunteers experiencing psycho-emotional stress and/or burnout. Information about AG actors influencing any policies related to TGD communities or their engagement in the creation and spread of false news was not reported in the Survey.

No further information was provided by the respondent.

Conclusions and Recommendations

The conclusions and recommendations are based on the most common global trends revealed by the Survey.

The assessment from the majority of respondents that the human rights situation for TGD communities has worsened in the past year should be a cause for alarm for activists, policy-makers, and donors. This alarming reality that the Survey brings to light demands that there should be more of an investment in TGD activism in terms of creating more awareness and more critical knowledge about AG opposition.

Building on this knowledge, analyzing existing activist approaches would help to critically rethink activist strategies in order for them to be more effective. The efficacy of activist approaches and strategies ideally need to include other parties: there need to be more discussions and collaborations between donors, policy-makers, TGD activists, and other socially progressive actors in order to understand the factors contributing to the success of AG actors, and to develop joint strategies to counteract the growth and impact of the AG movement. For example, as AG actors are globally weaponizing concepts like “family values”, sex education, abortion, children’s protection, and “Western ideas”, more critical knowledge is needed to understand how these concepts can be reclaimed through redefining them outside of a cis-heteronormative lens. and how the public communication coming out of activist circles can be improved upon in order to counteract the skewed perceptions that these AG narratives create and foster.

Moreover, as AG actors have successfully managed to position TGD communities and their rights against the women’s/feminist agenda in several contexts, further specific knowledge needs to be created around this topic and more discussions between TGD and feminist movements need to take place in order to clarify that this is a false dichotomy manufactured by the AG movement, and that the principles, values, aims and goals that govern the TGD human rights movement are the same as those that underpin the feminist/women’s movement.

Another aspect that the Survey highlights is the leading challenge experienced by activists resulting from the AG opposition – that of the psycho-emotional well-being of activists. Political discussions at the highest level need to include an awareness of this challenge, as well as ways to prevent and/or mitigate it. Undoubtedly, donors need to invest more in the safety, security, and psycho-emotional well-being of activists. Without this investment, the tendency of activists to leave activism may grow, which would pose a serious threat to the TGD movements, and human rights activism in general.

Pursuant to this, the security and safety of activists and organizations need to be prioritized in funding models as well as in high-political discussions because, otherwise, a growing number of community members may no longer be able to access the services provided by TGD/LGBTQI organizations, which would leave these members in even more vulnerable situations, especially when it comes to life-saving services related to HIV, psycho-emotional support, and other medical, social, and legal assistances. For many, lack of access to these services means vulnerability and exposure to HIV and other health-related issues, homelessness, violence, incarceration, and even death.

Another issue highlighted by the Survey is that due to AG opposition, advocacy opportunities for TGD activists are becoming increasingly limited, and activists have less capacity to reach decision-makers themselves. Therefore, beyond the financial investment in advocacy, donor institutions themselves need to proactively invest in enabling and facilitating discussions between activists and decision-makers, as donors and other institutions have relatively more power to reach decision-makers.

Activists, donors, and policy-makers also need to invest more political attention and resources into international and national policies and legislation that tackle the disinformation and radicalization of the AG movement, as the Survey revealed the main barriers to counteracting AG opposition to be the lack of political will, lack of proper legislation, and general failure to hold perpetrators accountable / lack of police effectiveness,

Finally, as the Survey showed, social media is the main domain enabling AG discourses to flourish and mobilization to take place. Donors need to support activist communication efforts more and activists need to be more invested in effective public communication. This requires more knowledge and resources for effective messaging (including message testing), understanding social opinions and factors contributing to radicalization, and utilization of more diverse

communication channels. Most importantly, social media platforms need to be held accountable. More and more effective regulations and policies are needed to force social media platforms to enforce higher safety and ethics standards on their platforms, ensuring that they do not enable disinformation that leads to social conflict and violence. Due to the transnational nature of social media platforms, discussions and policy efforts targeted at them are needed at the international level.

Summary of Recommendations

Donors

1. In funding portfolios, prioritize projects aimed at:
 - a. producing more critical knowledge on AG opposition, factors contributing to radicalization, and effective strategies for counteracting it,
 - b. increasing the capacity of activists and organizations, as well as their safety, security, and well-being,
 - c. producing effective and wide-reaching communication,
 - d. building intersectional cross-movement alliances, and
 - e. tackling disinformation and radicalization.
2. Beyond funding advocacy projects, proactively leverage positions of power to facilitate discussions between activists and decision-makers.
3. Provide flexible funding to adequately respond to emerging issues and increase core funding opportunities.

Decision-makers

1. Increase the participation of TGD communities in consultations for policy making – not only on issues that specifically impact TGD communities, but on all social issues.
2. Invest in understanding the factors contributing to anti-democratic radicalization, and conflicts operating in local contexts.
3. In consultation with various progressive/emancipatory and socially vulnerable groups, create or improve policies that address disinformation and anti-democratic radicalization.

Activists

1. Mobilize new resources and invest the existing ones in improving the understanding of the factors contributing to radicalization, the nature of AG opposition, and strategies on how to effectively counteract it.
2. Mobilize new resources and invest the existing ones in effective communication, both in terms of the content and the channels to reach as many audiences as possible.
3. Mobilize new resources and invest the existing ones in the safety, security, and well-being of the staff, board, and volunteers of the organization.
4. Liaise with social media platforms or organizations who can provide support in reaching out to social media to address disinformation.
5. Focus energies on building alliances and solidarity with other socially progressive and emancipatory movements, especially among feminist groups.



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