

**STOP BULLYING: Ending Violence and Discrimination on the Basis of Sexual
Orientation and Gender Identity
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From my point of view, the situation for transgender people in Thailand is not generally about physical violence but about stigma and discrimination.

Many people -- both inside and outside of Thailand -- believe that Thailand is paradise for LGBT people because the society is allegedly so open that we can live our lives comfortably and with freedom. The cabaret shows, the successful sex reassignment surgeries, and the famous transsexual beauty pageants are compelling images that have been shown to the world. The notion is that Thailand has become a tolerant country for LGBT people, culturally and socially.

However, there is no legal support specifically related to the way of life for LGBT people. The legal system and all policies have been created based on the premise of heterosexuality. Only the rape law has been changed to protect all human beings in Thai society.

There are many examples of how the laws and policies are still deeply homophobic and transphobic. We transgender women still have to use the “Mister” title in our national identity cards. When we access governmental services such as the education system, we have to dress in male uniforms. When we graduate and want to get a good careers, we have to wear male suits, which is totally against how we feel. What would happen if we choose to be ourselves? We will be ignored or rejected, our potential limited, barely able to survive. Transgender women in Thailand are only allowed to be dancing queens, make-up artists and costume designers. Transgender people lack any chance of being hired to work in government or private sector positions. Because the person’s own image contradicts their identity, and because there are traditional beliefs that employing transgender people is bad luck and will curse a business, it is very hard.

The problems are worse for transgender youth.

There is stigma and discrimination throughout the educational system. If a student dreams of becoming a teacher, for instance, she will be told that only a heterosexual person can be a good role model.

The Ministry of Education sets national education policy, and it refuses to recognize anything related to LGBT people in sex education, not even basic concepts like “sexual orientation and “gender identity.” Girls and boys are only taught about “reproductive” health. This results in so many lost opportunities for young people – to understand their bodies, to prevent sexually transmitted diseases, to prevent HIV/AIDS.

On a day that should be joyful – school graduation – the privileged Thai transgender student who manages to complete her studies is generally unhappy. Even that day, transgender people are made to dress according to their sex assigned at birth. It's hard to feel proud of yourself when you're forced to pretend to be someone you're not.

Transgender students in Thailand have it hard. They are pressured by social constructs. They are oppressed by lack of information. They lack role models. It's hard to transition. Most of what they live with is bullying from other students and teachers. But they endure, all because they must show their true selves, their beautiful trans identities.

In honor of International Human Rights Day, sitting here at the United Nations, I want to ask all of you: how can you stand in solidarity with us as we strive to realize our full human rights?

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