

# FACT SHEET

## VIOLENCE:

Through the Lens of Lesbians, Bisexual Women and Trans People in Asia

### COUNTRY CONTEXT

- ▶ LBT individuals in the Japan research attributed the violence they experienced to strictly enforced codes of conduct at home, work places, medical institutions, public facilities and schools.
- ▶ Non-conforming sexual orientation, gender identity and gender expression were viewed as antithetical to Japanese culture and family harmony.
- ▶ Despite Japan's (trans)gender recognition law, transgender persons reported being abused and assaulted because of their visible gender non-conformity.
- ▶ The legislation to legalize changed gender does not protect transgender employees from violence or discrimination after they are hired.

## JAPAN

### WORK PLACE SEXUAL VIOLENCE

- ▶ Over half of the 50 LBT individuals interviewed had experienced sexual violence by perpetrators they knew, from unwanted touching to rape.
- ▶ Lesbians and bisexual women reported sexual harassment by male co-workers "for being women."
- ▶ Transgender women reported sexual harassment by workplace colleagues because perpetrators "perceived them as women."
- ▶ Transgender men felt their "changed gender was disregarded" and they were targeted for sexual harassment in the workplace as women.
- ▶ Transgender people who had been sexually harassed in the workplace said they had difficulty reporting the violence and have it taken seriously.
- ▶ Transgender women in Japan had the impression that sexual violence only happened to "ordinary (gender conforming) women" and were unsure if their experiences of unwanted touching on breasts and buttocks constituted sexual assault or sexual harassment.



# JAPAN

## NO WORKPLACE PROTECTIONS

- ▶ Sexual harassment and other labor laws in Japan do not recognize sexual orientation, gender identity and gender expression as grounds for discrimination and harassment.
- ▶ LBT persons in private sector jobs whose identities were disclosed or discovered reported being denied opportunities to attend trainings or permission to interact with employees at other branch offices of the company.
- ▶ Workplace policies systematically overlook employees with non-conforming gender, thus making it onerous to hold perpetrators accountable.
- ▶ Workplace discrimination often leads to verbal violence in the form of sexualized and verbally abusive language, and demeaning comments.

## INVISIBILITY OF LBT REALITIES

- ▶ Non-comprehensive and narrow legislative definitions of sexual violence limit societal recognition of what sexual violence is.
- ▶ Limited societal understanding of what sexual violence is influences employer 's failure to address workplace sexual harassment for women generally and for LBT individuals in particular.
- ▶ Societal thinking about sexual violence also influences how LBT people perceive and respond to this violence when they experience it in the workplace, at home, or in public spaces.
- ▶ Help for LBT people in Japan experiencing sexual and other kinds of violence was either unavailable or inadequate because mental health and legal services were insensitive to and uninformed about LBT realities.

## HUMAN COST OF VIOLENCE

- ▶ LBT respondents who experienced violence reported long term and, sometimes, severe consequences, including depression, chronic physical illness and pain, addictions, low self-esteem and low confidence.
- ▶ Forced gender conformity led to acute self-loathing, social isolation, school drop out, disrupted education, job loss, loss of employment opportunities, and difficulty finding housing.
- ▶ Over half of the 50 LBT people in the Japan study had considered suicide to end the violence and the suffering due to violence. Five individuals had attempted to kill themselves.
- ▶ One trans man died as a result of suicide during the research. A year before his suicide, he was blatantly told at four different interviews that he was being denied a job due to his Gender Identity Disorder. He gave in and circled "female" on his curriculum vitae as he was getting hormone injections to sound and look more male.

