



Bảo tàng Phụ nữ Việt Nam
Vietnamese Women's Museum
Musée des Femmes du Vietnam



Homosexuality and Gender Issues in Vietnam

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I. Background



- Homosexuality is a much-mentioned social issue in Vietnam.
- Homosexuals dare not to come out the sex status.
- Living with a real gender is the need and legitimate right of every one.

II. Facts about homosexual people



1. Statistics about homosexual people

- Around 70,000 homosexual people in Vietnam (Source: Doctor Trần Bồng Sơn, Hồ Chí Minh Skinny Hospital)
- According to CARE organization in Vietnam, there has from 50,000 to 125,000 homosexual people (account for 0,06 – 0,15% of population)



II. Facts about homosexual people

2. Life of homosexual people in Vietnam

- Live in the whole country with different ages and different living condition. They may have a family but they still tend to have their own feelings and their own desires or choose an alternative way of live



“Marriage to me is really simple, not really love.... I prefer boys, but I as she nodded... I am still thankful to her.”

AC, Hải Dương Province



“Whenever I see a kid, I think about my own kids, but I can not tell my wife that I am scared of....sleeping with a woman – that would break up my life and make my kids suffer”

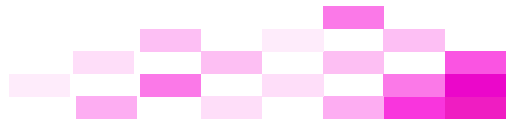
MD, Hải Dương Province



“Marriage keepsake - All the photos from this album have been burnt, and all the embroidery on this wedding pillow has been removed....the end to an unhappy marriage.”

AK, Hải Dương Province

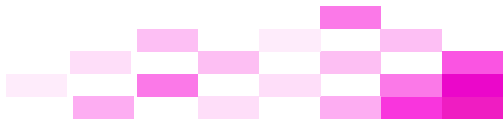




“Two weddings – I was the groom in one, and the bride in the other”



- Homosexuals mainly live in big cities such as Hanoi or Ho Chi Minh City where it is easier for them to express their feelings as the city people have greater understanding of homosexuality. They also have a lot of chances to communicate, and to meet and share their stories with others homosexual people



*“Painting – I drew my self- portrait
with half man half woman – a
real person ... that’s what I
want to be”*

TA, Hà Nội



*“Joy – It is the feeling whenever
I sing, no matter to whom,
.... singing about my life and
singing to communicate.”*

BH, Hà Nội



- Depending on the level of acceptance and their openness, homosexual people have different lifestyles. Many dare not to come out and express their sexual orientation for fear of social stigma, fear of family disapproval, fear of teasing and bullying and fear of job loss.

“I became an office worker as my parent’s wished, and I have met several people like me here”

4U, Hồ Chí Minh City





“My dad always yells at me whenever the topic of sexuality is raised”

LL, Hồ Chí Minh City

“I kept hiding again after having found myself when my dad said, “you are a good son, and you should not make us feel bad” – he doesn't like gay people.”

JF, Hồ Chí Minh City

- Community stigma not only affects homosexual people's lives but also affects non-homosexual people as well as the society. Besides, the homosexual tendency to live a lie means that many LGBT people in Vietnam suffer from social diseases such as HIV, Syphilis, etc.



“It has been two years since I told my family who I am and that I have HIV; since then my mom and sister always lock me up in the house when they are not at home.”

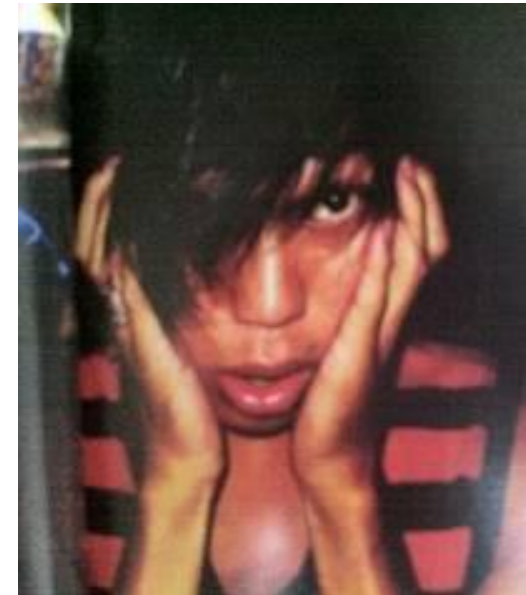
M, Hà Nội

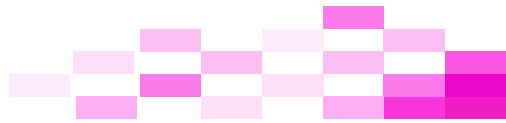
“Fear – the feeling that most of my friends have when they want to come out”

J, Hồ Chí Minh City

“Emptiness – Life is so exciting out there, but I do not belong there...I am all by myself and I feel lonesome.”

BBB, Hải Phòng City





“Door frame- There seems to be something that always prevents me from coming out”

JF, Hồ Chí Minh City

“They sent me home after a few months in the military service, because I am a gay man”

LL, Hồ Chí Minh City



“It took me a long while to get my feet back on the ground after knowing my HIV test result.”

M, Hà Nội



• **3. Community attitude towards homosexual people**

- Vietnam's wider community stigmatizes homosexuals. They either ignore or do not care about homosexual people. Most of population in Vietnam still stigmatize homosexual people as well as being negative towards them.
- Lots of parents feel vulnerable, shocked, angry and shy when they discover that their child is a gay or lesbian. Some of them try to change their child's manner while others do not care about him or her any more.




“Tailor – My whole family does this job, but my parents do not want me to do it – they want something more manly for me”

4U, Hồ Chí Minh City

“I wanted to become a monk in a pagoda but after a few months the chief monk sent me home as I belonged to one of the eleven groups rejected by Buddhism – homosexuals.”





“Family principle – When they found out I was gay, my uncles kept me away from my mom, thinking that would make me less gay.”

LL, Hồ Chí Minh City



- Nowadays, a few people have begun to recognize homosexuals, as well as acknowledging that homosexuality is not a disease. Attitudes towards homosexual people are tending to be more open.



“My female neighbor knows I am gay, and calls me auntie C, but she does not stigmatize to me.”

“Smile – A constant smile is my thing, as I am not stigmatized or discriminated against in my own house and local community.”

AC, Hải Dương Province

“Every human being deserves respect all over the world. I feel sad when some people still have prejudice against the homosexual community. I only want to say that: you should live by yourself!”

Hoàng Hải, Hà Nội



“You are only you even though the community thinks differently about you! Be confident and have a good life to prove to your community that you exist naturally. Homosexuality is not a disease and we have to treat homosexuals equally and well”

Ngọc An, Hà Nội



• Homosexuals in Vietnam are becoming more confident to show their love and to even marry.

In 2010, a young lesbian couple organized their big wedding with the witness of their family and friends.



Lesbian couple Quang Minh and Thuy Ling got married after love at first sight.

Since 2012, there have been more homosexual couples who organize their wedding and announce their relationship to the public supported by their family and friends.



- Besides homosexual couples, the first transgender (male into female) in Vietnam was recognized in September 2012, after having trans-sexual surgery in Thailand. It took her about a year and a half to obtain a local gender certificate.



“I cried a lot when I received the female certificate and I know that my life will change from now.”

Phạm Lê Quỳnh Trâm, Bình Phước Province



- Since 2000, there are a lot of forums for gay or lesbian people in Vietnam such as *Tinh yeu trai Viet* (Vietnamese men's love), *Tao Xanh* (Green Apples), *Vuon tinh nhan* (Love Garden), etc.
- Clubs have been established like Hải Đăng Club in Hà Nội, Ánh Sao Đêm in Đà Nẵng, Muôn Sắc Màu in Khánh Hòa, Bầu Trời Xanh in Hồ Chí Minh City, Đồng Xanh in Cần Thơ.



III. Vietnamese Women's Museum work on homosexuality and gender equality

1. Researching and organizing the exhibition about the homosexual community in Vietnam

- Research and survey about the homosexual community in order to develop and display an exhibition.
- Access to materials, as well as organizations doing research on this subject, to seek cooperation with them to organize an exhibition in the future.



The exhibition will:

- Help homosexual people to show their opinions and challenges in their life and work, as well as their desires and dreams to help them live a meaningful life.
- Show the thoughts and desires of the community, family members and relatives.
- Find the best solutions to implement the exhibition successfully in order to help the homosexual community.



2. Vietnamese Women's Museum's Goals

- Understand more about the homosexual community.
- Raise awareness of homosexuality to the whole community, and help them to listen and share, as well as showing sympathy towards the homosexuals, in order to recognize the homosexual community's rights and desires.
- Share and learn practical experiences through research and displays on human rights in general and homosexuality in particular.



THANK YOU!

