

LGBTQ+ inclusion in workplaces: Community Aspirations

by The Humsafar Trust

CONTENT

Changing face of
LGBTQ+
inclusion in India

1

Bringing
Community Voices
to the Forefront

5

From Boardroom
to Cubicle

9

A Voice at the
Table

12

Put it in writing

16

Visibility ~
Normalisation ~
Shared Humanity

23

Making people
culture-fit or
changing the
culture?

26

Authors

31

1

Changing face of LGBTQ+ inclusion in India

“It is difficult to right the wrongs of history. But we can certainly set the course for the future. That we can do by saying, as I propose to say in this case, that lesbians, gays, bisexuals and transgenders have a constitutional right to equal citizenship in all its manifestations.”

- Justice D.Y. Chandrachud,
Navtej Singh Johar & Ors. v. Union of India (Para7)

In the past decade, India has taken significant strides towards LGBTQ+ rights and inclusion. Landmark judgements by the Supreme Court of India like the NALSA judgement in 2014 (which recognised rights of the transgender communitiesⁱ) and judgement on section 377 in 2018 (which decriminalised all consensual sex among adults, including homosexual sexⁱⁱ) were passed. These judgements reflected a slow but gradual change in societal attitudes after years and years of continuous struggle.

While struggles for equal rights and rational attitude towards gender and sexuality in the society continue, these changes in the legal landscape of India offered LGBTQ+ communities in India an unprecedented level of attention from various stakeholders, particularly employers. In the past few

years both Indian and multinational companies in India have taken steps towards LGBTQ+ inclusion in their workplaces through policy changes, supporting pride-related events and conducting recruitment drives for LGBTQ+ candidatesⁱⁱⁱ. Along with corporates several other intermediary organisations have also come forward to facilitate LGBTQ+ recruitment and enhancing inclusion of LGBTQ+ persons in workplaces.^{iv}

Gaps in Policies and Implementation

However, as corporates seek to be more inclusive towards LGBTQ+ employees and undertake LGBTQ+ hiring drives, we continue to witness significant knowledge gaps that persist even within supportive employers. These gaps diminish the mission of broader inclusivity. These gaps not only exist in policies but also implementation of the policies towards transforming the organisational culture and making them more conducive towards existing LGBTQ+ employees and new hires.

Most Indian companies and Indian counterparts of some multinational companies do not have any policies that specifically protect or promote inclusion of LGBTQ+ persons. Many multinational companies with strong LGBTQ+ policies globally, are still in the process of rolling them out for their Indian workforce or operate with an assumption that their global policies can be replicated in the Indian context without taking into account the contextual nuances.

The bigger challenge lies in implementation of policies and catalysing a shift in the workplace culture itself

Having LGBTQ+ friendly policies in place is a necessary first step towards creating an inclusive workplace. However, the bigger challenge lies in implementation of policies and

catalysing a shift in the workplace culture itself. It is a longer process that requires continuous dialogue, sensitisation at multiple levels and strong will and intent demonstrated by the leadership.

Unheard Voices

Multiple job fairs and inclusion drives by various corporates have taken place in the past few years. However, we have witnessed that these efforts have not yielded the desired results either in terms of number of LGBTQ+ individuals being hired or in terms of retention of new recruits.

In addition to gaps in policy and implementation, a glaring reason for limited success of job fairs and inclusion drives has been inadequate participation of representatives from the community in these initiatives. Because of lack of community voices, these initiatives fail to take into account the unique needs and vulnerabilities of the community, and consequently reach out to fewer LGBTQ+ individuals.

Participation in job fairs and recruitment drives is limited for those who are most in need of increased livelihood opportunities

Furthermore, most LGBTQ+ individuals who end up participating in job fairs are those who are already working in formal corporate sector. There is no denying the fact that even those individuals who are well-qualified and have spent years working in corporates are quite likely to have faced stigma and discrimination on account of their sexuality or gender expression or would have been forced to remain in closet. The job fairs and proactive inclusion drives increase the options available for them and they can choose to explore opportunities with an employer which offers a more inclusive workplace.

“I am a gay man with an MBA from a leading B-school and 25 years of experience in leadership positions. I am a low-hanging fruit for an inclusive employer as compared to the majority of LGBTQ+ individuals who were not able to complete formal education and have been forced to live on the fringes of socio-economic development.”

- Vivek Anand, CEO,
The Humsafar Trust

Participation, however, is limited for those sections of the LGBTQ+ community that are disadvantaged at several levels and most in need of increased livelihood opportunities enabled by inclusive workplaces.

The Path Ahead

The underlying principle of participatory approaches to development has been that policies ought not be formulated without including those for whom the policies are made. In this initiative, we strive to go beyond this principle and assert that communities should not only be included in policy making

Communities should not only be included in policy making and implementation of policies, they need to spearhead the process

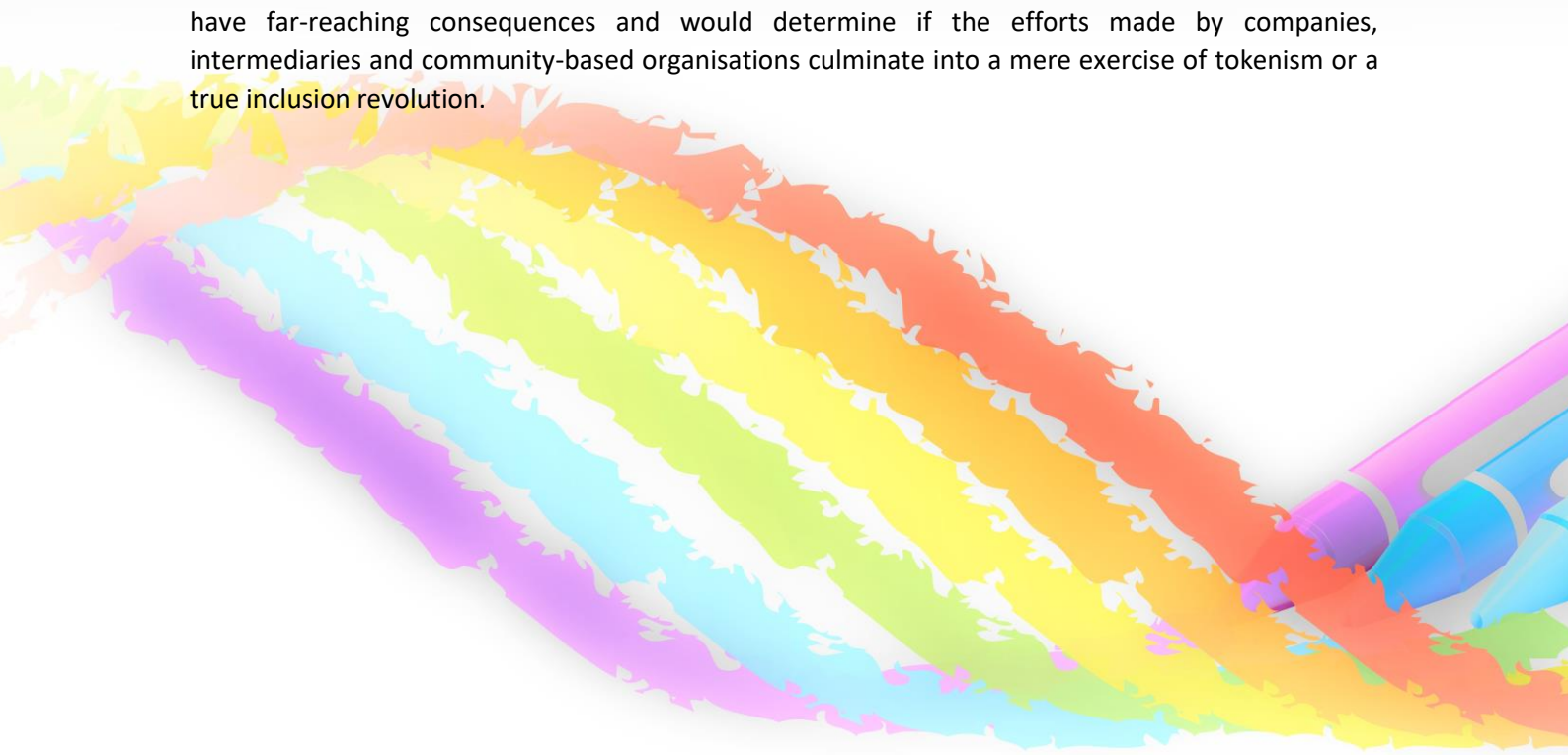
and implementation of policies, they need to **spearhead the process** for any meaningful inclusion to take place.

There is a need for setting benchmarks for inclusion in workplaces that can be aspired, implemented and promoted by employers. Furthermore, these benchmarks should address needs of those who are most vulnerable and disadvantaged within the LGBTQ+ community.

India today stands at the crossroads of LGBTQ+ inclusion. Seminal judgements have been passed, charting the course for many more legal reforms. Advocacy efforts for equal rights and opportunities for LGBTQ+ community in every walk of life are gathering steam. LGBTQ+ movement in the country has come a long way from a time when employers hesitated to even talk about LGBTQ+ issues to a stage when communities are being actively approached for jobs. Recruitment targets for hiring LGBTQ+ candidates are being set up by start-ups and large enterprises, Indian and multinational companies alike.

In order to ensure that communities, especially some of the most vulnerable and invisible identities within the LGBTQ+ spectrum, do not remain passive spectators of the inclusion revolution promised by employers and policy makers in India, we made an attempt to document the needs and aspirations of the community.

It is important that at this juncture community voices are heard and taken into account, for it would have far-reaching consequences and would determine if the efforts made by companies, intermediaries and community-based organisations culminate into a mere exercise of tokenism or a true inclusion revolution.



2

Bringing Community Voices to the Forefront

“Diversity is having a seat at the table, inclusion is having a voice, and belonging is having that voice be heard.”

- Liz Fosslien and Mollie West Duffy, Authors, ‘No Hard Feelings: The Secret Power of Embracing Emotions at Work’

The Humsafar Trust being India’s oldest LGBTQ+ community-based organisation has worked for over 25 years to bring community voices to the forefront of policy landscapes. We believe that communities not merely have the capability to participate and exercise control over their destiny, they have the **right** to do so. We focus on strengths inherent in the communities and insights they have on the complexities of their lived realities. Meaningful inclusion is not possible without communities being in the driving seat of the process.

LGBTQ+ Recruitment Process Document

After the 2014 NALSA judgement, several employers approached us with an intent to hire transgender persons. The 2018 judgement on section 377, further paved way for many others who expressed interest in hiring candidates, this time from the larger LGBTQ+ spectrum.

As a community-based organisation in India, where the LGBTQ+ community had been long struggling for basic human rights, The Humsafar Trust neither had the opportunity nor resources to actively collaborate with corporates on LGBTQ+ hiring earlier. However, as more and more employers approached us for partnering on recruitment drives, there emerged a need to create a process which safeguarded the interests of the community. As the country's oldest and one of the most trusted community-based organisations, it fell upon us to assess the employers for their credibility on inclusive practices and work with them to address the lacunae in the process, before we reached out to the larger community and connected individuals from the community with interested employers.

We developed a process document with an aim to ensure that basic conditions of making a workplace inclusive are met and employers can be held accountable to meet these standards. We maintained that while inclusion is an ever-evolving and continuous process, certain necessary steps are undertaken by employers which demonstrate a clear intent towards making the workplaces welcoming and conducive for LGBTQ+ individuals. The first step was reviewing policies of the employer to ensure that they include policies against discrimination and harassment, policies that promote inclusion and gender diversity, policies that address unconscious bias in hiring and appraisal and policies on inclusive communication. The process also mandated sensitisation workshops be conducted with the HR teams, senior management and employees of the departments where LGBTQ+ hiring is planned.

The policy review and sensitisation workshops conducted by The Humsafar Trust are distinctly different from others because they are not only rooted in the needs of the community but are also community-led. Policy review conducted by the teams at The Humsafar Trust bring in insights from different identities in the LGBTQ+ spectrum.

Personal narratives enable audiences to connect with the lives of LGBTQ+ individuals and make abstract concepts around gender and sexuality real

Similarly, sensitisation workshops conducted by The Humsafar Trust centre around personal narratives of people from the community. These narratives enable audiences to connect with the lives of LGBTQ+ individuals and make abstract concepts around gender and sexuality *real*.

TRANScend Roundtable Discussions

Our engagement with most employers revealed a glaring gap between the understanding employers had about LGBTQ+ community and the actual barriers faced by LGBTQ+ individuals in workplaces, during the recruitment process or even while identifying possible formal employment opportunities.

In order to bridge these gaps, we started roundtable discussions between corporate and community representatives. These discussions were conducted as part of TRANScend, an initiative started in 2017, by The Humsafar Trust, supported by Publicis Sapient, aimed to enhance inclusion of transgender persons in different walks of life, including workplaces.

Why only transgender persons?

Transgender community, being the most visible, has also been the most vulnerable and most marginalised. It had already been 3 years since the historic NALSA judgement was passed by Supreme Court of India which offered legal recognition to transgender persons in India, but the rights and

protections promised in the judgement were far from being translated into concrete reality. Moreover, we realised that employers in India were not ready to talk about the entire spectrum, partly because of criminalisation and stigmatisation of the LGBTQ+ community through Section 377 of the Indian Penal Code, which was still intact then.

The roundtable discussions were a first of its kind initiative where representatives from transgender/hijra community sat face to face with D&I and HR heads of several corporate giants. They not only gave a first-hand account of systemic issues that prevent the transgender community from joining formal workforce, they also made a strong case of equity versus equality. The roundtable discussions offered insights into previously unheard issues pertaining to the transgender community.

Several concrete action steps for both employers and the community emerged from the process. Most importantly, it offered platform for decision makers to discuss relevance of existing global policies on inclusion in the context of Indian LGBTQ+ individuals.

Most corporate representatives shared that they interacted with transgender persons and got to know about their issues in such depth and detail for the first time. The discussions made it discernible to them that there is a long and tedious path that needs to be traversed when it comes to inclusion of transgender persons in corporate workspaces.

“I have attended several roundtables on inclusion with D&I and HR leads of other companies. But this is the first time, I attended a discussion with transgender persons participating in the discussion. It changes one’s entire perspective.

- Senior VP, Global Human Resources of a leading IT company, in TRANScend Roundtable discussion

Documenting Community aspirations

Multiple roundtable discussions and countless interactions with employers through sensitisation workshops, recruitment drives and job fairs, reinforced the need to document community aspirations in the context of workplace inclusion of LGBTQ+ individuals.

A community consultation was held with individuals identifying with various identities in the LGBTQ+ spectrum and employed in diverse sectors at different levels. While no platform can be all inclusive, the idea was to bring in as many voices to the table as possible.

28 individuals from different parts of the country attended this consultation and shared their journeys of carving a niche for themselves in workplaces. There were stories about fighting extreme odds, finding unexpected allies in the workplace, homophobia and transphobia which ran deep in the psyche of people around them and reflected in the work culture, and how presence of LGBTQ+ individuals in leadership can make a world of difference. One thing that was common in all the stories was the perseverance and grit demonstrated by all these individuals who through their work and, at times,

their sheer presence, brought about gradual but marked shift in organisational policies and cultures and paved way for many others from the community.

In this 2-day consultation, participants worked in groups to arrive at an exhaustive list of steps that can be undertaken to create a truly welcoming and inclusive workplace for LGBTQ+ people. The groups

Sheer presence of 'out' LGBTQ+ people in workplaces has brought gradual but marked shift in organisational policies and cultures and paved way for many others from the community

were given broad themes namely, **Strategy and Plan, Leadership and Support Structures, Policies and Procedures, Workplace Culture and Branding and Marketing.** Each group presented their ideas to the larger group and the ideas were discussed and

debated in the light of a plethora of varied experiences the group brought to the table.

The most important aspect of this exercise was to think beyond what is deemed feasible and create a truly aspirational account of what an ideal LGBTQ+ friendly workplace might look like. The participants came up with a truly audacious vision of inclusion in workplaces based on their idea of what a truly equal world would be when each and every individual gets freedom and space to realise their full potential. The exercise demonstrated in no ambiguous terms that when communities for whom inclusion is sought are

themselves excluded from decision making process, the result is a stunted view of humanity that makes feeble attempts to make amends to an inherently flawed system. However, when community

When communities are excluded from decision-making process, the result is a stunted view of humanity that makes feeble attempts to make amends to an inherently flawed system

voices drive the process of inclusion there emerges the possibility of rejecting the cycle of oppression altogether and bring about lasting systemic changes.

3

From Boardroom to Cubicle

“Many conversations about diversity and inclusion do not happen in the boardroom because people are embarrassed at using unfamiliar words or afraid of saying the wrong thing — yet this is the very place we need to be talking about it. The business case speaks for itself — diverse teams are more innovative and successful in going after new markets.”

- Inga Beale, Former CEO of Lloyd's of London

While LGBTQ+ inclusion in workplaces needs to be addressed at multiple levels in an organisation, including the mandate for inclusion in organisational strategy and plan sends a definitive message about the commitment of an organisation towards LGBTQ+ inclusion.

Employers need to come out of the closet

Most Indian companies have not made any public statement to demonstrate their intent towards LGBTQ+ inclusion. Several multinational companies who have globally championed LGBTQ+ inclusion have been silent about their stance on LGBTQ+ rights in India. Many openly came out in support of the community only after the judgement on section 377 in 2018 which decriminalised homosexual sex. However, most companies have still not made any official statement on their commitment towards LGBTQ+ inclusion. Furthermore, their India teams are either not completely aware of their global policies and inclusion initiatives or are unwilling to openly come out in support of the community. If companies want to be seen as employers of choice by LGBTQ+ persons seeking jobs, it is imperative that they officially declare their support for the community.

Multinational and Indian companies which have larger geographical presence, can use their sphere of influence to promote and advocate for wider social inclusion of LGBTQ+ people.

In order to not only chart a defined path for LGBTQ+ inclusion but also inspire confidence within LGBTQ+ job aspirants about one's intent towards creating an inclusive workplace, the first step will be formulating an inclusion strategy and incorporating the mandate for LGBTQ+ inclusion in the

Public statements made on commitment towards LGBTQ+ inclusion go a long way in boosting the morale of the community and inspiring other employers come out in support of the community

organisation's short term and long-term business plans. This strategy should be shared with all the vendors, clients and external stakeholders.

Public statements made on commitment towards LGBTQ+ inclusion go a long way in

boosting the morale of the community and inspiring other employers come out in support of the community and create inclusive workplaces. Similarly, supporting or signing global standards for business ethics aligned with LGBTQ+ rights like 'UN Standards of Conduct for Business – Tackling Discrimination Against Lesbian, Gay, Bi, Trans, & Intersex People', establish a company as a trustworthy employer for the community.

Short-term, Mid-term and Long-term Strategy

LGBTQ+ inclusion strategy on one hand needs to take into account the urgent and immediate needs of existing and prospective employees and on the other hand envision a shared future that creates equal spaces and nurturing environment for all.

Short-term strategy which includes steps that need to be undertaken between 6 months to 1 year will be primarily corrective in nature. Reviewing existing policies, including review by an independent third party, will enable making micro-level amendments and additions to policies, as needed. A survey on needs, aspirations and satisfaction level of employees will further enable fine-tuning the policies. Short-term strategies can also include creation of employee resource groups (ERGs), initiating a dialogue on gender and sexuality among employees and conducting multiple levels of sensitisations in addition to making orientation programmes inclusive of LGBTQ+ issues. Progress towards these components of the short-term strategy can be measured against benefits accessible to employees and an assessment of the company's performance against that of its industry peers.

Mid-term strategy will aim to stabilize the progress made by an organisation once inclusive policies and structures are put in place. This will include establishing an infrastructure to retain LGBTQ+ employees, through clear career growth prospects, unambiguous commitment towards enabling a culture shift in the organisation and vociferous advocacy for LGBTQ+ rights at the leadership. It will also include getting LGBTQ+ inclusive vendors on board or insisting on LGBTQ+ inclusive policies with existing vendors. Partnering with community-based organisations or other companies working towards LGBTQ+ inclusion will also form a key component of mid-term strategy. Efficacy of the mid-term strategy can be measured through decrease in attrition rate of LGBTQ+ employees and how the company fares in different equality indices, preferably those managed and led by the community itself.

Long-term strategy focusses on bringing about fundamental attitudinal shift in not only the organisational culture but beyond the organisation as well. This will include introducing families of LGBTQ+ employees who have been supporting and accepting to other employees and their families. Companies will also need to arrive at their own unique selling points to recruit LGBTQ+ candidates.

The long-term strategy will include developing a scalable model for inclusion and defined guidelines for all levels of management. Efficacy of long-term strategy for inclusion will manifest in emergence of thought leaders and shaping up of ideas that go beyond the

Efficacy of long-term strategy for inclusion will manifest in emergence of thought leaders and shaping up of ideas that go beyond the conventional mandate of inclusion.

conventional mandate of inclusion. If an employer features within top 3 of the best employers to work for by LGBTQ+ people, it will definitively denote the success of their long-term inclusion strategy.

4

A Voice at the Table

“We all have the ability to promote a culture of acceptance and inclusion — and that is something I believe every leader has a responsibility to do. It starts with having a dialogue until we are all comfortable and no longer have the fear of saying the wrong thing.”

- Inga Beale, Former CEO of Lloyd's of London

Buy-in obtained from leadership and senior management can bring about a monumental shift in enabling inclusive workplaces. Whether it is presence of individuals who are committed to diversity and inclusion or “out” LGBTQ+ persons in the leadership, inclusive policy-making more often than not follows a top-down approach.

Commitment towards Diversity and Inclusion

Inclusive leaders show undeterred commitment towards diversity and inclusion. Their commitment goes beyond achieving targets or metrics for diversity in hiring and appraisals of LGBTQ+ individuals. Understanding the community better to create a workplace that is truly welcoming and inclusive takes precedence.

“In 1995, I joined a high-profile media house for my first ‘proper’ job, I was honest, but naive enough to declare, that I am an integral part of an LGBTQ+ magazine, The Humsafar Trust, and another media house. The HR Manager said – “The first two are ok, but you have to resign from the media house. They are competition.” Within 4 years, from a Manager I became the AVP.”

- Suhail Abbasi, Senior Media Professional and Chairperson, The Humsafar Trust

Inclusive leaders demonstrate exemplary approachability which sends the message across the organisation that LGBTQ+ voices will be heard. Their decision making on LGBTQ+ related policies involves discussions with community representatives.

Leaders ensure that these policies are communicated at all levels in the organisation.

Most importantly, their commitment towards diversity and inclusion emerges from belief in the business case of diversity and inclusion. This enables them to align the strategy and plan for inclusion with the larger organisational strategy and processes.

Inclusive leaders in the senior

management can be LGBTQ+ individuals or allies. However, our engagement with most employers has revealed that if people from the community are in leadership roles, it not only reflects in truly inclusive policies and workplace environment, it paves way for other LGBTQ+ individuals to get hired and succeed in the workplace.

Inclusion in leadership ~ Inclusion in workplace

An “out” LGBTQ+ individual in the leadership of a company can achieve extraordinary progress towards formulation and implementation of inclusive policies. Most companies in India which have come up with exemplary LGBTQ+ inclusive policies, have people from the LGBTQ+ community in their leadership championing the cause. These companies were also able to successfully navigate the once extremely adverse legal and policy landscape in India to promote LGBTQ+ friendly policies.

Most companies in India with exemplary LGBTQ+ inclusive policies, have people from the LGBTQ+ community in their leadership championing the cause.

Furthermore, systematically creating leadership opportunities in an organisation for “out” LGBTQ+ employees goes a long way in enhancing workplace inclusion. Most LGBTQ+ employees tend to not get a fair deal in any appraisal process owing to unconscious bias emerging from *Mini-Me syndrome* (people preferring candidates who are similar to themselves because it is assumed that they will think and behave like them) or the *Pigeon-holing prototype bias* (attaching generalized assumptions about particular social groups to individuals who are assumed to belong to those groups). A well-defined

leadership development plan in place for “out” LGBTQ+ employees enables them to navigate through these hidden biases that invariably come in the way of hiring and appraisals.

Which identities are represented in the leadership?

Having LGBTQ+ individuals in the leadership of an organisation creates significant shifts in the inclusiveness of workplace which, among other things, manifests in organisational policies. By corollary, policies are often not inclusive of the interests of identities that are not represented in the leadership. For example, if the leadership does not have representation from lesbian or bisexual women, transgender persons or people who come from disadvantaged socio-economic backgrounds amongst the LGBTQ+ spectrum, the LGBTQ+ inclusive policies of the organisation are not likely to

result in meaningful inclusion of the aforementioned.

Inclusion is continuous endeavour and inclusive leadership is constant effort towards bringing as many voices to the table as possible.

It is important for the employers and the communities to acknowledge this gap, at the very least, before they can make efforts towards bridging this gap. Inclusion is continuous

endeavour and inclusive leadership is constant effort towards bringing as many voices to the table as possible.

Are leaders willing to walk the extra mile?

There are numerous groups and identities that comprise the LGBTQ+ spectrum. While all of them are marginalised on account of their sexuality and/or gender identity, some are disproportionately impacted by patriarchal constructs and income inequality.

Most companies adopt an inherently meritocratic approach in hiring and appraisals. We often come across statements like “All other things being equal, we are open to hire LGBTQ+ persons in our teams”. Unfortunately, this approach proves to be exclusionary for a vast section of LGBTQ+ spectrum.

Many LGBTQ+ individuals have faced systemic disenfranchisement and loss of opportunities that are available to others and ‘all other things’ are seldom equal for them.

Many LGBTQ+ individuals have faced systemic disenfranchisement and loss of opportunities that are available to others

From an organisational point of view, it might not be easier to find representation of certain sections of the LGBTQ+ spectrum in the leadership, especially of those sections that are disadvantaged at multiple levels and might not possess conventional qualifications or skills. It is in this case that the commitment of an organisation and its leadership towards true inclusion is put to test. Leaders are expected to think outside the box and create unconventional pathways for inclusion of those LGBTQ+ individuals who truly need support and inclusive structures and processes.

There are hundreds of community-based organisations in India working at the grassroots, the employers can engage with. These organisations represent identities that are invisible in popular dialogues on LGBTQ+ - individuals who could not complete their education due to stigma around their sexuality or gender expression coupled with poverty and deprivation or individuals who are part of oppressive structures that limit the livelihood opportunities available to them. ***It is these identities and individuals who need inclusive policies and inclusive workplaces the most.***

“History owes an apology to the members of this community and their families, for the delay in providing redressal for the ignominy and ostracism that they have suffered through the centuries.”

- Justice Indu Malhotra, Navtej Singh Johar & Ors. v. Union of India (Para 20)

5

Put it in writing

“The measurement of good policy is the well-being of the community. I saw the human faces of failed policies, and they weren’t smiling.”

- Raul Ruiz, Chilean filmmaker, writer and teacher

A company’s formal policies outlining the organisation’s stance on tackling discrimination based on sexual orientation or gender identity and expression, ensuring that all employees are treated fairly and equally with regard to employment conditions, promoting gender diversity in the workforce and supporting gender-reaffirmation, send a powerful message to staff about its values and commitment to inclusivity.

Specific and Accessible policies

Some large corporates in India have umbrella policies on non-discrimination and equal opportunities but the policy statements do not have specific reference to LGBTQ+, sexual orientation and gender identity. Although the process of inclusion is continuous and evolving, a necessary first step is to define the organisation’s stand on LGBTQ+ inclusion through formal policies or reference to sexual orientation and gender identity in the formal policy statements. Unless the specific clauses on non-discrimination and equal opportunities for LGBTQ+ are added to the policy statements, issues specific

to LGBTQ+ remain invisible and there are limited opportunities for any dialogue on sexual orientation and gender identity and expression. Visibility is key for bringing about any attitudinal shift in people.

It is further important that all employees are aware of these policies through dedicated training during induction, periodic targeted communication and communication embedded in regular internal communication related to everyday work as detailed in the next section.

It is also important that policies are accessible to the LGBTQ+ employees already working in the organisation so that they can reach out to their management or HR or a designated grievance redressal body in case of any policy breach.

The Humsafar Trust Manual for Workplace Inclusion

In 2017, The Humsafar Trust created the first ever manual on inclusion of transgender persons in workplaces in India. This manual was referenced and used widely by corporates and NGOs to create manifestos and guides on LGBTQ+ inclusion. These manifestos and guides enumerated specific policies that can be adopted by companies.

We, at The Humsafar Trust, however, have refrained from prescribing a standard set of policies to all employers. We believe, every organisation is different and its policies on LGBTQ+ inclusion need to be

Every organisation is different and its policies on LGBTQ+ inclusion need to be tailored to align with its own ethos

tailored to align with its own ethos. Our manual offered themes and broad areas that capture the needs of the community, based on our experience of working with the community for over 26 years.

Similarly, the sample policies in the next section echo the voice and aspirations of individuals from the community which can be interpreted differently by employers in various contexts. These aspirations do not necessarily need to be codified into a one-size-fit-all policy document. We believe, employers need to delve deeper into reasons that make a workplace unwelcome and inconducive for LGBTQ+ people and work towards addressing them. They also need to understand their employees, clients and customers better and when viewed from the lens of gender and sexuality.

Relying on a set of readymade policies or insistence on quick fixes to make a workplace inclusive will merely be an exercise of tokenism. True inclusion requires the will to

Insistence on quick fixes to make a workplace inclusive will merely be an exercise of tokenism

address hidden biases and attitudes that are deep rooted and structural. It also requires the employers to understand the pulse of the community and acknowledge their needs and aspirations.

Sample Policies

The workshop participants came up with several sample policies to enhance inclusion of LGBTQ+ persons. It is important to note that these policies are indicative at best. Every employer needs to formulate policies to reimagine their workplace differently and in congruence with the ethos of the organisation along with the needs of the LGBTQ+ community present in the particular socio-cultural context the organisation operates in.

2. Anti-discrimination

- 2.1. There will be zero-tolerance for any incidence of harassment, bullying or discrimination on the basis of gender identity and expression or sexual orientation

1. Recruitment and equal opportunity

- 1.1. Every job advertisement will be checked for hidden biases against LGBTQ+ candidates
- 1.2. Targeted recruitments will be conducted through LGBTQ+ recruitment drives in association with community-based organisations, participation in LGBTQ+ job fairs and hiring through LGBTQ+ job portals
- 1.3. Company will organise exposure visits to the workplace for LGBTQ+ job aspirants
- 1.4. Counsellors trained in identifying hidden biases in recruitment will be involved in the recruitment process
- 1.5. Recruiters will undergo tests to identify implicit associations that give rise to unintentional bias and will get trained to address them accordingly
- 1.6. Training and internship options for LGBTQ+ individuals will be created
- 1.7. Interview round questions and assessments will be structured to address unintentional bias towards LGBTQ+
- 1.8. Hiring process will be flexible for LGBTQ+ employees coming from disadvantaged backgrounds
 - 1.8.1. Transgender persons who do not have Govt. ID proofs in the preferred gender identity or any ID proofs at all can submit reference letters from any registered community-based organisation
 - 1.8.2. The criteria for educational qualifications will be relaxed if the candidates pass the skill tests for a vacancy
 - 1.8.3. Background checks will not be agnostic of structural injustices towards transgender persons

4. Appraisal and career growth

- 4.1. Managers will demonstrate increased tolerance levels on business impact with respect to LGBTQ+ team members, taking into consideration their mental health, societal pressures and struggles pertaining to their gender identity and expression and sexual orientation or their socio-economic marginalisation and the resultant skill gap.
- 4.2. Skill Development will be facilitated for LGBTQ+ individuals
- 4.3. Leadership mentoring programs will include LGBTQ+ employees to put them on leadership track
- 4.4. LGBTQ+ inclusion related deliverables will be part of appraisal for senior management

3. Salary and Benefits

- 3.1. Fair wage practices will be followed across the company and the company will allow no discrimination in salary structures of employees, based on gender identity and expression and sexual orientation.
- 3.2. Irrespective of whether same-sex marriage is legally recognised or not, same-sex partners will be recognised as domestic partners and the company will offer same insurance coverage and other benefits to same-sex partners of employees as are available for heterosexual partners.
- 3.3. Medical insurance coverage will include transition related medical costs, HIV -related testing and medication and mental-health counselling support
- 3.4. Company will only enter into health insurance contracts that include coverage mentioned in 4.2 and 4.3
- 3.5. Revised leave policies will be applicable for LGBTQ+ employees who have any special needs like gender-reaffirmation related medical interventions etc.
- 3.6. The company will tie up with home rental platforms to facilitate safe, affordable and non-discriminatory housing facilities for LGBTQ+ employees

5. Awareness and sensitisation

- 5.1. Awareness and sensitisation on LGBTQ+ issues will be conducted at different levels in the organisation using multiple tools like open discussions with LGBTQ+ activists, workshops on gender and sexuality, LGBTQ+ themed film screenings and play staging and other entertainment and fun activities. These sensitisations will be led by the community involving personal narratives of LGBTQ+ individuals
- 5.2. Leadership and Senior Management will be routinely sensitised to understand inclusion and discuss strategies for workplace inclusion of LGBTQ+ individuals
- 5.3. LGBTQ+ awareness will be part of the induction program
- 5.4. Employees will be given handbook on understanding concepts on gender identity and expression, sexual orientation and LGBTQ+ issues
- 5.5. When an LGBTQ+ individual joins a team, sensitisation on gender identity and expression, sexual orientation and LGBTQ+ issues of all the team members will be conducted
- 5.6. Employee interactions and speaker sessions will be arranged with LGBTQ+ role models and LGBTQ+ advocates from other agencies
- 5.7. LGBTQ+ - themed events will be included in Annual events
- 5.8. Sensitisation on laws pertaining to LGBTQ+ will be conducted along with legal rights of LGBTQ+ individuals
- 5.9. Periodic community consultations will be organised with LGBTQ+ community-based organisations and independent activists to discuss emerging trends and changing dynamics of LGBTQ+ inclusion

7. Infrastructure and administration

- 7.1. There will be all-gender inclusive restrooms on every floor
- 7.2. Workplace ambience will be made gender neutral with the use of gender plural colours, pictures and other artwork and aesthetic elements.
- 7.3. A separate budget will be allocated for LGBTQ+ initiatives
- 7.4. Pride Committee will be constituted comprising of LGBTQ+ individuals and allies. This committee will be responsible for organising periodic events and activities aimed at increasing awareness on LGBTQ+ issues and encouraging dialogue on gender and sexuality.
- 7.5. The company, in association with Pride Committee, will sign up for diversity audits by a reputed accreditation body (preferably a community-led accreditation process)
- 7.6. Policies will be periodically reviewed by the accreditation partner
- 7.7. A periodic employee feedback mechanism will be put in place which will inform further improvements and changes in policies
- 7.8. Any new needs of LGBTQ+ employees that emerge in the course of their work or their stint in the organisation will be met timely
- 7.9. LGBTQ+ friendly counsellors will be appointed for mental health support of LGBTQ+ employees

6. Gender Reaffirmation

- 6.1. For social transition in case of transgender persons, changing given name to the preferred name and self-declaration of gender is deemed sufficient. No medical intervention will be mandated for a transgender person to avail any benefits available for transgender employees.
- 6.2. Necessary changes in personnel and administrative records, communication plan for co-workers and clients on change in name and pronouns will be in place within a mutually agreed timeframe with the transitioning employee
- 6.3. Plan on changes in dress code and restroom usage will be discussed with the transitioning employee and relevant communication will be made with other employees

10. Communication

- 10.1. Internal communication of the organisation will be aimed at increasing visibility of LGBTQ+ issues through:
 - 10.1.1. Newsletters to include LGBTQ+ Topics
 - 10.1.2. Activities to promote LGBTQ+ individuals showcase their talents.
 - 10.1.3. Exclusive Pride Marches in workspace.
 - 10.1.4. LGBTQ+ goodies to promote inclusion
- 10.2. Visibility of 'out' leaders in the organisation will be part of internal communication and work-related periodic updates
- 10.3. An employee's preferred name and gender will be used in all internal communications
 - 10.3.1. All employees will be able to use their preferred name and pronouns in email

9. Grievance Redressal and support system

- 9.1. Grievance Redressal cells will be setup to help LGBTQ+ individuals with addressing violation of any of the above policies
- 9.2. Diversity SPOCs will be appointed in every department who will ensure representation of LGBTQ+ employees in the department
- 9.3. Confidentiality and anonymity regarding the gender identity, sexuality, HIV status and any other health condition of any employee will be maintained as per their wish and any violation of confidentiality will be considered a non-negotiable

8. Promoting LGBTQ+ Rights

- 8.1. The organisation will undertake several activities to encourage inclusion of LGBTQ+ community in corporate workforce
 - 8.1.1. Breakfast sessions with corporate leaders from others organisations on LGBTQ+ inclusion
 - 8.1.2. Organising exclusive career fairs for LGBTQ+ individuals, where other companies are also invited
 - 8.1.3. Create networks among supportive managers and LGBTQ+ individuals in various organisations to have a better understanding about LGBTQ+ lifestyles
- 8.2. The company's CSR initiatives will include supporting activities by LGBTQ+ groups and organisations
- 8.3. The company will also facilitate documentation of community history and struggles, particularly in the context of workplace inclusion

6

Visibility ~ Normalisation ~ Shared Humanity

“There will not be a magic day when we wake up and it’s now okay to express ourselves publicly. We make that day by doing things publicly until it’s simply the way things are.”

- Tammy Baldwin, first openly gay U.S. Senator

Most LGBTQ+ individuals, along with other marginalised groups, have grown up consuming ads, TV and other media that tell stories of people they can’t relate to. It is a rather recent phenomenon that inclusive marketing and branding has gathered steam that takes into account what is unique in their audience and what makes them different. Consumers are evolving from accepting a world view that represents a privileged and elite section to one that portrays their own realities and dreams.

Inclusive branding

Inclusive branding conveys in clear terms that the company is passionate about inclusion and connects with its LGBTQ+ audience or clientele in a meaningful way. Several components of branding can be used to convey the LGBTQ+ inclusivity of a company. The company logo and other elements of design

can include pride colours or other symbols of LGBTQ+ equality or solidarity. LGBTQ+ icons or supporters can be made brand ambassadors. Subtle marketing or brand positioning through intelligent and crisp messaging and LGBTQ+-themed taglines for the brand or sub-brands are effective means of inclusive branding.

Companies can also undergo diversity audits or an accreditation process, preferably a community-led accreditation, to position themselves as an LGBTQ+ inclusive brand.

Including the benefits provided by a company to LGBTQ+ individuals in job advertisements during targeted recruitment drives or the standard recruitment process further increases their visibility as an inclusive brand. Similarly, public statements about best practices adopted by a company to promote LGBTQ+ inclusion enhances their image as an inclusive brand.

Internal and External Communication

Communication on visibility of LGBTQ+ individuals and issues and dialogue on gender and sexuality needs to cut across all levels of the organisation. This visibility will not only foster normalisation of various identities and enable individuals bring their authentic self to their workplaces, it will also help

Visibility will foster normalisation of various identities and enable individuals bring their authentic self to their workplaces

nurture informal leadership towards advocating for LGBTQ+ equality, rights and inclusion in the organisation.

Internal Communication enables the messages around LGBTQ+ inclusion get

internalised at every level in the organisation. It includes inclusive branding through logos and other design elements, as discussed in the previous section, incorporating LGBTQ+ themed merchandise in corporate gifting or employee rewards, and integrating relevant messages in employee communication, including, but not limited to, preferred pronouns in email signatures.

Administrative measures like gender-sensitive transportations for transgender persons and gender non-binary individuals, creating safe-spaces for LGBTQ+ employees, all gender-inclusive washrooms etc., conducting regular refreshers on awareness and sensitisation on LGBTQ+ issues and making the inclusive culture within the organisation visible through targeted advertising.

External Communication takes the message on inclusivity to customers, clients, vendors, competitors and other stakeholders. It includes social media marketing (Campaigns, organic and monetized hashtags), external events and radio partnership.

Participation and visibility in pride marches and other LGBTQ+ events and partnerships are also ways to come out openly in support of the community. Additionally, LGBTQ+ influencers can be approached for talking about

Visibility both within and outside an organisation goes a long way towards creating lasting shifts in the way LGBTQ+ individuals are treated and welcomed in various spaces

inclusivity measures taken by the community and providing referrals for jobseekers. Employees can talk about company's policies and vision for inclusion in speaker sessions on various platforms,

collaborations with community-based organisations can be fostered, community events can be sponsored and space and resources can be offered for community initiatives.

Finally, companies need to make use of varied media like TV, Radio, podcasts and flyers for mobile app marketing to send out messages on LGBTQ+ solidarity and inclusion measures that can be used, to the larger society and other employers.

Visibility both within and outside an organisation goes a long way towards creating lasting shifts in the way LGBTQ+ individuals are treated and welcomed in various spaces.

Towards shared humanity

The objective of increased visibility and normalisation of an environment where LGBTQ+ individuals can be their authentic selves, is to create an ecosystem where every human being is able to realise

True inclusion opens up the possibility for every human being to explore those aspects of their existence that are stunted by binaries and stereotypes and open spaces for shared humanity

their best potential and embrace their gender identity and sexuality without any apprehension.

Affirmative actions for disadvantaged groups are often deemed as 'special' privileges. It

is important that a dialogue around need for affirmative action takes place in the organisation. Affirmative action and proactive steps towards LGBTQ+ inclusion is needed not just as means to achieve the goal of equity; they are also needed because LGBTQ+ individuals bring something 'special' to the table. LGBTQ+ people, on account of their struggles and life experiences, bring richness to the collective insights of the organisation on understanding their consumer and other stakeholders better.

Most importantly, true inclusion opens up the possibility for every human being to explore those aspects of their existence that are stunted by binaries and stereotypes and open spaces for shared humanity.

“The ability of a society to acknowledge the injustices which it has perpetuated is a mark of its evolution. In the process of remedying wrongs under a regime of constitutional remedies, recrimination gives way to restitution, diatribes pave the way for dialogue and healing replaces the hate of a community.”

- Justice D.Y. Chandrachud,
Navtej Singh Johar & Ors. v. Union of India (Para 155)

7

Making people culture-fit or changing the culture?

“It’s really worthwhile to be open and to share who you are with people if you’re wanting to develop authentic relationships, candid conversations, creativity. All of these things are often born from an environment where people feel like they can be who they are.”

- Peter Arvai, CEO and Co-Founder of Prezi

While changing policies is a necessary first step towards inclusion of LGBTQ+ individuals in workplaces, there is a need for fundamental attitudinal shift to enable people feel truly accepted and welcomed so that they are able to bring their authentic selves to the workplace and are able to realise their true potential as human beings.

Addressing hidden biases ~ journey from ignorance to genuine efforts

Being inclusive goes beyond being politically correct.

The India D&I head of a multi-national company was once sitting across the table with a team of community leaders at The Humsafar Trust. She spoke enthusiastically about how their company was extremely interested in hiring people from the transgender community. She talked in detail about proactive measures their company took to hire people with disabilities. And now, she said, their leadership wanted to start a recruitment drive for hiring transgender persons in the workforce. The only question she had was the kind of 'skill sets the transgender community had', so that she could identify relevant vacancies in the organisation. The Humsafar team, representing several identities in the LGBTQ+ spectrum, tried to explain that the transgender community was as heterogeneous as any community, comprising of people who had not even completed primary schooling as well as those who had graduate, post-graduate and even PhD degrees. The problem was that the D&I head, not unlike most of the people in the Indian society, assumed that the transgender community comprised only of the hijra community. She did not have any idea about people with transfeminine identities who are not part of the hijra community, about trans-men or transmasculine identities or about gender non-binary identities. The Humsafar team patiently explained nuances of gender and sexuality along with an introduction to various identities that were a part of a large spectrum of identities, popularly referred to as the LGBTQ+ spectrum. After undergoing, what can be referred to a crash course on gender and sexuality, the D&I head said, "Well, right now we are only looking for hiring transgender people." On being asked if she would be interested in hiring transmen as well, there was a look of uncertainty on her face. Nevertheless, she said that they were open to applications from any transgender person. In yet another meeting with a corporate representative, the expectations were set very clear at the outset - "We wish to hire candidates only from the hijra community".

While most begin their journey with ignorance, some make genuine efforts to understand better and create inclusive spaces, some adopt political correctness and some get outright baffled by the complexity of the situation.

While most begin their journey with ignorance, some make genuine efforts to understand better and create inclusive spaces, some adopt political correctness and some get outright baffled by the complexity of the situation.

Some baffled responses also included emotions bordering on frustration, especially upon realising that the hijra community might not be as welcoming to their 'exciting job offers' - "I don't understand. If we are willing to make an effort to hire them, why can't they make some effort?" What they needed

What employers need to acknowledge is that inclusion is as big a need for the employer as it is for the community.

to understand and internalise was that inclusion is as big a need for the employer as it is for the community. And the fact that an employer expressed interest in hiring people from

the community did not automatically guarantee the interest reciprocated by the community. There are several factors like economic viability for the community, gaining trust of the community and

understanding the socio-cultural nuances of community structures that need to be considered while initiating recruitment drives for communities as disadvantaged and marginalised as the hijra community.

While undoubtedly most of the employers and recruitment agencies come with a noble intention of enhancing employment opportunities, deep-rooted societal attitudes towards certain sexualities and gender expressions manifest in stereotypical understanding of the community and unconscious bias. Stigma and discrimination faced by LGBTQ+ persons are also a result of these societal attitudes. Unconscious biases can only be addressed by continuous dialogue on breaking binaries and stereotypes around gender and sexuality. These dialogues can be initiated by conducting workshops where not only 'concepts' around sex, sexuality and gender are discussed but 'out' speakers from the community talk about their personal journeys which make the concepts real for the audience. Audience are able to connect with these stories and experience how binaries and stereotypes around gender and sexuality affect all of us but rather disproportionately impact lives of certain individuals.

Key to meaningful inclusion is understanding the plurality of identities that comprise LGBTQ+ spectrum, along with the fluidity of those identities.

Key to meaningful inclusion is understanding the plurality of identities that comprise LGBTQ+ spectrum, along with the fluidity of those identities. The best of intentions can't make up for acknowledging and understanding these nuances.

Inclusion is not a PR exercise

Once, after an hour-long discussion on various identities that are part of the LGBTQ+ spectrum, HR head of a company asked, "Do transmen 'look' like transgender persons?" It didn't take a lot of probing to reveal that the entire transgender inclusion drive planned by the company was a PR exercise based on an understanding of transgender identities limited to the hijra community, coupled with a misguided notion of altruism to 'uplift' the community.

Such instances create a feeling of mistrust within the communities, especially those like the hijra community which has faced extreme oppression and marginalisation for centuries.

Inclusion is an iterative process

Inclusion doesn't take place overnight nor is it a one-time activity. All the challenges that come up in the process of creating inclusive spaces cannot be anticipated and addressed beforehand or in one go. Work needs to be done both at an individual level and at the level of the collective with an aim to create an equitable environment for every employee.

While at an individual level the company strives to offer benefits that convey how the employees are valued by the organisation, these benefits are a microcosm of the overarching values and ethos that make an organisation at a macro level. At the level of an individual, acceptance of another person for how they self-identify themselves and how they express their gender through the attire or appearance they prefer, is crucial. A change in culture is also reflected at an individual level through the language used in an organisation which includes addressing people by their preferred pronouns and usage of gender and sexual orientation neutral language.

At a collective level, a culture shift manifests in macro-level decisions like putting systems and infrastructure in place to protect employees who are vulnerable or at risk. Similar to the structural changes brought about by companies in the form of flexible working hours, designated cabs for women etc. to ensure their safety in the light of their increased participation in corporate workforce, one can expect initiatives in the form of loans, financial and educational support for the most vulnerable among LGBTQ+ people, as their inclusion in workplaces enhances.

Most importantly, the nuances of LGBTQ+ inclusion are normalised by slipping them into narrative. Recognising aspirational LGBTQ+ figures, recognising allies in LGBTQ+ chapters, forging networks of LGBTQ+ individuals and allies through formal mechanisms and representation from employee resource groups or pride committees in leadership discussions further boosts a culture shift towards meaningful inclusion.

”It was way back in the 90s. I had just joined a high-profile media house. Considering the cold corporate environment, I slowly toned down my flamboyant appearance. After a few months, I ran into the CEO of the company. He just looked at me and said - ”You used to be so colourful, what happened to you? Bring back the colour in your life!” After that day, my career just flourished.”

- Suhail Abbasi, Senior Media Professional and Chairperson, The Humsafar Trust

As the organisation’s values evolve from diversity to advocacy for LGBTQ+ equality and rights through verbal statements on political and legal developments pertaining to the community, acknowledging needs of LGBTQ+ clients and customers, stronger ties with the communities, commitment towards social welfare and being vocal and visible to influence laws and legislations, ***the organisation starts spearheading the process of inclusion not only within but at a macro and systemic level as well.***

Return to Humanity

“What makes life meaningful is love. The right that makes us human is the right to love.”

- Justice Leila Seth, first woman judge in the Delhi high court and the first woman Chief Justice of a state high court

Finally, a truly inclusive culture is one in which any and every individual is treated in a manner that they feel respected, valued and welcomed. A continuous process of sensitisation and creating awareness through human stories across organisations is extremely powerful to create an attitudinal shift. Further, it is important that awareness is created in a way that is in congruence with what the individual wants their peers to be made aware of.

Similarly, policies and infrastructure also need to be individual oriented where specific needs of individuals are not only met but also normalised. There need to be specific programs and affirmative action to ensure equity and address centuries of injustice towards certain sections of the society.

LGBTQ+ inclusion cannot exist in a silo. A culture shift needs to focus on similarities around gender and sexuality that exist in all human beings and the impact binaries and stereotypes have on everyone. Finding spaces for recognising gender fluidity beyond labels enables people to deeply connect with those who are worst impacted by these binaries and stereotypes. There is scope for arriving at amicable resolutions to seemingly capital-intensive problems as well if the culture recognises fluidity of gender and sexuality, for e.g. all-gender restrooms instead of gender-neutral ones offer a different perspective altogether.

Finally, a human-centred approach needs reimagining every aspect of inclusion in a particular cultural context. What does it mean to be accepted, discriminated in a culture? What is 'offensive' and

what is not? Is it offensive or is it indifferent, if one person gets into the personal space of another person? There are cultural connotations to these questions and debates and the way forward is to keep these dialogues going so that the culture evolves according to needs of individuals and not individuals moulded to fit in a parochial and stagnant view of culture.

The way forward is to keep these dialogues going so that the culture evolves according to needs of individuals and not individuals moulded to fit in a parochial and stagnant view of culture.

Authors

Abhinav Sutar



Abhinav works as an Analyst. In his free time, he enjoys reading and writing. A great achievement after many attempts to end all the possibilities of better life. He believes that, with consistent little steps we can make a huge impact and bring the change in our society. No matter how small, all the actions shape the world.

Abhishek Sharma



Abhishek is a rationalist, supports logical and critical thinking. Out and proud Gay, lucky to be surrounded by great people at work and in life. He comes with over 10 years of marketing experience and currently working with NortonLifelock as Acquisition Specialist- Digital Marketing & Web Analytics. In his spare time, he prefers to listen to music and read fiction.

Akshara



Akshara, a bilingual public speaker, writer and an activist, is working on an inclusive space for Queer community in Arts and Literature Space. QAALI (Queer Arts and Literature Inclusion) is soon expected to be launched by Akshara. While she was a part of the corporate world for 6.5 years, she has also been a host and the manager of events related to Children and Queer community. Using her experience and passion, she hopes to create an impact.

Alpana Dange



Alpana Dange is a social researcher, strategic planner, trainer and mentor for the last 25 years. She has worked with rural men and women, slum dwelling youths, displaced people, LGBTQ+I+, migrants, female sex workers and orphan and vulnerable children. Alpana has been a consultant to the Humsafar Trust since year 2000, where she serves as a research director, policy and strategy advisor. She is also a co-founder of her consulting organization, Partners In Progress.

Anjali Siroya



Anjali Siroya identifies as a heterosexual transwoman. She's a survivor of discrimination and abuse and feels that she is a human being first and should be considered so. She's a media graduate and was the 1st transgender woman in Mumbai to be crowned as a beauty pageant in her college. She is working at The Humsafar Trust as Advocacy Officer and Recruitment Coordinator. She is core-member of Yariyaan, youth initiative of The Humsafar Trust.

Ankita Mehra



Ankita Mehra, Director- Events and Community at Equiv, has been working for Diversity and inclusion in 65+ MNCs and creating jobs for Women, Persons with Disabilities, Veterans and LGBTQ+. She is a motivational speaker who has done 30+ Talks nationally and been on TV by coming out on National Television in popular reality show Roadies.

Bharathan Iyer



Bharathan is the incumbent Vice President of Queerhythm LGBTIQ Community. His professional career spans around corporate portfolios in Human Resources, Public Relations, Project Management and Administration. He has hands on experience in framing core policies of start-up firms and has published research papers in Human Resources, Marketing and Strategies.

Harish Panchabhai



Harish is an experienced marketer, currently working as strategic marketing specialist in a global IT Firm. Striving for LGBTQ+I+ inclusion, Harish wishes to see corporates including D&I organically and making inclusivity part of the new normal. Harish enjoys constantly learning new things, writing, travelling and making each of his experience count. He holds an M.Sc. in communication studies and an M.B.A. in Marketing.

Authors

Hayathi



Hayathi loves humans beyond race, colour, sex, gender, sexuality, region and religion. She wants the next generation grow up with knowledge on SOGIESC (Sexual Orientation, Gender Identity and Expression, and Sex Characteristics) and live their lives without pain. She coordinates activities in National Non-Binary, Intersex and Transgender Forum (NNIT Forum) within Srishri Madurai. Beyond her work she does cycling, trekking, travelling and is a professional photographer.

Manu Karthika



Manu Karthika is a Transman, open and proud Queer and is currently serving as a Senior Executive HR in Technopark, Trivandrum. He has a fledged experience of 8 years spanning in Finance, HR and Project Management. A Queer activist and a member of Queerhythm LGBTIQ Community, Manu has been instrumental in handling Queer Advocacy and Awareness programmes in LGBTIQ spaces, especially among Transgender community.

Murugesan Sivasubramanian



Murugesan has been working with The Humsafar Trust on sexual health and human rights of MSM and Transgender communities since 2001. He holds a graduate in Psychology and a Masters in Social work from Tata Institute of Social Sciences, Mumbai. He currently oversees the capacity building initiatives at The Humsafar Trust. He has been a consultant to various community-based organizations in South-Asia to strengthen HIV and mental health programs with LGBTQ+ communities.

Nilofer



Nilofer is a transwoman working with The Humsafar Trust for 15 years as Peer Educator, Outreach Worker, MIS Officer, Accountant in various projects. Currently, she is working on TRANScend, an initiative aimed at inclusion of transgender persons in all walks of life. She graduated with science in 2003 at Shivaji University, Kolhapur. Her goal is to identify grass-root level issues of transgender community related to employment, health, experiences of violence and legal awareness and work towards equal rights and inclusion.

Niraj Singh



Mr. Niraj Singh, MA (Economics), MFM, FRM, is currently working with a Bank. He has 15 years of experience as an Economist and has handled various roles in the banking industry. He has handled assignments in Risk Management, Economic Intelligence, Investor Relations & Human Resources Department of the Bank and contributed in formulation of key policies.

Ragarenjini



Ragarenjini is an activist working towards recognition of transgender persons and rights of LGBTQ+. She was born in Kottarakara, Kollam district. Assigned male at birth, she faced ostracization due to feminine gender expression. She joined a hijra gharana and initially earned her livelihood through begging and sex work. Later on, she completed her M. Com and Hotel Management with a Computer Diploma. She is currently working in the ticket counter officer at Kochi Metro Station.

Raj Kanaujia



Raj is the co-founder of Umang, an LBT support group by the Humsafar Trust and works towards crisis resolution, counselling, empowerment and support for LBT+ persons across India. Raj has worked on HIV interventions for MSM and Transgender women under National HIV program and education and empowerment of school dropouts, women and senior citizens. He has also held supervisory and managerial positions in several private companies.

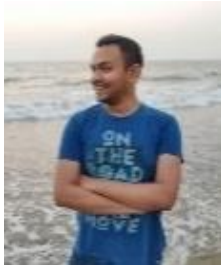
Rohan Pujari



Rohan Pujari is a health worker who works with the LGBTIQ+ communities at the grassroots level. He is the Media Coordinator and Advocacy Officer at The Humsafar Trust. Prior to it, he worked as an internet outreach worker at The Humsafar Trust and was instrumental in shaping up a pioneering model of HIV intervention for populations in virtual spaces. He is a fitness freak, model and actor and was runner up for Mr. Gay World India in 2017.

Authors

Rohit Bairagi



Rohit is an introvert boy from the suburbs of Kolkata, currently working in an MNC in Gurgaon. He is an out and proud gay employee of the organisation since 2015 and thus passionate about corporate LGBTQ+ Inclusion. Food, books, rain, Sufi and folk music keep him alive. They act as his stress buster. If he has to run away from the concrete jungle, he would for sure go to an isolated sea beach among strangers. He is an old school boy who is still fond of hand written letters and words.

Sandeep Mane



Sandeep began his career as an outreach worker in The Humsafar Trust in 2002 and has worked at different levels in the field of HIV and AIDS. He has been the Project Manager for Project Pehchan, a GFATM-Round 9 capacity building program. Currently he is the Technical director on the LINKAGES Project', an FHI 360, USAID initiative that aims at providing capacity building and on-site technical support to community-based organizations in Mumbai, Pune and Thane district towards achieving PEPFAR 90:90:90 goals.

Saadhy Pawar



साध्य पवार HE/HIM, is a Self-Contained Transman, Mumbaikar Marathi Maanus, All time Foodie, Traveller, Silent Poet, writer, Works as a Custom House Agent. He has done B.A. in Sociology and PGD in Human Rights. He is shy but confident and handles a group of 150+ Transmen in Maharashtra working towards acceptance, self-identity and empowerment along with support for documents and surgery related processes. He is proud of his journey from Saadhna (training) to Saadhy (possibility).

Shwetambara



Shwetambara manages TRANScend, an initiative by The Humsafar Trust aimed to enhance inclusion of transgender persons in India in different spaces. Prior to TRANScend, Shwetambara handled SAHYOG, a project aimed to address gaps in the National HIV program. She holds a Master's degree in Development Studies from University of Manchester and has over 13 years of experience in various sectors including livelihoods, education and health. She devours literature and philosophy, from Manto to Marx alike.

Sonal Giani



Sonal Giani is an LGBTQ+ activist and filmmaker. She has been featured on The Better India's list of '8 Inspiring Indian LGBT Individuals', 'Rainbow list of 20 LGBT Role Models' by Cosmopolitan. She co-founded one of India's largest LGBTQ+ youth initiatives "Yaariyan" and 'Umang', an LBT initiative. She is best known for featuring on ZEE TV's prime-time television show 'Connected Hum Tum', Bollywood film W and documentary 'Purple Skies'.

Sourabh Kumar



Sourabh is an urban nomad, a storyteller, and an imperfectly perfect human. He is an alumnus of MICA, Ahmedabad, and his 8+ years of corporate experience spans across brand building, digital transformation, and strategic initiatives with leading Indian & Global brands. He has organized the 'Chennai Rainbow Film Festival' in 2015 as the 'Joint Festival Director'. He is also a passionate photographer & a proud winner of 'Maruti Suzuki Arena' photography contest.

Subhojit Sen



Dr. Subhojit Sen is a Ramalingaswami Fellow at UM-DAE CEBS, Mumbai University. With a Ph.D. in Molecular biology from Tata Institute of Fundamental Research, Subodh has worked as a Research Fellow at Johns Hopkins Medical Institute and a visiting Fellow at National Cancer Institute, NIH. He is also on the Board of Trustees at The Humsafar Trust. His core research interests are Epigenetics and Genomics of diseases, Cancer, DNA recombination-repair, and the science of Behaviour, Sexuality and Gender.

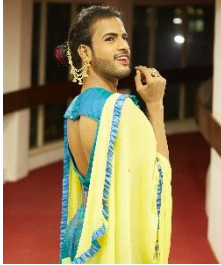
Suhail Abbasi



Suhail Abbasi is a media professional with over 25 years of experience across print, films, television & digital platforms. He holds a Master's degree in Visual Communication from IDC, IIT Bombay. He co-founded BOMBAY DOST - India's first registered LGBTQ+IA+ magazine. He's the Co-Founder & Chairperson of The Humsafar Trust. Suhail has been a mentor for budding journalists and filmmakers through LIKHO Citizen Journalism Workshop and Media Fellowship Programmes. He is also a member of the Institutional Review Board.

Authors

Swapnil Alizeh



Swapnil Alizeh is gender fluid performing artist and a storyteller. Has been a part of Times Out and Proud campaign. They believe in making relatable queer films which could change the narrative of queer films in India and also give work to queer actors like them. They also believe that "To see the change one will have to be the change they want to see". Picture Courtesy: @haifaphotography

Tinesh Chopade



Tinesh Chopade is a graduate working on Advocacy and Rights of sexual minorities for more than eight years. He is out and proud gay man. He's currently working with Humsafar Trust as Advocacy Manager and implements efforts to mainstream LGBTQ+ rights, carrying out capacity building and advocacy in 27 states of India. He is part of Queer Azaadi Mumbai that organizes the Mumbai Pride. He's also co-chair of Human Rights Committee and World Pride Committee of InterPride, which organises the pride events across the globe.

Varun Singh



Varun is a passionate advocate of equal human rights. An active participant and contributor in the LGBTQ+IA+ Inclusion since 2008. His work is primarily centred around corporate policies and volunteering. He currently works in an MNC in Gurgaon primarily driving Business strategy and transformation. He is also the lead of the orgs PRIDE India Chapter since 2017 which played a major role in their gender-neutral washrooms and same-sex partner insurance coverage launches.

Vivek Anand



Vivek Anand works as Chief Executive Officer of The Humsafar Trust (HST) which is India's first CBO of sexual minorities. He holds a degree in business management and is responsible for overall implementation of HIV prevention, care and support and treatment along with research, capacity building and advocacy projects. He has presented several papers in national and international conferences since 2002. He has been responsible for Institutionalizing organizational capacities and these systems are considered as model practices in community-based settings.

Yashwinder Singh



Yashwinder is an LGBTQ+ rights activist, working with the community for the last two decades. He was one of the petitioners in IPC 377 case in the Hon'ble Supreme Court. Currently, he is working with The Humsafar Trust as Director - Policies. He is a drag artist and documentary film maker too.

ⁱ National Legal Services Authority v. Union of India, Writ Petition (Civil) 400/2012 (Apr. 2014), available at <http://supremecourtindia.nic.in/outtoday/wc40012.pdf>. (accessed on May, 2020)

ⁱⁱ Navtej Singh Johar & Ors. v. Union of India thr. Secretary Ministry of Law and Justice, W. P. (Crl.) No. 76 of 2016 Available at <https://barandbench.com/wp-content/uploads/2016/06/NAVTEJ-SINGH-JOHAR-ORS-VS-UNION-OF-INDIA-WRIT-NO.....-OF-2016.pdf> (accessed on May, 2020)

ⁱⁱⁱ Venugopalan, Anjali. “Indian MNCs openly allying with the LGBT cause”, https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/company/corporate-trends/indian-mncs-openly-allying-with-the-lgbt-cause/articleshow/69951140.cms?utm_source=contentofinterest&utm_medium=text&utm_campaign=cppst (accessed on May, 2020)

^{iv} Mitra, Prerna. “At Delhi’s first LGBTQ+ job fair, a chance to move past toxic workplaces”, <https://indianexpress.com/article/lifestyle/feelings/a-step-towards-making-workplaces-more-LGBTQ+-friendly-and-inclusive-6137277/> (accessed on May, 2020)

Acknowledgements

We are extremely grateful to Publicis Sapient for their support in making the community consultation successful. We would particularly like to thank Ms Chetna Kaura, for showing tremendous faith in the potential of community-led initiatives.

Finally, we would like to express our deepest gratitude towards the LGBTQ+ communities across India who continue to struggle towards creating inclusive spaces and give us inspiration to keep the struggle alive.



Please consider the environment before printing. It is no good if we get equal rights and the planet dies right after!