A long-running focus of the NTF has been supporting the inclusion of LGBTI rights in the World Bank’s work. While work in the World Bank’s health projects has included SOGI issues, primarily through the lens of HIV/AIDS, other sectors have traditionally not done so. Today, thanks to efforts by a concerted team and with support from the NTF and others, the World Bank has a Task Force on SOGI issues and, in 2016, appointed the first Advisor on SOGI issues to continue building the focus on these issues in World Bank projects across all sectors.

World Bank staff working on SOGI issues stress that the NTF has been critical in maintaining the momentum behind this agenda through support for building an evidence base on the development experiences and outcomes of LGBTI people. The relevance of this work is clear, as there are large gaps in data on the scope of exclusion based on SOGI. A growing body of research provides solid evidence that sexual minorities experience lower employment, education, health, housing, and worse socioeconomic outcomes than the general population across a range of social and political contexts.

A strong evidence base is key for transforming the way development projects are designed and implemented and encouraging World Bank projects in all practice areas to consider the unique development needs and impacts on the LGBTI community. Since 2012, NTF-financed research has focused on incorporating SOGI in the World Bank’s global social inclusion work, as well as SOGI issues in India, the Kyrgyz Republic, Latin America, the Western Balkans, and Thailand. This has yielded a body of qualitative and quantitative evidence that has informed World Bank projects and Systematic Country Diagnostics (SCDs)/Country Partnership Frameworks (CPFs), as well as development interventions by external partners such as the UN.

In 2012, the NTF provided support for a flagship report on social inclusion, “Inclusion Matters: The Foundation for Shared Prosperity”. Social inclusion is central to the World Bank’s twin goals and brings in issues of perception, dignity, respect, and recognition which are essential for ensuring LGBTI rights in development. This report remains one of the most comprehensive reviews of social inclusion.

In India, the NTF funded the World Bank’s first research project looking at the economic costs of costs of exclusion based on homophobia and transphobia. Through quantitative and qualitative research the World Bank team was able to put forth key data for the evidence base. The team developed an economic model to quantify the financial cost of exclusion of sexual minorities at a macro level. This was followed by data collection in eight Indian cities through surveys and focus group discussions which examined the relationship between human rights, sexual and gender minorities, and development by looking at the impact pathways of stigma and exclusion, including violence, discrimination, job loss, family rejection and pressure to marry, and harassment in school. This work has spurred a larger conversation at the World Bank on the full inclusion of sexual minorities in development, including discussions held at the Annual and Spring Meetings. Two reports were produced based on this work, “The Economic Cost of Stigma and the Exclusion of LGBT People: A Case Study of India” and “Experienced Discrimination, Life Chances and Socio-Economic Situation of Sexual and Gender Minorities in India” (forthcoming).

The research agenda carried over to the Kyrgyz Republic where the NTF supported a background note on SOGI issues at a time when the Government put forth a number of bills that would negatively impact the LGBTI community, including a law on NGO funding and a “homosexual propaganda” law. The note presented an overview of the legal landscape of LGBTI rights in the Kyrgyz Republic and made recommendations for the World Bank’s continued in-country engagement including consulting LGBTI groups to assess the impact of the proposed bills, advancing the research agenda on these marginalized communities, and discussing a mechanism to ensure confidentiality within the medical and justice fields. The note led to specific changes to engage the LGBTI community (through health projects) and was used by the
In Her Shoes” methodology, an innovative tool which has and testing a training tool on SOGI issues based on the evidence base on SOGI exclusion, the project is also developing services, markets, and spaces. In addition to advancing the discrimination and stigma faced by LGBTI people in accessing Thailand. Specifically, this project explores and documents of discrimination experienced by LGBTI individuals in generating quantitative and qualitative data on the forms people’ will contribute to the growing knowledge base by of “In Her Shoes” to Illustrate Discrimination against LGBTI NTF grant on SOGI issues in Thailand. ‘The Global Adaptation In 2016 the research agenda expanded further through an schooling. In addition, experimental studies are being conducted to quantify levels of discrimination in access to housing and The project included the first-ever trainings for World Bank social teams in the region on how SOGI discrimination impacts development outcomes and has created public discussion within the international development community on similar work in the region. NTF support in the Western Balkans has built on the success informing the SCDs to include a project that is presently focused on developing quantitative data on the socio-economic outcomes of LGBTI people in the region. The regional survey will include a deeper dive in Serbia where the survey will include select questions contained in the Serbia Income and Living Conditions Survey and adopt a model- and matching-based approach to allow comparison of the results to the general population.

In addition, experimental studies are being conducted to quantify levels of discrimination in access to housing and schooling.

In 2016 the research agenda expanded further through an NTF grant on SOGI issues in Thailand. “The Global Adaptation of "In Her Shoes" to Illustrate Discrimination against LGBTI people" will contribute to the growing knowledge base by generating quantitative and qualitative data on the forms of discrimination experienced by LGBTI individuals in Thailand. Specifically, this project explores and documents discrimination and stigma faced by LGBTI people in accessing services, markets, and spaces. In addition to advancing the evidence base on SOGI exclusion, the project is also developing and testing a training tool on SOGI issues based on the “In Her Shoes" methodology, an innovative tool which has helped development practitioners and service providers to understand the dimensions of GBV. Building on this work, the NTF grant on "Safeguarding the Rights of Populations Based on Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity” aims to strengthen awareness on core obligations to safeguard populations based on their sexual orientation and gender identity of relevant government ministries in Thailand. In addition, this grant aims to build a South-South learning platform among six countries in South East Asia (Thailand, Lao PDR, Cambodia, Myanmar, Malaysia and Brunei) on discrimination and exclusion of LGBTI persons. Embedded in this work is also the objective of strengthening World Bank staff’s knowledge on how to integrate a human rights and SOGI lens in analytical work and operations.

Through targeted support to research and related educational programming, the NTF has been a critical player in highlighting SOGI issues within the World Bank. By providing continued and strategic support to research projects focused on SOGI issues, the NTF has helped narrow the data gap on LGBTI communities’ development outcomes and provided a platform on which to build internal support for this agenda.

In 2016, the Nordic Trust Fund (NTF) continued to provide a vibrant venue for human rights related debates, discussions and learning among World Bank staff, management and partners. Through the knowledge and partnership program and an internal grant system, work focused on pursuing the NTF’s objective to develop a more informed view of how human rights relate to the work of the World Bank.

The knowledge and partnerships program continued to support the objective of international knowledge sharing and deepened relationships with key external stakeholders such as governments, NTF donors, the Special Procedures of the UN Human Rights Council, other multilateral organizations, and NGOs active in human rights. It is the aim of the NTF that through these linkages World Bank teams will become more familiar with human rights initiatives in their spheres of work, as well as more comfortable with incorporating human rights standards and principles into their day-to-day work at the World Bank. The NTF also continued to benefit from excellent collaboration with the offices of the World Bank Executive Directors for the Nordic and Baltic constituency (Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway, and Sweden) and Germany. The grant program under which task teams across the World Bank Group receive financial and technical support to explore and operationalize human rights in their particular tasks.

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