



Transgender Advocacy in Malaysia: SEED Foundation's Strategic Efforts Against Conversion Therapy

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Abstract. Given that the practice of conversion therapy under the premise of religion — one that violates the basic tenets of universal human rights — still exists, transgender rights and human rights violation in Malaysia is real issue to tackle with. As a transgender-led non-profit organisation focusing on the transgender community, SEED Foundation Malaysia aims to be a voice for trans rights and put an end to conversion therapy in Malaysia. At SEED Foundation, the primary object is to promote the legislation policies for transgender rights and protection against abuses experienced by them. The strategies used by SEED Foundation in their advocacy can be examined from many perspectives, such as those offered by the transnational networks framework, agenda-setting research, and the research on information and symbolic politics. SEED Foundations have successfully deployed what is known as value politics to their benefit in the form of information politics, for instance by increasing awareness on the public stage of the violence generated by the practice of conversion therapy against transgender individuals. And meanwhile, they've built a wide-ranging network of relations with inter-national non-profits via leverage politics, especially groups such as the Asia Pacific Transgender Network, and made loud noise on the global stage. Researchers have explored these methods through qualitative de-scription and careful document analy-sis to highlight local challenges and SEED's initiatives that address those challenges. This research seeks to present a more holistic view of the challenges the Malaysian transgender community face and how SEED Foundation's advocacy indirectly focuses on such reform

Keywords: APTN, conversion therapy, SEED Malaysia, TAN, transgender rights.

1 Introduction

Malaysia has a strange and storied history of rejecting the rights of those who identify as Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual or Transgender, rooted very deeply in the fact that the foundations of Malaysian society are almost exclusively religious. That perspective continues to be embedded in the laws of the land, most especially the continuing implementation of Section 377 which criminalizes consensual sex between consenting adults of

the same sex or gender. Many state laws similarly regard the interaction between man and man, woman and woman, as unnatural. Transgender people are also banned, including areas who ban any assigned male at birth who adopts a feminine identity or the opposite. Worse still, fatwas issued by Islamic jurists have declared gender transitioning feminine but have also rendered transgender identities illegal. Contemporary Malaysia, on the other hand, perpetuates similar laws, meaning that transgender people are particularly susceptible to being charged criminally for living openly in lawfully permissible ways, despite changes elsewhere. This has resulted in an environment of sweeping intimidation and prejudice in which the LGBT community lives under perpetual threat of prosecution simply for being who they are.

But social stigma is not unique to Malaysia; it amplifies the plight of this community. This is especially true in the Muslim population with negative perceptions of homosexuality and same-sex relationships representing grave violations of religious code and social values. There is a powerful social taboo against LGBT people that has resulted in massive underreporting of violence and discrimination, especially in relation to transgender people. And when it comes to legally securing a job, they face enormous hurdles, since they are regularly barred from entering the workforce simply because of their sex-oriented identity. The open transphobia of our society manifests itself in other serious issues, such as accessing health care, with the trans being often denied the treatment they need. Within this largely hostile environment it has become all but impossible for a transgender person to live openly (potentially without aggravating a non-state actor to harassment, violence and/or prosecution over transphobic ideals).

The LGBTQIA+ community goes through layers of hardships in Malaysia. The government officially endorses conversion therapy, while they deal with legal issues and social discrimination. By such means, physicians seek to change an individual's sexual orientation, gender identity, or gender expression. Unfortunately, these are conditioning events, counseling, cult and worship erosion actions related to religion. Such practices have been encouraged by the Malaysian regime since at least late 2018, especially against Muslims. Trans women (some studies even find they comprise a majority of the transgender population) outnumber trans men around the world. As a result, transwomen experience considerable besieged vulnerability, with the social demands appearing aimed at promoting their transition into living male. Under such stifling environment, their actual existence continues to be a challenge. [5]. These approaches are characterized as a way to get people back to the 'right way' of understanding things, according to Islam [6]. These conversion therapy programs are also implemented through the Ministry of Religious Affairs by covering different departments such as the Department for Islamic Development (JAKIM) and amend of the state Islam Unit. Elements of such initiatives at other ministries including the Ministry of Health indicate the extent to which the issue of conversion therapy is institutionalized within the Malaysian governance.

The behavior of the conversion therapy openly supported and financed by the government creates hostile conditions for the transgender in Malaysia to facilitate any redress over the damage they have suffered from the conversion therapy. Combined with the resulting threats of retribution from authorities, this climate of fear cripples even the best efforts of transgender people to resist such harmful practices, with or without

allies [7]. Even so, transmigration of the SEED Foundation Malaysia represents a step to resolve the hurdles, to advocate transgender and to abolish these injustices. SEED Foundation, a trans-led and transfocused NGO, is a leader in the movement for trans rights in Malaysia [8]. The foundation aims at erasing the practice of conversion therapy and providing a better environment for the transgender community in the country. Through their work, SEED Foundation works to amplify the voices of the unheard, and aims to dismantle the oppressive systems that continue to disenfranchise transgender people across Malaysia.

Beyond Malaysia, the fight against legal and social discrimination of transgender people is a universal problem seen in many countries today. Some countries have outlawed conversion therapy, but many nations, including Canada and Germany, have not, leaving vulnerable groups exposed. This comparison emphasizes the importance of international advocacy/policy matching and combines transnational networks vital to securing rights for all transgender people. This study sheds light on the resilience and adaptability of transgender rights organizations operating in repressive contexts and analyzes SEED Foundation's advocacy strategies across a Transnational Advocacy Network (TAN). This study has far-reaching implications beyond Malaysia; it reminds us that pressure groups have tools to influence and to overturn oppressive structure. These findings support the crucial local transformation among community-led organizations, but at the same time showcase how international solidarity can broaden the action to overcome related stigma and systematic discrimination and human rights violations transgender people face around the world.

2 Literature Review

2.1 Literature Review of Transnational advocacy networks in LGBT issue

Aylward illuminated on the development of an inclusive global approach to LGBT issues. As globalization accelerated the movement of people and data across borders, activists responded to human rights violations with transnational campaigns. Likewise, NGOs prioritizing equality emerged. Central focuses for LGBT advocacy groups involve sexual and reproductive health, HIV/AIDS prevention and treatment, and guaranteeing the dignity of all people regardless of orientation. To progress human rights at the UN, organizers network strategically. While specific tactics remain unstated, Aylward stressed the value of securing consultative status with ECOSOC to directly engage diplomats. This access facilitates disseminating stories of LGBT lives through UN events, expanding compassion. By joining strategists in supportive nations, movements strengthen international solidarity in defending equality worldwide [9].

A study exploring transnational advocacy networks and the legalization of LGBT rights in Thailand was meticulously researched by Tyas. Non-state entities form Transnational Advocacy Networks with the singular aim of achieving clearly defined goals. In her article, Tyas delved profoundly into the movement within Thailand, scrutinizing the initiatives of these networks advocating for the equalization of LGBT rights, a topic

rarely examined to this extent. Drawing on the theory of transnational advocacy networks and employing the boomerang pattern approach, Tyas pinpoints assorted network campaigns that pressed resolutely for equity for LGBT individuals and compelled the Thai government to codify LGBT rights through the Gender Equity Act of 2015 [10]. While Tyas's work shares a related motif with the author's, focusing on LGBT movements utilizing the model of transnational advocacy networks, Tyas specifically addresses the legalization of LGBT rights within Thailand. Conversely, the present article centers on LGBT rights within Malaysia.

The study on Transnational Advocacy Networks and conversion therapy is discussed thoroughly by Dewi et al in their insightful writing. They delved deeply into ILGA Asia and its pioneering work banning the inhumane practice of conversion therapy across Asia. As the first LGBTQ-focused NGO, ILGA has opposed such pseudo-scientific and unethical attempts to change people's sexual orientation or gender identities for decades. ILGA Asia in particular has built an impressive transnational network collaborating with diverse stakeholders including advocacy groups, affected communities, supportive media outlets, and dedicated NGOs in countries like India, Indonesia, Bangladesh, and Sri Lanka to end this mistreatment. Their multi-faceted digital campaign, ably led by ILGA Asia in collaboration with allies from across the globe, harnesses the full potential of newly-emerging forms of communicative tools [11]. In particular, three online strategies were key: massive social sharing of educational interviews with survivors across the four countries; energetic advocacy across social media to raise awareness; and a cross-continent, cross-border online petition – launched in tandem with All Out – that turned the tide towards policy change. In sum, these impressive digital activist forays by ILGA Asia and its transnational allies emphasized two critical innovations—using web-based outreach to create knowledge of the human costs and then giving rise to synchronized virtual mobilization by tools of advocacy, like the petition. In the Fight for LGBTQ rights, technology propelled the search for justice into even the farthest reaches.

2.2 Theoretical Framework

At the moment the existence of non-governmental organization (NGOs) has become an indispensable part of contemporary international politics [12]. Characterization of NGOs as ideal types suited to partner with states to solve problems affecting specific segments of the population led to their explosion as global actors filling governance vacuums for issues shunned by governments and business actors [13]. The transnational nature of NGOs can help to meet needs that are otherwise neglected [14].

As Schoener envisioned, NGOs are independent, non-profit organizations with open, voluntary membership representing diverse society within which activities focus community interests addressing social needs [15]. Martens, in contrast, constructed, through his definitions, NGOs as formal and professional communities that independently pursue common domestic and global ends through membership. In the following paper, we define NGOs as individual non-profit organizations independent from the government and operating based on the shared goals and interests with unrestricted voluntary membership within and between countries [16].

One function that NGOs perform is activism, highlighting their watchdog, challenger roles vis-a-vis authority. This function can be performed by NGOs that are braiding transnational advocacy networks (TANs) on the same or similar issues across the globe [17]. As prime agendas voice and activism strategy, they are solely dependent on network size to gain traction: the larger the network, the higher the chance a TANs message and vision are able to spread and be heard (Tocci 2005).

Activism exposes NGO vs authority roles, but sustainable development has been taking over the entire NGO scene worldwide. While watchdog activism addressed governance failures of the past, development efforts now redress related ills. Global NGO networks operated sustainable development programs that target problems that cannot be solved through the actions of one state or business: ending poverty, addressing health. Data really shows that network scale matters as such initiatives enhance and advance society across the globe order by order.

Borders have no place in transnational coalitions working for change across borders based on shared values. It brings together different actors under such networks, ranging from grassroots organizers to religious figures and even international bodies. Human rights, gender justice, democratic governance, environmentalism and development are just some of the innumerable important causes that channel their efforts. At the end of the line it's the advocacy that drives these state policies or for that matter transnational decisions. They frame the issues to be of significance in the public consciousness so as to affect the public mind and create pressures.

Cross-network alliances operate on the strength of information circulating within systems. Inevitably, distributed groups rapidly convene and disseminate fact in service of interpretation and agenda. Keck and Sikkink explained that well, information, accountability, symbolism and leverage are particular drivers of their objectives. Sharing information helps to engage supporters both quickly and credibly. Members offer testimonies from people impacted. How many times they greeted each other across all different spaces and channels, and the volume of curated resources exchanged — those above all financed research. Furthermore, media spread these messages even further. Information flows within these alliances are enhanced by modern communications. The symbolism politics is more complex and relates to framing issues in captivating stories. On big platforms, these action-provoking expressions attempt to increase awareness to target groups, and help to make an impact. This level of visibility could stir up concerns [17], swelling supporting networks. Also, leverage means that you have strategic partnerships that sprinkle more pressure, as the mentioned research indicates is crucial. This happens either in a material way, entwining matters with resources, or in a moral one, generating shame. Accountability is also a theme, with targets go against their own values. Lack of adherence will primarily be demonstrated here.

Within this paper, analysing SEED's activism and advocacy regarding transgender rights and abolishing conversion therapy in Malaysia will utilize the concepts of NGOs plus Transnational Advocacy Networks theory.

3 Methodology

This research aims to provide a clearer picture of the challenges faced by the transgender community in Malaysia and how SEED Foundation's to advocate for transgender rights and abolish the practice of conversion therapy in Malaysia. A descriptive qualitative method was used to examine SEED Foundation's strategies. The qualitative research process focuses on developing an in-depth understanding through descriptive analysis of observed behaviors and collected words [18]. Qualitative research consists of 7 research steps, starting with the identification of the problem in this paper, which is the LGBT community in Malaysia facing government-supported conversion therapy practices. The second stage is the research focus, which in this paper is on the LGBT community in Malaysia. The third stage is that the author establishes the research focus on SEED Foundation's advocacy strategies in addressing the issues faced by the LGBT community in Malaysia. The fourth stage is data collection through secondary data sources, such as journals about LGBT movements, reports from APTN and SEED. The collected data is classified according to SEED Foundation's activism activities. Using the concepts of NGOs and the theory of Transnational Advocacy Networks, the author analyzes the activism function and advocacy strategy employed by SEED Foundation on issues of transgender rights and the abolition of conversion therapy practices in Malaysia. The analysis results are outlined in this paper.

4 Result and Discussion

4.1 Overview Transgender Issues and Conversion Therapy in Malaysia

Issues of gender identity and expression have emerged globally in recent decades as worthy topics of socio-cultural discussion and political debate. Transgender individuals, as part of the broader LGBT community, describe themselves as feeling differently about their assigned sex than societal expectations [19]. However, transgender identity does not define orientations of attraction. While some transgender people undergo medical procedures, others find affirmation through style and demeanor alone. For many, the desire to transition arises from deeply personal views about self and spirituality instead of only altering physical traits [20].

There are radically different attitudes towards the lives of trans people. For others, gender diversity appears to be a challenge to the accepted social order, but for yet others this diversity represents freedom of personal identity. Religious doctrines providing insights into human nature may direct a given culture towards more or less gender self-determination. Transgender rights and representation in an equitable society are thereby supported by international agreements promoting free expression, such as the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

The absence of lengthiness in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights concerning gender identity and sexual orientation means these issues inevitably leave some asking whether they are protected by this international agreement. Although the omission grants some rhetorical edge on behalf of trans advocacy, it has also opened up a

wrangle over the degree to which such persons are actually protected under the terms of the Declaration [21]. It described marriage as a legal outlet for expressing one's nature but did not indicate whether partners needed to meet the definitions of two different biological sexes. But this careless vagueness breeds discord over and over again at home and abroad, about what rights transgender people have to their attraction. However, the Declaration fails to provide a concrete circumscription definition for terms like "sexual orientation," leaving transgender people and others openly able to stake their claims on rights where the letter of the law is mute.

Transgender people, as an expression of self-definition against received gender roles, have gained wide acceptance—at least in Western countries—largely through earnest and humane advocacy for fundamental rights and dignities. Many nations advocate for LGBT equality, putting the quest to dignify all men and women in the world and recognized universally. In other words, transgender rights are human rights — no less than any other rights [21]. The growing recognition has translated into calls for transgender rights. Transgender rights are the rights and legal protections afforded to transgender individuals, and in broader synopsis, to the transgender community as a whole [22]. Every person has a right to document their authentic gender identity, free from undue burden or humiliation such as costly processes to change identifiers on records like birth certificates [23].

However, in certain regions around the world, this right continues being contravened [23]. In Malaysia, various expressions of gender transition have long been present in society despite conflicting with local spiritual beliefs. The transgender population there, locally termed *Mak Nyah* (transgender women or male-to-female individuals) and *Pak Nyah* (transgender men or female-to-male individuals), remains mostly marginalized by Malaysians. Transgender activists estimate 20,000 to 30,000 transgender women, also known as *Mak Nyah*, reside in Malaysia. Public information about transgender men remains limited, though the online community *Transmen of Malaysia* has over 170 registered participants [24].

As a predominantly Muslim nation, Malaysia commonly embraces conservative stances on concerns pertaining to sex and sexuality. A major obstacle faced by the transgender community in Malaysia is their exclusion from determinations impacting their wellbeing, livelihood, and lawful standing. Currently, numerous regulations criminalize LGBT individuals dependent on their sexual preference, gender persona, and gender presentation, resulting in many prosecutions under federal and regional statutes. Malaysia as a Muslim-majority land possesses dual justice systems to enforce both secular and non secular lawful codes. Under Federal Laws there are Penal Code 377 (criminalizes agreeable carnal relations between grownups) and other statutes that influence LGBT individuals. Under State Syariah laws there are *Liwat* (criminalizes sexual relations between males), *Musahaqah* (criminalizes sexual relations between females), male person posing as a woman and female person posing as a man. LGBT individuals also come across other lawful barriers like state-level fatwas that announce transgender individuals as haram, prohibit changes to lawful records and acknowledgment, prohibits gender affirmation medical procedures and forbid participation in LGBT-related bodies [25]. These laws and fatwas generally have far-reaching impacts, such as violations of rights to dignity, privacy, freedom of expression, self-determination, and public

participation, as well as restrictions on access to healthcare services. These laws generate a chilling effect on LGBT individuals and reinforce negative perceptions of them, leading to the marginalization of LGBT individuals.

Transgender Malaysians encounter extensive and systemic stigma and violations of their basic rights. Muslim transgender individuals specifically face apprehension, harassment, and assault by federal, state, and local Islamic religious authorities. Often, they avoid reporting such incidents due to fears that the police will fail to provide protection [26]. Additionally, due to the lack of clear separation between religion and government, the impact of state-enacted Islamic law extends beyond Muslim transgender people to non-Muslim transgender individuals as well. Consequently, all transgender Malaysians, irrespective of faith, are prevented from accessing gender affirming medical care or obtaining legal gender recognition [27]. Transgender people in Malaysia confront criminal prosecution under legislation that practically outlaws "cross-dressing" and permits discrimination in employment, healthcare, and education access [26].

Various forms of conversion therapy are implemented against LGBT individuals in Malaysia. Conversion therapy refers to any continuous effort aimed at "modifying a person's sexual orientation, gender identity, or gender expression" [28]. According to the International Rehabilitation Council for Torture Victims, conversion therapy can incorporate talk therapy, ritual or spiritual cleansing, behavioral conditioning like being requested to dress or walk a certain way, and/or physical abuse or other so-called "corrective" violence [29]. In practice, this involves trying to avert or suppress someone from being gay or identifying with a gender other than the one assigned at birth. It may involve counseling and prayer, but more extreme tactics could include exorcism, physical harm, and food deprivation. All these forms of conversion therapy are prevalent in Malaysia. Conversion therapy in Malaysia is perpetrated by parents, school systems, religious institutions, and the government, which disguise conversion therapy as religious education programs (such as the Mukhayyam program) or programs for hijrah diri (self-pilgrimage).

Parents within Malaysia frequently impose conversion therapy upon their children through distressing means. Tactics employed consist of punitive physical chastisement and behavioral conditioning such as coercing individuals to don garments typically interconnected with their birth-designated category. The Mukhayyam system and caretakers compelled transgender women into stringent bodily endeavors and competitive sports, advocating these would aid them evolve into more conventionally masculine figures, as cited [30].

As per APTN's report, Conversion therapy practices in Malaysia are facilitated by a climate of criminalization like Sharia statutes criminalising 'cross-dressing' and same sex intimate conduct and edicts criminalising sex work, pervasive cultural conservatism, transphobic mass media reporting, transphobic public statements by political and spiritual leaders, formal federal documents, state funded conversion therapy and lack of condemnation by medical professional associations, as mentioned [30].

Government documents present conversion therapy favorably and suggest promoting it. In recent years, the Ministry of Health issued guidance advising teenagers experiencing "gender issues" to undergo exams like genital inspections and tests of the pituitary gland. It proposed discussions with counselors, mental health professionals, or

religious leaders could help. Furthermore, a 2003 Ministry of Education circular to directors maintained corporal punishment for LGBT students is part of education, recommending caning methods varying by offense severity [31]. To our knowledge, this directive stands unrevised [32]. Also, a 2013 manual from the religious authority Department for Islamic Development outlined procedures for a government-funded conversion program, declaring gender affirmation surgery religiously forbidden according to a national ruling [33].

Professional bodies like the British Psychological Society and NHS England have condemned all conversion therapy as "unethical and potentially harmful," fueling movements in countries to ban the practice. This includes Malaysia, where state-sponsored conversion programs exist and highlight the need to protect citizens [34].

4.2 SEED Foundation's Activism in Malaysia

The development of transgender rights in Malaysia is intrinsically connected to the progress of lesbian, gay, and bisexual communities, evidenced by parallel emergence of organizations advocating for these groups. Extensive media coverage and cross-border cooperation among LGBT advocates have propelled acceptance. Success spreading awareness of LGBT issues stems from a history of determined activism and movement-building.

Nisha Ayub founded the SEED Foundation as a vocal opponent of Malaysia's discriminatory policies impacting transgender individuals. Taking a leading role, Nisha established two non-profits—SEED and Justice for Sisters—to advocate for and represent transgender rights. Her courageous activism earned global accolades, including the 2015 Alison Des Forges Award from Human Rights Watch and designation as the first openly transgender woman honored with the 2016 International Women of Courage Award. Additionally, the 2019 BBC 100 Women list solely featured Nisha from Malaysia [35].

As a community-led organization for key populations such as the homeless, people living with or affected by HIV, and the transgender community, SEED Foundation responds to needs; SEED has a mission of helping vulnerable groups with comprehensive programs and initiatives that foster coherence, sustainability and collaboration between the humanitarian and the development world. Their values resonate with those of the United Nations "17 Sustainable Development Goals"(SDG), and their tagline "Nobody Gets Left Behind" clarifies their intention to cater for everyone in the community.

SEED also runs a Klang valley drop-in center where essential services such as a meal, bath, and a safe space to rest are provided. In addition, SEED has opened a residence for homeless transgender people over 40, covering all basic needs, enabling them to work and re-establish themselves. The organization, for those above 55 and fit not for classic work, insist on people creating jobs out of the residence. SEED activities are also nonnegligible in the form of education programs and outreach initiatives. They do these programs to spread awareness of gender identity and equality hoping that it will lead to some long lasting change in the society and the policies. In 2022, SEED got

back to its groove and together with their projects, organized around 25 sessions (trainings, workshops, meetups, etc.) with around 734 participants. In addition, the organisation formally rolled launch its own center on 24 June 2022 with senior officials and ambassadors from various nations, and representatives of international organisations present at the event. The relaunch also symbolised SEED work as well as future networking opportunities for collaborations and support.

Despite asserting itself as a Civil Society Organization, SEED Foundation frequently refers to itself as a non-governmental organization on many occasions. An NGO, as Wendy [13] defines it, is an autonomous group without profits where membership is open and voluntary for society; activities address needs collectively identified by members in response to societal demands. Alternatively, Martens [14] characterizes NGOs as formal, skilled communities whose main objective is promoting shared goals and interests locally and globally. Based on these definitions, the author considers an NGO in this paper to be a non-profit organization operating independently according to common goals and interests with open, voluntary membership domestically and abroad. While CSO and NGO are often used interchangeably according to the UN website. As such, given general descriptions of an NGO, SEED Foundation Malaysia could be classified as one as seen on their site and registered with wiki impact [36].

SEED Foundation champions transgender rights. These struggles have exacerbated discrimination, poverty, and restricted access to healthcare and social services. Thus, addressing these issues and boosting welfare and protections for the transgender community have become pressing priorities. SEED Foundation organized strategic workshops bringing together stakeholders, experts, and transgender community members to identify key challenges faced in Malaysia. SEED Foundation organized regular meetings with local, regional, and international organizations concerned with the issues and needs of the transgender community in Malaysia. These activities aim to raise awareness on issues related to transgender persons in Malaysia. Many of these meetings explored opportunities for collaboration with various stakeholders to enhance and support advocacy efforts for the community.

The report was produced from the results of the workshops and is called: *Breaking Barriers, Building Bridges: SEED's Strategic Report 2023-2028 for Inclusion and Empowerment* [37]. This report can support advocacy to the government. SEED Foundation advocates with stakeholders, donors, and policymakers in Malaysia to improve and increase policies and programs for transgender persons. SEED Foundation also urged that resources and capacity-building must be sustained so that this sector is not ignored in the national development of the country.

SEED Foundation is involved in many activism-related activities — from conducting research and publishing reports. These research findings are subsequently published and shared, and several activist works are done – for example, the presentation on the plight of trans persons in Malaysia and the mapping of services for trans people in Malaysia that were presented during the APTN SEA Sub Regional Convening. Another example is the research publications which were also presented by SEED Foundation at the 2022 Judicial Colloquium held by NHRI and UNDP. For over 20 years Seed Foundation has partnered with dedicated researcher to expose sobering realities on ur-

gent matters facing Black women and girls. Working on the study, that estimated barriers against the vulnerable, through its collaboration with Asia Pacific Transgender Network in studying conversion practices in Malaysia, also helped in building awareness. Based on Kaldor framework as watchdogs SEED Foundation ensure that leaders are held accountable. They amplify experiences frequently marginalized through partnership with both local and global constituencies. Together we advocate; together we empower everyone to live freely without the fear of being rejected because of identity. Stakeholders intent on being heard — a multitude singing the same tune to achieve a united mission, a harmony that cannot be easily suppressed, a pitch demanding justice and respect for human dignity.

4.3 SEED Foundation's Transnational Advocacy Networks

While promoting the elimination of conversion therapies in Malaysia, SEED Foundation utilized Tan's four tactics: information politics, accountability politics, symbolic politics, and leverage politics. However, SEED Foundation primarily focused on information politics and leverage politics, showcasing its strategic methods in navigating advocacy challenges within the country's context.

Information politics refers to Tan's ability to quickly aggregate and analyze credible data which can then be leveraged politically to garner support and increase understanding among the public. Data accumulated through this approach typically originates from network members themselves. Moreover, it regularly includes testimonies or realities from people impacted by certain issues. Within this context, information exchange between members is crucial. Furthermore, as Keck and Sikkink [17] stated, the media becomes an integral partner for Tan, allowing the flow of information to be maximized and shared with a broader audience. Not only that, utilizing information and communication technology also played an important role in facilitating easier access to Tan's information flow.

Here, idea SEED Foundation had done so through coordinating with Asia Pacific Transgender Network (APTAN). Without this collaboration, it would have been much more difficult to compile and make available accounts of victims of conversion therapy. Much of these testimonies were gathered by SEED Foundations, who then used this as evidence to illustrate the gravity of the issue at hand, and to help generate supporters for their cause [30].

Another instance of SEED Foundation reinforcing information politics through collaboration with APTAN to host a trans healthcare and anti-conversion therapy practices workshop [38]. This workshop lasted three days and is a broader strategy to educate healthcare professionals on accommodating transgender individuals, facilitating the transition process, and fighting against the implementation of conversion therapy in Malaysia. At the end of the workshop, participants were given theoretical information and tools that could practically prepare them to act as allies in the fight to ban conversion therapies.

It also provided an opportunity for activists, healthcare providers, and other stakeholders to share information and ideas to work collaboratively on these issues. Hosting such an event, SEED Foundation was not only able to share important information but

also to promote discourse and education, both key elements of information politics. This campaign illustrated the impact of pairing grassroots testimony with professional expertise to create an effective narrative capable of shaping public opinion and policy.

In addition to information politics, the SEED Foundation is also using a tactic from the TAN playbook; leverage politics. To use leverage politics, as Keck and Sikkink put it, involves obtaining the support of a vastly more powerful third-party actor, who then engages in advocacy against the target [17]. This approach has two flavors: (1) Material Leverage, which links an issue to measurable consequences like money or concrete resources, and (2) Moral Leverage, which usually invokes shame to whip people into doing what you want. In this vein, SEED Foundation has recruited nationwide influential but less known international NGO with solidarity base, Asia Pacific Transgender Network (APTN) to further strengthen their moral ground in their advocacy of transgender rights. SEED Foundation works with APTN to show the injustice met by transgender people, creating a moral obligation for governments, organizations and citizens to solve these problems. This is done in a number of ways, one of which is public campaign. Through wide-ranging public awareness campaigns such as the workshop collaboration [38], APTN and SEED Foundation draws attention to the discrimination and human right violations against transgender peoples. These campaigns are also intended to engage the empathy of the public and the deciders and to act as the so-called moral catalyst, and hopefully, trigger them to respond and do something about injustices. A second option is by investigation and exposé. Through the conduct and dissemination of research describing the lived experiences of transgender individuals, their exposure to discrimination and violence, APTN and SEED Foundation could offer evidence-based reports that speak directly to stakeholders but that also have the potential to shame and embarrass those who cause harm against transgender individuals—and perhaps a little shaming or embarrassment is required to create the accountability and bring about the reforms necessary to protect individuals from violence. This could be reflected in the APTN country snapshot of which SEED Foundation was the research partner for Malaysia, collecting firsthand accounts of victims and examining the types of conversion therapies practiced, whether state-sponsored or those offered by privately-owned conversion therapy clinics [30].

SEED Foundation also received support from its collaboration with Asia Pacific Transgender Network, which has also helped a lot in strengthening the advocacy of the SEED Foundation through the history of APTN as one of the prominent leaders of welfare for transgender and gender non-conforming groups in Asia and the Pacific regions. Situated in close alignment with the aims of SEED, APTN combines these possibilities by targeting movement building, advocacy, leadership development, public campaigning, and research as core aspects of its strategic focus to take on the system of discrimination and human rights violations facing transgender communities [39]. Moreover, APTN's national reach and experience in mobilizing action focusing on raising awareness complement SEED's initiatives as the two serve as more broad-based, impactful champions of the rights and health of transgender people [39]. This collaboration not only improves SEED's ability to address local issues but also connects them to a wider regional movement for transgender rights, strengthening and broadening their advocacy interventions like never before.

5 Conclusion

Various forms of conversion therapy practices being enforced upon LGBT individuals in Malaysia. Such practices perpetrated by families, educational institutions, religious groups, and the governing state itself. Facilitated further through several official documents and state-sponsored programs of conversion. SEED Foundation, a community-led organization advocating for civil rights, strives to amplify silenced voices and challenge oppressive structures marginalizing transgender people. Focusing on transgender advocacy, SEED carries out various activism activities including comprehensive research and published reports. Working with the Asia Pacific Transgender Network on an investigation into conversion therapy within Malaysia. SEED plays an activist role, emphasizing nongovernmental watchdogs holding those in power accountable. Collaborating internationally expands the reach of SEED's message on conversion therapy issues at home. Strategically applying Transnational Advocacy Network frameworks of sharing information and applying political pressure, SEED advocates ending these practices. Through information sharing, SEED partners with APTN to collect and distribute testimonials of survivors. Along with organizing healthcare workshops and facilitating dialog. Leveraging APTN's global influence, SEED mobilizes moral outrage via campaigns and research. Aiming to provoke a sense of duty and responsibility in the public and leaders. This regional partnership significantly strengthens SEED's local efforts, integrating them into a broader movement for transgender rights across Asia Pacific.

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