

Appendix 1: Letter to Ministry of Health

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RE: Queries Regarding LGBT Youth

Your Excellency,

Please accept our greetings on behalf of Human Rights Watch. As you may know, Human Rights Watch is a nongovernmental organization that investigates and reports on human rights abuses in over 90 countries. This includes research on the rights of lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) people.

We have recently carried out research in Vietnam regarding barriers to the right to education for LGBT youth. Our report identifies the challenges faced by LGBT youth in accessing accurate information and being accepted at school without being bullied or discriminated against. Some of the key findings of our research are:

- LGBT youth in Vietnam feel isolated in school, especially when they experience bullying or harassment from peers. This is partly because teachers do not receive standardized training regarding sexual orientation, gender identity, and human rights, and therefore are not uniformly equipped to respond to cases that students report to them.

- The notion that homosexuality is a “mental illness” remains pervasive in Vietnamese schools, and is sometimes perpetuated by teachers and students who are ill-informed.
- Schools do not provide accurate information about LGBT youth. Students often turn to unreliable and misleading sources for information because the curriculum does not include accurate and affirmative information about sexual orientation and gender identity.

We would like the ministry’s position and work on this issue to be reflected in our upcoming report. So that we may do that, we request your response to the following questions and any other information that you can provide:

1. What steps has the ministry taken to support sexual and gender minority communities in its programs?
2. Homosexuality was removed from the World Health Organization’s (WHO) International Classification of Diseases in 1990 and Vietnam removed it from national guidelines in 2001. How has the ministry communicated to the public that homosexuality is not a diagnosable “mental illness”?
3. How does the ministry ensure that accurate information about sexual orientation and gender identity is available to the public?

Thank you for your time and consideration of our questions. We plan to publish our report later this year, and therefore request your response to these queries by November 15, 2019, so that we may accurately reflect the government’s position in our publication.

Sincerely,

Graeme Reid
Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender (LGBT) Rights Director
Human Rights Watch

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