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Editorial

By PAI Communications and Membership Officer, Germaine de Larch

March ended with LGBT Health Awareness week, which is the theme for this newsletter. Access to healthcare is severely impacted by discrimination against LGBTI people by healthcare professionals and laws dictating healthcare, and the gaps in healthcare for LGBTI people fundamentally impact their ability to live in and cope with a cisheteronormative society. The situation is exacerbated by the fact that because of this discrimination, many LGBTI people avoid or delay seeking healthcare, and when they do, they often receive inferior care.

Cisheterosexism as a barrier to competent healthcare for LGBTI people: With cisgender and heterosexual medical conceptions of the body, cisheterosexism determines the funding of research, demographic results of surveys (for e.g., questions about sexual orientation and gender identity are not asked, and when asked to fill in titles, gender-diverse options are not available, which excludes transgender and intersex persons). In comparison to gay men, lesbians are doubly disadvantaged due to their status as women and homosexual. This limitation in medical research negatively impacts the health care of LGBTI people as doctors generally have little to no knowledge about treating this community.

Transgender people face added barriers to healthcare due to a lack of knowledge and medical attitudes that pathologise transgender people. According to the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual V (DSM-V), which categorises mental health disorders, transgender is included as a disorder. Trans people are often denied trans-specific healthcare (hormones and surgery) on the basis of this diagnosis.

Intersex people are especially subject to ignorant healthcare practices, often undergoing non-consensual, barbaric surgeries shortly after birth, and treated with hormones without being aware of their impact and without consultation about their gender identity.

Impact on mental health: The disparity between general healthcare and health care for LGBTI persons, the societal and medical discrimination they face, and the lack of health care that is LGBTI competent results in this population being more affected by mental health issues. Depression, anxiety and suicidal ideation are 2-3 times higher than the general population. Eating disorders, self-harm, substance abuse and obesity are also more prevalent.

Impact on physical health: While the general healthcare concerns of the LGBTI population in comparison to the general population are the same, LGBTI people experience poorer health. Lesbian, trans and intersex women face higher rates of breast cancer, obesity, and gay men are more susceptible to HIV, Hepatitis and the Human Papilloma Virus, which causes anal and genital warts which increase the risk of anal cancer.

LGBTI health is thus a central concern for the community and human rights activists in the LGBTI sector, not only because of the associated health risks, but due to the impact this has on the community's quality of life and ability to deal with the discrimination and human rights abuses they face. Pan Africa ILGA will continue to fight for the right to health and the health needs of LGBTI people in Africa

LGBTI Health in Africa

Huge win in Kenyan case against forced anal examinations

Kenyan activists achieved a historic win for LGBTI rights when forced anal examinations were declared unlawful by the Kenyan Court of Appeals.

Forced anal examinations have been banned in Tunisia, while places like Egypt and Tanzania still use these examinations to confirm suspected same-sex activity. In October 2017, the General Assembly of the World Medical Association (WMA) condemned these examinations and adopted a [resolution](#) to end forced anal examinations.

An excerpt from the press release by the NGLHRC in Kenya: “In a significant win for human rights in Kenya, the Court of Appeals has ruled that the use of forced anal examinations by the state is unlawful.

On Thursday 22nd March 2018, a five judge bench handed down a ruling in a case appealing the state’s cruel and degrading treatment of two Kenyan men while under arrest in 2015. The men were arrested in Kwale country, on suspicion that they were gay. They were subjected to forced anal examinations and HIV testing under a magistrate’s order to determine if they had engaged in consensual sexual acts in private. The violating examinations, which include being made to lie with legs up in a humiliating position and having instruments forced into your rectum, are widely accepted to have no medical merit.”

[Read more.](#)

[Court of appeal ruling.](#)

[History of the case.](#)

Universal health coverage impossible without changes to the legal systems

While Kenya’s win against forced anal examinations is cause for celebration, there are still laws in Kenya and across Africa that impede LGBTI persons from accessing quality healthcare.

Patients have had their private details forwarded to the police when they share information about their sexual orientation or gender identity, creating fear among members of the community and an unwillingness to seek healthcare. The highest medical risk in the community is the delay in or avoidance of routine medical examinations.

[Read more.](#)

Healthcare for MSM, female sex workers and drug users

A recent study was published in the Southern African Journal of HIV Medicine based on research into the healthcare experiences of key populations in Bloemfontein and Mafikeng, interviewing healthcare workers about their perceptions about and attitudes towards men who have sex with men, female sex workers and people who use drugs.

[Read more.](#)

Morocco: Establishment of a transgender group

The establishment of a youth group who identify as transgender, transsexual and gender non-conforming was announced in Rabat. The group seeks Moroccan youth, who identify as a “a group of transgender, transsexual, and gender non-conforming individuals”, announced the establishment of their own body in a meeting held in Rabat. The aim of the group is to begin a conversation in Moroccan society about transgender people and their rights.

[Read more.](#)

Tunisia: Oscar-nominated film banned

The oscar-nominated film, Call me by your name, a love story between two men, has been banned in Tunisia. According to the distributor, the cancellation of the screening of the film is “an infringement of liberties” undoubtedly based on the content of the film.

[Read more.](#)

South Africa: Cabinet approves historic Hate Crimes Bill

The Department of Justice announced the approval of the Hate Crimes Bill on Wednesday the 14th of March. The Prevention and Combating of Hate Crimes and Hate Speech Bill will criminalise hate crimes and hate speech. This is a victory for LGBTI activists after decades of campaigning.

[Read more.](#)

Botswana: Case to review sodomy law

A case has been scheduled before the High Court to review Section 164 (a) and (c) and Section 165, which criminalise sodomy, to be declared unconstitutional. PAI's member organisation in Botswana, Lesbians, Gays and Bisexuals of Botswana (LEGABIBO) have been declared a friend of the court and will be represented in this case alongside the applicant.

[Read more.](#)



NEWS SNIPPETS

- [Egypt and Sudan](#): A report by Bedayaa Organisation - Violence Based on Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity toward LGBTIQ+ Persons in Egypt.
- [Tunisia](#): Sign the petition to repeal the anti-gay law.
- [Egypt](#): Omar Sharif Jr on brutal crackdown against LGBTI people.

PAI News

Statements:

- [Statement on International Women's Day](#)
- [Human Rights Day, South Africa](#)
- [Transgender Day of Visibility](#)

PAI 4th Regional LGBTI Conference

We have received a record-breaking 700+ number of applications to attend Pan Africa ILGA's 4th LGBTI Regional Conference to be held in Gaborone, Botswana, hosted by LEGABIBO. We are in the process of finalising participants and will be sending out emails regarding the status of applications during the course of this month.

We're looking forward to hosting applicants from 37 African nations and 11 international countries in what we hope to be our most successful conference yet.



Become a Member



Pan Africa ILGA is the largest membership based and democratically organised LGBTI federation in Africa. PAI currently consists of 125 African organisations and 40 international organisations working on human rights and equality for LGBTI people.

How to become a member:

Please be aware that only organisations (not individuals) can apply for membership. At its next meeting the Executive Board of ILGA will review your membership and you will receive communication as to the status of your application.

To apply, click [here](#). The membership fee is €60 for two years.

KEEP IN TOUCH



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