



PAI 5TH REGIONAL CONFERENCE

Reclaiming Our Past – Defining Our Future

Conference Report

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Compilation and Writing: Anthony Oluoch and Bobby Rodwell

Logo Design: Meta Creations, Fhumulani Msandiwa

Design: The Design Carpenter, Nsingwire Stuart

Print: Global Print, Andrew Mayer

Pan Africa ILGA (PAI)

21 Village Road

Selby

Johannesburg

South Africa

Contact PAI at

admin@panafricailga.com

+27 11 339 1139

[@panafricailga](#)

<https://www.facebook.com/PanAfricalLGA>

<https://linkedin.com/company/pan-africa-ilga/about/>

<https://panafricailga.org/>



RECLAIMING OUR PAST
DEFINING OUR FUTURE
THE PAI 5TH REGIONAL CONFERENCE

27th - 31st August 2021

Who Is PAI?

Pan Africa ILGA (International Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans, and Intersex Association), also known as PAI, is a network of organisations in Africa working to improve human rights of individuals on all grounds, including sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression and sex characteristics. The unique strength of PAI is that it is connected to a global federation of 1,679 organisations from 164 countries and territories across the globe.



Vision

An Africa that promotes and respects the integrity, rights, and autonomy of all her people regardless of culture, faith, sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression or sex characteristics.

Mission

To challenge and change mindsets of communities in Africa on SOGIESC (sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression and sex characteristics) and related work through unifying and strengthening LGBTIQ+ organisations.

Membership

Pan Africa ILGA has 266 members based in the following countries:

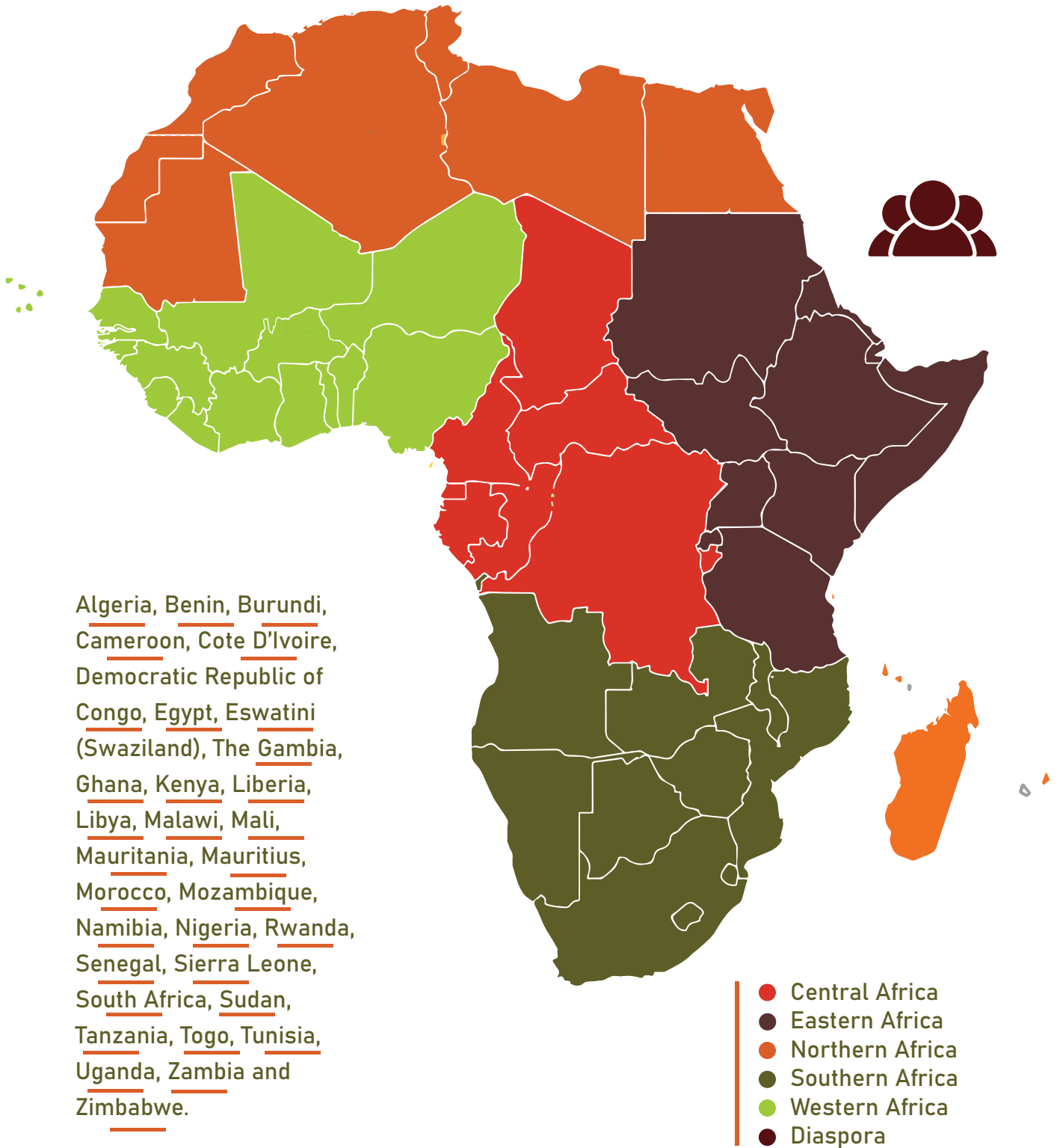


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Introduction

Pan Africa ILGA holds biennial regional conferences which aim to:

- Engage on common regional strategies to achieve change in policies that discriminate against people based on their sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression and sex characteristics.
- Develop strategies to build the capacity of LGBTIQ+ youth across the continent, through capacity building workshops.
- Create a forum to exchange ideas on best practices, while sharing successes and opportunities.
- Share ideas for effective advocacy on the African continent.
- Receive advocacy training in relation to relevant regional and international bodies, including the ACHPR (African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights) and the UN (United Nations); and
- Confirm the mandate of the PAI Board in taking forward LGBTIQ+ rights on the continent.

Over the years, The Pan Africa ILGA Regional Conferences have become spaces where activists from various regions meet to share experiences and learn from each other. These spaces are important because they enable the activists in the five regions of the African continent to gather and share in their triumphs, the lessons they have learnt from their work, and help each other improve the lives of the individuals they work for. The spaces provide a forum for

individuals to meet and network with others in the same field.

Due to the Covid-19 outbreak in December 2019, Pan Africa ILGA was forced to postpone the 5th regional conference originally intended to be held in Accra, Ghana in 2020. Due to the uncertainty around the spread of the virus and the closing of borders, Pan Africa ILGA was not able to hold the conference as planned.

Pan Africa ILGA is committed, not only to ensuring that the lives and dignity of everyone including persons of different sexual orientation, gender identity and expression are protected, but also to keeping our safe spaces alive. We are committed to ensuring that activists on the continent can use this time to tackle some of the unique challenges they face in the ever-changing world we live in. We are committed to continuing to provide platforms for LGBTIQ+ individuals to highlight the work they do and improve their lived realities even while a pandemic has drastically shifted the world's concerns.

We recognise that while the world grapples with the impact of the virus, our communities, which have in normal times faced stigma, discrimination, and various kinds of hardships in their various contexts, are facing a tougher time in dealing with quarantines, lockdowns and government enforced curfews.

Safeguarding the health of our community is our utmost concern. Considering the current pandemic and the technology we have in place today, the 5th Pan Africa ILGA Regional Conference was held virtually. It was the first virtual edition of the Pan Africa ILGA Regional Conference. The conference was hosted at Constitution Hill in Johannesburg, South Africa from 27 August to 31 August 2021. The choice of venue is incredibly significant as the South African Constitution was



the first in the world to prohibit 'all unfair discrimination based on sex, gender, or sexual orientation.'

The theme this year was *Reclaiming our Past: Defining our Future*. To do that, we need to look at where we are. And look at aspects of our past that define us and reclaim them, and consider the future we hope for and define it. With this in mind, we sought to create a truly Pan African programme that not only focused on African issues but was presented by African activists.

We partnered with different organisations and individuals to curate a host of pre-conferences including an intersex pre-conference, an interfaith pre-conference, and a conference on key populations, among others. For the first time in our convening history, we had a pre-conference that focused entirely on migrant issues.

The main conference had a series of plenary conversations tackling the effects of the pandemic on our communities, breaking the silence on mental health, decriminalisation within and beyond the law, religion, and our sexualities, and embracing social justice by considering the intersectionality of our struggles.

We had a uniquely African donor conversation, looking at funding for our communities on the continent, and how best we can ensure that our goals are met, to ensure that the future we define is achieved. The Workshops

- a great tradition of the Pan Africa ILGA conferences, took the form of satellite sessions, selected from abstracts submitted to the conference.

A total of 18 satellite sessions spread across the three days covering a wide range of topics, including: *On Taking an Intersectional Approach in our Activism; Touch: An African Anthology on Sex and Sensuality - The Politics of Queer Pleasure; Funding for Social Justice Movements; The SDGs and LGBTIQ+ Inclusion; and Queering Sex Education.*

The PAI 5th General Assembly was held on the final day of the conference, 31 August 2021, as per the Constitution and Standing Orders of the organisation.

The PAI 5th Regional Conference was the largest LGBTIQ+ conference ever to be held on the African continent, with a registration of 1007 delegates, and an attendance rate of between 850 and 890 people per day cutting across sessions. Designed as a Pan African dialogue there were 99 speakers from the continent, across the plenaries and satellite sessions.

This conference report attempts to cover the content and debate that took place at this conference, and capture the key issues raised through the Plenary and Satellite sessions, which can enhance and enrich debate for the sector going forward. All the conference sessions can be found in full, on our PAI Vimeo Page.

Acknowledgements

The PAI Board

Nnedinma Juliet Ulanmo: Co-Chairperson

Sheba Akpokli: Co-Chairperson

Jennifer Henshaw: Alternate Chairperson

Sandra Kwikiriza: Treasurer

Barbra Wangare: Secretary

Frida Wahrania: Member

Peter Njane: Member

McLean Kabwe: Member

The PAI Secretariat

Executive Director Nate Brown,
PAI Staff and Volunteers

The Conference Co-ordinating Team

Bobby Rodwell, Co-ordinator and Anthony Oluoch, Programme Director

The Technical Team

H. Lee Productions

Our Donors

The PAI 5th Regional Conference could not have been such a resounding success without the unwavering support of the donors.



Opening Session

Nate Brown, Pan Africa ILGA's Executive Director opened the PAI 5th Regional Conference. Nate noted that Pan Africa ILGA is a network that is connected to a global movement of more than 1600 groups and individuals. PAI is the Africa chapter of ILGA.

Pan Africa ILGA's main aim is to improve human rights for all, including marginalised people. This conference will address marginalisation of the LGBTIQ+ community who are, in most parts of the continent, not protected by the laws. Stigma and discrimination are so extreme in some countries that the LGBTIQ+ community is blamed for the spread of HIV and AIDS. A central message for the conference is that the community exists, and the community will reclaim our past and define our future.

Nate thanked the PAI Board, the staff, conference team, volunteers, donors and all other stakeholders, who contributed to the conception and delivery of the virtual conference.

“**The network needs to be empowered to support future activities.**”

Juliet Ulanmo, Pan Africa ILGA's Board Co-chair welcomed all delegates, speakers and panelists and declared the conference officially open. Juliet noted that all PAI members are committed to the achievement of goals set out in our strategy and that the conference was a space where they could meet and interact with each another to achieve powerful collective actions.

The past three years have been difficult for all those who identify differently. Many are without work and this virtual conference arose out of the need to bring members and communities together. All regions in Africa were represented.

The increase of repression in Ghana in 2020 and 2021 was highlighted and voices from Ghana were heard via an audio/visual presentation. Ghana appears to be a liberal environment for the LGBTIQ+ community, but societal backlash and a proposed criminalising bill threatens this status.

Victor Madrigal-Borloz, the United Nations Independent Expert on Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity expressed his disappointment at not being present with us as he has been in the past. However he stated that it is fundamentally important for the energy to continue to be challenged towards common objectives.

“**We have learnt from your competence, we have learnt from the way you can formulate strategic thinking and we take example in the manner in which you further these strategies, these principles and exercise that courage in an everyday basis.**”

Pre-Conferences

The following Pre-Conferences were held on Friday 27th August 2021 of the PAI 5th Regional Conference. The Pre-Cons were organised by various partner organisation and took place at various times of the day. Full reports can be obtained from the relevant organisations, through the Pan Africa ILGA office.

1. Trans Pre-Conference

Organised by the African Trans Network (ATN), a network of regional trans organisations across the continent, created a space to bring members together and make decisions and plans for governance of the network. ATN aimed to move the network to the next phase of growth.

2. LBQ Pre-Conference

A collective of LBQ women from across the continent organised this session as an extension of the various discussions that were held at the Global LBQ Women's Conference in Cape Town. Issues around LBQ organising, mental health, and the importance of entrenching feminism in all our activism were discussed.

3. Youth Pre-Conference

Organised by queer youth individuals from Ghana, the Youth Pre-Con looked at the importance of cross-generational programming and the need for intentional inclusion of youth in all LGBTIQ+ programming. This session was critical, important not only in bringing young people together, but to ensure that youth in the movement are not left out of our organisational spaces.

4. Interfaith Pre-Conference

Global Interfaith Network created a series of conversations with people of different faiths, to bring to the fore the need for the inclusion of issues of faith into our activism. Given that faith and spirituality are an integral part of who we are and understanding how religion is used to justify the stigma and discrimination LGBTIQ+ people face, interfaith meetings are vital.

5. Key Populations Pre-Conference

Hosting a pre-conference at a Pan Africa ILGA Conference for the first time ever, The African Sex Workers Alliance brought together key populations from various contexts and spaces in which they work. The focus was on African sex workers and youth within the key populations in the LGBTIQ+ movement.

6. Intersex Pre-Conference

African Intersex Movement (AIM) organised a pre-conference which brought together a number of African Intersex activists, to define a future for the African Intersex community. Participants explored challenges and opportunities that the African Intersex community faces, ranging from funding issues to mental health and the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic.

7. Migrant Pre-Conference

A collective of organisations working on human rights for LGBTIQ+ people, including the Global Interfaith Network, organised the migrant pre-conference with the view to looking at the challenges faced by migrants, the reasons they leave home, and how best to address the different issues they face in their receiving countries and beyond.

8. Human Rights Mechanisms Pre-Conference

The human rights training pre-conference hosted by Pan Africa ILGA, ILGA World and COC Nederland took place over a full day with the aim of equipping participants across the African continent with information and skills to navigate the Africa Human Rights systems that exist on the continent, as well as the Human Rights Council. These mechanisms are critical in the fight against violence and human rights abuse that LGBTIQ+ people experience in their various contexts on our continent.

Plenaries

Plenary 1: Reclaiming our Past: Defining our Future

Moderator: **Anthony Oluoch**

Panelists: **Azeenarh, Edwin Cameron, Nguru Karugu, Azza Sultan**

Session Objectives

This session was designed to take a critical look at the vision of the African LGBTIQ+ movement, recognising that the various roads towards that vision are different. Looking at the past, considering our present situation, and envisioning a future that works for all.

Discussion

The panelists agreed that there is a need to reclaim the past and that the community needs to proudly assert its place in society. African queer activists share a collective memory. **“The past was as close as yesterday or a hundred years ago.”** Azza Sultan. They noted that the LGBTIQ+ community has multiple identities, all of whom function as agents for social change. To get this change however, there is a need to think intersectionally. To do so, a continuous line between the past and the future and those who have sacrificed their lives for these intersectional rights needs to be remembered.

Edwin Cameron emphasised that the focus on the past and the future was critical. He confirmed that the LGBTIQ+ community has always been in Africa and was not a **“Western influence.”** He did note the risks faced by the community differ from country to country. Persecution and risk lead to a sense of connection and the importance of creating a collective consciousness. Edwin asserted the

need to seek out allies amongst persons in our community; traditional healers as a particular example, because they embody within them, centuries-old history.

Building on that point, Nguru Karugu highlighted the fact that the continent is intrinsically connected, and that this extends to the historical and ancestral. The historical African voice should influence the global voice. Currently social norms fall behind legal norms, and our dialogue should ensure that these social attitudes are brought to the present. He further stated that the timing of the conference revealed the resilience of the network.

Azeenarh emphasised the importance of Africanising the movement and driving the narrative to avoid misrepresentation. The LGBTIQ+ sector is well represented in the creative industries, and this should be leveraged to amplify stories. Access to families and social circles is key to well-being and confirms the LGBTIQ+ community as part of the fabric of Africa, both in the present and historically.

Edwin Cameron confirmed that the community is represented everywhere but is often invisible. He said **“coming out”** was not necessarily a full public act but could be more private. These stories should be included in everyday media and those with influence should ensure that these stories are not excluded. In addition, the legal profession and those in high positions in legal societies should be challenged, exerting international

pressure to change the narrative back home.

“

A bright future is possible if the past is processed, and the present understood.

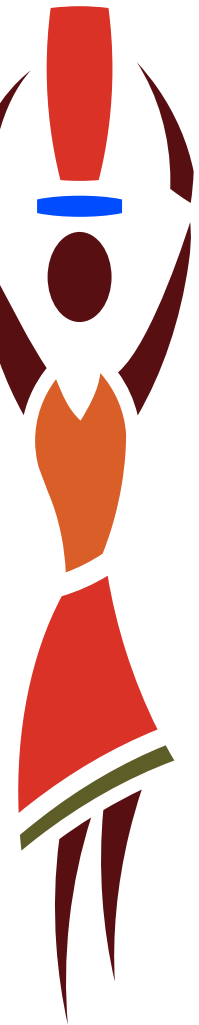
Understanding the impact of colonisation is important as it was a root cause of the problem. The notion of complete liberation was important as could be seen in the work of different organisations which are trying to shape the history of the LGBTIQ+ movement in countries such as Morocco, the Middle East and Sudan. Efforts are underway to decriminalise homosexuality in Morocco and progress is being made in terms of advocacy and mobilising resources. The movement there remains underfunded, and many organisations are not registered as they may contravene the penal code. Despite Covid-19, work is ongoing but in North Africa the political situation affects these efforts.

True liberation was described as having both personal and political dimensions and required an understanding of the root causes of hatred which are directed against the community.

Fundamental patriarchy was central to this, as with gender-based violence. Both women and queers are oppressed. Liberation can be found in declaring one's difference and translating this into the political sphere, by forming strategic alliances.

Moving Forward

- There is a need to intentionally include trans and gender diverse people in conversations. The challenges they face are yet to be addressed.
- Challenges facing LGBTIQ+ refugees need to be tackled
- Expand the definition of the LGBTIQ+ community and broaden our understanding of the different narratives.
- Intersex communities can benefit from cross-border networks. When space is being claimed it should also benefit others.
- There should be more teaching, learning, and sharing and more creativity in how to fund the movement.
- The process is collective, and challenges of Covid-19 are to focus on our collective health and wellbeing.
- The LGBTIQ+ community can no longer be silenced.



Plenary 2: Being Different in a Global Pandemic

Moderator: **Juliet Ulanmo**

Panelists: **Marian Nwaokolo, Jamal Venance, Nandi Msezane, Shamim Salim**

Session Objectives

This session looked at the past year since the onset of the Covid-19 pandemic and considered the changes in our lives as LGBTIQ+ people. This has been brought about by the pandemic, the various challenges that we have faced and the lessons we have learnt in terms of being “different” in the face of a global pandemic.

Discussion

Ghana was the first context focused on by the panel. Jamal Venance stated that due to the law that seeks to further criminalise the community in the country, being different has been difficult. Activists have for a long time worked behind the scenes. However, the challenges do not stop individuals in the country from continuing to advocating for the rights of everyone.

“**A law cannot make me deny who I am but there is a need for all queer persons and activists to come together and fight these laws.**”

Ultra-conservatism in Northern Nigeria in an already conservative country has created a hierarchy

of oppression even in the queer community. Marian Mwaokolo stated that the homophobia and transphobia in Northern Nigeria is more serious than the rest of the country. Covid-19 has created further marginalisation. There was an increase in intimate partner violence in the region due to the closure of safe houses. Intersectional struggles including gender, poverty and access to sexual reproductive health services coupled with the struggles of the pandemic, including the lack of provisions to marginalised groups has created a challenge to queer activism. Covid-19 produced new forms of oppression. Due to this, a lot of funding that was pegged for LGBTIQ+ programmes was lost. However, funders later started to find strategies to plan around the situation created by the pandemic.

Nandi Msezane stated that the LGBTIQ+ sector, like the rest of the world, was not ready for the pandemic. A lot of funders that normally fund the sector had to reprioritize to cater to the effects of the pandemic. We live in communities where the socio-economic opportunities for most people are extremely limited and are even less for the queer communities. Due to the pandemic, about 70% of queer entrepreneurs have lost their businesses. What is important right now is to start preparing for a post pandemic reality.

A lot of the government response came from a point of not being prepared. Shamim Salim stated that these responses did not put marginalised people in the fore. For persons living with disabilities, the fact that the spaces where they felt safe like schools and safe houses were closed, increased the reports of gender-based violence and discrimination against people living with disabilities.

It was also difficult for people who are in these situations to access justice. The issue of people living with disabilities and productivity was a big issue. This made it difficult to thrive in a capitalistic society. The isolation exacerbated mental health concerns for disabled people. It was difficult to access support and care. Healthcare services for disabled people has also been difficult for those who require chronic care.

Moving Forward

- We need to look at how to provide mental health support for LGBTIQ+ persons across the continent.
- We need to start thinking about how we organise so that LGBTIQ+ entrepreneurs can access opportunities within incubators and hubs.
- There is a need to intentionally focus on improving the lives of LGBTIQ+ persons living with disabilities who are often not included in our programming.
- There is a need for intersectional unity on gender-based violence.



Plenary 3: Mental Health: Breaking the Silence

Moderator: **Zsa-Zsa Fisher**

Panelists: **Rethabile Jessica Gamede, Adhip Maharaj, Barbra Wangare**

Session Objectives

A moderated panel discussion with activists and mental health professionals on the fact that mental health is not often taken in account in our activism, with countless cases of burn-out and activist trauma. The stigma that comes with talking about mental health in Africa and how we as a movement can break the silence on mental health.

Discussion

Mental health is a major challenge given the extent of stigma and discrimination around these issues. In a sense reclaiming a mental health past is about reclaiming the past in general. This is a grounding experience and reveals that the work starts at the individual level.

Rethabile Gamede stated that activists often require additional support which would hinge on organisational wellness. How power is wielded, whether it is visible or hidden, whether decision-making is transparent and whether power takes the form of collaboration - all impact on the individual. Breaking the silence should take place within organisations and ensure that policies are owned by everyone. People are empowered by having a sense of belonging. In addition, self-healing is important and here coaching may contribute positively to how advocacy is conducted.

Adhip Maharaj, B.Psych Registered Counselor deals with several conditions presented to him. From a counsellor's perspective, many people are anxious

and find it difficult to open up. In the broader society and in terms of access to support and counselling, not enough is being done and visibility about these issues remains low. An organisation, Queerwell, offers mental health services to LGBTIQ+ people specifically. This eases access to services. Organisations like Lifeline and SADAG (which are South African organisations) are sometimes limited and oversubscribed especially during the Covid-19 epidemic. It is also possible for people to find support from friends and colleagues and learn the art of deep listening.

An important insight was that self-healing can often follow on a triggering event, where it becomes important to seek support timeously to circumvent a larger crisis.

Barbra Wangare provided a personal account of her diagnosis with bipolar disorder and how it had derailed her life, career, and relationships. Her shift from denial to acceptance and improvements experienced through a medication regiment were outlined. It was important for her to address the underlying trauma as well as the impact of Covid-19, which led to an extended manic phase. Attitudes to mental health issues in Africa are not supportive and it is often not understood that there are real impacts, and that mental illness is as real as physical illness. Depression is a major challenge in the LGBTIQ+ community, to some extent because individuals are not seen as who they are. Trans identities have a unique set of challenges and more than eight out

of ten trans people have contemplated suicide.

Depression and suicide are serious issues in LGBTIQ+ communities. People who are depressed are vulnerable, and they often do not share their symptoms.

Their behaviour may conceal their depression making it difficult to be aware of their state of mind. Being more observant to those close to you is a key step, along with active and deep listening. Suicide and thoughts of suicide come with a sense of shame and safe spaces are crucial in addressing the full complexity of the struggles being faced.

How individuals in the community are perceived causes anxiety which contributes to depression. Support structures need to be built up to address complexities around both gender identity and the general attitudes towards mental health conditions in Africa.



Moving Forward

- Funders need to provide resources for psychosocial-support and allow organisations to incorporate staff wellness budget lines.
- Some would say, “Our existence is a mental health challenge” but it is important to be stable to conduct the organisational work successfully.
- Accessing mental health care services in rural areas is exceedingly difficult and there is a need to extend these services to our communities in those areas.
- There is a widespread lack of empathy for mental health in the society. Efforts should be made to address the stigma and discrimination and open spaces for conversations around mental health.
- Self-education is important. Read and learn about trans identities, listen to colleagues and friends, and provide support to those friends and colleagues who need it.
- To address issues of mental health, it is important to be more observant to those close to you along with active and deep listening.
- The movement needs to be intentional about addressing mental health issues.



Plenary 4: Decriminalisation: Within and Beyond the Law

Moderator: **Richard Lusimbo**

Panelists: **Bradley Fortuin, Akudo Oguaghamba, Jabu Pereira, Frank Mugisha**

Session Objectives

This panel looked at the criminalisation of same-sex conduct, sex work and HIV transmission. Considering the countries whose laws have changed in diverse ways and those who have challenged the laws and won or lost, and a discussion on ways forward to achieve equality for all.

Discussion

South Africa has seen a change of laws since 1994. From the abolition of the death penalty to the repeal of the sodomy laws, recognition of same-sex couples and allowing them to adopt to recognition of civil unions and marriages. However, according to Jabu Pereira, LGBTIQ+ people are still marginalised. Trans and intersex people in particular still experience inequalities and grapple with this.

“

We don't have a system that is really protecting us – it's up to us to develop those systems.”

Toxic masculinity, violence, intersections of class, anger and rage against the system are still deeply rooted in people. In a society that is so angry, it is always the most vulnerable who are affected. There is a need to remedy these underlying factors that are causing harm in South Africa.

Nigeria passed the Prohibition of

Same-Sex Marriage Act in 2014. Akudo Oguaghamba found it important to mention that Nigeria is a highly conservative and religious country of over 200 million people. Since the signing of the Act, there was a lot of focus and attention on LGBTIQ+ Nigerians. The law prohibits cohabitation of same-sex people, public displays of affection and forbids allies from collaborating with LGBTIQ+ people with punishment from 10 to 14 years in prison. Many LGBTIQ+ people in the country returned to the closet out of fear of being stigmatised or being used as an example. There has been an increase of sexual violence and gender-based violence against the community and it has also affected the mental health of individuals. The law has however motivated activists to organise more and support each other in fighting for the rights of marginalised individuals.

It is also interesting to note that in Nigeria, activists were not fighting to get married but trying to lobby to be allowed to exist in safe spaces and not be discriminated against or disowned. This bill was used to dig deep into the hearts of Nigerian people who consider marriage so sacred.

The Botswana High Court ruled for decriminalisation of same-sex conduct in 2019. Bradley Fortuin stated that prior to the ruling, a lot of work was done on strengthening communities and raising awareness in the hope that Botswanian LGBTIQ+ community would have allies. However, there was still an increase in hate crimes against LGBTIQ+ individuals, who are still being excluded from work opportunities and schools are still hostile

towards LGBTIQ+ students.

On the bright side, this ruling increased visibility of the LGBTIQ+ communities. Botswana saw an increase in documentation of LGBTIQ+ stories by people who were able to own their own narratives. There was an increase in positive reporting in the media and an increase in collectives, organisations, and strengthening of the movement. Queer women, trans and gender diverse communities started coming together. There was an increase in accessing of health care services and of public health services.

The judgement in Botswana encouraged people to stand up for rights, to ask for equality, to be given services that are due to them. It spoke a lot about the right to personal autonomy of sexual and gender minorities. This process gave the community validation. The government has however appealed the entire judgement and it is now going to the Court of Appeal.

Uganda has been one of the countries in Africa that has been the playing field for extreme conservative groups which have influenced the Ugandan economy and societal attitudes towards LGBTIQ+ people. Colonial anti-sodomy laws still exist in the country but there is an argument that the Penal Code has a gap and that more needs to be criminalised. Ugandans argue that same-sex attraction is “not African.” This leads to political scapegoating of the community with LGBTIQ+ people being blamed by

politicians for any atrocity facing the country.

However, there has been a lot of visibility and dialogue creating political and social capital. This has created opportunities to have training with the police and the judiciary. There have also been positive reactions from bilateral international partners, and from Ugandan civil society.

Moving Forward

- There is a need to look at our shifts and changes collectively as a continent as opposed to just nationally.
- We need to Work within the African Commission for Human and Peoples' Rights and the African Union with the view to changing their mindsets.
- It is time to start conversations about laws against discrimination and inhumane treatment.
- Partner with other marginalised groups like people living with disabilities, women, children – This will increase our advocacy capabilities.
- Countries can learn a lot from each other. Different countries have achieved legal reform in diverse ways, and this can be a starting point in creating equality.
- Beyond the law, there is a need to sensitise societies about LGBTIQ+ people. That way, societal attitudes change at the same pace as the laws.



Plenary 5: Devoutly Queer: Religion and our Sexualities

Moderator: **Moegsien Hendricks**

Panelists: **Jacqui Benson, Hanzline Davids, Nurul Huda, Rev Thuli Mbetse**

Session Objectives

This was a discussion on how religion (an interfaith approach) affects our lived realities and how best to engage religion. This discussion considered the different contexts on the continent and included activists who have engaged with religion in one way or another. The wins, the struggles, the challenges, the potential for progress.

Discussion

Religious leaders should become change agents. Faith is a very intrinsic part of who we are, and we should not be required to choose between faith and our sexual orientation, gender identity or expression. This discussion was centered around the personal journeys of the panelists and was focused on how they used theology in their journeys. One speaker spoke of the important mission of bringing together Jews and allies with activists from other faiths. It is possible to learn from one another and become more effective. The experiences of being Jewish and queer were addressed in terms of reconciling faith with gender identity and LGBTIQ+ rights. Jacqui Benson stated that orthodoxy is very patriarchal. Having to deal with gendered roles in their community. They have tried to challenge themselves to create more inclusive spaces in their community but recognising that conversation around faith and sexuality are difficult.

However, it is important to be cognisant of the need to bring compassion to those who are learning to merge the two.

Reverend Thuli stated that in ministry, there is need for the message to be spread that we are all people of God. Acceptance in the community, especially within African spirituality can be incredibly difficult.

Nurul Huda spoke about their upbringing in Singapore, a patriarchal society, and how as a young activist they found support and allies, whilst affirming the theological principle of being one of God's creations.

Even the worst engineer will not design something to fail. God the creator did not design me to fail.

Hanzline Davids spoke about how as an ordained minister, he achieved a life of respect and dignity as a follower of Christ and was able to reconcile his religious beliefs with his spiritual being. Studying Theology was extremely useful. Liberation theology introduces the God of the poor, the oppressed and the marginalised. A group was formed in his church to discuss sexuality and gender issues. In cases where verses have been used to condemn LGBTIQ+ sector, popular arts and culture have

made it possible to reimagine the meaning of sacred texts. It is important to note that the original sin of Sodom was gluttony and inhospitality not same-sex activity. Biblical texts can be used in a liberative manner, and the dominant narratives contested.

Moving Forward

- The first step towards being supported is to ensure that families understand who we are.
- It is possible to have a sexual orientation or gender identity that is different from the norm and still be of faith.
- Life is not supposed to be difficult emotionally and mentally. It is possible to reconcile one's existence with one's faith.

- Find a group of people that read scripture outside of the comfort zone.
- Accept and love the person who you are first. Believe in yourself wherever you go.
- Differentiate between religion and spirituality.
- It is God that accepts and loves. People are the ones who discriminate.



Plenary 6: Intersectionality of Struggles: Embracing Social Justice

Moderator: **Kevin Mwachiro**

Panelists: **Carlos Idibouo, Hamada M, Khoulood Bidak, Yvonne Oduor, Lize Ehlers**

Session Objectives

A moderated panel discussion looked at our movement and considered how connected we are within ourselves with other social justice movements looking at the need to understand that these intersections exist and the need to engage with these intersections. How to do so, when to do so, and how best to do so.

Discussion

The panelists agreed that intersectionality meant being intentional about inclusion and how we as activists go about it. While representation is important, it is equally vital to have inclusion in everything that we do. Intersectionality takes various forms including race, class, language and multi-sectoral identities. Activists also present representation within themselves.

To achieve social justice, all these multi-sectoral identities need to be worked on simultaneously. In HIV and AIDS activism, there has been a marked focus on men. This leaves out other people who are adversely affected by the disease like women and transgender people, sex-workers and people who inject drugs. Carlos Idibouo stated that looking at these intersectionalities is key to ensuring a

better world for the people we represent in our work.

Khoulood Bidak spoke about the very nuanced situation in Egypt. She stated that organising around race, gender, sexual orientation, feminism only started in the last 10 years and that there is still a long way to go. The complexities in activism applied mostly to people who live in poorer areas of the country where they do not have devices that would connect them to the rest of the world. These individuals perceive themselves as lone LGBTIQ+ people and to be accessed and offered services they need.

Yvonne Oduor noted that mental health is something that needs to be considered, not only for activists as they do the work but also for those who have left activism. Often, once activists are no longer active in the circle, they are abandoned and not looked after. This needs to change, and a positive environment created.

The panelists also noted that it is particularly important for us as LGBTIQ+ activists to involve more allies to make the movement stronger. We can do this by getting involved in other issues that face the community including fighting corruption, dealing with environmental issues, partnering with women's rights movements, and engaging actively in the wider social justice spaces.

Moving Forward

- We need to check ourselves as a community to ensure that we are as inclusive of all our diversities as possible.
- It is important to organise regionally due to the similarity in contexts of the different countries. This strengthens the messaging that is shared with the public.
- Neo-colonialism is still a reality. It is important to keep this in mind in all the work we do and to create strategies that speak to our unique contexts.
- To be intentionally inclusive we must consider the fact that language can be a barrier to accessing information and services, in order to ensure that we are speaking to everyone at the table.



Special Plenary: An African Donor Conversation

Moderator: **Anthony Oluoch**

Panelists: **Neville Gabriel, Dr Stellah Bosire, Caroline Kouassiaman**

Session Objectives

To look at the current funding environment for the movement on the continent and hold a conversation about how best to harness funding for the various diverse issues that affect our continent.

Discussion

People are at the centre of the work and the investment should be in the strengthening of these people. There are changing realities around the LGBTIQ+ sector, related to social exclusion. High level movements are being established and matrices of success indicate that progress is being made. The impact on the lived realities of the people we work for is key.

In various parts of the continent a new phase of advocacy is going for irreversible change and progress. The movement needs a scale and depth of impact of activism that goes beyond the past and needs a scale of investment to enable this. Institutional architecture must be built up and informed by authentic experience and deep analysis of immediate and distant pasts. It is important to understand impacts and what should be done differently. There is a need for a quality of engaged funding informed by authentic and participatory processes.

The Ghanaian legislature is attempting to change laws in a regressive way. This may see a backlash against a series of advances and successes achieved by the movement. To accommodate this, funding has in the past focused on public health but ideally

these are not public health issues. There are several forces, most significantly imported religious fundamentalism of the evangelical movement whose language is identifiable in the proposed Ghanaian Bill. The current era of global fundamentalism necessitates new strategies and a review of how we relate to communities and allies. Stronger movements will assist in dealing with this type of pushback and this should be negotiated with donors.

Challenges of conditional funding and excessive competition for funding were outlined. Leadership needs to be developed, knowledge and analysis deepened, to allow for the collective determination of priorities when building coalitions and alliances. Stronger networks should still provide some protection for smaller groups. Prominent levels of visibility are the most conducive to success. This in turn heightens risk, necessitating a greater focus on protection and security. Working towards flexible funding is a priority and requires a strategy to influence donors and donors. Here donors should also undertake philanthropic advocacy.

LGBTIQ+ groups are accessing funding and this assists with economic empowerment of poor communities. Livelihoods and resilience are connected to our wellbeing and flexible support is still desirable. How to maximise impact is being addressed as well as ensuring that communities are accessing resources. The extent to which donors are inclusive requires attention. The goal is larger and more inclusive investment in our communities.

Donors need to influence how resources move into the continent and to ensure that it supports human rights. An interesting

shift has been to move beyond public health to mental health and socio-economic wellbeing. Donors also face challenge ensuring that funding reaches rural organisations.

Most funding is from private donors and the challenge is to increase government funding. The daily experiences of people need to be well understood. In Africa poverty, inequality and economic exclusion are defining characteristics, and more acute when considering the LGBTIQ+ community. Funding applications far outweigh available grants pointing to the need to build coalitions, alliances, and collectives. Collaborations among diverse types of organisations have a particular advantage as funding becomes accessible to more groups.

Some funding streams are inconsistent. There would be adequate funding for decriminalisation but not for mental health. Participatory approaches to grant making would allow for a more initiative-taking and intentional networking approach. Donors should recognise that communities organise in diverse ways and may have more informal approaches. What is happening on the ground must be recognised to ensure that funding decisions made do reflect priorities.

Concerns were expressed that some donors fund the same organisation repeatedly arguing that issues of sustainability inform these decisions.

Gatekeeping in rural areas was raised as a critical concern. Issues remain complex even while donors attempt fairness and transparency.

It was emphasised that donors do not have all the answers.

Moving Forward

- The donor community should remain initiative-taking and aware of new opportunities and the development of strong networks.
- Allegations of financial and personnel abuse in organisations require a mechanism to hold leaders to account.
- Fairness and due diligence are essential. Abuse of power can also be addressed by contractual conditions and building governance structures in organisations.
- The community can be empowered to function as a watchdog as movement building includes accountability. Power does not belong to the donors.
- There is an urgent need to make funds available to address poverty and job creation.
- Funding should strive to have more equitable strategies in future and address funding gaps identified.
- A percentage of funding needs to be earmarked specifically for mental health issues in the LGBTIQ+ community.



SATELLITE SESSIONS

Session 1: LGBT Movements in Western Africa: The Story We Don't Tell Enough

Speakers: **Adadjisso Togbe Maudzoro Comlanvi, Hugues Benissan, Unoma Azuah, Fatou, Sedar**

Session Objectives

To determine what can be learned from the past to ensure that nothing is lost during the formalisation of the sector and partnership building.

Discussion

This panel reflected on the essence and diversity of LGBTIQ+ people and organisations in Western Africa from the early 1980s to the early 2000s to improve learning outcomes and ensure that valuable lessons are not lost. Earlier aspirations should be recalled, assessed, and revived in relation to the current status quo. How the movement has projected itself should be reviewed and measured against what the earlier goals were and what could have been achieved.

The first LGBTIQ+ associations in Nigeria were formed discretely in the 1980s. Numerous cultural practices such as Igbo women marrying women preceded these developments. Personalities such as Fela Kuti began to speak openly about sexuality, putting it in the public domain.

In Togo and Benin informal associations were linked to similar developments in Ghana. However, states denied the existence of the LGBTIQ+ community, arguing that it was “unAfrican” and appeared to take little interest in these associations. The situation on the ground only changed when HIV and AIDS reached West Africa. Movements formed into structured NGOs. Nigerian activist, Dari, revealed his HIV status in the late 1990s and was outspoken on LGBTIQ+ rights. This contributed to the growth of a movement beyond inter-personal

caring arrangements which challenged the Nigerian government and spoke out against homophobia. LGBTIQ+ people became more visible about their status, in turn contributing to further growth in the LGBTIQ+ movement.

Unfortunately, this visibility has contributed to more violence and prejudice than when the community was less public.

The issue was raised that young people need to listen to the stories of their elders and learn from them. One speaker said, “I agree we have failed in bringing our elders on board from the outset.” It is possible for one person to change perceptions as was illustrated by a case from Senegal. In Cote d'Ivoire, the elders did not have the level of visibility that is now possible. The LGBTIQ+ community today is more self-accepting than previous generations.

Moving Forward

- A strategy must be developed to capture the history so that elements of the past should be reclaimed.
- In many instances the focus on public health may divert attention from human rights, which remains central to the broader goals of the movement.
- The objectives of these meetings could be about accessing funding or affirming identities, and priorities should be clear.
- Trans, gender diverse and Intersex persons have been neglected, and all alliances should be strengthened to build a more united LGBTIQ+ movement across Africa.

Session 2: Resilience and Advocacy during a Pandemic: Southern Africa Perspective

Speakers: **Melusi Simelane, Anna Mmolai-Chalmers, Sam Ndlovu, DK Dlamini, Eric Sambisa**

Session Objectives

This session aimed to contribute to a southern African perspective on the priority areas of advocacy post the Covid-19 pandemic and highlighted new and adapted strategies to advocacy.

Discussion

The South African Litigation Centre (SALC) held a virtual conference focused on discrimination in December 2020 with eight hundred participants. The purpose was to assess the political and economic environment and reach agreement about which issues to prioritise. The conference addressed approaches to building political interest in the movement and diverse ways of working during the pandemic. One of the outcomes was the creation of a scorecard with identified priorities. SALC plays a significant role in challenging the use of the law against the LGBTIQ+ sector, even when explicit laws do not exist. The sector needs to understand on what the law states and look at other strategies. In addition, in terms of vaccines and treatment, it is important to advocate for access across all future pandemics and epidemics.

Out and Proud conducted a risk and vulnerability analysis. The project developed a media guide to equip media practitioners in the southern African context. Possible political opportunities have arisen in Zambia after the recent election

In Zimbabwe, many politicians avoid LGBTIQ+ issues but there are some who are supportive of the community. Civil society is under siege in Zimbabwe generally and Covid-19 lockdowns have had a significant impact on LGBTIQ+ work. A decision was taken to assess digital and online activities

in responding to a wide range of contexts.

In Malawi, a petition was delivered to government. The petition itself failed but Out and Proud was satisfied with the process undertaken. Support from the Malawi Human Rights Commission who participated in the Pride parade was valued.

Eswatini has faced several challenges, particularly during the Covid-19 lockdowns. It was not possible to gain access to public spaces, and the municipality adopted diversionary tactics making permissions impossible. The situation remains difficult. Preparations for the 2022 Pride March are underway, whilst strategizing about future advocacy work.

Moving Forward

- Strategic litigation may not always be effective as in the case of Malawi where dialogue produced better results. The emphasis on the right to freedom of expression rather than 'fighting the system' was successful and this should be considered when contemplating litigation.
- The digital divide is widening, and data costs are prohibitive for many. What is needed is a comprehensive analysis in terms of costs, access, and proximity to ensure a balanced approach.
- There was growing reliance on the digital space during Covid-19 and due to associated safety risks the digital space needs to be improved regarding management and security.
- A common view is that political change should precede focus on LGBTIQ+ issues. Whatever the different views are, collaborative efforts are essential.

Session 3: A Case for Decriminalisation: The Impact of Anti-Gay Laws in West Africa

Speakers: **Mathiu Bitachou, Kami Frank Oba, Sadikh Ndoye**

Session Objectives

This workshop examined the challenges faced by LGBTIQ+ activists to develop innovative actions for a better result: the decriminalisation of homophobic legislation. The central issue was homophobic legislation in West Africa and taking stock of the current situation, noting that the domestic situation varies from country to country.

Discussion

The law neither prohibits nor allows same-sex acts in Benin. There is no protection either and authorities do nothing to prevent attacks on LGBTIQ+ individuals. The situation in Benin is complex and dedicated work is needed to bring justice to the country. If laws are silent, society remains hostile. Policymakers should understand that the LGBTIQ+ sector has the right to enjoy all rights afforded to other people, including the right to safety and protection. Activists are trying to contribute to a change in thinking in Benin.

Even in countries where same-sex activity is not prohibited, uncertainty exists around certain legal provisions. In Togo all 'unnatural' acts with another person is prohibited. This is the extent of legislation on same-sex attraction, including that the focus is on 'the act' and not 'the individual'.

In Gabon, the question is whether decriminalisation will address homophobia. This is unlikely and when

a country commits to decriminalisation a roadmap to address other issues arising should be established. Security is important so activists can continue with their work. Social and economic inclusion are essential. This will be an ongoing process and having allies amongst judges, lawyers and professionals would play a vital role. These stakeholders are empowered to influence certain decisions and can represent the sector in different communities.

In some countries decriminalisation is rejected politically and it is important to collaborate to achieve compliance with universal human rights. Culture and religion may hamper any actions that have to be taken so sensitisation activities become important.

Moving Forward

- There should be a commitment to working together and taking the conversation forward.
- Learning from other countries experiences is essential as they may have adopted novel and innovative actions following decriminalisation, which can be adapted for different contexts.
- Countries that have achieved decriminalisation should be included in these panels to share experiences and factors that contributed to their success. A future meeting about this should be organised to consider different approaches.

Session 4: Mental Health: Untold Stories of The War Within Ourselves

Speakers: **Eric Ndawula, Prisca Kyombela**

Session Objectives

This session aimed to build awareness about mental health challenges, to contribute to fighting self-discrimination, break the silence in the LGBTIQ+ community and normalise conversations about mental health in society.

Discussion

Ten of the most critical issues facing LGBTIQ+ youth include coming out, bullying and victimisation, physical and sexual abuse, experiencing rejection, violence and trauma, domestic violence, and body image fitness and weight.

When addressing mental health issues in the LGBTIQ+ community it was suggested that the person should be treated holistically. Counsellors should make use of the correct pronouns and inclusive language, learn about the client's social and historical experiences, avoid counter transference, and never use pathologising or stigmatising language. Displaying a rainbow sticker will signal a safer space.

The second presentation spoke to the National Census on Mental Health of LGBTQ Persons, in Zambia. The presentation highlighted that good health encompasses complete well-being physically, mentally, socially, emotionally, and psychologically.

The point was made that mental health affects emotional life, actions and how stress is managed. It is important to be able to evaluate your own wellbeing and determine if support is required.

The community should be sensitive to people's needs and provide support and positive role models.

Moving Forward

- It is important that signs of mental illness or depression are identified, and the person is supported.
- Normalising conversations around mental health in our communities will make it easier for people to seek help when they need it.



Session 5: Touch - An African Anthology on Sex and Sensuality – The Politics of Queer Pleasure

Speakers: **Tiffany Kagure Mugo, Kim Windvogel**

Session Objectives

The presentation sought to guide participants towards healthier and happier sex lives using edutainment and content created specifically for and by queer Africans. It hosted the authors of *Touch*, a recently released anthology of queer works looking at sex and sensuality.

Discussion

The session was introduced by an extract from the book *Touch, The Weight of F**cking* – Zanta Nkumane.

“The architecture of pleasure is expansive. Every solid structure requires a sturdy foundation, but for the structure to endure, you cannot rush its construction. Even when it is done, you are constantly decorating and fixing. My aunt says a house is never finished for that reason. I feel the same way about pleasure. We constantly think of experiencing it with an end goal in sight. Most times we assume there must be penetration for that end. I implore us to imagine pleasure as never ending, as a ritual. We can partake in even with our most mundane activity.”

Two short films were shown dealing with sexuality and raising questions around queer sexuality. The presenter outlined some myths about queer sexuality:

Myth number 1: Everyone is gay or lesbian. We know by now that this is not the case.

Myth number 2: Queer sex is always amazing. As with all sexual activity it should be worked on, learned, explored, and communicated.

Myth number 3: Sexuality is static. This is not the case and sexuality is fluid.

Myth number 4: Queer folks understand consent.

Myth Number 5: Gay men and lesbians all have the same sort of sex.

Myth number 6: Lesbian bed death is real.

Myth number 7: Pornography is an accurate representation of queer sex.

Myth number 8: Dating as a queer person is different from dating as a heterosexual person.

Discussion was held on sex positivity – facts; myths about sex positivity; and what is sex positivity?

The following sexual attractions were discussed:

Pansexual – attracted to many different people across the spectrum.

Asexual – not sexually attracted but still have an array of healthy relationships.

Gynesexual – more attracted to the feminine.

Aromantic – do not feel romantic attraction to people.

Brosexual – an individual who experiences frequent changes to their sexuality.

Androsexual – attracted to masculinity.

Moving Forward

- Online resources: “Touch manual on <https://linktr.ee/TheTouchExperience>.
- Contact HOLAAfrica - https://www.instagram.com/insta_holaa/hl=en
- There is a need to demystify sex and have open and candid conversations around it.

Session 6: Absolute Sovereignty Exceptions as well as Legal Obligations of States to Protect the Rights of LGBTIQ+ and Gender Diverse Persons

Speakers: **Portia C. Allen, James Katlego Chibamba, Augusta Aondoover Yaakugh**

Session Objectives

An analysis of three African country contexts: Nigeria, South Africa, and Uganda in terms of absolute sovereignty exceptions and legal obligations of States to protect the rights of LGBTIQ+ and Gender Diverse Persons.

Discussion

The presenters spoke to the research findings related to the three countries.

In Nigeria, the state must be challenged to recognise the right to be who you want to be without encouraging violence. Thus, strategic litigation was the chosen strategy as the state may not go against the Economic Community Of West African States (ECOWAS) declaration on human rights or the African Union. If a person identifies as LGBTIQ+ they can approach these courts to have their rights enforced. Outside of strategic litigation other strategies for holding the Nigerian state to account include judicial activism. Judges need to be enlightened as most judges do not understand the root causes of violence and discrimination against LGBTIQ+ persons. Acting as 'amicus curiae', meaning friend of the court also forms a part of judicial activism. Efforts are also made to influence legislators and politicians as a further advocacy strategy. To hold the Nigerian government accountable by challenging the laws and identifying supportive movements facing similar challenges, has been most effective.

South Africa has a progressive constitution; thus, sovereignty was not discussed. No South African laws against LGBTIQ+ exist. What is needed now is the reformation of existing laws around identity documents which would allow for certain categories to make alterations of legal sex description. The relevant Act is not in line with international treaties and international best

practice for changing gender markers. It can be removed and replaced with gender self-determination, a very efficient approach to the whole matter. International influence continues to play a significant role in building national democracy in South Africa, and thus linking up to international struggles is a good strategy in South Africa. South Africa is also required to remain committed to its obligations to international and regional treaties.

Uganda has at least five national laws which promote discrimination, for example the Penal Code has several provisions that sanction sexual conduct. The Registration of Persons Act also promotes discrimination as there are legal implications for transgender persons. Marriage between same sex persons is prohibited. Uganda criminalised same sex relationships under the guise of protecting other rights. In August 2021, the NGO Bureau suspended the operations of 54 NGOs claiming that they had not complied with the NGO Act. The best strategy in Uganda is to refer to the 2021 African Charter of Human Peoples Rights and build partnerships with allies.

Moving Forward

- Financial, political, and legal resources required for wider coordination.
- Mobilising that is not dependent on patriarchal and hierarchical leadership models, challenging leadership models.
- Lobbying allies to intervene when legally proven that rights are being violated, and do not rely on litigation.
- Obtain credible data to authenticate injustices.
- Coordinate with significant movements focused on economic and social justice.

Session 7: On Taking an Intersectional Approach to Activism

Speakers: **Sedica Davids, Carlos Idibouo**

Session Objectives

This joint session looked at an intersectional approach to activism to achieve equality for sexual and gender minorities. It also introduced coaching and mentoring as a means of strengthening confidence amongst members of an LGBTIQ+ organisation. Finally, it moved the discussion to that of a multifaceted approach that is intersectional. It suggested that LGBTIQ+ organisations focus on strategy and risk, as the global pandemic caught us all off guard.

Discussion

The Presenters spoke of the complex concept 'intersectionality' and presented a slide illustrating this. Kimberley Crenshaw, who created the concept defines it as: The complex, cumulative way in which the effects of multiple forms of discrimination (such as racism, sexism, and classism) combine, overlap, or intersect especially in experiences of marginalised individuals or groups introduced the theory of intersectionality.

The focus of the session was how to apply intersectionality to ones work in the LGBTIQ+ movement considering the multiple violences that are experienced on a daily basis. As marginalised people

(individuals and groups), intersectionality is transversal. Most LGBTIQ+ people deal with this kind of discrimination in their daily lives. Like when you talk about health, you can talk about how the system discriminates because of skin colour, gender, sexual orientation, etc.

The presentation looked at intersectionality at a personal level and at a movement level in solidarity with other activists.

Delegates spoke of situations where the countries are big and LGBTIQ+ people are very spread out. There was discussion about the limited support that LGBTIQ+ people get in their countries. Discussion was also held around how to hide the fact that there is an LGBTIQ+ gathering taking place, meetings can happen at church, etc.

Moving Forward

- Funders need to help build a strong and healthy movement by providing funds to intersectional approaches to activism.
- LGBTIQ+ organisations need to collaborate with more allies and other movements to enable growth of the work they do.
- Organisations need to think more about sustainability of their work and how to manage risks.



Session 8: Decriminalisation of Same-Sex Conduct: Past, Present and Future of the Laws in Mauritius, Botswana, and Nigeria

Speakers: **Anjeelee Kaur Beegun, Anna Mmolai Chalmers, Amanda Shivamba, Michael Amalumilo**

Session Objective

To look at the state of anti-sodomy laws in Mauritius, Nigeria and Botswana, the efforts that have been taken to decriminalise, the current situation and the future of communities in the countries.

Discussion

In Mauritius, the presenter spoke about the pursuit of decriminalisation through constitutionality within Mauritian law and gave the evolution of anti-sodomy law in the country. The speaker gave an overview of the processes of repealing discriminatory laws in Mauritius and made the point that these laws are colonial laws.

The next speaker gave a history of colonisation in Botswana and the way in which this impacted on the laws, bringing it up to date. There was an overview given of the 1994 – 2003 sexual orientation, gender identity case, that was lost as the court proclaimed, “Botswana are not ready for homosexuality” and that homosexuality was against public opinion.

The speaker also gave an overview of the LEGABIBO case where the organisation was denied registration in 2013. LEGABIBO appealed to the minister, finally taking the issue to the High Court and then the Court of Appeals. Ultimately the High Court ruled that homosexuality had never been illegal in Botswana. There was an assumption

that homosexuality was illegal. This has happened in other countries. Activists need to know the law.

The next speaker focused on the Nigerian Sodomy Law. Indicating that Nigeria is very hostile to homosexuals and homosexuality. An overview was given of the history of the Nigerian Sodomy laws and key cases including arbitrary arrests of gay men in the country.

There was a discussion about the importance of knowing the law. Also important is the need for support nationally, regionally, and internationally. The session ended on the proverb: The best way to eat an elephant is to cut it into small pieces and do it bit by bit.

Moving Forward

- We need to Africanise our movement, we don't know how our ancestors struggled.
- Criminalisation comes from colonial laws about sin.
- Where it involves a whole community, litigants are critical. Litigants must understand the process and shape the strategic advocacy because it can affect their lives.
- Use should be made of the SALC website as a key resource in litigation efforts.
- It is important to focus on the rights in constitutions and African Courts.

Session 9: Religion and our Sexualities: A Botswana Case Study

Speakers: **Bradley Fortuin, Gagotheko Mothai, Seipone Boitswhwarelo, Andile Nchube, Kanjo Tjineka**

Session Objectives

The session focused on unpacking the work that LGBTIQ+ people of faith are doing in Botswana in the quest for inclusion, at the same time also hear and understand how LGBTIQ+ people of faith have been able to live fulfilling lives and still maintain their faith. Building communities of faith that are diverse and where the fullness of common humanity is celebrated. Faith communities that are welcoming and inclusive, safe spaces that demonstrate respect of human dignity.

Discussion

The session consisted of several LGBTIQ+ people sharing their experiences with faith and identity in Botswana.

One activity was the participating in retreats which restored connection with God and faith. These covered issues of identity and how to merge with religion and matters of faith. The speakers elaborated on how this can be a difficult journey.

The speaker indicated that being a woman who expressed herself in a masculine manner has created difficulties and negative perceptions. Therapy and fellowship led to love and acceptance of identity and recognition that we are all God's creation. Assisting in the dialogues was a positive experience.

Another speaker shared their experience of attending the dialogues with an NGO, which led to returning to church. The dialogues taught them to have a conversation with God who clarified that he was interested in their soul not their flesh. The speaker said there is no need for an intermediary when talking to God and inviting him into your life.

A religious leader spoke about how religious leaders are called to be the voice

of the voiceless and we advocated for love of God. The leader said there is no need for boundaries and margins. People spoke of attending dialogues in Botswana and indicated how transformative it was to be able to speak in a safe space.

It was further indicated that religion plays an important role in the perceptions of the LGBTIQ+ community so intersectionalities with religious leaders have been sought out. Policies could be influenced in this manner and emphasise that God loves all his creation equally even in their diversity.

It is important to influence communities to understand that LGBTIQ+ people wish to worship in church as a free space. Church leaders should be convinced to really give us a chance to be who we really are in the house of the Lord.

It was emphasised in the discussion that the dialogue method works as it clarifies what religious leaders think and improves our understanding of one another. It allows for open sharing about thoughts and perceptions. It was agreed that dialogues have contributed to the balance of power between religious leaders and our communities. Trained religious leaders become our protection and our support. This is vital as we are never sure of what may transpire between religious leaders and communities.

Moving Forward

- Many religious leaders offer safe spaces and counselling. This support deepened during the lockdown.
- The role of this type of engagement should be extended to influence public perceptions beyond individuals. This could assist in influencing politicians and decision-makers.

Session 10: Trans Engagement in Local Communities: Unleashing the Silenced Voices

Speakers: **Bradley Fortuin, Gumisayi Bonzo, Aubrey Chacha**

Session Objectives

A look at lived realities of trans people and sharing experiences that have enabled the advocacy for policy change and inclusion in the community.

Discussion

A recent research report by the Southern African Youth Education Centre called for laws and policies that protect transgender persons in Southern Africa. It states that South Africa is the only African country to offer constitutional protection against discrimination based on sex, gender, and sexual orientation.

In 2017 in Botswana, the high court made a landmark ruling on trans individuals, and their rights to change their gender marker in national documents. Small gains contribute to the larger movement in terms of recognition and visibility of one's rights as trans and gender diverse individuals.

A speaker told of growing up as a transgender woman in Zimbabwe and indicated that it has not been easy. Trans people are continually criminalised and the constitution of Zimbabwe, which is the legal 'bible' of the country, does not recognise trans and intersex persons yet. As a result, trans persons constantly leave the country, and some seek asylum to start their transitioning, or development opportunities outside the country. There is a need to sensitise citizens to be more aware of the issues facing trans, gender diverse and intersex persons.

The speaker went on to indicate that in rural areas, people don't even know what terms to use for themselves thus they struggle to navigate society and are unable to access services.

There was discussion on transgender engagement with the Legislator General around policy and changing gender markers, but it has not been smooth

running. The speaker spoke about a podcast (Purple Royals) started in 2016, about trans lives in Zimbabwe.

The speaker ended off by saying that visibility is crucial so that we have role models and see that we are more than our sexuality and our gender identity.

In Zimbabwe the trans community gets hormonal treatment medication on the black market, which cause side effects. We can also share with our neighbours on how they might be able to assist us to get hormonal treatment medication in Zimbabwe, especially in hospitals and clinics.

The Second presenter works as a community mobiliser among trans and intersex communities in Botswana. They talked about the challenges trans people faced in Botswana based on research conducted on trans inclusion. The focus was on how trans persons access health, education, and employment in Botswana, It is difficult. The speaker discussed the work that LEGABIBO does in Botswana, and their engagement with schools and parent/teacher associations.

LEGABIBO works for inclusion for trans individuals to fully participate in national conversations and to ensure that there is visibility for trans people. As a member of SALC, LEGABIBO is currently working for SOGIE inclusion in the school curriculum.

The speaker discussed the shortage of hormonal treatment medication in Botswana, increased during the pandemic.

During the current pandemic, a challenge that trans people face is registration for the Covid-19 vaccination. There is also a concern around the side effects of the vaccine on those taking hormonal treatment medication.

It was pointed out that on-going concern for trans people everywhere are ID cards and access to mental healthcare.

Moving Forward

- The Trans movement in Africa needs funding. There is a need to strengthen the movement with more strategic and continuous improvement so that we are not left behind.
- We need decent education in terms of acceptance within our own families and communities. This is possible if we stand together. There's power in unity.
- It is necessary to capacitate the upcoming generation in terms of representation and visibility of ourselves and our legal gender status.



Session 11: Leaving No One Behind: The SDGs and LGBTIQ+ Inclusion

Speakers: **Anthony Oluoch, Micah Grsywnowicz, Monica Tabengwa, Richard Lusimbo, Melanie Judge**

Session Objectives

The objective of the session was to provide guidance to PAI conference participants on how to use SDG Voluntary National Reviews (VNRs) and Universal Periodic Reviews (UPRs) to advocate for LGBTIQ+ rights and inclusion. To give a substantive overview of how LGBTIQ+ issues relate to the SDGs, human rights obligations, and member state accountability. To give a concise explanation of the SDG Voluntary National Reviews – purpose, process, how to get involved when the government is open to activist involvement, how to write shadow reviews or other advocacy when government excludes activist involvement and learning from countries where LGBTIQ+ people have participated in the VNRs. To show the relationship between the UPRs and the VNRs using similar content for both processes, substantive links, lessons from LGBTIQ+ participation in the UPR processes and how to follow up VNRs and UPRs with further advocacy and accountability work.

Discussion

A brief introduction on the relevance of LGBTIQ+ issues to the SDGs and the relevance of the SDGs to LGBTIQ+ activists, was given. The SDGs having been adopted by UN member states in 2015, they were a “blueprint to achieve a better and more sustainable future for all”. The pledge to leave no one behind in “Agenda 2030”, a UN resolution which includes the SDG’s, commits countries to not only reach the poorest of the poor, but also to combating discrimination, marginalisation, and exclusion. While there is no explicit attention to LGBTIQ+

people in the official SDG declaration, there is ample room to include them (or to read in other factors such as sexual orientation, gender identity and expression) in SDG related actions, given the attention to **“sex,” “other status”** and the **“marginalised.”**

The presentation highlighted how LGBTIQ+ issues are relevant to some specific SDGs and targets.

A speaker highlighted that even though the SDGs are a voluntary framework, and they may not have obligations attached to them, it is one of the most inclusive documents to ever come out of the UN. They highlighted the need to focus on the language of the document.

The Voluntary National Reviews are a way for member states to report on their work on the national level around the SDGs.

At the global level, one of the tools that the LGBTIQ+ Stakeholder Group does is deliver the position paper. This is an obligatory condition every year and its executive summary is part of the formal documentation for the HLPF. Information: <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/>

While many of the participants had previously engaged with the UPR review process, most participants had not engaged with VNRs and were keen on getting more information and follow up with their organisations on ways in which to engage with the SDG processes. 94% of those who participated in the in-session poll indicated an interest in learning more beyond the content of the session and in knowing how to further engage with the VNRs and the broader SDG processes.

Moving Forward

- It was noted that Pan Africa ILGA and UNDP under its Inclusive Governance Initiative will be providing support to LGBTIQ+ activists in 17 countries to develop reports for inclusion in the SDG processes
- Some links to the VNR processes and broader SDG processes are:
 - [Handbook for the Preparation of Voluntary National Reviews \(2020 Edition\)](#)
 - [SDG Human Rights Data Explorer](#)
 - [Approaches and Methodologies for Civil Society Reporting on the SDGs and the 2030 Agenda: TAP Network Spotlight Reporting Guidelines](#)



Session 12: Covid-19 and Access to HIV Treatment and Care in the Democratic Republic of Congo

Speakers: **Modeste Mambo Amisi, Alphonse Kabwa Lumbwe, Dr Bahizire Riziki Richard**

Session Objectives

To share the role played by the LGBTIQ+ community members in the accompaniment of sexual minorities considering the lack of ARVs treatment during the pandemic to Covid-19 from May to December 2020 in the city Province of Bukavu.

Discussion

The session took the style of a discussion between activists from the DRC around HIV treatment and care, giving insight into the situation for LGBTIQ+ people in the country. It was noted that same sex relationships are illegal in the DRC and there is not protection for LGBTIQ+ people. LGBTIQ+ community in DRC is suffering because no legislative law to protect our community making it difficult to access health care

This means it is very difficult for LGBTIQ+ persons to access health care. One speaker gave detail of a clinic that they opened in 2012 specifically to treat sex workers and various minorities. Since the Covid-19 pandemic, it was difficult for patients to reach the various clinics, due to lockdown. Patients could not access their HIV treatment. In addition, there was a scarcity of facemasks, and they have vulnerabilities regarding their health. Implementation of these activities was not easy at all, but UNAIDS assisted with facemasks and more than 600 MSM sex workers were assisted.

Regarding the impact of Covid-19, one of the speakers said that there was a problem with vaccinations as the LGBTIQ+

community are not even thought about regarding the roll out of vaccine in eastern Congo, and there is a lot of movement between Rwanda, Uganda, and Burundi putting the LGBTIQ+ sector at risk. On top of this in east Congo there is no vaccination centre, vaccines are being delivered in Kinshasa, 2000 km away. In addition, the President has not been vaccinated and so is the case with many of the Ministers, which puts the sector at risk as there is no health care that supports us, and some of us are vulnerable as we are HIV positive. In addition to this the Minister of Health has been arrested for stealing Covid-19 funds. In short, what Covid-19 has done is simply amplified the problems that already exist in the DRC.

Moving Forward

- There should be stronger advocacy interventions addressed to the politicians in DRC.
- There should be a Memorandum of Understanding signed with the national union of people living with HIV/AIDS to ensure that they also are monitoring LGBTIQ+ people living with HIV.
- The community was hit hard by Ebola before, and organised sensitivity programmes and we were able to publish some documents, this is another time to do this.
- There needs to be mobilisation and communication strategies for better health care for LGBTIQ+ people.
- Clinics need to be made aware that they need to be more friendly sites.
- There is a need for advocacy for a change in legislation in the Congo.

Session 13: Growing and Preparing for the Future: A Perspective on LGBT Organisational and Individual Development

Speakers: **Robert Akoto Amofo, Omolara Oriye, Samuel Owiredu Hanson**

Session Objectives

To ensure the LGBTQ+ movement in Africa is strong and able to continue to work towards the welfare of LGBTQ+ people on the continent, there is need to strengthen individuals (activists, leaders, founders, executive directors, and volunteers) and ensure they are all well. LGBTQ+ organisations need to be supported by strong leadership structures and continually evaluated systems to deliver effectively functioning governance systems and sustainable financial inflows.

Discussion

The first speaker outlined the operations of The Initiative for Equal Rights (TIERs) in Nigeria.

Our capitalist oppressors are the same, they are here to enslave humans.

TIERs Nigeria came together to create space as a response to HIV treatment exclusion of MSM at the time. This was called the independence project. We helped people in the health care space in the context of the denial of fundamental freedoms.

We now do public health; HIV treatment and programming; advocacy; access to justice and freedom from violence.

We now have four departments: Health and wellness, Human rights, Finance, Knowledge management.

You need people who are visionaries, who want to achieve their goals, in our case we want equality, dignity and rights for everyone.

What helped TIERs to grow from HIV

treatment to its current state was visionary leadership which went beyond individual leadership.

Key questions we ask ourselves at TIERs are: what is our vision? What do we intend to achieve? How flexible are we? Are we listening? Are we accountable? Do all the staff and members have the space to speak their minds?

The well-being of the people who do the work is critical. We experience second-hand trauma and government clamp downs. Most systems around us are capitalist, and people do not matter.

People continue to be at the centre of what we do, you cannot prioritise profit over people. People carry the burden of this continent. Having the passion for change is not enough, there is a need for skills and education. Education about the issues we work with and the needs of the community. Whatever issue you want to advocate on, you need to understand the context, people and issues. This helps us navigate better as activists and organisations.

The second speaker spoke about organising in Ghana. The Centre for Popular Education and Human Rights Ghana (CEPEHRG) started in 1998 as a theatre group working on inclusion with UNAIDS. In 2003 it formed as an organisation.

Ghana does not allow registration of LGBT organisations, so we are a human rights organisation. At this time, we worked on MSM sexual health, human rights, education, and training. We did LGBT advocacy and leadership with a passion for serving our community at the time when no one was talking about it. The staff of the organisation all looked

up to the passion of the leader.

The organisation now has six peer educators, community volunteers, offering capacity building support of LGBT organisations with the basic structure that they need to establish themselves as organisation. We give credit where its due, we do training on novel issues that emerge. We get support from donors for staff to do professional courses in things like project management, resource mobilisation etc. wherever there are learning opportunities for our staff. We support our staff and volunteers. There are opportunities for staff to participate in ILGA conferences every 2 years. In the health project, some performing volunteers are allowed to become full-time staff we now have seven field and programme officers that were volunteers, and this has enabled them to progress with their lives.

Over the last 18 years there have been challenges even though Ghana is not explicit in the law. You cannot register an LGBT organisation, you have to register as a human rights organisation. There is a lot of discrimination when you are working with the LGBT community. You see the stigma when people do not want to interact with you. Human Resources has been a challenge to get the right

people to collaborate with you. Some people do not want to work with LGBT organisations, and they leave because of remuneration, our salaries are not on a par with mainstream.

Moving Forward

- Many queer people are excluded from education and job opportunities and many young people need to be brought on as volunteers. This is a socio-economic rights issue. For these young people to realise their economic rights they, need access to housing, they need food, water, and access to decent jobs.
- There needs to be a spotlight on funding for the wellbeing of people working in this space. Everyone is equally important. Funding is a major question.
- We are looking at integrating young people into spaces where they can receive education.
- Donors need to allow partner organisations to become involved in programme design. Often programmes are dumped on us to implement. Organisations need a voice and to be involved in how programmes are designed especially in emerging areas.



Session 14: Access to Justice in the West African Context

Speakers: **Ahodi Credo, Addis Sémèvo, Mousa Magazi Moumouni, Andrea Rose, Vanessa Anastasia Freeman**

Session Objectives

To analyse the access to religious, traditional, civil society, and government representatives regarding the access to justice and protection of LGBTQ persons. The purpose was to engage religious, civil society, and government representatives in round table discussions as a medium for constructive engagement on the protection and access to justice of LGBTQs persons in West Africa.

Discussion

The workshop took the format of a discussion between activists from Benin, Nigeria and Liberia, and the need to understand the law in one's respective country and know what regional bodies are available to report human rights violations.

Few people know about or are afraid of going to the ECOWAS (Economic Community of West African States) Court of Justice in Abidjan, Nigeria. This is a forum to get justice. People in the LGBTIQ+ community can go to this court to have their rights exercised. There may be some homophobic officials in this court, but this is a challenge everywhere. The main problem is that LGBTIQ+ individuals do not know their rights. It is difficult to access justice if people are afraid to seek it in courts.

The presenter gave an example of three people who were lynched in

Benin, they sued through the ECOWAS Court of Justice, and they won their case in court. The perpetrators were sentenced to 1 month in jail. There are constitutional courts in every country. However, the ECOWAS court of justice has a universal mandate to sanction local courts which fail to deliver on their human rights mandates.

For access to justice, we need to better train and inform ourselves. We need to do training in our community to understand the human rights mechanisms available to us in our country. Know the laws, know the mechanisms and how to access them. We can draw on other stakeholders, civil society, journalists, the world of artists, influential people, religious leaders, and security forces to assist us as LGBTIQ+ people. We need to do awareness raising - also for heterosexual people.

We need to understand that everybody has the right to access justice. This includes through international NGOs, like Amnesty International. In one of the cases, we had to call up our allies powerful people, to find justice. They are community leaders who could help us carry our voices to be heard. This is the role that each stakeholder may play in accessing justice. It all begins with us.

The speaker urged LGBTIQ+ people in West Africa to use the ECOWAS forum to access justice.

Moving Forward

- The ECOWAS Court of Justice is a court that has authority to deal with and deliver justice in all its member countries.
- It is critical that people know their rights at country level and go to the Constitutional court in your country. If these fail then it is important to understand the regional forums, for example the ECOWAS Court of Justice and the African Union.



Session 15: Promoting Mental Health Among LGBTQ Women in West Africa

Speakers: **Melody Boateng, N'Deye Tille' Traore**

Session Objectives

Informing and raising awareness about violence regarding LGBTQ mental health, advocating for the reduction of mental problems among LGBTQ women, Breaking the silence about violence against LGBTQ Women in West Africa.

Discussion

The first speaker described the situation and context in Benin and West Africa which is getting increasingly hostile and economically unstable. When women become victims of violent attack, our organisation takes stock of the situation and try to help them. The organisation hosts a series of conversations with messages on security and safety for women. We try to reach out to LGBTQ women that cannot reach us. We are informed through our community networks and offer support where we can. We set up support groups through which we make donations, provide legal information and mental health training.

LBTQ women are not recognised, we want to change how we defend ourselves in terms of rights and the violence towards LGBTIQ+ people. Physical pain, and all the trauma leads to mental conditions, even when we are not physically attacked, we are not able to express what we feel. We experience discrimination on all the doors we knock on including the police and the churches.

LBTQ women experience lots of violence in Benin. They do not have the experience and capacity to defend and fight for rights.

In Mali, some LGBTQ women have had to leave the country. As a rule, in West Africa, LGBTIQ+ people are less accepted. If you see a lady dressed as a man, it is taken with disdain. We have religious fundamentalism which leads to serious human right violations. There is no support, equity, or justice for victims.

We have sought help from donor organisations, and we try to provide support to the members of our community. For four years we have had an alliance who support us. It includes doctors, lawyers, and police. We turn to the alliance to seek help. In 2020 we registered 225 cases of sexual and gender-based violence against women, we notice that the number of cases has reduced by 50% since we started. This includes Bamako, the capital city, and other parts of the country, which proves that we have had a real impact, and we have now turned to our funder to help further support. We want to reduce the violence committed against LGBTIQ+ people.

We are currently trying to set up a shelter for women, especially trans women who are the most exposed to violence in the country. Some women are frequently raped, so we need to do something to provide support and protect them from these acts of violence.

Moving Forward

- People need to be trained to communicate in an appropriate manner that will eradicate discrimination that we experience.
- There is a lack of appropriate services to deal with our mental health care.
- We need training on human rights legal instruments and how to apply law in the cases of violence.
- We want to have an emergency fund for LGBTIQ+ individuals when they run into trouble, with clear criteria on how to access it. This should be available to all LGBTIQ+ individuals in West Africa.
- LGBTIQ+ organisations need to build their organisational capacities to train health workers in providing services.
- Even our leaders suffer violence which affects their mental health. We may not notice it, but it affects us – it causes fear.



Session 16: The Peculiarity of LGBTQ Women in Accessing Social Justice in Nigeria

Speakers: Marian N, Nandi Msezane, Shamim, Magnus Jamal Venance, Akudo Oguaghamba, Hadiza Selaboy, Oniyide Oluwaseun, Otubo Margreth Shade, Mary-Ann Olaoye

Session Objectives

The presentation aims to propose innovative solutions to mitigate the challenges faced by LGBTQ women in Nigeria, to inform interventions and programs tailored specifically for the needs of LGBTQ women in Nigeria.

Discussion

LGBTQ women are affected by several laws that impact on their rights, LGBTQ women have different status from what society defines as the “norm”. Society is already against them-illiteracy, socio-economic well-being, and laws criminalise their very existence, making it difficult to ask for services or to seek justice when their rights have been violated, or to access health services. Policies contain heteronormative values in Nigeria which do not take into consideration that some people in Nigeria do not follow the same path as these policies envisage. These laws do not take the uniqueness of LGBTQ women into consideration.

There are laws in Nigeria that give men the right to batter their wives or beat a woman. As a woman, when you experience gender-based violence, you go to access justice, you will notice the law enforcement agencies and courts pitted against you. You must prove yourself beyond what a man is required to do. You must prove that you are not mad and that you are not to be blamed in any way. If they perceive any little blimp in relation to you, then your case is gone. The presenter cited a case where a woman was raped and the police refused to open a case docket, and they

insulted the complainant. They sought to determine how she was dressed before they would help her. This is a common occurrence in Nigeria.

When systems are in place that oppress you as a woman, you internalise these inhumanities against your person, instead of seeking justice. It is difficult for LGBTQ women to be part of society; they want to disappear because the society is already against them. When we look at health services, you go to the hospital to access health services, to care for yourself, the health workers, have also internalised heteronormativity.

Nigeria ranks as number 18 out of 134 countries in terms of the Gender Equality index (world bank study 2008). Women are highly disadvantaged. Boys' rights are prioritised in politics, in education, and in the economy. There is Greater disadvantage in minority groups. As a woman, a diverse sexual person living with a disability, living with HIV, you are subjected to discrimination greater than other women or anyone else in the society. Women are subjected to discrimination from early days of their lives, at the institutions of education, moreover LGBTQ women get heavily bullied in school. To avoid the abuse, they start skipping school-discrimination, stigma, family rejection-have denied them freedom of expression.

Most LGBTQ women are deprived of access to education. We also get discriminated against in our workspaces, we get bullied, and get harassed. Our research shows there is a **21%** unemployment increase among LGBTQ women.

Covid-19 has further expanded the gap that we face. It has increased the vulnerability of LGBTQ women even more than before. The socio-economic position of women has negatively impacted the participation of women in political decision-making bodies, participation is unaffordable for them. Since 1999 we have no female elected governors in Nigeria. There are only nineteen women in power, and these are assumed to be heterosexual. As an LGBTQ woman in Nigeria you must deny yourself freedom of expression, because you are not only discriminated against as a woman but also an LGBTQ woman.

The perception, however, is changing slowly, if the change we desire will not come in isolation and we must look at building alliances with other civil society organisations and take an intersectional approach in our advocacy efforts. We need to understand the issues faced by women in general, and in addition to LGBTQ women, and take this into feminist spaces and organisations to push the agenda forward.

We need to focus on coalition building and building the women's movement. Strengthening organisations that need it, building alliances with other organisations especially other minority groups. If you solve one part, you solve the other. We are looking at moving coalitions forward. We need to form a united front. We want to achieve inclusive policies.

Moving Forward

- Movement building is important; We need to hold each other and fight for our rights. PAI has a role in making movement building happen.

- Advocacy at grassroots level is important and should target families, religious leaders, and organisations.
- Female judges need to be educated in these concepts as they allow their religious and cultural backgrounds to cloud their judgement. People must understand that everyone must enjoy their rights.
- We will not give up, we will keep pushing until we achieve a society that is free of all forms of discrimination.
- Advocacy strategies focused on LGBTIQ+ rights and freedoms must be focused not only changing legislation but should also address prejudice and public opinion.
- To address the socio-economic and political environment of our context, we need to look at how we can improve the economic status of women in our community.
- Intergenerational leadership is paramount for the community and the entire movement. Recognise the generational gap in the community and the movement.
- We need cross generational leadership based on mutual respect, empathy and understanding.
- Use the CORE method: C : Collaboration, O : Objectives, what do you want to achieve? R: Rights know them; E : Empowering.
- Take care not to get to a state of burn out. Prioritize your health. Rest and take time to do what you must, to recharge your battery. Love yourselves without apology. Know that you are loved, do what you love. Mental health is critical.

PAI 5th REGIONAL CONFERENCE DECLARATION

Activists, speakers, and participants on the ground and online across Africa attending the PAI 5th Regional Conference, Reclaiming Our Past – Defining Our Future gathered in their hundreds to discuss the challenges and triumphs in the lives of LGBTIQ+ individuals.

This was a unique conference as it was held together by a spirit of Pan Africanism. Looking at the ways in which we can progress as a movement, framing our issues from our lived realities and finding solutions to our problems.

On Advocacy and Building Allies

- We recognise that we, as activists, can learn from each other in our different countries, particularly those countries that have achieved some level of legal reform. We see the importance of organising regionally due to the similarity in contexts as this will strengthen messaging that is shared with the public. We note that neo-colonialism is still a reality and that it is important to keep this in mind in all the work we do while creating advocacy strategies that speak to our own unique contexts.

- We note that beyond the law, there is a need to sensitise societies about LGBTIQ+ people. We must do this in order for societal attitudes to change at the same pace as laws.

- We note with concern that as the LGBTIQ+ movement, we have not been inclusive of all our diversities and pledge to broaden our narratives to include everyone, especially intersex, trans and gender diverse persons, in all our conversations.

- We recognise that LGBTIQ+ refugees and asylum seekers exist in our countries and that they face challenges that are unique to their context and immigration status. We therefore need to be intentional in addressing these challenges as a movement.

- We commit to taking an intersectional approach in our activism and partner with other movements that are focused on economic and social justice including the role of women in our societies. We shall intentionally enshrine feminist ideals in all our activism.

- In our commitment to be intentionally inclusive, we commit to always consider the fact that language can be a barrier to accessing information and services and ensure that we speak to everyone at the table in a language that is accessible to them.

On Movement Building and Sustainability

- We categorically state that our community shall no longer be silenced and during the next phase of developing the movement there shall be emphasis on sustainability of organisations and networks.
- We reiterate need to ensure that all sectors within the LGBTIQ+ community are given due attention in order to build our movement. This includes youth activists and leaders who need to be nurtured to take the movement forward.
- We underscore the critical role of ensuring that the economic well-being of the sector is strengthened in order to build a sustainable movement.
- We note with grave concern that there have been allegations of financial and personnel abuse in organisations. We pledge to ensure that mechanisms are in place to hold leaders within our movement to account where fairness and due diligence in all we do are essential. We shall build proper governance structures and where there is a need, enhance the capacity of the organisations to build them.
- We recognise that digital security is becoming a big area of concern through the growing reliance on the digital space for movement building. We pledge to address all the safety risks that come with this.

On Funding

- We commend the donor community for the innovative ways in which they have approached funding for the LGBTIQ+ community in Africa. We however urge them to remain proactive and allow partner organisations to engage in programme design and self-driven implementation especially in emerging areas.
- We emphasise the need to enhance the capacity of the movement in fund raising for their activities and sustainability.
- We reiterate the need for full and equitable access to funds for the community. This is especially true for intersex, trans and gender diverse networks.
- Recognising the need for intersectional approaches to our activism, we urge funders to help build a strong and healthy movement by providing grants geared towards achieving this.
- We underscore the critical need for improving our movement's well-being and the mental health of those who work within it. We therefore urge funders to take these areas into account in their grants and include psycho-social support and mental health wellness in their grants.

On Mental Health and Well Being

- We recognise the need to provide mental health support for LGBTIQ+ individuals across the continent. We note that the Covid-19 pandemic has exacerbated the challenges faced by everyone, particularly those in our community around maintaining their mental health and well-being.
- We reiterate the need for our community to mobilise around networking with each other in order to gain strength to fight for our rights. We do so by celebrating the wins and commiserating in the losses in our movement.

- We note with concern that accessing mental health care services in rural areas is very difficult. We pledge to make effort to address stigma and discrimination and open spaces for conversations around mental health. Normalising conversations around mental health in our communities will make it easier for people to seek help when they need it.
- We emphasise the need for training in counselling within our networks so that we can recognise when someone is in a mental health crisis and thus give support or assist in trying to find appropriate mental health care.

On Understanding the Law

- We commit to critically look at the movement and shifts in the laws of our various countries on the continent and work together to make positive changes.
- We recognise the need for training on human rights mechanisms that exist on our continent and beyond as well as ways in which we can apply them to cases of violations of our rights.
- We note that it is critical to ensure that activists within our movement understand the remedies available to them nationally, regionally, and internationally. Understanding that once local remedies have been exhausted, there are potential recourses at structures including the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights (ACHPR) and the United Nations Human Rights Council (UNHRC)
- Recognising the strengths and successes of strategic litigation, we note that this may not, in every case and context, be effective and we therefore need to be strategic in our dialogue and messaging.

On The Self


- We, as activists, recognise the incredible importance of prioritising our health. We recognise that we need to take time to reflect on our work, to rest, to recharge and to love ourselves, in all our diversities, without apologies.
- We pledge to accept and love the people we are and to believe in ourselves wherever we go!



ABBREVIATIONS AND GLOSSARY

ACPHR:	African Commission of People's and Human Rights
AC:	African Commission
AGM:	Annual General Meeting
AU:	African Union
CBO:	Community Based Organisation
CEDAW:	Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women
CEPEHRG:	Centre for Popular Education and Human Rights Ghana
Cisgender:	Denoting or relating to a person whose sense of personal identity and gender corresponds with their gender assigned at birth
COC	
Nederland:	A Dutch organisation for LGBT people
Covid-19:	Coronavirus
CRPD:	Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities
CSOs:	Civil Society Organisations
CSW:	Commission on the Status of Women
ECOWAS:	The Economic Community of West African States
FEW:	Forum for the Empowerment of Women
HIV/AIDS:	Human Immunodeficiency Virus and Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome
IAM:	Inclusive and Affirmative Ministries
ILGA:	International Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, and Intersex Association
ISDAO:	Initiative Sankofa d'Afrique de l'Ouest
ISHR:	International Service for Human Rights
ISSA:	Intersex South Africa
ITF:	International Transgender Fund
LBQ:	Lesbian, Bisexual and Queer Women
LGBTIQ+:	Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, and Intersex
LGBTIQ+:	Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Intersex and Queer Plus
M&E:	Monitoring and Evaluation
MTR:	Mid-Term Review

NGO:	Non-Governmental Organisation
NPO:	Non-Profit Organisation
PAI:	Pan Africa International Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, and Intersex Association
POP:	Power of Pride
SADC:	South African Development Community
SALC:	Southern African Litigation Centre
SDG:	United Nations 2030 Strategic Development Goals
SOGIESC:	Sexual Orientation, Gender Identity and Expression, and Sex Characteristics
SRHR:	Sexual and Reproductive Health Rights
STIs:	Sexually Transmitted Infections
TIERS:	The Initiative for Equal Rights
UHAI:	East African Sexual Rights Initiative
UN:	United Nations
UNAIDS:	United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS
UNDP:	United Nations Development Programme
UNHRC:	United Nations Human Rights Council
UNICEF:	United Nations Children's Fund
UNFPA:	United Nations Population Fund
UPR:	Universal Periodic Review
WHER:	Women's Health and Equal Rights Initiative

The background features a vibrant orange gradient with stylized, colorful figures in traditional African attire. The figures are rendered in shades of red, yellow, purple, and green, with some wearing large, ornate headpieces. The style is reminiscent of traditional African art or textiles.

Pan Africa ILGA (PAI)
21 Village Road Selby Johannesburg
South Africa

admin@panafricailga.org

+27 11 339 1139

@panafricailga

<https://www.facebook.com/PanAfricalGA>

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