

URGENT ACTION FUND ♀

FOR WOMEN'S HUMAN RIGHTS



"The journey of a thousand miles begins with a single step"

LGBTI Organizing in East Africa:

The True Test for Human Rights Defenders

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December 2005

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Research conducted in Kenya, Uganda and Tanzania (2005)

Donor Roundtable held at Simba Lodge, Naivasha, Kenya (October 24-25, 2005)

Ford Foundation-East Africa and Hivos have jointly commissioned the research and funded the roundtable and this report as part of their efforts to provide insight into the situation of LGBTI communities in the countries of East Africa and to seek ways to enhance the development of those communities, in the ways they choose.

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Acronyms and Abbreviations

AIDS	Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome
MSM	Men who have Sex with Men
BTM	Behind The Mask
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
CSO	Civil Society Organization
OSIEA	Open Society Institute East Africa
EA	East Africa
SMUG	Sexual Minorities Uganda
FGM	Female Genital Mutilation
TRP	The Rainbow Project
GALZ	Gays and Lesbians Zimbabwe
UAF-Africa	Urgent Action Fund – Africa
HIV	Human Immunodeficiency Virus
VCT	Voluntary Counseling and Testing
HR	Human Rights
WSW	Women who have Sex with Women
LGBTI	Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Intersex

Some Useful Words¹

¹Access to Rights, Access to Services, "An ABC of LGBTI: A Resource Guide for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender and Intersex People," South Africa (2003).

Bisexual/Bisexuality

People who are emotionally, physically and sexually attracted to both men and women.

Coming Out

When we share our identity as a lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender or intersex (LGBTI) person, usually as part of a process over a period of time.

Gay/Gay men

Men who are emotionally, physically and sexually attracted to men, and who identify as gay. Gay is sometimes used broadly to mean gay men and women, although many women prefer to be referred to as lesbian.

Gender identity

Our psychological and social sense of who we are as male or female.

Hate crimes

When specific groups are targets of crimes involving physical and mental abuse, like rape, assault and name-calling (defamation).

Heterosexual

People who are emotionally, physically and sexually attracted to people of the opposite sex.

Heterosexism

The assumption or belief that everyone is heterosexual, or, if not, that they should be.

Heteronormative

Used to describe and often criticize the manner in which many social institutions and social policies are seen to reinforce the beliefs that human beings fall into two distinct and complementary categories, male and female; that sexual and marital relations are normal only when between two people of different genders; and that each gender has certain natural roles in life.

Homophobia/Homophobic

Irrational fear of, hatred against and disgust towards homosexuals or homosexuality. It can result in people not wanting to associate with lesbians and gay men.

Homosexual

Used to describe people who are physically, emotionally, and sexually attracted to people of the same sex. Homosexual is a term more commonly used to refer to gay men, than gay women.

Some Useful Words

Intersex people	People born with full or partial genitalia of both sexes, or with underdeveloped or ambiguous genitalia, or with unusual hormone or chemical combinations. The existence of intersex people challenges the idea that there are only two biological sexes.
Internalize	When we feel something within ourselves, e.g. If we internalize homophobia, we hate ourselves because of our sexual orientation.
Lesbian/Lesbian women	Women who are emotionally, physically and sexually attracted to women, and who identify as lesbian.
Mainstream	Treat as part of everyday life, e.g. by mainstreaming LGBTI issues, we ensure they are dealt with as part of policies, laws, procedures and service delivery.
Prejudice	An opinion, usually negative, formed beforehand without having valid facts or reasons.
Sexual diversity	Being open to and including a range of ways of expressing sexuality, e.g. bisexuality, heterosexuality, homosexuality, transsexuality.
Sexual orientation	Whether we are homosexual (lesbian or gay), bisexual or heterosexual. Our sexual orientation shapes our emotional, romantic or sexual attraction to others.
Transgender people	People who have male and female personalities in the way they express aspects of their gender. Some transgender people are referred to as androgynous when they express their masculine and feminine 'sides' equally, or do not identify as male or female.
Queer	The term used to refer to lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender or intersex (LGBTI) people – those whose sexual orientation and/or gender identity or gender expression does not conform to heteronormative societal norms.

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First, we would like to express our gratitude and admiration for the courage of all the LGBTI persons in East Africa who were willing to participate in the research and donor roundtable discussions. We would also like to thank all those who continue to struggle to build the movement. Their contributions have made a significant input to this report.

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We would also like to thank Zawadi Nyong'o and Jane Kiragu for writing and editing this report. Finally, thank you to the staff of UAF-Africa, for their efforts in ensuring the success of this process.

Memorable Quotes

"It is not difficult to reject cases of discrimination put before you which are already rejected by public opinion. However, the true test of our commitment to human rights comes when you have to respond to stigmas and discriminations that are still widely upheld by the authorities and general public."

EDWIN CAMERON, SOUTH AFRICAN JUDGE

"When political statements are made about rape, they should include lesbian women."

IAN SCHWARZ, THE RAINBOW PROJECT, NAMIBIA

"The very fact that women who love women are meeting at a bar is organizing and revolutionary in a country where women are not meant to meet in bars, and most importantly not meant to love each other."

KARUGU NGURU, CO-FOUNDER OF UHURU WAZOBIA

"Action is the only remedy to today's challenges and in order to do this effectively, we need to work collectively against human rights abuses."

VICTOR JULIET MUKASA, LESBIAN ACTIVIST, UGANDA

"LGBTI activism in East Africa is in its incipient stage and stands where the gay movement was 40-50 years ago in most western countries. Threats of the movement faltering or falling to pieces are typical of such movements that operate within the context of an illegal regime."

SYLVIA TAMALE, MAKERERE UNIVERSITY LAW FACULTY DEAN

"When gay people hear that something is happening, word goes around faster than the internet." **MEMBER OF ISHTAR, KENYA**

Preface

This report is the outcome of two processes; an LGBTI research study and deliberations of an international donor roundtable held in Kenya in October 2005. The donor roundtable convening was organized by the Urgent Action Fund-Africa with support from the Ford Foundation Office for Eastern Africa and HIVOS .

The study has reaffirmed that sexuality and sexual matters remain taboo subjects within most of the region. The gradual but slow realization that same-sex relationships are based upon fundamental human rights and freedom is slowly though reluctantly “seeping” across the region. The cultural and religious biases continue to discriminate and inhibit the full realization of the LGBTI communities. The “closeted” lifestyle of LGBTI’s transcends the region and is a direct violation of an individual’s right to association and freedom of choice. Notwithstanding the silence surrounding human rights of LGBTI groups, their very existence has facilitated public discourse on the indivisibility of human rights and poses the challenge to human rights activists selectively working around some human rights issues.

This report presents a challenge of our times to human rights activists who are called upon to embrace the whole range of human rights in their advocacy work, if the enjoyment of human rights is to become a reality. The protection of minorities and particularly sexual minorities is a special and significant aspect of human rights work. The research findings, amongst other things have facilitated a closer reflection on the current donor strategies in the East African sub region. It has given rise to the exploration of different avenues for change and improvement, as well as begin a process of designing strategies and frameworks for engaging LGBTI activists in the promotion of sexual rights in the region.

This report captures some of the critical challenges that hinder the advancement of sexuality debate and sexuality rights, including the absence of space for dialogue on the issues of sexuality, the society’s homophobia towards same-sex relationships as well as the capacity gap by mainstream human rights and women’s rights organizations for integrating LGBTI issues within their work and activism. In considering the research findings, there was general agreement that homophobia has significantly contributed towards the publicly exhibited attitudes to any sexual minorities, which ultimately removes them from the protection afforded by law enforcement agencies

with accompanied isolation, exclusion and other forms of discrimination. Thus LGBTI groups operate within private and isolated spaces for fear of being threatened by the law and ostracized, thus hampering and infringing on their enjoyment of human rights. Within a region (East Africa) where activism for the respect, protection and promotion of human rights has made advance gains, the silent endorsement that “sexual orientation” is not considered a human rights issue presents a contradiction and a paradox. This is the unfortunate back drop upon which LGBTI initiatives are to be pursued within the region. This report is one of the strategies through which the space for dialogue on sexuality in East Africa may be expanded.

Kaari B. Murungi
Director, Urgent Action Fund-Africa

Executive Summary

This report presents a consolidated assessment of the LGBTI movement in East Africa through a research study that formed the basis of in-depth and critical review at an international donor roundtable in October 2005. The report has consolidated the research findings and the deliberations as well as incorporated the experiences of activists from Southern Africa; Namibia and South Africa

The report captures the context within which the LGBTI movement is currently working – a context which is politically and socially exclusionary to the rights and needs of sexual minorities. While it has been extremely difficult to organize and build an LGBTI movement in the East Africa context, the report seeks to demonstrate the successes and challenges that the LGBTI movement has continued to face. Most importantly, it is noted that due to the socio-cultural environment as well as the legal restrictions imposed, internet mobilization and organizing as well as other informal organizing form the platform for LGBTI work in the region. These levels of informality present challenges to effective movement building as communication is often on the “net” and building synergy or structured institutions is almost impossible.

The experiences from Southern Africa are shared as a model from which East African LGBTI groups may shape themselves. They acknowledge that the political and social contexts differ and that some of the challenges currently faced in East Africa are similar to those experienced in South Africa and Namibia. However, the groups present a wide range of strategies that may be utilized to advance and build an East Africa LGBTI movement.

In exploring ways in which the East African LGBTI movement may be enhanced, the report presents some of the areas for support that would energize and revitalize LGBTI organizing. These include capacity building, peer initiative support, sensitization of mainstream civil society, research amongst others.

In concluding this report, lessons learnt from the research, critical reviewers input, activists experience as well as deliberations of the donor roundtable are consolidated to inform how the approaches to LGBTI organizing would look like. The importance of context specific analysis as well as recognizing existing mobilization and organizing models are highlighted. The greatest challenge that remains is how indeed the LGBTI movement work shall be framed and integrated in the wider human rights and sexuality work with a view to ensuring advances made in these aspects are inclusive, sensitive and gay friendly.

Introduction

The area of LGBTI organizing in East Africa is a vast and culturally complex field that requires in-depth analysis and research. While this report is an earnest attempt to address many of the broad patterns and concerns faced by LGBTI groups in the region, it must be noted that it is the first of its kind, and can therefore only give a broad and general orientation on what it is like for sexual minorities to organize themselves in Kenya, Uganda and Tanzania.

This report is based on research findings undertaken in the area of LGBTI organizing, which formed the deliberations of the donor roundtable discussion that took place in October 2005 in Kenya. The Tanzania research was undertaken well after the donor roundtable and the findings have been integrated in this publication but were not discussed at the roundtable. The roundtable benefited from activists from Southern Africa who shared their experiences and lessons learnt in organizing for sexual minorities in their region. The research sought to investigate the historical, political, cultural and economic contexts in which LGBTI groups exist. Many of the issues discussed in this document are only briefly mentioned and definitely deserve more in-depth analyses in future studies. Nonetheless, the research findings and information gathered from various stakeholders can be used to visualize the East African LGBTI movement, bring together potential allies, and help define policies that support sexual minorities.

Discrimination of LGBTI persons is common all over the world. People often cite politics, tradition or religion as reasons to be extremely intolerant to LGBTI persons, and internally punish those who deviate from heteronormativity and/or gender stereotypes. Discrimination of sexual minorities can be in the form of criminalization of homosexuality, institutionalized homophobia, abuse in state institutions, pathologizing, forced medication and cruel treatments, neglect of the existence and needs of LGBTI people with disabilities, young and elderly LGBTI persons, diminished access to health care, work place discrimination and violence and harassment from official state representatives including execution. Social repression with or without state tolerance can be manifested in the form of verbal abuse, silence, ridicule, hate crimes, “corrective rape” of lesbians, honor related violence and forced marriage². Some of the specific institutionalized and other forms of discrimination that LGBTI persons in East Africa experience are highlighted in this report. Nonetheless, the main focus is on understanding the experiences and challenges faced by formally/ informally organized LGBTI groups in the region.

The purpose of the research was to investigate the experiences of LGBTI groups in Kenya, Uganda and Tanzania, identify challenges faced, and provide local and international donors with the necessary information to develop clear strategies to help support the movement in the region. The researcher, commissioned by Ford Foundation and Hivos, was able to interview representatives of 9 LGBTI groups in Uganda, 6 in Kenya, 3 in Tanzania and 40 mainstream CSOs/NGOs in the three countries. While a significant amount of information was gathered within a very short period of time, there are still a few issues that may need to be investigated deeper.



Left to right; Thuli Madi, Madeleine Maurick and Carla Sutherland at the donor roundtable

²SIDA Report, "Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity Issues in Development," by Samelius and Wagberg (November 2005) pp. 23.

The Context for LGBTI Organizing in East Africa

Madeleine Maurick's research on LGBTI in East Africa is a necessary precursory comparative analysis of LGBTI in Kenya, Uganda and Tanzania. It illuminates the multiple ways in which LGBTI groups struggle and survive and some of the unexpected partnerships they have developed. In order to get a clearer understanding of the context in which LGBTIs are able or not to organize themselves in East Africa, the researcher met with representatives of several human rights NGOs, CSOs and foreign embassies. The responses from these organizations and institutions varied from having a clear understanding of the need to include LGBTI rights in the human rights agenda, to having a very conservative and even homophobic attitude towards these issues. Many mainstream organizations argue that it is impossible to fight for a group of people that are invisible, and that LGBTIs should lead the way by speaking out for themselves. Nonetheless, they fail to realize that they can help break the silence by creating an enabling and safe environment for this criminalized group of society to step out. By failing to be a part of the solution, they remain part of the problem.



Tamme Hansma (Hivos) and Madeline Maurick (Consultant) share a light moment.

General Overview

One of the most efficient ways that patriarchy uses sexuality as a tool to create and sustain gender hierarchy in African societies, is by enshrouding it in secrecy and taboos. Another option is to use the law to prohibit all “sex outlaws” in the social ghettos of society. Prominent among the sex outlaws that have historically resisted and subverted dominant cultures are homosexuals, bisexuals and transgendered individuals. By maintaining a tight grip on certain activities, and silencing the voices of those individuals and groups that engage in them, the patriarchal state makes it extremely difficult for these individuals and groups to organize and fight for their human rights. Socio-cultural norms and religious beliefs (such as virginity testing, female genital mutilation, female chastity, occult sexuality, taboos around polyandry, and so on) constitute the screws that keep the calm of sexual repression firmly in place³.

Political, cultural and religious fundamentalisms have played a crucial role in suppressing and stifling sexual pluralism in East Africa. Any variation in sexual activity and sexual partners from heteronormativity is considered “pathological”, “deviant”, “unnatural”, and condemned in the strongest possible terms. The gendered politics implicit in these views are crucial, since sexual activities that go against the grain of mainstream ones subvert conventional gendered relations and hierarchies. Sexuality therefore becomes a critical site for maintaining patriarchy and reproducing African women’s oppression⁴.

The gendered dimensions of sexuality are very clear when we consider the implicit erasure of lesbian activity in Kenyan, Ugandan and Tanzanian societies. The laws seem to be more preoccupied with male-on-male sex, while dominant phallogentric culture maintains the stereotype of women as the passive recipients of penetrative male pleasure. In fact, sex that is not penetrative does not count as “real” sex. In Kenya laws for example, rape is currently defined to anticipate male penetration to the vagina. Furthermore, African women’s sexuality is often reduced to their conventional mothering role, and conflated with their reproductive capacities⁵. What is therefore particularly threatening to patriarchy is the idea of intimate same-sex relationships where a dominating male is absent, and where women’s sexuality can be defined without reference to reproduction. The main factor in the patriarchal equation is missing; that is, power along sex lines, and thus the preservation of the gender hierarchy⁶.

The mainstream aversion to same-sex relations consequently reflects a greater fear. Homosexuality threatens to undermine male power bases in the “private” sphere (at

the level of interpersonal relationships and conventional definitions of the “family”), as well as in public discourses (where myths abound about what it means to be a man or a woman). Homosexuality presents a challenge to the deep-seated masculine power within African sexual relations, and disrupts the core of the heterosexist social order.



(Left to right) Ian Shwarz (The Rainbow Project), Thuli Madi (Behind The Mask) and Cary Alan Johnson (International Gay and Lesbian Human Rights Commission) in Naivasha

³Tamale, Sylvia, “Out of the Closet: Unveiling Sexuality Discourses in Uganda,” *Feminist Africa: Issue 2* (2003).

⁴Ibid

⁵Tamale, Sylvia, “How Old is Old Enough?: Defilement Law and the Age of Consent in Uganda,” *East African Journal of Peace and Human Rights*, 7 (2001).

⁶Tamale, Sylvia, “Out of the Closet: Unveiling Sexuality Discourses in Uganda,” *Feminist Africa: Issue 2* (2003).

Experiences of LGBTI Groups in Kenya, Uganda and Tanzania

To begin with, LGBTI is not a term that is commonly used or understood in either of the countries under study. In fact, the LGBTI communities do not necessarily use the sexual identities “Lesbians, Gays, Bisexuals, Transgendered or Intersex” to describe themselves. In Uganda, urban homosexuals commonly refer to themselves as kuchus (singular-kuchu), but even then, it often does not imply conscious sexual politics⁷. In Kenya, the term MSM (men who have sex with men) is more commonly used, while shoga is a more derogatory term used by homophobic people. There are several stigmatized terms to describe homosexuals in East Africa. In Uganda, the commonest one is abasiyazi (others include kyafoko and eyumayuma) while in Kenya, they are referred to as shoga. In Tanzania shoga is commonly used whilst in Zanzibar the language of basha and msenge are vocabulary used within the gay community.

The complexities of Subversion: According to the research findings, the majority of gays and lesbians maintain heterosexual relationships, while very few transgendered individuals are out of the closet. This applies across the board within the three countries. Under the repressive conditions of state and religious-inspired homophobia in the region, it is not surprising that most homosexuals find it difficult to “come out” of their closeted lives, or to be open about their sexual orientation. Most blend within the wider society and even live under the cover of heterosexual relationships while maintaining their homosexual relationships underground. The tendency is to construct “comfort zones” where they complacently live a different and segregated lifestyle. Gay and lesbian clubs in particular offer comfort zones for homosexuals.

Family repression: Family intolerance to LGBTI persons may be the most difficult level of discrimination to combat and the one that will have the most thoroughgoing consequences. In East Africa, as in most parts of Africa, the family is the cornerstone of social life. Exclusion from the circle of the family thus results in economic and social hardship and possibly even difficulties for LGBTI people’s physical survival. On this level there is also the risk of deep psychological damage through exclusion or risk of exclusion and many LGBTI persons are forced to compromise their sexual orientation or gender identity to the point where they even comply with family ideals of marriage and procreation⁸. The fear of being “found out” and dealing with family repression is also one of the major issues that prevent sexual minorities from formally organizing

themselves. One Ugandan lesbian, for example, tells the story of how her association with a publicly active lesbian activist led to her being “found out” and ultimately resulted in her mother throwing her out of the house. The most extreme expression of family repression, however, is violence in the name of honor, which could even lead to murder.



International donor roundtable participants reflect on the research findings

⁷Tamale, Sylvia, “Review of Report on LGBTI in East Africa: The True Test Case for Human Rights Defenders,” by Madeleine Maurick (September 2005)

⁸SIDA Report, “Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity Issues in Development: A Study of Swedish Policy and Administration of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender Issues in International Development Cooperation,” by Samelius and Wagberg (November 2005) pp. 24.

LGBTI Organizing Successes in East Africa

Although LGBTI organizations in East Africa are faced with many challenges⁹, we must give them credit for some of the gains they have made in creating and building the movement. The following section identifies some of the successes these groups have had.

Political Activism: Some strong LGBTI activists are engaged in public activism and have helped politicize LGBTI issues. Their brave positions have also given credit to the few feminist and human rights activists that have taken public positions against homophobia and institutionalized forms of discrimination against sexual minorities. In Tanzania while not publicly presenting themselves as LGBTI, there are lobbying activities by LGBTI groups to support their members in seeking elective parliamentary representation with a view to amending the repressive laws that criminalize homosexuality and hoping to that through such entry they will forge and advance gay friendly politics.

Registration: A number of groups that focus on LGBTI issues have successfully managed to register their organizations. Most of these are HIV / AIDS organizations that provide services to sexual minorities, without necessarily openly admitting it. Others organize themselves in support groups and have sought to adhere to principles of good governance through electing their leadership.

Research: Several groups have made significant contributions to research that have been done on LGBTI issues in the region. This research is useful as it provides data and credible information with respect to the actual situation on the ground. These include amongst others:

- Life Realities of African Women
- HIV / AIDS & STIs in the MSM Community in Kenya
- Sex Behavior, HIV & Health Care in Uganda
- Tommy Boys, Lesbian Men and Ancestral Wives: Female Same Sex Practices in Africa

HIV/AIDS Policies: LGBTI groups have through the Liverpool Clinic VCT in Kenya successfully lobbied for the inclusion of MSM in national HIV / AIDS policies. This inclusion within official policy is a crucial entry to commence the mainstreaming of LGBTI concerns.

Public Awareness-Raising: Efforts have been made to sensitize the public and mainstream human rights and women's rights organizations on LGBTI issues, through meetings, radio and print media.

HIV/AIDS Education: Some organizations have focused on educating their members on HIV / AIDS and sexual health issues through workshops, discussion forums, referrals to VCT clinics, and condom and lubricant distribution. A few have also established peer education and outreach programs that specifically target poor LGBTI communities. In September 2004, LDI in Uganda organized an East African Symposium on HIV / AIDS & Human Rights.

Capacity Building: Several leaders of LGBTI groups in all the three countries have had opportunities to build their knowledge and skills through regional and international LGBTI forums, conferences, and workshops. Exposure to other African LGBTI organizations, though minimal, has helped create spaces for groups to share and exchange information and skills.

Umbrella Groups: Albeit plagued with internal conflict, umbrella organizations like Sexual Minorities Uganda (SMUG) have provided forums for LGBTI groups to come together. The value of working collaboratively brings strength and energy to the movement creating opportunities for sustained initiatives.

Internet Organizing: A number of gay websites have helped create safe spaces for hundreds of LGBTIs to interact with each other. In this way sharing of experiences, information, knowledge and challenges has provided room for encouragement, support and confidence building amongst one another...

Publications: A few LGBTI activists have agreed to do interviews, leading to the publication of a number of positive articles in the media. East African LGBTIs also contributed significantly towards the publication of the book, *Tommy Boys, Lesbian Men and Ancestral Wives: Female Same Sex Practices in Africa* (ed. R. Morgan, Saskia Wieringa).

Constitutional and Legal Reform: While positive changes have yet to be achieved, some LGBTI activists have engaged in Kenya's constitutional review process. That they submitted reports to the Constitution of Kenya Review Commission (CKRC) and lobbied the government through consultations with the Attorney General, is to be commended. The Tanzanian experience of mobilizing their membership to vie for elective office so

Participants at the "International Donor Roundtable On The Sexuality Field in East Africa", Naivasha, Kenya, 24-25 October 2005.



Seated (L-R): Madeline Maurick, Ian Schwarz, Thuli Madi, Jane Kiragu, Zawadi Nyong'o, Muadi Mukenge

Middle Row (L-R): Marijke Langeveld, Willie Pronk, Katherine Acey, Liz Makimaro, Cary Alan Johnson.

Back Row (L-R): Carla Sutherland, Nancy Kanyago, Tamme Hansma, Joo-Hyun Kang.

⁹See following section on challenges faced by LGBTI groups in East Africa.

Challenges Faced by LGBTI Groups that Participated in the Study

Diversity of approaches:

There is a significant divide between LGBTI activists who choose provocative radicalism versus those who focus on closeted or 'soft' activities. Some LGBTIs do not want to be associated with radical activists out of fear that their acquaintance might also expose them in public. Many prefer to organize social activities, rather than engage in risky political LGBTI activism. Failure of donors to recognize different approaches as constituting 'political' activism also presents challenges to these groups. Their inability to articulate their goals and activities as being LGBTI focused, also makes it difficult for them to build strategic alliances with leaders in mainstream society. Furthermore, most mainstream CSOs/NGOs refuse to engage with LGBTI issues due to homophobia, fear of government repression, and fear of loss of financial support from Christian or other religious donor organizations. While some leaders of women's and human rights organizations are LGBTI friendly and have been identified as possible allies, the entry point for most LGBTI groups is often not at the management level. Homophobic attitudes within the human rights movement therefore remain a huge obstacle to LGBTIs seeking support and representation.

Registration:

Most of the LGBTI groups that participated in the study are not registered as LGBTI groups, rather they operate within an umbrella of different activities such as HIV/AIDS or support groups. The criminalization of homosexuality¹⁰ has meant that groups either have to register under the pretext of non-LGBTI focused organizations, or fail to register because they are open about their real objectives. The implications of non-registration, means that they are not able to institutionalize any management and financial procedures to enable them source funds and implement coherent programs. Nevertheless, while some groups may only exist in name and do not actually have active members, many LGBTI activists continue to use these briefcase organizations to influence the system in order to forward their goals. This is understandable, and can be seen as stepping stone if resources gained are used to empower individuals who are committed to building the movement. Nonetheless, some individuals take

advantage of organization names to acquire funds for their own interests. Organizing joint activities has therefore been impossible because there is a lot of mistrust between LGBTI groups who are competing for funding and cannot agree on who will receive donor money on behalf of the other. Many groups therefore suffer from financial struggles, both due to inadequate funding, as well as poor financial management. Some group members complain of a lack of balance between funds allocated to program and infrastructure development. Finally, while some organizations claim to have paid staff, when interviewed, the researcher found out that many staff work on a volunteer basis, and do not even have money for transport.

Conflict and Power struggles:

LGBTI groups in the region are plagued with conflict and power struggles, both within and between organizations. One of the reasons for this is because they have to survive within hostile and disempowering environments and they are also competing for scarce funding. In addition, high expectations coupled with low self confidence, weak leadership, insufficient skills, and undefined organization goals and tasks, also contribute to fuelling conflicts in the LGBTI movement. Lack of transparency within and between some groups also weakens the movement by exacerbating feelings of exclusion and misunderstanding. There are also a number of claims that some leaders of certain LGBTI groups are not actually gay, but simply take on sexual minority identities in order to solicit funds for personal gain. High levels of mistrust therefore continue to divide LGBTI communities. Collaboration between gays, lesbians and bisexuals has also been stifled by internalized homophobia. Bisexuals are seen as always having the protection of marriage if push comes to shove, and are therefore not considered 'real' gays and lesbians, but traitors.

Internet organizing:

Since the internet can be used as a 'safe space' for LGBTI's to communicate, it has been used to mobilize sexual minorities in the countries covered under the study. Unfortunately, this mode of communication lends itself to accountability challenges because of its invisibility and anonymity. Cyber spaces like e-groups are therefore misused by members and have become outlets of frustration and disappointment. Accusations that may not be verified are made, thereby creating larger divisions within and between groups.

Gossip & Blackmail:

Accusations that some are not gay but straight and are in the movement only because of invitations overseas and other benefits, might be true. This in itself creates major tension between groups. Problems arise when gossip is accepted as proven fact, without sufficient means of verification. There is a saying within the LGBTI movement – “gay at the conference, straight at home.” The use of blackmail within LGBTI circles is also common. Threats to expose one another within an environment where the practice is criminalized without recourse to supportive law enforcement mechanism, place them in vulnerable positions. The fact that LGBTI people cut across the socio-economic divide places great challenge and opportunity for blackmail. Class differences between the groups also do not make things easier.

Media:

There have been a lot of media articles, in Uganda, that have had a negative impact on the LGBTI movement. In January 2004, for example, an article titled ‘Inside a lesbian den’ was published in the Ugandan tabloid Red Pepper, carrying pictures of two lesbian activists. A journalist from the tabloid had contacted and befriended one of the women, who then invited her to the lesbian bar and to her house. At the time, she was sharing a room with the other woman, who actually lived in her mother’s house. A photo album was shown to the journalist. As a result, a detailed story, including pictures and a description of the mother’s house appeared in the tabloid. This article had serious consequences, personal as well as organizational. One of them lost her job, while the other was thrown out of the house. The LGBTI group to which they belonged was also deeply troubled by all the exposure. Meetings therefore failed to proceed and the group retreated to having informal social gatherings in the lesbian bar. However, despite the hostile media coverage, each article on LGBTI contributes to opening up the debate and making the issue more public

Substance use and commercial sex work in the LGBTI community:

While the provision of social services to alcoholics, drug abusers, and sex workers, is limited in general, it is non-existent for LGBTIs. Nonetheless, LGBTI sex workers and substance abusers are amongst some of the most marginalized and vulnerable groups in society. Unfortunately, these groups are also extremely difficult to organize. This is not surprising because making a living out of sex, while surviving in the streets,

exposes them to violence, sexual abuse, police brutality, poverty, HIV / AIDS and STIs. LGBTI communities in the region, as in most parts of the world, also use alcohol and drugs to cope with their oppression. Unfortunately, this creates volatile environments where confidentiality is threatened, thereby creating even more conflicts between an already alienated and divided community.

Lack of support from other LGBTIs:

There is general reticence, complacency and apathy of minority groups to challenge oppressive structures. This is especially true of middle class gays and lesbians, who are in a better position to change things than most, but are not willing to. According to one Kenyan LGBTI group leader, many sexual minorities are not active in the movement because they claim to have ‘moved on’. “Most of them are married because their families kept asking about their grandchildren. Pretending to live ‘the African life’, they organize gay parties for themselves,” he says. In Zanzibar island, where there is an extensive gay population there is silent acknowledgment. In fact, so long as they do not attract attention or make public statements about it there is harmony – the pressure to marry and have an “heir” results to some being bi-sexual.

Donor and international community roles:

So far, the donor and international community have had as much difficulty working together as the LGBTI groups. In Uganda, for example, in just a few months, 6 different initiatives were undertaken to meet with LGBTI groups to analyze the present situation. Such international responses to crises might only add to all the confusion, more especially if these efforts are not coordinated. The present initiative by Ford Foundation and Hivos may indicate a turn for the better, as it brings together both LGBTI groups in East Africa and donors in the field of LGBTI

Exclusion of WSW, Transgender and Intersex:

While great strides have been made to include MSM in HIV / AIDS policies in Kenya, the same is not true for WSW. Most health care providers fail to recognize that WSW are also at risk of HIV / AIDS infection. Specific reproductive and sexual health needs of WSW are therefore not met. The same applies for transgender and intersex people. Efforts to create an inclusive and integrated health care system must therefore be made.

¹⁰Kenya Penal Code, Uganda Penal Laws and Tanzania's Penal Code refer to homosexuality as unnatural offences with penalties ranging from ten to fifteen years imprisonment.

Similarities in Kenya, Uganda and Tanzania

Sexual minority rights in Kenya, Uganda and Tanzania have yet to be included in human rights frameworks. This is not surprising, considering the historical, cultural and political contexts in which they exist. Historically, all the three countries regained their independence from the British in the early '60s and have since been suffering the negative consequences of authoritarian rule and corruption, leading to the underdevelopment of economic and social systems. The development of a strong local human rights culture has therefore been very limited in the region, thereby directly affecting how sexual minorities are organizing themselves.

Currently, there are very few women's and human rights organizations or institutions in Kenya, Uganda and Tanzania that actively support the LGBTI movement. While some organizations are open to discussing LGBTI issues, and understand the need for promoting an all-inclusive human rights approach, most are extremely conservative and do not recognize LGBTI rights at all. Many organizations argue that there are more important issues to attend to, including poverty and development. Women's rights organizations are especially reluctant to address LGBTI issues, because they are afraid the gains they may have made in the women's rights struggle might be threatened. This is not surprising since they operate in patriarchal societies that have been known to resist any changes which may upset the status quo. Unfortunately, a clear link between the women's movement and the LGBTI movement has not yet been made, where the containment of sexual rights is concerned. Most Kenyans and Ugandans are also vehemently anti-LGBTI and therefore help create a hostile environment for both queer people and their supporters. Whilst in Tanzania, the environment is not as hostile there is silent acknowledgement of the community provided they do not publicly discuss sexual orientation. While some people accept and understand that homosexuality is a natural expression of one's emotional, romantic and sexual attraction to people of the same sex, most people believe that it is a result of western or wazungu¹¹ influence, and is therefore learned and needs to be unlearned.

Nonetheless, despite the pervasive homophobia, stigmatization and discrimination suffered by the queer community, there is also a "curious contradiction" in terms of relative tolerance of gays and lesbians by the public¹². In Kenya, Tanzania and in Uganda, for example, there are some LGBT social places and pubs that are well known

to the public, but have hardly faced any significant harassment or police raids. This could be seen as a sign of hope for LGBTI mobilization and activism in the region¹³.

A few organizations are LGBTI friendly, but only in private. These organizations are willing to engage in dialogue with LGBTI groups, and even recognize the importance of sensitizing their staff on LGBTI issues. A number of organizations recognize that exclusivity creates marginalization and are willing to offer their support to the LGBTI movement, but only do so in theory. In practice, these organizations find it difficult to actively support LGBTIs because they fear government repression, or are unable to do so because they are funded by conservative donors. They therefore do not have specific policies on the issue, and do not have any intentions to include LGBTI issues in their strategic plans for the future. One organization in Tanzania however has in its constitution a non-discrimination article which includes sexual orientation, though they do not publicly talk about it. They are supportive to LGBTI groups so long as it is informal and not publicized. Some organizations like Equality Now, however, have an inclusive women's rights approach. Nonetheless, because they only address issues that are widespread, they have yet to deal with lesbian rights violations since the majority of lesbians remain in the closet. It is also important to note that even within LGBTI-friendly organizations, individual attitudes towards these issues vary widely. Intra-organizational dynamics therefore contribute towards stifling debates on sexuality in East Africa.

All things considered, it is the feminists who are at the forefront of the defense of LGBTI rights in East Africa. Some organizations in Uganda, Tanzania, and the Urgent Action Fund-Africa, in Kenya, have offered political (solidarity) as well as financial support to LGBTI activists in the region. In fact, Urgent Action Fund-Africa has a clear policy around rapid response grant making for all women in Africa, irrespective of their sexual orientation. They are also committed to opening up spaces for dialogue on LGBTI issues in Africa, by convening meetings between international donors, civil society, and LGBTI groups. In Kenya, the Population Council and Institute of African Studies conducted a research¹⁴ on HIV/STI issues in the MSM community, which has also helped create spaces for dialogue on LGBTI issues with mainstream CSOs. Research has been useful because it helps break myths about these issues and exposes the fact that East African LGBTIs exist in large numbers. The fact that there are mainstream activists in the countries that are already actively supporting, or willing to support LGBTIs, is encouraging because it creates the basis on which strategic coalitions can be built.

The legal and political contexts are also similar because there is a lot of tension around constitutional and political reforms in both countries. In Uganda, the tension has been around the issue of changing the constitution to allow for a third term of presidency, the referendum on reforming the Movement system into a multi-party system, and the upcoming presidential elections in March 2006. In Kenya, the tension lies around the long debated constitutional review process, the recently concluded referendum, political tensions within the NARC government, and the journey towards the 2007 general elections. Hostility towards LGBTIs has been expressed in both countries for both fundamentalist religious and political reasons, amongst others. In Uganda, by a vote of 111 to 17, with 3 abstentions, parliament approved a constitutional amendment stating that “marriage is lawful only if entered into between a man and a woman,” and that “it is unlawful for same-sex couples to marry.” This is similar to a clause in the recently rejected Kenyan draft constitution. In Tanzania, the situation worsened after the review of the Sexual Offense Special Provision Act (SOSPA) 1998 whereby the punishment of same sex was enhanced from 15 years to a minimum of 30 years up to life imprisonment

Some activists have used the freedom of speech and association approach to support LGBTI organizing. Nonetheless, even this has proven difficult when it comes to sexuality. For example, when “The Vagina Monologues” were recently introduced in Kenya and Uganda, there were numerous public outcries against the production of this play because it was deemed to be vulgar, disgusting, homosexual and pornographic. The play was totally banned in Uganda, and although it was produced in Kenya, the media only advertised it as the “V” Monologues – another example of the need to expand spaces for dialogue on issues to do with sexuality. The Media Council in Uganda has also been given unconstitutional powers to prevent ‘immoral’ discussions. Radio Simba, for example, was fined 1.8 million shillings for hosting homosexuals on their call-in talk show, thereby breaching their freedom of expression rights.

¹¹Swahili term for Caucasian/white people.

¹²Tamale, Sylvia, “Review of Report on LGBTI in East Africa: The True Test Case for Human Rights Defenders” By Madeleine Maurick (September 2005)

¹³Ibid

¹⁴Onyango-Ouma, W., Harriet Birungi, and Scott Geibel. 2005. “Understanding HIV/STI Risks and Prevention Needs of Men Who Have Sex With Men in Nairobi, Kenya,” Horizons Final Report. Washington, D.C.: Population Council.

Differences between Kenya, Uganda and Tanzania

The situation in Tanzania particularly in the Zanzibar island shows that there is a level of tolerance and acceptance of sexual minorities, which is absent in both Kenya and Uganda. There is evident open hostility and outrage within the Kenyan and Ugandan community towards sexual minorities through faith based organizations as well as individuals.

The network that SMUG in Uganda has built, however small, does not yet exist in Kenya. The only exception lies in the HIV / AIDS sector, where there is a lot of public health concern around the issue of MSM and HIV / AIDS in Kenya. Even the government is relatively open to discussing homosexuality as it relates to HIV / AIDS, whereas the Ugandan government has remained hostile. Organizations like the Institute of African Studies, the Population Council, and Liverpool VCT are also responsible for the recently published report, “Understanding the HIV / STI Risks and Prevention Needs of MSMs in Nairobi, Kenya,” which has even been approved by the Ethical Review Board. This can be regarded as a milestone, and should be seen as an entry point for Ugandan civil society.

In Kenya, to some extent, LGBTIs have been able to participate in the constitutional review process. Although the final draft constitution that was presented to Kenyans at the referendum explicitly banned same-sex marriages, the fact that LGBTIs were able to submit their proposals to the Constitution of Kenya Review Commission, and even met with the Attorney General, Amos Wako, was a sign of hope for the movement. In fact, some LGBTIs in Kenya strongly supported the draft constitution because they claimed there were sufficient loopholes in the “freedom of association” clauses, and did not mind not being able to marry, as long as their relationships were not seen as criminal and constitutional offences.

Southern African Experience and Knowledge Sharing

At the roundtable, two activists from Southern Africa (Namibia and South Africa) shared their organizational experiences and lessons learnt that could provide a basis for building the East African LGBTI movement. Their overall observation was that the absence of a “sense of community” for LGBTI’s in Uganda and Kenya poses a challenge for their mobilization and subsequent organizing. The internal tensions and challenges faced by the organizations in Uganda and Kenya should not be viewed as unique to the region, indeed they have been experienced even in South Africa where there is a stronger movement. Their organizational experiences are presented below.

BEHIND THE MASK - South Africa

Three years ago, Behind the Mask (BTM) started asking how to move forward, face challenges, and move away from the ‘ghettoization’ of LGBTI. Seven organizations came together to discuss ways to best work together to help the LGBTI community. Because of apartheid, there was a lot of division in the LGBTI community. Non-whites were more disadvantaged, so the group thought of ways to make services more available to sexual minorities of color. The seven organizations developed a pilot project to capitalize on joint strengths, network, and create a greater impact on the movement, allowing the disadvantaged to access services. Positive outcomes included:

1. The production and distribution of an ABC resource guide for LGBTI people
2. Capacity building for organizations on programmatic and sectoral levels
3. Raising awareness in the mainstream public and civil society.

Lessons learned

- There should be an emphasis on the need to do joint work in this way organizations will be able to analyze their work/activities better. Donors can also help push for joint work. LGBTI organizations should also be encouraged to design terms of reference for communication, transparency, and services that they offer.

- Capacity Building is crucial. Kenyan, Tanzanian and Ugandan LGBTI groups need to be empowered. This will lead to more public outcries about the issues they face.
- Networking is very important. Without partnerships, BTM could not have done all the work it has. Nonetheless, it is often difficult to acquire funds collectively. There may be need for funding agencies to support joint initiatives or coalitions to enhance collaboration.
- The need to challenge the constitution is important, this is because it is the supreme law and sets out the principles to be applied in other legislation and shapes standards for observing equality for all. This however, is work that requires collaborative approach and diverse groups have to work together on this.
- Cyber space can be used successfully to create safe spaces for dialogue. However, there are challenges because many people do not have access to the internet. Poverty therefore impacts this process, and focusing on this medium could lead to more infighting between groups. People also need to own and be visibly participating. At the end of the day, we need to put faces to the struggle.
- There is a need to explore ways to engage faith-based organizations and other Human rights organizations in securing non-discrimination of sexual minorities. LGBTI groups need to identify and capitalize on already existing allies, whilst focusing on educating these groups better on LGBTI issues.
- There is always a need to do more research, because it helps paint an accurate and larger picture of the issues being addressed, as well as raising awareness amongst a wide range of constituencies that engage with LGBTI groups.
- Most importantly, people need to be educated about sexuality being a human rights issue. That is the basis for the LGBTI movement.

THE RAINBOW PROJECT (TRP) - Namibia

In comparing TRP, Gay and Lesbians of Zimbabwe (GALZ) and the LGBTI groups/ organizations in Kenya and Uganda, we can identify reasons why the previous may have worked, while the latter struggle. When TRP and GALZ started, there was a large group of middle class, well-educated LGBTIs. They started in a completely different political, cultural and economic space. They had some capacity, a wealth of information, and even resources to finance their establishment as institutions.

The packaging of LGBTI issues was done to ensure that they were part of a human rights setting. They had really close relations with the women's movement, feminist movement and faith-based organizations. Without these partnerships, especially faith-based organizations, TRP acknowledged that it was challenging to forge ahead.

Both TRP and GALZ are national organizations, and therefore do not fight for funding. Funding only one organization, however, is not a viable solution to this problem. Every organization exists because there is a specific need for it. While internal conflicts are normal in movement building, there is a need to think of constructive ways to overcome them. Conflicts are indicative of other problems.

One of TRP's challenges was trying to do everything at the same time, spreading themselves too thin and getting little done. LGBTI organizations tend to spread themselves too thin because there is such a need and scarcity of services and resources. It took a long time and many resources for The Rainbow Project to get to where it is right now.

In order to build the movement in Namibia, TRP went out and started talking to people about sexuality, packaging sexual orientation as part of it. What strengthened the LGBTI movement was that people really believed what they were saying and fighting for. They also have an annual gay and lesbian awareness week, where hundreds of young black gay and lesbian people speak out. It has taken them 8 years to get where they are, but they have made it. They recognize that it is important to show the youth that their sexual orientation is normal.

The National Coalition of Gays and Lesbians in South Africa is also TRP's "big brother" organization. They received a lot of support from them with proposal/grant writing, building the movement, etc. TRP in Namibia benefited and still benefits from what is happening in South Africa.

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Lessons learnt

- Funding agencies can propose supporting collaborative projects; the old adage that there is strength in numbers, can only enhance institutions as they work jointly
- There is need to organize events where LGBTI activists can sit with government officials, in a neutral ground, and in a space they would not usually have access to. With support from funding agencies, the interaction would enable more awareness and sensitivity to the issues being advocated for; specifically the non-discrimination of sexual minorities in all spheres of life.
- It is important to create opportunities for structured learning engagements about LGBTI issues for the wider community.
- Capacity Building is crucial – without this you cannot strategize or focus. Focusing goals and priorities is strategic and funding agencies can help encourage LGBTI organizations to do this.
- Picking battles is crucial. Tackling sodomy in Kenya right now, for example, would backfire. It is therefore important to identify priorities for action.
- Visibility is also very important, and it shouldn't be gay male dominated. TRP is finally seeing a movement in Namibia because of visibility. With visibility must come some form of public education. Through support from various funding agencies, TRP did some education for the mass media and several NGO's. Every year they go to the National NGO Forum to educate them about why LGBTI issues are part of the human rights movement. There is a constant turn-over of staff so they have to constantly educate them to continue sustaining the coalition
- It is important for the East African LGBTI community to have some sort of big brother/sister organization, even if it is not an LGBTI organization. This will help build trust and assure LGBTI groups that the spaces offered to them are indeed safe

LGBTI Support to Forge Ahead

The study from all the three countries presented a catalogue of areas of their work that will require strengthening in order to build the basis of a strong LGBTI movement in the East Africa region. These recommendations for support range from capacity building, peer support initiatives, conflict resolution programs, sensitization of mainstream civil society groups amongst others. These areas of support are presented here below in more elaborate detail.

Capacity building: The most commonly suggested recommendation made by those interviewed was capacity building. Some suggested developing programs that were specific to individual groups, while others advocated for general programs that are open to all LGBTI activists, thereby helping to reduce competition between groups, and creating spaces for LGBTIs to meet each other. Questions about legitimate/illegitimate membership of individuals to certain groups will also cease to complicate the process. Capacity building and training should include the relevant items selected from the following list:

- Leadership Development
- Lobbying & Advocacy skills
- Networking & Mobilization strategies
- Political Activism
- Organizational Management & Accountability
- Financial Management
- Grant Writing & Fundraising
- Goal & Priority Setting
- Alcohol & Drug Abuse Issues
- Sexual & Reproductive Health Education
- Media Skills
- Counseling Skills
- Conflict Resolution & Life Skills

- Human Rights & building effective partnerships with mainstream organizations
- Diversification of Strategies
- Defining the roles of heterosexual allies
- Understanding sexual diversity & challenging internalized homophobia
- Discussing the value of monitoring principles and codes of conduct

LGBTI Convention: This should be organized to create a safe space for all LGBTI groups to meet each other, share success stories, discuss challenges, build partnerships and strategize on the way forward. It is important for LGBTI groups in the sub-region to connect with each other in order to gain a stronger voice.

Peer Support Initiatives: The experience and knowledge of other African groups like Behind the Mask (BTM), The Rainbow Project (TRP) and Gays and Lesbians Zimbabwe (GALZ) can be used. They can therefore play an important role and help develop peer support initiatives to strengthen the LGBTI movement in East Africa.

Internet organizing: The internet has a tremendous impact on how people meet and can be effectively utilized as safe spaces for the exchange of information between LGBTIs in the region. Initiatives to redesign and revive gay websites to function as reputable news sites, as well as forums for exchange of information, networking and coalition building, should be supported. This will help create visibility for sexual minorities and help promote healthier attitudes towards LGBTI people. Nonetheless, there still needs to be vigilance on internet use because security forces have been known to infiltrate such sites in order to monitor activities of sexual minorities.

Income generating projects: Funding targeting sexual minorities should include income-generating projects. Poverty is a major issue in both countries and therefore should be addressed when dealing with LGBTIs, who are often victims of discriminatory employment practices, as well as other forms of discrimination. Funding should also be secured for the rehabilitation of LGBTI sex workers.

Conflict resolution programs: Some LGBTI groups believe that conflict resolution is possible & necessary, and that it will create spaces for groups to build common grounds and maximize mutual strengths. Others argue that the current focus should not be on conflict resolution, but on the root cause of divisions which seems to lie in power struggles, combined with a lack of skills. It therefore makes more sense to start by strengthening the

leaders in the LGBTI movement so they can work on the way forward and recognize that a lot of time and energy is wasted in fighting each other.

Monitoring & Evaluation: Some groups have suggested that a mechanism that evaluates the concrete activities of each of the LGBTI organizations should be installed to filter out those who are not doing anything. They also agree that a Code of Conduct should be formulated and signed by all LGBTI organizations. Finally, a group of regionally based monitors should be identified to oversee this process. Groups have also recommended exploring the need and task of an advisory group. This could function as a correcting mechanism to filter out those who are undermining the movement. However, if any of the above strategies are adopted, they should be carefully implemented as such mechanisms may actually backfire on the LGBTI movement in East Africa, which is still in its infant stages.

Interacting with the Law: LGBTI groups should take advantage of opportunities to bring their issues into the courts of law, albeit indirectly. For example, in October 2005 when Uganda's Radio Simba was fined for hosting homosexuals on one of their programs, SMUG had a discussion about instituting a constitutional case around freedom of expression rights, but subsequently abandoned the idea. Such opportunities should be capitalized on in a wise and prudent manner.

Building Partnerships: These are required to strengthen activism and research and these are best developed and supported through the recognition of commonality of interests and mutual learning. Most importantly, it must begin with supporting the purposeful learning of partnership methods and strategies for strategic alliances. A round table conversation with LGBTIs and those who are gay friendly in civil society and government could therefore be organized to discuss different ways they can support the movement. If possible, awareness presentations should be conducted by sexual minorities themselves. If not, indigenous allies who understand the issues should help sensitize possible allies. The use of indigenous LGBTI and LGBTI-friendly trainers will help breakdown the perception that these issues are a result of western influence.

Heterosexual Allies: It is extremely important to build a local ground swell of activism around LGBTI rights by raising enough awareness and arousing enough vocal activism. The more heterosexuals that speak out for LGBTI rights, the more 'legitimized' they will become.

Sensitization of Mainstream Civil Society: It is important to raise sexual rights awareness not only among LGBTI groups but also within the women's movement and mainstream human rights movement. The development of policies that recognize sexual diversity and promote the creation of awareness of LGBTI issues within human rights and women's organizations is necessary. Human rights and women's organizations staff members also need to be trained on these issues.

Intersectionality: This has become the buzzword for human rights agendas. Analyzing the intersection between various oppressive structures of sexism, racism, classism and heterosexism is as relevant to the women's and mainstream human rights movement as it is to the LGBTI movement.

Role of indigenous sexual minorities: For the movement to be successful, local LGBTIs must be kept at the forefront of policy reform processes and any discussions pertaining to their lives. They must be the voice that is heard when discussions are held about their community. While donors and international LGBTI organizations have an important role to play, it must be secondary, complimentary, and always engaged in partnership with what local groups are developing. There are several educated and extremely smart closeted LGBTIs in Kenya and Uganda who can potentially make very useful contributions to the struggle. If safe spaces are created with a serious political agenda, they would slowly come on board.

Research: According to one East African reviewer, a research agenda is urgently called for in view of the pressing need to make sexuality an important category of analysis. It should include explorations of how LGBTI behavior and identities appear in the East African region, how they are understood, how they manifest in relation to communities and families. Decisions taken to resist or conform to norms, the nature of the spaces for organizing and constructing alternative representations, how lives are being envisioned, and how positions are negotiated in local contexts. The intersections between class, gender, ethnicity, age, ability, sexuality and LGBTI concerns.

Rights-based approach: Sexual rights must be an agenda for development work that strengthens and expands the current health focus, but at the same time is cognizant and inclusive of rights-based work. Rights-based approaches will also promote the type of public context within which LGBTI and feminist/women's organizations can be able to work individually and collaboratively.

Invisibility of Women: There is clearly an invisibility of same gender loving women/lesbian groups. There is therefore a need to focus on the reasons for this. The integrated approach to a human rights discussion means that the discussion of the many rights denied to all women, also holds true for LGBTI women. Mainstream society must therefore realize that discussions and formations of policies that impact all women, impact LGBTI women.

Interventions that focus on the awareness of issues that are specific to LGBTIs are needed. There is also a need to address the prevention of violence against LGBTIs, and the needs of youth, especially with regards to health and education. Young LGBTI persons have, compared with adults, very different conditions for living and working with their identity.

Engaging with Religion: A coalition of mainstream human rights, women's and LGBTI groups need to collectively devise strategies on how to engage with religion on issues of sexuality.

Maximizing Entry Points: There are three possible entry points for challenging discrimination against the LGBTI community:

1. Challenging sodomy laws which equally apply to heterosexuals as well as homosexuals and are unconstitutional because they have policing responsibilities that violate the right to privacy.
2. Using the prevalence of HIV / AIDS to force government and policy makers to address LGBTI issues, recognizing that sexual minorities are at risk of infection.
3. A stigmatized community that is usually associated with homosexuality is that of intersexed individuals. Although intersexed people are not necessarily homosexual, their plight is less likely to invoke similar sentiments of bigotry as homosexuality does. Therefore support for the rights of intersexed persons may be a 'safer' and 'softer' entry point for LGBTI rights.

Conclusion

The actions of LGBTI groups in the East African region, though often burdened with efforts to be invisible, might appear to be disorganized and mismanaged. They have nevertheless brought attention to the need for sexual rights in development work. Most LGBTI groups in the region seem to frame their work in terms of development; i.e. addressing reproductive health or public health concerns around HIV / AIDS, thus having access to funding. At the same time, it has been a strategy that strengthens LGBTI work to some extent. The most common genesis of LGBTI work in the region has however been for the provision of social support for members, even in seeking to be active in policy and legislation design. The few groups that have sought to extend themselves into new sites of activism have been most challenged, but managed to contribute significantly into breaking the silence around LGBTI.

Unfortunately, neither the women's movement nor the mainstream human rights movement in Kenya, Tanzania or Uganda, has embraced LGBTI rights in any meaningful way. They are uninformed and heterosexist at best, and homophobic at worst. Individuals, located within organizations, are also struggling with responding to LGBTI issues and concerns because of tensions, divisions, resource constraints, and the invisibility that is faced by the LGBTI community. Furthermore, the lack of knowledge, capacity, membership and leadership challenges within LGBTI activist groups presents even more challenges in building the movement.

The research study and the donor roundtable deliberations illustrate that working towards creating a more enabling environment for LGBTI organizing in East Africa will require capacity building for LGBTIs, public awareness raising, and building strategic partnerships to develop better support systems. In designing programs it is important to pay due attention to the aspect of diversity. This applies to forms of organizations as well as strategies. LGBTI people and organizations in East Africa, like in other parts of the world, will have to determine their own appropriate forms in their specific context¹⁵.

The opportunity that this research provides for the region is to reach out and seek attention on mainstream society's need to seriously consider:

- How sexuality is shaped by structures of power and relations of subordination;
- How freedom to determine one's sexual behavior is very much connected to political and economic freedom;
- How those who depart from the norms of female and male sexuality face sanctions or harm; and
- How gender norms are all pervasive, shaping sexuality in ways that in turn shape access to economic resources and one's ability to participate in cultural, economic and political life.

The conceptualization of these issues in this manner will thus help illustrate how LGBTI issues resonate with the work of gender activists, feminists, and even mainstream human rights activists. The integral role for creating safe spaces for LGBTI cannot be overemphasized as it is a struggle for liberty to freely determine who you are and how you wish to live your life as a citizen of this world!



Donor Roundtable participants in the van on the way back to Nairobi

¹⁵This point is emphasized by Karugu, Nguru in his "Review of Report on LGBTI in East Africa: The True Test Case for Human Rights Defenders", by Madeleine Maurick (September 2005)

Annex I

International Donor Roundtable Organizational Profiles

The organizations represented at the meeting included¹⁶ :

- **Astraea Lesbian Foundation For Justice** – A dynamic global foundation providing critically needed financial support to lesbian-led, LGBTI and progressive organizations. Based in New York, today Astraea is the largest lesbian organization in the world. They raise funds and issue grants based on the belief that all women can participate in the philanthropic process – from giving to grant making.
- **Behind the Mask** – A communication initiative around lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex (LGBTI) rights and issues in Africa. BTM aims to: give a voice to African LGBTI communities; be a platform for exchange and debate for LGBTI groups, activists and individuals, as well as other interested people; influence opinions and to change negative attitudes towards homosexuality and same-sex traditions in Africa; mainstream LGBTI interests into health, religion, law, human rights and social justice by publishing a website magazine and by exploring other forms of media. BTM uses information and communication technology, and independent journalistic activism as their main tools.
- **Ford Foundation** – A resource for innovative people and institutions worldwide. Their goals are to: strengthen democratic values; reduce poverty and injustice; promote international cooperation; and advance human achievement. The Ford Foundation East Africa Office, based in Nairobi, works through several programs to achieve these goals. Through the Education, Sexuality & Religion program, the East Africa office supports efforts to build knowledge, develop policy and deepen public understanding of sexuality and its relationship to human fulfillment, culture, religion and identity. Together with Hivos, the Foundation funded the most recent research done on “LGBT in East Africa: The True Test Case for Human Rights Defenders,” by Madeleine Maurick.
- **Global Fund for Women** – An international network of women and men committed to a world of equality and social justice, which advocates for and defends women’s human rights by making grants to support women’s groups around the world. The

Global Fund has always focused on groups that are taking risks, making tough choices, and daring to transform society. This has included funding specific groups that have at times been marginalized by the larger women's movement e.g., lesbians, sex workers, indigenous women, women with disabilities, etc. The Global Fund view LGBT rights as integral to the realization of women's sexual rights and social justice.

- **Mama Cash** – Mama Cash, the first independent funding organization for women, strives for a peaceful and just world, a world where women are free to make their own choices and to develop their myriad talents and skills. It is for these very reasons that Mama Cash supports women's groups that blaze the trails with self-initiated projects. In fact, it is heading such trail-blazing or ground-breaking projects, and often supporting new and smaller women's groups, that set Mama Cash apart from other grant making organizations.
- **Madeleine Maurick** – Dutch consultant commissioned by Ford Foundation and Hivos to conduct research on LGBT activism in East Africa. She has worked for the anti-apartheid and feminist movements in the Netherlands and has been traveling to Africa since 1991. She also does consultancy work for Behind the Mask.
- **Hivos** – Hivos, the Humanist Institute for Cooperation with Developing Countries is a Netherlands-based non-governmental organization that wants to contribute to a free, fair and sustainable world where citizens, women and men, have equal access to resources, opportunities and markets and can participate actively and equally in decision-making processes that determine their lives, their society and their future. Hivos' core activities are funding and providing political support for civil society organizations and initiatives. Civil society building, sustainable production and lobby & advocacy are the 3 central policy areas. Within its work on human rights and democratization Hivos has a strong focus on LGBT rights and emancipation.

Hivos co-funded the research done on LGBT in East Africa, jointly with Ford Foundation, and financed the research and publication of Tommy boys, lesbian men and ancestral wives – female same-sex practices in Africa.

- **International Gay & Lesbian Human Rights Commission** – The mission of the IGLHRC is to secure the full enjoyment of the human rights of all people and communities subject to discrimination or abuse on the basis of sexual orientation or expression, gender identity or expression, and/or HIV status. A US-based non-profit, non-governmental organization, IGLHRC affects this mission through advocacy, documentation, coalition building, public education, and technical assistance.
- **Open Society Institute Eastern Africa** – Launched in 2005, the OSIEA strives to promote public participation in democratic governance, the rule of law, and respect for human rights in Kenya through grant giving, program development, and convening of a broad spectrum of civil society actors. OSIEA support focuses on the following areas: electoral process; governance and accountability; human rights; independent media and access to information; and regional programs.
- **The Rainbow Project** –The Rainbow project (TRP) is Namibia’s only NGO that specifically fights to uphold the rights of LGBT people living in Namibia. TRP was formed in reaction to remarks by some of Namibia’s government leaders including President Sam Nujoma, who said that gays and lesbians are un-African and un-Christian in 1996.
- **Urgent Action Fund – Africa** - works to promote the human rights of women and girls through urgent response grant making and by encouraging or creating collaborative projects to support women. In the area of sexual rights, UAF - Africa is particularly concerned that spaces for dialogue around sexuality are dimming, shrinking or closing. Through their grants program, UAF - Africa has supported the work of groups that are engaged in advocacy for sexual rights as well as made protection grants to persons targeted for their sexual orientation. UAF - Africa is also able to support and increase learning to other groups in this area of women’s rights, through their collaborative initiatives programs. UAF - Africa was responsible for convening the International Donor Roundtable on Sexuality in East Africa.

Annex II

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