

**BRIDGING THE GAPS**  
Health and rights  for key populations



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UHAH EASHRI

The East African Sexual Health and Rights Initiative

P.O. Box 7144 - 00300, Nairobi, Kenya

Tel: +254 (020) 233 0050 /

(020) 812 7535

Tel: +254 (737) 920 920 /

(702) 931 911

Email: [info@uhai-eashri.org](mailto:info@uhai-eashri.org)

Website: [www.uhai-eashri.org](http://www.uhai-eashri.org)

**Author:** Roselyn Odoyo

**Editor:** Wanja Muguongo

**Illustrators:** Faith Namikoye Wanjala and Damaris Muthoni Njeri

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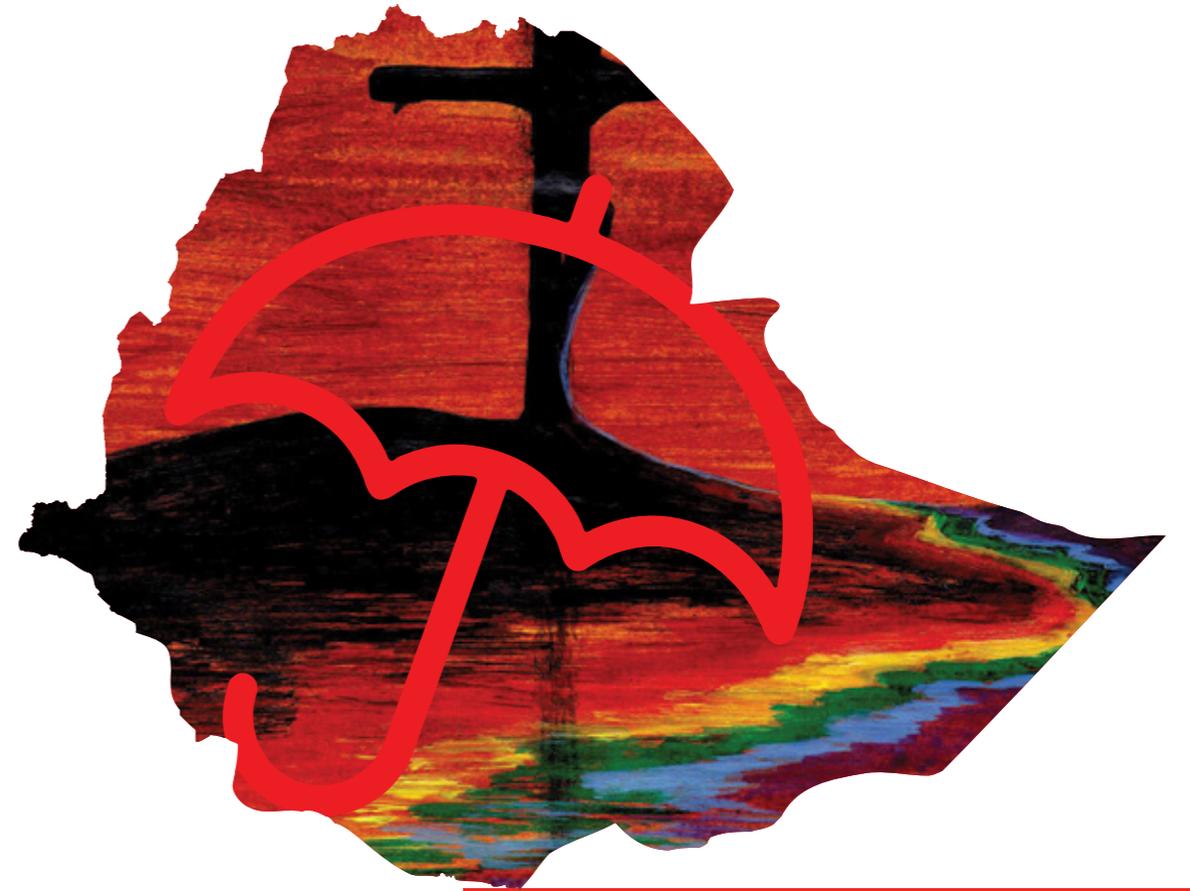
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## OUTSIDER CITIZEN:

Landscape Analysis of the Human Rights of  
Sex Workers and LGBTI People in Ethiopia  
2014-2015



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## LIST OF ACRONYMS

AHA	Anti Homosexuality Act
AIDS	Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome
EWLA	Ethiopian Women Lawyers Association
FGDs	Focus Group Discussions
FSW	Female sex worker
GNC	Gender non-conforming
HAPCO HIV/AIDs	Prevention and Control Office (Ethiopia)
HIV	Human Immunodeficiency Virus
LGBTI	Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender and Intersex
MARPS	Most at risk populations
MSM	Men that have sex with men
NHRI	National Human Rights Institution
OSSA	Organisation for Social Service for AIDs
SRHR	Sexual and Reproductive Health Rights
STD	Sexually Transmitted Disease
STI	Sexually Transmitted Infection
SW	Sex Worker
TLH	Timret Le Hiwot Ethiopia
TOT	Training of Trainers
UPR	Universal Peer Review

## DEFINITION OF LOCAL TERMS<sup>1</sup>

1. **Setaset:** means feminine. A male person in Ethiopia acting like ‘a female’ may be characterised as setaset, meaning feminine.
2. **Gibre sodom:** means sodomites. It is a **Ge’ez** term, which literally means the practice of sodomites. Sometimes it is also used to denote a person practicing same-sex intercourse. This is the term nearest to “sodomy” in the Amharic language.
3. **Gibre sodomawi: (plural: gibre sodomawian)** a Ge’ez term meaning homosexual.
4. **Medarat:** A term that denotes seductive and romantic acts that may include but are not limited to kissing, rubbing and hugging. In Ethiopia, performing seductive and romantic acts that lead to sexual arousal in public places is traditionally considered to be indecent even for heterosexual couples.
5. **Zega (plural: zegoch)** is an Amharic term that literally means “citizen”, but that denotes a same-sex attracted man when it is used by same-sex attracted men themselves.
6. **Keta (plural: ketawoch)** is also derived from Ketach, which means ‘bottom’, and refers to the men who are anally-penetrated during sexual intercourse.
7. **Yekela kela** is a term created by zegoch to denote the sexual preference and role of the zega, who assumes an exclusively top, or penetrative, role.
8. **Yeketa Keta** is also a term created and used by zegoch to denote the sexual preference of a zega to be exclusively at the bottom (being anally penetrated).
9. **Ket (plural: ketoch)** is a direct translation of the English word “straight” (heterosexual) into Amharic and men who have sex with men communicate with it to refer to other men who are not themselves same-sex attracted.
10. **Setegna adari:** means female sex worker
11. **Yefenteta megelbet:** means anal prolapse
12. **Maleslesha:** means lubricant
13. **Muka:** It is a term used by same-sex attracted men to denote the buttocks.
14. **Meketeb:** Is an Amharic word meaning vaccinated. When used by same-sex attracted men, it refers to the decision of a man to identify himself as same-sex attracted or to join a community of same-sex attracted men.

<sup>1</sup> Perspectives on Life and Health: A qualitative study among same-sex attracted men in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia by Mekonnen Aderaw, University of Oslo 2012

## SUMMARY

This study was conducted with the aim of exploring the lived realities of the LGBTI and Sex Worker communities in Ethiopia. The study was conducted with Addis Ababa, being the capital of Ethiopia, as the focal point.

The objectives of the study included:

- Exploring the presence of an LGBTI, GNC and Sex Worker communities in Ethiopia;
- Conducting a needs assessment of the LGBTI, GNC and Sex Worker communities in Ethiopia;
- Identifying opportunities for support;
- Investigating the existence or not of a LGBTI, GNC and SW movements and what movement building might look like.

The first visit to Ethiopia was not very productive owing to lack of access to the understandably secretive and hidden LGBTIGNC community, although the same can’t be said of the female sex worker community. Attempts to gather information from policy-making bodies, the national Human Rights institution and other government offices bore little result.

### Study Limitations

Whereas the study set out to document the lived realities of LGBTI and GNC community in Ethiopia, because of lack of access to any trans\* or intersex persons the findings in the study relate to the Lesbian, Gay (and MSM) as well as the Bisexual community all of whom this study interchangeably refers to as ‘queers’.

Most sex workers interviewed were reluctant to discuss or even acknowledge the existence of male sex workers. There was no actual or physical contact with male sex workers. As such reference to sex workers in this study refers to female sex workers.

There were a few challenges faced during the study, most notably:

- **Lack of a visible community.** This was particularly so for the trans\* and intersex community and male sex workers. There is a persistent denial of the existence of non-heteronormative identities in Ethiopia. This is evidenced by the lack of documentation as well as lack of inclusion in any existing policies particularly as regards HIV and AIDs.
- **Language barrier.** The official language of Ethiopia is Amharic. A large part of the population in Ethiopia's capital, Addis Ababa spoke mostly Amharic and other local dialects. This was particularly a challenge in terms of the number of one-on-one interviews because of the pertinence of confidentiality which made it difficult to interview Amharic only speaking queers outside of the social circles of the queers interacted with as well as some sex workers such as street based sex workers. Another important way in which this may be as relates to trans\* or intersex visibility. There may not be any existing words that are the equivalent to 'transgender' and 'intersex' as such, the community there may not have a linguistic platform to even begin to articulate gender identities that do not conform to hetero norms.
- **Existing sodomy laws.** Homosexuality is criminalised in the Ethiopian penal code. This despite that unlike most of it's African neighbours, the penal code was not a colonial inheritance owing to Ethiopia's never being colonised but was borrowed extensively from European models. The existence of these laws made it difficult and tricky to obtain or access 'official positions' nor were there any collected statistics from any government departments or offices including from the Ministry of Justice and the Ethiopian Human Rights Commission which is the national human rights institution (NHRI).
- **Hostile environment.** The government of Ethiopia generally has an inexplicable hostility towards the advocacy for Human Rights and has emphasised this through the various policies and pieces of legislation enacted to frustrate human rights advocacy, training or implementation. The political, social and cultural environment in Ethiopia is particularly hostile towards LGB identifying individuals. This owes mostly to the mainstream religions, the most politically influential being orthodox Christian, and to a lesser degree Islam. Homosexuals are rendered invisible and an unacceptable cultural violation whereas the existence of trans\* or intersex individuals appears to be incomprehensible.

- **This hostility towards the LGB community raised security concerns that affected the validation.** By the point of validation, members of the queer community in Addis Ababa reported that they were being surveilled by the government after receiving word that the government somehow had compiled a database bearing the names, social media identities, addresses and contact information of at least 200 queers with no indication of the reason for the existence of said database. They reported monitoring of foreign embassies by the government who are purported to have also collected information about any visits to said embassies by members of the queer community. These concerns made the community understably reluctant to communicate via email, social media or even meet. As a result, most members of the community have deleted their social media presence, changed their email addresses and consequently fled Ethiopia and sought refuge in other countries such as Kenya.

## METHODOLOGY

Due to the particular sensitivity of the subject of this research in the context of Ethiopia the approach taken was decidedly qualitative. Addis Ababa, Ethiopia's primary metropolis served as the focal point of the conducted interviews. Given the limited geographical scope of this study, it is important to note that Ethiopia is a large country comprised of many diverse cultures, beliefs and practices. As such, any proposed recommendations should not be construed as homogenously applicable.

The research was a hybrid between desk reviews as well as verbal and electronically collected data. The study was conducted through focal group discussions (FGDs), one-on-one interviews, informal conversations as well as an online survey. The sources of information include social media group conversations, on line news articles, email correspondence, Ethiopian authored theses and official documentation such as existing policies and pieces of legislation.

## LEGAL AND POLICY CONTEXT

Ethiopia has a civil law and dualist legal system. Whereas the Constitution makes reference to compliance with international human rights instruments, these instruments even though ratified by Ethiopia would have to be domesticated for them to take full applicable effect.

Ethiopia's existing laws create a hostile environment for LGBTIGNC advocacy. Any protection that may have been offered by the seemingly progressive Constitution is regressed by the existence of other regressive and oppressive pieces of legislation that translate into discriminatory practice by state officers, social service institutions and stigma by the general society. This is exacerbated by the absence of an anti discriminatory law.

Aside from the Penal Code, which expressly outlaws same sex sexualities, the other legislation with the largest impact on advocacy for the Human Rights of the queer community in Ethiopia is the Charities and Societies Proclamation.

The preamble of the Charities and Societies Proclamation states that it is a law crafted to “ensure the realisation of citizens right to association enshrined in the Constitution...”. Whereas this legislation does not outrightly deny the registration of LGBTIGNC organisations, the provisions contained therein limit any Human Rights advocacy and outreach to LGBTI among other communities whose existence is negated by the government. By virtue of the proclamation, majority of the funding for any registered organisations should come from the government, the same government that is known to have an unfavorable human rights record. In this way, the government by proxy dictates the who, how and what of any organisations that purport to work in Ethiopia.

The Anti Terrorism and Mass Media Proclamations are fashioned to stifle dissent against the government. They essentially make it difficult to publish or vocally criticise the government's discriminatory practice and mechanisms.

### Zega...

(plural: zegoch) is an Amharic term that literally means “citizen”, but that denotes a same-sex attracted man when it is used by same-sex attracted men themselves.

In early 2014, the Ministry of Justice sponsored a proposed bill that sought to add homosexual acts to a list of crimes ineligible for presidential pardon. The proposal was rejected.<sup>2</sup>

As regards policy, LGBTI individuals and men who have sex with men (MSM) are blatantly excluded most notably from the national AIDs policy or any interventions by the HIV/AIDs Prevention and Control Office (HAPCO). Reports of international organisations such as UNAIDs also exclude statistics on MSM or the LGBTI community in Ethiopia<sup>3</sup>.

Therefore Ethiopia much like most of its African peers maintains a hostile legal and socio-political environment towards non-heteronormative sexualities which hostility seemingly extends to gender non conforming individuals particularly within the context of Human Rights

<sup>2</sup> <http://archive.globalgayz.com/africa/ethiopia/ethiopian-government-cancels-anti-gay-rally/>

<sup>3</sup> [http://www.unaids.org/sites/default/files/country/documents/ETH\\_narrative\\_report\\_2014.pdf](http://www.unaids.org/sites/default/files/country/documents/ETH_narrative_report_2014.pdf)

## Existing legislation and policies

### Supportive Legislation

Law/Statute	Provisions	Impact on LGBTI
<b>1994 Constitution of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia</b>	<b>Preamble...</b> Firmly convinced that the fulfillment of this objective requires full respect of individual and people's fundamental freedoms and rights to live together on the basis of equality and without any sexual, religious or cultural discrimination;	Provides that LGBTI persons are just as entitled to fundamental freedoms and rights without discrimination.
	<b>Article 10 (1) and (2)</b> provides for the inviolable and inalienable Human Rights and freedoms of every citizen.	This reaffirms that queer and sex worker Ethiopians are entitled to the same Human Rights and freedoms as any other Ethiopian.
	<b>Article 13 (2)</b> provides that the fundamental rights and freedoms as contained in the Constitution are to be interpreted in conformity with the principles of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and international covenants and instruments adopted by Ethiopia.	This extends the protection against discrimination including on the basis of sexual orientation to LGB Ethiopians.
	<b>Article 14 - 17:</b> Right to life, the security of Person and Liberty.	Protects queers from arbitrary detention or threat to life on the basis of their sexual orientation.
	<b>Art 24:</b> Provides for the respect of every person's dignity as well as recognition as a person.	This provides that regardless of sexual or gender identity, LGBTI are still people and as such entitled to their Constitutionally enshrined Human Rights.

	<b>Article 25:</b> Right to equality	Provides that all persons are equal before the law and entitled without discrimination on the listed grounds or any other status to equal protection by the law.
	<b>Article 26:</b> Right to Privacy, which includes the right not to be subjected to searches of a person's home, person or property...	Guarantees that LGBTI individuals are not to be subjected to unlawful searches or breaches of privacy on their property.
	<b>Art 29 (2):</b> Provides for freedom of expression without interference including to seek, receive and impart information and ideas of all kinds, regardless of frontiers, either orally, in writing or in print, in the form of art, or through any media of his choice.	Provides that LGBTI persons can share information and be able to respond to hateful and discriminatory rhetoric in the media or through other platforms.
	<b>Art 33 (2):</b> Provides that Every Ethiopian national has the right to the enjoyment of all rights, protection and benefits derived from Ethiopian nationality as prescribed by law.	Enshrines the right of all Ethiopians including LGBTI to enjoyment of the rights and access to the protection contained in the Constitution and other pieces of legislation.
	<b>Article 35</b> provides for the rights of women.	Ensures the protection of all women including lesbian, bisexual and transgender and intersex women.
	<b>Article 37</b> provides for the right to Access to Justice.	This provides for the ability of LGBTI groups to challenge discriminatory legislation through the judicial system.

	<b>Article 41:</b> Provides that every Ethiopian national has the right to equal access to publicly funded social services and that right includes an obligation upon the Government to allocate resources to provide to the public health, education and other social services.	This guarantees LGBTI individuals the right to access health services offered in public hospitals and health care centers including access to STI and HIV testing and treatment.
	<b>Art 43 (2):</b> Provides that Nationals have the right to participate in national development and, in particular, to be consulted with respect to policies and projects affecting their community.	This provision provides for the inclusion of LGBTI in aspects such as the creation of National policies that affect the community. Most notably the national AIDs policy.

## Ratified international Human Rights Instruments

Instrument	Date of Ratification
International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights	Ratified in 1993
International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights	Ratified in 1993
Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman and Degrading Treatment or Punishment.	Ratified in 1994
African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights	Signed but not ratified.

## Prohibitive Legislation

Law/Statute	Provisions	Impact on LGBTI
<b>Criminal Code of Ethiopia 2004</b>	<b>Art 606 (1)</b> provides that unauthorized opening, access, disclosure and use for gain of any electronic, verbal or written correspondence will be punishable by a fine of up to one thousand birr or up to three months imprisonment. However as read with <b>Art 614 (2)(b)</b> which provides that a person that contravenes <b>Art 606</b> is not liable to punishment if he can prove that "he acted in the public interest or he was actuated by a higher interest or moral aim."	Art 614 reverses any protection Art 606 may have offered LGBTI persons against blackmail and extortion.
	<b>Art. 629</b> provides that "Whoever performs with another person of the same sex a homosexual act, or any other indecent act, is punishable with imprisonment of up to 15 years.	This provision expressly criminalises same sex sexuality.
	<b>Art. 639-643</b> provides for "crimes tending to corrupt morals".	These articles outlaw any form of expression of or about same sex relations deemed to be "sexual acts or any other obscene act or gesture grossly offensive to decency or morals". This includes writings, images and film unless they are artistic, literal or scientific and are not "obscene or indecent".

<b>Charities and Societies Proclamation of 2009</b>	<b>Preamble:</b> Provides that the legislation is crafted to "ensure the realisation of citizens right to association enshrined in the Constitution..." However when read with section two which establishes the Charities and Societies Agency, article 5 provides that the agency's objective is to among others, "ensure that charities and Societies operate legally".	This subsequently limits the possibilities of any work or advocacy on sexual orientation and gender identity. It may not affect FSW organisations to the same extent as sex work is not expressly outlawed by any legislation.
	<b>Art 6</b> provides for the powers and functions of the Charities and Societies Agency inclusive of the power to license, register and supervise charities and societies.	This provision gives the agency power over the registration of organisations and as such is used as the basis for denial of registration of queer organisations. FSW organisations are able to register. For example Nikat, a FSW organisation is registered as a charitable association presumably based on article 14.
	<b>Article 14</b> provides the definitions of organisations considered to be charities including those that have the charitable purpose of the advancement of: education (d),health (e), human and democratic rights (j),promotion of equality of nations, nationalities, peoples, gender and religion (k) as well as the promotion of the efficiency of justice and law enforcement services (n).	This provision limits the entry points for registration for organisations focused on the LGBTI as read with Articles 84 – 94 which gives the Agency power to decide.

	<b>Article 65</b> provides that charities or societies pending registration may not “solicit” money and property exceeding fifty thousand Birr.	This provision essentially limits any funding to any LGBTI organisation that may attempt to apply for registration to a maximum of fifty thousand birr.
	<b>Article 68</b> provides that in order for an organisation to be registered it must provide information about its goals, objectives and activities. Read with <b>article 69(2)</b> which provides that an application for registration may be denied if “the proposed Charity or Society is likely to be used for unlawful purposes or for purposes prejudicial to public peace, welfare or good order in Ethiopia”.	This will hinder any organisation from including the LGBT community as part of its target constituency because of the provisions in the penal code which outlaws same sex sexualities.
	<b>Article 77 - 83</b> provides that any registered charities or societies shall keep records of all monies received and expended by said charity or society which records are subject to inspection by the agency. It also prohibits receipt of anonymous donations and must be able to disclose the names of all its donors. In addition the articles provide that the agency will review annual activity reports which reports are obligatory.	This provision hinders financial support of LGBTI organisation particularly as there may be donor partners that wish to remain anonymous.
	<b>Article 84 - 94</b> provides for the supervision of Charities and Societies by the agency.	This essentially gives the agency the powers to police registered societies and Charities.

<b>Anti Terrorism Proclamation</b>	The provisions basically provide that “Whosoever or a group intending to advance a political, religious or ideological cause by coercing the government, intimidating the public or section of the public, or destabilising or destroying the fundamental political, constitutional or, economic or social institutions of the country....”	The Act takes on broad application, which could mean anyone could be targeted. Further it provides for breach of privacy by law enforcement on mere suspicion, inclusion of hearsay as evidence as well as other provisions which are at best ambiguous and at worst easy to abuse.
<b>1994 Constitution of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia</b>	<b>Art 27 (5)</b> Limits the expression of one’s religion or belief to ones that do not contradict among other things, public morality.	LGBTI issues are broadly considered to be ‘against public morality’ therefore this makes expression on issues affecting the community difficult.
	<b>Art 34 (3)</b> Provides that The family is the natural and fundamental unit of society and is entitled to protection by society and the State.	Opponents of LGBTI inclusive equality tend to purport that it threatens the concept of ‘family’ in Ethiopia.
	<b>Art 39 (2)</b> Provides that Every Nation, Nationality and People in Ethiopia has the right to speak, to write and to develop its own language; to express, to develop and to promote its culture; and to preserve its history.	This can be misinterpreted on the subjective basis that homosexuality and gender non-conformity is non-Ethiopian ‘culture’.

	<b>Art 31</b> Freedom of Association for any cause or purpose....with the exception of organisations formed, in violation of appropriate laws, or to illegally subvert the constitutional order, or which promote such activities which are prohibited.	May be used against LGB individuals under the guise of 'promotion' of same sex sexuality, which is 'prohibited'.
<b>Mass Media Proclamation</b>	Justifies the restrictions on freedom of expression under among others mentioned, to 'preserve the wellbeing of the youth, honor...public order and other overriding rights'.	Issues faced by LGBTI persons are likely to be dismissed and justified as subjective to 'other rights' and public order which may be interpreted as superceding those of LGBTI persons. Thereby hindering the visibility of LGBTI as well as any attempts to respond to hateful and discriminative rhetoric in mass media.
<b>Family Code</b>	<b>Art 5</b> provides that marriages celebrated abroad are only valid in Ethiopia so long as they do not offend 'public morals'.	This provision may be used to illegitimise marriage between same sex partners that may have been conducted and recognised outside of Ethiopia.
	<b>Art 13 (c) and (d)</b> provides that marriage may be negated on the basis of "error on the bodily conformation of the spouse who does not have the requisite sexual organs for the consummation of the marriage; (d) error on the behaviour of the spouse who has the habit of performing sexual acts with person of the same sex."	This provision negates marriages involving trans* and gender non-conforming individuals.

### Statements by Political Leaders.

*Zenebu Tadesse* Ethiopia's Minister of Women, Children and Youth Affairs said, "I'm really saddened and traumatised by the action of the hackers, this is neither mine nor the government view, homosexuality is a crime under the Ethiopian criminal Code." She was responding to the reaction to tweets posted via her twitter account condemning the February 2014 passing of the AHA in Uganda.<sup>4</sup>

These comments are indicative of absolute lack of political will to decriminalise homosexuality and ensure equality and non-discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation and gender identity in Ethiopia.

### Recommendations on Legal and Policy:

1. Invoke the Constitution, which is the supreme law to challenge the existing discriminatory laws such as the Penal code and Charities and Societies Proclamation. Whereas 'sexual orientation' is not expressly mentioned as a group protected against discrimination, it could fall under the broader grouping of 'other status'.
2. Engage mainstream networks of organisations in Ethiopia that seek to challenge the other discriminatory pieces of legislation such as the Anti Terrorism Act and the Mass Media Proclamation and use such space to make allies on the basis of all oppression being connected.
3. Lobby and engage Policy and law makers on the detrimental effect of the existing pieces of legislation to queer Ethiopians who are citizens of the Republic. The Ethiopian government accepted several recommendations made to it during its Universal Peer Review (UPR) process<sup>5</sup> concerning enforcement of stronger human rights mechanisms that the community and it's allies could lobby for implementation
4. Documentation of human rights abuses.

<sup>4</sup> <http://www.tesfanews.net/ethiopian-ministers-twitter-account-deleted-after-slamming-ugandas-anti-gay-law/>

<sup>5</sup> <http://www.ehrc.org.et/LinkClick.aspx?fileticket=h%2fjN%2bDN7LEg%3d&tabid=116>

## HEALTH

LGBTI people are excluded from Ethiopia's definitions of Most At Risk Populations (MARPs) and vulnerable groups which are limited to female sex workers, mobile workers, in school youth (15-24) years, uniformed services and inmates.

Recognition of inmates as part of MARPs is based on a presumption that they are heteronormative. The only mention of the word homosexual in Ethiopia's HIV/AIDs Prevention and Control Office (HAPCO) report is used to imply that any such activity was due to pre-imprisonment influence.

Access to funds for HIV related work is tightly controlled by the government with organisations doing work in this area having to not only get their funding through the government but also adhere strictly to the parameters and priorities as defined by the Charities and Societies Agency and contained in the Charities and Societies Proclamation. For example, UNAIDS *country progress report on the HIV response of 2014* has no statistics on MSMs.<sup>6</sup>

Of the interviewed members of the queer community, most found that:

- Condoms as well as testing and treatment of HIV and STIs is fairly accessible as long as their non-conforming sexualities were kept hidden as these services are generally accessible in by the general public in Ethiopia owing to government policy and availability of free ARVs.
- Access to lubricants is fairly inaccessible as they are typically available in pharmacies and most members of the community fear being stigmatised in said pharmacies.
- Information on sexual health tailored to the LGBTI community is fairly inaccessible.
- Dental dams are highly inaccessible as is information on what they are as well as their utility.
- Psychosocial support such as counseling and support groups are perceived as inaccessible on the most part.

### Recommendations on Health

1. Networking and engaging the organisations that have successful interventions with advocacy for sex workers. Given that the sex workers have been able to overcome the challenges of the applied moralism in Ethiopian society and gained increased visibility and a degree of recognition by the government could be indicative of the possibilities.
2. Utilising of any mainstream networks to lobby for the inclusion of LGBTI in national health policies. Mainstream networks have played a role in the inclusion of sex workers in the National AIDS policy. Whereas the sensitivity around non-conforming sexualities is not negated, mainstream networks could certainly make strong allies in the ongoing struggle for the visibility and recognition of the existence of an Ethiopian LGBTI community.
3. Sensitisation of health workers in pharmacies and clinics.
4. Engagement with HAPCO on the effects of excluding the LGBTI community from National AIDs policy and statistics.

<sup>6</sup> [http://www.unaids.org/sites/default/files/country/documents/ETH\\_narrative\\_report\\_2014.pdf](http://www.unaids.org/sites/default/files/country/documents/ETH_narrative_report_2014.pdf)

Snapshot of systematic inequality of queers based on the legislative and policy environment.



## ORGANISING

The baseline study found that there is currently no visible LGBTI movement in Ethiopia per se. Less so for the Trans\* and Intersex community. None of the interviewed members of the queer community in Addis Ababa knew of any trans\* or intersex people.

This is perhaps attributable to various factors namely:

- Aforementioned national, state and religion sponsored hate and discrimination. The existing legislation and the widespread concept of moralism make organising difficult due to the hostility and moralism that emanates therein. Existing community are not only unaccepted but their existence is almost negated entirely. Any organising that can be done is restricted to specific areas that seeming exclude advocacy for issues within health even which if possible has to be shrouded under a broader scope that in appearance does not purport to include non conforming sexual orientation or gender identities.
- Fractioning in the community. Due to the hostile environment, the queer community appears segmented between those that prefer to maintain the status quo as regards visibility in the belief that it may draw unwanted attention and those that are want to become more visible in the bid to gain recognition of the various levels of discrimination their invisibility has brought.

*“I feel guilty as if I'm doing something so wrong. Nobody knows about my sexuality & if they do I'm sure I'll be cast out from each & every activities be it social, professional, cultural or political.”*

— Interviewee

The government's hostility towards human rights advocacy. This being evidenced by the drafting and passing of the Charities and Societies legislation created an environment in which Human Rights advocacy in Ethiopia is financially capped and dependent on government sanctioning which thereby limits any form of outreach and interventions for the recognition of the rights of LGBTI persons.

Trans\* and intersex individuals are perhaps rendered even more invisible than the lesbian, bisexual and gay and the Amharic term we could get that closest comes to describing a trans\* individual is setaset which refers to a male person acting like 'a female'.

#### Birth of an organised movement.

As a result of the aforementioned, the queer community has resorted to social media as the preferred tool for community and individual conversations, expression and outreach. The study identified two existing 'closed' Facebook pages whose membership comprises of mostly gay identifying men and some lesbian women all of whom use false names to protect their identities. Social media was also utilised by the community for the '*Stop the hate spread love*' campaign to speak out against the planned anti gay rally and to demystify non normative sexualities.

There may be the re-emergence of organising particularly as regards health issues faced by the gay community. For example, a group called *DG* that is "founded by a group of people willing to work toward addressing the issues of sexual minorities in Ethiopia." Their mission is to create educated, self-accepting LGB community in Ethiopia by conducting different kinds of trainings and counseling services.

#### Who is organising what?

So far in Addis Ababa three organisations were identified by those interviewed:

Organisation	Physical Location	Levels of Operation	Niche and Focus area	Target Constituencies	Challenges
<i>RE*</i>	Unknown	Diaspora	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Access to HIV prevention, treatment, care, support and other services</li> <li>• Strengthened capacity of grassroots organisations that work on HIV and key populations in Ethiopia;</li> <li>• Human Rights advocacy including through art and media.</li> <li>• Public awareness about MSM including youth, MSM living with HIV, male sex workers, married men, elder men etc.</li> <li>• Sexual health education (including through peer education).</li> <li>• Capacity building of members.</li> </ul>	MSM and SW	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Was disbanded in Ethiopia and as such operates externally;</li> <li>• Due to it's lack of physical presence in Ethiopia it does not hold a lot of credibility among Ethiopian LGBcommunity who feel that it is too far removed;</li> <li>• Inaccess to its interventions.</li> </ul>

<b>DG</b>	Addis		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sexual health education of LGBTI ;</li> <li>• Sensitisation of health workers;</li> <li>• Sexual health service delivery;</li> <li>• Creation of safe spaces for LGBTI community.</li> </ul>	LGBTI	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Still in formation;</li> <li>• Not registered so yet to acquire a legal personality;</li> <li>• Members still need a lot of capacity building to enable them meet their objectives;</li> <li>• Inaccess to part of their target constituency i.e. trans* and intersex individuals.</li> </ul>
<b>ZR</b>	Addis		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Economic empowerment of MSM sex workers;</li> <li>• Rehabilitation of Male Sex workers;</li> <li>• Reuniting estranged MSM with their families;</li> <li>• Provision of safe spaces for estranged MSM.</li> </ul>	MSM	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lacking in community validation;</li> <li>• Not yet registered and therefore lacking in legal personality;</li> <li>• Unreliable accounting structures;</li> <li>• Capacity issues particularly as regards staffing and sustainability.</li> </ul>

The primary focus areas of groups working with LGB (more accurately MSM) include:

- Sexual Health education –There is a notable gap in information around sexual health among non-hetero normative sexualities. One of the groups interviewed expressed intentions to “Conduct Training of Trainers (ToTs) with university students, general population and medical professionals on sex education and STD/STI issues affecting men that have sex with men (MSM)”.
- Provision of accessible health services for example clinics that will be easily accessible to Ethiopia’s LGB community whilst ensuring their anonymity and access to condoms and lubricants.
- Creating safer spaces for self-expression. Even though there exists snatched opportunities for clandestine gatherings to socialise, these tend to typically happen in the metropolis, more notably Addis Ababa, and among a small network of individuals that already know and trust each other’s discretion to be able to meet each other socially. Members of the community that may know of said gatherings are often reluctant to take part for fear of being discovered or worse having such gatherings raided by the law enforcement and being arrested.
- Documenting the lived realities of Ethiopian Zega community. Which could include the making of a documentary that accurately portrays their narrative.
- Movement building and networking. Ethiopia is a vast country and as a result of the criminalising legislation.

### Partners, Allies and Adversaries.

As a result of the restrictive Charities and Societies legislation, what little support exists emanates largely from non-Ethiopian sources through a few select locally registered companies.

**Access to condoms and basic sex education** — Particularly through entities such as the Embassy of the Netherlands which has supported and funded organisations across Ethiopia for outreach, condom access and sex education. DKT (a condom and lubricant manufacturing company) has also played a role in facilitating access to condoms for the vulnerable groups. However most of the community members interviewed expressed insensitivity and homophobia from Ethiopian staff of some of these partners as a challenge to access.

**Access to sexual health and counseling services** has been facilitated by organisations such as Marie Stopes (an international SRHR organisation) that have and still express interest in reaching the queer community in Ethiopia and making it's vast network of clinics accessible to the community. Marie Stopes also runs a free hotline that provides counseling services.

### Safe spaces.

**UK and US embassies** — which although restricted in what assistance by their diplomatic relationship with Ethiopia have remained notably reserved in any criticism of Ethiopia's government as regards discrimination and inequality particularly against the LGBTI. They however offer technical assistance to the community particularly as regards having a safe space to meet. These embassies in particular have a considerable advantage based on their donor relations with the Ethiopian government and therefore could and should be doing more for the community.

**Planet Romeo Foundation** — Has supported interventions that include the provision of safe spaces for queer youth, as well as psychological and legal help. It is lacking in physical presence and as such limited in the kind of support it can give.

### Adversaries

#### Religious Leaders

Although Ethiopia does not have a state religion on paper, the country is on the most part divided into two major religions. The Orthodox Church which has a majority of followers, whilst about 40% of Ethiopians subscribe to Islam<sup>7</sup>. There is increasing anti gay rhetoric particularly from Orthodox Church leaders and believers.

Dr. Seyoum Antonios, the head of United For Life Ethiopia at a religious conference in Lagos Nigeria, openly declared that “Africa will become a graveyard for homosexuality” and also expressed that homosexuality is the result of a “western agenda”, to kill Africans and “homosexuals are coming to Africa to steal our children”.<sup>8</sup>

#### The Government of Ethiopia

The government was cited as seemingly indifferent on one part but hostile towards non-conforming sexualities on the other part. Whereas it has rejected various opportunities to further criminalise or penalise same sex relations, it has done nothing to nor does it show any inclination towards decriminalising homosexuality or repealing the penal code. Most of those interviewed during this study found that this was as probably owing to the Government's attempt to balance it's international relations vis a viz the purported 'will' of it's citizenry.

<sup>7</sup> <http://ehsna.org/about/ethiopian-religion/>

<sup>8</sup> <http://rainbowethiopia1.net/2013/05/22/campus-crusade-for-christ-pamoja-3%E2%80%B2-conference-incites-hatred-against-lgbt-community-in-africa/>

## Media

Ethiopia's media is on the most part state owned and run. Any existing independent media houses are completely lacking in autonomy and independence and therefore unlikely to report without bias particularly as regards views and issues contrary to those of the government. For example Ethiopian TV such as...*The Awramba Times* and the *Feteh newspaper* which were two of the last remaining independent newspaper were forced to cease publishing in 2011.<sup>9</sup>

The remaining media outlets can hardly be considered independent or objective in reporting on matters regarding the queer community and have published sensationalist and homophobic rhetoric. For example *Yenga Daily* which printed an article in June 2012 referring to homosexuality as an imported disease and homosexuals as satanic.<sup>10</sup> *The Ethiopian Reporter* published an article further demonising homosexuals<sup>11</sup> whilst a popular magazine, *Addis Guday* published an article 'warning' about 'the spread of homosexuality'<sup>12</sup>.

9 <http://www.amnesty.org/en/library/asset/AFR25/004/2013/en/95f2e891-acc4-408d-b1c4-75f20c83eceb/afr250042013en.pdf>

10 <http://ethioforum.org/ethiopia-media-calls-gay-people-satanic-disease/>

11 <http://www.ethiopianreporter.com/index.php/other-sections/social-affairs/social/item/2426-%E1%8B%A8%E1%8C%8D%E1%89%A5%E1%88%A8-%E1%88%B0%E1%8B%B6%E1%88%9B%E1%8B%8D%E1%8B%AB%E1%8A%91%E1%8A%91%E1%8B%9B%E1%8B%9C>

12 <http://rainbowethiopia1.net/2013/07/09/rise-of-%E2%80%8Ehomophobia-in-%E2%80%8Eethiopia/>

## COMPLEXITIES OF FUNDING IN ETHIOPIA

**Government imposed funding cap** — This is a huge problem in funding organisations that engage in human rights advocacy in Ethiopia because the Charities and Societies Proclamation has among its provisions a cap of 10% of an organisation's budget that can be from non-government resource. This essentially affects how much human rights organisations can resource for operational costs particularly to organisations that may not have huge budgets to begin with.

**Inability to register** — The groups that exist that serve the LGBTI community are not registered and as such do not have legal personalities therefore they do not have the conventional structures in place to be able to receive any funding that may be given.

**Capacity** — The groups that exist are relatively new and need a lot of capacity building to enable them achieve their set objectives.

### Recommendations for Organising

1. Mapping of the Ethiopian LGBTI community in Ethiopia. The current political and socio-cultural context makes the visibility of queers and non-conforming gender identities difficult. Nevertheless a mapping of these communities on a wider scale beyond Ethiopia's capital city is crucial to organizing in a national context. This mapping may include that of queer Ethiopians in the diaspora to facilitate shared experiences and documentation on the impact of the hostile environment in Ethiopia;
2. Using said mapping for the creation of networks within the community;
3. Focus on right to health as an advocacy entry point;
4. Capacity building of the queer and non conforming identities to facilitate documentation of Human Rights violations as well as to better interrogate the community's needs and issues faced;
5. Engagement of law enforcement and health stakeholders;
6. Engaging in dialogue with mainstream NGOs, policy-making institutions and possible allies on policy and legislative change.

## PUBLIC DISCOURSE

### Anti-Gay Rallies

***“Gay practices are not our culture so we wanted the society to be aware of the danger and protect itself.”***

— Tsegaye Gebretsadik, chairman of the Addis Ababa Youth Forum.<sup>13</sup>

Two Ethiopian groups, government-affiliated *Addis Ababa Youth Forum* and *Weyiniye Abune Tekelehaimanot Association* (WAT) a religious group associated with the Ethiopian Orthodox Church planned and organised an ‘antigay rally’ on April 26 2014 citing ‘an increasing rate of homosexual acts’ as the reason behind it. The government eventually cancelled the rally not with the objective of protecting its queer citizenry but rather to not upset a ‘delicate’ balance between following the ‘will of the people’ whilst not losing foreign.

***“Let me add more yes they are satanic, diseased and cursed puppies who must not be privileged as humans so no human right to them. If they want to be healed they can. If not they have to be taken to a quarantine area until they die.”***

— Comment by ‘Getu’ on July 2 2013.<sup>14</sup>

<sup>13</sup> <http://www.aljazeera.com/news/africa/2014/04/ethiopia-groups-stage-anti-gay-protest-201441113425498130.html>

<sup>14</sup> <http://ethioforum.org/ethiopia-media-calls-gay-people-satanic-disease/>

## LIVED REALITIES

***“It’s hard to be gay and Ethiopian. No one knows about my sexuality. If they found out they will kill me.”***

— Interviewee

### Coming out

Most members of the community that were interviewed during the course of the study are in the closet and fear that their visibility would bring serious backlash including being ostracised by their families as well as exclusion from the general population. As such most queers in Ethiopia lead double lives and dare not reveal their real sexual identities.

***“Well being my self here is very difficult I always live a double life well when it comes to my family and friends am straight which is a lie but I don’t have a choice, I have to lie about my sexuality...”***

— Interviewee

### Conflict

The community in Ethiopia is fragmented along the lines of visibility as well as accountability for interventions. This conflict is often made manifest using the Facebook groups in which the fractions belong.

Another issue that became apparent was a general discontentment by those interviewed with the interventions done by organisations that purport to be working with the community. There were allegations that one of the organisations used the community to raise funds which funds have not been accounted for and the community has allegedly repeatedly attempted to visit said organisations premises in vain.

### Family

Most of those interviewed are not out to their families for fear of backlash. There were a few exceptions that were out to selected members of their family (siblings on the most part) most of whom had positive feedback about the experience but still expressed caution when it came acceptance of their sexual identities by the broader family.

*“Not my family but some of my friends who are girls know, and two guy friends. I knew they are not religious and progressive when it came to the subject before hand so as expected they've been supportive. But telling to my parents will never happen, as there is no way for them to understand it ...”*

— Interviewee

### Access to Healthcare

Health needs were ranked high for the queer community. A repeated concern was the lack of access to lubricants. Although a few of the gay men interviewed were aware of their availability in pharmacies, they expressed a reluctance to go to said pharmacies due to the stigma emanating from pharmacists and the pharmacy employees. As regards broader health needs, most queers are reluctant to access what health resources may be available due to the stigma and discrimination faced during access.

*“I have heard of guys going to a hospital because they had blisters in the rectum area and the procedure was done without anesthetic.”*

— Interviewee

Majority of those interviewed also expressed a gap in psycho-social support. Considering the hostile legal and social environment in Ethiopia there are no supportive systems of structures that queers in Ethiopia can access.

There is also a huge gap in sexual health education. For example most of those interviewed did not know what dental dams are nor what they are used for.

*“Not enough information is available even when it is that most from the LGBT community never admit or even understand them selves”*

— Interviewee

### Access to safe social spaces

Of those interviewed most expressed a general accessibility of spaces to interact and socialise. That said, access to said social spaces has notable challenges including evictions and barring from spaces owing mostly to targeted discrimination.

### Group security

Most queer individuals join existing social groups by way of introduction by a queer that is already part of the group. The respondents noted this as their generally applied mechanism to prevent 'outing' and 'spies'.

Social events such as parties are held in private facilities. Information regarding its location is not easily disclosed and the parties are intentionally kept small to medium sized to prevent attracting attention.

## OVERALL RECOMMENDATIONS

The entry points for support are severely restricted. As such, a more conservative approach has been deemed by the communities in Addis as the best to take. This approach may be centered on capacity building including on:

1. **Online security.** The queer community in Ethiopia largely depends on social media as a platform for interaction, education and movement building. Given that the government of Ethiopia's stance on the human rights of the queer community, the protection of the identities of individuals from the community is prudent. The location of people as well as other personal information can be tracked in multiple ways without the individual's knowledge. As such organisations working in and with the community in Ethiopia could build the capacity of the community to create effective passwords, encryption of data, virus protection, secure data storage and transfer among other examples.
2. **Organisational structuring.** Existing community led organisations have only just started organising. However in doing so, there is a notable gap in the structuring of these organisations and an absence of mechanisms that would aid in visibility, communication and accountability to the community. The existence of the Charities and Societies Proclamation is a considerable obstacle. The capacities of the individuals in these organisations can be built to be able to manage, fund raise for and sustain the organisations, it would create a platform through which that and any other obstacles can be met as a collective.
3. **Health based advocacy.** Majority of those interviewed not only deemed health as a priority to the community but also suggested it as a viable entry point for the recognition and visibility of the queer community in Ethiopia. Particularly with organisations working on sexual health and the government through it's national AIDS policies. Given the hostility the community currently faces, lobbying the government may be initiated by the 'mainstream' organisations working on sexual health and rights such as UNAIDS, Marie Stopes, DKT etc.
4. **Legal advocacy.** The law particularly the Constitution of Ethiopia is an important tool that enshrines the rights of LGBTI/GNC persons as citizens of Ethiopia. As such it can be used to lobby the police and the different ministries including the Ministry of Health to protect and uphold the rights of the community.
5. **Sensitisation of staff** working in the health sector and in organisations that support the queer community. Insensitivity and homophobia was cited by most interviewed as an obstacle to accessing services provided by organisations and in public hospitals etc. This speaks to a gap in educating and sensitizing Ethiopian staff at these establishments on non-discrimination and equality.
6. **Network building.** The hostile environment towards non-conforming identities in Ethiopia makes networking with mainstream organisations crucial in advocating for equality and non-discrimination and change in the legal and health sectors. This may involve community representatives forming and investing in relationships with mainstream organisations and mainstream agendas in which they lobby for inclusion of issues affecting the community as part of said 'mainstream agendas'.
7. **Documentation.** This is a powerful tool for visibility for the purpose of other interventions. Public interest legal cases often times require evidence of an affected constituency. Documented human rights abuses, cases of discrimination and inequality as well as violence based on ones gender and/or sexual identity would go a long way in bolstering advocacy efforts. The capacities of members of the queer community need to be built through trainings on media based documentation such as photographic and written mediums is needed.

## INTRODUCTION

The study of the sex worker population in Ethiopia was notably easier to conduct in comparison to the study of the LGBTI community.

Ethiopia has a rich population of sex workers of various types based on their identified locations and types of sex work namely:

- Primary sex workers who include: street based, bar based, hotel based, home based (Areqi Bets) and phone based.
- Secondary sex workers who include high school students, waitresses, those linked through hotel owners, nightclubs and khat houses.

There is increasing social and government acceptance of female sex workers compared to five years ago due to increased visibility facilitated by various health based interventions and outreach activities. The government seemingly offers and implements supportive structures evidenced by the documentation of challenges faced by sex workers as well as comprehensive strategies to mitigate said challenges.

There are no express positions taken up by either of the two mainstream religions on sex work in Ethiopia.

Despite the gains made, sex workers still face various forms of discrimination, stigma as well as physical and sexual violence.



*Setegna Adari...*

Female sex worker

## LAWS AFFECTING SEX WORKERS IN ETHIOPIA

The law is generally silent and ambiguous on the subject of sex work. Sex work is not expressly criminalised in any legislation. As such it is felt that existing legislative provisions do not really hinder the work of sex workers. As a matter of fact, for a society whose laws are hinged on broad, subjective definitions of ‘morality’, existing legislation illustrates an apparent empathy to female sex workers as per compared to male sex workers or the LGBTI individuals. National policies such as the National HIV/AIDS Policy are inclusive of sex workers under vulnerable groups and endorse targeted interventions.

Despite the ability to register under the restrictive Charities and Societies law, the law still hinders the access of female sex workers to vital services and interventions through its limitations on funding to mainstream human rights organisations. For example the Ethiopian Women Lawyers Association (EWLA) which had previously provided legal aid to tens of thousands of women, which services female sex workers could have been able to utilise in instances of rape or other forms of sexual and physical abuse at the hands of their clients or anyone else, is currently barely functioning and it’s services rendered almost dependent on volunteers.<sup>15</sup>

<sup>15</sup> <http://ethioforum.org/ethiopia-media-calls-gay-people-satanic-disease/>

### Enabling and supportive provisions.

Law/Statute	Provisions	Impact on Sex Workers
<i>Constitution of Ethiopia</i>	<b>Art 10 Human and Democratic Rights</b> Human rights and freedoms, emanating from the nature of mankind, are inviolable and inalienable. Human and democratic rights of citizens and peoples shall be respected.	Recognises the rights of sex workers to enjoying every human right as enshrined in the Constitution as the supreme law of the land.
	<b>Art 14 Rights to life, the Security of Person and Liberty</b> Every person has the inviolable and inalienable right to life the security of person and liberty.	Grants sex workers the right to be protected from cases of arbitrary arrests and violence that may or may not threaten their lives.
	<b>Art 16 The Right of the Security of Person</b> Every one has the right to protection against bodily harm.	Grants sex workers the right to protection by law enforcement against sexual and physical violence.
	<b>Art 17 Right to Liberty</b>	Protects sex workers from arbitrary arrest without a charge.
	<b>Art 24 Right to Honour and Reputation</b>	Provides for the sex worker right to human dignity and recognition as a person.
	<b>Art 25 Right to Equality</b>	This provision entitles sex workers to equality before the law regardless of the societal or otherwise perception of their profession.



**Prohibitive Legislation.**

Law/Statute	Provisions	Impact on Sex Workers
<i>Criminal Code of Ethiopia</i>	<b>Art 630 (1) (b)</b> prohibits same-sex sex and makes it punishable by up to ten years.	Criminalises male sex workers that are MSM.
	<b>Art 634:</b> Habitual Exploitation for Pecuniary Gain. Provides that: Whoever, for gain, makes a profession of or lives by procuring or on the prostitution or immorality of another, or maintains, as a landlord or keeper, a brothel, is punishable with simple imprisonment and fine.	This criminalises hotel owners who are considered as partners and allies by the sex workers.
	<b>Art 639:</b> Public Indecency and Outrages against Morals. <b>(1)</b> Whoever, in a public place or in sight of the public, deliberately performs the sexual act or any other obscene act or gesture grossly offensive to decency or morals, is punishable with simple imprisonment from three months to one year, or fine not exceeding one thousand Birr.	This provision criminalises 'sexual' or 'obscene' acts that are "offensive to decency or morals" therefore making it difficult for sex workers that operate in public places to conduct their business.

<i>The Vagrancy Proclamation No. 384/2004</i>	<p><b>Provides that:</b> Unless it entails a heavier penalty under the Penal code whosoever being able bodied having no visible means of subsistence, and;</p> <p><b>1)</b> is found loitering or prowling at a place, at a time, or in a manner not usual for a law abiding citizen under circumstances that warrant alarm for the safety of persons or property in vicinity and takes flight upon the appearance of a police force, refuses to identify himself or manifestly endeavors to conceal himself;</p> <p><b>2)</b> demands payment for a service he has rendered without being authorised or demands more than what he has agreed to be paid or refuses to leave the property when asked by a person with authority; is punishable with imprisonment not less than one year and a half and not exceeding two years. In cases of exceptional gravity the maximum penalty may be extended to three years imprisonment.</p>	Makes it difficult for street based sex workers to conduct their work.
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<i>Civil Code</i>	<p><b>Art 2030</b></p> <p><b>1)</b> A person commits an offence where he acts or refrains from acting in a manner or in conditions that offend morality or public order.</p> <p><b>2)</b> Regard shall be had to the behavior of a reasonable man.</p> <p><b>3)</b> Unless otherwise provided by law, the offense shall be assessed without regard to age or mental state of the person concerned.</p>	The term “offend morality” is ambiguous and as such can be applied subjectively and selectively by state officers against sex workers.
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## HEALTH

There is a high demand among sex workers in Ethiopia for health services.

Female sex workers are recognised as part of vulnerable groups by the Ethiopian government’s HIV/AIDS Prevention and Control Office (HAPCO) and are therefore beneficiaries of various government sponsored interventions such as supplementary income generation measures, harm reduction programs encouraging condom use, increased availability and access to condoms as well as access to STD diagnosis and treatment.<sup>16</sup> An example of this made manifest is that HIV testing in government clinics is free of charge. However testing for other STIs is not.

Another example is the now defunct requirement of having an identification card to access health services, which made access to health services difficult for sex workers who did not have national identification cards due to their constant migration. Identification documents are no longer required.

There are currently sex worker only clinics in Ethiopia e.g. Family Guidance Association clinics. Sex workers are also able to access clinics run by Marie Stopes, an international organisation that deals with sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR).

When attempts are made to access essential sexual and reproductive health services such as HIV testing, access to post exposure Prophylaxis (PEP), ARVs and abortions, sex workers still face discrimination and bias from different health workers.

<sup>16</sup> <http://www.etharc.org/index.php/resources/download/finish/32/110>

## ORGANISING

Despite the limitations imposed by the Charities and Societies Legislation, sex workers are able to register organisations and to benefit from the intervention of both local and international NGOs that work on SRHR.

The study was able to identify one sex worker led and managed organisation based in Addis Ababa called *Nikat Charitable Association*. Whereas there are pockets of sex workers throughout Ethiopia in both the cities and rural areas, the communities are not organised in the traditional sense of the word and there is yet to exist a sex worker owned network. Mainstream organisations such as DKT and USAID have so far taken the lead in coordinating their sex worker networks on a national scale.

Examples of support from other NGOs include the Stepping Up, Stepping Out (SUSO) programme funded by the Dutch ministry of foreign affairs among other partners and coordinated and implemented by Nikat Charitable Association and DKT Ethiopia. The support offered appears to be limited to female sex workers.

As a result of the existing legislative provisions that criminalise same sex sexualities, male sex workers that have sex with men are not included or even recognised in the organising.

### Peer Led Organisations

Organisation	Physical Location	Levels of Operation	Niche and Focus area	Target Constituencies	Challenges
<i>ZR</i>	Addis Ababa	Addis Ababa	Rehabilitation of Male sex workers; Empowerment of male sex workers; Reuniting rehabilitated make sex workers with their families.	Male sex workers	“Rehabilitation” has a negative connotation with an element of shame. During the study, the credibility of this group was challenged by the queer community and cited for its lack of transparency and visible outcomes. Sustainability of the projects.
<i>Nikat Charitable Association</i>	Addis Ababa	Addis Ababa	Sexual health services and education; Economic and psychosocial empowerment; Advocacy and empowerment of the social, political and economic rights of sex workers;	Female Sex Workers (FSWs)	Currently the only organised peer led sex worker organisation in Ethiopia; Currently limited to Addis Ababa; Constant movement of sex workers to different cities in pursuit of financial gain; Absence of a wider national network to exchange learning;

### Partners and Allies

Those interviewed identified the partners they have worked with as well as those they consider allies to the movement to date.

#### Partners

- Timret Le Hiwot Ethiopia (TLH) - A local NGO that has done projects to raise the awareness of sex workers through sex education as well as outreach testing programs.
- DKT Ethiopia - Has a generic condom promotion and education project dubbed 'wise up' through which it implements outreach programmes in 12 Ethiopian cities through out reach workers, other organisations and about 1,308 non traditional outlets.
- Marie Stopes - Specialises in SRHR and offers support targeting family planning, safe sex, capacity building particularly on sexual health issues, facilitating access to the testing and treatment of STDs and a helpline that offers counseling and support.
- Organisation for Social Service for AIDs (O.S.S.A)
- SOA AIDS Netherlands
- Stop AIDs Now
- Save the Children
- HCP
- ISAPSO
- The Dutch Embassy
- USAID

#### Allies

- The police
- Women, Youth and Children Affairs Office
- The Finance and Economy Bureau
- Hotel Owners
- Pimps

### Interventions by Organisations Working with Sex Workers in Ethiopia:

The study discovered that the existing interventions revolve around three thematic areas: Service delivery, Advocacy and Economic empowerment.

#### Service Delivery

This involves:

- Targeted condom dissemination and use demonstration - Nikat and the various partners ensure access to condom for sex workers through subsidising the cost of condoms for clients and dissemination among sex workers. Sex workers are trained as peer educators to facilitate outreach to other sex workers, police officers, night adult students etc. Out reach opportunities such as World AIDs Day as well as other forums are used to promote safe sex and disseminate produced IEC materials on safe sex.
- HIV and STI testing and treatment - The interviewed organisations expressed that there has been increased accessing of testing and treatment services by sex workers in both government clinics as well as clinics specifically set up to cater to sex workers.

#### Advocacy

This includes regular stakeholder meetings, trainings and outreach on the challenges faced by sex workers.

Coffee sessions have also been regularly hosted by organisations such as Nikat in which GBV is discussed with poor women, janitors as well as community representatives at their drop in center. Coffee sessions are also utilised to reach police on challenges faced by sex workers at the hands of clients as well as harassment by police. The sex workers interviewed noted that as a result of these sessions, police attitude and behavior towards sex workers has improved over the past five years. Whereas previously sex workers were forcefully evicted off the streets of Addis Ababa during and before 'large' meetings and conferences hosted in the city, now they give the sex workers prior notice. Those interviewed also stated that there has been a reduction in solicitation of sex or money as bribes by the police.

A 'radio diary' on local radio stations has also proven a useful advocacy tool in changing societal attitudes towards sex workers. The programme provides a platform for sex workers to share stories about their lived realities as well as receive and answer questions by the listening audience.

### Economic Empowerment

Economic empowerment activities conducted by groups that work with sex workers include:

- Literacy programs, capacity building and business skill transference. For example Nikat holds on site reading and math classes, hair salon training, micro finance, tailoring and catering services.
- Loans and trainings on savings and credit for sex workers as well as facilitating access to different educational scholarships
- Subsidised condoms which can then be sold by sex workers for income generation.

## CHALLENGES FACED

- The Charities and Societies Proclamation limits funding to registered organisations as such attempts to organise are limited by the lack of funds.
- Whereas there are thousands of sex workers in Ethiopia, there is a gap in capacity that would enable organising at a national level.
- Most of the empowerment interventions are not fully utilised by the sex workers that enroll due to the constant migration from city to city by sex workers as well as the amount of time required to complete said courses.
- The literacy classes even though offered are not very successful owing to a lack of interest because of age associated shame and misperception that attaining literacy is difficult.
- Even though several strides have been made as regards gaining social empathy, societal

perception still has a negative bias against sex workers.

- Some health agencies still discriminate against sex workers
- Sex workers are unable to access services from Human Rights organisations because these organisations are unable to operate without access to foreign funding and cannot access government funding.

## SOCIAL-CULTURAL AND POLITICAL CONTEXT

### Lived Realities

Despite the absence of rigid legislative provisions on sex work, male sex workers in Ethiopia are broadly categorised under homosexuality and therefore expressly rendered illegal by the law and invisible in the sex worker community.

Most sex workers flock to the cities, which are deemed to be economic hubs for financial reasons. In 2012, the Ethiopian Health and Nutrition Research Institute (ENHRI) estimated that 50-000 to 250,000 female sex workers were working and living in the capital city, Addis Ababa.<sup>17</sup>

Seven to eight years ago there was also a lot of opposition to the recognition of sex workers who were ostracised and targeted by law enforcement. According to the sex workers interviewed, presently, sex work is perceivably more open. Both government and society are generally more accepting of their existence. In 2013 the mayor of Addis who opened the youth exhibition even stopped by the Nikat booth. An action that was indicative of support and good will.

<sup>17</sup> Assessment Report of Needs of sex workers in Addis Ababa, Nikat Charitable Association, September 2013 pg. 8

### Stigma

Despite the increased visibility of sex workers and the gains made in the recognition of sex work, sex workers are still stigmatised by health care workers, harassed by the police, owing to the few available opportunities for economic empowerment vulnerable to human trafficking and constantly subjected to physical and sexual abuse by clients.

### Sexual violence

The baseline found that one of the challenges faced by sex workers in Ethiopia is sexual violence at the hands of clients. The sex workers then face persistent judgment and re-victimisation from law enforcement officers at the stage of reporting who typically fail to arrest or investigate the perpetrators on the basis of their perceived personality of the perpetrator. If the perpetrator is charming and friendly with the police nothing is done

*“It is difficult to have the people that rape sex workers prosecuted even with the police. The government recently opened a police station next door to Gandbi hospital which should help.”*

— Interviewee at Nikat

### Strategies that have worked

- Sensitisation trainings (coffee ceremonies) with police and other stakeholders.
- ‘Radio diary’ which has been effective at changing societal attitudes.
- Mainstreaming e.g. some sex worker groups such as Nikat take part in public events such as Women’s day on March 8th.
- They have taken a more conservative approach to advocacy focusing on health as opposed to Human Rights which approach has been found to be generally more ‘acceptable’.
- Developing relationships and cooperating with the various stakeholders.
- Shared information amongst themselves and their networks for security purposes.
- Collaboration with organisations within national networks.

## OVERALL RECOMMENDATIONS

1. **Organisational structuring.** The Creation and capacity building of a sex worker owned nationwide network would spread the reach of advocacy efforts. Currently Nikat appears to be the only sex worker owned and managed structured organisation. There are several other forms of organised sex workers across Ethiopia made evidenced by the ‘wise up’ programme that works in 12 towns.
2. **Health based advocacy.** Continued prioritisation of health as an agenda. Access to health has so far proven an effective platform for the visibility of sex workers and for the rising acceptance of the existence of sex workers in Ethiopia. Although female sex workers are included as part of most at risk populations, there are other aspects of health that remain unaddressed such as in instances of physical and sexual abuse of sex workers. Sex workers continue to experience stigma when accessing health services in public hospitals, which affects access. This advocacy could include sensitization and training of health care professionals, engagement with policy makers such as HAPCO on the implementation of policies that exist, on ground level.

- 3. Legal advocacy.** Advocating for the regulation through legislation of sex work, which is envisioned as providing a platform for the protection of sex workers. Currently, express recognition or protection offered to sex workers in either the laws or by laws particularly as regards non-discrimination is lacking. The Charities and societies proclamation is also a huge stumbling block. Although sex worker organisations in Ethiopia may seemingly not be expressly affected by the limitations therein, the proclamation places severe limitations on organisations that bolster the recognition and protection of the sex workers through an access to Human Rights agenda. Organisations such as the Ethiopian Women Lawyers Association (EWLA) that could have a resource for access to justice for sex workers against actions such as arbitrary arrests and detention, were forced to shut down because of the hindrance caused by the provisions in the Proclamation.
- 4. Documentation.** The challenges and violations faced by sex workers in Ethiopia need to be documented as a basis for effective engagement. Particularly with law enforcers and policy makers. The stigmatization and discrimination still exists and because of the absence of a practical and accessible channel through which any such grievances can be addressed, it is crucial that the violations that occur become documented and shared.



**UHAI EASHRI**

**The East African Sexual Health & Rights Initiative**

**P.O. Box 7144 - 00300 Nairobi, Kenya**

**T: +254 20 2330050, 8127535**

**F: +254 20 3860660**

**C: +254 737 920920, 702 931911**

**E: [info@uhai-eashri.org](mailto:info@uhai-eashri.org)**

**W: [www.uhai-eashri.org](http://www.uhai-eashri.org)**