



# CFCS VI

CREATING A JUST RESISTANCE:  
OUR STRUGGLES...OUR STRIDES...

CONFERENCE REPORT





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The challenges

And then the curtain came down...

**41 THEY SAID...**

UHA! EASHRI proudly hosted the 6<sup>th</sup> Regional Changing Faces, Changing Spaces pre conference and conference (CFCSVI) which was convened from **14<sup>th</sup> to 16<sup>th</sup> June 2017** themed:

### **CREATING A JUST RESISTANCE: OUR STRUGGLES...OUR STRIDES...**

CFCS conference is intentionally planned as a safe, creative and facilitative space for African activists to strategise, network, plan and reflect on achievements and challenges pertinent to our movements. CFCS is organised by pan-African sex worker and LGBTI activists who volunteer their time and form a CFCS planning taskforce to conceptualise, vision and plan for the conference including determining the conference theme, agenda and selecting abstracts that inform the programme.

The word 'just' is defined as "based on or behaving according to what is morally right and fair"[1]. This theme sought to inspire discussions and sharing on naming and identity as African movements. The conference was visioned as a space in which we would discuss, explore and negotiate how we as collective African movements can further reclaim our agency in movement building, strategically navigate the hostility of the environments in which most of us exist and work in as well as to holistically make visible the variety of experiences of our African bodies through the approaches and tools we use to organise. The conference conference also sought to facilitate dialogue and exploration of the ways we can create and continue to build our movements that speak to our realities, challenges and gains in a manner that is based on our collective aspirations for, understanding and practice of what is right and what is fair. How can we create a just resistance?

Invited panelists in the form of written presentations or artistic expression discussed five thematic areas namely:





**A. IT'S AN AFRICAN THING!**

Under this theme, activists discussed and proposed possible strategies that interrogate the intersections between agency, unpacking language and decolonising our identities. Presentations explored the history, value and legitimacy of work in our movements including addressing segregational politics and enhancing internal accountability in our organising.

**B. BATTLES AND SCARS...**

Despite the challenges of their lived realities and hostile environments the movements continue to endure which is testament to the resilience inspired by necessity. This begs the questions, what is the cost of this resilience? How do LGBTI and sex worker identifying individuals pay it?

Under this theme, participants discussed and interrogated possible topics that speak to developing an African response to violence and prioritising sustainable self-care practice in activism and the ways in which we build our movements. Panelists deliberated over experiences of violence and learning from possible resolution/mitigation models and strategies that facilitate long term redress and restorative justice to the named form of violence. Submission of abstracts that speak to various security issues and viable responses in emergency, medical and cultural contexts are encouraged.

**C. MONEY, POWER AND JUSTICE.**

Movements require sustenance in order to carry on the work. Whilst financial support is seemingly available there still exists a need for crucial answers regarding power and the ways it manifests in resourcing and being resourced, access, accountability, impact or lack thereof.

Under this theme panelists discussed and proposed possible strategies on resourcing dynamics, multi level transparency and accountability. Participants also explored the socio economics of our struggles and what it means as regards expectations and organizing. Panelists shared possible strategy on sustainable ways to organise and other viable resources that are independent of donor funding particularly as regards grassroots organizing and the youth movement.

**D. FROM THE STREETS TO THE BENCH.**

Is there a need to challenge our existing legal strategies? To interrogate if recognition, decriminalisation and protection are holistic objectives? Do these objectives ultimately result in conformity to a continued culture of perpetuated norms and being part of a recognised elite i.e cis and heteronormativity or are we seeking to disrupt and transform the system? Ultimately what could 'just' strategies look like?



Panelists discussed a sub thematic area of documenting, research and information that spoke to the development of community driven, evidence based strategies and the various dynamics therein. Presentations on a sub theme of legal reform, freedom and dignity were also made. In particular shared learning on objectives, drivers, timing and transitions within litigation strategies, reclaiming traditional values, labour laws, migration and building allies.

#### **E. OUR AFRICAN BODIES: AUTONOMY, DIVERSITY AND SELF DETERMINATION**

Considering the hostile environments and other factors that more often than not make our communities vulnerable to HIV, policing of how sex and pleasure manifests and violations of our sexual reproductive health and rights remain relevant and current issues needing discussion and strategy.

This theme presented an opportunity to discuss and share learning on the de(re)construction of sex, pleasure, gender, normativity, economics and history in our movements in the context of our African identities. This included various discussions on new HIV prevention technologies and the visibility of different identities in HIV. This theme also included a third sub theme of cultivating people centered sexual reproductive health and rights which explored the role of the medical field in human rights violations, community specific competency in the medical field and addressing the challenges of accessing trans specific IEC materials.

*We are grateful to all our partners that made convening possible through their support. Also to every single person that deliberately put aside time, energy and passion in order to participate in CFCs are celebrated as the drivers of what was a successful 6th CFCs conference.*

*Although there is some utility in traditional conference reports, at UHA I believe that the stories and experiences of the resilient and inspiring LGBTQ and sex worker activists shared in CFCs this year was better told through the eyes of someone that participated in it.*



## A TALE FROM A CFCS NOVICE

When Kevin Mwachiro called me one sunny morning in June to ask me to help him document a conference of the LGBTIQ, I was elated. I had ever met, fleetingly, only one person who, it was rumoured, was queer. I was going to be in a conference full of queers. A queer conference, in other words. Nothing, but nothing, would stop me from attending, I told the family.

I arrived two hours early at the pick-up point where we were taking a bus to an anonymous location. Queer, I thought. I looked around—I was not expecting a familiar face—and saw a tall, slim man with a hand luggage, standing next to a post. Something must have been written on my face. Hi, he said proffering a hand, Vinck was his name. You must be going to the meeting in Naivasha he asked. I replied in the affirmative and introduced myself, Dali. Hmm, they are welcoming. I looked him up and down then up again. Frankly, I do not know what I was looking for.

I know class when I see it. Is that a shawl you are making? That was Lorna asking. I love crocheting. And so began a conversation with Lorna about their part of the world. After Naivasha, the bus turned left onto a winding road up the hills. OK, I know where we are going.

A zebra blissfully chewed grass outside the plenary tent. There were at least 200 ordinary people—black, white, brown, tall, stocky, extra thin, XXL, voluptuous, hairy, kinky hair, braided, beautiful—in the massive, creamy-silver tent. In ordinary clothes and ordinary shoes—open sandals, Gucci, five-inch heels—speaking languages I am fluent in—English, Kiswahili, French. I had not gotten very far with Arabic and Spanish. They spoke those too. Everything went according to plan. The range of topics and activities was as wide, and it was interesting. Three days of narrating shameful experiences suffered for being who you are. Yoga sessions. Of intense and academic debate. Practical workshops. Lorna paid for the shawl. Of beating persecutors to their game. Breakfast meetings. Of sharing pain and laughter. I enjoyed the play. Of projects to return hope to those who have been overwhelmed. Coffee and tea with sweet titbits. Donor speed dating. Beautiful Ankara and other trinkets on sale. Of normal people charting their future. Of learning about *my* rights. Did I tell you I was searching out queer?

Dali Mwogere — 2<sup>nd</sup> Conference Rapporteur



**DAY I**  
**WEDNESDAY 14<sup>TH</sup>**  
**JUNE 2017**



## Opening remarks and introduction

Wanja Muguongo, the Executive Director of UHAI, was in her element during the opening ceremony. Vivacious as always, she warmly welcomed the almost 200 participants, to the sixth CFCS conference. She described the meeting as the sixth opportunity to convene activists from across the African continent, allies and funders so that together, important decisions that impact are made.

This was UHAI's largest convening so far, bringing participants from the five regions of the continent including the islands and representative of 37 countries. Present among them were funding partners from 35 donor agencies. I had attended the very first CFCS meeting in 2007, that was held in Nairobi and involved activists from the East Africa region and funders. How far CFCS has come! I was overwhelmed when I walked into this grand white tent and humbled by how large this gathering had become. I must admit I did shed a few tears but was filled with pride at how far the movement has grown. I was home and with my people. Now, back to Wanja's opening remarks.

Wanja went down memory lane and outlined some of the amazing things that have followed these spaces. The second CFCS in 2009 happened at a time when someone discovered that the infamous Anti-Homosexuality bill was being drafted in Uganda. At that time, no one knew what would happen once the bill was tabled in Parliament. Thus was born the Uganda Civil Society Coalition that fought the bill turned Act and overturned that law. There was also the Africa Queer Youth Initiative (AYQI) which was created out of CFCS V in 2015.

Wanja was passionate in emphasizing that UHAI is an indigenous activist fund whose aim is to ensure resources are going to the Eastern African movement in ways that speak to the needs of the activists. She said the donors come to this space and listen to what is being said, and craft their funding strategies to meet the activists' strategies, and this was why the donors pre-conference had taken place the previous day. Other pre-conferences had also been convened to address particular issues that were not necessarily part of the main conference issues, but were important for the movement. She noted all the pre-conference work fed into the theme of this year's convening, 'Creating a Just Resistance: Our Struggles, Our Strides.' Wanja thanked the peer-led task force that conceptualised and planned the conference, the funders and partners for their support and the Board and staff of UHAI, who worked tirelessly to see the conference succeed.

*"Let's make good work in this continent. If not us, then who?"*

Wanja Muguongo



Following Wanja's opening remarks, Roselyn Oduyo aka Roxxy, the conference MC welcomed Nobhongo Gxolo from **Positive Vibes** (PV) to the podium. PV is a Namibian based organisation, which also works in the greater Southern Africa region with a main focus on capacity development. PV is currently managing the KP REACHs Key Correspondents (KC) and Rights Evidence Action (REAct) components of the programme, which saw them train several citizen journalists as KCs, some of whom are members of the LGBTI and SW community on: interviewing, storytelling, writing, videography and photography. The PV team had partnered with UHA1 to document the conference and used the opportunity as a hands-on experience for the trained KCs.

**As mentioned before, there had been three pre-conferences that had been held. There was the donor pre-conference co hosted by the Global Philanthropy Project (GPP), the LBQ pre-conference co-hosted by the Coalition of African Lesbians (CAL) and the Youth Pre-Conference co-hosted by the African Queer Youth Initiative (AQYI).**

"Hey, are you OK? I said good morning," asked Solome. This time Solome got a resounding 'Yeah!' from everyone in the tent. "We are used to fiery, feminist discourse," she continued, her vibrant voice matched the giant flowers on the Ankara maxi skirt and top she was wearing. Solome was part of the LBQ pre-conference that had taken place the previous day. She invited Patience and Ruth to read out a summary of the pre-conference that they called, 'Our aspirations for the future'. This statement

was read with a large mural that acted the part of the backdrop. The mural was meticulously created during the two days of the pre-conference.

"Who are we?" Patience started. "We are radical African lesbian feminists that use radical feminism as our political standpoint on women's' body autonomy, minds, desires, and sexuality. We are firmly committed to liberating projects and encompass spiritual, political, social, cultural, sexual and economic transformation. We live and work on the African continent and have a shared vision of an Africa that embraces diversity."

The CAL statement<sup>1</sup> went on to deliver the following demands:

- **Investment in Wellness** - Development of a tool-kit of wellness, resourcing wellness work that goes beyond a western understanding of wellness and encompasses collective local, traditional, and indigenous frames of self-care and wellness.
- **Resourcing our Movements and Struggles** - Calling upon donor partners to increase financial resources towards LBQ organising in Africa; and ensure equity between and amongst various regions and priorities for LBQ organising.
- **Knowledge Production** - The LBQ experience, analysis and lived realities must be acknowledged as knowledge and called for a change of the modes of knowledge production.
- **Transformative Leadership Development** - Called on the funding and implementing partners to commit to the establishment and resourcing of an African lesbian feminist

<sup>1</sup> <http://www.cal.org.za/2017/07/06/changing-faces-changing-spaces-cfcs-vi-statement-from-the-lesbian-bisexual-and-queer-womens-pre-conference/>

leadership institute as a way to build the LBQ movements and, nurture transformative leadership.

After this came the voice of the future, 'The African Queer Youth Initiative' (AQYI) who put out their call<sup>2</sup>.

"We, young LGBTIQ people, have also identified areas of action to address our needs and challenges namely:

- Capacity building and support for youth-led organisations, disadvantaged and marginalised LGBTIQ youth and other stakeholders to understand and incorporate youth issues and solutions;
- Networking among young LGBTIQ people to learn and share best practices already existing in our African context;
- Core and programme funding for LGBTIQ youth-led organisations and individuals;
- Contextualised documentation and research;
- Access and dissemination of enabling information;
- Mentorship of youth-led organisations and disadvantaged LGBTIQ youth; and,
- Youth representation and involvement of young LGBTIQ in decision-making processes in healthy, productive and sustainable youth-adult partnerships."





## Plenary Session: The Danger of a Single Story

*"It is impossible to talk about single stories without talking about power. Stories too, are defined by how they are told, who tells them, when they are told, and how many stories are told and be dependent on power. Power is the ability not just to tell the story of another person, but to make it the definitive story of that."*

Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie,  
Nigerian author (TED Global 2009)

Keval, the Director of the [Gay and Lesbian Union in Action \(GALA\)](#) based in Johannesburg, moderated the session. The session explored examples of African queer histories and attempted to interrogate how these stories are situated in present day advocacy. Other panellists were; a queer Sudanese activist; Amanda, a trans activist from Uganda Achary from Morocco, who pointed out that it was complex living as a queer in North Africa and Raphael; from Cameroon, who said that transgender Cameroonians live in a very hostile environment.

The panel expressed their thoughts on whether it is possible to be LGBT as well as African and deliberated ways on how to create that space for analysis. Key highlights from this discussion included:

- No one should allow a checklist to identify them. Everyone should claim and own their space and choose to be what they want.
- To be human, queer and African are categories of identity that are misconstrued and seen to be mutually exclusive. These confusions arise because queer histories and stories are told in ways that aren't owned by the community. The community should reclaim these safe spaces regarding their histories and lived experiences.
- It is acceptable to be African and Christian but not to be LGBT and Christian. Christianity is not an African religion, yet it has been accepted.
- African indigenous languages do not have a strict distinction between gender boundaries. Africans share a common history

of oppression (slavery, colonialism) and resilience and this becomes important in claiming the queer space. The community should reconceptualise its identities in their language as activists. It is important that as activists and researchers to compile these names that exist and decolonise the knowledge that currently exists.

- *Violence.* The violence against homosexuality in Africa is a result of either cultural or religious fundamentalism. In Uganda, children are brought up believing homosexuality is un-African and a sin, yet being queer in Morocco is nothing new. The brainwashing against homosexuality starts at an early age.
- Violence against SOGI individuals is equally widespread in Cameroon, Equatorial Guinea and Gabon, and compounded further by punitive laws.

The Sudanese activist summed it up well when she recited this African proverb: 'Until the lion learns how to hunt, every story will glorify the hunter.' She went on to say, "We should start choosing the angle of the story we want to focus on, talk about our problems and suggest solutions for them. In short, if we express our sexuality in our own words and share our narratives to power structures like patriarchy then we arrogate power to ourselves. But our patriarchy, past and internal colonialism are factors still make it impossible to tell our stories freely."

### Plenary Session: Conversations on accountability

The session was moderated by academic and activist S.N. Nyeck. The panellists were: Stéphan from Burkina Faso, Addison Smith from Wellspring Advisors and Namita Chad from Astraea. This session interrogated accountability and the concept of multi-level and multi-directional accountability in the context of LGBTIQ and sex worker movements in Africa. The main issues that arose were money, power, transactions, organisational issues, and relational issues, that is, ethics and value creation.

The panellists agreed that accountability brings together partners to tally resources and identify where the resources should go. Accountability is about how change happens to the world and how to channel this change responsibly. Form follows function and organisations must be structured, but should at the same be aware that destructive models can be replicated.

According to Addison, both donors and grassroots organisations need to look at the question of moving beyond individuals and service delivery. Who is accountable to whom? Who holds donors accountable when they change their priorities and grantees have to change their priorities to align them with donor requirements? But because of funding restrictions, organisations are forced change their structures. This is not a model LGBTI organisation should adopt or emulate.

It was pointed out that the lives of activists are complicated and funding needs to consider these complexities, yet funding comes with many restrictions. Activist organisations have a role to query these changes. There is need to build trust between all



the different layers of accountability especially around activists-led funds and public funds that churn out of movements. Accountability in organisations involves management, such as selecting members of an advisory board, decision-making and when it is appropriate to raise money.

S.N. Nyeck stated that the challenge is to the queer community to understand the relationship that comes along with the funding and funders must go beyond simply thinking of the change that is being made. She went on to add that funders need to recognise the relevance of the queer community and that despite pen pushing, they are also involved in the emotional aspects that come with the work.

African activists were challenged to create values to work with and see that value in the work that they create with available resources.

## Plenary Session: Reform or Revolution

*"There was a comment on our page that read, 'We don't have a problem with you guys (gays) but don't say you're Sudanese.'"*

Sudanese activist

Moderated by Kholoud a long-term activist who works in the areas of gender and security, this afternoon session was comprised of: a queer activist from Sudan, Malika from Côte d'Ivoire, Victor from Men Against Aids Youth Group (MAAYGO) and Michael from Initiative for Equality and Non- Discrimination (INEND) in Kenya.

Political, religious and cultural fundamentalisms affect the way sexuality is viewed. But reformers and revolutionists are going out of their way to change this. The panel discussed ways that their respective organisations are rethinking and reshaping the way they work to bring change.

Michael gave a beautiful quote, "Reformers are said to want gradual change while revolutionists want it instantly." He noted that his organisation chose to work with motorcycle taxis commonly known as boda bodas in the coastal town of Mombasa. The

boda bodas are used widely by the public, including members of the community. Though, it is these boda boda riders who end up knowing rather intimately about the lives of the community members. Sensitising them on LGBTBI issues is one way of ensuring the safety of members of the community.

In 2014, MAAYGO's Kisumu offices were raided by the police who thought that the organisation was 'recruiting' the youth. Despite the arrests and confiscation of property, MAAYGO were able to turn this incident into an opportunity that eventually saw them partner with the law enforcement officers. They were able to educate the police on public health more so, HIV and its spread and eventually also engaged local government officials. Victor noted that the 'beauty' of working with the police is that once trained and made aware of the various rights, they use their new skills wherever they are deployed to work. This has brought gradual change in law enforcers in the way they perceive sexuality and human rights.

Malika pointed out that for a long while there were no transgender organisations in Côte d'Ivoire, yet there was a huge population of non-conforming genders. On realising this, Malika said she then went into revolution mode. She started a movement to create the change that would keep gay and transgender persons alive. Malika pointed out she worked with what she had, the existing gay community, but with the aim of reaching out to and working for the trans community. She mobilised resources and sought ways to get the services of health professionals such as psychologists. She approached organisations with the gender issues she had and found a partner in Astraea. It was thanks to this partnership

that she was able to garner the resources to mobilise more people, receive and disseminate correct information about the trans community. They as an organisation concentrated on creating strong partnerships around them. Malika asked, "Where does one turn to when they are rejected by family because of their sexual orientation?" Pointing out that you have to be a revolutionist to survive rejection by a loved one. Her parting shot? "You cannot reform a system that does not accept who you are."

The Sudanese activist shared a video of various clips of how the Middle East media view homosexuality. She pointed out that working with alternative media was a revolution because it is difficult to work or even reform a system that doesn't accept who you are. She advised the activists to work with systems that acknowledge the existence of activist groups.

Responses from the audience were thought provoking. An activist from Algeria said the media published a report on the role of media in provoking hate. The violence emanating from the community was shocking! Another participant noted that one negative TV program could destroy a year's work in sensitisation. An activist from Togo said that their trans members were once arrested and when the movement had them released, they recounted how they were taunted by the police the whole night.

What alternatives are available to activists considering the media and press in many African countries is under government control? In Togo, the movement has sought out friendly journalists who write about their issues positively. In Sudan, an organisation held two workshops for the LGBT members to train them on personal



security. The Sudanese organisation also has its platform where they publish work without revealing identities. Fortunately, in Côte d'Ivoire the community has the recourse of the National Press Council where they can report false or adverse information appearing in the media about them. The Sudanese activist noted that in order to counter the negative stories pushed by the media, activists should consider working with progressive journalists, use of pseudonyms, re-train journalists and the usage of alternative media outlets.

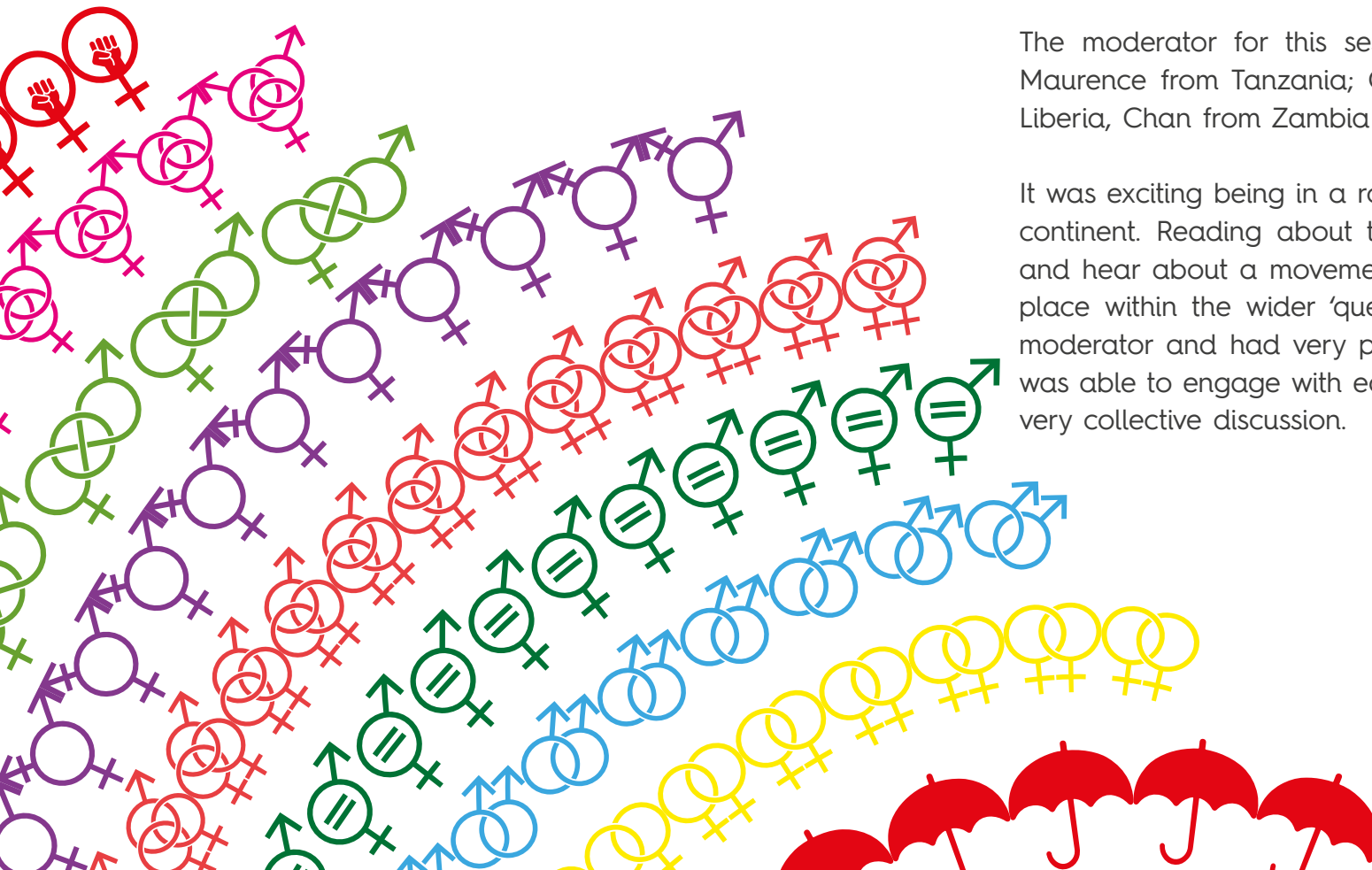
### Parallel Session: Body Politx

*"How do I work in a country where the government supports me, but I can't talk?"*

Rwandese Trans Activist, Carter

The moderator for this session was Rikki who was joined by Maurence from Tanzania; Carter from Rwanda; Karishma from Liberia, Chan from Zambia and Ricki from Zimbabwe.

It was exciting being in a room of trans activists from across the continent. Reading about this session I was eager to see, feel and hear about a movement that is slowly but surely getting its place within the wider 'queer' movement. Rikki was a fantastic moderator and had very poignant and targeted questions. She was able to engage with each panellist on a personal level in a very collective discussion.



**Rikki: How has the trans movement evolved and how are leaders in this movement addressing this in your respective countries?**

*Maurence: It is difficult being trans in Tanzania, and I came to terms with my real gender when I was in primary school. Tanzania still doesn't allow trans individuals to identify themselves outside their prescribed gender. The general public acknowledges the existence of lesbian and gays but are unaware of trans individuals. We are all seen as gay. The environment has become hostile; however, I have still been able to carry out my work through my organisation and share my journey.*

*Rikki: Zimbabwe needs to overcome the hurdle of gender identity and expression beyond sexual orientation. We are advocating for bodily autonomy. Within the community itself, we face non-acceptance, being accused of not being either female or male enough. I'm taking the government to the Constitutional Court for violating seven of my constitutional rights. This is helping to highlight trans issues. I'm also having a conversation with judges, lawyers and MPs. The overall strategy to get the term transgender into the Constitution.*

*Chan mentioned that they are aligning themselves to other movements, namely sex-workers and drug users. The reason they have pursued this approach is because similar draconian laws are applied against these movements. The aim is to open*

*up synergies with other groups. The Southern African Trans Forum (SATF) opened their offices so that trans women and men could have a space for dialogue. It was encouraging to hear Chan mention that trans people have been recognised by Zambia's national health policy. This will help in programming their work and in addressing health issues that the community faces. However, there is no movement from the Department of Home Affairs in dealing with the violence meted against the community.*

*Carter pointed out that In Rwanda because they are not allowed to register as a LGBTI organisation, they have gone around registering themselves as groups working with targeted audience, for instance youth, women, etc. Matriarchy unlike other countries in the world is a challenge that they have to deal with.*

**Rikki: Are we replicating heteronormativity within our movement? Is diversity within the trans movement welcome?**

*Karishma: Trans women in Liberia can't access hormones and worse still we have limited access to education. Challenges come in accessing trans spaces even if you don't have access to hormones or transitioned.*

*Rikki: Not all trans individuals want to transition medically or otherwise. Passing<sup>3</sup> is a very sensitive issue within the trans community, and it is a discussion that constantly recurs. How*

<sup>3</sup> Passing - refers to a transgender person's ability to go through daily life without others making an assumption that they are transgender. (Source: <https://www.glaad.org/reference/transgender>)



one chooses to represent themselves boils down to body autonomy. Bodily autonomy and the personal decision of what one wants to do with their body is a personal decision. Not many trans people can afford rent besides wanting to buy the latest wig or heels. We come in all shapes and sizes, colour and even shoe sizes! This shouldn't detract from who the person is. It all boils down to respect and accepting one another.

How do we negotiate trans spaces? How does a trans woman who doesn't look like a transwoman speak to society as a trans woman? This is a huge can of worms that needs further discussion. We need to decolonise what it means to be a transman or a trans woman.

Chan: I want to begin by saying that I am transfeminist and not a feminist. I say this because modern day feminism especially African feminism has nothing to offer us. But as a transsexual person, my thoughts are more for equality as it celebrates the person for who they are.

Maurence: Allow me to digress from your question because I'd like to share something. A few years back in Tanzania, before the trans movement started we were working with other gay and lesbian organisations, and we were making headway. Recent utterances from the government have made it too difficult for us to work. Parents are even scared to support their children in their journey's if they chose to come out. We

are being silenced because we fear what the government will do to us. So, we've resolved to pull back on our various activities and closely keep an eye on the government. I mean, even health care centres that were our allies are being shut down.

I had to lie at the airport to come here. The passport still identifies me as male; we are cautious about our movements.

Maurence's statement was startling. Tanzania who is just next door to Kenya is rolling back whatever advances being made in the civil and human rights space. Maurence's remarks were a reminder that there is still work that needs to be done.

The audience raised the following issues: whether it was more effective not just working with politicians but with the wider community; the appearance of authentic solidarity within the movement and what a gender revolution would look like? Is there an agenda beyond body autonomy for the trans movement?

- Ricki pointed out that it is important for the trans movement to set its agenda outside other key populations as this will lead to further stigmatisation of the movement. She pointed out that trans issues go beyond sexual orientation.
- In Liberia, the movement is working with lawyers to push for litigation and exploring ways to engage with the politicians. They are also using the Global Fund approach where they are advocating for access to health services for all citizens. Working with the police forces from the academy level onwards is another strategy that is being employed.
- Chan pointed out that we are in a revolution. Giving credit to the continent's trans movement that is about ten years old and being able to convene in meeting spaces like CFCS is not a small feat. Meaningful solidarity isn't about what is gained but how society changes. The movement should be seen to be adding value in each respective context. For authentic solidarity to be achieved, movements need to recognise each other's battles and learn from each other. #MICDROP

### Workshop: Community Driven Documentation

Organised by Positive Vibes, this workshop offered great learning for all present. I was impressed by how all the members from the Positive Vibes were responsible for presenting an area of learning during the workshop. Talk about teamwork!

The importance of documentation was stated as follows:

- Provides evidence
- Offers access to funding
- Provides healing and is therapeutic
- Provides evidence for strategising
- Offers credibility

They also highlighted the four basic processes of documentation:

- Data collection which could be qualitative through interviews;
- Organise the data and question the meaning behind the data gathered;
- Data analysis; and
- The dissemination of data and advocacy. Use and share the data.

**DAY II**  
**THURSDAY 15<sup>TH</sup>**  
**JUNE 2017**





If the first day was anything to go by, it was going to be another day of thrashing heads with interesting and thought-provoking conversation. The conference was getting into its rhythm, and the participants were expected to get into the groove.

### **Plenary: Stick and Stones**

Nigerian activist, Otibho was the moderator for this session, joined by: an Ethiopian activist, Edinedi from Togo, an activist from Zanzibar, , Amaka from Nigeria, Kholoud from Egypt; Daisy from Uganda, and Star from Burundi. This was the largest panel at the meeting, and they explored the hostile environments that they find themselves operating in.

Otibho set the ball rolling by stating that governments on the continent are increasingly using tools of oppression that are largely administrative and legislative, restricting space to organise and work. Responses from the panel were as follows:

- Governments either own the media or have restricted private media ownership making it difficult to disseminate information.
- Internet access is now frequently shut down, more so in Ethiopia. The Internet is crucial to reaching key populations in hostile countries.
- The mass media is awash with negative information on homosexuality, lesbians and sex workers and, in some countries, has reversed the gains made in sensitising communities on LGBTQI issues.

- In Ethiopia, there is increasing crackdown on gay men in particular, and with arbitrary arrests taking place so as to instil fear in the community and within the LGBTI movement.
- LGBTI youth in Togo are being denied access to their birth certificates by family members and therefore cannot get personal documentation.
- In Ethiopia, the LGBTI community receives online health facilities. It has an online health officer who is consulted virtually. LGBTQI members send photographs online, and the health officer uses them to analyse and prescribe treatment.
- The Uganda Network of Sex Workers' Organisation (UNSWO) has successfully partnered with lawyers, especially human rights lawyers, to either lobby for restrictive laws to be repealed or new progressive laws passed. UNSWO uses health as its entry point to discuss issues of rights, security and protection. It now sits on several Ministry of Health departments such as the Uganda AIDS Commission, and now works with the police, who have incorporated the human rights angle in its work.
- In Nigeria, the law does not criminalise sex work but those that benefit from the proceeds of sex work. The sex workers' association is empowering the community by telling them to stand their ground and not to fear the police. It has also sensitised the police that sex workers have rights.
- The crackdown on gay men (including foreigners) in Tanzania has reached unprecedented levels in the last three years. Not just them, women and gender networks are being labelled as lesbian organisations, and fear has been instilled everywhere. The LGBT movement met and held discussions with the

Ministers of Health and Constitutional and Legal Affairs, and the harassment has reduced.

- Burundi and Ethiopia have restrictive legislation that limits access to foreign funding this has curtailed the work of civil society.
- In Togo, many parents threw out their children when they discovered their children's sexual orientation. Activists are holding various public awareness campaigns that are aimed at changing the public's attitude. Some projects even involve the country's health and justice ministries. Groups in Togo are working with the prison authorities, youth and women groups having taken a broad empowerment approach.
- Egypt is still many years behind. Even sending a tweet or writing about your experience will land one in prison. The only space activists have is the Internet, which is used in a way that bypasses government monitoring and censorship.

It was apparent that activists are getting more creative and innovative as they work in countries that are hostile and restrictive towards sexual and gender minorities and sex worker movements. Surprisingly, there have been considerable gains from within or around these same governments that are restrictive.

## **Plenary: HAKI – Litigative Keys to Legislative Doors**

Social movements exist in various forms but what binds them is the issues they stand for. Can social movements and the law be used as tools for social change? Activists from the continent showed how it is possible to take on the bar and break barriers. Highlights from this conversation are as follows:

- Mauritius - homosexuals in the country were not allowed to donate blood, and it was not until 2012 when this matter was taken to court and challenged. The Young Queer Alliance spearheaded this case, which was in court for two years. This organisation also brought this case to the public eye. Only two months after the movement was found, the country's Equal Opportunity Commission conceded they had been denied a right and could donate blood.
- Uganda - despite the intense homophobia that prevails in the country, Ugandan activists have brought together 50 mainstream and queer organisations to litigate for their rights with remarkable success. Lawyers and the community in this coalition have had several successes in 2009 and 2014. The annulling of the Anti-Homosexual Act by the Supreme Court was a victory whose sweetness was felt across the world.
- Tanzania - activists complained of the dearth of human rights lawyers in the country; only three lawyers were working with key populations.
- Questions that arose during this plenary were pertinent to the state of affairs on the continent:
  - When, how and what should movements litigate?
  - What capacity is needed to decide to litigate? What is the impact of out-of-court settlements?

- If individual rights are violated, does this become an agenda for the movement or should the individual go it alone?
- How strong are movements to avoid situations that require litigation?
- Should movements spend funds on litigation in the first place?
- What do we mean when we say a strategy has been successful?

Responses from the panel are as followed:

- The law is a driver of social change, yet many people also liken it to problems. Litigating for human rights has its benefits: it translates and recognises the interests of individuals and communities.
- Litigation is not a matter of hiring a lawyer and rushing to court. It is a process you invest in, whose duration cannot be determined. A case must be built which may arrive at a logical conclusion or end at the point.
- Lawyers may have their own political agendas and funders come with their interests too. Ensure that the movement or even the individual's interests are kept at the forefront. This is particularly the case in discrimination and violence cases where retribution delivered is not in the interest of the individuals who have put themselves forward for the sake of public good.
- Transforming cases into public interest litigation helps protect and enforce human rights.
- There are huge differences in litigation between Anglophone and Francophone countries. Movements need to balance the stakes for and against going to court. Strategic litigation sometimes forecloses other actions, with negative implications on what happens inside the court. Litigation can spell the

end of a cause if the case is lost, which will set a dangerous precedent.

- Donors said that there are limitations as to how much and for how long support can be given towards litigation cases, but this should not deter activists from seeking support.
- Litigation should be part of transitional demands, but not a substitute to our activism. Movements should balance between litigation, mobilising, activism and advocacy (don't forget to bring in the media for more impact). The wider community needs to know why we are litigating and what the achievements will be benefitted for all.
- Institutional reforms and structural system change are needed on the continent; this will help in pushing for change. Otherwise, we should not expect too much from the courts considering the context in Africa.
- In South Africa, the battle has moved from the court to the boardroom.



### **Parallel Session: The 'I' is silenced: Intersex visibility in organising experiences.**

This was the toughest session that I attended while at the conference. It was not for the faint hearted, as Tom and Delphine from Support Initiative for People with Congenital Disorders – SIPD took us through their work in Uganda. They shared heart-wrenching stories and photos of intersex individuals and the challenges faced by the individuals and their families.

*“When a child is sometimes born even a mother will fail to tell whether her child is a boy or girl. So, our advice to the parents is to be patient and to wait for the child turn to get an age so that the child can decide what sex they want to be. Though, in case some cases immediate and emergency medical procedures need to be done soon after birth to save the child.”*

—TOM

There were sighs and gasps as Tom shared a photo of an infant who was murdered by the mother. He pointed out that in some cases, the mother would rather take home a dead child rather than be blamed for the birth of an intersex child. In some quarters of Ugandan society, being born intersex is a curse and this is mostly blamed on the mother.

SIPD is collaborating with the University of Pretoria in South Africa in coming up with a Draft Model Law on the Rights of Intersex Persons in Africa that will eventually be presented to the African Commission on Human and People’s Rights. This model law will call on African governments to collect data on intersex people; stop unnecessary surgery and provide health support.

It was not all gloom, as SIPD shared a recent win in Uganda, where the law, The Registration of Persons Act 2015 recognises intersex individuals though the term hermaphrodite is used in the Act. Furthermore, the first intersex consultative clinic opened in Kampala, in April this year.

It was pointed out that there is a lot of ignorance within Uganda on what being intersex means. People often confuse homosexuality with intersex issues. Critics of the movement have also accused SIPD of recruiting young people into homosexuality. SIPD offer financial support for some sort of surgeries especially if the life of the infant is at risk.

Delphine shared a story from an intersex child called William who is from the town of Jinja in Uganda.

For more information on SIPD and their work, please visit:  
[www.sipduganda.org](http://www.sipduganda.org)

*“I’m not a boy, and I’m not a girl. Being born with ambiguous sex characteristics, people will discriminate against you, and you don’t fit into society. Learning about intersexuality has tortured me. The truth is that I am boy trapped in a body that is in between. This upsets me. Some people considered me to be demonic. I found out about my condition when I started menstruating at the age of 15. I nearly fainted and chose not to share what had just happened with anybody; everyone knew me to be a boy. When my parents died, my stepmother who probably didn’t know about my condition brought me up. The fear of being stigmatised kept me tight-lipped, and I knew my life was going into a difficult phase. As I grew up I continued to menstruate, developed breasts and hips and my voice became high-pitched. Sometimes, I want to be in a relationship, but I don’t know whether I should get a female or male companion. People stare at me, and that makes me feel empty. I just wish I wasn’t born.”*



## Parallel Session: Sex and Pleasure

**Moderator: Khouloud**

This was the 'steamier and hottest' session at CFCS. I got the tail end of the proceedings and walked into a room that was filled with folks fanning themselves and faces that had laughter and tears of joy streaming down their cheeks. Participants were asked to write down their sexual fantasies anonymously; these were then thrown into a box and divvied across the room. The gloves were off, and the room became alive.

*"I'd love to have sex with a Maasai man in the Rift Valley as a hyena watches."*

*"Dirty talking as I'm having sex with my husband who will be spanking me hard."*

*"Me sitting in a room watching a group of people having sex."*

*"Watch a group of women in a room pleasuring each other."*

*"Rubbing myself against a trans man's genitals."*

The participants were urged not to inhibit and explore themselves and their desires, and as they walked out of the room, I could tell that this session had offered a 'happy ending'.

## Donor Speed Dating Sessions

This was an opportunity for the activists to get up close and candid with the donors present at the conference. The speed dating sessions had been broken down to cover various themes:

- **Intersex; Trans and Gender Non-conforming individuals**

Donors present: The International Trans Fund; Mama Cash; UHAI; The Other Foundation (TOF); COC Netherlands; American Jewish World Service (AJWS) and ASTREA. The donors gave a brief on their organisations and what kind of funding that they offer.

The following activist organisations, Gay and Lesbian Association of Liberia; Rainbow Rights Uganda, IRANTI from South Africa, Transgender Network of Liberia, Friends of Rainka from Zambia raised issues that touched on: grass-root mobilisation and support available; ensuring accountability of funds; inclusion of communities that are outside the digital space and access to funds and funding criteria.

Donors acknowledged that the fund-raising process is arduous and their organisations receive numerous applications. Successful applications that meet funding criteria and fall within priority areas stand a good chance of funding. AJWS have a pooled fund of US\$ 5.5 million which supports trans work in the countries they work in. The International Trans Fund will put out two calls in 2017, i.e. August and towards the end of the year.



### • **Decriminalisation – Strategic Litigation**

Donors present: UHA!; Global Equality Fund (GEF); Hivos; Arcus Foundation and Anonymous. The donors gave a brief on their organisations and what kind of funding that they offer.

The following activist organisations: Young Queer Alliance from Mauritius, Kisumu Peer Educators from Kenya; Peoples' Matrix Association from Lesotho, GALCK from Kenya and an independent human rights defender from Nigeria raised the following issues: support for organisations that work with allies and organisations outside LGBTI structure: support for art focused organisations; timelines for funding and ceilings; working with intermediaries; availability of emergency funds and support for LGBTI work in Nigeria.

GEF pointed that the organisations that they work with have to be movement led and work in collaboration with partners; they support the arts as long as its used as tool to support wider Human Rights objectives; they facilitate in building connections that can offer diplomatic support; they have an open call for proposals; don't have a strategic litigation platform but work on capacity building and movement building activities that work towards this and have emergency funds available towards Nigeria.

Arcus Foundation informed the activists that they offer funding for strategic litigation at both national and regional levels and work in countries where relationships can be built with local partners/intermediaries. They had an open call for proposals at the time of the meeting; they are looking at how to provide core support over multiple years and don't offer support to organisations that have over 20% operational funds from a single donor.

ANONYMOUS – work with intermediaries and not directly with the organisations. They don't accept unsolicited proposals but are happy to engage in dialogue and are looking at how to provide core support for multi-year funding.

UHA! pointed out that they are an intermediary for several East Africa based partners and support litigation efforts through the organisation's various channels and have funds available for core support; urged activists to be innovative and creative with their applications. They don't offer individual support.

Hivos – have a thematic focus on arts, media and culture and are keen to work with community processes and partners who are keen on co-creating and can provide funding for up to five years. They are keen to bring synergies together and highlighted the funding opportunity offered through [The Voice](#).

### • **Faith-based advocacy**

Donors present: UHA!; Arcus Foundation; Unitarian Universalists Service Committee (UUSC); The Other Foundation (TOF); Global Faith and Justice Project. The donors for this session gave a brief on their organisations and what kind of funding that they offer.

The following activist organisations, NYARWEK from Kisumu, Kenya; Initiative for Equality and Non-Discrimination (INEND) from Kenya and AIDS Accountability International from South Africa raised issues around how the donors work with various faith groups; safety and security; funding cycles; working with traditional leaders; capacity building and support for LGBTI groups that engage faith leaders and LGBTI led faith organisations.



Arcus Foundation – Mentioned that they don't fund groups working with faith groups unless they are allied to LGBTI groups. They offer capacity building to LGBTI groups though the request for support would have to be carefully framed and due to strategic reasons, the foundation does not work with cultural leaders.

TOF – pointed out that they have a religious person who is sympathetic to the cause, on staff and they work with religious partners who are also sympathetic to the cause. Their approach is to tap into their humanist principles, emphasising the principle of love.

UHAJ – the support offered is geared towards community needs and applications received. UHAJ funds advocacy work that targets faith organisation and documentation processes that help in learning how to work with faith groups. There is support for capacity building and organisations can consider the peer grants call where they can state their case on their work with cultural leaders.

UUSC – stated that religious groups should work with members of the movement. Work with cultural groups currently doesn't fall within their strategic goals. The organisation's work on the continent is geared towards fighting US rooted homophobia that targets Southern Africa.

Global Faith – encouraged activist to explore opportunities or even discussions with ILGA and Outright International. The Global Interfaith Network is also a valuable resource and is potential partner.

## • Youth Empowerment

Donors present: AJWS, UHAJ, Astraea, Advocates for Youth. Activists were from African Queer Youth Initiative, Youth Coalition for Sexual and Reproductive Rights, MAAYGO Kenya, PICTURES Youth Group, Kisumu Peer Educators, Link to Smile, NYARWEK, and MOLI from Burundi.

The critical areas mentioned were capacity building, capacity support and programme design that ensure a space for the youth. It was widely expressed that it is important to build capacity of youth organisations so that they can define the challenges they meet in achieving their objectives

PICTURE Kenya uses art to address sexuality. Art empowers youth by providing space for them to express themselves and to earn an income. They were keen to find out what support was available. Some of the organisations present highlighted the need to work with young LGBTI youth and youth with disabilities.

## Africa Premier of Bisi Alimi's play: "Africa's Future Has No Space for Stupid Black Men"

*"Depression is so disrespectful, so harassing. I once confided in a boy when I was at university about my battle with depression since childhood, and he gave me this are-you-fucking-serious look. 'Africans don't suffer from depression,' he said. 'It's one of those fashionable things black men say now to sound sophisticated like the white man, like being gay,' he continued, to further undermine the genuineness of my feeling. His opinion broke me down for two reasons. One, the flimsy way humans treat each other. Two, he was a final-year student in social sciences. How could he be so stupid?"*

(EXTRACT FROM AFRICA'S FUTURE HAS NO SPACED FOR STUPID BLACK MEN)

'Africa's Future' is a story written by a bisexual young Nigerian man from Northern Nigeria who narrates the incidents that led to the death of his gay friend. It highlights the passion that exists in an atmosphere of forbidden love and also the struggle with rejection, and depression. The story was adapted for the stage and was first performed by Bisi Alimi in London October 2016. The play has since been performed six times, but this performance was the first on the continent.

In an interview with me following the performance, Bisi admitted that he was drawn to the story because he felt that main character's story, mirrored his journey too. Many may not know that Bisi is a trained actor. His coming out publicly changed his life in Nigeria. He was candid about the journey to building a life for himself in exile and his struggle with depression and his attempts at suicide. This was Bisi unplugged, and I appreciate his candour and nakedness. I must admit, Bisi gave me one of my most memorable interviews in my journalism career.

—Kevin



**SIDE EVENT**

**CSF**  
**CS**  
**VI**

## Highlights from Side Event on West and Central Africa LGBTI Fund Meeting

The meeting was specifically for funders with projects in West Africa. UHAI and other partners are in the process of starting the West African LGBT fund. Four funders; Global Equality Fund, COC Netherlands, AJWS and Arcus Foundation, were present. LGBTI representatives came from Nigeria, Liberia, Mauritania, Côte d'Ivoire, Togo and Senegal.

Global Equality Fund, indicated that they were happy and willing to initiate conversations with the various groups that were present at this meeting.

Nina from COC Netherlands works with LGBTI associations in four countries in West Africa—Senegal Cameroon Burkina Faso, Ghana—and was looking to understand the West African context in a broader way and to know the landscape better;

In West Africa, AJWS works with the African Queer Youth Network, which works in multiple countries across, but in West Africa, AJWS was working only in Liberia;

The Arcus Foundation were watching developments around the West African Fund and were keen to learn more about the work that will be done in the region.

COC Netherlands is supporting advocacy work in Senegal, Cameroon, Burkina Faso and Ghana, with a focus on lesbians and transgenders. The funder is developing a strategy to see how it can help lesbians and transgender persons in the whole region. The programme has been extended to 2020 work in the whole region.

The donors were aware that there had been limited resourcing to Francophone West Africa. However, they were keen to receive suggestions on how best to work in the region without excluding any group. They affirmed that they would not want to create or impose solutions on how the West African groups organise themselves.

**DAY III**  
**FRIDAY 16<sup>TH</sup>**  
**JUNE 2017**





As the Naivasha sun rose over the conference the mood was a lot more relaxed, the pace of participants had geared down. We were to proceed straight to respective parallel sessions, with organisers only scheduling two plenary sessions for the day. There were already reminders of check-out times for the unlucky few who would be heading to Nairobi later in the day. Bus departure times from Naivasha to the city were announced. I was like, already? We were only getting used to having 'Madoadoa, aka Spot) (I'd already named the resident zebra) around but we'd soon be saying goodbye... The end of the CFCS VI was nigh.

### **Plenary Session: A better EU-Africa Partnership: Improving Human Rights, Education, Decent work and Democracy**

Session moderator: Simona Russo, [Global Progressive Forum \(GPF\)](#) Adviser. She was joined by the following panellists: Enrique Guerrero is a member of the development committee in the EU Parliament and is the standing rapporteur for humanitarian aid. He is also working on issues of governance, democracy and social justice. Jean-Danielle is a LGBTI activist and works with asylum seekers in Belgium. Marie-Ange works with Rainbow House. She said the movement in Africa is not known in Belgium, and an important strategy of the organisation is to make this work public.

It was interesting to learn that the EU is now the most important donor on development cooperation (providing almost 60% of development aid) and has assumed moral responsibility after USA cut their contributions by 50%. Enrique said he was attending

CFCS to listen to the debate, work with the African movement and give their voice to the EU Parliament. The [African Week](#) in the EU Parliament will concentrate on the youth situation in Africa, and he will also try to influence the situation towards the EU Africa summit later in the year.

Highlights from this session were:-

- With its experience and studies, Rainbow House will consider cooperating with African universities to sensitise them on LGBTI issues to change prevailing mentalities. Rainbow House could facilitate and leverage support to LGBTI members who are being persecuted and victimised. However, participants asked for more information from Rainbow House for its support to asylum seekers.
- Refugees, social development and human rights issues will be addressed during the Africa Week at the summit. Queer youth participating at the conference will be presenting their case.
- Activists appreciated the EU support to the LGBTI community but pointed out that more assistance was needed in Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia, Togo and Cameroon. Activists from Tunisia and Morocco also appreciated Belgian support to asylum seekers.
- It was felt that foreign NGOs purporting to be helping asylum seekers should be vetted. Local associations in each country have lists of their members and are usually aware of the activists who are in danger.
- It was suggested that the African LGBTI movement document and share its stories, both positive and negative, and about the movement as this is important in normalising the movement's narrative.

### **Parallel Session: Body Economics**

Moderated by Denis from African Sex Workers Alliance (ASWA), this session looked at violence and the various faces that it has within the sex worker environments. Panellists included: Pilot from Botswana, Phelister from the Kenya Sex Workers Alliance, Amaka from the Nigeria Sex Workers Association and Daisy from Women's Information Network for Human Rights Advocacy in Uganda. Little did I know that this was going to be a most enlightening session, as I was sensitised on the sex-worker movement.

Denis started with a sobering fact, that sex workers are more than likely to experience various of forms violence during their work and get minimal if no protection from the law.

*"I'm constantly moving house because I fear for my safety. People accuse me of promoting sex work and for helping gay men. I fear for my security."*

Pilot

*"In the mornings they (sex work clients) are pastors, but in the night, they are patrons in hotels!"*

Amaka

Highlights from this session are as follows:

- In 2015, 26 sex workers were murdered in four Kenyan counties;
- Paralegals in Kenya are being engaged to help document violations against sex workers;
- State actors in Uganda are using the recently enacted Anti-Pornographic Act to curtail any public awareness activity around sex worker rights despite its vague provisions.
- Sensationalisation of sex work and sex workers in Nigeria has stigmatised sex work in the country;
- Sex worker right groups in Nigeria are engaging with lawyers at a national level that will help in advocacy. They are also assisting in documenting instances of violence;
- A Botswana sexual health facility that targets men is still struggling to be legally registered, as authorities are citing that registering of such an organisation will promote sex work;
- Sex workers in Kenya are being trained on human rights issues, security, documentation of violence and movement building. They are also exploring ways to accommodate sex workers who are living with HIV/AIDS or are trans or gay identifying;
- Similar efforts are being carried out in Uganda. Though, sex worker organisations in Uganda are working with the police, the media, religious leaders, bar and hotel owners and are sensitising them on the intricacies of sex work;
- Kenyan sex workers intend to file decriminalisation proceedings at the High Court in October this year;
- Sex worker activists are encouraging sex workers to report acts of violence perpetrated on them. Working with the police and creating partnership with them is important to create areas of safety;

- Sex workers in DR Congo are actively working with sex workers in low-income communities. They are also working with pimps and brothel owners to create safe working spaces;
- In Botswana, 'hot spots' have been identified. These are areas where sex workers operate in and new clients are asked to pay upfront to avoid any swindling that may take place. . There is also a programme in Botswana that has been able to rescue sex workers who had been trafficked into South Africa;
- It is about time positive documentation of sex work should be encouraged; and
- There was a call to look into how activists within the movement can get psycho- social support; which will help deal with trauma occasioned by the often violent situations that they find themselves in.

Sex workers as advocates adhere to the following values:

- Sex work is work;
- Decriminalisation of sex work; and
- Self-determination and self-organising by sex workers themselves

*"We need to look at the structures within our society that give rise to violence in all its various manifestations. At the very core of our advocacy work is essentially challenging oppression, the abuse and misuse of power. It is learning to be visible and learning to claim and work with power. Violence and the ever-present threat of violence is the way society punishes, controls and regulates all people to bring compliance and conformity and we need to challenge that."*

Denis

### **Plenary Session: Funding in Restrictive Areas**

The session was moderated by Wanja Muguongo, the Executive Director of UHAI. On the panel were representatives from AJWS; CREA; Global Human Rights Fund; and Global Equality Fund.

Wanja gave the background under which the movement finds itself. Funding, closing and restricting space for civil society are the new buzz words. She went on to mention that the space has always been restricted for those who have been funding the LGBTI and sex workers' movements. But there are ways in which communities have been clamping down on the limited space. But this is normal. She stated that anti-homosexuality laws are not the problem, as these laws have had the opposite effect of what they were intended to do. They have instead galvanised communities, birthed movements, spot lighted certain countries and have been the reason why people have been spurred to use their judiciaries to fight back.

"How I wish all we were dealing with was only anti-homosexuality legislation, which can be dealt with at night, during our sleep, and in the morning, we would be taking these things to court, and we would fight the fight with our allies," says Wanja. "But when what we are fighting are foreign funding laws, that do not allow us to get more than 10% of our funding from outside our countries, if what we are fighting are laws that necessitate that every single thing you do has to be signed off by a government official, if what we are fighting are laws that make it illegal to form alliances, then it becomes really hard to fight. And that is what we are dealing with."



**Editor's Note: Due to the nature of the discussion, the rest of the discussion will not be availed in this report.**

### **Parallel Session: Solace Project**

I didn't know what to expect from this session, but I knew it was going to be different. Crazy different. I'm a big admirer of AFRA-Kenya and their work in providing peer support for a queer woman or is it womyn? I digress. So, with my pen in hand, I went into to rapporteur. I walked in, and moderator and other participants were seated on the floor and the chairs pushed against the wall. This was different I said to myself. There were lots of flash cards and lots of felt pens. Since I'd taken up colouring recently; inwardly I did the happy dance! I placed my recorder in the centre of the circle and Immah, the moderator, laid down the rules. She told participants that whatever was shared would remain with the room and that it was a place of safety for all. The recorder was promptly turned off....

I don't know about other participants, but I walked out of that session fully relaxed. I hadn't realised that the last two days had been intense. I had been given the opportunity to confront my demons, was affirmed and affirmed others, got the best hug ever and felt loved. I found home.

### **Workshop: Security**

Charles works with ISHTAR MSM, one of the oldest MSM organisations in Kenya. It is the first gay clinic exclusively run and managed by MSM in Kenya. Ndiye from Mali has been sensitising journalists in Mali on LGBTQ issues and how to report them. Moses works for Spectrum Uganda Initiative, an organisation focusing on health and advocacy. Vinck is representing the Movement of Men Initiative (MMI) based in Kenya. The initiative provides health and human rights services to bisexual men. Kennedy works for NYARWEK in western Kenya. Fungai moderated this session.

All the panellists mentioned that members of the community live in fear in their respective countries. It was reported that blackmail has become a major issue in Nairobi, and there is the constant fear of abuse physical or otherwise from homophobic individuals. Moses reported the existence of a toll-free number that members of the community could use to report incidents of violence. This has led to more victims feeling more secure even to report these crimes to the police. Spectrum Uganda was pleased to note that the Ministry of Health and the Uganda Police, are using the line to disseminate health-related issues, and general inquiries.

Constant harassment and terrorising for sections of society forced Vink to come up with a solution to protect himself. Vinck has devised a mobile app, *Nifuute* (follow me) that can be used on any smartphone. The app allows one to share their location, more so when meeting someone socially in an unfamiliar area. This location is shared with friends in case of any unfortunate incidents. Vinck says once launched, the app will go a long

way in protecting the community from blackmailers or violent individuals.

Ndiye trained journalists in Mali on how to report on LGBTI issues. The negative articles reported by the media feed into homophobic sentiment within the society. Three days of training that resulted an action plan and a change of perception to LGBTI issues have seen a difference in the reportage of LGBTI issues.

Having hosted a website that is used for reporting and documenting incidents of violence across the country, NYARWEK went further and set up a toll-free hotline. The website, [www.utunzi.com](http://www.utunzi.com) generates reports on its own and creates an early warning system to alert members of the community of the security risks in a particular region of the country.

To take on the blackmailers head-on, ISHTAR MSM intends to put up a website that will expose the details of black mailers. They are also embarking on an innovative way of countering the menace by working with 'reformed' blackmailers and using them to entrap extortionists.

There was a second part to this session where Fungai of the [Association for Progressive Communication](#) (APC) and Ivy of [Protection International](#) offered security tips.

Protection International also provides an online course on personal protection, and Ivy encouraged participants to send proposals to the organisation to be trained. While Fungai

advised that participants take more time to understand what social media developers do, who owns them and how they link to their platforms, where information is stored, for whom and what purpose. Participants were encouraged to visit [www.securityinabox.org](http://www.securityinabox.org)

### **Closing Plenary Session: Continentuity – Continental based membership organising**

The session was moderated by Joshua. His panellists were Sheena from CAL, Irwin from The African Queer Youth Initiative, Denis from ASWA, Anthony from Pan-African ILGA (PAI) and Berry from AMSHER. During this session, participants gave their thoughts on how justice or the lack of it was in practice, and it offered a moment of self-reflection on whether these regional and continental bodies were really in touch with the grassroots organisations in Africa.

### **The challenges**

The panellists agreed that there are many advantages to having continental platforms that enable the movement to speak with 'one voice' and work on the same issues. Nevertheless, they also appreciated that the African context is not static Differences are wide in terms of ideology, geographical disparities, social and economic contexts, class issues, language, priorities, legislation, representation and marginalization of LGBTQI communities within countries and across regions. These issues ensure organising a continental movement is challenging, yet paradoxically this diversity is our richness.

The continental organisations provide a platform to develop together and sit and negotiate ‘united’ positions. A continental movement provides clout, identity and visibility, and political muscle to claim spaces previously not claimed. It was unanimously felt that the struggle against a common enemy can be won. African queer activists are strong, and the strength of the movement will come with numbers. However, it was pointed out that it is crucial to consider the quality of the membership and not just boast of numbers.

The continental organisations will need to create processes and systems to ensure wider consultation, ensure a balance of the different views, and to be internally critical of their work. Grassroot members should be able to demand accountability from these organisations on the use of resources, operations and decision-making.

It was acknowledged that membership-based organisations are necessary and important but to effectively do their work they must be consultative, have their ears on the ground, and be aware of the grassroots work. The continental organisations must be aware that constant introspection of the body and its members are needed as growth takes places.

### **And then the curtain came down...**

“We’ve had three amazing days full of pleasurable conversations, at times those conversations were uncomfortable and difficult. We’ve discussed strategies and made contacts, and I know we are now ready to twerk,” said Mukami Marete, UHA’s Deputy Director as she closed the sixth edition of CFCS. In my head, twerk could easily be replaced by work, because the work of making the continent a lot more SOGI friendly still needs to be done.

Pan-African meetings like CFCS take me through a cocktail of emotions, because of its significance to the movement and community in Africa. I met my first Mauritanian ever, and the fact that this was his very first time at a LGBTI conference and one that was on African soil is what CFCS is about to me. Breaking boundaries, break chains and creating a just resistance that gives space to the sharing our struggles and the celebration of our strides.

# THEY SAID...

Participants from Mauritania



*"It's my first time in Kenya and at this conference. CFCS is a big experience for me, and I have to share what I've learnt here with people back home, that is very important. It is great to be here."*







*"This is my first CFCs. Being in Mauritius felt like we are a branch, but now I can see we are part of the whole tree. From this conference I've discovered that our problems are similar to those on the mainland continent, yet we all have our unique ways to deal with these problems. The fight is still one; we need to fight as Africans."*





*"We don't have many spaces like this in the Mauritius; this isn't space it is a sanctuary. We can be ourselves. This is paradise. It is easier for me as a gay man to get around, but what about someone who is gender fluid? They don't have that liberty. This place offers them that, they can be themselves without judgement."*



## Denis on Parallel Session on Beyond Funding: Strategies for self-sustainability

This session was put together to assist sex worker, and LGBTI organisations can become self-sustaining by finding alternative sources of income that are independent on donor funding. It was a case study based session that offered insights into this. Examples of farming, table banking, sourcing capital were cited. It looked at economic empowerment and the added value it brings to advocacy.

For Denis from ASWA conversations like this are important because there is a need.

ASWA was keen to push this conversation forward within its network, recognising with shrinking funding this discussion on self-sustainability should become a recurring issue.



*“There are members of our community who may not have sufficient education or don’t have access to opportunities, but the fact that LGBTI groups can have separate ways of raising income is important. We come to this discussion with a very open mind and the fact there are existing movements led by members that have independent sources of income, shows that these initiatives are worth sharing. As a network movement, the issue of sustainability is something that we think about a lot and if there are alternative ways of getting income outside of donor funding, that is great.”*





Botswana  
NNYWANA  
PHONA

Mars

KENYA  
KIKUYU  
KEINO

KENYA - country  
Kuma - vagina (swag,  
intimacy)

Burundi  
Igisa

NIGERIA  
(IGBO)  
OTU

Sudan  
Kos  
Tamal  
(Camel)

Ug  
Emana

Uganda  
Kuma - vagina  
Emana - Bié

Zimbabwe  
Beche

CFCs VI  
CREATING A JUST RESISTANCE:  
OUR STRUGGLES...OUR STRIDES...

Nigeria  
Uwedin (in Edo)

Kos  
Egyptian  
Arabic  
Egypt

Kuma

VAGIN:  
BOBODOUMAN  
CÔTE D'IVOIRE

Ghana  
Wayase

ZAMBIA  
ICINYO

KENYA  
KtENO

Uganda  
(Luganda)  
Emana

Country long  
name of vagina





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