

# MANUFACTURING MORAL PANIC:

## Weaponizing Children to Undermine Gender Justice and Human Rights

### Research Team:

Juliana Martínez, PhD; Ángela Duarte, MA;  
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Sentiido (Colombia)

Elevate **Children**  
Fundators Group



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March 2021

The **Elevate Children Fundators Group** is the leading global network of fundators focused exclusively on the wellbeing and rights of children and youth. We focus on the most marginalized and vulnerable to abuse, neglect, exploitation, and violence.

**Global Philanthropy Project (GPP)** is a collaboration of fundators and philanthropic advisors working to expand global philanthropic support to advance the human rights of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and intersex (LGBTI) people in the Global South and East.

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# CASE STUDY 3.

## GHANA:

### HOW FAITH-BASED, GENDER-RESTRICTIVE GROUPS SOWED HOMOPHOBIA AND REAPED POLITICAL AND SOCIAL POWER

#### OVERVIEW

The actions of faith-based, gender-restrictive groups<sup>85</sup> in Ghana gained international attention in 2019 due to two main events: the World Congress of Families (WCF), which convened in Accra, and the opposition to the Comprehensive Sexuality Education (CSE) program proposed by the government. Though the two were not originally related, faith-based, gender-restrictive groups used the WCF as a platform to amplify their message against the CSE program, as well as LGBT<sup>86</sup> rights more broadly.

The Ghanaian case illustrates how faith-based, gender-restrictive groups use the rhetoric of protecting children and leverage entrenched anti-LGBT sentiment in many English-speaking countries in Africa to manufacture moral panic. This strategy both effectively advances a gender-restrictive worldview and strengthens the social capital and political power of these groups. Furthermore, the anti-LGBT cause allowed these groups to work across denominations and religions—for example, Evangelicals with Catholics<sup>87</sup> or Christians with Muslims—to create a powerful interfaith alliance that constitutes a serious threat to gender justice<sup>88</sup> in Ghana.

85 This chapter will use the expression “interfaith, gender-restrictive groups” when there is an explicit alliance between faith-based, gender-restrictive groups, like the National Coalition of Proper Human Sexual Rights and Family Values (NCPHSRFV).

86 Intersex and non-binary people’s rights are also undermined by the actions of gender-restrictive groups. However, the researchers did not find evidence of gender-restrictive groups instrumentalizing the experiences of intersex persons in their narratives: in the case of Ghana, even if the NCPHSRFV sometimes speaks about LGBTIQ people, they rarely speak of the needs of, trans, intersex or queer people. Therefore, throughout this report we use the acronym LGBT when speaking of the rights explicitly targeted by gender-restrictive groups, and LGBTI to denote the consequences of their actions that also affect intersex and non-binary people.

87 In this report we use “Evangelical,” “Orthodox,” and “Anglican” churches to name non-Catholic Christian denominations. When relevant, specific confessions are mentioned.

88 Gender justice is a systemic process of redistribution of power, opportunities, and access for people of all genders through the dismantling of structures of oppression including patriarchy, homophobia, and transphobia (Global Fund for Women, 2021). It encompasses the affirmation and protection of LGBTI rights, including the rights of LGBTI children, as well as (cis)women’s rights, that is, the “ending of—and if necessary the provision of redress for—inequalities between women and men that result in women’s subordination to men.” (Goetz, 2007).

**Gender-restrictive groups and actors** are organizations, politicians, researchers and institutions that seek to establish a gender-restrictive world order.

A gender-restrictive order organizes economic, political and social life through the imposition and enforcement of a restrictive and hierarchical vision of gender. It has two main and interdependent components: the naturalization of the gender binary, and the enforcement of gender-normativity.

Most of these groups and actors are faith-based, religiously affiliated or explicitly confessional. These groups attack human rights and gender justice, as well as the principles of self-determination and equity.

**despite strong anti-LGBT sentiment, considerably close relations between politics and religion, and intense lobbying on the part of faith-based, gender-restrictive groups.**

The following case study starts by **I)** presenting the most recent gender-restrictive initiatives in the country and their anti-LGBT crusade. It then **II)** provides key contextual information that will explain why the messages of these faith-based, gender-restrictive groups were so appealing. Later it **III)** analyzes the framing strategy of the anti-CSE campaign. Finally, this chapter **IV)** provides conclusions about the Ghanaian case.

During what was called the “CSE controversy,” influential politicians and faith-based, gender-restrictive groups ignored the actual rights violations Ghanaian children experience every day<sup>89</sup> to portray CSE as the biggest threat to their health and wellbeing. By creating moral and homophobic panic and mobilizing nationalist and pan-African sentiment, these groups successfully presented themselves as concerned with the wellbeing of children,<sup>90</sup> while characterizing their gender-restrictive and patriarchal ideas as synonymous with African culture and values.

As was the case in many other countries, the discourse, actions, and lobbying strategies of faith-based, gender-restrictive groups started long before these public demonstrations and events. These sustained “silent” actions allowed them to wield considerable political influence by the time the “controversy” started.<sup>91</sup>

However, in contrast to what has happened in other English-speaking countries in Africa, **these groups have not succeeded in passing anti-LGBT laws further criminalizing homosexuality in Ghana**

<sup>89</sup> Teenage pregnancy is very high in the country: 14% of teenage girls (aged 15-19) have already had a live birth or are pregnant with their first child, compared with 1.6% in developed countries and 0.7% in China (Asiedu, 2020); 36% of 19-year-olds were already mothers as of 2017 (GHS, 2017). Furthermore, in 2017, 21% of girls under the age of 18 were married (Addo, 2019). Also, despite Ghana having signed the Convention of the Rights of the Child (CRC) in 1990, “in Ghanaian secondary schools, students who are suspected of homosexual conduct are often taken through psychological counselling by the school authorities or are dismissed for allegedly engaging in homosexual activity” (Atuguba, 2019).

<sup>90</sup> Throughout this report we highlight the ways in which gender-restrictive groups weaponize children. This is why we will usually speak about children, and the child protection rhetoric, unless explicit references to children’s rights made by gender-restrictive actors.

<sup>91</sup> Faith-based, gender-restrictive groups have a long history in Ghana. For example, the Christian Council of Ghana, perhaps the country’s first faith-based, gender-restrictive organization, was founded in 1929 and has been spreading the idea of “proper sexual behaviors” since at least 1961. That same year, they established the Committee on Christian Marriage and Family Life (CCMFL) “to promote positive Christian teaching on sex, marriage and family life” and to introduce Ghanaian youth to “proper sexual behaviors” (Otu, 2019).

## 1) KEY EVENTS: THE MAKING OF THE “CSE CONTROVERSY”

### TAKEAWAYS

- Faith-based, gender-restrictive groups in Ghana have been framing the protection and advancement of human rights and gender justice as a colonization effort on the part of “Western organizations” and using reactive pan-African rhetoric since at least 2013.
- The World Congress of Families (WCF) Regional Summit that took place in Accra in 2019 was a pivotal moment that i) provided opportunities for multiple faith-based, gender-restrictive groups to come together and amplify their gender-restrictive messaging against CSE and ii) raise their national and international profile.
- The “CSE controversy” in Ghana was opportunistic: it i) used the connections provided by the WCF to amplify gender-restrictive messaging, and ii) demonstrated the effectiveness of instrumentalizing children against LGBT rights (Andams, 2020; interview with Fuller, 2020).

Faith-based, gender-restrictive groups have had a public role in Ghana since the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. However, since 2013 many of them work together in the National Coalition for Proper Human Sexual Rights and Family Values (NCPHSRFV, see box below) to pass bills that attack the human rights of LGBT people, claiming that homosexuality is a “Western import.”

Despite these efforts, it was not until 2019 when the NCPHSRFV gained national and international notoriety by manufacturing moral panic about the government-mandated CSE program. The Coalition claimed that CSE was a grave threat to children and a vehicle for the imposition of an internationally orchestrated “LGBT agenda.” President Nana Addo Dankwa Akufo-Addo intervened swiftly and clarified that there was no such agenda in the CSE program. His statements were effective in calming moral panic and preventing social unrest, but they did not settle the controversy because he neither supported CSE nor rejected it entirely.

### THE NATIONAL COALITION FOR PROPER HUMAN SEXUAL RIGHTS AND FAMILY VALUES (NCPHSRFV)

*Coalition between Ghana’s most important religious leaders and faith-based organizations: the Christian Council of Ghana, the Catholic Secretariat, the Scripture Union, the Catholic Bishops Conference, Ghana Pentecostal and Charismatic Council, Full Gospel Business Men’s Fellowship, Ghana Muslims Council, Child Evangelism Fellowship, Ghana Federation of Evangelical Students (GAFES), Traditional Councils, and Regional and National Houses of Chiefs (NCPHSRFV, n.d.).*

**Founded in December 2013, it has been a platform for these religious institutions to come together in opposition to the human rights of LGBT people** (Marwei & Frempong, 2019; Otu, 2019). They define their “sole purpose” as “providing a focused and researched intellectual response to the growing menace of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender (LGBT) Rights activities in the world” (NCPHSRFV, 2018b). Its founder and executive secretary, Moses Foh-Amoaning, is a lawyer and well-known anti-LGBT spokesperson.

### FAMILY RENAISSANCE INTERNATIONAL

*Founded in 2012, it was formerly called Women in the Gap International (WIG). It is a “nonprofit, nondenominational Christian organization dedicated to teaching, intercessory, mentoring and evangelistic functions for spiritual and social development of families.” Their core values include heterosexual marriage, which they claim was instituted by God.*

The World Congress of Families (WCF) Regional Summit took place in Accra in 2019. The event was hosted by the NCPHSRFV and Family Renaissance International (FRI), a nondenominational Christian group that seeks to promote development through Christian values (see box above). The conference brought together local politicians and faith-based, gender-restrictive groups with international representatives of gender-restrictive initiatives against human rights, bolstering efforts against CSE and nonnormative family configurations with strong anti-LGBT rhetoric.

# THE MAKING OF THE "CSE CONTROVERSY" IN GHANA

Actions and Statements That Aim to Protect  
Human Rights and Gender Justice

Actions and Statements Against Human Rights  
and Gender Justice

Aug.  
2015

**Ghana Catholic Bishops' Conference organizes "pro-life" march.** The Conference declares their willingness to work with other faith-based organizations and the government to promote faith and family in human development. The Bishops also rehearse a narrative that would eventually be used against CSE: they call on the African people to resist the supposed "attempts to impose population control on Africa" on the part of international organizations advocating for the "agenda" of Sexual Health and Reproductive Rights (SHRR) (Catholic News Agency, 2015).

**The national guidelines for Comprehensive Sexuality Education in Ghana are issued**

as part of a UNFPA, UNICEF and UNESCO-led effort to "harmonize sexual and reproductive health education in Ghana" and to empower girls (Adogla-Bessa, 2018).<sup>92</sup>

2018

**Theresa May's speech to the Commonwealth Heads of Nations.** The former prime minister states her regret about Britain's role in the criminalization of same-sex relations in its former colonies and offers support to change this discriminatory legislation (Jain, 2018). Her speech is interpreted by the NCPHSRFV as a recolonization project (NCPHSRFV, 2018b).<sup>93</sup>

The organization threatens "to cause trouble if the Ghanaian government softened its anti-gay laws" (Sadi, 2018).

Apr.  
2018

Aug.  
2018

**The NCPHSRFV claims to have "voluntary camps" in Ghana to "cure homosexuality."** Allegedly, 400 volunteers signed up to "receive 'counseling' and 'reformation' at an antigay conference" (Sadi, 2018).<sup>94</sup>

<sup>92</sup> The guidelines were produced by Ghana Education Service (GES), an agency of the Ministry of Education (MoE), to help young people "acquire accurate and reliable information on sexual rights and reproductive health, develop skills for self-development and decision making, [...] and nurture positive attitudes and values including [a] sense of responsibility concerning their sexual and reproductive health issues" (Ghana Education Service, n.d.). The guidelines did not recommend any specific textbook, a fact that gender-restrictive groups would manipulate in 2019. There was no mention of gender and sexual diversity either, but the guidelines nonetheless alluded to "gender norms" and "femaleness and maleness," terms which were also implicated in the "CSE controversy" (interview with Fuller, 2020).

<sup>93</sup> This was not the first time that public statements on homosexuality by the British prime minister triggered anticolonialist sentiment. In October 2011, Prime Minister David Cameron threatened to cut economic aid to African countries that banned homosexuality (*Press Association*, 2011). A couple of days later, then-Ghanaian president John Atta-Mills rejected the threat and proclaimed that the UK could not bully African countries into accepting practices that violated their religious and cultural beliefs (AFP, 2011).

<sup>94</sup> The NCPHSRFV still claims to have these camps in undisclosed locations, but their actual existence has not been confirmed (interview with Fuller, 2020; interview with Andam, 2020).

Sep.  
2018

The NCPHSRFV allegedly presents an anti-LGBT bill titled *A Comprehensive Solution Based Legislative Framework for Dealing with the Lesbianism Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender Phenomenon* to Parliament. It provides guidelines on how to “help” LGBT people or prosecute them, depending on whether they are “penitent” or “irredeemable” (Ghana Web, 2018; McCabe, 2018). The “helping mechanisms” closely resemble “conversion therapies.”<sup>95</sup> Parliament does not approve the bill (interview with Otu, 2020).

The U.S. embassy in Ghana announces the program *Our Rights, Our Lives, Our Futures in Ghana*, jointly organized by the government and UNESCO. The program aims to scale up CSE in six African countries and is supported by Sweden and Ireland (Ferdinand, 2019; U.S. Embassy, 2019).

Jan.  
2019

The Minister of Education suggests the CSE program will begin in September 2019.

The program is based on the guidelines for Comprehensive Sexuality Education in Ghana (Occupy Ghana, 2019). His statements are later used as proof of the presence of the “malignant CSE” in Ghana (FWI, 2019).

Feb.  
2019

Sep.  
2019

The “CSE brouhaha”<sup>96</sup> or “the CSE controversy” begins.

Sep.  
26,  
2019

Inaugural address of the World Congress of Families Regional Summit. Moses Foh-Amoaning, spokesperson of the NCPHSRFV, claims that the introduction of CSE in the national curriculum will undermine the “cultural and moral values of the country.” He emphasizes that “safeguarding the country’s indigenous traditional, cultural, sexual rights and family values [is] critical to addressing the threat of Lesbianism, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender rights (LGBT) of the people” (Noshie, 2019).

95 The project included the creation of a Holistic Sexual Therapy Unit at the Korle Bu Teaching Hospital (KBTH). The “comprehensive unit” would have “psychiatric, psychologist, medical personnel, surgical team, guidance and counsellors or Gospel Ministers, etc.” (Equal Eyes, 2018; Sadi, 2018). The language in which these “helping mechanisms” was presented closely resembles that of “conversion therapies.” Conversion therapies are “interventions of a wide-ranging nature, aimed at effecting a change from nonheterosexual to heterosexual and from trans or gender diverse to cisgender.” Such practices are considered a form of torture by the UN (Fitzsimons, 2020).

96 This is what the controversy was called in the media.

<p><b>Sep. 30, 2019</b></p>	<p><b>The scandal about CSE grows on social and mainstream media.</b> Faith-based, gender-restrictive groups spread fake news claiming that children are at risk of being exposed to sexually charged content in textbooks, and that they would thus be encouraged to “become” gay. The heads of the most powerful churches in Ghana, as well as prominent politicians, demand the immediate withdrawal of the program.<sup>97</sup></p>
<p><b>Oct. 1, 2019</b></p>	<p><b>Ghana’s Education Service (GES) backtracks.</b> It claims the Ministry did not approve any document on CSE and that the curriculum does not include gender and sexual diversity (GES, 2019).<sup>98</sup> However, there is no clarity on whether the program is already being implemented, and the controversy continues with few references to the actual guidelines for CSE.</p>
<p><b>Oct. 6, 2019</b></p>	<p><b>President Nana Akufo-Addo’s speech about the CSE program.</b> He debunks the idea that his government is introducing “foreign practices into the Ghanaian society” through CSE and clarifies that children would not be taught inappropriate concepts and content, by which he means teaching students a rights-based and diversity-affirming curriculum (Asamoah, 2019). The president’s response calms the controversy but does not settle the matter because he seems to neither support CSE nor reject it entirely.<sup>99</sup></p>
<p><b>Oct. 2019</b></p>	<p><b>NCPHSRFV passes a resolution against CSE.</b> The resolution asks the government to keep CSE out of Ghanaian society (Marwei &amp; Frempong, 2019).</p>
<p><b>Oct. 30- Nov. 1, 2019</b></p>	<p>World Congress of Family’s African Family and Sustainable Development Summit (see box).</p>
<p><b>Oct. 30, 2019</b></p>	<p><b>Sharon Slater, president of FWI, is invited to a prayer breakfast held by the Ghanaian president.</b> As part of the WCF conference, influential politicians, gender-restrictive civil society organizations, and interfaith organizations like the NCPHSRFV attend the breakfast (Kuukuwa Andam, 2020). “Top on the prayer list was the introduction of Comprehensive Sexuality Education in the Ghanaian educational system and the need to resist it” (Parliament of Ghana, 2019).<sup>100</sup></p>

97 The Pentecostal and Charismatic Council, the Islamic Community, the Catholic Bishops, etc., are some of the faith-based, gender-restrictive groups that reacted to the controversy. All of them are part of the NCPHSRFV. Among the politicians that issued public declarations are the Speaker of Parliament, who is a Baptist Minister, and former presidents John Kufuor and John Mahama, who was also a presidential candidate in the 2020 election (adomonline, 2019; *Don’t Impose Your Cultures on Us – Mahama*, n.d.; General News, 2019; [starrfm.com.gh](http://starrfm.com.gh), 2019).

98 The declarations of the Ministry contradicted previous statements from Ghana’s Education Service (GES), specifically one that read: “The new Standard Based Curriculum being implemented has nothing to do with LGBT issues, masturbation or explicit display/labelling of intimate body parts. [...] The CSE does not seek to throw out the advocacy for sexual abstinence, but rather seeks to reinforce it. [...] It further seeks to help students to make informed decisions about their health, with emphasis on Ghanaian cultural values and norms” (GhanaWeb, 2019).

99 The ambiguity of this statement might be due to Akufo-Addo’s desire to run for reelection in 2020. “He didn’t want to be seen as the LGBT president.” This ambiguity allowed both faith-based, gender-restrictive groups and progressive organizations to claim some degree of success, since neither felt completely invalidated by the president (interview with Fuller, 2020), which highlights Akufo-Addo’s political skill.

100 Slater and Seyoum Antonios, the Ethiopian director of FWI Africa, also participated in nationally televised discussions on CSE, some of which were shared on the NCPHSRFV’s Face-



Ghana's Education Service (GES) issues an invitation to a **one-day stakeholder meeting on Reproductive Health Education in Schools** (GES, 2020). It does not mention CSE.

**Nov. 6,  
2019**

**Slater is interviewed about the CSE program in *Hot Issues*, a talk show on TV3 Ghana.** Slater repeats false claims about the CSE program and reinforces the idea that it is evidence of a supposed neocolonization project enacted by "Western" powers in Africa (Faalong, 2019).

**Jan.  
2020**

**Mar.  
2020**

**Fifth Pan-African ILGA Conference in Ghana.** The conference is scheduled for July 2020, but is cancelled due to the coronavirus pandemic (Pan Africa ILGA, 2020). Disinformation<sup>101</sup> campaigns report that the cancellation is due to the successful opposition of religious groups.

## **"THE AFRICAN FAMILY AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT: STRONG FAMILIES, STRONG NATION"**

### **THE WORLD CONGRESS OF FAMILIES SUMMIT IN ACCRA**

The World Congress of Families Regional Summit in Accra was hosted by the NCHPSRFV and FRI, with support from CitizenGo (Kenya) and Family Watch International (FWI) (Emenusiobi, 2019). It was a platform for African gender-restrictive actors (see actor typology in pg. 123) to gather, share experiences, and plan actions.

Through "collaborations with government officials, the media, academia, religious and [cultural] bodies, civil societies, [and] NGOs and interest groups" (Montgomery, 2019), the Conference wished to position Ghana as a key actor in the global movement to reinstate the heterosexual patriarchal family as the core of society (Ghoshal, 2019). As part of this effort, the NCHPSRFV paid courtesy calls to many politicians, former presidents, and members of the opposition to invite them to the conference, advocating against the CSE program and in favor of more repressive laws against LGBT rights (Koomson, 2019; Open Democracy Investigations, 2019; Sekyiamah, 2019).

The core message of the WCF conference was that "strong families create strong nations." Despite the use of the plural for "families," this rhetoric allows for only one model of family: the heterosexual, patriarchal archetype. The conference went even further by proposing that upholding the (heterosexual and patriarchal) family was not only the antidote to corruption in Africa, but also the only road to the nation's (and the continent's) economic development (Nketiah, 2019).

The WCF Regional Summit was guided by a strong anti-LGBT sentiment, which focused on four points, also central to the messaging against CSE in Ghana:

The idea that nonnormative sexual orientations and gender identities are disorders that can be cured through "holistic therapies."

The idea that there is an "LGBT agenda" that is being imposed on the country and the region by European colonizers as a plan to depopulate Africa and "wreak havoc."

The idea that CSE is part of a sinful "war on children" that destroys the (heterosexual, patriarchal) family and mocks "God's natural law."

The centrality of Ghana in the plan to contain the spread of homosexuality in the continent.

Progressive organizations such as Out Right International regard this event as a clear demonstration of the WCF's "right-wing fundamentalist agenda in West Africa" and their desire to further spread anti-LGBT sentiment in Ghana (Rudusa, 2019). The WCF has supported other anti-LGBT laws in Africa, like the anti-gay laws in Nigeria (Ghoshal, 2019; Open Democracy Investigations, 2019), and has links to Islamophobic, far-right, anti-migrant, white supremacist movements in both the U.S. and Europe (Open Democracy Investigations, 2019).

book page (*Good Evening Ghana*, 2019).

101 While misinformation is false information that is created and spread regardless of an intent to harm or deceive, disinformation is a type of misinformation that is created to be deliberately deceptive (Gebel, 2021).

## II. CONTEXT

### 1) The Power of Interfaith Alliances: The Rise of Religious Influence on Ghanaian Politics

#### TAKEAWAYS

- In the last 20 years, a number of Ghanaian presidents and politicians have become affiliated with the major Charismatic or Pentecostal churches in the country (Acheampong, 2018). This deepening relationship between politics and religion is a sign of a “Christianization” of the Ghanaian political system.
- Christian gender-restrictive groups often present Christian values as the religious and cultural core of Ghanaian society despite significant religious diversity in the country, as well as important interdenominational and interreligious differences.
- Faith-based, gender-restrictive organizations have successfully leveraged the historic relation between religion and education in Ghana to actively participate in the development of educational policies to the detriment of LGBT rights.
- Ghana’s dominant religious institutions found a common cause in anti-LGBT sentiment that allowed them to set aside their disagreements and establish a powerful interfaith alliance that constitutes a serious threat to the rights and dignity of LGBT people in Ghana.
- Close relations between members of the NCPHSRFV and political elites have intensified state-sponsored homophobic policy and rhetoric.

Ghana is a deeply religious country: as of 2020, 96% of the population reported some religious affiliation (Pew Center, 2020). However, Ghana’s religious landscape is not homogenous. According to a study by the Pew Center, 73.6% of Ghanaians identify as Christians, 17.5% as Muslims, and 4.9% are said to belong to traditional African religions (Pew Center, 2020).

*As of 2020, 96% of Ghanaians reported some religious affiliation: among them, 73.6% identify as Christians, 17.5% as Muslims, and 4.9% belong to traditional African religions (Pew Center, 2020). Within the Christian demographic, 60.8% were Protestant and 12.9% Catholic based on a 2010 survey.*

The Constitution defines the Ghanaian state as both secular and religiously plural (Quasigah, 2015), but this religious diversity is often erased by politicians who

speak of Christianity as if it were the national religion (Otu, 2019). For example, in 2011, President John Evans Atta-Mills said that “Christ is the president of Ghana,” and that he owed no one an apology for that statement (Otu, 2019; *The Ghana Herald*, 2011). Six years later, in the midst of Ghana’s 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary celebrations, President Akufo-Addo launched a plan to build a national cathedral. This project created concern among other spiritual communities because it prioritized Christianity over all other religions (Bob-Milliar & Lauterbach, 2018).<sup>102</sup>

President Atta-Mills’s statements and the construction of the cathedral are signs of a worrisome **“Christianization” of Ghana that is threatening the country’s religious pluralism and the secularity of the Ghanaian state** (Bob-Milliar & Lauterbach, 2018; Otu, 2019).

<sup>102</sup> Despite these critiques, the government and Christian leaders—mostly Pentecostal and Charismatic—continue to maintain an intimate relationship. Both Christian and political elites “see advantages in drawing on each other’s capital and legitimacy.” For example, the project of the national cathedral was perceived as a way to court Christian votes for Akufo-Addo’s successful 2020 reelection campaign (BBC News Pidgin, 2020). This is not the first time Akufo-Addo used religion for political purposes. His 2016 presidential campaign also appealed to religious sentiment through its slogan: “The Battle is the Lord’s.” Since then, Akufo-Addo has strengthened his ties to preachers and religious leaders. His strategy reveals the emergence of a “theocratic-political elite” which blurs the boundaries between culture, politics, and religion (Bob-Milliar & Lauterbach, 2018).

The “Christianization” of Ghanaian politics is threatening the country’s religious pluralism and the secularity of the state (Bob-Milliar & Lauterbach, 2018), while also further ingraining gender-restrictive views into Ghanaian society and law.

Furthermore, this “Christianization” has coincided with the rise of Pentecostal Churches in Ghana and of Pentecostals in politics, a process that has been in the making at least since the 1990s (Acheampong, 2018). In 2005, Pentecostals were the second largest Christian denomination in Ghana, after Roman Catholics (Crook, 2005). By 2010, they were the largest Christian denomination in the country. Of the 71.2% of people who defined themselves as Christians, 28.3% self-reported as Pentecostal, 18.4% as Protestant; 13.1% as Catholic, and 11.4% as other denominations (Benyah, 2018). These numbers are consistent with the growth of Pentecostal churches in other African nations.

Pentecostals and other religious denominations organize via faith-based civil society organizations that work with the government, but retain considerable autonomy (Crook, 2005; Sumaila Nlasia, 2020). This status grants them an important political role because they can **support or criticize the government in key moments of political change or social unrest**. This influence is based on faith-based, gender-restrictive groups’ salient role in the consolidation of democracy<sup>103</sup> and economic development in Ghana. The last role was achieved through actions in the education, health,<sup>104</sup> and agricultural sectors (Adamtey et al., 2020).

Faith-based, gender-restrictive organizations have played a particularly salient role in Ghanaian education. Almost 50% of schools in Ghana were set up by religious groups (Avevor, 2012). In some parts of the country, they own the buildings where schools operate and oversee their administration and functioning, although the teachers themselves are hired by Ghana Education Service (GES) (Auwah-Nyamekye, 2010, interview with Fuller). Also, traditional elders are still in charge of reproductive health education in some regions (Ghana Education Service, n.



Poster of the celebration of the NCPHSRFV’s sixth anniversary.

“The Catholic Church alone, as at 2012 [sic], owned 15% of Basic Schools, 10% of Senior High Schools, 21% of Colleges of Education and 39% of Technical and Vocational schools in the country while the Methodist Church of Ghana as at 2015 had 744 Kindergartens, 1,042 Primary Schools, 519 Junior Secondary Schools, 21 Senior High Schools and 3 Teacher Training Colleges.” (Adamtey et al., 2020).

In the last two decades, these organizations have successfully leveraged the historic relationship between religion and education in Ghana to actively participate in the development of gender-restrictive educational policies (Crook, 2005).

103 For example, both the Christian Council of Ghana and the Catholic Church advocated for the constitutional government back in the ‘90s (Crook, 2005). Religious leaders of different faiths “educated the electorate on democratic principles and voting and acted as the moral consciousness of society,” which meant, at the time, addressing human rights violations and social injustice (Bob-Milliar & Lauterbach, 2018).

104 “The endorsement [by] influential religious leaders [of] new ideas on demographic dividend[s], family planning, HIV and AIDS, gender equality, and [the] empowerment of women have helped communities to accept and adopt these approaches” (Addo, 2019). However, some of the most influential religious leaders and faith-based, gender-restrictive groups oppose family planning methods such as contraceptives and an age-appropriate CSE program (Asiedu, 2020).

Finally, since at least 2013, the leaders of all major faith-based organizations in Ghana (see actor typology) have been members of the National Coalition for Proper Human Sexual Rights and Family Values (NCPHSRFV).

Led by Evangelicals and Pentecostals, this interfaith, gender-restrictive organization presents its members as defenders of African traditions against “foreign cultural and moral influence.” A key part of their mission is the “eradication” of “CSE and LGBTQI from Ghana, Africa, and the World” (NCPHSRFV, 2019).<sup>105</sup>

**These very different religious institutions found a common cause in anti-LGBT sentiment that allowed them to set aside their disagreements and establish a powerful interfaith alliance that constitutes a serious threat to gender justice, particularly the rights and dignity of LGBTI people in Ghana.**

In addition, close relations between members of the NCPHSRFV and Ghanaian political elites further promote institutional homophobia and embed a gender-restrictive worldview in the social, political, and legal culture of the country.

## 2) Criminalization of Same-Sex Relations Provides Legal Backing to Anti-LGBT Sentiment

### TAKEAWAYS

- The Ghanaian criminal code retained a British-era law that criminalizes male same-sex sexual acts, punishable by up to three years in prison.
- **The main impact of the law has been cultural:** it has been used to “naturalize” anti-LGBT sentiment and to frame homosexuality as foreign to Ghanaian values. However, it is rarely enforced.
- “Anti-LGBTI rhetoric from government figures, as well as from religious groups magnifies existing societal homophobia” (IAGCI, 2020).
- LGBT people are subject to physical, sexual, and psychological violence in their families and communities.
- The acronym “LGBT” is used mainly as a pejorative term for (male) homosexuality, while a strategic silence is maintained regarding trans people.
- The Ghanaian Parliament has played a key role in the rejection of more restrictive anti-homosexuality laws.

**As is the case in 32 other African countries, male same-sex intercourse is illegal in Ghana.** According to the Criminal Code, men who engage in “unnatural carnal knowledge” can be sentenced to up to three years in prison (Carroll, 2016). This prohibition has been inherited from colonial laws enacted in the country from the Victorian era until Ghana’s independence in 1957 (Fröhlich, 2019; Human Rights Watch, 2018).

Despite the law’s specification of male same-sex intercourse, or sexual acts between men, it has had wider consequences for the LGBTI community. **The law is rarely enforced, but it “is often seen as tacit state approval of discrimination, and even**

<sup>105</sup> Faith-based, gender-restrictive groups in Ghana regard the protection and advancement of LGBT rights as contrary to their values and morals. U.S. Christians (mainly Episcopalians, Presbyterians, and Methodists) have capitalized on this sentiment to further advance a gender-restrictive world order. According to Kapya John Kaoma, a Zambian pastor and researcher, “U.S. conservatives mobilized African clergy in their domestic culture wars at a time when the demographic center of Christianity is shifting from the global North to the global South, increasing Africa’s influence on Christianity worldwide” (K. Kaoma, 2009). The paradigm shift against homosexuality and reproductive rights has transformed the religious landscape in Africa causing congregations, like the African Protestant Churches on the Anglican Communion and the Presbyterian Church, to lose influence. The void left by these churches was filled by more conservative U.S. gender-restrictive congregations (K. Kaoma, 2018).

**violence, on the basis of real or imputed sexual orientation and gender identity” (HRW, 2018).**

For example, although female same-sex relations are not illegal, women who engage in them are violently reprimanded and heavily policed. Whether they are lesbian, bisexual, or trans, they are often also subjected to domestic violence as a way to exercise control over their bodies and to “cure them of their deviation.”<sup>106</sup> These hate crimes are rarely monitored or prosecuted (Nketiah, 2019).

Moreover, anti-LGBT sentiment is strong and pervasive in Ghana. It is common for LGBT people to suffer attacks in their homes and communities. In a 2018 report on the lives of LGBT people *“No Chance but to Deny Who I Am,”* interviewees reported being beaten up, sexually assaulted, intimidated, arbitrarily arrested, blackmailed, or extorted because of their gender expressions, identities, and/or sexual orientations (Human Rights Watch, 2018).

Furthermore, although there is great variety within gender and sexual identities and relations in Ghana, this diversity is often erased by public discourse, which uses the acronym “LGBT” mainly to refer to (male) homosexuality while maintaining a strategic silence regarding trans people.<sup>107</sup>

Undermining the rights and dignity of LGBT people in the public sphere is also common in Ghana. **Local and national government officials, along with traditional elders and senior religious leaders, routinely make public homophobic statements** (Butcher, 2018; McCabe, 2018). By calling for further criminalization through religious and sometimes pseudoscientific arguments, their rhetoric legitimizes homophobic and transphobic stigma and violence, curtailing the rights of LGBTI people in Ghana and endangering their lives (Human Rights Watch, 2018).

Also, even though slightly more progressive stances have been voiced from time to time, fear of social and political pushback quickly leads people to backtrack. For example, in 2017, President Nana Akufo-Addo said that the country needed to be more liberal and that change was inevitable (Moore, 2018), but “that the law criminalizing homosexuality in Ghana remained because he did not believe there was a ‘sufficiently strong coalition’ across public opinion calling for a change” (Butcher, 2018). Shortly after this moderate statement, which did not support LGBT rights directly, the president clarified that he opposed the decriminalization of homosexuality and described himself as a “politician deeply influenced by Christian values” (Moore, 2018).

Nana Akufo-Addo’s attitude is indicative of a tension at the core of Ghanaian law. Ghanaian law condemns sexual relations between men, but it is ambiguous about the criminalization of LGBT identities per se.<sup>108</sup> Also, the country is a signatory to international treaties that urge states to recognize LGBT rights (Atuguba, 2019). This tension and ambiguity are reflected in the statements of many politicians who, like Akufo-Addo, do not explicitly oppose LGBT rights, but do not support them either out of fear of the political fallout.

Despite this adverse climate for LGBT people, **anti-LGBT laws in Ghana are not as restrictive as in other African countries (see box below). This is in great part thanks to the Ghanaian Parliament, which has not approved harsher or more expansive laws against homosexuality** (interview with Otu, 2020).

106 Ghana’s “politics of sexuality is male-centered: there is a hypervisibility of gay men that renders women and trans people invisible” (interview with Otu, 2020). Because of this, queer women or lesbians are usually violently disciplined by family members and/or by their communities (interview with Andam, 2020). “Transgender men are also reportedly frequently victims of domestic violence and coerced marriage” (IAGCI, 2020).

107 “LG and B persons who are open about their sexual orientation, or who are known to be perceived to be LGBTI, are likely to face stigma, discrimination, violence and mistreatment from family members and the wider community which, by its nature and frequency, amounts to persecution. [...] There is limited information about the treatment of T and I persons but there is no indication that such groups are treated differently by societal actors than L, G and B persons” (IAGCI, 2020).

108 An explanation of the complexity of the law can be found in the Country Policy and Information Note on Ghana published by the Independent Advisory Group for the UK government: “The criminal code under section 104 criminalises consensual ‘unnatural carnal knowledge’ with somebody over 16. It is categorised as a misdemeanour, with a sentence of up to [three] years’ imprisonment. Non-consensual ‘unnatural carnal knowledge’ with a person over 16, i.e. rape, is punishable with a term of imprisonment ‘of not less than five and not more than [25] years’. The law does not explicitly refer to same-sex activity between men or women but ‘unnatural carnal knowledge’ is interpreted to apply to males only. However, some source[s] suggest because the law’s wording is vague it is not consistently interpreted and may be applied to and used to target women, and trans, and intersex persons too” (IAGCI, 2020). Also, “it is argued that Ghana’s criminal statute does not outlaw ‘homosexuality’ or ‘homosexual expression’ in general. Homosexuality could mean the mere sexual attraction to a person of the same gender, and not necessarily unnatural carnal knowledge or sodomy. This implies that a person who identifies as ‘gay,’ but does not engage in same-sex sexual relations would not be punished by Ghana’s criminal laws. Nevertheless, a heterosexual person who engages in ‘unnatural carnal knowledge’ commits an offence, although (s)he may not [be] homosexual” (Atuguba, 2019).

## **EXPORTING HOMOPHOBIA THROUGH THE SUPPORT OF “ANTI-GAY BILLS”**

*Like in other places around the world, gender-restrictive groups’ strategy in Africa has had a domino effect, from its start in Kenya, moving on to Uganda and Zambia, and then to Nigeria and Malawi (Kaoma, 2012).*

*Well-known international gender-restrictive groups as WCF, FWI, and the American Center for Law and Justice (ACLJ) lobby English-speaking African countries to “take Christian views into consideration as they draft legislation and policies.” They recommend actions to further criminalize LGBT identities and relations while upholding the heterosexual and patriarchal family as the only legally recognized configuration of family (Sneed & Welsh, 2014).*

*Furthermore, through local representatives of large NGOs, gender-restrictive groups have infiltrated local politics to pass even more restrictive laws for LGBT people. For example, some bills seek the expansion of anti-LGBT legislation to include female same-sex relations, as was the case in Malawi in 2011, when the parliament amended the penal code to “provide that any female person who, in public or private, commits ‘any act of gross indecency with another female,’ shall be guilty of an offence and liable to a prison term of five years” (Kaoma, 2012).*

*Another more violent type of “anti-homosexuality bill” seeks to make existing penalties against homosexuality more severe. The first bill of this kind, commonly known as the “Kill the Gays Bill,” was introduced in Uganda’s Parliament and sought to harden existing penalties against homosexual relations to include the death penalty. Although the bill was ultimately rejected, it was reintroduced in 2012, 2014, and yet again in 2019 (AP, 2019).*

*Similar legislation to further criminalize homosexuality was passed in Burundi (2009), Malawi (2010), and Nigeria (2011) (Kaoma, 2012: 8), but the death penalty was not approved in any of these countries. As of 2018, same-sex relations were only illegal under penalty of death in northern Nigeria because of Sharia law (Amnesty International UK, 2018; Carroll, 2016).*

## **III. THE MESSAGING STRATEGY: G.H.A.N.A. AGAINST THE “LGBT AGENDA”**

During the “CSE controversy,” faith-based, gender-restrictive groups in Ghana used strategies common to other gender-restrictive groups around the world, such as the mobilization of anti-LGBT sentiment to sow moral panic and the framing of the CSE proposal as a Western neocolonial imposition. However, as is the case in other contexts, the groups in Ghana also tailored their messaging and strategies to the country’s history, culture, and concerns.

In particular, in 2019, faith-based, gender-restrictive groups used the WCF Regional Summit to both consolidate and expand their opposition to the CSE program, their anti-LGBT stance, and their political connections.

Traditional and social media were key to amplify the reach of gender-restrictive messages. Traditional media provided a powerful platform to the leaders of national faith-based, gender-restrictive groups and associated politicians, enhancing their profile and influence. Social media, particularly WhatsApp, Facebook, and YouTube, were used to spread a disinformation campaign that included fake news, videos, and links to FWI material (interview with Fuller, 2020).

Six ideas were key to generate the moral panic which ultimately led the government to rescind its CSE program:

- Using the term “LGBT agenda” (instead of “gender ideology”) to manufacture moral panic about a supposed plot hidden in the CSE program to sexually corrupt children.
- Pathologizing LGBT relations and identities.
- Presenting the human rights of LGBT people as a neocolonial imposition that contradicted Ghana’s culture and sovereignty.
- Presenting the CSE program as an initiative that would encourage children to have sex at an early age and “become gay.”
- Framing the CSE program as a form of satanism.
- Presenting the heterosexual, patriarchal family as the main institution for the protection of children and for economic development.

## i) Using the Term “LGBT Agenda” to Manufacture Moral Panic

### TAKEAWAYS

- Faith-based, gender-restrictive groups in Ghana do not use the term “gender ideology” partly because the term “gender” was already positioned to refer to a more conservative stance on women’s rights that was not perceived as threatening to the patriarchal order, and thus is not perceived to be related to LGBT rights.
- The use of “LGBT agenda” instead of “gender ideology” speaks of the adaptability of faith-based, gender-restrictive groups.

Faith-based, gender-restrictive groups rarely use the term “gender ideology” to mobilize people against LGBT rights in Ghana. There are two main reasons for this. First, by the time the term “gender ideology” was introduced in the country, the term “gender” was already well-positioned to refer to a more conservative stance on women’s rights that was not perceived as threatening to the patriarchal order.<sup>109</sup> Second, cisgender women’s movements in Ghana do not usually defend LGBT issues (interview with Otu, 2020) and some renowned leaders have even spoken publicly against CSE and LGBT rights (interview with Kuukuwa Andam, 2020).<sup>110</sup>

The use of “LGBT agenda” instead of “gender ideology” speaks to the adaptability of faith-based, gender-restrictive groups and their rhetoric. Furthermore, it also speaks about how their rhetoric builds on silos between women and LGBT organizations. Since anti-LGBT sentiment has more traction in Ghana than the uproar against the idea of gender as a social construct—as happened in Bulgaria, for example—faith-based, gender-restrictive groups mobilized the term “LGBT agenda” instead to cause moral panic and form a unified front against LGBT rights.

### DIFFERENT WORDING, SAME STRATEGIES

*Despite the change in terminology, faith-based, gender-restrictive groups used many of the same strategies employed in other contexts within the framework of opposition to “gender ideology.”*

## ii) Pathologizing LGBT Relations and Identities

### TAKEAWAYS

- Faith-based, gender-restrictive groups in Ghana used discredited scientific language and concepts to frame LGBT relations and identities as deviations and disorders that can and need to be cured.
- These pseudoscientific arguments are used to delegitimize LGBT rights and to promote “conversion therapies.”
- Faith-based, gender-restrictive groups argue that so-called “conversion therapies” are holistic and corrective, not violent. However, these “therapies” are considered torture by the UN and their ineffectiveness and devastating consequences have been widely recognized by the medical and psychiatric community.
- The use of (discredited) scientific language and concepts allowed faith-based, gender-restrictive groups to frame their anti-LGBT arguments in a more positive light. By speaking of “care,” “support,” and “cure,” faith-based, gender-restrictive groups presented themselves as “helping” instead of attacking LGBT people and rights.

<sup>109</sup> The policies enacted by the Ministry for Gender, Children and Social Protection are a case in point. This office was founded in 2013 to achieve “gender equality, equity, the empowerment of women and girls, promoting the survival and development of children, thus ensuring their rights” (MoGCSP, 2020). However, its programs and initiatives uphold hetero- and cisnormative values (interview with Fuller, 2020; interview with Otu, 2020), its gender-based actions and strategies are not LGBT-inclusive, and it does not have and specific LGBT programs.

<sup>110</sup> See, for example, the online campaign of “Ghana Diaspora Women” against CSE in [change.org: https://www.change.org/p/government-of-ghana-we-don-t-need-cse-in-ghana-education-curriculum?use\\_react=false](https://www.change.org/p/government-of-ghana-we-don-t-need-cse-in-ghana-education-curriculum?use_react=false)

One of the most effective messaging strategies of faith-based, gender-restrictive groups in Ghana was to frame LGBT relations and identities as “unnatural,” “deviant conduct,” and/or as “curable disorders.”<sup>111</sup>

This framing draws from two main sources: the Criminal Code inherited from British rule, which legally condemns same-sex intercourse because it is regarded as “unnatural carnal knowledge”; and outdated medical and psychiatric concepts that did consider gender and sexual diversity pathologies.<sup>112</sup>

This approach, which appropriates and revitalizes discredited frameworks to refer to LGBT people as individuals suffering from regrettable yet curable disorders, allowed faith-based, gender-restrictive groups to present themselves as well-meaning actors offering “holistic sexual therapy systems” that include “a range of counselling methods and spiritual solutions” (Ghana Web, 2018; Marwei & Frempong, 2019) to “bring healing and comfort to Africans and other persons with LGBTQI disorders” (Nketiah, 2019).

This pseudoscientific narrative has been front and center for the NCPHSRFV since 2018, when they claimed to have voluntary anti-gay camps in the country and declared their intention to make these “treatments” mandatory (Dunne, 2018; McCabe, 2018). Religious and gender-restrictive leaders routinely ignore the fact that conversion therapy is a form of torture and falsely promote the idea that gender and sexual diversity is a “redeemable condition” (Sadi, 2018).

*The use of discredited and misleading medical and psychiatric references to frame LGBT identities and relations further stigmatizes LGBT people in Ghana and puts them at risk by legitimizing “conversion therapies”—a form of torture—under the guise of medical or a spiritual “treatment.”*

*The NCPHSRFV has also used this argument to deny the existence of LGBT rights and discredit LGBT activism as foreign propaganda based on “false human rights issues.”*

The following statements made by the Speaker of Parliament, Aaron Michael Oquaye, during a prayer breakfast associated with the WCF in 2019, demonstrate how influential these ideas have become in Ghana:

*You cannot have a right as gay [sic] apart from the fact that you are also a human being; it is a deviant conduct, but of course, it does not mean they must be killed, or their hands must be amputated. We do not do any of [sic] such things here in Ghana. We try to handle our matter. Either we treat you medically if you say you have a problem with your genes or we handle it psychologically if it is a psychological issue. (Humanists International, 2019; Konadu Agyeman, 2019).*

These arguments have devastating consequences for LGBTI people in Ghana. **However, the pseudoscientific framing allowed faith-based, gender-restrictive groups to speak a secular language that complements their religious narrative and positions their anti-LGBT rhetoric in a positive light.** By speaking of “care,” “support,” and “cure,” faith-based, gender-restrictive groups present themselves as “helping” instead of attacking LGBT people and rights—unlike other African countries with harsher laws and penalties—and give their supporters a positive sense of the movement and of themselves.

111 For example, Foh-Amoaning, spokesperson for the NCPHSRFV, said that “nobody was born gay and even if such a gene is found, it’s an abnormality just as the hermaphrodite gene and albinism, [which are] defective genes and several treatments have come out which can help rectify such conditions” (Class FM, 2019).

112 Homosexuality was considered a pathology in the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM) until 1973, and in the International Statistical Classification of Diseases and Related Health Problems (ICD) of the World Health Organization until 1990. Gender dysphoria was considered a pathology in the ICD until 2018.



## **"PRAY THE GAY AWAY": FAITH-BASED, GENDER-RESTRICTIVE GROUPS PROPOSE "HOLISTIC CONVERSION THERAPIES" FOR LGBT PEOPLE INSPIRED BY "PRAYER CAMPS"**

*In a 2018 HRW report, some LGBT people said they were interned in "prayer camps" that were privately owned by Christian, Evangelical, or Pentecostal institutions. However, LGBT people are not the only ones these camps. They hold a wide array of individuals seeking "spiritual healing" for multiple "conditions," most of which are "mental health disorders" that are considered undesirable by their faith and community (Human Rights Watch, 2018, interview with Andam, 2020).*

*People who attend these camps are routinely chained and beaten. There have been appeals to the Ghanaian government to improve the living conditions of the people interned in these institutions, but despite a ban on chaining and efforts to train personnel, the abuse continues (HRW, 2019). In the case of LGBT people, the "treatment" these camps offer is a form of "conversion therapy," and thus torture (Fitzsimons, 2020).*

*These efforts are complemented by other religious initiatives. For example, in 2011, the Presbyterian Church announced plans to set up "prayer and exorcism counselling centers for gays around Ghana" (Throckmorton, 2012). In addition, faith-based, gender-restrictive groups commonly organize annual "festivals" that seek to "pray the gay away" from Ghana (McCabe, 2018).*

*More recently, the NCPHSRFV claimed to have set up an anti-gay camp to "reform" gay people through counselling and medical and psychiatric treatment (Sadi, 2018). The shift to a more secular and pseudoscientific language was also critical for Foh-Amoaning, spokesperson of the NCPHSRFV, to present a project titled *A Comprehensive Solution Based Legislative Framework for Dealing with the Lesbianism Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender (LGBT) Phenomenon*. Based on discredited scientific information, the project sought to institutionalize LGBT people so that they could undergo "treatment" (Dunne, 2018; Equal Eyes, 2018; Sadi, 2018). This attack on gender and sexual diversity was framed as an "Afrocentric response to Western European and LGBT groups, who were pushing this act onto African [countries]" (Equal Eyes, 2018).*

### **iii) Presenting the Human Rights of LGBT People as a Neocolonial Imposition Contrary to Ghana's Culture and Religious Traditions**

#### **TAKEAWAYS**

- The idea of homosexuality as un-African is not new in Sub-Saharan Africa, but faith-based, gender-restrictive groups strategically and successfully deployed it to further stigmatize LGBT people and to oppose the implementation of the CSE program.
- This narrative presents the UN and other international NGOs, like IPPF and UNFPA, as leaders of a recolonization project that seeks to undermine Ghana's culture, religious traditions, and sovereignty.
- Faith-based, gender-restrictive groups often ignore the racist and white supremacist underpinnings of their international partners, as well as the fact that former colonial laws actually played a key role in the criminalization of homosexuality and the legitimization of homophobia in the first place.

Despite notable contradictions at the core of this argument, gender-restrictive politicians and religious leaders often claim that heterosexuality is a key component of Ghana's and Africa's cultural traditions. Therefore, they present the recognition and advancement of LGBT rights as part of a neocolonization project.<sup>113</sup> By saying that homosexuality is a "Western import" and a mediatic trend "contrary to the religious and cultural backbone of the country" (Konadu Agyeman, 2019), faith-based, gender-restrictive groups promote the supposed "un-Africanness" of gender and sexual diversity, while reinforcing hetero- and cisnormativity.

Faith-based, gender-restrictive groups also frame homosexuality as contrary to "proper family values" (Otu, 2019), and as part of a wider plan to "depopulate the world" and exterminate African traditions. This framing has conspiracy undertones, as can be seen in Foh-Amoaning's 2018 statements: "[the] LGBT agenda" is the "deliberate propaganda hatched mainly by Europe and America to depopulate Africa and other rising populations, owing to their failure to sustain their population growth rates over the years" (Ghana News Agency, 2018). International organizations that support CSE, such as the UNFPA, the IPPF, the Planned Parenthood Association of Ghana (PPAG), and Family Health International (FHI), are consistently cited as some of the main actors in this supposed depopulation plot (Marwei & Frempong, 2019).

Moreover, during the WCF Summit in Accra, a Parliament member went so far as to compare the implementation of CSE to slavery, arguing that, as in the times of the trans-Atlantic slave trade, Europeans wanted to "wreak havoc" in Ghana with the CSE program (Nketiah, 2019).

Finally, faith-based, gender-restrictive groups used the idea of a neocolonial attack on Africa to raise

Ghana's profile and influence in the region, positioning the country as the leader of a coalition of African nations that can coordinate a united response to the "LGBT agenda." Theresa Okafor, African regional representative of the WCF, used a new acronym to symbolize this role: "**God Has a New Africa**" or "**G.H.A.N.A.**" (Nketiah, 2019).

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113 This idea has been further ingrained in the country as a reaction to the declarations of David Cameron in 2011 and Theresa May in 2018 regarding the criminalization of homosexuality in Africa. There are three main contradictions at the core of the neocolonial argument that faith-based, gender-restrictive groups strategically ignore:

- ➔ Faith-based, gender-restrictive groups, particularly the NCPHSRFV and FRI, work with the World Congress of Families, an international network that has "numerous links to Islamophobic, far-right, and white supremacist movements" (Nketiah, 2019; Open Democracy Investigations, 2019; Otu, 2019).
- ➔ There is indeed a link between colonization and LGBT criminalization, but not the one faith-based, gender-restrictive groups claim. The "laws criminalizing homosexuality come straight from the British Empire (though they were retained after independence)" (Nketiah, 2019). Activists and scholars say same-sex love was tolerated before the colonial era (Fröhlich, 2019): "Homophobia in Ghana is very colonial. Homophobia in Africa is not African, it is really the result of colonial Christianity. Before the introduction of colonization, Africans had fluid gender understandings. The introduction of colonization and Christianity disciplined Africans into embracing gender identity as limited to male/female and forced them to embrace monogamy as the only way to become civilized or modern" (interview with Otu 2020).
- ➔ Gender-restrictive groups use the fact that Ghanaian families traditionally have many children to create resentment against family planning. However, population growth has been publicly recognized as a problem for the country's economy (Ghana Education Service, n.d.). The National Population Council in Ghana even organized free family planning sessions and tried to limit the national birth rate to three children per household to slow down the current trend in population growth (Asiedu, 2020b).

## iv) Presenting the CSE Program as an Initiative That Would Encourage Children to Have Sex at an Early Age and “Become Gay”

### TAKEAWAYS

- Faith-based, gender-restrictive groups used false information and out-of-context quotes from the guidelines for Comprehensive Sexuality Education to claim that CSE is harmful for children because:
  - It supposedly encourages young kids to engage in inappropriate sexual behavior.
  - It supposedly “legitimizes” LGBT identification,” implying that being LGBT is both caused by external factors and wrong.
- The NCPHSRFV also claimed that the CSE was the proof of the existence of an “LGBT agenda” against Ghanaian children. His declarations show that by using the term “LGBT agenda,” interfaith, gender-restrictive groups instrumentalized children to produce a moral panic to further curtail children’s, women’s, and LGBT rights.

One of the more popular and effective narratives promulgated by faith-based, gender-restrictive groups is that CSE harms children by supposedly teaching age-inappropriate sexual content, and/or by “facilitating recruitment to unnatural practices.” Presenting children as supposed victims of sexual harm unleashes moral panic, which lends itself easily to political manipulation.

In Ghana, faith-based, gender-restrictive groups used decontextualized quotes from the guidelines for Comprehensive Sexuality Education to make two main false claims:

- That the guidelines had a module for preschoolers was proof there was a plan to teach young children about sexual acts and promote inappropriate sexual behavior (ModernGhana, 2019).
- That the modules on gender stereotypes and norms, and the emphasis on children and adolescents getting to “know themselves,” was coded language for promoting LGBT identification (Otu, 2019; Sekyiamah, 2019).

Faith-based, gender-restrictive groups shared these false narratives through disinformation in social and traditional media. They spread fake news claiming that young children were going to be exposed to sexually explicit material and activities, which were allegedly part of the CSE curriculum (GhanaWeb, 2019).

*The “CSE controversy” effectively halted the implementation of comprehensive sexual education in Ghanaian schools. It thus discarded the mandate to provide age-appropriate and accurate information to children and adolescents so they can make informed and autonomous decisions regarding their sexual health and exercise their sexual and reproductive rights.*

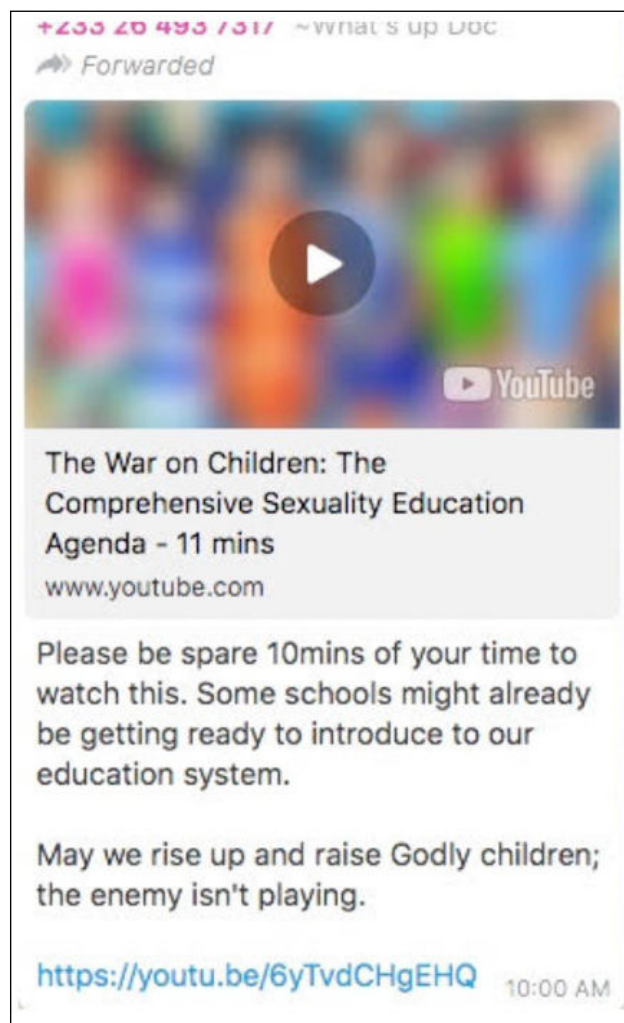
*There are other sexuality education programs in the country, but they are not nationally enforced. Also, these programs do not address gender and sexual diversity, which is particularly devastating for LGBT children and adolescents, who are often bullied and harassed by school administrators (Atuguba, 2019).*

*Finally, “the general approach [to sexuality education] is still fear-based and abstinence-focused” (Awusabo-Asare et al. 2017).*

For example, some WhatsApp publications had links to Sharon Slater’s documentary *War on Children*, which warns about these supposed dangers of CSE (interview with Fuller, 2020). Other materials used half-truths using decontextualized quotes from the CSE guidelines to suggest that acquiring “accurate information on sexual rights and reproductive health” was actually a source of sexual perversion promoted by “foreign entities” (Ghana News, 2019). Similarly, there was a petition against CSE on the Protect Children-Kenya website arguing that CSE would violate the “prior”

right of parents to educate their children (FWI, 2019; see examples below).


Paradoxically, the NCPHSRFV acknowledges the need for a sexual education program in the country, but argues religious institutions should be in charge of providing it.<sup>114</sup> Foh-Amoaning, spokesperson for the coalition, said in October 2019 that it was time “to engage in broad consultation with faith-based organizations, parents, and teacher unions in the development of a new holistic, vibrant, indigenous Ghanaian curriculum that would be anchored [in] the cultural values of Ghanaians” (Markwei & Frempong, 2019). In this curriculum, abstinence is presented as the only way of preserving sexual and reproductive health for teenagers.



Messages Spread Through WhatsApp (Fuller, 2020).

114 The NCPHSRFV offers a sexual evangelism program through their website that seems more concerned with spreading disinformation about sexual and gender diversity than with actual reproductive sexual health. The program aims at “disabusing young people’s minds from the unnatural vices of homosexuality” by giving “up-to-date” information on LGBT issues, training institutional personnel and other stakeholders (parents, teachers, ministers, etc.) in order to “[help] raise the moral fibers that prevent these vices,” and providing “assistance, Love and Spiritual care to students and youth engaged in Homosexual and other unnatural sexual relationships” (NCPHSRFV, n.d.).

**Protect Ghana Children Petition**



*We, as concerned citizens including parents, grandparents, teachers, doctors, counselors, youth, and business, religious, and civil society leaders, hereby petition our Ministry of Education, Ministry of Health, our Parliament, and our Prime Minister to take the following urgent actions:*

1. **Withdraw from the deceptive Ministerial Commitment on Comprehensive Sexuality Education (CSE)** that committed Ghana’s schools to teach highly controversial and harmful CSE programs to children in 75 percent of Ghana’s schools. This commitment was signed without proper consultation with parliament, parents or religious leaders. Every Ghanaian parent has the “prior right” to direct the education of their children (see UDHR Article 26.3), and this ministerial commitment violates this critical right.
2. **End any and all agreements, plans, or projects with UN agencies, foreign governments or foreign-funded NGOs to implement CSE programs**, including those which normalize extramarital sexual conduct, especially between children of minor age (whether heterosexual or homosexual), or that include graphic or pornographic materials, that teach children they have “sexual rights” or how to “consent” to sexual acts, or that teach unscientific gender identity theories (i.e., claiming genders or sexes exist other than male or female or that sex is fluid and can be changed).
3. **Conduct a comprehensive review of sex and sexuality education programs in Ghanaian public schools, universities, and teacher training initiatives**, including those being implemented under the guise of sexual or reproductive health education or preventing HIV, pregnancy, sexual abuse, violence, using formal, non-formal, or peer-to-peer modalities, both inside and outside of schools, and remove all those that contain any of the common 15 harmful CSE elements.

**We warn that these ineffective and highly controversial CSE programs pushed by foreign entities are harming Ghana’s children and must be stopped immediately! (See failure rates at SexEdReport.org)**

Petition Against CSE Hosted by the Protect Children in Kenya Coalition Shown on the StopCSE website (FWI, 2019).

## v) Framing the CSE Program as a Form of Satanism

### TAKEAWAYS

- Faith-based, gender-restrictive groups presented CSE as part of a “demonic,” “satanic,” and “malignant” plan.
- Framing CSE as part of a “satanic” plan allowed faith-based, gender-restrictive groups to position themselves at the center of a crusade against evil, as well as saviors of children and of Ghanaian religion, culture, and values.
- Equating CSE with an “LGBT agenda”—and conflating the “LGBT agenda” with a “satanic agenda”—also allowed faith-based, gender-restrictive groups to portray CSE, and the advancement of LGBT rights more broadly, not only as a “war on children,” but also as a “war on religion.”

The NCPHSRFV and other religious leaders presented the CSE program as proof of a “satanic agenda,” and as a site of “malignancy” contrary to the “good Christian faith” and to Islamic jurisprudence ([starrfm.com.gh](http://starrfm.com.gh), 2019). Some religious leaders like Paul Yaw Frimpong-Manso, the president of the Ghana Pentecostal and Charismatic Council (GPCC), went as far as calling the program “Comprehensive Satanic Engagement” (Otu, 2019).

### **This language resonates deeply across denominations, bolstering interfaith alliances between different religions and denominations.**

For example, during the WCF, Foh-Amoaning, leader of the NCPHSRFV, asked for support so that what he called the “Holy Trinity of Christian, Muslim and Traditionalist leaders in Ghana [could] fight Comprehensive Sexuality Education” (Nketiah, 2019).

Also, equating CSE with an “LGBT agenda”—and conflating the “LGBT Agenda” with a “satanic agenda”—allowed faith-based, gender-restrictive groups to portray CSE, and the advancement of LGBT rights more broadly, not only as a “war on children,” but also a “war on religion” to which they are poised to react collectively.

By literally demonizing gender and sexual diversity, faith-based, gender-restrictive groups leveraged the strong anti-LGBT sentiments in the country to successfully portray themselves as the only possible saviors of Ghanaian children, religions, culture, and society.

## vi) Presenting the Heterosexual, Patriarchal Family as the Main Institution for the Protection of Children and Economic Development

### TAKEAWAYS

- Faith-based, gender-restrictive groups have been promoting the idea of the heterosexual, patriarchal family as an African institution at least since the 1960s.
- Faith-based, gender-restrictive groups used the WCF Regional Summit in Accra to amplify their messaging about the heterosexual, patriarchal family as the only socially and legally viable family configuration, despite the increasing diversity of actual Ghanaian families.
- The 2019 WCF Regional Summit that took place in Accra identified an additional role for the heterosexual, patriarchal family: its supposed relation to national economic development.

The Christian Council of Ghana (CCG) has been trying to position the heterosexual, patriarchal family as the only socially and morally acceptable configuration of family since at least 1961. That year, the CCG established the Committee on Christian Marriage and Family Life (CCMFL) to achieve two main objectives:

1. “to promote positive Christian teaching on sex, marriage, and family life” (Otu, 2019), and
2. to introduce Ghanaian youth to “proper sexual behaviors” (Otu, 2019), which is coded language for heterosexuality and abstinence.

More recently, faith-based, gender-restrictive organizations in Ghana have worked towards this gender-restrictive ideal through alliances with international missionaries, regional religious leaders, local politicians, and even some women’s rights activists.

The speakers at the WCF in 2019 built on these efforts. Catherine Onwiodukoit, pastor and founder of FRI reinforced the idea of the patriarchal, heterosexual family as stemming directly from God (Noshie, 2019) and Brian Brown, president of the WCF, said that other kinds of families are “a denial of who we are as human beings” (Sekyiamah, 2019). None of these speakers acknowledged the actual diversity of Ghanaian families (Andams, 2020).<sup>115</sup>

<sup>115</sup> Ghana has a broad range of family structures and kinship arrangements, which include extended and polygamous configurations, and women-led and same-sex families (Kuukuwa

The idea of the heterosexual, patriarchal family as society's main moral bulwark, and as essential to the continuation of the human species through sanctified heterosexual intercourse, is not new. However, **the 2019 WCF Regional Summit that took place in Accra identified a new role for this configuration of the family: its supposed relation to national economic development.** This message was aptly captured in the summit's title: "The African Family and Sustainable Development: Strong Families, Strong Nation." Despite the use of the plural for "families," this rhetoric allows for only one model of family: the heterosexual, patriarchal one, which is then presented as the key to a prosperous Ghana (Nketiah, 2019; Noshie, 2019).

## IV. CONCLUSION

The Ghanaian case is illustrative of the ways in which faith-based, gender-restrictive groups instrumentalize children to curtail gender justice and human rights, in particular those of LGBT people.

**This instrumentalization feeds on and fuels entrenched anti-LGBT and anticolonial sentiments. It also leverages colonial-era laws that criminalize (male) homosexuality to legitimize an aggressive anti-LGBT stance, promoting disinformation about gender and sexual diversity through religious discourse and discredited medical and psychiatric concepts.**

The 2019 WCF Regional Summit in Accra was a pivotal moment for faith-based, gender-restrictive groups to amplify their messages against the CSE program; strengthen their local, regional, and international networks; and showcase their cultural influence and political muscle.

The CSE scandal in Ghana is a case in point of how the "Christianization of society" and the public role of faith-based organizations are shifting the political landscape in the country towards increasingly gender-restrictive views that pose a serious threat to children, women, and LGBT people.

Faith-based, gender-restrictive groups with political ties have yet to be successful in further criminalizing male homosexuality and other LGBT relationships and identities in Ghana. However, their messaging has been highly effective in making pro-LGBT initiatives a politically toxic issue, stigmatizing LGBTI people even more, and condoning or explicitly promoting physical, sexual, and psychological violence against them.

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Andam, 2020; interview with Otu, 2020; Sekyiamah, 2019). Civil society organizations, such as the Coalition for African Family Values of Love, Unity and Tolerance, claim that "African traditions" encourage people "to live peacefully together as a family" and to "accord privacy to issues of sexuality" (Open Democracy Investigations, 2019), which implies that African families and values are "based [...] on love and compassion" (Open Democracy Investigations, 2019; Samanga, 2019).

# RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendations in this report are organized into two categories: **How to Fund** and **What to Fund**. In the first category, we offer recommendations regarding fund allocation processes and structures. In the second category, we suggest specific areas for intervention. It is important to note that in order to fully leverage the changemaking potential of their grantmaking craft, funders, philanthropic networks, and other members of the progressive ecosystem should try **to engage with both sets of recommendations simultaneously** as much as possible.

By pointing out these general differences we do not imply that gender justice and other progressive funders should emulate these strategies uncritically, or that some or all of them are not already part of the grantmaking craft. Our hope is to provide a tool for a comparative analysis to continue to defend and advance women's, children's and LGBT rights.

## HOW TO FUND

George Lakoff argues that the success gender-restrictive groups have had in expanding their influence and mainstreaming their worldview is not only due to the amount of funding they get, but, more significantly, to how they are funded. It is not only a numbers game (although of course funding is important). It is a matter of how the money is allocated, for what purposes, through which processes, with what requirements, and for how long.

The strategies and mechanisms gender-restrictive funders use and the worldview that informs their decision-making process are different from those of most gender-justice and other progressive funders (Lakoff, 2004).

The following chart summarizes the main differences between funding approaches, strategies and rationale that Lakoff outlines, as well as our own findings in this study.

Aspect	How Gender-Restrictive Organizations tend to Fund	How Gender Justice and Other Progressive Organizations tend to Fund
<b>Time-frame</b>	Long-term (40-50 years)	Short-term projects (1-5 years)
<b>Funding Mechanisms</b>	Block grants, endowments, trust funds	Project-based grants, capacity building, service procurement
<b>Distribution of Funds</b>	Duplication as a worldmaking strategy. Allows for several organizations to be working on the same thing at the same time; reinforces key messages in different contexts and through different media; contributes to long-term development of the gender-restrictive organizational ecosystem	Duplication as wasteful. Organizations must differentiate themselves from others; spreads money thinly, narrowing scope and diminishing impact of work; may promote competition instead of collaboration
<b>Funding Constraints</b>	Few constraints. Freedom to decide how to spend the money; encourages risk-taking and provides rapid response capabilities, flexibility and adaptability	Project-based, deliverable-driven and impact-evaluation-contingent. Cumbersome reporting procedures to donors; little flexibility, stymies creativity because it has little room for failure
<b>Use of the Funds</b>	Worldmaking strategies. Career development, cohorts of policymakers and analysts, media organizations, funding scholars to conceptualize and frame key issues	Reactive strategies. Expenses and personnel tied to specific projects and service provision programs, narrow set of deliverables
<b>Issues Funded</b>	Interconnected, worldmaking issues. Broad campaigns and slogans (e.g., "gender ideology") that simultaneously engage with all or several issues considered key for their gender-restrictive worldview, including women's, children's and LGBT rights, as well as anti-democracy efforts and environmental deregulation	Specialized and targeted funding that creates silos and makes cross-issue, cross-sectoral, transnational, and intersectional collaboration difficult

### Crafting a More Diverse, Risk Tolerant, and Flexible Funding Ecosystem

In order to shift from a reactive funding approach to a worldmaking one regarding women's, children's and LGBT rights, progressive funders should:

- **Ensure grantees have access to long-term unrestricted funding.** If you are unable to support this type of funding directly, work with grantees to identify who else is funding grantees and work with other funders to identify which specific gaps you might be able to fill with restricted funding (such as funding advocacy and narrative framing capacity building, wellbeing and security etc.)
  - Cultivate a **diverse ecosystem of funding opportunities** for your grantees. Including direct,

project, general operating and core support to create stable projects.

- Fund **more flexibly** to allow grantees to adapt to the changing, malleable tactics of gender-restrictive groups. Provide more unrestricted support to allow grantees to react.
- Actively and repeatedly **communicate to grantees working in this space that you understand and acknowledge the long-term nature of this work** and that change will likely be incremental.
  - Remain accessible to grantee partners and actively harvest non-monetary foundation support and communicate scope of commitment clearly and honestly.



- Work with partners to develop **alternative mechanisms to measure and/or understand the impact** along the way of long-term cultural change.
- Consider expanding funding **beyond individual organizations and key actors** to consider funding cohorts, networks, collective impact, etc. at the national and local levels.
  - Resource the ecosystem- work with other funders to ensure a robust and diverse civil society (cohorts, networks, collectives) at national and regional levels.
- Ensure **diversity of actors/voices** in these models and set expectations that the backbone of organizations will prioritize inclusivity and practices that prevent gatekeeping.
  - When funding feminist and/or women’s organizations do due diligence work to ensure they are not trans-exclusionary.
- Be conscious of **limiting donor influence**, agenda-setting, and credit-taking considering the neocolonial sensitivities in the gender-restrictive narrative.
  - Actively work to decolonize your grantee / foundation relationships within the parameters of the existing model.

### Leadership for Coordinated Collaboration

Additionally, funders should consider **investing resources in leadership and coordinated collaboration** to maximize the conditions for cooperation, coordination, co-learning, and identification of action steps,

- Identify and begin to build **cross-issue, cross-national, and intersectional alliances** with key groups in the development and humanitarian sector who don’t necessarily see themselves as rights-based.
  - If their language isn’t rights-based, you could use resources like this report to identify aspects or concerns that would resonate to open communication channels.
  - If you don’t know who those actors are in the context in which you work, map them (ideally in partnership with other funders).

- **Identify potential pathways for collaboration within your own foundation**, whether that’s between geographic and issue-focused teams or across different issue-focused teams whose key populations are affected. Collaboration could span from ensuring these other teams are aware of this issue/research and sharing how it is affecting grantees to more intentional co-funding.
  - Fund to the edge of your grantmaking mandate.
  - Join funding collaboratives and co-funding tables to reduce risk, increase opportunity for shared learning and increase impact.
  - Build intra team initiatives at your foundation to strengthen institutional knowledge and strategic confidence.
  - Encourage thematic teams in foundations to work with the geographic teams in co funding and learning/knowledge development.
- When opportunities for collaboration with other funders emerge, make sure you know and are being **clear about what comparative advantage/ strength you bring to the table** and what you are and are not able to do/tolerate in terms of risk.
  - Leverage your institution’s strengths and know the limits to risk tolerance and mandate when entering partnerships and co funding agreements.
  - **Identify your organization’s tolerance for taking risk and committing to long-term funding** of an issue that may be perceived as “too risky.” Where are the hard lines and where are the opportunities to nudge towards the edge? If possible, do so in partnership with other teams internally, working to create an internal “advocacy” strategy that supports shifts towards the type of funding and strategy that will help move the needle.

## WHAT TO FUND

### A GUIDE TO HOPE-BASED COMMUNICATIONS

- *Talk about solutions, not problems*
- *Highlight what we stand for, not what we oppose*
- *Create opportunities, drop threats*
- *Emphasize support for heroes, not pity for victims*
- *Show that “we got this”!*

Source: [“Open Global Rights”](#)

### Narrative Change, Framing, Worldmaking Strategies, and Creative Communications

Commit to and invest in **long-term work towards cultural shift and narrative change**.

- Support the creation and dissemination of **alternative, all-encompassing narratives** that creatively frame human rights values, take into consideration local histories and values, remain sensitive to the root causes of the anxieties and resistance mobilized by gender-restrictive groups, and reclaim the language of human rights and family values.
  - Emphasize and highlight **opportunities, solutions, heroes, and creative work** around key issues, not (only) problems or what gender justice or human rights advocates are reacting against.
  - Work with partners to **rethink the visual language and narrative** of human rights. Include storytelling, art, imagery, play, and interactivity in the communication process.
  - “Humanize the data.” Support work to **frame scientific research and evidence** in a way that connects with, and is meaningful and easy to understand for **the “movable middle”** in order to maximize its impact.
  - Amplify and distribute **narratives that do not equate religiosity with gender normativity**.
  - Work with partners to shift communication strategies to change perceptions that consider

human rights, whether children’s, women’s or LGBTI, as a very professionalized area that people don’t understand.

- Fund the creation of an ecosystem that allows the **collaborative creation of resources** that both acknowledge and address the damage done by disinformation campaigns about women’s, children’s, and LGBT rights.
  - Support the creation of **open-source resources** for everyone to use and adapt.
  - Focus on creating **targeted, youth-centered messaging** that presents an affirming and positive view of gender justice and human rights.
  - Consider funding **cross-sectoral problem definition and messaging workshops** with movement leaders and communications professionals.
- Support initiatives that aim to maintain the pace of **increasing communications training** and capacity development at the national level in **key/contested countries**.
  - Identify and fund **investigative journalism** with the intent of bringing visibility both to the issue and the actors. In particular, consider journalists and organizations who adopt creative, effective approaches to the format and distribution of these stories.
    - Fund a robust, diverse journalistic and documentation ecosystem that is disruptive, innovative and promises broad distribution.

### Support Collaboration between Diverse Stakeholders and Frontline Organizations

- In collaboration with other funders, create space and fund **diverse groups of actors within key countries (and across key countries) to come together** to build alliances, learn from each other, and identify opportunities and who is doing what.
  - Do ensure these spaces are not donor-driven or designed around donor agendas.
  - Do ensure youth and communities are supported to participate authentically.
  - Support training and convenings to strengthen movement cohesion, cross regional learning and cohort leadership development.
  - Support training and convenings to strengthen

movement cohesion, cross regional learning and cohort leadership development.

- Prioritize working and engaging with **local governments and institutions**. Do not always—or exclusively—engage at the national level.
  - Support efforts to **monitor the particular political and economic situations in each country or region**, and consider providing resources to define country-specific strategies that involve local stakeholders, and funding initiatives beyond children’s, women’s, or LGBT rights.
  - Provide grantees with funds to **access communities and advocacy training** and capacity building at the local level. If possible, do so with cohorts of grantees and with other funders working in the same country.
- Prioritize working and engaging with youth. Partner with existing participatory funds who are already experienced and well-practiced in resourcing and **engaging youth** (including girls and LGBTI youth) authentically.
  - Ensure they are aware of this issue/research.
  - Generate strategies for youth participation and community participation where the needs of women and LGBTI people emerge organically, as opposed to importing international curricula, discourses, or best practices.
  - Bring children and LGBTI people into philanthropic spaces as advisors, contributors and participants.
  - Support work at the school level to articulate CSE and progressive values more deeply into the classrooms and in such a way that it acknowledges the cultural diversity and contextual differences.
- Provide grantees with resources to identify and **amplify the voices of local, regional, and international churches, religious leaders, and inter-faith organizations** that uphold their faith while affirming LGBT, women’s, and children’s rights and rejecting gender-restrictive agendas.
- Do ensure that grantees are supporting **trans-inclusive feminist work**.
- **Make any financial support for security (personal, infrastructure, physical, etc.) explicit and accessible** in grant agreement letters, reporting requirements, and other formal structures.
- Partner with existing organizations to **devise participation mechanisms to communicate and**

**negotiate with the general population** when progressive initiatives and policies, such as CSE, are being discussed.

## Promote Shifts in Knowledge, Skills, and Attitudes in Progressive Organizations

- If you are going to provide capacity building and training to support grantees working in gender justice and human rights, consider whether you are able and willing to **support grantees in identifying their own priorities and consultants they would like to engage**.
- **Cultivate a culture of learning**; fund actionable research that does not duplicate existing efforts.
  - As much as possible, try to fund the consolidation/synthesis/analysis of existing research on related issues (effective approaches to public mobilization, narrative-framing, etc.) before commissioning new research.
  - Consider whether the existing evidence base already adequately captures the work of activists, youth leaders, and truly community-led organizations.
  - Support efforts to monitor political and economic situations in each country or region that can help in the definition of country-specific strategies that involve the collaboration with local stakeholders.
  - Consider funding local or regional data monitoring centers and initiatives.
- Commission a **mapping of non-rights based (potentially humanitarian) development and foundations who fund children** to identify key potential partnership and/or leverage opportunities and actively engage in non-rights-based donor spaces.
  - Share resources, build learning tables and produce accessible materials to build authentic relationships.
- As much as possible, consider funding research to understand **concrete grant craft** for these issues: skills, tools, approaches, models, innovations, and lessons learned from previous projects.