Our commitment to LGBTI rights:
International Day Against Homophobia, Transphobia and Biphobia

Background

Whilst there have been many great advances in the enshrinement of LGBTI rights in laws, LGBTI communities still face serious threats to their safety and well-being and are still not fully recognised as citizens in many countries.

Violence and stigma against LGBTI individuals is so commonplace and culturally accepted in many countries that it is often not reported. Despite this lack of global data, the data that does exist shows that LGBTI people face disproportionate amounts of violence. The scale of unreported cases of violence is a serious concern for civil society.

The work that we are doing

AmplifyChange supports organisations and activists working at the intersection of gender, sexuality and gender-based violence (GBV) to increase the effectiveness of prevention and response to GBV experienced by LGBTI communities and to remove barriers to accessing and fulfilling their rights.

Since 2018...

AmplifyChange has awarded £12,708,907 in grants to organisations working to address GBV and increase the rights of the LGBTI community in Sub Saharan Africa and South Asia.

We have supported a total of 31 projects working at this intersection across 14 countries, 20 of these are LGBTI-led organisations.

The organisations we support use a variety of strategies including evidence collection, litigation and community sensitisation.

The following case studies illustrate that gathering evidence, providing support to survivors, engaging with stakeholders and seeking to change legislation are crucial approaches to understanding and responding to this abuse of human rights.
AmplifyChange grantees Humanity First and Alternatives Cameroon work together to monitor violence against the LGBTI community in Cameroon. They have been collecting data since 2012 and see an increase in cases of violence each year. For example, in 2019 they recorded 1,380 cases of violence against the LGBTI community as compared to the 1,134 cases in 2018.

There are no national laws to protect the rights of the LGBTI community in Cameroon. This group is unrecognised in the eyes of most Cameroonians making it an uphill struggle to use Human Rights as the entry point to the law. There has been progress but it is slow and highlights the need to ensure there is an understanding of the issues facing the LGBTI community among a range of stakeholders and allies. Cameroon has seen some success in the courts; however, many survivors are hesitant to bring their cases to court for a fear of being arrested for homosexuality rather than getting justice against their perpetrators.

In light of these challenges, organisations such as Cameroonian Foundation for AIDS (CAMFAIDS) are critical in supporting individuals impacted by violence. CAMFAIDS provide direct support to LGBTI community members who have been arbitrarily arrested, psychosocial support to survivors, a safe house, and legal support for those who want to take their case to court.

In Lesotho, The People's Matrix Association are working to ensure concerns for LGBTI persons are included in amendments for the Bill of Rights.

In 2021, the National GBV statistics in Lesotho claimed there were no LGBTI cases. The People's Matrix Association presented their own statistics of 35 GBV cases and gave recommendations on ways to include LBGTI statistics in government reporting in the absence of guiding laws.

The National Reforms Authority are currently reviewing and drafting recommendations for constitutional amendments.
Nigeria

In Nigeria discriminatory laws such as the Criminal Code, Penal code, Sharia Law and the Same Sex Marriage Prohibition Act all deny LGBTI people their right to privacy, freedom of expression and to assemble freely.

Arbitrary arrests and unlawful detention of LGBTI persons are common under accusations of offenses including cultism and drug dealing. This criminalisation in Nigeria has led to a growing trend of gay men blackmailing other gay men for financial gain. Human Rights for LGBTI persons in Nigeria still remain unrecognized and unprotected making it difficult to report such violence.

Strategic litigation continues to be one of the most effective ways of highlighting the need to overturn restrictive legislation; however, efforts have been hampered by the absence of lawyers invested in the social justice angle of the cause. Funding from AmplifyChange has helped T I E R S (The Initiative for Equal Rights) identify and build significant allies creating pro bono support available to community members.

South Africa

**Access Chapter 2** works extensively with community leaders to sensitize them on issues that affect LGBTI communities and with LGBTI people to raise awareness about the issues around violence.

Access Chapter 2 has been providing victim empowerment service and psychosocial support to survivors of violence while working to positively influence policies and laws. The South African Parliament issued a call for submissions for the Hate Crime and Hate Speech Bill, a bill aiming to make hate crime and hate speech an offence with provision to prosecute offenders. Access Chapter 2 made the following submission:

> It is hate crime that takes away the freedom of being secure, it diminishes the right that the LGBTI community must express themselves without any fear of being harmed. Today we still fear to simply be ourselves, to dress how we choose or to share and embrace not only in public but also amongst those who we may count as friends and neighbours. They too are our murderers. We don’t only fear for our very lives however we continue to face discrimination all around us, social media platforms are full of queer-phobic words, threats, and slurs with no consequences. Religion continues to be used as an excuse to debase our community in ways that would never be tolerated when it comes to other citizens or groups.”

Image: Access Chapter 2
India

The **India HIV AIDS Alliance** is a non-government organisation working in partnership with civil society, government and communities to support sustained responses to HIV in India that protect rights and improve health.

The India HIV AIDS Alliance conducted a study to understand violence against the Transgender community. Their data showed the most common types of violence experienced in the previous 3 months were physical assault/harassment (53.4% of participants), verbal abuse (49.6%), discrimination and/or denial of services (11%), mental abuse (4.7%), and outing of status or identity disclosure (2.8%). The frequency and impact of sustained violence is a real concern, and the India HIV AIDS Alliance continues sensitisations in community and education settings, including influential actors such as law enforcement and health care workers.

The India HIV AIDS Alliance has successfully contributed to policy and law change creating huge gains nationally and at state level; however, there is a long way to go before the LGBTI community can be considered to have attained full citizenship.

The Transgender persons (Protection of Rights) Act, 2019 was hoped to have been a transformative moment and whilst it has led to the recognition of a third gender in India there continues to be many obstacles to the full achievement of citizenship. The implementation of the Act is critically important and advocacy work continues to ensure full engagement of relevant stakeholders to realise this.

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Image: The India HIV AIDS Alliance