

canaries in the coal mines

An analysis of spaces for LGBTI activism in Zimbabwe
COUNTRY REPORT



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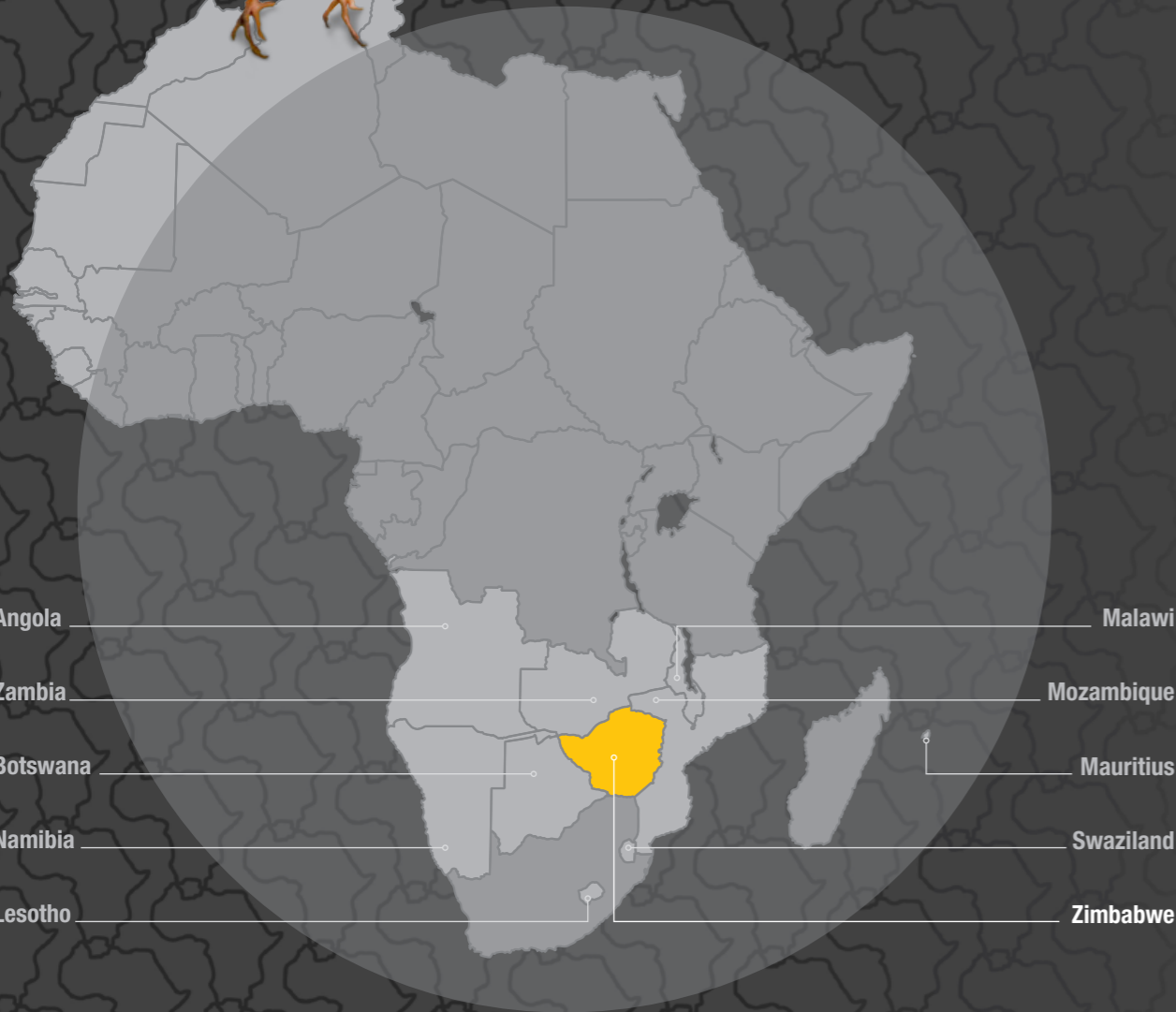


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summary



Zimbabwe's history, colonial and post-colonial, has been violent and fraught with human rights infractions, including economic crises that have left the country and its people stripped of resources. In this fraught context, the violation of the human rights of sexual minorities who identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender or intersex (LGBTI) is unsurprising.

Homosexuality is criminalized, with additional laws and policies regarding 'criminal nuisance', 'prostitution' and 'fraud' often used to victimize LGBTI people.

Public discourse on sexual orientation and gender identity (SOGI) is influenced by conservative views on African tradition, articulated publicly by senior political and religious leaders; homophobic media coverage; the politics of colonialism and its post-colonial residues, including in the legal system; along with narrow interpretations of Christianity. These factors are used by the state and others to create the perception that same-sex practices are alien to Zimbabwe, despite documented, albeit little-known archival evidence to the contrary.

The Christian church holds particular sway, and the Zimbabwe Council of Churches (ZCC) has condemned same-sex practices as "unchristian". Traditional leaders -- as with the church -- largely male, also articulate notions of tradition and Africanness that exclude same-sexuality.

The politics of sex and procreation, and gendered notions of masculinity and femininity come into play in this space between religion and tradition, and how these powerful frameworks perceive intimate human relations.



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

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Over the last 25 years the state has attempted to eradicate LGBTI organizations through state-sponsored homophobia targeting LGBTI people and the groups and organizations that lobby for LGBTI human rights.

LGBTI human rights issues have had a high public profile in modern-day Zimbabwe. Current president, Robert Mugabe has publicly condemned same-sexuality and LGBTI human rights for more than 25 years, leaving LGBTI Zimbabweans, particularly the poorest and most vulnerable, in a precarious position regarding their human rights.

In 1997, the first and former-president of independent Zimbabwe, Canaan Banana, was arrested on eleven charges of sodomy, attempted sodomy and indecent assault. Banana was sentenced to 10

years of imprisonment, with nine years suspended.

Recently, economic woes have shifted public and media attention away from LGBTI human rights, towards addressing the economic fallout in Zimbabwe.

LGBTI human rights issues hit the headlines when inflammatory statements are made by public figures, and when there have been arrests of LGBTI people using criminalizing and discriminatory laws.

Gays and Lesbians of Zimbabwe (GALZ) is the oldest and most high-profile LGBTI human rights organization, and smaller groups have formed in recent years to focus on LBT issues and concerns.

Some human rights organizations have come out in support and defence of LGBTI human rights, creating some civil society space to engage on SOGI issues. GALZ, in turn, has engaged more broadly in the human rights arena, enabling more intersectional engagement on human rights. Sport is also seen as a possible arena where LGBTI inclusion can be fostered, especially for LBT people.



With Mugabe's anti-LGBTI vitriol dating back to 1990, and mainstream media vigorously championing his anti-LGBTI discourse, grabbing headlines and influencing opinions, it appears there is now something of an anti-LGBTI 'fatigue' that has set in, shifting the discursive space towards a broader public indifference to LGBTI human rights issues.



country context



Debates about homosexuality, framed in anthropological and religious terms, along with responses from the public health sector, assert that same-sex sexual relationships and marriage are the epitome of sexual perversions, alien and taboo to traditional Zimbabwean societies.¹ At the same time, Vincent Mabvirira, Petronila Motsi and others² trace same sex relations to pre-colonial Zimbabwe.

Mark Epprecht³ has traced same-sex practices to ancient San rock paintings of male and female homosexual practices, as well as images of several males engaging in sex acts together. Masiwa Gunda, writing from a religious perspective, shows that homophobic responses to same-sex relationships reflect preconceived gender prejudices buttressed by certain biblical texts.

The public health response focuses on combatting HIV/AIDS, and include Men who have Sex with Men (MSM) as a 'key population' in need of specialized support. Public health literature recognizes the stigma and discrimination experienced by MSM and other minorities when attempting to access health services, calling for deliberate strategies to ensure MSM have access to counselling, testing and HIV/AIDS treatment, where necessary.

Despite gaining independence from Britain in 1980, and anti-British rhetoric, Zimbabwean legislation remains heavily influenced by colonial-era British law.

¹ Chemhuru, M. 2012. *Rethinking the legality of homosexuality in Zimbabwe: a philosophical perspective.*

² *The "politics" of sexual identities in Zimbabwe: a social work perspective.*

³ 2004. 'Hungochani' - *The history of a dissident sexuality in southern Africa.*

legislative and policy environment

2



Various laws and policies are used to directly and indirectly police and ‘punish’ SOGI. These include the sodomy law, criminal laws relating to ‘criminal nuisance’, ‘indecent acts’, the publication and dissemination of ‘undesirable publications’, fraud, solicitation, freedom of expression and freedom of speech.

2.1 Sodomy Law

Until the Sodomy Law was passed in 2006 under the Criminal Law (Codification and Reform) Act, colonial-era laws were used to punish sexual activity between two persons of the same sex. After 2006, the law was extended to criminalize two people of the same-sex holding hands, hugging and kissing, terming such “indecent acts” as sexual crimes.

The specific clauses in the Act read:

1. Any male person who, with the consent of another male person, knowingly performs with that other person anal sexual intercourse, or

any act involving physical contact other than anal sexual intercourse that would be regarded by a reasonable person to be an indecent act, shall be guilty of sodomy and liable to a fine up to or exceeding level fourteen or imprisonment for a period not exceeding one year or both.

2. Subject to subsection (3), both parties to the performance of an act referred to in subsection (1) may be charged with and convicted of sodomy.

After 2006, the law was extended to criminalize two people of the same sex holding hands, hugging and kissing, terming such “indecent acts” as sexual crimes.



Within the existing legal frameworks, there is no law which allows transgender persons to legally change their gender markers on identity documents. This creates further difficulties when presentation of legal documentation is required.

2.2 Fraud

Section 136 of the Criminal Law states: *Any person who makes a misrepresentation*

- (a) *intending to deceive another person or realizing that there is a real risk or possibility of deceiving another person; and*
- (b) *intending to cause another person to act upon the misrepresentation to his or her prejudice, or realizing that there is a real risk or possibility that another person may act upon the misrepresentation to his or her prejudice;*

shall be guilty of fraud if the misrepresentation causes prejudice to another person or creates a real risk or possibility that another person might be prejudiced, and be liable to

- (i) *fine not exceeding level fourteen or not exceeding twice the value of any property obtained by him or her as a result of the crime, whichever is the greater; or*
- (ii) *imprisonment for a period not exceeding thirty-five years; or both.*

This law is used against transgender people and other gender non-conforming persons for ‘misrepresenting themselves’.

In 2014, Zanu-PF youth league member, Farai Mteliso, conducted a citizen’s arrest of transgender activist Ricky Nathanson, handing her over to police for wearing female clothes, masquerading as a woman, and using a female toilet, under this particular law.

2.3 Production and Dissemination of Undesirable Publications

Chapter 10:04 of the Censorship and Entertainment Control Act prohibits importing, producing and disseminating “undesirable publications, pictures,

statutes, records, films and pornography”. This law has been used to confiscate GALZ pamphlets and publications.



2.4 Soliciting

The Criminal Law on Sexual Crimes and Crimes Against Morality, Section 81, stipulates that “any person who publicly solicits another person for the purposes of prostitution shall be guilty of soliciting

and liable to a fine not exceeding level five or imprisonment for a period not exceeding six months or both.” This law leaves transgender sex workers vulnerable to abuse.

2.5 Freedom of Speech/Expression

While the country’s Constitution protects freedom of expression, this freedom is not extended to LGBTI people who are

particularly vulnerable if they present themselves in gender non-conforming ways.

2.6 Regional and International Treaties

Zimbabwe is signatory to various human rights treaties, including the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the African Charter on Human and People’s Rights (ACHPR), and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR). The ICCPR provides for equality before the law and the right to non-discrimination on the basis of sex, which the UN

Human Rights Committee (HRC) has ruled to include SOGI. Implicitly, any law criminalizing consensual sexual relations between adults is in violation of the Covenant. As signatory to the ICCPR, Zimbabwe is obligated to conform to its provisions, despite the government’s refusal to recognize LGBTI human rights.

Transgender people are at particular risk; easy targets for the policing of appearance, with limited recourse to justice.

public discourse

3



Public discourse on SOGI in independent Zimbabwe has been informed by narrow interpretations of African traditional practices; provocative homophobic media coverage inspired by powerful, inflammatory outbursts by the head of state, among other leadership figures in society; the politics of colonialism, and its post-colonial legacies with regard to what is and is not considered African; what is perceived as Western, and therefore negative; deploying the politics of anti-imperialism, matched by perceived efforts by donor governments to link aid to the guaranteed protection of the human rights of LGBTI people; and conservative religious beliefs and restrictive interpretations of Christianity.

Together, these factors have contributed to spreading perceptions that same-sex practices are alien to Zimbabwe, and Africa, despite documented, but little-known archival evidence, to the contrary.

3.1 Tradition/Culture

“Homosexuality is a social wrong that progressive minds should resist[...] It is alien to Zimbabwe and is a taboo [...] even the platform to discuss such issues should not be accorded.”

Chief Charumbira, Leader of the Traditional Chiefs Council of Zimbabwe

Same-sex sexualities can be traced to pre-colonial Zimbabwe. Although largely undocumented, it is argued that Zimbabwean traditions and cultures emphasize community life and social cohesion, with sex linked only to

procreation. From this perspective, same-sex practices are considered taboo and unacceptable, lacking generative potential and angering the ancestors, which is given as cause for individual and communal punishment.

“We are just victims of propaganda and money. Political parties use us as bait to gain political mileage. And media uses us to make money.”

Member of the LGBTI community



3.2 Media

Media coverage that would increase understanding and acceptance of LGBTI people and LGBTI human rights is notably absent.

President Mugabe and other leaders have over the years effectively used government-owned media to widely propagate discrimination against LGBTI people. At the 1995 Zimbabwe International Book Fair (ZIBF), several efforts were made to exclude GALZ from participating, including efforts by state actors to destroy the GALZ stand and publications at the Fair. The ensuing international spotlight on LGBTI human rights in Zimbabwe ensured local media was awash with inflammatory articles about homosexuals and homosexuality, setting the tone, and undermining the safety of LGBTI people for years to follow.

The Herald and the Sunday Mail, national newspapers, continued to publish articles condemning GALZ, leading to the raiding of GALZ offices in 1996. Independent newspapers like the Financial Gazette were sympathetic to LGBTI people,

publishing articles saying that attacking decent individuals who are fully respectful of the rights of others, who are productive and responsible citizens but who happen to be gay or lesbian, is wrong.

Although mainstream media remains negative towards LGBTI people, current trends suggest a level of media anti-LGBTI 'fatigue'. SOGI issues are mainly covered when a leader has made a defamatory statement, during elections for political gains, or when there has been an arrest of an LGBTI person.

LGBTI groups have taken to using online media to counter negative mainstream media coverage, and to share information and news with each other, and make friends. According to a Pakasipti key member, LGBTI Zimbabweans blog and use social media like Facebook and WhatsApp to connect.



3.3 Christianity

"We are not going to allow, as a Christian body, gays in our council; and destroy that which we cherish: our culture."

Anglican Bishop Jonathan Siyachitema, ZCC President

"Some religious leaders suggest that LGBTI people are spreading heresy, causing droughts, poor economic performance, and heralding the end of the world."

Religious leader

Churches in Zimbabwe have historically spoken with one voice against homosexuality. In 1998, the eighth general assembly of the World Council of Churches (WCC) was to be held in Harare, and would include public space for discussions and exhibitions by accredited groups and NGOs. GALZ applied but local churches had already made it clear they would oppose GALZ's presence. At a 1996 press conference, Anglican Bishop Jonathan Siyachitema, President of the ZCC – an umbrella body of over twenty Protestant churches -- denounced homosexuality. Adding his voice, ZCC General Secretary,

Murombedzi Chikanga Kuchera, argued that Zimbabweans "should not be coerced into a practice [homosexuality] which is totally alien to them".

In 2011, the Archbishop of Canterbury, Rowan Williams, visited Zimbabwe and met with Mugabe, making it clear that inasmuch as homosexuality may be a problem within the church, whoever practices it deserves dignity and respect.

He also presented a dossier to Mugabe with allegations that some Anglicans were being persecuted by Archbishop Nolbert Kunonga who left the Anglican Church of the Province of Central Africa over its acceptance of homosexuality, and now leads the independent Province of Zimbabwe.

"Religion is used to castigate LGBTI people and some religious and spiritual spaces are unsafe."

Pakasipti key member



Justice Minister, Patrick Chinamasa told the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, Navanethem Pillay, that his government rejected calls for basic LGBTI rights and would continue to arrest people for engaging in same-sex practices.

3.4 Political Parties

SOGI discourse within Zimbabwean politics has morphed from general unacceptability, to linking it with anti-imperialism, economic dependence, anti-colonialism and anti-western culture.

Zanu-PF and the Movement for Democratic Change (MDC) are the major political parties in Zimbabwe. In 2012, Ignatius Chombo, the Zanu-PF Minister of Local Government, Rural and Urban Development urged chiefs to banish “people who support homosexuality” from their communities and to take away their land. That same year, Justice Minister, Patrick Chinamasa told the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, Navanethem Pillay, that his government rejected calls for basic LGBTI rights and would continue to arrest people for engaging in same-sex practices.

The Herald newspaper in 2013 quoted Mugabe saying:

“We have this American president, Obama, born of an African father, who is saying we will not give you aid if you don’t embrace homosexuality. We ask, was he born out of homosexuality? We need continuity in our race, and that comes from the woman, and no to homosexuality. John and John, no; Maria and Maria, no. They are worse than dogs and pigs. I keep pigs and the male pig knows the female one.”

Mugabe’s statement was triggered by then British Prime Minister, David Cameron and US President Barack

Obama tying aid to respect for LGBTI human rights. Although no direct mention of Zimbabwe was made by Cameron, there was a general warning of cutting aid to African countries with anti-gay rights, angering Mugabe, who reasserted the notion of homosexuality being a European import.

In 2011, MDC leader, Morgan Tsvangirai made pro-LGBTI human rights statements, arguing that gay men have the same rights as other minorities in the new Zimbabwean Constitution: “The right to freedom from discrimination [...] given our history of discrimination and intolerance, must be broad to include the protection of personal preferences, that is gays and lesbians should be protected by the Constitution.”

This statement was rebuffed by government accusing Tsvangirai of being Britain’s puppet. Later, in 2013, Tsvangirai denounced homosexuality during electioneering, stating: “In the draft Constitution, we said marriage is between a man and a woman, and those who want to marry another from the same sex, have a problem. Why do you want to sleep with another man?”



3.5 Human Rights Organizations

Two prominent human rights NGOs have supported LGBTI rights: Zimbabwe Lawyers for Human Rights (ZLHR); and the Zimbabwe Human Rights Organisation (ZHR), an NGO that works to ensure that Zimbabweans know their rights and are empowered to defend their rights.

After the 1995 banning of GALZ from participating at the ZIBF, ZHR executive director, David Chimhini, was quoted by The Herald newspaper arguing that banning GALZ from exhibiting at the ZIBF was an overreaction, not in tandem with global thinking on LGBTI human rights.





the LGBTI movement:

Organizations Advancing the Human Rights of LGBTI People

4

GALZ is the oldest and most established LGBTI organization in Zimbabwe, advocating for the welfare of LGBTI people and for non-discriminatory laws in Zimbabwe. In recent years other LGBTI groups have formed to focus on the specific needs of LBT people, often overlooked in male-dominated LGBTI organizations. New groups include Voice of the Voiceless (VOVO), Pakasipiti catering to lesbians, female bisexual and transgender people (LBT) and TREAT, focusing only on transgender people, have emerged more recently.

GALZ was formed in 1990, initially as a small club of mostly white, middle class professionals in Harare. It drew members from a men's party list and a women's cultural club. GALZ was among the first groups to engage with HIV/AIDS in Zimbabwe.

In 1995, GALZ challenged a ban from government ordering them not to participate at the annual ZIBF. During the ZIBF, Mugabe asserted:

"I find it extremely outrageous and repugnant to my human conscience that such immoral and repulsive organizations, like those of homosexuals, who offend both against the law of nature and the morals of religious beliefs espoused by our society, should have any advocates in our midst and elsewhere in the world."

This statement brought GALZ into the limelight with more LGBTI people finding out about its existence. Over time, the makeup of the organization changed and attracted a black community from urban townships. GALZ became a safe-haven for members to meet, establish friendships and freely express themselves. It also gave a black face to the struggles of sexual minorities in Zimbabwe, challenging views about homosexuality being 'unAfrican'.



The more government persecuted the LGBTI movement, the more organized the movement became, successfully and legally challenging government attempts to exclude them from public space and participation.

In 1996, GALZ successfully challenged the government ban and won the right to participate in all future ZIBF events. There was a second attempt to ban GALZ from exhibiting at ZIBF but this time GALZ took the Ministry of Home Affairs to court twice in the space of a week, recording a victory.

In 1999, against the wishes of the National Constitutional Assembly (NCA), GALZ participated in a parallel constitutional process led by the Constitutional Commission (CC). The NCA, an NGO pushing for a new constitutional order, comprised individual Zimbabweans, civic and human rights organizations, labour movements, students, youth, women's groups and churches.

The CC, a government-led initiative, was regarded as a mechanism to diffuse growing interest in the NCA process. GALZ made a written submission, and two formal presentations before the CC. During the second presentation, before

400 commissioners, four GALZ activists, Ska Ngwenya, Chesterfield Samba, Romeo Tshuma and Keith Goddard spoke about their lives and the need for LGBTI protection under the new Constitution.

Many Commissioners booed and heckled the group until Commissioners were restrained by the Chair. Following the Chair's intervention, LGBTI representatives were allowed to share their experiences with Commissioners. LGBTI concerns were, however, not reflected in the constitutional reforms. Despite this setback, the LGBTI movement continued to operate amidst government interference and the imposition of the Sodomy Law of 2006, passed to make any physical contact between males a criminal offence.

In 2012, computers and pamphlets from GALZ offices were confiscated, and a few days later, over forty GALZ members were arrested. GALZ chairperson, Martha Tholanah stood trial for operating the

organization without registration, in contravention of the law. The court ruled that GALZ materials be returned.

During this time, GALZ challenged Mugabe to focus on fixing Zimbabwe's economy instead of harassing sexual minorities. In recent years, government's anti-LGBTI human rights rhetoric has lost



New LGBTI organizations add to the diversity of LGBTI voices and groups in Zimbabwe, organizing specific groups and engaging with their needs and issues.

some of its potency, due to economic hardships that demand a focus on improving the country's economic situation. GALZ has, as a result, more recently been able to operate with minimal state and police intimidation.





strategies

used by LGBTI groups and allies

5



Among the known LGBTI groups are: GALZ which serves the interest of LGBTI people, counters homophobic legislation and has been influential in helping emerging LGBTI organizations establish in Southern Africa.

Pakasipiti was formed in 2011 to promote improved health services for lesbian, female bisexual and transgender people (LBT). Voice of the Voiceless (VOVO) was formed in 2013 and focuses on LBT people. Despite political differences relating to SOGI and relations between gay men and lesbian/transgender groups, organizations collaborate on common issues.

A VOVO key member mentioned TREAT, a new group dealing with transgender people only, but online research did not yield information on TREAT.

5.1 Collaborating with other human rights organizations

“The understanding that my struggle is your struggle [is what builds alliances].”

VOVO key member

“There is collaboration between such groups to a certain level. In some spaces there is forced collaboration because of donor-driven agendas; and in some instances there is support because the organizations believe in the human rights agenda. There has been collaboration when pushing a common agenda like women’s rights, state-sponsored homophobia and fear of persecution for being LGBTI.”

Pakasipiti key member

Human rights organizations that support LGBTI people’s social inclusion in Zimbabwe advance the human rights of LGBTI people through litigation, legal advice, awareness campaigns, research, training, and documenting LGBTI issues.

Over time, GALZ has engaged with broader human rights campaigns and champions, such as the NCA, and participating in a coalition of human rights groups to celebrate the 40th anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

“Internal politics affect the way in which collaborations work between groups especially the politics of gay men versus lesbian women and trans groups. It affects work in a negative way.”

Pakasipiti key member



As LGBTI organizations evaluate the best way to lobby for LGBTI human rights, the biggest threat remains fear of arrest and harassment from police and government.

GALZ also established links with Padare/ Enkundleni, a men’s gender forum that counters gender-based violence and does not restrict membership to heterosexual men only. GALZ was also a founder member of the Zimbabwe Human Rights NGO Forum (HRF), set up to assist victims of organized torture, and reporting on gross human rights violations committed by the State. GALZ continues to provide the HRF with reports relating

5.2 Wellbeing and Social Inclusion

To facilitate wellbeing and social inclusion of LGBTI people, LGBTI organizations use strategies such as law reform and improvement of LGBTI rights, although different strategies present different tensions.

At a macro-level, there is a difference in levels of visibility among the three known LGBTI organizations. Because GALZ has been visibly active in the public eye since the mid-1990s, VOVO and Pakasipiti have learnt from the backlashes faced by GALZ. As a result, these groups operate

to human rights violations against GALZ members and is also a member of the civil society group, Crisis in Zimbabwe.

In addition to its engagement with other human rights organizations, GALZ has created alliances with the WCC to reformulate theological education around HIV. Pakasipiti is working closely with Zimbabwe Lawyers for Human Rights (ZLHR) on LBT rights.

more ‘clandestinely’ or utilise spaces proffered by government through the Ministry of Health.

Because of this varied strategic approach, apart from the impact of GALZ, LGBTI strategies have remained relatively weak, and carry more weight in collaboration with other human rights organizations. The strategies of VOVO and Pakasipiti remain invisible to the broader public, or are overshadowed by the functions of the Ministry of Health.



5.3 Risks

As LGBTI organizations evaluate the best way to lobby for LGBTI human rights, the biggest threat remains fear of arrest and harassment from police and government. Chester Samba, current GALZ Director, noted that “the president himself is the law” and LGBTI people fear being caught

on the wrong side of the “law”. LGBTI activists have learnt how far they can push for their human rights to be upheld whilst avoiding being in conflict with the “law”.

5.4 Family

As LGBTI organizations continue to engage with key players to influence perceptions of LGBTI people, a strategic missing link has been revealed: the families of LGBTI people. Supportive family members could be strong assets in devising strategies for influencing attitudes. Families have kinship and communal influence, with the potential to positively affect communities’ perceptions of LGBTI human rights and fostering the social inclusion of LGBTI people.

GALZ initiated a programme for families called Parents, Families and Friends of Lesbians, Gays and Queer (PFLAGQ), currently operating in Harare with the hope of expanding nationally. PFLAGQ undertakes support group meetings for LGBTI families, conducts awareness campaigns, with the aim of getting families of LGBTI people to advocate for LGBTI human rights.

Families have kinship and communal influence, with the potential to positively affect communities’ perceptions of LGBTI human rights and fostering the social inclusion of LGBTI people.

the needs and experiences

of LGBTI people

6



LGBTI people understand social inclusion as the ability to be part of the socio-economic and political systems, being fully accepted and living an open LGBTI life. LGBTI participants noted the desire to feel fully part of society, accepted and involved in society, in a manner that allows them to enjoy full citizenship rights in Zimbabwe.

Being able to fully participate in all social spaces -- such as work, school, community, church and family -- without fear of discrimination, self-censorship or judgement featured as the overall theme regarding the needs and experiences of LGBTI people. LGBTI people remain unable to marry or adopt children.

6.1 Education and Spaces that Exclude LGBTI People

While there is no legal mechanism for excluding LGBTI people from access to education, school and tertiary education curricula do not engage with LGBTI human rights. There is no clear anti-

discrimination policy, and no known redress channel for LGBTI people who suffer discrimination at school or at work.

6.2 Opportunities for Change

With the predominant view of homosexuality as 'unAfrican', family structures often maintain a negative stance towards LGBTI family members. Because of ongoing homophobic stigma, families with LGBTI members are also at risk of being excluded from participating in community activities. Small shifts toward accepting and supporting LGBTI family members have become visible through PFLAGQ.

Despite overt and covert social exclusion, sport has been one area where LGBTI people have been welcome. LGBTI sportspeople have found spaces to raise awareness, using sport platforms to engage in community dialogue and document LGBTI violations. Pakasipiti has used sporting spaces as a point of contact for broader community engagement on SOGI.



LGBTI people have found some safety in online spaces where they feel able to express themselves and engage with other LGBTI people.

6.3 Arts and Media

In recent years, efforts to sensitize editors to LGBTI issues have shown that private media is more receptive, while state media remains hostile or, at best, indifferent.

LGBTI people have found some safety in online spaces where they feel able to express themselves and engage with other LGBTI people. Access to regional and global TV programmes have contributed to the normalization of LGBTI lives.



key potential non-LGBTI allies/

7





Engaging with families holds much potential for shifting attitudes in the family, their social and religious communities.

Key potential and existing allies include mainstream human rights NGOs and NGOs that undertake strategic rights-based litigation.

The possibility of working with women's rights and feminist organizations, especially for the newer groups that aim to support LBT women should be explored further. Other local feminist LBT groups include Katswe Sistahood.

In the religious sector the World Council of Churches (WCC) has been an ally. Incremental steps should be taken to build on gains made. Engaging with families also holds much potential for shifting attitudes in the family, their social and religious communities.

Relationships with public health providers are at an early stage, as are efforts to use sport as platform for engagement, and present further opportunities to open space for LGBTI people.

While engaging with politicians is difficult in this context, organizations would do well to identify 'friendly' and supportive politicians towards building new strategic relationships.

ways forward

8



The emergence of groups that put women at their centre hold the potential of ensuring women’s voices and experiences are heard in efforts to secure the human rights of LGBTI people.

Changing laws and policies does not necessarily result in broad-based social change. To reduce levels of discrimination against LGBTI people, strategic social change interventions that aim to change harmful attitudes and beliefs about LGBTI people are needed.

To this end, some promising practices emerged, including targeted engagement with families of LGBTI people to increase support and reduce the exclusion LGBTI people experience; with the added hope of families of LGBTI people becoming agents of positive change in their communities.

GALZ’s efforts in engaging with the religious sector is another promising strategy for integrating LGBTI people in religious bodies.

Together with human rights organizations involved in litigation, ongoing advocacy is required for changing discriminatory laws and policies from a human rights perspective. Collaborations to this end hold promise for future change. LGBTI groups lobbying for legal and policy change are encouraged to work in collaboration with other legal and human rights based organizations for advocacy towards intersectional engagement for change.

The mushrooming of smaller LGBT groups based on the needs and experiences of specific groups of LGBTI people is a positive development. More mainstream LGBTI organizations tend to be male-dominated. The emergence of groups that put women at their centre hold the potential of ensuring women’s voices and experiences are heard in efforts to secure the human rights of LGBTI people.

Working with media towards changing attitudes and beliefs is warranted as a strategy for changing the attitudes of media workers, and for them in turn to report on LGBTI human rights issues sensitively and from a human rights perspective.

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