

# YOUNG LGBTIQ AFRICANS:

## Survey Findings on Needs, Challenges and Priorities

### INTRODUCTION

Homosexuality is still criminalized in 73 countries around the world and five of these countries use the death penalty as a punishment for people caught engaging in homosexual practices. In every region of the world, transgender individuals face significant human rights violations. Even in countries where homosexuality has legal recognition, members of the LGBTIQ community still face systemic forms of discrimination and risk of violence. In Africa, homosexuality is often seen as a western import, with arguments of culture and religion used to deny LGBTIQ people the right to be who they are. Western based religious fundamentalists have been flocking to the continent of Africa to sow the seeds of hate against LGBTIQ people including creating a strong political push against their efforts to achieve equal rights. Young LGBTIQ Africans unfortunately bear the brunt of these developments in the continent. Culture and religion are often used to defend anti LGBTIQ sentiments and the guise of “protecting minors” becomes a proxy to further advance an anti-LGBTIQ agenda. This puts young people at a crossroad of having to choose between leading a life of secrecy, or face discrimination and violence. Additionally, they are denied access to comprehensive sexuality education, access to information on sexual health and life saving services.

### LEGAL CHALLENGES

Most of the laws in Africa that criminalize homosexuality are products of colonial rule and era. Some countries in the continent are beginning to strengthen their existing penal codes like in Nigeria with the Same Sex Marriage Prohibition Law and in Uganda with the Anti-Homosexuality Act. Other countries in the region have been reported to be exploring available opportunities to introduce similar laws that seek to further criminalize LGBTIQ individuals and gag any form of advocacy relating to LGBTIQ rights.

Even countries in the region like South Africa where LGBTIQ people are recognized under the law, there is still much violence targeting lesbian and bisexual women as well as transgender people, which can be attributed to societal stigma and discrimination. Lawyers who represent LGBTIQ individuals in court are often blackmailed, threatened and prevented from doing their jobs. The lack of legal representation coupled with the existence of laws that criminalize LGBTIQ people only help legitimize the discrimination and violence perpetrated by state and non-state actors.

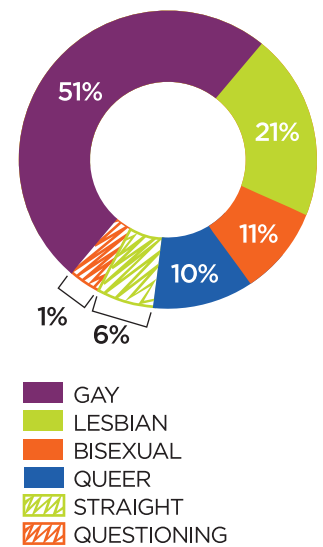
### VIOLENCE TARGETING LGBTIQ INDIVIDUALS

The grim reality is that when discriminatory laws are combined with the forces of religion and culture, it can lead to dangerous outcomes for the LGBTIQ communities in the region. There are several cases of violation against LGBTIQ individuals in the continent, which range from arbitrary arrests; rejection from home; discrimination in education, housing and employment; and experiencing violence including murder. Young LGBTIQ individuals who are unable to deal with these extreme situations are often left with the desperate option of fleeing their country and seeking refuge elsewhere.

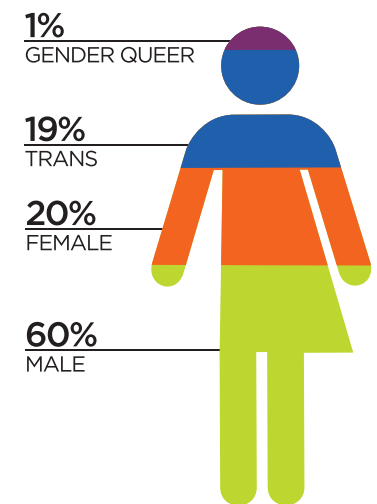
### LGBTIQ MOVEMENT IN AFRICA

There is a growing, vibrant, and resilient LGBTIQ movement in the continent that has achieved success with advancing the human rights of LGBTIQ people. In 2014, the African Commission of Human and People’s Rights passed a resolution condemning violence and human rights violations against the LGBTIQ community and in Botswana, one of the country’s leading LGBTIQ groups, LEGABIBO, recently won a court case demanding that their government officially recognize their organization. In a similar case in Kenya, the court judgment in favor of registering the National Gay and

### SEXUAL ORIENTATION



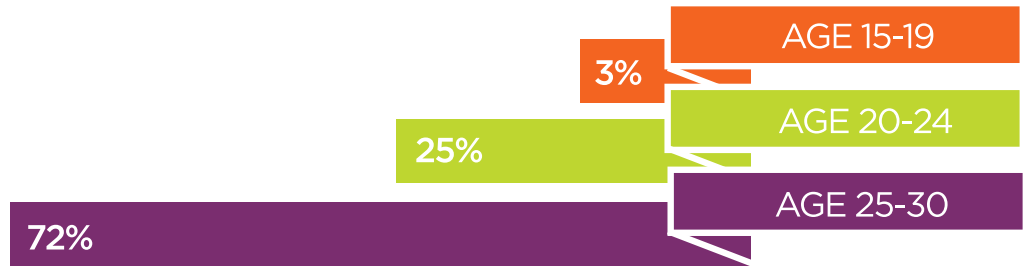
### GENDER



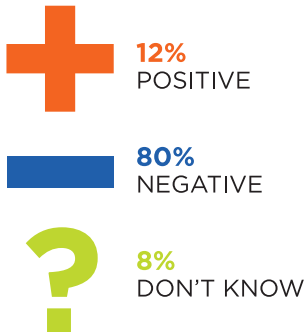
## INTERSEX VARIATIONS



## AGE RANGE OF RESPONDENTS



## HIV STATUS



Lesbian Human Rights Commission as a non-Governmental organization illustrates significant progress. In Uganda, activists recently won a court case challenging the Anti-Homosexuality Act on technical grounds and Mozambique and Seychelles recently decriminalized homosexuality. These important successes can be attributed to the tenacious and resilient work done by LGBTIQ activists across the continent.

Young LGBTIQ Africans are a critical part of the movement and in many instances lead organizations that are not necessarily youth focused but are at the forefront in the struggle for LGBTIQ rights in their countries. However, many times there are limited spaces within the LGBTIQ movement for youth to organize and elevate issues that make them particularly vulnerable. As part of the effort to sustain the work of the movement in Africa, it is imperative that young people are provided a platform, support, and opportunities to facilitate a successful representation within all aspects of LGBTIQ-led organizing in Africa.

### SURVEY

There is a growing number of vibrant and visible young activists within the LGBTIQ movement in Africa who often face challenges due to the lack of experience and opportunities made available to them. African Queer Youth Initiative is made up of and led by young activists within the movement who believe strongly in building a support network for young LGBTIQ Africans. In order to explore the dynamics among the youth and to elevate their voices within the movement, the African Queer Youth Initiative together with Advocates for Youth, conducted an anonymous survey among African LGBTIQ youth. The survey was administered online in April 2016 to spotlight the different challenges they face, highlight the common restrictions that affect their meaningful participation and involvement in the global LGBTIQ movement, and prioritize specific themes to

inform and support a Pan-African LGBTIQ youth-led movement.

### LIMITATIONS

The survey was not intended to be comprehensive in reach but to rather provide a starting point for gathering information and insight from African LGBTIQ young people able to access and respond to the survey. Under-documented LGBTIQ youth in Africa; limited/unavailable internet service; as well as the short time during which the survey was open limited participation, possibly in semi-rural and rural areas. In addition, the survey was available only in English and French, thereby limiting potential respondents as those speaking other languages were not able to participate.

Summarized below are the findings from the survey. The survey reached a total of 106 respondents in Africa and a limited number of those living in the diaspora.

### RESPONSES RELATED TO DISCRIMINATION, CHALLENGES, AND CONCERNS

*Respondents were asked to select the top three forms of discrimination that they have experienced. The top three forms of discrimination that were selected by participants are:*

1. Physical, Verbal and Emotional Abuse
2. Eviction from house, work and community
3. Rejection by family/clan, friends and from church

*Respondents were asked to select the top three challenges they face as an LGBTIQ youth and below are the findings:*

1. Intolerance
2. High rates of violence and persecution
3. Lack of connection to other LGBTIQ youth, safe space for LGBTIQ youth, friendly health services, sources of employment and lack of friendly social places.

Respondents were asked to select their primary needs and concerns as young LGBTIQ Africans. Findings listed below indicate the primary needs and concerns of respondents:

- Access to affordable health services and ability to live openly without fear and discrimination
- Mental health services and counseling support
- Access to human rights services and legal representation
- Access to sexual and reproductive health services
- Comprehensive sexuality education
- HIV/AIDS prevention, care, treatment and support
- Employment opportunities, scholarships and career mentorship
- Psychosocial support services
- Substance abuse, counseling and support
- Access and links to wider support system
- Access to human rights services and legal support
- Access to sexual and reproductive health services
- Comprehensive sexuality education
- HIV/AIDS prevention care and support
- Employment opportunities, scholarship and career mentorship for LGBTIQ youth
- Psychosocial support services for LGBTIQ youth
- Substance abuse counseling and support

In terms of advocacy, respondents selected the options below for what a youth movement in the region should prioritize:

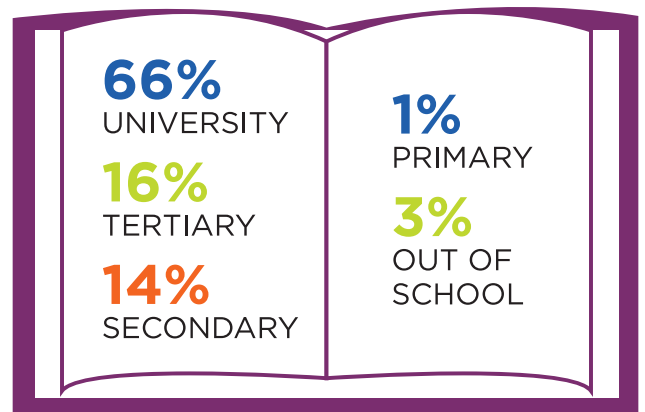
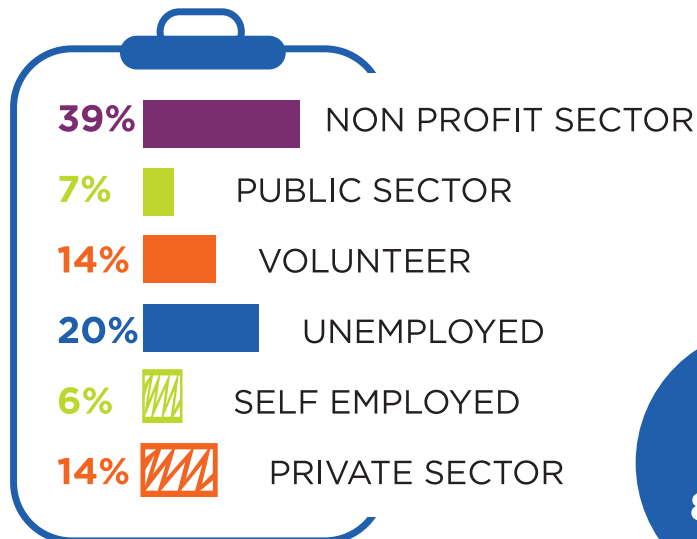
- Promote the leadership and involvement of young people in the development and realization of programs advocating for LGBTIQ rights
- Advocate for LGBTIQ youth inclusion in the design and implementation of LGBTIQ and mainstream youth programs
- Facilitate dialogue and networking between LGBTIQ youth and adult-led organizations on key issues
- Advocate for LGBTIQ youth representation within the national and continental level advisory committees and working groups related to LGBTQ rights

### RESPONSES RELATED TO PRIORITIES, ADVOCACY, AND ENGAGEMENT IN THE MOVEMENT

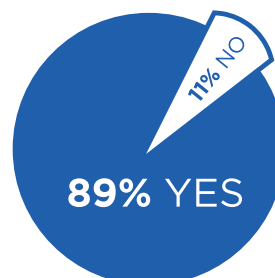
Respondents were asked to select specific issues a youth movement should prioritize. Below are the issues selected by respondents:

- Access to affordable health care services for LGBTIQ youth without fear of stigma and discrimination
- Mental Health services and counseling support for LGBTIQ youth
- Ability for LGBTIQ youth to live openly without fear of discrimination and/or violence

## EMPLOYMENT STATUS



## LEVEL OF EDUCATION



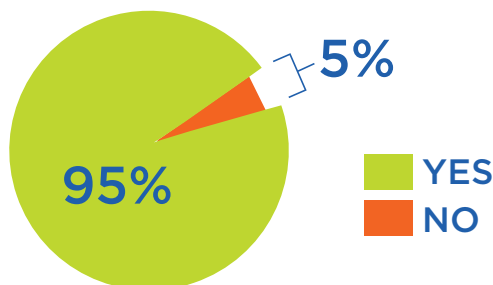
## OPEN ABOUT LGBTI IDENTITY

- Secure commitments to represent African LGBTIQ youth in human rights settings & other LGBTIQ related conferences & networking events around the world
- Strengthen the involvement and commitment of decision makers to address issues of LGBTIQ young people's involvement and participation in advocacy
- Create and strengthen networks of LGBTIQ youth-led and LGBTIQ youth-serving organizations at sub-regional and national levels

### NEXT STEPS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

It is clear that there is an emerging force of vibrant and intelligent young people in the LGBTIQ movement in Africa, which presents a lot of opportunities for the movement. To ensure sustainability and expansion of the movement, investments and support for young people within the movement and those willing to be a part of it, must be prioritized. The idea that young people lack the ability to define their sexuality or are being recruited into homosexuality is an argument the opposition often use to deny LGBTIQ young people access to comprehensive sexuality education and access to life saving services. Young people are creative and very resourceful. The LGBTIQ movement must not neglect the voices of these young people who are demanding to be heard. As findings from this survey have revealed, these LGBTIQ young people care about the movement and need to be supported. Specific recommendations based on findings from this survey include:

## WILLING TO BE PART OF A MOVEMENT



- Recognize and prioritize the needs of LGBTIQ young people in Africa
- Invest in leadership and capacity building for young LGBTIQ Africans
- Promote comprehensive sexuality education for LGBTIQ young people in Africa
- Ensure that young people who speak languages other than English or French are supported
- Create opportunities and support for youth voices to be heard at high level spaces like the African Commission on Human and People's Rights and the United Nations
- Set up specific funds for LGBTIQ youth organizations and young human right defenders
- Support a broader LGBTIQ human rights approach for young people in Africa other than through HIV/AIDS.

If you are interested in supporting and/or working with the African Queer Youth Initiative, please e-mail: [queeryouthia@gmail.com](mailto:queeryouthia@gmail.com)