



#WeBelongAfrica

South-South learning event for human rights activists and allies in complex socio-political environments to strengthen support for sexual and gender minorities in Francophone sub-Saharan Africa

Report

19-21 June 2024

Abidjan, Côte d'Ivoire

#WeBelongAfrica brings together multiple initiatives that enable inclusive, just, affirming, safe, productive and fulfilling lives for all people in Africa, irrespective of sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression or sex characteristics, and irrespective of HIV status or risk.

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Background and justification

An anti-gender campaign is spreading across Africa. This campaign encompasses a diverse set of social and political actors who believe in the existence of a "gender theory" and have turned it into a public issue (Kuhar and Paternotte, 2017). The anti-gender movement develops discourse and actions opposing the concept of gender and gender studies, in response to the social, political and legal transformations achieved through the struggles of feminists and sexual minorities (Awondo et al, 2023). Anti-gender opposition manifests itself in various ways across the continent, from campaigns against access to safe abortion to efforts aimed at strengthening existing laws that criminalize sexual and gender minorities.

The inclusion of LGBTQI+ people in Sub-Saharan Africa faces persistent challenges, including the following:

- Social norms remain conservative, and various political actors take advantage of this to oppose advances in human rights or to roll back measures to protect human rights that have been adopted.
- Conservative and far-right organizations such as the extremist Christian organization, the World Congress of Families - among many others - actively promote anti-LGBTQI+ rhetoric in African countries, privileging conservative and cis-heteronormative ideals of family values based on Christian doctrine and pushing for the legislation of these values to slander LGBTQI+ people.
- Growing hostility to the promotion of equal rights for all, especially LGBTQI+ people.
- Same-sex relationships are still criminalized in several countries in the region.
- LGBTQI+ people continue to suffer discrimination and abuse such as blackmail and violent assaults.
- The dominant ideologies of many citizens in these countries assert that homosexuality and gender diversity are Western and "un-African" concepts.
- Religious doctrine and cultural norms continue to fuel anti-LGBTQI+ rhetoric in these countries.

In early 2023, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), in collaboration with the Human Rights Campaign, organized a workshop with activists and allies from challenging countries in English-speaking Africa, regarding the inclusion of sexual and gender minorities, to understand the anti-gender campaign in the sub-Saharan African region, and to find ways to respond effectively and sustainably.

The 2023 workshop brought together 25 LGBTQI+ activists, allies and experts from seven English-speaking African countries. This year, UNDP has therefore organized a similar workshop with the participation of activists and allies from French-speaking countries, drawing on the lessons learned from the 2023 workshop and catalyzing collective efforts to combat the anti-gender movement in sub-Saharan Africa.

On 19-21 June 2024, UNDP organized a 2.5-day workshop on these issues in collaboration with Fierté Afrique Francophone (FAF) - a network of LGBTQI+ organizations in Francophone Africa. The first two days brought together 32 participants, mixing LGBTQI+ and HIV advocates with government and/or UN allies from eight francophone countries. On the third day, a half-day session enabled civil society representatives to meet alone to discuss and develop plans for mutual support and networking across borders.

The event was organized as part of UNDP's Inclusive Governance Initiative (IGI), a regional project that aims to help countries in the Sub-Saharan African region become increasingly accountable to and inclusive of their entire population, including sexual and gender minorities

- who are often particularly marginalized and excluded. This will help improve laws and policies, make public services more responsive, and establish social norms that affirm the rights and inclusion of all, including sexual and gender minorities.

Workshop objectives

1. Provide a South-South learning platform to exchange best practices and lessons learned in anticipating, understanding, responding to and combating anti-rights and anti-LGBTQI+ movements in French-speaking African countries with difficult political environments.
2. Create alliances and solidarity networks within national delegations and at regional level, to overcome difficulties and support LGBTQI+ people in these countries. Strengthen the network of LGBTQI+ activists who defend human rights and the inclusion of LGBTQI+ people, and equip them with concrete tools to help them counter or neutralize opposition groups and other anti-LGBTQI+ narratives.
3. Identify key priorities and formulate strategies to advance the rights of LGBTQI+ people while combating growing anti-LGBTQI+ sentiment and actions in their countries.
4. Facilitate meaningful interactions between LGBTQI+ civil society representatives.
5. Amplify positive stories and testimonials about progress in promoting LGBTQI+ law reform and the repeal of laws criminalizing consensual same-sex relationships and/or diverse gender expressions and identities.

Results achieved

1. Improved capacity and understanding of key legal and public policy issues affecting the lives of LGBTQI+ people in complex environments.
2. A better understanding of the forces driving the opposition and their strategies, including the anti-gender/LGBTQI+ movement.
3. A better understanding of the skills, knowledge and resources needed to strengthen engagement and coalition-building to counter opposition to LGBTQI+ inclusion and gender diversity.
4. Draft national plans (for each country delegation) and a draft multi-country plan (for French-speaking Africa), outlining priority actions to resist and respond to anti-LGBTQI+ forces.

Day 1

Welcome and introduction

Mr Adrien Kouassi from UNDP Cote d'Ivoire expressed his delight at the presence of participants from so many different backgrounds, and gave greetings from Ms Flore and her Programme Director, and thanked Fierté Afrique Francophone (FAF) and UNAIDS. He also recalled that the leaders of the countries present in the room had ratified by a majority laws that protect human rights and those of LGBTQI+ people by ricochet, so they must have their rights respected as human beings. Finally, he expressed the hope that, at the end of the session, each participant would return home with stronger tools and arguments to continue the work effectively.

Mr Carlos Idibouo, representing the FAF, welcomed all participants to the Land of Eburnia. He recalled that a great deal of work had been carried out since the beginning of the year with

the various stakeholders, and that we should congratulate ourselves on the work carried out with the IGI project and FAF's activities. This has enabled us to exchange views with decision-makers in the various countries, and to see their positions with a view to better orienting the various advocacy axes. He also sounded the alarm about the anti-gender conference to be held in Côte d'Ivoire, which could undermine all the work done since the beginning. He proposed that we reflect on the actions we need to take to avoid falling victim to this conference, which generally aims to strengthen the rights of LGBTQI+ people in the countries where it is held.

Mr Joseph Messinga, permanent secretary of the FAF, also thanked the session participants and the UNDP, which also supports the LGBTQI+ community. He also recalled that some French-speaking African countries have decided to condemn the LGBTQI+ population, such as Senegal, Gabon, Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), etc., and that we must be careful so that other countries are not contaminated. He also noted the lack of funding in French-speaking countries for the fight against homophobia.

Mr Yapi Léonce of the Conseil National des Droits de l'Homme (CNDH) Côte d'Ivoire began his remarks with greetings and then presented his director's apologies as she was out of the country. He was delighted to have been associated with this activity, which will provide a South-South learning platform to build alliances and support LGBTQI+ people despite the non-existence of mechanisms to take charge of their rights. He also recalled that the CNDH's mandate does not include discrimination, and that it carries out activities to combat human rights violations against LGBTQI+ people. He proposed that exchange frameworks be organized with parliamentarians and decision-makers, with the aim of creating favourable laws for LGBTQI+ populations. He also welcomed this exchange framework as it will enable sexual and gender minorities and their human rights defenders to be awakened and trained. He reaffirmed the CNDH's support for the LGBTQI+ population. Finally, he declared the workshop open.

This was followed by a session introducing the workshop participants. The idea was to reach out to strangers and gather information about them, and during the personal presentation, to bring out that information.

This was followed by a presentation by Mr Bakary Dosso of the UNDSS for the security briefing. He provided information on demographics and geography, not forgetting the security situation in Côte d'Ivoire. He also recalled that the environment is calm but unpredictable. He listed common types of aggression, which are physical and often cyber-criminal. He also gave a list of reference clinics in the United Nations, and advised participants to use YANGO or UBER cabs to get around. Additionally, he advised participants to be careful with valuables, and to watch out for scammers and cyber criminals. He asked people to avoid displaying their LGBTQI+ sexual orientation, as there are no legal provisions to protect this population in Côte d'Ivoire. He asked everyone to use common sense when communicating with others. Finally, he advised everyone to remain calm in all situations, and gave emergency contacts.

Understand national contexts and the landscape of opposition movements

The first session aimed to understand national contexts and the landscape of opposition movements. In a panel discussion, a CSO representative presented the country context of anti-gender activities and how they are responding. The speakers were asked to answer the following questions:

1. What are the 2 or 3 challenges encountered in promoting the rights and inclusion of LGBTQI+ people?
2. What are the 2 or 3 opportunities to better promote the rights and inclusion of LGBTQI+ people?

The session was divided into two parts, and the first countries to take part were Côte d'Ivoire, DRC, Gabon and Congo-Brazzaville.

Côte d'ivoire

There is no law criminalizing homosexuality in Côte d'Ivoire. However, what was worrying was the arrival of the anti-gender conference in Côte d'Ivoire, their philosophy and operating mechanisms were unknown, not to mention the faces of their leaders and managers. It should also be noted that they spend a lot of money on their activities. However, their activities are free of charge, which means that it is easy to get to know them, understand their activities and talk to their leaders. Nevertheless, a law was proposed which stipulated that no one should be discriminated against regardless of nature, way of being or sexual orientation, which created a political and religious furore that exacerbated insecurity in the community. In the end, sexual orientation was removed from the article. He also recalled that the advent of the IGI project facilitates collaboration with the CNDH, which helps open certain doors and enables effective advocacy for the rights of LGBTQI+ people.

Challenges:

Difficulties were noted with transgender people's identity documents, causing problems with diplomas, house rentals, access to employment and education, not to mention the issue of intersex people.

DRC

The LGBTQI+ issue is not taboo, but it is interpreted differently. However, there are organizations campaigning for the well-being of this population, who are invited to take part in many religious and public health debates. In addition, the situation is critical at the moment, with a bill to criminalize LGBTQI+ people on the table, and the country's strong Christian leanings can lead to arbitrary acts, not to mention a lack of public awareness about sexual minority groups, which hinders minority rights.

Challenges:

- Lack of state rights solutions for minority groups.
- Lack of awareness programmes on the issue of promoting the rights of LGBTQI+ people.
- The country has noted (rejected) the UPR recommendations without taking action, and on the ground there is still violence against LGBTQI+ people, with arbitrary judgments.

Opportunities:

- Growing commitment and open-mindedness of young activists.
- Collaboration with international and civil society organizations.
- The openness of the population to messages about sexual and gender minorities.
- Open-mindedness on the part of the DRC's CNDH, which accepts the local LGBTQI+ community and the issue is open within their services, not to mention advocacy.

Gabon

- Following the coup d'état, the environment is not favorable. The current context is bad.

Challenges:

- Environment resistant to the decriminalization of LGBTQI+ people.
- The new leaders have put the issue of homosexuality on the agenda by proposing to criminalize homosexuality, with religious leaders also motivating this action.
- Some LGBTQI+ activists have resigned in the face of the psychosis created by the new regime.

Opportunities:

- The support of international organizations represented in the country that help in the field of advocacy.
- Awareness-raising and training for human rights defenders.
- Training of health workers in health centers in community-based HIV care.

Congo-Brazzaville

The environment is non-criminalizing; there is no official condemnatory discourse from the government. The process of de-Westernization, by contextualizing actions according to the realities of the Congo, is a vital one. We need to demonstrate that these practices, namely homosexuality, have always existed in Africa, and prove that they are not imported from the West. Promote African identities and abandon the use of the acronym LGBTQI+.

Challenges:

- Demonstrated to society the existence of homosexuality before colonization.
- Show the authorities that people's actions will not jeopardize their power.

Opportunities:

- Reducing media aggression.
- Working with Congo's CNDH.
- The government is not homophobic.
- The organization of a de-Westernization conference sponsored by the CNLSE.

Senegal

Challenges:

- A predominantly Muslim country with an article that criminalizes unnatural acts. It is ambiguous and equated with homosexuality.
- There are arbitrary arrests and their phones are searched.
- Scarce financial resources, especially for LBT.
- Non-representation of LGBTQI+ people in decision-making bodies.
- The programmes have exposed community leaders without providing them with protection and support measures, which has resulted in activists going into exile.

Opportunities:

- Inclusion of associations in regional and international networks.
- Collaboration with health programmes such as the Fonds National.
- Strengthening advocacy because there is a new government.
- The creation of a pool of lawyers to defend the rights of people.

Mali

Challenges:

- The very negative religious context towards the LGBTQI+ population with the advent of pseudo activists.
- Although there are no laws directly criminalizing LGBTQI+ people, there are laws that are arbitrarily used to condemn sexual and gender minorities.
- Renewal of the penal code. The constitution is being redrafted and there are rumors that there will be laws criminalizing LGBTQI+ people.
- There are very few allies in Mali, and institutions are afraid to open up to LGBTQI+ associations, so the pleas and lobbying they do get no response.

Opportunities:

- The presence of identity organizations and movements is growing, with the existence today of identity associations fighting for the well-being of people.
- Assistance and technical support for organizations.
- Existing consultation frameworks.
- Exchange proposal between Côte d'Ivoire's CNDH and that of Mali.

Burundi

Challenges:

- Burundi was the first country in French-speaking Africa to criminalize homosexuality, with limited shared analysis on the issue.
- The presence of the evangelical movement, which favours the criminalization of homosexuality, accompanied by sovereignist movements using simplistic terms to convince the population, using decolonization and pan-Africanism as arguments.
- Penalizing speeches by decision-makers creates psychosis in the community.
- The trust and legitimacy of civil society called into question by public authorities, with the restriction of civic spaces.

Opportunities:

- Anchoring individual belonging in communities.
- Invest in the strategic visibility of issues of inclusion with indigenous identities by highlighting our local identities and cultural and creative industries.
- Agenda 2063, with its objectives and administrative and political measures, into which we must integrate without forgetting to redefine national development programmes.

Togo

Challenges:

- The legal context criminalizes homosexuals with arbitrary arrests, but there is a plea to improve the environment.

- Associations may not register with the LGBTQI+ designation.
- The LGBTQI+ movement needs to be federated.
- The absence of a framework for collaboration between identity associations.
- Influencers on social networks incite the population to hate the LGBTQI+ population, which weakens the activities of associations.
- The difficulty of documenting cases of GBV.

Opportunities:

- Support from technical and partners.
- Advance with the Ministry of Health on the recognition of MSM and trans people in the national strategic plan.

Cameroon

Challenges:

- The legal context discriminates against and condemns the LGBTQI+ community, leading to arbitrary arrests and GBV.
- The confusion between homosexuality and transidentity.
- Weaknesses in funding for trans people.
- The legal non-recognition of the third gender.

Opportunities:

- A strong presence of identity NGOs, even if they are not registered as LGBTQI+, with some 40 organizations.
- The renewal and organization of presidential elections, which could promote advocacy.
- Use positive community role models to help advocate with the population.
- Develop a personal and organizational safety plan.
- Networking to minimize risk.
- Analyzing intergenerational issues in the search for balance.
- Ensuring the retirement of former leaders.
- Key population networks absorb associations.
- Think about highlighting actions that will be carried out by the community and for the community in order to touch the sensibilities of our parents.
- Question the LGBTQI+ movement and analyze actions and strategies and use our rules to protect ourselves.
- Are elections an opportunity or a danger? A call for caution.
- Using holy books to protect LGBTQI+ people too.

Panel discussion summaries

Lessons learned and key strategies (1): Identify and engage with allies (e.g. human rights institutions such as NHRCs, HIV/AIDS programmes, police, UN, development cooperation partners, etc.)

- Identifying allies.

- The strategy for reaching out to families, and finding channels for communicating with them.
- Using art (music, theater, film) as a strategy.
- Use of the media with journalists who produce positive articles.
- The use of family privileges with relatives well placed in the government while putting forward their opportunities.
- Identifying people in institutions who can help and support the community.
- Carry out actions such as festive evenings by inviting diplomatic missions. Use parents to touch the CNDH.
- Use HIV associations as allies, supporting each other.
- Differentiating between allies of the heart and allies of interest.
- Use the CNDH's institutional presence to invite other decision-makers.
- Use of subtle themes such as gender minorities to invite intuitions to activities.
- Avoid knee-jerk reactions and confrontations, try to calm things down and lobby downstream.
- Find one or more allies among parliamentarians to mobilize others for activities.
- Carry out studies to obtain good information on the community for lobbying purposes.
- Organization of LILO (looking in looking out) activities.
- Review of the legal framework with studies to better understand the realities of LGBTQI+ people.
- Using the HIV approach with training sessions including the LGBTQI+ issue, which helped identify LGBTQI+ allies.
- Organize workshops with parliamentarians and magistrates, not forgetting the Ministry of Justice and Human Rights.
- The Ministry of Justice was highlighted for all activities.
- Police high commissioners trained on LGBTQI+ issues.
- Identify supportive people during training sessions and use them as allies.

Lessons learned and key strategies (2): Engaging with parliamentarians, heads of government and key public sector ministries

- The use of health as an argument, given that health puts everyone in agreement; this factor has facilitated inclusion, especially through HIV.
- The use of key populations has made things easier, as national strategic plans present key populations as vulnerable, and LGBTQI+ populations are among them.
- The national dialogue with the Minister of Justice and parliamentarians, with key populations.
- The creation of identity-based organizations with HIV coverage; this allowed these associations to grow and enabled the organizations to become legalized.
- The implementation of a workshop with religious leaders, where texts from holy books were used to advance lobbying efforts.
- Advocacy for journalists with training on the LGBTQI+ community to ensure inclusive writing.
- Develop a support mechanism for homosexual children, as parents are not really involved.
- Meeting with the authorities to make the case with the chairman of the National Assembly committee.

- Development of a rationale to support capacity-building sessions for parliamentarians in the provinces.

Lessons learned and key strategies (3): Influencing behavior change - hearts, minds and social norms

- Organize testimonial activities to appeal to the sensitivities of the families of rejected persons and call for the protection of their children.
- Coaching community members to convey inclusive messages in the media.
- Use of friendly parents for family mediation to help LGBTQI+ children reintegrate into society as victims of family rejection.
- Educate LGBTQI+ populations to set a good example and behave well in order to attract public empathy and reduce problems of stigmatization and discrimination.
- Training for journalists.
- Organization of panel discussions with the LGBTQI+ community on television.
- Organization of training workshops for traditional chiefs on LGBTQI+ issues.
- Magistrate champion training to help better manage cases of GBV.
- Using the CNDH to advocate and facilitate the inclusion of LGBTQI+ populations.
- Capacity building for TV and radio presenters and managers to prevent media abuse.

Day 2

Lessons learned and key strategies (4): Application of international law in domestic courts

- Using health as an argument for lobbying.
- The role of national institutions such as the CNDH are services to be used for advocacy, not forgetting advocacy at the level of the supervisory ministries and the state.
- Conduct analyses with special rapporteurs, who are independent experts who give an independent opinion without interference, which means they are often listened to more than the United Nations.
- Use the African Commission on Human Rights to lobby African countries, which could put pressure on states.
- Prioritize knowledge of international appeal procedures, and take the matter to international bodies at the right time and with the right arguments, knowing the allies who could support us.
- Obtain the informed consent of the people whose cases will be documented, not forgetting the choice of the right allies.
- Emphasize economic arguments for advocacy in the states, while demonstrating their benefits.
- Good morals are evolving traditions, and we need to use this argument to show that LGBTQI+ people do not obstruct good morals, and we need to show that good morals change according to geographical location.
- Find the right lawyer to make a good case.
- Focus on very important, emblematic cases that need to be documented and that can be used for advocacy.
- Prioritize knowledge of laws and international conventions to be used for advocacy and recourse.

Group work: Participants were in small national working groups to map their allies and identify the groups and networks they want to involve in the future. Reporting back to the group focused on the similarities and differences between national contexts, and discussion of how ideas from one country can be applied to another.

(See country presentations in Appendices)

Day 3

The meeting on Day 3 took place solely between civil society organizations. The aim of this meeting was to make a diagnosis of all the actions carried out by the FAF over the past four years, and to draw up recommendations with the aim of perfecting future actions, but above all to have a positive impact on the French-speaking LGBTQI+ environment in Africa.

Mr Carlos Idibouo took the floor and set the scene by recalling that although they had worked hard to put in place a board of directors representative of the different genders of the LGBTQI+ movement in French-speaking Africa, it should be pointed out that since its mandate, the Fierté Afrique Francophone board has only held two meetings. This is a serious problem, as for a regional network to function properly, the board and executive management must be very active. As Co-Chairman of FAF, he cannot help but wonder why such laxity. Despite individual exchanges with board members, the situation has not improved. A mediation mechanism will have to be set up to remedy the situation as soon as possible.

Joseph then recalled that the FAF had no strategic plan, and the expectations of the network's organizations were not known. He therefore gave the floor to each country, and the following recommendations emerged.

Country recommendations to the FAF

Gabon

- That FAF pay particular attention to the situation of the two associations working with the LGBTQI+ target group, especially HUMANITUS, which is very much involved in human rights issues, and would therefore be well advised to include it among FAF's members.
- The FAF should also consider Gabon for the organization of sub-regional conferences and workshops because Gabon is young on LGBTQI+ issues.
- Help and support Gabon in its political communications strategies by giving it access to a strong pan-African and international network of human rights activists.
- The FAF could help to put pressure on the Gabonese health system so that it can put everything in place for PrEP supplies, or facilitate collaborations with other FAF member associations.
- Strengthen capacities in the field of advocacy and help Gabon's structures to have better strategies for approaching partners.
- The inclusion of members of the LGBTQI+ community of Gabon in the members of Pride Africa Francophone.

Cameroon

- Rethink the fight; take a break to think in concert to take into account the realities of each country.
- Facilitate the mobilization and reallocation of funding to member organizations.

- Set up a monitoring/reporting system and clear denunciation of sub-regional violence and violations.
- Support local organizations in advocacy.
- Focus activities by thematic area, without leaving any community out.
- Set up South-South learning sessions for young activists and movement pioneers to facilitate intergenerational transfers.
- Set up leadership programmes.
- Set up a community watch system to anticipate potential conflict problems and better meet the network's needs and expectations.
- Ensure that community members are represented on the network's coordinating bodies.

Mali

- Organize a workshop to exchange ideas and draw up a strategic plan for French-speaking Africa.
- Set up a security plan and warning system for French-speaking Africa.
- Advocate the de-Westernization of homosexuality in French-speaking Africa.
- Set up an official FAF membership system.
- Lobby the NHRCs for synergy of action between the NHRCs of all FAF member countries.
- Setting up a system for managing and monitoring GBV victims between FAF member countries.

DRC

- That FAF offers training through workshops and other capacity-building opportunities to help organizations better respond to community needs.
- Promote mutual support and solidarity between FAF member organizations.
- FAF needs to advocate more effectively, making the community's voice heard more loudly.
- Promote international dialogue to positively change the community's perception of sexual and gender minorities.
- Sharing resources and best practices, so that organizations can benefit from exchanges, resources and experiences to strengthen their actions and programmes.

Congo-Brazzaville

- Strengthening the women's movement for sexual and gender minorities through experience-sharing courses, training in associative life, governance and leadership.
- Take into account the de-Westernization strategy approach in the fight against violence and discrimination based on SOGI in French-speaking Africa (decolonization).
- Support Congolese movements in mobilizing funds.
- Produce anthropological, sociological, historical and biological evidence on MSG in Africa.
- Facilitate the BUJUMBURA-BRAZZAVILLE-ABIDJAN cultural bridge.
- Promote our living legends and pay tribute to the dead.

Togo

- Disseminate the network's normative documents to member CSOs for greater ownership.
- Build the capacity of member CSOs through an organizational diagnosis of members.
- Promote the work of member CSOs.
- Set up an emergency fund that French-speaking activists can mobilize as needed.

Cote d'ivoire

- Review the role and interest of member organizations by establishing a close link between member organizations, the Board and the Board of Directors, so that they feel more involved in the running of the FAF and motivate organizations that are not yet members.
- Improve the FAF's communication system to make it more inclusive.
- Have specific programmes for LBQ women, who are more or less a weak link in the LGBTQI+ acronym.

Senegal

- Draw up a strategic plan and procedure manual.
- Include more activities for LGBTQ+ girls and women.
- Organize exchange workshops between countries.
- Create a regional watch and alert committee.
- Help countries mobilize resources.

The participants were then asked to give their wishes as to what they would like to see the FAF achieve by 2030, and the recommendations that emerged were as follows:

- Research and cartographic documentation to obtain authentic evidence that will enable them to better orient advocacy actions.
- Promote financial autonomy by offering vocational training in entrepreneurship and the management of small and medium-sized businesses.
- FAF to professionalize LGBTQI+ activism.
- That the FAF network be extended to all the French-speaking nations of Africa.
- FAF to develop strategies for strategic contracts with politicians.
- That FAF becomes a strong, powerful network capable of granting funding to French-speaking LGBTQI+ organizations.
- That the FAF work to decriminalize homosexuality in all French-speaking African countries.
- That the FAF has a permanent fund, a reinforced and seasoned staff.
- That there is real implementation in the French-speaking world and greater influence in international advocacy.
- That FAF organizes an annual regional conference/learning workshop.
- That the FAF organizes a general meeting of the LGBTQI+ movement in French-speaking Africa and has the necessary resources to follow up on the recommendations.
- FAF to carry out organizational diagnostics of its member CSOs and propose a funded strengthening plan.
- That FAF has acquired an influential status in every French-speaking African country in the human rights sector, particularly for people from the LGBTQI+ community.

Appendices

Appendix 1: Country action plans

Here is a more detailed analysis of the strategies, challenges and opportunities identified by each country during the workshop:

Togo

- **Challenges:** Limited identification of key allies and champions; need to improve security planning for activists and organizations.
- **Opportunities:** Opportunity to capitalize on cultural values favouring equality; collaboration with UN agencies and regional networks.
- **Key strategies:** Progressive interpretation of the national constitution regarding non-discrimination and dignity; engagement of new allies such as the CNDH and international donors.

Mali

- **Challenges:** Cultural resistance to LGBTQI+ issues, influence of religious leaders and unclear legal frameworks.
- **Opportunities:** Existing allies such as CCM, PTF and UNAIDS; advocacy through the media and international support networks.
- **Key strategies:** Decolonize perspectives on LGBTQI+ issues by revisiting pre-colonial cultural narratives; engage political decision-makers and religious leaders in constructive dialogue; develop targeted media campaigns.

Gabon

- **Défis :** Le dogmatisme religieux, l'utilisation abusive des questions LGBTQI+ à des fins politiques et la désinformation dans les médias sociaux.
- **Opportunités :** Soutien des agences de l'ONU, des institutions nationales comme le CCM et le PNLS, et des alliés influents dans le secteur de la santé.
- **Stratégies clés :** Campagnes de sensibilisation dans les médias, renforcement des capacités des agents de santé communautaires LGBTQI+ et collaboration avec les ambassades pour un soutien diplomatique.

Senegal

- **Challenges:** Lack of inclusion of LBQ women in health programmes, poor coordination within the LGBTQI+ movement and media bias towards LGBTQI+ issues.
- **Opportunities:** Artistic means such as music and theater for advocacy; strong existing relationships with health organizations such as the Global Fund and FHI360.
- **Key strategies:** Collaborate with media professionals for unbiased reporting, conduct anthropological research on LGBTQI+ history and sensitize law enforcement to SOGIE issues.

Burundi

- **Challenges:** Hostile legal and political environment, limited funding and weak local capacity for sustained advocacy efforts.
- **Opportunities:** Growing support from regional networks and emerging alliances within civil society.

- **Key strategies:** Strengthen organizational safety frameworks, improve collaboration between organizations and advocate policy reforms to protect LGBTQI+ rights.

Côte d'Ivoire

- **Challenges:** Legal ambiguities in non-discrimination clauses, limited media involvement in LGBTQI+ rights advocacy and problems accessing health services.
- **Opportunities:** Existing collaboration with CNDH and international organizations such as UNDP and UNAIDS.
- **Key strategies:** Develop public education through collaborations with the media, work with religious and traditional leaders for inclusive dialogue, and advocate for policy amendments to cover all marginalized groups.

Cameroon

- **Challenges:** Restrictive laws criminalizing LGBTQI+ identities, lack of funding and confusion around key populations in health programmes.
- **Opportunities:** Structured LGBTQI+ networks and partnerships with global funders such as PEPFAR and the Global Fund.
- **Key strategies:** Launch human rights education campaigns, train journalists for fairer coverage of LGBTQI+ issues and strengthen collaboration between civil society and policymakers.

Congo-Brazzaville

- **Challenges:** Disinformation, limited scientific evidence to counter anti-LGBTQI+ rhetoric and insufficient funding for advocacy.
- **Opportunities:** Positive government stance, existing support from institutions such as CNLSE and UNAIDS.
- **Key strategies:** Promote culturally-rooted advocacy strategies, organize conferences on decolonization and strengthen LGBTQI+ women's leadership movements.

Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC)

- **Challenges:** Lack of political support, minimal representation in legal frameworks and misinformation campaigns.
- **Opportunities:** Existing collaboration with CNDH, Global Fund support and committed youth movements.
- **Key strategies:** Creating safe spaces for LGBTQI+ people, lobbying legislators and fostering intercultural dialogue to reduce stigmatization.

Main cross-country recommendations:

- **Policy advocacy:** Develop context-specific advocacy strategies targeting legal reform and policy change.
- **Community empowerment:** Building the capacity of grassroots organizations through funding and technical support.
- **Media engagement:** Train journalists and influencers in sensitive coverage of LGBTQI+ issues.
- **Cultural reframing:** Using cultural narratives and historical perspectives to challenge discriminatory norms.
- **Safety planning:** Develop robust safety protocols for activists operating in hostile environments.

Appendix 2: Evaluation

In June 2024, a diverse group of human rights activists and advocates from nine French-speaking countries gathered in Abidjan for a pivotal South-South cooperation workshop. The aim was to exchange experiences and strategies and strengthen collaboration between organizations defending human rights and equality.

The participants arrived with high expectations. They wanted to identify key allies and champions in Côte d'Ivoire, learn from the experience of other countries and engage in constructive dialogue with UN mechanisms. Many hoped that the workshop would strengthen the regional network, share strategies for creating safer environments for marginalized communities and inspire effective advocacy approaches.

Throughout the two-day event, the workshop effectively achieved its objectives. Sessions were interactive, with open and honest discussions despite the difficult contexts some participants face in their home countries. Each delegation shared its realities and strategic approaches, resulting in an enriching exchange of knowledge. Collaborative action plans were drawn up, highlighting how shared strategies could be adapted to different national contexts.

The most beneficial aspects cited were the diversity of participants, the sharing of strategies from countries such as Congo-Brazzaville, and the collaborative development of action plans. The contextual approaches to advocacy and informal lobbying experiences shared, in particular the case of Gabon, were noteworthy. Participants appreciated the structured group discussions, effective moderation and in-depth exchange of challenges and successful tactics.

Despite the overall success, some areas for improvement emerged. Participants suggested extending the duration of the workshop to allow more in-depth exploration of topics such as professional reintegration, resource mobilization and strategies to combat anti-gender movements. Logistical problems, including delays in visa processing and stipend distribution, were also noted, and calls were made for more efficient management of future events.

Key skills and knowledge acquired include culturally appropriate advocacy strategies, effective use of social media for campaigning and methods of decolonizing human rights narratives. Many stressed the importance of working with local authorities and community allies to ensure lasting impact.

Back home, participants planned to apply their new knowledge by organizing local feedback sessions, developing inclusive action plans and strengthening collaborations within the region. However, they anticipated potential challenges such as limited funding, resource mobilization and resistance from certain state actors or social groups.

In the end, the workshop was considered a resounding success, with all participants expressing their satisfaction and recommending the event to other human rights leaders. The spirit of collaboration, shared learning and the development of collective strategies illustrated the power of South-South cooperation, leaving a lasting impact on the movement for equality and justice throughout the region.