



LET'S WALK UGANDA (LWU)

Silence Equals Death, Action Equals Life

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ANNUAL REPORT



LET'S WALK UGANDA ANNUAL REPORT 2022



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OUR BACKGROUND

The majority of LGBT youth in Uganda struggle to survive by doing odd jobs. As a result, most of these LGBT youth resort to theft, prostitution and other illegal activities for survival. Yet these very youths are already faced with challenges of family rejection, arrests, torture and discrimination examined together with the rest of the non-decriminalized better off youth who have easier access to better welfare due to their presumably normal sexual orientation. The extreme consequence of this is that these LGBT youth that are in need of better skills are the ones without possibilities to obtain them.

Let's Walk Uganda is a registered charity that arose out of online LGBT+ activism and interaction. Since its inception in 2016, the internet platforms have benefited thousands of LGBT+ people. Armed with this information and expertise, Let's Walk Uganda set out to expand the scope of existing programs and reinforce the organization's training and advocacy roles. LGBT+ people can be found in every community in Uganda, and significant efforts have been made in recent years to increase LGBT+ visibility and reduce discrimination. Those who live outside large cities, young LGBT+ people, and those who have relocated or plan to relocate from Uganda to avoid persecution face considerable challenges despite these efforts. Let's Walk Uganda strives to ensure that the perspectives of all LGBT+ individuals are heard in policy and practice.

OUR VISION

We envisage an independent and Ugandan lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender + community that is free of stigma, discrimination, and injustice.

OUR MISSION

Let's Walk Uganda strives to provide LGBT+ individuals in Uganda with needs-based protection and response services so that they can live dignified and independent lives.

OUR CORE VALUES

Diversity and Inclusivity: We advance our vision and purpose by ensuring non-discrimination and meaningful inclusion of people of many nationalities, ethnicities, genders, sexual orientations, and more in our workplace, as well as in our programs and activities.

Transparency: We are committed to meaningful participation of our members, partners, and other key stakeholders in Let's Walk Uganda's performance, financial status, and governance.

Respect: We are committed to upholding the concept of respect for all individuals and their unique qualities by enforcing consistent protection and the establishment of an atmosphere free of discriminatory behaviours and harassment.

Accountability: At Let's Walk Uganda, all decision-makers, both collectively and individually, accept full accountability for their actions, which are documented and reported on.

Teamwork: To achieve excellent achievements in our team, we are committed to involvement and communication.

OUR OBJECTIVES.

- To improve access to income generating opportunities for the jobless LGBT youth.
- To promote welfare of LGBT youth by providing shelter and other welfare services to LGBT youth that have been rejected by their families
- To provide legal entity services to LGBT youth.
- To promote LGBT advocacy.
- To promote the role of the LGBT youth in the development of the LGBT community and nation at large.
- To promote friendly relations with any other companies, institutions, societies or associations having objectives altogether or in part similar to those of the organization.
- To improve communication and the accessibility of information revolving around LGBT rights and LGBT inclusiveness in LGBT communities

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS:

It would have been impossible for Let's Walk Uganda to resiliently carry on with the work we do of continuously provide economic empowerment, individual and organizational capacity building, health wellness, shelter to challenged gay, bisexual and the queer men youths or constant online advocacy in Uganda, had it not been the support of our partners in Uganda and beyond. We owe our resilience of the past 7 years at various organization, communities and individuals.

We are grateful to those who pulled out their finances and technical support throughout this challenging year. The year has really been a test to us and our different partners but you never lost trust in our work and commitment.

In a special way, we wish to thank Hirschfeld-Eddy-Stiftung, Hannchen Mehrzweck Stiftung, Madam Virginia Fitt, UNAIDS, Dignity for All, Allout International, Global Fund, UGANET, TASO, Dr. Lutz, Bismarckschule (Elmshorn), HRAPF, UMSC and our GoFundMe campaign donors. We grateful of your support rendered to us.



Message from the Executive

Let's Walk Uganda's existence for 7 years is an achievement itself for a local organization boldly fighting for rights of men having sex with other men in a highly political, religious and conservative environment Uganda is!

The year has been a challenging and testing moment for us as an organisation and the entire LGBT+ movement in Uganda compared to the previous years. The anti-gay movement has used both the religious and political support to organize themselves and rise against the work of the LGBT+ Human rights defenders.

As a result, LGBT+ organisations and Human rights defenders have been raided, beaten, unlawfully arrested and their properties being damaged by both law enforcement agencies and individual homophobes. In addition to Sexual Minorities Uganda (SMUG), Let's Walk Uganda and other organisations like UNESO, Foster foundation, Queer Youth Uganda, COSF, Pride for Youth, IPIA and many others have been victims of these Anti-gay movement attacks.

Many organisations and activists have continued to carry out their advocacy work in fear of what can be the end result of these diplomatic anti-gay activists since they are fueled and sponsored by political and religious arms. Some donors have stepped back in their funding efforts towards the LGBT+ work in Uganda fearing that due to the situation in Uganda, organisations might not be able to successfully carryout their projects which has interrupted the service delivery impact.

Allow me to profoundly proud present to you this report which summarizes the organization's activities and accomplishments in the year 2022.

Despite the challenges, Let's Walk Uganda has continued to do its work reaching out the vulnerable Gays, Bisexuals and Queer youths in Uganda through online and offline advocacy.

The shelter has housed over 152 persons since its inception in 2016 with 23 in this year alone. 15 of these have successfully been relocated into personal homes and have been economically empowered to sustain themselves through the liquid soap and tailoring projects.

We have maintained the existing partners and partnered with new different service providers to increase accessibility of HIV services to MSM youths in Kampala and Wakiso with emphasis on those living in urban slums and through 31 outreaches we managed to reach out to 523 MSM youth. With our new dedicated partners MARPI-Mulago, Global Fund and TASO, we hope to increase the Prep uptake and treatment enrollment next year.

Despite the challenges, we have managed to persistently mobilize the resources and bringing new funders on board to support the organization projects and day to day expenses for the entire year. In addition, we managed to relocate the organisation to bigger premises where we can carry out our activities freely.

As I conclude my message, 2022 marks a year or challenging times with open doors for us as a team to improve, adapt and develop our services and the organization structures at Large next year.

2022 PROJECTS, ACTIVITIES AND PROGRAMS

ECONOMIC EMPOW

ADDRESSING MSM HOMELESSNESS

ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT/CAPACITY ENHANCEMENT

The hands of hope shelter (Est. 2016) offer distressed homeless MSMs a safe, supportive, empowering and nonjudgmental environment with meaningful skills development that will help them reverse the cycle of homelessness.

There has been an increase in the number of homelessness among the LGBT+ community that resulted from the different impacts of Covid 19. The lockdown that was imposed by the Ugandan government from 2020 to 2021 fueled the increase of different forms of domestic violence in the country. Many LGBT+ lost their jobs, others were outed and rejected by the families and they all ended up unable to make a livelihood.

Due to the high volumes of homeless LGBT+ members seeking for shelter services, we initiated the family reconciliation program where we have reunited 8 MSM in 2022 with their families to decrease homelessness. We hope to help other shelters to adopt the same strategy of fighting homelessness.

Despite the challenges, we have been able to mobilize resources to cater for the shelter rent, food, water and electricity bills for the full year. Thanks to HES, HMS, Virginia Fitt and Dr. Lutz who have been the sponsors of this program.

As of December 2022, over 100 MSMs have been housed at the Hands of Hope

Shelter, 15 have been relocated and facilitated 8 family reconciliations.



ECONOMIC EMPOW

HIV/AIDS AWARENESS AND PREVENTION

ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT/CAPACITY ENHANCEMENT

Let's Walk Uganda has continuously strived and add to existing efforts to create awareness about HIV/AIDS and its prevention, support Young MSM to exercise their health rights and receive quality services free from stigma, discrimination or judgement.

More than 15 community outreaches that targeted Lesbians, Gays, Bisexuals and Transgender people were organized in different parts of Kampala and Wakiso Districts. Each of these outreaches targeted a minimum of 20 participants and more than 300 LGBT benefited from our awareness workshops. Through technical, material, and monetary support from TASO, UGANET, MARPI and Global Fund, we have been able to sustain this program for the year 2022.



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While increasingly some MSM youths are gradually adjusting to be able to accept who they are in Uganda, many others face complex challenges. Due to their sexual orientation and/or gender identity, the day-to-day experience of many MSM youths in Uganda continue to include marginalization, discrimination, stigma, sexism, prejudice, hate speech and harassment in different forms. It should also be noted that anti-gay laws remain largely in use by Ugandan authorities to persecute MSM persons and other LGBTQ persons.

The COVID-19 pandemic however heightened all these and made the already marginalized to be more susceptible to its effects. Given the day to life of a gay man or MSM living in an urban slum of Kampala, described with poor standards of living, poverty and exposure to harmful practices including drug abuse, theft among others.

Even though some of these MSM youths have expressed interest in improving their standards of living or fight against poverty, there are limited spaces they can involve themselves due to lack of skills or access to cheap financing to start small businesses. This leaves them to seek for petty jobs most downtown to sell clothes or working for today's food on a daily.

Let's Walk Uganda as its continuous program continued to provide lifetime skills to both its shelter occupants and organisation beneficiaries to ensure that they can sustain their lives in a period to come. 18 LGBT+ community members around Kampala and Wakiso were the beneficiaries from the 2022 program. 4 members from this program were given a moderate startup capital to kickstart independent enterprises for their own sustainability.

Thanks to our donors!!!



ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT/CAPACITY ENHANCEMENT

MENTAL HEALTH CLUB

During the opening of mental health month (May, 2022), officials from the Ministry of Health in Uganda stated that about 14 million people of the 43.7 million population have a mental illness. The approximate prevalence of about 32.0% was higher than in previous national estimates of 24.2% the prevalence might be higher due to the pervasive social stigma and

taboos associated with accessing mental health services and the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic.

One of our 2022 goals as an organization was to provide services with a focus on mental health and a bias in counselling. Under the mental health club, we have provided head-to-head and online counselling to more than 150 LGBT+ community members in 2022. Most of which have been facing economic and social stresses due to family rejections, job loses, relationship stresses and housing related stresses.



Having been impacted by the COVID 19 pandemic and the lockdown that ran from 2020 to 2021 that hindered easy access to health and any other life necessities, Let's Walk Uganda through our COVID 19 awareness and prevention campaigns joined the rest to prevent the continuous spread of COVID 19 with an aim of decreasing the COVID 19 death cases in Uganda.

This has been done both online and offline using our different social media platforms and also the different community outreaches that not only targeted the LGBT+ community but also the general community. 5 anti-covid 19 outreaches were organized and 4 covid 19 vaccination drives were carried out in Kampala district.



ECONOMIC EMPOW

ADVOCACY FOR POLITICAL, SOCIAL AND RELIGIOUS CHANGE

ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT/CAPACITY ENHANCEMENT

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We have consistently leveraged social media to create an advocacy platform to Inform and Influence attitudes towards Young MSM through online campaigns on our social media platforms like Facebook, Instagram, twitter and website.

We have managed to establish further our online presence by always updating our social media platforms to attract more online beneficiaries. We have posted encouraging and comforting messages, running different campaigns Gender and Sexual Based Violence and also responded to different community needs of our LGBT+ members online.

CHALLENGES FACED IN 2022 AND SOLUTIONS

- Just like previous years, Let's Walk Uganda and the entire LGBT+ community have faced a lot of homophobia, transphobia and biphobia that has been worsened by the rise of well-organized anti-gay movement that is led by a network of religious leaders in Uganda. In August, our organisation was raided by the police, village residents and a group of anti-gay activists, we were evicted from the village where we were residing and outed on different communication platforms.

As an immediate solution, we reached out to our different partners and well-wishers seeking for support to relocate to a safer place. In September, we were able to relocate our offices and shelter, as a security measure, we limited our staff from working physically at the offices instead working virtually. We have partnered with friends and well-wishers to beef up the security of our offices and the shelter so that the members are not only safe but are able to pursue their lives peacefully.

- Throughout 2022, we have been trying to adapt with the current situation. Because of these insecurities, most in person events were canceled and we had to carry them out virtually. Community outreaches and dialogues became harder to conduct due to the difficulty in observing Standard Security measures. It was this year that we recorded the big number of human rights violence cases.
- Due to these anti-gay forces, some donors withdrew their funding efforts towards the LGBT+ work in Uganda fearing that due to the situation in Uganda, organisations might not be able to successfully carryout their projects which has interrupted the

service delivery impact. As a solution, we persistently sought for funding from donors and well-wishers who were still willing to support our activities in this challenging environment and also minimizing the available funding to reach our goals.



OUR 2023 PROPOSED PROJECTS AND PROGRAM.

In regard and addition to our strategic plan 2021 to 2026, we plan to prioritize the following programs in the year 2023 in the baseline of fulfilling our strategic goals;

INITIATION OF AN ACCESS TO JUSTICE UNIT:

- It's of undeniable that an estimate of 6/10 LGBT+ members in Uganda have limited knowledge about the rights that protect their existence and the 4/10 who have this knowledge include organizational leaders, staff and Human rights defenders. Let's Walk Uganda believes that despite numerous efforts made by various LGBT+ organizations and human rights advocates, the human rights positions of the LGBT+ community remain lag behind. The majority of the efforts have gone into legally empowering LGBT+ organizations and leaders, but have neglected the LGBT+ people themselves, who are severely harmed by their rights abuses.

In 2023, Let's Walk Uganda aims at initiating and launching an "Access to Justice Unit" to relieve human rights advocates of the difficulties associated with addressing some of the most pressing LGBT+ human rights issues in Uganda on a pro gratis basis. We hope to reduce LGBT+ rights violations in Uganda by increasing ongoing human rights awareness among LGBT+ community members, following up on and documenting rights violations, dealing with police arrest cases, implementing family reconciliation programs, and providing legal assistance to LGBT+ grassroots organizations and individuals.

SUSTAINABLE ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT PROJECT:

- Sample research carried out by Let's Walk Uganda shows that 7 out of 10 LGBT+ members in the slum areas of Kampala and Wakiso district are unemployed and struggle to earn a living. Some of these lack employment skills and others find it difficult to locate jobs even after acquiring different job skills due to their gender and sexual orientation. In 2023, we plan to train more vulnerable LGBT+ members to acquire some hands-on skills and also mobilizing resources to provide them with start-up capital to kick start their independent enterprises to sustain their lives. To create a self-employed LGBT+ community than job seekers!

CAPACITY BUILDING:

- Capacity enhancement for both the organisation and the staff. Resource mobilization and programming have been the challenging departments in the previous years, in 2023 we hope to address these challenges by introducing our resource mobilization and programming personnel to different training sessions/courses in their respective departments. We hope to mobilize resources to implement an income generating project that will help to sustain the organizational day to day operations since we have not yet located any core funding for our operations like feeding and paying shelter and office rent. Here we are to implement a project that will aim at benefiting both the organisation and the shelter occupants. In addition, we plan to upgrade our organisation status from a company Limited by Guarantee to a Non-Government Organisation in order to access more funding to irrigate our projects.

MENTAL HEALTH CLUB:

- As GBV and other life inequalities increases in the country, life becomes harder for the citizens, this becomes worse when it comes to the LGBT+ community which is criminalized in Uganda. As these issues increase, people develop more mental concerns. At Let's Walk Uganda, we believe in ensuring our beneficiaries and staff's mental wellness, we plan continue with our mental health club.
- Continuously addressing the LGBT+ homelessness due to the increasing number of Gender Based Violence in Uganda and continuous HIV and health rights awareness campaigns.