



Comprehensive Report on Rights Violations, Lived Experiences, and Anti-Gender Agendas Targeting Trans and Gender-Diverse (TGD) Communities in Uganda

September 2025

Executive Summary

This integrated report presents comprehensive findings from research conducted by Let's Walk Uganda (LWU) on the lived experiences, protection risks, and priority needs of trans and gender-diverse (TGD) individuals in Uganda. The research combines quantitative survey data from 30 TGD participants, qualitative narrative accounts from 5 individuals, and an analytical mapping of anti-gender actors operating in Uganda.

83.3%

of respondents reported experiencing verbal insults

63.3%

experienced physical assault

60%

described daily lives as "very unsafe"

The findings reveal a crisis of rights violations, systemic discrimination, and intensified persecution following the enactment of the Anti-Homosexuality Act 2023.

76.7%

reported loss of livelihood due to AHA 2023

13.3%

reported no change in circumstances due to AHA 2023

Personal narratives document the profound human cost: forced invisibility, family rejection, sexual violence, employment denial, and healthcare barriers. These stories reveal how legal persecution translates into daily survival struggles, mental health crises, and the erosion of dignity. The analytical component identifies 18 distinct actors across 6 categories promoting anti-gender agendas, with international actors comprising 35% of identified entities. This demonstrates how Uganda's hostile environment is sustained by both domestic political and religious forces and significant international networks providing resources, ideological frameworks, and strategic coordination. The report concludes with urgent recommendations for legal reform, healthcare access, economic empowerment, safe housing, public awareness, and capacity building for TGD-led organizations.

Background: TGD Context in Uganda

Trans and gender-diverse individuals in Uganda face severe marginalization, widespread discrimination, and violence. This hostile environment significantly impacts their access to essential services, including healthcare, education, and safe housing. The enactment of the **Anti-Homosexuality Act 2023** has further criminalized consensual same-sex relations and gender expression, intensifying persecution and fear within TGD communities. This legislation profoundly undermines fundamental human rights and exacerbates existing vulnerabilities, leading to a crisis of rights violations.

Urgent Need for Evidence

There is a critical need for robust research to document the extent of rights violations, service barriers, and the socio-economic impact of discriminatory laws on TGD communities. This data is vital for informed advocacy.

Amplifying Lived Experiences

This study aims to provide a platform for TGD individuals to share their lived experiences, ensuring their voices are heard and acknowledged. Documenting personal narratives is crucial for humanizing policy impact and fostering empathy.

Let's Walk Uganda (LWU)'s Role

Let's Walk Uganda (LWU) initiated this research as part of its ongoing commitment to promoting human rights and advocating for LGBTIQ+ communities in Uganda, collaborating directly with TGD individuals.

This analytical report is a product of "The Community Defense Initiative for TGDs in Uganda Project." This initiative aims to strengthen the safety, resilience, and advocacy capacity of trans and gender-diverse (TGD) communities in Uganda. The project is funded by **GATE**.

Research Methodology

01

Purpose

To generate reliable evidence on the lived experiences, protection risks, and priority needs of trans and gender-diverse (TGD) individuals in Uganda.

03

Methodology

A **mixed-methods approach** using KoboCollect questionnaires and narrative accounts.

02

Participants

30 trans and gender-diverse individuals across Uganda.

04

Focus Areas

Demographics; Violence; Impact of AHA 2023; and Support Needs.

Study Objectives

- Document demographics and socioeconomic profile of TGD communities.
- Assess prevalence of abuse, violence, and rights violations.
- Evaluate impact of the Anti-Homosexuality Act 2023 on TGD lives.
- Identify priority support needs and service gaps.

Analytical Approach

A comprehensive desk review approach was employed for the anti-gender actors analysis, systematically gathering and analyzing existing information from civil society reports, academic research, media archives, and policy documents.

Quantitative Component

- Focused on mapping actors according to their category of influence.
- Documented their activities and support networks.
- Prioritized identifying relationships between domestic and international actors.

Qualitative Component

- Understood their strategies for influencing public opinion and policy.
- Assessed operational mechanisms.
- Collected real stories using open-ended questionnaires from **5 purposively selected TGD individuals**.

This approach allowed for a comprehensive and evidence-based overview without direct engagement with the actors themselves, ensuring findings could inform advocacy, programming, and future research on anti-gender movements in Uganda.

Findings: Rights Violations & Access to Services

Demographics and Socio-Economic Profile

Age & Gender Identity

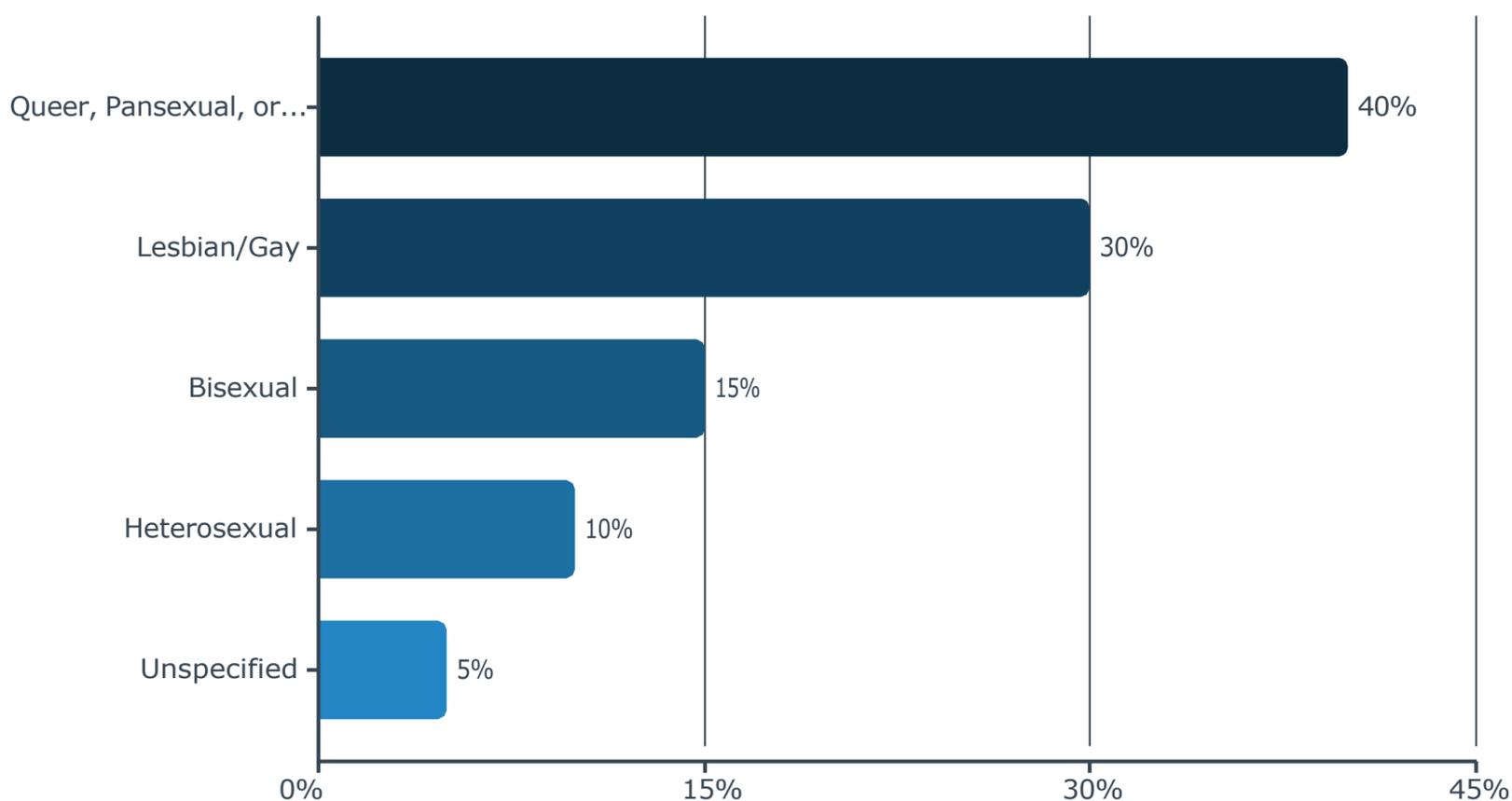
- Most respondents aged **23-31** years
- **66.7%** identified as trans women
- **10%** as trans men
- **20%** as cisgender females
- **3.3%** Unspecified

Education & Employment

- **86.7%** completed secondary education
- **10%** held university degrees
- **23.3%** unemployed
- **20%** engaged in sex work
- Most rely on informal, precarious work

Detailed Sexual Orientation Breakdown

To provide a more granular understanding of participants' sexual orientations, the following horizontal bar chart breaks down the combined 'Queer, Pansexual, or Non-binary-attracted' category and also details other identified orientations. Percentages are estimated where specific sub-breakdowns were not explicitly provided in the original study data, while maintaining the overall reported figures.



Prevalence of Abuse and Violence

A significant portion of respondents reported experiencing various forms of abuse and violence. Physical violence was reported by **70%** of respondents, followed by verbal abuse at **85%**, and sexual violence affecting **45%**. Financial exploitation was also prevalent, impacting **60%** of the participants.

Physical Violence

70% of respondents

Verbal Abuse

85% of respondents

Sexual Violence

45% of respondents

Financial Exploitation

60% of respondents

Key Finding: Only **41.4%** of victims reported incidents due to fear of further victimization and police hostility.

Safety Perceptions

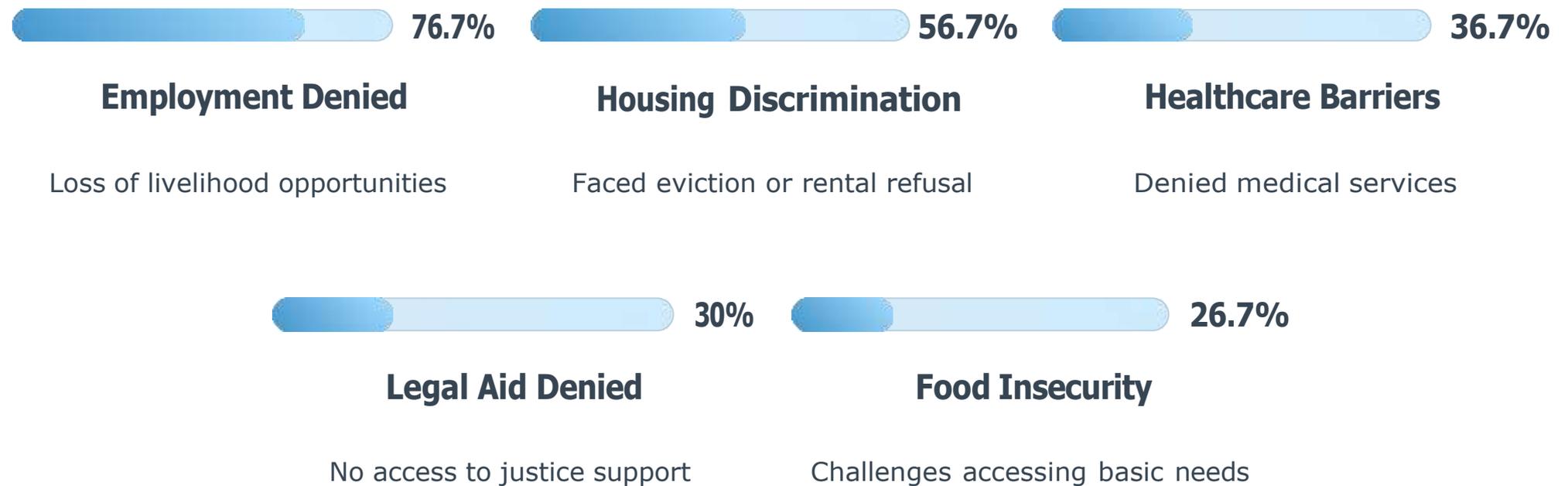
Perceptions of safety among trans and gender-diverse individuals in Uganda reveal a dire situation, with a majority feeling profoundly vulnerable in their daily lives. The primary concern contributing to this pervasive sense of insecurity is the escalating threat of violence, both from state and non-state actors. This is exacerbated by a lack of legal protection and widespread discrimination, leaving individuals exposed to harassment and harm without adequate recourse. The absence of safe spaces and supportive community structures further compounds these fears, leading to social isolation and limited access to essential services.

"**60%** of respondents described their daily lives as 'very unsafe,' underscoring a pervasive sense of insecurity."

Impact of Anti-Homosexuality Act (AHA) 2023

The AHA 2023 has had near-universal negative impact, with only **13.3% reporting no change in their circumstances.**

Service Access Barriers Post-AHA 2023



Priority Support Needs

Respondents emphasized comprehensive support integrating safety, health, and livelihood interventions. Key priorities include:

- ◆ Enhanced safety and protection mechanisms against violence and discrimination.
- ◆ Improved access to non-discriminatory healthcare services, including mental health support.
- ◆ Development of sustainable livelihood opportunities and economic empowerment programs.
- ◆ Provision of legal aid and advocacy to ensure access to justice.
- ◆ Support for secure and inclusive housing options.
- ◆ Establishment of community-based support networks to foster resilience.

Findings: Real Stories & Human Impact

A key objective of this assignment was to collaborate with Transgender and Gender Diverse (TGD) communities to gather authentic stories and data concerning abuse, violence, and discrimination. Five TGD individuals were purposively selected to share their experiences through open-ended questionnaires. Their stories are presented below:

Kendrick's Story

Kendrick speaks calmly, yet a profound heaviness permeates his voice as he describes his life. As a transgender man living in Uganda, his daily reality is shaped by fear, uncertainty, and constant self-protection. The environmental hostility has intensified with the rise of anti-gender campaigns and laws targeting individuals whose identities do not conform to traditional norms.

"It is hard to live a normal life when you are seen as a problem just because of who you are," Kendrick states. "I always have to think twice before doing anything, even simple things like going out or meeting friends."

His fear is not theoretical; it stems from direct lived experiences. Kendrick has been harassed in his own neighborhood, subjected to verbal abuse, threatened, and made to feel unsafe simply for existing. This constant tension has made him withdrawn and cautious.

"Sometimes I just stay inside," he admits. "You never know who might try to hurt you because of how you look."

The anti-gender rhetoric, amplified by politicians, religious leaders, and the media, has fueled increased hatred. Kendrick notes that messaging around "protecting culture" has normalized violence against transgender and gender-diverse persons.

"When leaders say we are dangerous or immoral, it gives society permission to hate us," he explains. "It becomes harder even to walk or travel safely."

Employment also presents a significant struggle. Although trained as a mechanic, Kendrick has been repeatedly denied work. Interviewers mock him, ask intrusive questions, or simply refuse to consider his skills.

"To survive, I rely on small repair jobs from a friend who understands my situation," he says. "It is not enough, but it is something."

Accessing healthcare is equally difficult. Many health providers lack knowledge, sensitivity, or respect toward transgender persons. Kendrick recalls a painful experience where a nurse openly mocked him after checking his ID. Since then, he avoids health facilities unless absolutely necessary.

"You cannot trust people to care for you when they do not even respect your existence," he says quietly.

The cumulative discrimination has profoundly affected his mental health. Kendrick battles anxiety, hypervigilance, and periods of sadness.

"I am always on edge," he confesses. "Even when I am alone, I cannot relax because I am always thinking about what could happen if someone decides to target me."

Still, he remains resilient. Kendrick has a small inner circle of trusted friends who check on one another and provide mutual support.

"They are like family," he says. "When things get hard, we talk, we laugh, and remind each other that we are still alive." Sometimes he smokes to calm his nerves. "It is not a solution, but it helps me get through the day."

Despite everything, Kendrick still holds onto hope. When asked what would improve life for transgender persons in Uganda, his response is clear:

"We need safe spaces, places where we can speak freely and get support without judgment," he says. "People need to understand that we are human beings. We deserve to live in peace like everyone else."

Givens' Story

Givens is a trans man living with his parents in Uganda. He has known his gender identity for many years, but his current living situation compels him to conceal who he is. At home, he cannot openly express himself due to fear of rejection and conflict. He constantly monitors how he dresses, speaks, and behaves around his family a daily emotional containment that keeps him silent.

"At home, I have to keep things to myself. They would not understand," he says.

This creates an internal split between his true self and the restricted version he must perform for safety. Being around trusted friends feels liberating, but returning home means reverting to secrecy, suppression, and emotional restraint.

Living as a transgender and gender-diverse person in Uganda is extremely difficult. Outside the home, stigma and public hostility make it unsafe to be visible. *"People talk, people watch you. You never know who may turn against you,"* he explains. His life is shaped by constant caution. Interestingly, Givens has not experienced direct physical violence or abuse; however, this safety has come at the cost of invisibility. *"I have learned to stay low,"* he says. This reveals another form of harm: survival through erasure.

The passage and enforcement of the Anti-Homosexuality Act have heightened fear. Even though the law directly targets same-sex relationships, it has emboldened harassment against all gender minorities. *"The law made people more aggressive. They now feel empowered to police everything about you,"* he reflects. Simple activities like visiting friends or seeking healthcare now require strategic risk assessment.

Givens' decision to access healthcare privately has allowed him to avoid the harassment common in public facilities. *"Private clinics are safer,"* he says. *"You pay more, but at least you are treated like a human being."*

He has not yet faced major discrimination in employment or education, partly because his hidden daily life limits his exposure.

He draws strength from friendships and community networks. His main sources of support are a few close friends and organizations that advocate for transgender rights. He specifically mentions T-MEN Evolution and the Uganda National Trans Forum (UNTF) as supportive spaces.

"They invite us to meetings, we share experiences, and you learn you are not alone," he says.

These spaces have also exposed him to advocacy work, instilling hope that change is possible.

Education is at the top of his priority list for change. *"Education changes everything,"* Givens says. *"If we are given equal access, we can get jobs, be independent, and compete fairly like everyone else."* He also believes trans men need more targeted support because they are often excluded from mainstream LGBTQ+ programming. *"We need our own spaces,"* he adds.

As we conclude, Givens expresses one simple desire for the future:

"I just want to be able to live normally. To study, to work, and to be accepted for who I am."

Shamim's Story

Shamim Pretty sits quietly as she begins to speak, her hands folded gently in her lap. As a transgender woman living with HIV in Uganda, surviving everyday life has become increasingly difficult. Simply existing authentically has now become an act of courage.

"Life has become so much harder," she says softly.

Over time, the support systems that once protected her community have collapsed. Drop-In Centres, which were once safe havens where she could access services, community, and safety, have closed due to funding cuts and political pressure. These spaces were more than service centres they were lifelines.

Being transgender and unemployed in this environment is extremely difficult. Opportunities disappear the moment her identity becomes known. The Anti-Homosexuality Act did not only criminalise identities; it dismantled her sense of stability, belonging, and purpose. The organisation where she once worked closed when funding froze, leaving her suddenly without work, income, or routine.

Some experiences are too painful to describe in full. Shamim shares that she has experienced sexual violence from a group of men who attempted to punish and "correct" her identity through abuse. Although she cannot bring herself to relive the details, the impact remains with her daily. This form of gender-based violence is a tool of fear and control used against transgender women in Uganda.

"I can only find services in communities that already know who I am," she explains.

The general public environment is hostile and unsafe. She now relies heavily on a small network of community-based organisations and queer-led groups such as HRAPF, UNTF, and IBU. *"These organisations see us, they understand us," she says.*

These community networks provide emotional support, referrals, and protection where formal systems fail. Even though these spaces remain under threat, they are still the anchors in her life. When asked how she copes, Shamim answers with one word: *"Friends."* Friendships are her chosen family. They are the people who stand by her when the world refuses to see her humanity.

She also draws comfort from within herself hope that there will be better days to come. "It's not being unrealistic," she says. "It's choosing to believe that tomorrow can be different."

Shamim believes that what transgender people need most at this moment is **economic empowerment** opportunities to earn income and stand independently without fear. She also believes that transgender people need **community spaces** to gather, speak, and heal together. "A space to share so that we do not feel alone."

Sheilah Morgana's Story

Sheilah Morgana's voice carries both exhaustion and determination as she shares her story. As a transgender woman living in Uganda, her journey toward authenticity has been filled with barriers that most people never have to think about: barriers written into law, enforced by society, and experienced in daily interactions that slowly erode dignity.

"It has not been an easy path living as a transgender woman, especially in Uganda," Sheilah reflects. "The laws make it very hard for persons like myself to live with dignity and respect."

The Anti-Homosexuality Act and the rising anti-gender messaging have intensified the already hostile environment for transgender and gender diverse persons. Discrimination is not always loud or physical; sometimes it is subtle, quiet, but just as painful. "People judge the way I walk and how my body is structured, and they make fun of me for being different," she explains.

But for Sheilah, the emotional pain is often the deepest. "The most abuse I have had to deal with is the emotional abuse where I do not feel seen, I do not feel loved, and I am not appreciated," she says. This emotional invisibility reinforces a constant message: that her identity is not legitimate, and that her existence is inconvenient.

This climate of discrimination has shaped her life in very tangible ways. Education which should be a right and a path to opportunity was cut short because of the discrimination she faced. "I failed to get an education because of the discrimination I experienced while in school," she states. This is a loss not only for her, but for the society that refused to nurture her potential.

Basic services that every human being should access, including healthcare, housing, employment, and protection, are now risky for transgender persons. Every time Sheilah attempts to access these services, she must first calculate safety. Even law enforcement and police structures, which should protect her, can become spaces of danger, judgement, or humiliation.

In the middle of this daily harm, Sheilah has found small lifelines. "Friends helped me survive," she shares. These friends are more than companions; they are chosen family, a critical support network in a world where formal systems have failed her.

Yet she also understands that individual friendships alone are not enough. Systemic change requires collective strength and organised support. When asked what would make the biggest difference, Sheilah is clear and practical: **"Funding for transgender organisations is much needed at such a time,"** she says.

She knows that sustainable resources are needed to build community power, strengthen protection networks, and support collective advocacy that creates lasting change.

Her story makes one thing undeniable: this is not just about identity; it is about humanity. "Navigating life as a transgender woman is hard because community hates us for living our true and authentic lives," she says.

Yet even within this hostility, Sheilah insists on being seen not as an issue or debate, but as a human being who deserves dignity, safety, voice, and full recognition.

Casablanca's Story

Casablanca identifies as a transgender woman and gender non-conforming person. Her journey has been marked by both hope and hardship. "Living openly as a transgender and gender diverse person in Uganda is not easy," she says. She constantly navigates stigma not only because of her gender identity, but also because of her HIV status. Despite these challenges, she remains determined, creative, and resilient. Today, she is a proud **small business owner** running a decorative business she built from scratch through her own hard work and innovation.

Casablanca recalls painful discrimination from people within her own community who continuously remind her of her HIV status to shame and reduce her dignity. "People think HIV defines you. They reduce everything about you to that one thing," she says. She was among the **42 COSF members** who were arrested an experience that left deep fear and trauma. For her, this demonstrated that simply existing as a transgender person in Uganda puts her at constant risk.

She explains that the social and legal environment has become even more hostile since the passing of the Anti-Homosexuality Act. "After that law, everything got worse," she says. Online violence, hate speech, threats, and targeted attacks have intensified. Digital spaces, which once offered escape and connection, now feel unsafe. Access to essential services has worsened due to donor funding freezes affecting organisations that previously supported her and many others.

Despite this difficult environment, Casablanca relies on a few close friends and some supportive family members who provide emotional strength, protection, and encouragement. "If I did not have my friends, I would have completely given up," she says. She strongly believes that **economic justice** is one of the most powerful ways to support transgender persons helping them build livelihoods, earn income, and stand independently beyond stigma, rejection, and vulnerability.

As Uganda moves toward the election period, Casablanca highlights the urgent need for **safety planning, relocation support, and community protection**. She encourages transgender persons to seek assistance from organisations such as Let's Walk Uganda (LWU), HRAPF, and UKPC who have been at the forefront of providing support, relocation assistance, legal help, and protection for targeted individuals. "We need to be safe. We need support to survive the coming period," she says.

Findings: Anti-Gender Actors & Their Influence

Overview of the Anti-Gender Landscape

18

Total Actors

Distinct actors and institutions documented across all categories

6

Categories

Different types of influence spanning domestic and international spheres

35%

International Influence

Largest actor category, demonstrating strong external influence

This comprehensive mapping reveals a complex web of influence operating at multiple levels of Ugandan society, involving domestic political leadership, religious and cultural institutions, state agencies, media outlets, and international/transnational networks.

Political and Religious Actors

Political Leaders

Central to policy formulation and enforcement

- **President Yoweri Museveni:** Signed Anti-Homosexuality Act
- **Speaker Anita Among:** Presided over debates on 2023 Bill
- **Deputy Speaker Thomas Tayebwa:** Parliamentary influence
- **MP David Bahati:** Legislative advocacy
- **JEEMA MP Asuman Basalirwa:** Policy promotion
- **Former Minister Simon Lokodo (RIP):** Shut down LGBT workshops

Political leaders play a central role at the national and parliamentary level, formulating and enforcing anti-gender policies in Uganda.

Religious Actors

Amplifying positions to mass audiences

- **Inter-Religious Council of Uganda (IRCU)**
- **Uganda Joint Christian Council (UJCC):** Organized anti-LGBT rallies
- Prominent pastors and denominational churches
- Religious coalitions providing moral legitimacy

Religious actors amplify anti-gender positions through sermons, rallies, and public statements, lending moral and social legitimacy to restrictive policies and shaping public attitudes.

State Institutions and Enforcement

 <p>Uganda Police Operations: National enforcement Actions: Enforced anti-LGBT laws, raided organizations and safe spaces, conducted arrests of individuals and activists Impact: Direct operational enforcement of restrictive policies</p>	 <p>NGO Bureau Operations: National regulatory oversight Actions: Deregistered LGBT-supporting NGOs, restricted operations of civil society organizations Impact: Administrative control over advocacy organizations</p>	 <p>Uganda Registration Services Bureau (URSB) Operations: National registration authority Actions: Blocked registration of organizations, prevented legal recognition of advocacy groups Impact: Institutional barriers to organizational legitimacy</p>
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State institutions operationalize anti-gender policies by regulating, shutting down, or arresting organizations and individuals, thereby creating a comprehensive enforcement apparatus.

Media and Cultural Influence

Media and cultural institutions play a significant role in shaping public opinion and legitimizing anti-gender policies through disinformation and traditional narratives.

<p>Tabloid Press Disinformation Content: Publishes names and photos of LGBT individuals, often fabricating stories. Impact: Spreads hate speech and exposes vulnerable individuals to danger and public harassment.</p>	<p>Broadcast Narrative Amplification Reach: National and local TV and radio stations are widely consumed platforms. Actions: Continuously amplify anti-gender narratives, disinformation, and fear-mongering.</p>
<p>Traditional Leadership Influence Figures: Key traditional leaders, such as the Buganda Kingdom and Acholi elders. Actions: Reinforce and promote traditional narratives that often conflict with modern gender and sexuality concepts.</p>	<p>Community Mobilization Method: Leverage deep-seated cultural authority and community ties. Objective: Mobilize local support and foster broad societal acceptance for restrictive anti-gender positions within communities.</p>

The combined effect of media outlets enabling harmful content and cultural institutions providing legitimacy creates a powerful environment for the enforcement of anti-gender agendas.

International and Transnational Networks

International actors constitute **35% of identified actors**, demonstrating a strong external influence on Uganda's anti-gender landscape.

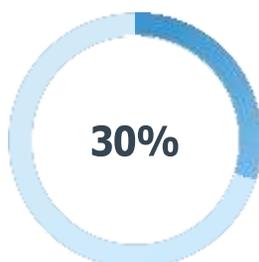
 <p>Family Watch International Provides ideological support and strategic guidance, positioning Uganda as a hub for global anti-gender campaigns.</p>	 <p>World Congress of Families Facilitates international coordination and networking, connecting Ugandan actors to global movements.</p>
 <p>Human Life International Engages in religious advocacy and resource provision, supporting local initiatives with international backing.</p>	 <p>The Fellowship Foundation Focuses on political networking and influence, connecting religious and political leaders across borders.</p>

- **National Center on Sexual Exploitation:** Provided ideological frameworks and advocacy materials for local campaigns.
- **Scott Lively:** An individual activist conducting workshops and speeches, directly engaging with Ugandan actors.
- Foreign state allies, such as **Russia**, also support these initiatives.

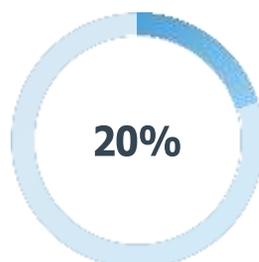
Mapping Key Anti-Gender Actors and Their Influence



International Actors
Largest category, providing



resources and legitimacy



Political Leadership
Central role in promoting

restrictive policies

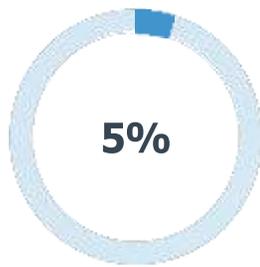
Religious Institutions

Shaping public attitudes and moral justification



State Institutions

Policing and implementing restrictions



Cultural Institutions

Symbolic authority and community legitimacy

Recommendations and Conclusion

Key Recommendations



Legal Reform

Advocate for protection of TGD persons under national and international human rights frameworks.



Healthcare Access

Expand stigma-free healthcare and psychosocial services.



Economic Empowerment

Support livelihood and vocational initiatives for self-reliance.



Safe Housing

Establish community shelters for displaced TGD individuals.



Public Awareness

Strengthen media campaigns to combat stigma and misinformation.



Capacity Building

Build capacity of TGD-led organizations for advocacy and service delivery.

Conclusion

This survey reveals that trans and gender-diverse individuals in Uganda continue to face severe and widespread violence, discrimination, and exclusion. The Anti-Homosexuality Act 2023 has intensified fear, disrupted livelihoods, and deepened barriers to essential services, leaving many without safety, housing, or stable income. Despite these challenges, TGD communities demonstrate remarkable resilience, solidarity, and commitment to advocating for their rights. The findings call for urgent action strengthening legal protections, expanding access to safe and inclusive services, and investing in economic and psychosocial support. A coordinated, multi-sector response is essential to ensure dignity, safety, and equal opportunity for all gender-diverse people in Uganda.

30

Participants

Voices heard

4

Objectives

Areas examined

6

Recommendations

Actions needed

Implications for Advocacy and Action

The comprehensive mapping offers a **strong foundation** for evidence-based advocacy and programming.

It reveals a **complex web of actors** promoting anti-gender agendas across multiple levels of Ugandan society.

Uganda's anti-gender landscape is **dual-natured**: driven by strong domestic political and religious forces, and significantly reinforced by international networks.