



ADVOCACY BRIEF: Protecting Rights of Transgender and Gender-Diverse Persons in Uganda

1. Background

Uganda has witnessed an increasing rise in anti-gender narratives driven by political, religious, state, cultural, media and foreign ideological advocates. These narratives sharply escalate violence, discrimination, reduced access to services, and legal restrictions against Transgender and Gender-Diverse (TGD) persons. The Anti-Homosexuality Act (2023) has worsened exclusion and institutionalised punishment based on identity. Evidence from research, lived experiences and programme work demonstrates deep harm to the dignity, safety, economic survival and rights of TGD communities in Uganda.

2. Evidence Overview

Research conducted among 30 Transgender and Gender-Diverse persons in Uganda by Let's Walk Uganda confirms widespread systemic exclusion and violence against TGD individuals. 83% reported frequent verbal harassment, 63% experienced physical assault, 53% reported arbitrary arrest or police harassment, 50% faced family rejection, 46.7% had faced forced eviction and 30% reported denial of healthcare services. Furthermore, 77% of respondents lost livelihood opportunities following the passing of the Anti-Homosexuality Act (2023), with many forced to withdraw from public spaces due to heightened fear, hostility, and targeted attacks.

Real life narrative accounts from transgender persons directly evidence the emotional trauma, depression, social isolation, economic hardship and mental health decline fueled by anti-rights climate. Survivors described living in constant fear, hiding identities for safety, being denied health care, surviving sexual violence, and losing income due to shutdowns of safe spaces and funding freezes.

These lived experiences mirror and directly connect to the ecosystem of anti-gender actors mapped in Uganda. Evidence shows that anti-gender narratives are being deliberately amplified through coordinated political leadership (including Parliamentary champions and Executive messaging), religious and cultural institutions, state enforcement bodies (such as the NGO Bureau and the Police), hostile media platforms and international evangelical networks providing ideological and financial support. This demonstrates that the violence TGD persons experience is not random or isolated — it is linked to a multi-layered, well-resourced and strategic anti-gender movement

3. Priority Advocacy Messages

- *TGD identities are not foreign; TGD persons are Ugandan and are part of families, communities and the national workforce.*
- *Criminalisation of identity increases violence, homelessness, extortion and economic losses, it does not “protect culture”.*
- *Protecting TGD persons from violence is not “promotion of homosexuality”; it is fulfilling Uganda’s constitutional obligations to protect dignity, non-discrimination and equal protection under the law.*
- *Denying TGD persons access to healthcare increases HIV vulnerability, mental health distress, and worsens public health outcomes nationwide.*
- *Economic empowerment and protection of livelihoods strengthens families, reduces dependency and promotes national productivity.*
- *Stigma, misinformation, and hate messaging fuel violence, evidence-based awareness campaigns challenge harmful narratives, prevent violence, and strengthen community protection mechanisms.*
- *Safe spaces and community shelters are essential harm prevention measures that enable survivors to heal, work, and live in dignity.*

4. Recommendations for LWU and Partners

Policy & Legal Reform:

- Advocate for removal and reform of punitive provisions used to target TGD persons.
- Strengthen non-discrimination safeguards in health, education, employment and justice systems.

Service Access and Protection:

- Expand safe spaces, shelters, drop-in centres and protection support systems.
- Strengthen health service access and referral pathways free from fear and humiliation.

Economic Justice:

- Support livelihood and income initiatives for TGD persons.
- Prioritise economic resilience, vocational skills training and micro-enterprise support.

Narrative Shifting:

- Document lived experiences and use evidence-led human stories to challenge extremist and anti-rights narratives.
- Promote dignity, shared humanity, and constitutional values of fairness and equality.

5. Call to Action

TGD persons in Uganda deserve dignity, protection, safety and equal opportunity. Laws and narratives that promote fear, exclusion and violence undermine human rights, public health and community wellbeing. LWU and partners call on government, civil society, regional and international actors to work collectively to protect all Ugandans, defend fundamental freedoms and ensure no person is denied rights based on gender identity. Protecting TGD persons is protecting humanity itself.