



FEMINIST ACTION ON LGBTQIA+ RIGHTS

**A CALL TO ACTION AT THE 10TH AFRICAN CONFERENCE ON SEXUAL
HEALTH AND RIGHTS (ACSHR) JUNE 2022, SIERRA LEONE**

PREAMBLE

The seeming division within the human rights space in Africa and the rejection of LGBTQIA+ identities from the feminist discourse pose a threat to the gains made over the years in the struggle for liberation on the African continent. In the context of increasing violence and hostility from both state and non-state actors against LGBTQIA+ persons, and the re-proliferation of misogyny in Africa as seen in the increasing rates of violence - physical and sexual - against women, these divisions constitute a barrier to effective action to address these issues. Recognising the need for collective action to protect the rights of minorities in Africa, CHEVS decided to host a panel at the 10th African Conference on Sexual Health and Rights (ACSHR) to discuss the interactions and intersections that lie between LGBTQIA+ advocacy and feminism, the causes of these divisions and ways to address them in order to give us a louder, and stronger voice in Africa. The strategy panel session on Feminist Action on LGBTQIA rights at the African conference on sexual health and rights in Sierra Leone hosted by CHEVS had 5 African activists discussing these issues and coming to a collective resolution.



PROBLEMS WITHIN THE MOVEMENT

This strategy session identified a number of issues that pose a barrier to effective advocacy and collective action on the continent against all forms of violence:

1. THE EXCLUSION OF LBQT WOMEN AND SEX WORKERS FROM THE MAINTSTREAM AFRICAN FEMINIST MOVEMENT.

The mainstream feminist movement still finds itself beholden to counterproductive ideas of morality, chastity, and social gendered norms with respect to expressions of sex and sexuality. In holding briefs for these ideas and rejecting LBQT women from feminist spaces, the movement implicitly supports ideas and ideals that are inherently contradictory and unsuited to the ultimate goals and aims of the feminist ideology.

“Some LGBTQI activists do not define themselves as feminists even though they are because they are constantly denied, rejected or ignored when they try to join the feminist movement. This is a reality” Shika fleicher - Ghana

2. LACK OF SUPPORT FROM FEMINIST GRANT MAKERS FOR LGBTQIA+ ORGANISATIONS

Places LGBTQIA+ orgs and activists in situations where they must deny their LGBTQIA+ identities or affiliations in order to get funding from said feminist funders. This is born from a failure or refusal to realise the similar patriarchal motivations that ground both misogyny and homo/trans-phobia.

“We recognize that there is progress when we look back five years. But we believe the feminist philanthropic sector in africa can do better in terms of engagement with the LGBTQIA+ movement so we continue to push” Stephane Simpure, ISDAO-Burkina faso



3. EXCLUSION OF TRANS WOMEN FROM THE FEMINIST MOVEMENT

In holding fast to essentialist ideas of gender and sexual identities which are inherently transexclusionary, they unwittingly support the patriarchal position on gender norms and gender expressions, and then support ideas that run counter to the feminist ideology which is liberation for all.

4. PERFORMATIVE INCLUSION AND TOKENISM

Feminist organisations bring LGBTQI persons into their spaces, but without the intention to hear from them or to earnestly consider a queer perspective in pursuit of feminist goals. In doing this, they turn queer persons into diversity props without necessarily incorporating and reflecting this diversity in their ideology.

“We must demand accountability from the feminist movement for thier engagement with LGBTQI activist. Because all social justice actors should be accountable” Kay - Nigeria.

5. DIVISION BETWEEN THE FEMINIST AND LGBTQIA+ MOVEMENT AND THE AFRICAN FEMINIST

The ideological separation between feminism and queer theory is an artificial and untenable one. At the point of these separations, the patriarchy finds breathing space, and opportunities to grow, reinvent itself and infiltrate these movements.



GENERAL AGREEMENTS

From their discussions, the Panellists and participants came to a resolution that:

WHEREAS We have come to an understanding of the patriarchal motivations for both misogyny and homo/trans-phobia, and we acknowledge that there is an increasingly hostile environment against LGBTQI identities within the African Society

WE have now come to an acceptance of the intersections that exist between the LGBTQI and the feminist movement

WE now understand the incompleteness of a feminist ideology that excludes LGBTQI identities from its propositions

WE realise the need for and importance of a more inclusive feminist ideology that acknowledges the full diversity of humanity

AND We now recognise the urgency for feminist action on LGBTQI rights in Africa

We hereby Call on government, donors, Feminist funds, womens rights organizations, Educators, activists and LGBTQI organizations who work, or are aligned with, or interact with other organisations on the African Continent to prioritize the following recommendation in order to achieve a feminist future in africa.



1. REDEFINE FEMINIST FUNDING TO BE INCLUSIVE OF LGBTQIA+ COALITIONS

Understanding the importance of well funded advocacy in pushing the human rights struggle forward, we call for feminist funders to restructure their funding requirements to be inclusive of projects or programs that that are carried out through the lens of a queer theory that challenges preset ideals and ideas of gender, sex and sexuality. Funders must refrain from tailoring their funding requirements in such a manner as to force an untenable separation of feminism from the LGBTQIA+ struggle. It is necessary to either redefine their funding requirements, or create additional funding for advocacy projects and programs that are built around and focused on the pursuit of an LGBTQI+ inclusive feminism in Africa.

2. INCLUDE AFRICAN LGBTQIA+ VOICES AND PERSPECTIVES IN AFRICAN FEMINIST SPACES AND CONVERSATIONS

In order to ensure that this alliance is stronger, inclusive and properly suited to the peculiar requirements of the African society, we call for the inclusion of authentic African LGBTQIA+ perspectives and voices in African Feminist Conversation. This is to ensure that the two movements grow and evolve together through conscious action and collaboration. Lending their strengths to each other and



3. ACKNOWLEDGE THE VALIDITY OF TRANS IDENTITIES AND TAKE ACTION TO REALISE TRANS RIGHTS



We call on all organisations and persons involved to reject the essentialisation of sex and gender, and to adopt a more human idea of sex and gender that is more inclusive and respectful in its presentations. This is to ensure a wider acceptance of Trans identities, the acknowledgement of their full humanity, and to foster action that asserts their full validity on the sociopolitical plane across Africa.

4. INCREASE COLLABORATION AND COOPERATION BETWEEN WOMEN AND LGBTQIA+ ORGANISATIONS

Seeing as the same sexist underpinnings support misogyny and homo/trans-phobia, Feminist and LGBTQIA+ organisations must come together to form an alliance rooted in this acknowledgement in order to pose a concrete and powerful challenge to the patriarchal foundations of the African society. The progress we want is an all inclusive and comprehensive one. To this end, our advocacy must be all inclusive and comprehensive.

CONTRIBUTORS

93 individuals that include sixty-seven participants at the feminist action on LGBTQI rights at the 10th ACSHR Conference in Freetown; and, twenty-six feminists, gender justice activists, and representatives of Women's/ LGBTQI rights organisations from Eastern, Western, and Southern Africa reached through an online survey

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