
IMPROVING ACCESS TO LBGT RIGHTS AND HEALTH CARE IN SELECTED REGIONS OF GHANA

A COLLABORATIVE PROJECT BY HUMAN RIGHT ADVOCACY CENTRE (HRAC) AND WEST AFRICA AIDS FOUNDATION (WAAF) NOVEMBER 2014-MAY 2015

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1 INTRODUCTION

In Ghana, discrimination against members of the LGBT community is widespread, both within State institutions and in the community at large. While the rights of LGBT persons to be free from discrimination have been recognised internationally, and, as citizens of Ghana, LGBT persons like other Ghanaians have basic rights under the 1992 Constitution of Ghana; these rights are currently not receiving adequate protection.

This project aims to improve the protection and promotion of the rights of members of the LGBT community in Ghana by educating and clarifying values of State institutions that interact with the LGBT population, Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) and the broader Ghanaian population on diversity and discrimination, and LGBT rights.

The project is envisaged to empower human rights advocates as well as clarify and changed perceptions of duty bearers (including state institutions such as the Commission on Human Rights and Administrative Justice (CHRAJ), and the Domestic Violence and Victim Support Unit of the Ghana Police Service (DOVVSU)) and LGBT communities to better protect and advocate for the rights of LGBT persons in Ghana. This in turn will support the reduction of stigmatization and discrimination against LGBT persons in Ghana.

With the collaboration of the West African AIDS Foundation (WAAF), LGBT people from within targeted communities in the Greater Accra and Western Regions will receive friendly health care services which they are usually denied.

The objectives of this project are therefore:

- To increase the capacity of advocates (including state organisations and CSOs) to advocate for the rights of LGBT persons in Ghana;
- To empower members of the LGBT community to enforce their rights by arming them with information and strategies for rights protection;
- To develop a strong network of organisations who advocate for the protection of the human rights of LGBT people.
- To contribute to access to quality, affordable, stigma free health information, risk reduction and treatment services to enhance health status of LGBT people.

In order to achieve these objectives, HRAC and WAAF engaged in various activities focused on improving LGBT rights and access to health. This report is to highlight activities accomplished in the first half of the project implementation. The report is in two parts. Part one is the report of activities completed by HRAC with part two being the activities accomplished by WAAF.

2. PART I: ACTIVITIES COMPLETED BY HUMAN RIGHTS ADVOCACY CENTRE

The Human Rights Advocacy Centre undertook the following activities to implement the Improving Access to LGBT Rights and Health Care in Selected Regions of Ghana:

- Update of Literature materials for LGBT community on human rights and how to address abuse with the legal and support system in Ghana.
- Developed documentary on LGBT in Ghana for the education of media and government institutions responsible for the protection of human rights.
- Held a Stakeholders inception meeting on the formation of a network/coalition on LGBT and human rights
- Organized a three-day consultative workshop on the development of strategy to advocate for human rights protection of LGBT.
- Marked international Human Rights Day Against Homophobia and Transgender (IDAHOT).
- Held human rights and legal education training workshop for 30 LGBTs in Greater Accra Region.
- Held a Press Release on rise of mob Action

2.1 Overview of Midterm Activities

2.1.1 Update of Literature materials for LGBT community on human rights and how to address abuse with the legal and support system in Ghana

HRAC constituted a four member team, in March 2015, to update the handbooks on “Advocacy and Empowerment on LGBT Rights.” The team has submitted the first draft for review. The literature materials when completed will be the training material for the LGBT community on human rights. The material will be disseminated among Human Rights Defenders, Civil Society Organisations (CSOs), Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) and governmental human

rights institutions including the police, Commission on Human Rights and Administrative Justice (CHRAJ) and Legal Aid as a resource material for addressing human rights issues in Ghana.

The expected outcome of this activity is the publication of 1,000 copies of updated handbooks on LGBT. The targeted timeline is January 2015. We have not been able to fully achieve this outcome due to the bulkiness of information on LGBTs gathered both locally and international that need thorough scrutiny. The team asked for extension to submit the final draft on 30th June, 2015.

2.1.2 Developed documentary on LGBT in Ghana.

After exhaustive consultation with key stakeholders and partners on the content of a documentary on LGBT in Ghana, HRAC contracted Dynamite Communication Limited to develop a documentary on LGBT in Ghana. Dynamite submitted the first production of the audio video material which was reviewed by HRAC, donor partners, AfED and WAAF at the AfED quarterly meeting held on 24th March, 2015. After the review the team recommended Dynamite to broaden the scope of contributors from the general public. For instance there was a suggestion to include the opinion of the clergy in the documentary.

The expected outcome of the documentary is an audio video file which educate the media and government institutions responsible for the protection of human rights, and the general public on LGBT. Dynamite submitted final copy of the documentary video to HRAC on 8th May 2015.

2.1.3 Stakeholders inception meeting on the formation of a network/coalition on LGBT and human rights

On 24th November, 2014 HRAC conducted the first inception meeting at Cleaver House in Accra. Participants were drawn from members of the LGBT community, LGBT advocates (defenders) from various regions of Ghana and LGBT-focused organizations including the Centre for Popular Education and Human Rights Ghana (CEPEHRG), Priority on Rights and Sexual Health, and Maritime Life Precious Foundation. A social health worker from the West African Aids Foundation (WAAF) was also present. There were total of twenty-two (22)

participants and four (4) HRAC staff. The purpose of the meeting was to initiate discussion towards building a strong network of civil society organizations (CSOs), community-based organizations (CBOs) and key stakeholders in advancing and protecting the human rights of LGBTs in Ghana. There was also discussion on ways to improve LGBTs access to healthcare services. Some of the major outcome of the discussion are:

- The need to reduce the current one-sided focus on homosexuals by including lesbians, transgender and bisexuals in the LGBT advocacy and empowerment activities in Ghana;
- The need for greater opportunities for empowerment and skill development as an important component of advocacy; and
- Extending the LGBT human right intervention activities and empowerment beyond Accra and the South of Ghana to other regions of the country.

The meeting made the following recommendations:

- The need to translate important legal instruments and empowerment literature into the local language;
- The need for greater involvement and partnership with the media in advocating for the rights of LGBT communities; and that,
- For greater commitment and passion toward LGBT related intervention and activities, the leadership of CSOs/NGOs working directly on LGBT projects/programmes should be members of the LGBT community.

A major outcome of the first inception meeting was the formation of a network of individual members of the LGBT community and CSOs working directly with LGBTs which later was christened Alliance for Equality and Diversity (AfED). The membership and possible activities of the network were discussed.

This activity was scheduled for the last quarter of the project. However, the project team at the commencement of the project implementation realized the need to implement it in the first quarter for the network and the HRAC to collaborate in the organization of some of the activities solely designed to address the concern of LGBTs.

2.1.4 Two days Consultative workshop on the development of strategy to advocate for human rights protection of LGBT.

HRAC organized a three-days consultative workshop at Dodowa from 29th to 31st January, 2015 for NGOS/CSOs working with LGBTs and members of the LGBT community. The purpose of the workshop was to develop strategies that will aid in the protection of the rights and total wellbeing of the LGBT community. In her opening remark, Ms. Hege Hertzberg (the Norwegian Ambassador), stated that human rights are for all and not just selected people. According to the Ambassador, the fight for LGBTs is hard in Ghana, because of community perception. Drawing on the experience of other countries, she challenged participants to develop a strategy within the Ghanaian context and stated that there will be change in the Ghanaian situation as it happened in other countries. Ms. Zainabu Williams (Vice Consul, US Embassy), in a short address discussed the myth by Ghanaians that LGBT is a foreign concept.

The workshop had two inter-related sessions. The first session (day one) presented an overview of the current status of LGBTs in Ghana, with the second (day two and three) focused on developing strategies for the wellbeing of the LGBT community. The session was facilitated by three resource persons.

Mac-Darling Cobbinah (the Executive Director of CEPEHRG) presented on the current situation of regional and international LGBT issues. He made mention of various LGBT concerns in India, USA, Uganda and Nigeria. Dr. Naa Ashiley Vanderpuye-Donton (the Chief Executive Officer of WAAF) in her presentation gave a broad picture of LGBT health issues and areas to consider when thinking about strategies to adopt for the health of LGBTs. She climaxed her presentation by discussing some of the external human right concerns (victimizations, violence, moral judgment, discrimination, abuse) and internal or self-stigmatization which includes low self-esteem, depression, social withdrawal not seeking treatment. She concluded her presentation by providing approaches to protect the health right of the LGBT person.

Robert Akoto Amofo (Executive Director of HRAC), in his presentation on human rights and the law stated that a great deal of work has been done in Ghana focusing

on LGBT persons over the past decade. Majority of the work has focused on health; specifically HIV prevention and management among MSMs who are a key component of the LGBT community in Ghana. That notwithstanding, he stated there are still reports of fundamental human rights abuse against LGBT people. Some of these cases sometimes go unreported. With reference to the 1992 Ghanaian constitution, he asserted that on one hand the constitution of Ghana protects the rights of all Ghanaians irrespective of their sexual orientation, while on the other hand the unclear nature or stand of the Ghanaian law (section 104 of the Criminal Offences Act (Act 29) threatens the rights of LGBTs. The issue of undefined political and socio cultural positioning on LGBTs and their rights was the focus of his presentation. Robert concluded by recommending the need for stakeholders to distinguish between LGBT and MSM interventions and to focus on the other elements of the LGBT community. He emphasized on the need for continuous education for human rights institutions like Commission Human Rights and Administrative Justice (CHRAJ), Ghana Police Service, Social Welfare, Domestic Violence and Victims Support Unit (DOVVSU) and LGBTs, and stressed that such education and empowerment should go beyond health and human rights.

The major outcome of the workshop is the development of a strategic plan for the wellbeing of LGBT persons. The participants used the third session of day one to identify the human rights and access to health challenges confronting LGBTs in Ghana, and difficulty in forming a unified body of LGBTs. With the Challenges identified, participants used days two and three to develop a two-year strategic plan. Participants agreed that the group will meet two years after the implementation of the final strategic plan to evaluate its effectiveness.

In her closing remark Ms. Caecillia Widjgers (the Deputy Ambassador of the Dutch Embassy), advised that the objectives must be made clear and an action plan must be developed to implement the strategies. She also alerted participants of the risk involved in implementing such advocacy strategy and that they should prepare to take the risk. She stressed on the need for a strong network for solidarity. She underlined the need for the community to monitor and compile human rights violations of LGBT persons in the country as a powerful tool to engage

government, NGOs and other influential persons. In conclusion, she congratulated all participants present and pledged the support of the Kingdom of the Royal Netherlands Embassy at any given time and situation.

There were total thirteen (13) participants drawn from CSOs and the LGBT community, three (3) facilitators and five (5) guest from our partners. The activity scheduled for the last quarter was held in the first quarter to enable HRAC collaborate with the AfED in the finalization and monitoring of the implementation of the strategic plan.

2.1.5 International Day Against Homophobia and Transphobia (IDAHOT) Ghana 2015

HRAC in collaboration with AfED marked the International Day Against Homophobia and Transphobia in the Western, Volta and Greater Accra regions of Ghana. The focus of the event is to watch the first ever documentary on LGBTs in Ghana and discuss the content and its implication for LGBTs and public interaction. The major outcomes of the event was the awareness created among the LGBT community about the perception the public about homosexuality. The event also gave community the opportunity to gather for the first time as a united body.

IDAHOT in Volta Region

HRAC through AfED in Volta Region marked IDAHOT Ghana 2015 at the Liberty Hotel Aflao on 15th May, 2015. The event brought together twenty-eight (28) members of the LGBT community in Aflao and two (2) staff from the Humana Right Advocacy center. Mr. Lawrence Adjei, the Outreach coordinator for CEPEHRG gave the welcome address. He began his address by educating participants about IDAHOT and traced the history to 17th of May 1985, and added that IDAHOT is celebrated worldwide on 17th of May. He pointed out that this is the second official marking of the event in Ghana and said that the 2015 IDAHOT is being marked in the Volta, Western and Greater Accra Regions. He indicated that the purpose of the meeting is to discuss and human rights of LGBTIs in the Volta region, and stressed that was the reason the HRAC was there to educate, document cases,

answer questions and provide legal assistance to the community members. On these note he welcomed everyone to the program and wished all a happy IDAHO.

The LGBT Documentary was premiered as part of the program for the night. The participants took time to critically watch the documentary and listened attentively to all issues and what the various personalities spoke about. Questions were asked about the documentary during the discussion. Participants also shared some experiences that they had with their communities. Comments from participants showed that they were very ignorant about their rights and need more education and assistance on legal services.

Philomina Ahiable, the Human Rights Clinic Manager at HRAC, began her presentation by saying that the sexuality of all humans cannot be the same, each individual has different sexual orientation and sexuality is not a choice. He reiterated the need for people to respect the rights of all, including LGBTs. Touching on the basic fundamental rights of all human beings, she took time to mention the various rights and discussed how those rights can be upheld and where to seek redress when the rights are abused. She spoke about the legal desk at HRAC which is providing legal services for the LGBT community and discussed with participants on how to make complaints to the desk on abuses, she assured all that it is very confidential and there are pro bono lawyers who are ready to handle cases. She ended her presentation by saying that our rights as human beings come with responsibilities and therefore in seeking our rights we must also be responsibilities.

Mr. Adjei led the group to discuss issues on security and risk reduction. He spoke about the need for participants to secure their phones and the importance of keeping their picture and private information from social media or sharing such with people they do not know. He also caution them to be very careful of people they even know. His reason for the caution is that people may use revealed information for blackmailing. He added that to avoid blackmailing and physical attacks it is advisable to meet new friends in public and open places. He also spoke about the risk of HIV/AIDS and STIs and advised all to use condoms and lubricants

correctly and consistently, and check their status and seek early treatment at all times.

The meeting ended with thanks and appreciation by Abusah Dodzi, who thanked the participants and encouraged all to share information they received with members of the LGBT community in the Aflao community.

IDAHOT in Western Region

Maritime coordinated the event at Takoradi, in the Western Region, on 16th May, 2015 at the Maritime office. A total of eighteen (18) members comprising of seventeen (17) gays and one (1) Lesbian participated in the event. The activity commenced with a welcome by Mr. Anthony Adenu-Mensah, the Programmes Manager of Maritime, who introduced AfED to the participants and encouraged them to be active participants in future AfED planned activities. Anthony also stated the purpose of the gathering as a community interaction and an opportunity to understand public perception of LGBT and how that should influence how members of the LGBT community relate to the public to avoid unnecessary conflict.

In his introduction to the documentary, Mr. George Owoo, the Acting Executive Director of the HRAC, gave a brief background to IDAHOT and encouraged participants to pay attention to the details of the documentary and freely share their views and contribute to the discussion. The participants watched the documentary after which Anthony led the discussion. There was a split in opinion as to whether the documentary should be used for public education. It was finally agreed that with the anti-LGBT sentiment expressed in the documentary, it is not safe to share the content with the public.

George Owoo, Acting Executive Director of HRAC in his closing remarks stated the need for members of the LGBT community to be united and help each other; be conscious of their security; and be prompt in reporting human right abuses to appropriate institutions for action. Anthony shared with the participants recent attacks on three members of the community in Amanful and Effie Kuma (suburbs) of Takoradi. To end the meeting, George thanked all participants present.

IDAHOT in Greater Accra Region

HRAC in collaboration with AfED, Accra, marked the International Day Against Homophobia and Transphobia (IDAHOT) on 16th May, 2015. The event was hosted by Her Excellency Deputy Ambassador of the Kingdom of the Royal Netherlands, Cecilia Widjgers. Over 180 members of the LGBT community participated in the event.

The moderator of the event introduced the concept of IDAHOT and linked the Accra event with other similar events held in the Western and Volta Regions. Participants were invited to add their signatures to the statement banner “I stand against homophobia; I believe in equality and freedom for all” at the entrance to the venue. The focus of the event was the screening of a documentary on LGBT that showcased personal experience of some members of the LGBT community and public opinions on LGBTs’ rights in Ghana. This was followed by a seven member panel discussion to help all present to understand the complexities of public view on the dialogue on the rights of LGBTs in Ghana. This was followed by a moment of silence and lighting of candles in remembrance of deceased members of the LGBT community. There was presentation of awards to seven personalities who have contributed immensely to the advocacy for the recognition of the rights of LGBTs in Ghana. The event was climaxed by poetry and a fashion show by a prominent designer and member of the LGBTI community.

2.1.6 Human Rights and Legal Education Training Workshop for 30 LGBTs in Greater Accra Region.

HRAC held a human rights and legal education training workshop for twenty-nine (29) out of the expected thirty (30) LGBTs in Accra on 29th May, 2015 at the SNNIT Guest House. The participants comprise of seventeen (17) gays, two (2) bisexuals, and ten (10) lesbians. Mr. George Owoo, the Ag. Executive Director of HRAC, welcomed the participants and stated that the workshop is to empower the LGBT community by providing them with legal security information that will equip them to appreciate and protect their rights. Mr. Nelson Azumah, the Minority Right Officer at HRAC, led participants to develop the workshop rules and their expectation from the training, after which all present introduced themselves. The West African Aids Foundation set up a health screening desk at the workshop to answer any

questions regarding health, while the HRAC mounted a human rights clinic to take and address human rights cases/concerns by participants. A major outcome of the workshop is that the human rights clinic of HRAC received three cases – one stigma related, and two human right related cases, an indication that participants learned and were empowered.

2.1.6.1 Presentations:

2.1.6.1.1 LGBT around the world: By Sara Hartford and Heather Tucker

Sara, an intern at HRAC, gave a presentation on LGBT Rights in Canada and she discussed some of the notable legal achievements the LGBT community has made as well as certain challenges that they continue to face. In response to the presentation many of the participants showed particular interest in the discriminatory policies that still plague the LGBT community and in specific, Canada's policy banning homosexual men from donating blood. Heather Tucker, a volunteer and researcher with HRAC, presented on LGBTIQQ issues around the world. Ms. Tucker started her presentation on explaining that she uses LGBTIQQ, as the stands for intersex, the Q for queer (in her regional context), and another Q for Questioning. Ms. Tucker went through the basic information of the number of countries in the world which have legalized gay marriage, have legalized or decriminalized same sex acts, and those countries which have criminalized, and or have not removed colonial penal codes which criminalize same sex acts. Further, Ms. Tucker reviewed some of those countries, which have passed laws, which have criminalized "homosexual propaganda," or countries which have sought to replicate criminalization patterns similar to Russia and Uganda. Ms. Tucker also explained which countries have also legalized third genders, or choosing one's gender on one's birth certificate, which countries allow for similar arrangements to same sex marriage (such as civil unions or civil partnerships), and which countries have legislated to explicitly criminalize homophobic or trans phobic violence.

The purpose of this presentation was for the participant to learn from best practices as they pursue the recognition of LGBT rights in Ghana.

2.1.6.1.2 *LGBT and Security: By Chief Superintendent Jones Blantari*

Mr. Blantari from the Ghana Police Service in his presentation made reference to the Criminal Code Section 104 (1) (b) and explained that carnal knowledge is the penetration of the penis into the virgin (natural sex). Though he did not dwell much on the criminality of other forms of sex, Mr. Blantari indicated that the Criminal Code criminalizes anal and oral sex (unnatural carnal knowledge). However, he stressed the fact that since sex is a private affair the police will never arrest any persons who engage in anal or oral sex in their privacy. Using this as a link, Mr. Blantari stated that it is the members of the LGBT community that report their private sexual affairs to the police. The Chief educated the community on the illegality of having sex with a minor. The Chief continued his presentation with a list of security challenges for the “key populations” and LGBT community. These including blackmailing (by LGBT community members towards other LGBT community members), the nature of illegal work such as sex work, and the community members being involved in illegal activities unrelated to sexual identity/acts.

He said the law on sodomy is clear so if a member of the community have sex with a minor, with or without consent, it will be treated as criminal. In this case the criminality is not about sexual orientation but about legality. He sighted the Dr, Abass case as an example. He counseled participants to make sure that their partners are not under age (minors).

Mr. Blantari, in reference to a recent training he had at the US Embassy on the “Gender Person” admitted that most Police Officers has little or no knowledge about homosexuality and reiterated it is wrong to criminalize one’s sexual orientation, and also added that the Police service is educating the Officers on the “Gender Person.”

2.1.6.1.3 *Know Your Rights and Responsibilities: By George Owoo*

George Owoo followed with a presentation on Knowing Your Rights and Responsibilities. He began his presentation with a pre-training evaluation questions asking the participants some general questions about what they currently know about human rights. He then discussed some general legislation

that cover human rights including the Universal Declaration of Human rights, the ICCPR and other international laws, and case laws. Following general rights, Mr. Owoo went into a detailed description of more specific rights and under which legislations they are covered that members of the LGBT community should be aware of. Some of these specific rights include: right to privacy/private relations, shelter, expression, assembly, health/sustenance, employment, education, and social security/pension; and freedom from torture, arbitrary arrest and detention, discrimination; and freedom of expression, association, and peaceful assembly. Other areas discussed are the discriminatory laws against human rights of LGBTs. Mr. Owoo with reference to Article 104 (1) (b) of the Ghanaian Constitution that criminalizes “unnatural carnal knowledge” and makes “gay sex” criminal. Though in Ghana, there is no legal recognition of same sex couples, Mr. Owoo alluding to the Registrar’s pronouncement **“Do I understand you A.B. and you C.D. that you come here for the purpose of becoming man and wife?”** (Marriage Ordinance, 1951- CAP 127) explained that this does not leave room for same sex couples and as such discriminate against LGBTs.

His final presentation covered what individuals can do when international and domestic obligations are not met. He encouraged participants to submit claims through the court system; File a complaint under the treaty body complaints mechanism; seek asylum in emergency situations; and support human rights education and campaigns in situations where international human right obligations are not met. In situations where domestic obligations are not met, participants were advised to initiate legal action; consult a legal counselor; and collectively get involved in advocacy activities. Participants were counseled to report human right abuses to the Human Rights Clinic of HRAC, and CHRAJ immediately they occur.

2.1.6.1.4 Training on the CHRAJ Online Stigma and Discrimination Reporting System: by Lawyer Efua Ewur

Lawyer Efua Ewur from the legal depart of CHRAJ and an administrator of the Health Help Desk gave the background to the CHRAJ Stigma and Discrimination Reporting System and said it is designed for Key Populations

(MSMs, SWs and PLHIVs). She noted however, that CHRAJ has the mandate to assist people with all forms of human right abuses. She encouraged participants to submit claims if their rights are abused. Lawyer Ewur took participant, step by step, through the reporting system. She told participants who lack computer skills to walk in to any CHRAJ office or contact HRAC to assist them to file an online report.

2.1.6.1.5 Experience Sharing

A participant shared a story of being arrested for defilement, and kept in jail for a total of one year. The participant states that the person he had sex with was a minor, but he did not know, and the mother of the minor reported him to the police. The participant shares that he pleaded guilty out of ignorance, and therefore ended up in jail. The participant reports that he met several people with similar stories in jail.

Miss Philomena Ahiable, explained to participants they should certify the age of persons they engage in sex with.

Another participant shared that HRAC legal staff helped them. A person they knew took an HIV test for a health screening at work (which was a school). The test was positive, and the word got to the headmaster of the school. They then forced the person to write a resignation letter. HRAC is now helping the person to take legal action against the school.

Another participant shared a story of being publicly humiliated and called an “Aagbla kpor,” which means “pulling of the clit” The person states that he has handled it the situation his own way, but that he will also report it to HRAC.

Another participant shared the story of being documented on a video, which was shared on YouTube. The participant explains that it is important for community members to be aware of purpose of research and documentary videos before they participate in them. The participant stated that they should have read and signed the consent form themselves, but unfortunately trusted a friend to do so, and therefore had no control over protecting themselves.

2.1.7 Press Release on Mob Action

In commemoration of the International Day of Human Rights, HRAC held a press conference on 10th December, 2015 at the HRAC office to address increasing rate of mob action [justice] in Ghana against suspected homosexuals. The Conference was addressed by Mr. Robert Akoto Amofo, Executive Director, HRAC; Mr. Eddie Annan, Deputy Commissioner, CHRAJ; Madam Mena Mensah, Regional Coordinator, Africa Office, Commonwealth Human Rights Initiatives; and Mr. Robert Numo, Programme Manager, Legal Resource Centre. The theme for the Press Conference was mob action [justice].

Mr. Akoto in his address expressed concern about the increasing rate of mob action in the Ghanaian society and said it is illegal and denies alleged criminal or innocent victims their right to fair trial and justice. He called on the Ghana Police Service to be proactive in addressing reported incidents and ensure speedy trial of perpetrators. HRAC encouraged CHRAJ, NCCE and human rights defenders to increase public education on the need for individuals to report suspected crimes to the police for investigation. Madam Mina Mensah in her contribution called for the delivery of justice and the enforcement of laws.

This event was not part of the planned activities for the project. HRAC saw the International Day on Human Right as a good opportunity to address the increasing physical attacks on members of the LGBT community. HRAC sent a request to our partners to organize the event which was approved. The outcome of the event is that there was a media reportage on the event; HRAC was invited to contribute to panel discussion on mob action and public discussion on LGBT issues on FM Station.

2.2 Achieved Outcomes

- Twenty-nine (29) LGBT persons empowered to protect their rights and that of other LGBT persons in Greater Accra Region.
- Established network CSOs and in Greater Accra Region.
- A documentary video on public perception of LGBTs produced to educate the general public on LGBT.
- A network of CSOs, activists and personalities, and members of the LGBT

community formed and christened Alliance for Equality and Diversity (AfED).

- A strategic document to guide the network developed.
- International Day Against Homophobia and Transgender (IDHOT) marked in three regions in Ghana.

2.3 Outstanding Outcome

The publication of 1,000 copies of updated handbooks on LGBT human rights and how to address human rights abuse still in progress.

2.4 Challenges/Lessons learnt

The unavailability of data on Lesbians; Bisexuals and Trans-genders, the reluctance and refusal of some key public figures to contribute towards the documentary on LGBT; and the resignation of the project lead and contact person are the major challenges the confronted the project.

The following are some of the lessons learnt through the midterm activities:

- That most of the reported abuses of the rights of LGBTs by police officers is as a result of ignorance of the officers about homosexuality, lack of knowledge and understanding of the human rights laws, and difficulty in interpretation of the Ghanaian laws on sexual activities.
- That majority of alleged LGBT cases handled by the police are as a result of engagement of members of the LGBT community in criminal activities, such a blackmailing and sodomy.
- That there are a lot of LGBTs in the society who are hidden for security reasons. And that increased social activities with assured security protection will encourage them to come out of their hiding.
- That human rights and health related projects and interventions are concentrated in Southern Ghana, Greater Accra, Western and Central Regions.
- That members of the LGBT community lack an authentic and united voice, and the skill to embark on advocacy campaign to fight for the recognition of the rights and freedom of LGBTs in Ghana.

2.5 Way forward

- As a way forward HRAC is to interrogate further the admittance by the Ghana Police that majority of police officers lack knowledge about homosexuality at the value clarification workshops scheduled for July 2015 at Accra and Takoradi to engage duty bearers and CSOs in steps we can take to support the Ghana Police Service in their effort to educate officers on homosexuality, human rights and the LGBT related laws.
- There should be in-depth security and legal sensitization among members of the LGBT community concerning on how to protect themselves from self-inflicted criminal acts.
- HRAC will collaborate with AfED and partners to establish the IDAHOT event as an annual event in Ghana by extending the marking of the event to all the regions in Ghana in 2016 to reach out to all LGBTs across the nation. During the celebration HRAC will launch “PRIDE 2020”.
- HRAC also will collaborate with partners to replicate the entire project to the remaining eight (8) regions of Ghana.
- There is the need to form regional AfED groups and embark on capacity building in advocacy for AfED to empower them to lead the fight for the recognition of the rights and freedom of LGBTs in Ghana.

3. PART II: ACTIVITIES COMPLETED BY WEST AFRICA AIDS FOUNDATION

3.1 Summary of first half of project year

WAAF has provided access to quality, friendly and professional health services, with focus on screening and treatment of sexually transmitted Infections, health education and counselling for members of the LGBT community in Greater Accra and Western Region. During the first six months of project implementation a total of 482 people have been reached by our services, of which 176 have received treatment for various forms of STI's. 380 now know their HIV status through HTC. Members of the target groups are reached through service provided at the DIC's as well as through outreach programs where WAAF meets the target groups through the help of Peer Educators from CEPEHRG and Maritime.

3.2 Objective

People engaging in same sex activities are not well accepted in the Ghanaian society, this is also the situation in most health facilities. Where quality health care is supposed to be provided to ALL people, disregarding sex, race, religion or sexuality, members of the LGBT community meet stigma and discrimination. Due to the way people are met and treated at many health institutions some of the LGBT's fear and avoid seeking health services when wanted and/or needed. Especially the group of men having sex with men, prevalence of STI's including HIV is higher than the general population, so for this group there is even a higher need for friendly, stigma free health services. WAAF, in collaboration with organizations working closely with the LGBT communities, aim to address this barrier of LGBT's accessing health care by providing friendly, free and professional health care. Not only will the LGBT's have access to health care services, they will also be empowered to make safer decisions in their sexual life as well as use of preventive methods.

In the Greater Accra Region, Lesbians, Gays, Bisexuals and Transgender (LGBT) work closely with the Center For Popular Education and Human Rights, Ghana (CEPEHRG). Same applies to those in the Western Region who work closely with Maritime Life Precious Foundation (Maritime) in Takoradi. As these organizations have a strong network within the target group, working through their Peer educators (PEs) in various communities in the two mentioned regions allows for members of these LGBT communities to be informed and mobilized for these services.

3.3 DROP IN CENTER (DIC)

The DIC is a small scale health service facility, with room and environment for privacy and confidentiality. Located within the CEPEHRG facility in Teshie-Nungu, Accra, a Norwegian trained registered general nurse with special training in counselling and Sexual Reproductive Health is in charge of the functioning of the DIC.

The DIC offers once a week service where clients are referred to the facility by PE's. At the DIC screenings of STI's and free treatment is provided. All clients are offered voluntary HIV testing and Counselling (HTC). In addition, rapid testing for malaria, typhoid and Hepatitis B are also available, as well as treatment for other basic

ailments. Psychosocial support is also provided, together with awareness of human rights and protection.

For clients who need further investigations or follow up, they are referred to either the WAAF's onsite clinic, International Health Care Centre (IHCC) or any other preferred or more appropriate health facilities.

3.4 OUTREACH

Despite quality, affordable stigma free health services provided at the DIC's, some clients still do not seek the services at the DIC. Reasons are mainly financial constraints, time or different prioritizing. For those who do not or cannot come to us, we try to go to them. WAAF sees it useful bringing the services to the doorsteps of the target group. Therefore, in collaboration with CEPEHRG's Peer Educator's the nurse goes out into the communities, providing the exact same services as offered at the DIC's, which include STI screening and treatment, HTC, condom and lubricant distribution as well as education and awareness on STI's, including HIV and other Sexual Health related issues. The venue is mostly arranged to ensure a closed spaced for the nurse to allow for private consultation and testing. The nurse is mostly assisted by a second staff or volunteer from WAAF. The PE is always in charge of the education and awareness services given to the group as they attend consultations individually. All participants receive condoms and lubricants. Whenever there is a need for further translation or explanation to the clients, the PE assists the nurse and this is always under strict confidentiality procedures.

3.5 OUTCOME

For the project year, WAAF's goal is to reach 200 members of the LGBT population in Greater Accra and Western Region with medical care and health education. Half way into the project **114** known LGBT's have attended health services through either the DIC or outreach programs. This figure reflects the number of people who have personally disclosed their sexuality to the nurse. It is well known that from the total of 482 people participating in the service, more than 114 interact with same sex activities, but they are not willing or confident enough to disclose to the nurse. Information from the PE's mobilizing and knowing the clients support the assumption that most of the people attending outreaches do take part in same sex activities.

From December 2014 till the end of April 2015 the DIC was open 20 days, and 12 outreaches were conducted in various communities in the Greater Accra Region.

Through these activities, a total of **482** people were reached with health services. 381 males and 101 females. A total of **249** have received free treatment of which **176** having been treated for STI's. **380** conducted HIV testing and all 482 received sexual health related education and awareness on preventive methods for STI's. **3411** condoms and **1235** lubricants have been distributed.

Out of the 380 people testing for HIV, **25** people tested reactive of which, **22** belong to the LGBT group. All reactive cases are referred for confirmation test. Of the total 25 referred for confirmation testing, 13 have visited the next level of care facility at least once but unfortunately 12 have not followed through. One of 13 who reported for confirmation test, tested non - reactive. Further follow up will be done with this case.

Site	Total seen	Male	Fem	LGBT's*	STI's	Treatment	HTC	Reactive	LGBT Reactive
Chorkor A	51	43	8	2	20	30	50	0	0
JamesTown	31	15	16	7	19	20	28	0	0
Osu	12	8	4	9	8	10	9	2	2
Bubuashie	42	38	4	1	17	23	29	0	0
Chorkor B	36	33	3	9	14	18	32	4	4
Adabraka	23	17	6	1	6	8	22	1	0
Sakumono	34	23	11	2	9	18	29	1	0
Bukom	36	26	10	11	11	11	35	5	4
Mamprobi	18	12	6	4	0	6	16	0	0
Achimota	36	29	7	9	7	8	34	0	0
Tema	22	21	1	1	6	7	18	0	0
Chorkor A	26	24	2	3	0	3	25	2	2
TOTAL	367	289	78	59	117	162	327	15	12
DIC	115	92	23	55	59	87	53	10	10
GRAND TOTAL	482	381	101	114	176	249	380	25	22

3.6 OTHER ACTIVITIES

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Home Care necessitated due to stigma: One person had to be attended to at his home. The nurse had been notified of a critical situation relating to stigma and lack of cooperation from the man's family, leading to him not being able to access care in a health facility or an organized outreach event. The nurse therefore attended to this person in his house. After counselling and observations the man was referred and sent to IHCC for further care.

Extra Monitoring: One client from the DIC has had to be followed up very closely, even to the extent of escorts to hospital appointments. He has also been receiving financial support to undergo necessary laboratory investigation tests.

3.7 Challenges/Lessons learnt

Follow up of clients with reactive results to HIV test is key as they need to be enrolled onto HIV management. Unfortunately, majority of people testing reactive to the initial HIV test during outreach events will not take the initiative to go for a confirmation test despite the counselling by the nurse. Through follow up calls indicated, only about half of the clients will come for follow up visit giving room for further counselling. Follow up through phone calls is a challenge as several clients do not have contact numbers. Equally, due to confidentiality it is difficult to reach them through other people or other peoples phone numbers.

Activities planned were to conduct weekly outreach events within the Greater Accra as well as monthly outreach in the Western Region. Since organizing the outreach in collaboration with PE's it has been difficult to mobilize communities every week for outreach. Additionally, three outreaches have had to be cancelled due to different reasons, and they were never replaced.

The project in the Western Region was delayed due to new staff and tight schedule that did not allow the project coordinator to travel to start project as planned. However, activities in the WR started in April 2015 where every Tuesday a health assistant from WAAF is present at the DIC of Maritime offering health services to members of the LGBT.

3.8 Way forward

In Accra the DIC will continue to be open every Thursday from 8.00am to 3.00pm. Outreaches will equally continue to be organized roughly every week.

In Takoradi, WAAF health personnel will be at the DIC every Tuesday and a total of at least 10 outreaches will be organized.

As we reach members of the target group LGBT's, we want to ensure that participants receive more knowledge and get more empowered with regards to human rights related topics. All though information and education is focused on health information on human rights, is also widely shared as we see need for more advocacy on other human rights issues. In the second term of this project we will ensure increased support from HRAC staff especially during outreach events so participants can have their knowledge and experience on human rights enhanced.

To assure more support and knowledge for participants a support group on the mobile application, Whatsapp, will be established. This will provide an excellent platform for anonymous members of the LGBT group to receive education, to clarify misconceptions and to open up for discussion between the group members and the nurse who will be administrator of the group.

4. CONCLUSION

Notwithstanding the challenges faced during the first half of the project implementation, it has been a learning experience and success. Members of the community are empowered to protect their human rights and also take appropriate legal steps to seek redress when their human rights are infringed upon and a total of 482 people were reached by WAAF's services in 12 communities in Accra, out of which 114 were LGBTs. The project management teams have reviewed the challenges and lessons learnt and are working on improving on activity implementation and building of more objective and effective collaboration in future to achieve the outcomes of the second half of the project.