



Global Dialogue Series

Letters to the Editor

LGBTQI Lives in Cameroon: Law, Human Rights and Health and Wellbeing

Dear Editor

Am called Mr Sone Desmond I am 30 years old am gay and working as the executive director of Rainbow cooperation limited an LGBTI community-based association founded in 2014 by young LGBT persons in Yaoundé Cameroon. Our primary mission is to valourise technical know-how of LGBT persons through sociocultural and educative activities to reduce stigma and discrimination on our community to participate in the development of our nation Cameroon. We do organise sensitisation programs, capacity building, development programs, sports, expositions, mini pride events, awards ceremonies and much more; I work with 12 volunteers staff who give in their all to make sure that our community become independent and reduce stigma on our community. We work in close collaborations with other LGBT organisations in Cameroon of which we are a member of an LGBT platform in Cameroon called Platforms unity a platform that regroup 32 LGBTI organisations and has the as main objective to protect the rights of our community members and community leaders. We are also a member of the enterprise, international organisations that regroup LGBTI pride organisations world wide.

As a volunteer working for LGBT community I face lots of difficulties because homosexuality is condemned by the law in Cameroon, the penal code of Cameroon article 347/1 highly condemn the practice of homosexuality with up to 5 years imprisonment, so the penal code is a

barrier for my work. We face lots of stigma and homophobic acts on us, our rights are violated by the law enforcement officers, religious bodies, family members and civil society, LGBTI persons are forced to live in hiding in order to express their sexual orientations, we are brutalised everyday by homophobic persons who believe that we don't have their rights to live, we are evil, we can't participate in the development of our nation. I, myself was sent away from my house by my landlord all because of my sexual orientation, he wounded me with a sharp Cutlass and held back all my household items till now he has all my stuff, I had to run away for my dear life and left all my stuff till today. As LGBTI persons we are facing difficulties. We have lots of LGBT community-based organizations in Cameroon that work for our community of which most of these organizations have as main objective to fight against HIV/AIDS and sexual health of LGBTI persons in Cameroon, it should be noted that they are doing a lot of good work to fight HIV on our community since due to high errate of stigma we get to hide and so we lack information and services on our sexual rights, so we carry-out sex without protection and get infected with HIV, there are some few funders who accompany these organizations to help fight these ills, but I in particular and my association RAINBOW CO LMT we believe that the problem is not HIV/AIDS our main problem is not Just the fact that our rights are violated. No government will legalize homosexuality just because homosexuals are highly

infected with HIV, neither will they legalize just because our rights are violated, we LGBTI persons we have to stand up and become productive in all domains that is agriculture, health, sports, fashion designing, politics, technology and much more, we believe that if we have LGBT leaders who represent us in all these domains we are going to make great change in the society by been productive, the society will respect us and even stand by us to put pressure to the government to legalize homosexuality in our country. Cameroon is an impoverished country LGBTI persons find it challenging to intergrade the society due to poverty and stigma if we don't fight against this ill our community will continue to be infected and affected with HIV/AIDS die every day. Many donors and founders focus on HIV forgetting that even those who are affected don't even have jobs, can't eat a day, live in difficult conditions, what we need is funders who can accompany us to develop LGBTI community through development programs, capacity building problems, develop activities to generate revenue, reinforce capacity of Community leaders so that we become productive and independent this way we will speak for ourselves, stand up for yourselves and reduce poverty in our country. We need funders who will not only come and look on HIV we are faced with much more problems of which if this is looked upon HIV AIDS will be reduced and our rights will be respected.

I and my association have been working since 2014 our of our funds, we have been carrying out programs activities with funds from our staff, members and well wishes, we wish to great partnerships and collaborations with international organizations to

accompany us in other to fight against stigma and discrimination on our community in other to bring développement between us, we are really facing difficulties since we have new and more significant projects but due to lack of funding we just can't carryout activities, we have a very very small office of 9m² that is not convenient for work and lack necessary materials to carryout our work, so we wish for help from well wishes and donors to accompany us in other for us to continue with the excellent work. We have to wish to increase our sensitisation programs, to educate our community and the society on tolerance and living together, we are all humans and has the right to live as any other Cameroonian. We believe in our community because we have so many talented LGBT community members who due to a high rate of poverty, stigma and discrimination they feel left out with auto stigma and can't tintebrate the society. We do really need help and assistance to work harder to develop our community and society, we wish to open an LGBTI centre were our community members will be able to get information and services on their sexual orientations, Human rights, develop their technical know-how and also open refuge rooms for LGBTI persons who have been sent out of their family homes and place of residence, we are calling on goodwill persons to help us to realize this great project that will help our dying community to become independent thanks together we stand.

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