AMSHER STRIVES FOR A FUTURE WHEN EVERY COUNTRY IN AFRICA WILL ENABLE SAFE, HEALTHY, PRODUCTIVE AND FULFILLING LIVES FOR ALL ITS PEOPLE, IRRESPECTIVE OF SEXUAL ORIENTATION, GENDER IDENTITY OR GENDER EXPRESSION.
ABOUT AMSHER

© November 2019 African Men for Sexual Health and Rights (AMSHeR)
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Founded in 2009, African Men for Sexual Health and Rights (AMSHeR) is a coalition of 18 LGBT+/MSM-led organisations across sub-Saharan Africa that aims to: address the disproportionate effect of the HIV epidemic on MSM and LGBT+ individuals; redress the human rights violations these populations face on the continent; and increase the visibility of LGBT+ individuals and their issues. Although AMSHeR’s formal membership is 18 organisations, strategically chosen to maintain geographic (Central, East, Southern and West Africa), linguistic (English, French, Kiswahili and Portuguese-speaking countries), and socio-legal (common law, civil law and Roman-Dutch legal systems) representation of sub-Saharan Africa, AMSHeR was formed in an attempt to devise ‘home-grown’ strategies to address local issues. AMSHeR maintains a reach across the whole of Africa through partnerships with a network of affiliate members.

SUGGESTED CITATION

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KEY TERMS/ GLOSSARY

AMSHeR: African Men Sexual Health and Rights
APCOM: Asia Pacific Coalition on Male Sexual Health
CAL: Coalition of African Lesbians
EAC: East African Community
ECOWAS: Economic Community of West African States
ECOM: Eurasian Coalition on Male Health
HIV: Human Immunodeficiency Virus
IAC: International AIDS Conference
ICASA: International Conference on AIDS and Sexually Transmitted Infections in Africa
ILGA: International Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans and Intersex Association
INGO: International Non-Governmental Organisation

LGBT: Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender
MDGs: Millennium Development Goals
MSM: Men who have sex with men
NGO: Non-Governmental Organisation
PLWHA: People Living with HIV/AIDS
SADC: Southern African Development Community
SDGs: Sustainable Development Goals
UN: United Nations
UNAIDS: Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS
UNDP: United Nations Development
UNESCO: United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
18 MEMBERS
15 COUNTRIES
1 COALITION
INTRODUCTION

One of the main highlights in preparing this Progress Report for the African Men for Sexual Health and Rights (AMShER) had to be the 10th Anniversary of AMSHeR. That’s 10 eventful years of promoting non-discrimination for LGBT+ individuals, building partnerships and achieving our mission of a healthy and empowered LGBT+ community in Africa. May this landmark occasion introduce an exciting new chapter of strengthening our leadership and, especially, celebrating the great contributions of our 18 members across 15 African countries as well as our global partners.

What a wonderful journey it has been!

Founded in 2009 by our Founding Pioneer, Joël Gustave Nana, AMSHeR came to be as a coalition of HIV and human rights organisations sharing a vision of an empowered and healthy life for African men who have sex with men, with human rights for all.

As early as 2005, during the International Conference on HIV/AIDS and STIs in Africa, people interested in building a coalition started an email listserv through which they could keep in touch and share information. The coalition started to take shape through discussions between the Global HIV and AIDS Programme Adviser at Oxfam GB, and individuals such as the Director of the Centre for Popular Education and Human Rights (CEPEHRG), an organisation working for LGBT+ rights in Ghana. Enthusiastic responses from members of the email listserv confirmed the appetite for a coalition. The idea also received support from Oxfam Novib, who at the time was the largest contributor to LGBT+ issues among Oxfam affiliates, and the International Gay and Lesbian Human Rights Commission (IGLHRC) based in Cape Town.

During the International AIDS Conference in Mexico City (August 2008), the Oxfam GB Programme Adviser, Director of CEPEHRG and the HIV Officer from IGLHRC stood outside a forum on MSM to ‘collect’ African activists who agreed on the need to formally establish a coalition. Donor representatives from amfAR (The Foundation for AIDS Research) and UNDP who happened to be walking by during the discussion expressed their willingness to see proposals for such a coalition. Encouraged by this, a member of Sexual Minorities Uganda drafted the first concept note of the pan African network of MSM and HIV organisations, which later became known as AMSHeR.

Celebrating 10 years of advocacy and leadership and successfully implementing the organisation’s strategic mandate, AMSHeR today continues its commitment to promoting the health and rights of LGBT+ across the continent.
AMSHeR has representation in 15 countries spanning Central, East, Southern and West Africa, with a linguistic diversity of English, French, Kiswahili and Portuguese. We maintain a reach across the whole of Africa through partnerships with a network of members and affiliate members.

Here, at a glance, are the countries where AMSHeR has representation as well as our members active in those countries:

**Burundi**

*Rainbow Candle Light* (RCL) is a non-governmental organisation founded on 24 November, 2009. Rainbow Candle Light is an LGBT+ - led organisation working towards sensitising community members, and to help change attitudes and practices to reduce the risk of HIV and other sexually transmitted infections.

Since the adoption of anti-gay laws in the revised penal code of Burundi, RCL have extended their activities to include advocacy for human rights and freedoms, and also to promote the rights and duties of citizens, particularly those relating to gay rights.

**Cameroon**

*Alternatives-Cameroun* was founded by a group of young professionals and has been a legally recognised non-profit organisation in Cameroon since 27 October, 2006. The organisation works for equality, tolerance, and respect for people who suffer from social exclusion, especially for the rights of people who have sexual relations with people of the same sex.

Their vision is to have a principled and strong Cameroonian society, which is democratic and tolerant, and affirms individual as well as social and economic rights.

**Cote d’Ivoire**

*Alternative Ivory Coast* is a non-political, non-confessional and non-profit organisation founded on 14 March, 2010 in Abidjan. They work towards being a platform of health training and human rights, planning and implementing programmes and services in terms of HIV/AIDS which are responsive to the realities of sexual minorities as well as other populations who interact with them.

In their ongoing fight for respect of human rights, the organisation actively campaigns for the right to access medical services, information, training and education for vulnerable people or victims of discrimination and stigmatisation. They effectively advocate on a national and international level to raise public awareness on the issues facing the communities they represent.

**Ghana**

The *Centre for Popular Education and Human Rights* (CEPEHRG) started as a youth and human rights project in 1998 and was officially registered in March 2003. The organisation works for the attainment of equal rights and the removal of all forms of discrimination in all aspects of life for gay, lesbian, bisexual, and same gender loving people in Ghana, where same-sex relationships are still criminalised. They strive to inform, educate, counsel and support people in matters relating to law, health (specifically HIV/AIDS in same-sex relationships) and socio-economic well-being.
Kenya

The Gay and Lesbian Coalition of Kenya (GALCK) is the national umbrella body of 16 Kenyan organisations working for the rights and social well-being of sexual and gender minorities (SOGI). They envision a safe and enabling environment for all—a space where the fundamental principles of human rights, equality and non-discrimination and the protection of the marginalised are guaranteed. Where all Kenyans, regardless of their sexual orientation, gender identity or expression are accorded their rights and freedoms as guaranteed by the Constitution of Kenya 2010.

Ishtar is one of the founding organisations of the Gay and lesbian coalition of Kenya (GALCK) and was formally registered as a community based organisation in 2002. Their initial membership was male sex workers but the organisation has since been at the forefront of advancing LGBT+ health rights in Kenya, becoming actively involved in several groundbreaking research programmes.

Malawi

The Centre for the Development of People (CEDEP) was established to address the needs and challenges of minority groups in Malawi in the context of human rights, health and social development. Such minority groups are LGBT+ people, prisoners, sex workers, street children and any other minority groups whose rights are often neglected.

The main goal of CEDEP is to create a legally and socially accepting environment where minority groups have an improved livelihood. They work to advance the human rights of minority groups through advocacy and lobbying, to promote the human rights and health of minority groups through civic education, training, capacity building, networking and research, and provide support services for the improvement of the welfare of minority groups.

Mozambique

The Mozambican Association for Sexual Minority Rights (LAMBDA) was founded in 2006. They work to promote the civic, human and legal rights of LGBT+ citizens through public awareness and education, advocacy and social dialogue. Their target groups are all LGBT+ citizens, civil society organisations, political and governmental institutions, and social groups such as youth, teachers, medical doctors, and the general public.

Namibia

Out Right Namibia (ORN) is a human rights based organisation that was formed in March 2010 by self-identified LGBT+ activists and officially registered in November 2010 as a Trust. ORN advocates as the voice for lesbian women, gay men, bisexuals, transgender and intersex people in Namibia to further address, redress and arrest the amount of homophobia rhetoric in the country.

They work towards being the leading organisation to create a united movement for sexual diverse people to enjoy improved quality of life and have access to legal and social justice.
Nigeria

The Initiative for Equal Rights (TIER) is a registered non-governmental organisation that was established in 2007 as a response to the continuous discrimination and marginalisation of sexual minorities in health programmes such as the HIV prevention programme and human rights advocacy. It envisions a society that is free from discrimination on the grounds of age, gender, tribe and, especially, sexual orientation and gender identity. The organisation works to achieve this through sexual health programming, skills acquisition programmes, capacity building development and legal aid programmes.

The International Center for Advocacy on Right to Health (ICARH) is an independent research initiative established in 1999 to contribute to policy issues affecting the rights of sexual minorities through research, analysis, training, awareness campaign development and advocacy. They are also active in providing legal support to its members and is a member of a number of important human rights coalitions including Sexual Minorities Against AIDS in Nigeria (SMAAN).

South Africa

OUT-LGBT Well-being is 15 years old and one of the biggest LGBT+ organisations in South Africa. Their focus is on health and rights and they have played a leading role in securing legal same sex marriage in South Africa. They work towards counselling LGBT+ communities, focus on HIV and substance abuse prevention programmes and the strengthening of community norms. Their advocacy includes the advancement of inclusive LGBT+ and progressive gender legislation. They also serve on the South African National AIDS Council.

Tanzania

The Community Health Education Service and Advocacy (CHESA) was established in 2008 and is a registered youth voluntary, non-partisan, non-governmental organisation (NGO) dedicated to the key population, LGBT+ communities and their networks. They work towards responding to HIV/AIDS and human rights issues through in-depth partnership with the communities in Tanzania.

CHESA uses international commitments such as Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) as a measure of competence and performance for improved standards of living for the key population.

Togo

Afrique-Arc-En-Ciel, founded on 23 October, 2007 is a group of young gay men who advocate for access to adequate prevention, treatment, care and support in HIV and AIDS, as well as a social environment free of stigma and discrimination. They work in partnership with the NGO Medical Aid and Charity (MAC) and administers a meeting space in Lomé, where free discussion without
any taboos on the topics on homosexuality and HIV/AIDS prevention and human rights can take place.

**Uganda**

*Frank & Candy* was formed in 2005 as a Kuchu grassroots organisation with the specific aim to address the HIV and health care needs of Kuchus in Uganda. The word Kuchu is used deliberately as a self-identification of all those who have sexual orientations that differ from the heterosexual majority. Frank & Candy aims to help Kuchus, Kuchu organisations and individuals self-actualise with regards to their needs of health, in particular sexual health and HIV prevention needs.

**Zambia**

*Friends of RAINKA* (FoR) is a non-governmental, not-for-profit organisation that champions the rights of sexual minorities in Zambia through advocacy, information dissemination, legal reform, research and direct service provision. They work to engage law and policy makers in legal reform, build capacity to undertake effective advocacy, establish member services based on identified needs and priorities, and to research, gather, analyse and disseminate information.

**Zimbabwe**

*Gays and Lesbians of Zimbabwe* (GALZ) is a voluntary membership organisation established in 1990 to serve the needs of the LGBT+ community in Zimbabwe. They provide membership driven services to the LGBT+ community and work to increase availability of relevant services that are responsive to the needs of members, ensuring access to safe and non-discriminatory spaces and facilities. Their aim is to strengthen the capacity of LGBT+ people to exercise their rights and to raise awareness and understanding by the public of LGBT+ issues, interests and rights.

GALZ achieve their goals through ongoing and engaged advocacy, lobbying, empowerment, education, research and provision of safe spaces.
Joël Gustave Nana (1982-2015) – AMSHeR’s founding Executive Director

Joël was the founder and Executive Director of AMSHeR from 2009 until early 2014. A colourful, outspoken and dedicated champion for human rights, sexual orientation and gender identity, and HIV health access for LGBT+ in Africa, he pioneered AMSHeR from a fledgling activist organisation to an influential coalition leader.

Joël believed that LGBT+ communities in Africa needed to find a voice, to raise an African voice. “Denial of the existence of these communities lead to the denial of access to services for these communities all through the continent,” he cautioned, and proposed that motivated advocates around Africa who work on these issues in their own countries must come together to raise an African voice.

His contribution in creating a voice and visibility for LGBT+ communities and putting the issue of violence against these communities on the agenda at policy forums such as the AU and the African Commission of Human and People’s Rights is unprecedented and still bears fruit today. In his own words, “having found our African voice has been one of AMSHeR’s greatest achievements.”

His achievements sprang from deep, personal convictions.

Joël’s friends and colleagues remember him as a person of conviction: “If he felt strongly about something, he would tell you about it. He was a complex person,” they say. “He had a clear vision of what AMSHeR is, and made effort to persuade people and establish AMSHeR as a key player in Africa and globally in a very short space of time.”

But Joël was also human, someone who responded to tone and emotion. There was something about the way he stepped in to care and say “this must matter ...” He is fondly remembered as a friend and an inspiration: “He was human, he was flawed, he made mistakes, but he always acted with compassion and conviction.”

What he stood for remains clear in the minds of those close to him: “What I’ve learned from Joël was don’t ever be paralysed by inaction of those around you. Don’t get distracted. People will tell you all kinds of things, but keep your focus. Stay on the course.”

“If your country’s too small to work in, work for your continent. Africa is full of dreams and promises, get out there. Do something!” Joël leaves an indelible mark, and a vision worth upholding.
STRATEGY – OPEN UP THE FUTURE

The daily reality for African SOGI (sexual orientation and gender identity) communities, has not significantly changed for most in the past few years. HIV prevention and care remain key priorities for these key populations.

However, today the needs and priorities of our communities go far beyond HIV. There is a risk that an exclusive focus on HIV to the exclusion of other issues might reinforce public perceptions of these communities as vectors of disease.

A broader approach has become the norm across Africa, as “mainstream” human rights groups are increasingly likely to defend equal rights for people regardless of sexual orientation, gender identity or gender expression, even in the face of strong and politicised homo/bi/transphobia. The adoption of Resolution 275 by the African Commission on Human and Peoples’ Rights in May 2014, condemning violence related to sexual orientation and gender identity was a particularly significant step forward.

There has been a significant shift in the over-arching development framework that shapes both domestic policy and development assistance in Africa. This shift is illustrated in the transition from the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) as well as the endorsement of the AU’s Agenda 2063. Both the SDGs and Agenda 2063 emphasise universality, including the aspiration of leaving no one behind in development efforts.

This changing landscape informs AMSHeR’s policies, strategies and approach.

OPEN UP AFRICA AND THE WORLD

As a regional African coalition, AMSHeR works at three levels to contribute towards better lives for people of diverse sexual orientations, gender identities and gender expressions.

- **At country level** AMSHeR continues to empower members and partners to directly influence change as well as to strengthen other national and local LGBT+ groups and other national and local social movements. This is achieved through facilitating access to specialist technical support, access to resources by sharing information about funding opportunities, and by producing and/or sharing evidence about what works to achieve relevant social change.

- **At regional level** AMSHeR advocates for attention to sexual and gender diversity in regional human rights, facilitates inter-country programming, and strengthens the regional evidence base and its use by supporting multi-country documentation, research and knowledge sharing. To this end, AMSHeR cooperates with regional bodies of religious, cultural and media organisations to increase the positive representation of gender and sexual diversity.

- **At global level** AMSHeR focuses on increasing and improving attention to African gender and sexual diversity issues within health-related governance bodies and networks, emphasises African perspectives and priorities in international civil society organisations, and facilitates sharing of relevant evidence and lessons across regions.
OPEN UP: GUIDING PRINCIPLES

Driving and delivering its strategic plan and advancing its vision, AMSHeR challenges widespread homophobia and related discrimination. The LGBT+ movement in Africa is dynamic and growing but also fragile. In order to be successful, it is essential that AMSHeR’s leaders, the staff of AMSHeR’s member organisations and secretariat, and volunteers have a shared commitment to guiding principles that guide how we work.

- Human rights-based approach: AMSHeR consistently advocates for human rights principles as the basis of health and development programming, emphasising equality and addressing marginalisation, exclusion and discrimination. The constant challenge is to identify and address the different forms of discrimination, power imbalances and structural factors that perpetuate marginalisation.

- Inclusivity and intersectionality: AMSHeR recognises that contexts are complex and are made up of a range of factors that enhance or hinder the ability of people to access their rights. We recognise that each individual is complex – in addition to their sexuality and gender identity and expression, they are young or old; women, men, intersex or transitioning; ethnic majority or minority within their countries; citizens or migrants; living with disabilities or not. AMSHeR is committed to an inclusive and intersectional approach that considers these multiple realities.

- Incremental approach: AMSHeR has a vision of an ideal society where stigma, discrimination and violence are eliminated, and where human rights are respected, protected and promoted. We also recognise that our strategies require incremental engagement and planning to achieve realistic outcomes.

- Empowerment: AMSHeR is committed to promoting partnerships and strategies that reinforce autonomy and agency of African SOGI individuals and communities instead of charity models that perpetuate dependency.

- Professional, accountable and compassionate: AMSHeR is committed to the highest standards of professionalism and accountability in its approach and operations. AMSHeR’s secretariat and members are accountable to people of diverse sexual orientations, gender identities and gender expressions in Africa as well as to donors that finance activities. All AMSHeR investments and actions must remain consistent with such accountability.

- Positive narrative: The people of AMSHeR are committed to positive language and messaging that celebrate the courage and success of African LGBT+ individuals and the rich diversity and humanity of the African people. The narratives of victimhood and homophobia that currently dominate discourse on sexual orientation and gender identity in Africa are not the full story of Africa or African LGBT+ individuals.
AMSHeR has a number of significant key strengths, which we leverage to inform our strategy and achieve change.

**Members and partners:** At the beginning of the Strategic Plan period, AMSHeR has 18 members in 15 countries as well as 9 other formal partnerships with affiliates that work at country or sub-national levels, expanding AMSHeR’s reach to 20 African countries in total. These members and affiliates are intimately familiar with the priorities and needs of people of diverse sexual orientations, gender identities and gender expressions in their countries, understand local political and cultural dynamics and opportunities related to sexual and gender diversity, and collectively possess a wide range of relevant skills:

- AMSHeR members and partners find areas of common interest with other members and foster collaboration across the membership.
- Join in common advocacy alliances to develop joined-up advocacy strategies and to pursue common advocacy goals.
- Support multi-actor fundraising in partnerships or consortia with other members and/or the secretariat.
- Provide visibility for AMSHeR at country and sub-regional level.
- Cultivate good governance in their own organisations.
- Share information, results and tools from their own activities and programmes with others, via the AMSHeR secretariat.

**Strong regional and global networks:** AMSHeR has played a significant role in building a better coordinated and formidable pan-African LGBT+ voice, which is respected regionally and globally, including:

- The Coalition of African Lesbians (CAL), Pan Africa ILGA (PAI), and others.
- At global level, networks and institutions including the Global Forum on MSM and HIV, the Programme Coordinating Board of UNAIDS and the Board of the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria.
- Influencing global policy, programmes and discourse that in turn can influence responses in Africa.
- Developing important skills in how to leverage HIV and health networks and movements that it will increasingly apply to networks and movements addressing other relevant issues.

**Expertise in working with key state bodies and multilateral organisations:** AMSHeR has successfully developed relationships with national and regional political institutions, state agencies, broader social justice movements and development agencies and elevated the discourse on human rights, social justice and state accountability. The AMSHeR approach is based on:
A key foundation of the post 1945 human rights system is that rights are universal, that is, applicable to all people. Such an approach is firmly enshrined in international law at global, as well as regional, levels – including in Africa.
• Building civil society solidarity
• Eschewing LGBT+ exceptionalism
• Focusing on the intersectionality of struggles
• Using evidence as the basis of policy engagement and advocacy
• Its influence on working in networks

An increasingly professional secretariat and technical depth in key areas: At the beginning of the Strategic Plan period, AMSHeR’s secretariat includes an office in Johannesburg with 12 staff as well as an additional five national officers, one each in Madagascar, Zimbabwe, Zambia, Angola and Mozambique. Staff have expertise in technical areas including human rights and law, HIV prevention and care among men who have sex with men; and organisational capacity assessment and planning. Different staff members are fluent in English, French and Portuguese. Capacity in communications and knowledge management is improving. Senior staff have extensive professional networks in public health, human rights and the NGO sector. The ever-expanding role of the secretariat is to:

• Lead AMSHeR advocacy on LGBT+ rights and inclusion in Africa at regional and global levels.
• Facilitate coordination of advocacy and other efforts among the members and between the members and other institutions (including regional and sub-regional institutions).
• Reinforce the technical and organisational capacity of members, particularly by facilitating linking and learning programmes amongst the membership.
• Serve as a centre of excellence in SOGI inclusion work in Africa.
• Facilitate collective resource mobilisation.

OPEN UP: STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES AND OUTCOMES

Informed by our geographical focus, guiding principles and strengths, AMSHeR has identified four Strategic Pillars, each with its intended outcomes:

**Strategic Objective 1 – Rights championed:** Improved human rights policies that address stigma, discrimination and other violations related to sexual and gender diversity in Africa and improved responses to violations, including redress to survivors.

**Outcomes**

• Increased affirmation of sexual and gender diversity and human rights by policymakers, public officials, other stakeholders and institutions.
• Increased incorporation of AMSHeR positions and priorities in relevant law and human rights meetings, deliberations and consultations at global, regional and country levels.

**Strategic Objective 2 – Diversity celebrated:** Increased number of government bodies, civil society institutions, private sector companies, and other stakeholders in Africa issue policies, official statements or similar pronouncements that recognise, accept and affirm sexual and gender diversity.

**Outcomes**

• Increased neutral and positive media and communication coverage and representation of sexual and gender diversity in Africa.
• Increased number of political, cultural, religious, private sector, community, academic and other relevant leaders in Africa personally recognise, accept and affirm sexual and gender diversity.

**STRENGTHS**
• Increased visibility and influence of African LGBT+ leaders and champions for change, reflecting the diversity of Africa’s key populations’ realities and communities.

**Strategic Objective 3 – Inclusive development:**
Attention and responsiveness to sexual and gender diversity integrated into public sector health, social protection, education and other relevant development programmes in Africa.

**Outcomes**

• Increase in policies improved or developed at country, regional and global level that recognise and address social determinants of health outcomes for people of diverse sexual orientations, gender identities and gender expressions, and that define and promote access to equitable, quality health services.

• Increased inclusion of needs and priorities related to sexual and gender diversity in policies and strategies to advance the African Union’s Agenda 2063 and the Sustainable Development Goals, at country and regional level.

**Strategic Objective 4 – Empowered social movement:**
The LGBT+ movement in Africa, including (and beyond) AMSHeR members and secretariat, more effectively advances rights and social inclusion for people of diverse sexual orientations, gender identities and gender expressions.

**Outcomes**

• Improved performance of the AMSHeR secretariat and of AMSHeR members in delivering on their missions.

• AMSHeR members and partners better reflect the distinct, continental, intersectional identities of African LGBT+ constituencies.

• Increased use of AMSHeR tools, position papers, workshops, events and training resources by African designate groups and other relevant African NGOs/CSOs, beyond AMSHeR members and partners.
The very first sentence of the African Union’s Agenda 2063 refers to the people of Africa and her diaspora, “united in diversity”. That reflects the political and popular recognition and validation of commonality among all Africans, with “desire for shared prosperity and wellbeing, for unity and integration, for a continent of free citizens and expanded horizons, where the full potential of women and youth, boys and girls are realised, and with freedom from fear, disease and want.”

Against this background, AMSHeR was founded in 2009 and rapidly grew into an influential coalition of role-players and advocates who championed the vision of prosperity, safety and wellbeing of the LGBT+ communities in their own countries.

Funding for the coalition’s start-up costs were secured from UNDP and the Global Centre of Learning for HIV and AIDS (GCoL) at Oxfam GB, and a consensus workshop to define and agree on the objectives of the new coalition was held in Cape Town in March 2009. After this meeting, which marked the formal beginning of AMSHeR, coalition structures, a constitution and workplan were developed, with the HIV Officer from IGLHRC hired as the Coalition Coordinator.

By the time of the International AIDS Conference in Vienna in July 2010, AMSHeR had functional structures in place. The Coalition Coordinator had now become the Executive Director, and AMSHeR had a secretariat of three staff (including the ED, an office manager and a communications intern).

AMSHeR’s coordination provided visible leadership on SOGI in Africa at regional and global levels, which had an immediate year-on-year impact. The AMSHeR international sign-on statement in 2011 shifted the debate linking SOGI and aid conditionality. AMSHeR coordinated the participation of and submissions from African LGBT+ organisations to the Global Commission on HIV and the Law in 2012 and ensured a broader dialogue on the implications of the UN SOGI Resolution follow-up process for countries in the global South with the AMSHeR and CAL-led 10 May 2013 Statement.

Starting in 2014, the AMSHeR Secretariat began a period of transition, culminating in the launch of a new identity for AMSHeR. the Board engaged Ingrid Obery as the Managing Administrator to oversee the transition process. Her contribution to the renewal of AMSHeR was immense and included strengthening the organisation’s governance processes, re-building AMSHeR’s financial management systems, strengthening human resource policies and practices, and building and maintaining relationships with key donors.

2015 is the year AMSHeR begun its journey into a new strategic plan that moved it from being a purely health-centric organisation advocating access to health care, into more of a champion in the LGBT+ law and human rights space.

Empowered by its refreshed identity and strategy, AMSHeR carried out a series of meetings, workshops and other forms of engagement throughout 2016, culminating in their active involvement at the 60th session of the African
Commission on Human and Peoples’ Rights. Significantly, this engagement resulted in the graduation of AMSHeR from an MSM (Men who have sex with men) and LGBT+ organisation to more broadly promoting non-discrimination of individuals based on their real or perceived sexual orientation and gender identity and expression (SOGI). This continued through 2017 when AMSHeR began to focus more on intersectionality and the space and identity of individuals within the multiple identities that they occupy at different spaces in time. More development language now emerged, tied to the SDGs and the concepts of ‘leaving no one behind’, social inclusion, reducing inequalities and getting to zero infections.

In March 2016, the Regional Seminar on Practical Solutions on Ending Violence and Discrimination Against Persons based on Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity and Expression was held in Ekurhuleni, South Africa. The Seminar brought together government officials, national human rights institutions and civil society organisations from 24 African countries. The outcome document of the Seminar, The Ekurheleni Declaration, made a number of practical recommendations for State actors including law enforcement agencies and the criminal justice system in addressing violence and discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity in Africa.

In November 2016, AMSHeR convened a meeting of the Regional Key Populations Networks (ASWA, CAL, SATF) to discuss key issues affecting Key Populations and to frame common themes for joint advocacy. These processes yielded a joint advocacy plan, titled: Meaningful Representation, Dialogue and Advocacy [MRDA] plan. As a result, a second round of the meetings was convened at the end of May 2017 to address the gaps identified and cost the plan accordingly, with inputs and support from Southern African Trans Forum (SATF) and Gender Dynamics (GDX). Discussions were further enriched by inputs from the Southern African Litigation Centre (SALC), M&C Saatchi, United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), Aids Accountability International (AAI), Hivos and Southern African HIV and Aids Information Dissemination Service (SAFAIDS). The MRDA plan was finalised and disseminated amongst the networks for implementation.

The plan remains a first in Southern Africa because it is a marker of diverse key population groups with differing ideology and positioning coming together to identify a common advocacy theme that is at the centre of their struggle in African society.

A further significant event was seeded in November 2016, when a consultation process started with Law Enforcement Officials to assess their role and responsibilities in reducing SOGI based violence. In June 2017, a self-organised event was held in Naivasha, on the occasion of the 6th Changing Faces, Changing Spaces Conference for further discussion and inputs from potential donors and regional partners.

In July, the Mechanism was presented in a sub-regional consultation meeting to organisations and activists from West and Central Africa.

Along its journey, AMSHeR continued to remain focused on the aims to enrol its membership into a comprehensive capacity strengthening approach that would significantly establish AMSHeR as a coalition of strong member organisations. The OCAT (Organisational Capacity Assessment Tool) was rolled out in July 2017 in Harare, Zimbabwe following the successful implementation of a community dialogue with Young Key Populations (YKPs) that enabled the selection of Trans and Intersex Rising Zimbabwe (TIRZ), a youth trans-led organisation to be assessed using OCAT.

As a result of the OCAT assessment, a capacity strengthening plan that included support provided by the YKP project national officer in Harare was developed and implemented in the country.

Further to its Strategic Objectives to improve policy framework guaranteeing access to quality health services for LGBT+ individuals in Africa, 2018 saw a number of highlights:

- AMSHeR and ASWA jointly organised and convened a Regional Linking and Learning workshop in Nairobi Kenya.
- AMSHeR provided capacity assessment support to 2 KP network partners GALZ and Outright in Zimbabwe and Namibia respectively.
• A Strengthening Plan development meeting with Friends of Rainka in Lusaka, Zambia and MoU signing were implemented.

• The Police Manual Customisation process was rolled out.

• AMSHeR coordinated and supported the IAC conference for KP REACH in Amsterdam, Netherlands.

In terms of their Strategic Objective to improved response to stigma, discrimination and violations based on sexuality and gender in Africa, AMSHeR through their Linking Policy and Programming, UNDP focused on strengthening legal/policy environments for young key populations 10–24 years, and to improve sexual and reproductive health outcomes for young key populations in SADC countries, implementing a host of capacity strengthening activities.

Looking forward to the next leg of their journey, the people of AMSHeR are committed to continue portraying a positive narrative that celebrates the courage and success of African SOGI individuals and the rich diversity and humanity of the African people.
Activities are organised through the 3 AMSHeR strategic objectives to strategically detail achievement of AMSHeR’s mission and vision.

It is important to note that specific donor driven projects therefore direct resources into AMSHeR’s 3 objectives. Of importance are the overarching resources under the The BUILD Grant which, under the auspices of the Ford Foundation, provisions AMSHeR with general support to facilitate its work in four major areas: regional and international advocacy on LGBT+ social inclusion, training, office spaces and human resources, as well as core support for institutional strengthening in the areas of: strategic plan development for the Secretariat and membership, network-wide leadership and governance, establishment of safety and security systems and retention of critical technical competencies.

The organisation undertook the following programmatic activities in the quarterly reporting period were implemented:

**KP REACH:**
**KEY POPULATION REPRESENTATION, EVIDENCE, AND ADVOCACY FOR CHANGE IN HEALTH (AFRICA)**

KP REACH is a consortium project funded by the Global fund and aims to implement a focused program of work by a consortium of KP Networks, Technical Partners, Civil Society and Academia. KP REACH implementation started in January 2016, and the regional programme funding cycle ends in 2018. The implementation of the regional programme involves key populations regional networks which include Coalition of African Lesbians (CAL), African Men for sexual Health and Rights (AMSHeR), African Sex Worker Alliance (ASWA) and Southern African Transgender Forum (SATF), with the intention of sustaining the lessons learned, capacity strengthening of the network secretariats and their partners, improving collaboration, synergies and resources within the KP networks and organisations themselves. The overall goal is the reduction in HIV infections and HIV-related deaths among key populations in Southern Africa through improved access by KPs to HIV prevention, testing and treatment services.
Within the KP REACH Programme, AMSHER implements its contractual process activities under the auspices of the Meaningful Representation, Dialogue and Advocacy (MRDA) plan.

The MRDA plan is a joint Southern African regional plan which has key population networks advocacy common advocacy themes. The plan is a regional game changer in Southern Africa as a yardstick of diverse key population groups with different ideologies and positioning cleaving together with major identified common advocacy themes at the centre of their struggle in African society. The theme identified: ‘Freedom from Violence’ serves as the advocacy theme which AMSHeR and the other networks are pushing at several platforms including The International Conference on HIV/AIDS and STI’s in Africa, International AIDS conference, Southern African Development Community (SADC); country roll-outs at the level of the Ministry of Health, law enforcement and Judiciary.

**Key Activities**

- Capacity strengthening of Young Key Populations in advocacy in Angola.
- Conducting a community dialogue and multi-stakeholders meeting in Antananarivo, Madagascar.
- Conducting an OCAT assessment of AMSHeR affiliate member ASSOFrama, in Antananarivo, Madagascar.
- Conducting the strengthening plan development and approval with Transbantu in Lusaka, Zambia.
- Conducted capacity assessment, strengthening plan development and members/partners engagement in Cameroon and Senegal.
- Adapted and piloted the Advocacy Guide around YKP Sexual and Reproductive Health.
- Established mechanisms for community inputs into policies, strategies and laws regulating sexual and reproductive health needs of young key populations on country and regional level.
- Established and operationalised an Advocacy Working Group (AWG) in Angola.
- Convened at the International AIDS Conference 2018 in Amsterdam, where oral presentation of the issues on HIV and the Law was made and AMSHeR’s experience was shared with the global audience.

**YKP: LINKING POLICY TO PROGRAMMING (SOUTH AFRICA)**

The project primarily focuses on strengthening legal/policy environments for young key populations 10–24 years and to improve sexual and reproductive health outcomes for young key populations in SADC countries.

The project is implemented at SADC regional level and in 5 countries, community-based partners, including sex workers and people who inject drugs-led partners, are selected to be part of the project.

Key Populations [KPs] are disproportionately affected by HIV and YKPs (both female and male) are especially vulnerable to Sexual Reproductive Health risks through widespread discrimination, stigma and violence. Young prisoners can be exposed to sexual abuse, young female sex workers are at risk of unwanted pregnancies and sexually transmitted illnesses [STIs], while young lesbian women are the targets of ‘corrective’ rape.

**Key Activities**

- Developed relevant tools and guidance on the HIV/Sexual Reproductive Health (SRH)-related needs and rights of each young key population – Advocacy Curriculum; Scorecard for year 1.
- Implemented capacity strengthening activities for young sex workers [SW], young lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender individuals [LGBT*], young people in prison, young people who use drugs in HIV/SRH rights and on access to justice – Community Dialogues;
Stakeholders’ Workshops; Advocacy Work Plans Development.

- Established a mechanism for community inputs into policy development and implementation related to HIV/SRH service provision for young key populations.

The Advocacy Guide around YKP Sexual and Reproductive Health

AMSHeR adapted and piloted the policy advocacy curriculum around MSM Health to the training needs of stakeholders around young key population issues. The process of adaptation involved developing terms of reference, recruiting a consultant, producing a draft advocacy guide for young KPs and holding a community validation meeting, translating and publishing/printing the Guide. This is an important process because the use of the advocacy guide around LGBT+ health has yielded positive outcomes, as illustrated by key populations’ participation in various national, regional and international health governance bodies.

Key Activities

- As of the end of 2017, the draft YKP Advocacy Curriculum was submitted by the consultant, community validation, editing, translation, publication and printing in 2018.

- Strengthening legal/policy environments for young key populations in SADC countries, noting that only young key population adults aged 18-24 participate in the capacity strengthening, policy/advocacy and research components of the project.

- Established mechanisms for community inputs into policies, strategies and laws regulating sexual and reproductive health needs of young key populations.

SOGIR: SEXUAL ORIENTATION AND GENDER IDENTITY AND RIGHTS – BEING LGBT IN AFRICA (AFRICA)

The project aims to strengthen the evidence base, develop advocacy capacity and public information materials, and convene regional and national dialogues that bring together national decision makers from the executive, legislative and judiciary branches of government with LGBT+ civil society organisations, their allies and other stakeholders.

The non-implementation of activities related to the SOGIR project within this quarter poses a risk to the grant agreement signed by the organisation with UNDP particularly the In-country meetings (community dialogue, stakeholders’ roundtable and CSO capacity assessment & strengthening). The in-country missions for Zambia, Tanzania, Nigeria, Cameroon and Senegal did not occur due to circumstances beyond programme management’s control.

Key Activities

- Developed shadow report and preparation of in-country meetings in Nigeria.

- Reviewed and made inputs to the consultant report on the status of inclusion of LGBT+ in Botswana.

- Conducted community and other stakeholders’ engagement in Zambia.

- Engaged bilateral and multilateral partners on advocacy priority for LGBT+ inclusion in Zambia.

- Prepared shadow reports on Togo, Nigeria and Eritrea.

PROJECTS
• Attended SOGIR in-country meetings with the Advocacy Working group and National Steering Committee in Lusaka, Zambia.

• Conducted Capacity assessment, strengthening plan development and members/partners engagement in Cameroon and Senegal.


• Attended SOGIR in-country meetings in Botswana.

• Involved in regional advocacy at the African commission on human and peoples’ rights for sexuality-related rights and engaged with partners on issues related to sexual orientation and gender identity.

**Capacity strengthening plans development for AMSHeR membership**

Under the KP REACH, RCNF-Core, BUILD and YKP projects in the reporting period, AMSHeR enrolled some of its membership into comprehensive capacity strengthening processes that has already significantly started establishing AMSHeR as a coalition of strong member organisations. A Work plan and Project Management Preparation process were initiated for BUILD Grant. The outputs include a staff retreat conducted, annual work plan, new strategic plan draft developed and the convening of a 9-member board meeting in February 2018 to review AMSHeR’s past performance and inform the direction for 2018 and beyond, review AMSHeR strategies and policies and strengthen institutional capacity through management of the executive transition, governance leadership while assessing progress made to date in the implementation of the organisation’s strategic plan.

**Key Activities**

• Finalised all the preparation for planned activities with several partners including CAL, Synergia, TIERS, Afrique Arc En Ciel, Centre for Human Rights and Amnesty International at the NGOs forum and 62nd session of the African Commission as well as attendance of the NGOs forum and 62nd session of the African Commission in Nouakchott, Mauritania.

• Provided strategic input in the development of a shadow report by Afrique Arc En Ciel, Togo.

• Submitted Q1 RCNF update report to MSMGF.

• With support from existing grants from the Netherlands Foreign Ministry under the Linking Policy to Programming Project (LPP) and the Global Fund under the Key Populations Representation, Evidence and Advocacy for Change (KP:REACH), AMSHeR undertook capacity strengthening assessments with several of its members, notably Centre for the Development of People (CEDEP), Malawi, Outright Namibia, Lambda Mozambique, Friends of RAINKA, Zambia and the Gays and Lesbians of Zimbabwe (GALZ).

• Other assessments with AMSHeR’s partners and affiliates who are being courted for membership, notably Iris in Angola and ASSOFRAMA in Madagascar to increase the coalition.

• A process to develop a 4-year strategic plan for 2019 – 2022 was initiated in early July 2017 to support the strategic direction of the AMSHeR network and inform its programming beyond 2019.

• Through support from the BUILD Grant and other existing funders, the AMSHeR Secretariat undertook a number of coalition building activities which included sponsorship and support of members to attend a steering committee meeting and other advocacy initiatives including at the International Conference on AIDS and STI (ICASA).

• Conducted further assessments of affiliates across the continent including in Madagascar, Angola, Zambia (Transbantu), Botswana (LEGABIBO) and Zimbabwe (Trans* and Intersex Rise Initiative in Zimbabwe - TIRZ) under the SOGIR and the LPP Project.
UTETEZEI: ADVOCACY FOR IMPROVED ACCESS TO SERVICES FOR MSM

Starting in 2013, AMSHeR partnered with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the Southern African AIDS Trust (SAT) and the USAID-funded Health Policy Project to implement the Utetezi project. The goal of the project was to increase health care access for communities of gay men through policy and advocacy training, which would result in locally-led, multi-stakeholder policy interventions. The project had a further aim to ensure meaningful participation of the key population in policy-level processes, regardless of their legal status within the target countries.

Key Activities

- Training of key government and civil society stakeholders such as City Council Health Units, law enforcement officials, NHRI, NACs, Departments of Justice and Health, and LGBT+ organisations.

- Facilitating the establishment and governance of an Advocacy Working Group in Burundi, Cameroon, Ghana, Malawi, Mozambique, Tanzania, Togo and Zambia, and developing and implementing targeted advocacy activities.

- Mentoring of LGBT+ organisations at country level to sustain the engagement of other stakeholders in the project.

- Mentoring LGBT+ organisations to sustain participation and work with municipal, national and regional bodies to ensure increased support for access to services.

- Researching, writing and publishing best practices on LGBT+ interventions in Africa.

FLAI: FRANCOPHONE LGBTI ADVOCATES INITIATIVE

This project seeks to ensure that Francophone LGBT+ advocates and organisations have enhanced capacity, are skilled, and able to engage in SOGI advocacy. The project’s aim is to broaden the LGBT+ leadership in 9 Francophone countries: Burkina Faso, Burundi, Cameroon, Cote d’Ivoir, Democratic Republic of Congo, Mali, Rwanda, Senegal and Togo.

Key Activities

- With support from the European Commission’s Instrument for Human Rights and Democracy through Heartland Alliance, under its Global Initiative for Human Rights, AMSHeR implemented the Francophone LGBT+ Advocates Initiative (FLAI) across countries in West and Central Africa.

- In Cote D’Ivoir, the project team worked with the National Human Rights Commission to develop an implementation plan to respond to the recommendations of the United Nations Human Rights Committee on strengthening human rights protections for LGBT+ in the country.

- In Burundi and Burkina Faso, a socio-political crisis gave more sense to the security assessment component of FLAI, shifting the focus of the project to risk mitigation and ensuring the safety of beneficiaries and the LGBT+ constituency as a whole.

- In Rwanda, an existing platform on youth and human rights was extended to include project participants.

- In Cameroon, the country’s Monitoring Group for Economic, Social and Cultural Rights invited representatives of LGBT+ organisations to be part of the committee drafting shadow reports and to participate in monitoring the implementation of recommendations from regional and international human rights bodies.
In **Mali**, a larger Platform was created to discuss how best to document and address SOGI-based human rights violations, and to strengthen community organising and participation in advocacy for change.

### MHAP: THE MSM HEALTH ADVOCACY PROJECT

The MHAP utilizes an African MSM Health Scorecard as the tool for establishing a baseline and building accountability for MSM health services. The Scorecards are used by member organisations for advocacy and tracking of progress on strategic indicators of MSM health.

Men who have sex with men across Africa remain at the margins of HIV interventions despite the grave need for urgent, immediate and serious attention to their health needs. This is evidenced by the lack of comprehensive data analysing the situation despite several key studies that hint at the scale of the epidemic and its impact on MSM across the continent.

This project is a comprehensive review and analysis of the current situation for MSM in each country about health policy, programme and funding support for MSM health services.

**Key activities**

- Established a baseline of services in Cote D’Ivoire, Kenya and Nigeria. This was achieved through a desk study of the current situation in each country; and the development, implementation and evaluation of an MSM Health Score Card.

- Through series of capacity building workshops, technical assistance, coordination, communication and follow-up mentoring, three member organisations were able to collect, analyze, and report on MSM health disparities. The workshops provided skills building, project development, collaboration and networking in health policy advocacy for MSM in each country.

### THE SEXUALITY AND EQUALITY IN AFRICA PROJECT

Through advocacy and delivering capacity developments interventions for CSOs, national, regional policymakers and other stakeholders. AMSHeR’s work is underpinned by five guiding principles – human rights based approach to health; intersectionality of social justice issues; incremental approach; empowerment model that re-enforce autonomy and agency; and positive narratives of African LGBT+ persons.

**Key activities**

- Developed the Voices for Freedom video documentary featuring LGBT+ individuals from 8 countries portraying positive narratives of their work and contributions to the societies.

- Ran the Respect, Visibility and Inclusion poster campaign to raise awareness of the rights of LGBT+ individuals in Africa.

- Coordinated emergency legal aid and psycho-social support to LGBT+ persons facing prosecution and persecution on the basis of their SOGI. Supported LGBT+ asylum seekers through referrals, provisions of country of origin information for refugee status determination.

- AMSHeR staff have served on a number of global platforms to advance policies for key populations and other marginalised groups including the Project Coordinating Board of UNAIDS, Southern Refugees Legal Assistance Network, Global Board of the MenEngage Alliance and the International Bar Association.

• Mobilised a global campaign at the UN Human Rights Council to voice the concerns of CSOs from the Global South on the proposed position of the Special Rapporteur on SOGI.

• Led the campaign for the adoption of Resolution 275 of the African Commission on Human and Peoples’ Rights condemning violence based on sexual orientation and gender identity in Africa.

• Successfully implemented the Francophone LGBT+ Advocates Initiative, the largest European Commission LGBT+ project outside Europe.

• Published the Reflections on Sexuality and Equality in Africa, Vol 1 [2015], a collection of peer reviewed articles written by Africans and reflecting African perspectives and addressing various issues of sexual orientation, gender identity and equality of these issues.

• Hosted the first Pan-African Key Populations Pre-Conference to an AIDS Conference. The pre-conference held before the International Conference on AIDS and STIs in Africa [ICASA] 2015, brought together LGBT+ communities, sex workers, people living with HIV and people who use drugs to address a range of policy and service delivery issues affecting the HIV and SRHR responses to their communities, with a view to identifying a common advocacy agenda.

• Hosted a Panel Discussion on BRICS, Civil Society Solidarity and Key Populations beyond 2015, featuring LGBT+ activists, sexual and reproductive health rights advocates and social justice practitioners from Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa.

• Supported a number of CSOs in the Eastern Caribbean region who are setting up a gay men’s network to address human rights violations, discriminatory policies and practices within their region. AMSHeR has been providing technical assistance on coalition building and advocacy strategies for addressing discrimination and exclusion based on sexual orientation and gender identity.

• Coordinated a CSOs listserv of organisations and activists working at the African Commission on Human and Peoples’ Rights, the African Union’s human rights body. This listserv includes activists working on a range of human rights issues and provides a platform information sharing, campaigning and solidarity.

ADVANCING HEALTH AND HUMAN RIGHTS ACCESS FOR LGBT+ INDIVIDUALS

Through the production of credible evidence on community experience and leadership, the project aims at addressing critical gaps within the HIV response for, and SOGI advocacy discourse on, LGBT+ individuals in Africa. Although the contribution of community-led initiatives are acknowledged, the investment by States and global health financing institutions remain insignificant, despite laudable objectives in national strategic plans (NSPs), strategies and targets.

Key activities

• Documenting the experiences of LGBT+ communities in the country processes of the health financing and governance institutions with a view to strengthening their engagement in decision making, promote and respect human rights, and lead to greater accountability and transparency.

• Demonstrating the impact of LGBT+ led community initiatives in promoting a favourable policy/human rights environment and addressing stigma and discrimination against LGBT+ persons.

• Supporting local civil society organisations and activists to develop shadow reports on the situation of LGBT+ individuals for the UN UPR process and the African Commission on Human and Peoples’ Rights.
The Voices for Freedom Project aims to portray a positive narrative of African LGBT+ persons and their experiences through their voices and the voices of their friends and family. This project seeks to counter the single story of African LGBT+ as victims by presenting alternatives of courage, resilience, pride and freedom. Ultimately and perhaps more importantly, this project will give that young LGBT+ person somewhere on the continent, a positive role model that is relatable to his/her own situation.

**Key activities**

- Debunk the ‘un-African’ argument, often used against same-sex practising people in Africa.
- Foster visibility, tolerance and acceptance.
- Garner support from mainstream organisations and the general public to better protect the rights of LGBT+ people from human rights violations.
We bring tribute to our leaders, past and present, who directed AMSHeR’s endeavours with their unique vision. Not only those who have been entrenched in the very heart and workings of our organisation but also those new leaders, our young rising stars, who are increasingly making their mark in their countries and on AMSHeR as a whole.

LEADING OUR VISION

Kene Esom

AMSHeR Executive Director, 2015 – 2017

As a child, Kene Esom was intrigued by stories of Martin Luther King Jnr’s commitment to achieving social change through dialogue. Little wonder then that as part of the AMSHeR team from 2011 to 2017, he made a significant contribution to advancing thought leadership on human rights and access to HIV health services for LGBT+ and other key populations in Africa through training and technical advisory. As a remarkable contribution, he developed a research agenda to support policy reform and evidence-based advocacy with government officials that was implemented across 25 African countries.

Kene quotes “integrity, compassion, and diligence” as three cardinal values that govern his professional and personal life.

Indeed, during his tenure as Executive Director from April 2015 to August 2017, he focused on entrenching AMSHeR’s position as a credible, authoritative community voice and thought leader on issues of human rights, HIV, sexual orientation and gender identity in Africa. Specifically, he led AMSHeR through a period of organisational transformation, ushering in a new strategic direction and expanding the organisation’s footprint in the international rights and health governance sector.

His personal views on HIV/AIDS are possibly most evident in the following extract from a speech he made at the 38th annual United Nations Programme Coordinating Board (PCB) reception in Geneva in 2016: “Funding Key Populations communities is not only the pragmatic, evidence-based, sensible thing to do, it is also the morally just thing to do in order to end AIDS.” Or, in the words of Martin Luther King Jnr, “The ultimate measure of a man is not where he stands in moments of comfort and convenience, but where he stands at times of challenge and controversy.”

“Funding Key Populations communities is not only the pragmatic, evidence-based, sensible thing to do, it is also the morally just thing to do.”

Danilo Da Silva

AMSHeR Interim Chair, 2014 – 2015

Founding member of LAMBDA, the first LGBT+ organisation in Mozambique, Danilo Da Silva is one of the region’s strongest voices for the advancement on LGBT+ rights. In his role as Executive Director of LAMBDA, as well as in previous roles as the Pan African representative of the ILGA (International Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans and Intersex Association) and board chairman of AMSHeR, Danilo has worked tirelessly to shift attitudes towards LGBT+ people.
In the 2015 AMSHeR annual report, he reflects on the organisation’s successes during the review period: “I’m particularly proud of achievements in championing the recognition of sexual orientation and gender identity through our members in countries across the continent, and at the African Commission on Human and People’s Rights. Without this recognition, we’ll continue to struggle to achieve dignity, equality and freedom, not just for gay men and other MSM, but for everyone.”

Danilo was instrumental in many positive shifts in his native Mozambique, in the region, and globally. His direct hand was visible in the positive findings of the 2016 report, *Canaries in the Coal Mines*, that, next to South Africa, Mozambique is the country most accepting of homosexuality in Southern Africa, as was he an active role player in the decriminalisation of homosexuality in Mozambique in 2015. But the pragmatic civil engineer maintains there is much work to be done: “We are swimming against the current in a flood of prejudice that you sometimes don’t see but you know is there.”

“*We are swimming against the current in a flood of prejudice that you sometimes don’t see but you know is there.*”

Lorna Dias

Coordinator, *Gays and Lesbians Coalition of Kenya (GALCK)*

Lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender persons in Kenya face unparalleled challenges. In Kenya’s Kwale County, where homophobia is rife, those who suffer mob attacks, violence and victimisation can’t even afford to report their experiences to the police. “LGBT+ people are not safe,” says Lorna Dias, executive coordinator of the Gay and Lesbian Coalition of Kenya (GALCK).

Criminalisation, discrimination and violence also inhibit access to HIV prevention and treatment and those who assist LGBT+ people often become targets as well, with mobs attacking clinics, healthcare workers, activists or anyone providing assistance.

Working tirelessly to establish relationships and alliances with both government institutions and civil society organisations, GALCK strives for a safe and enabling environment for all – a society that appreciates diversity and recognises that everyone has a right to equal opportunities, irrespective of their sexual orientation, gender or expression.

With the High Court of Kenya refusing an order to declare sections 162 and 165 of the Kenyan Penal Code (which criminalise same sex conduct) unconstitutional, the fight against discrimination remains just as strong as when the #Repeal162 movement started four years ago. A rebel by her own admission, Lorna Dias remains steadfast: “Being a lesbian or a gay man is a non-issue. Being harmed because of it is a huge issue,” she says.

“*Being a lesbian or a gay man is a non-issue. Being harmed because of it is a huge issue.*”

Gift Trapence

Programmes Manager, Centre for the Development of People (CEDEP), Malawi

An HIV/AIDS and human rights activist focusing especially on issues of sexual minorities, Gift has worked on MSM sexual health and HIV prevention projects since 2005. He has contributed to more than 20 studies related to HIV and LGBT+ rights and issues, including the first ever HIV seroprevalence study among the MSM community in Malawi. He was also a principal investigator of the study “HIV Prevalence, Risks for HIV Infection, and Human Rights among men who have sex with men (MSM) in Malawi, Namibia, and Botswana”, published in *PLOS One* (a peer-reviewed open access scientific journal covering primary research from any discipline within science and medicine).

Says Gift, CEDEP has achieved many positive results in areas of LGBT+ human rights and health, research, policy, access to justice, HIV prevention care and treatment and general governance, in fact, “…the National AIDS Commission supports MSM HIV/AIDS peer education programmes, and MSM were included in HIV/AIDS national policy documents as early as 2013.”
Despite such impressive strides forward, Malawi still has one of the highest prevalences of HIV in the world. Fear of discrimination and victimisation remain key barriers to progress, particularly among MSM and sex worker communities. Social stigma, combined with the punitive legal environment prevents many lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender people from getting medical care, or from reporting abuse.

True to CEDEP’s motto – Different people, same rights – for Gift the answer is much simpler than the contradictions in Malawi’s criminal law and constitution, or a culture that doesn’t recognise the rights of LGBT+ minority groups. “People confuse culture and human rights. The issue is about human beings. People shouldn’t use ‘culture’ to oppress others.”

“People confuse culture and human rights. The issue is about human beings.”

OUR YOUNG RISING STARS

And here they are, some of our young leaders who have been nominated by their peers for making a meaningful contribution and making it ever more possible for AMSHeR to reach its goals.

Name: Ezéchiel Koffi  
Country: Ivory Coast

Since 2013 Ezéchiel is an active member of the NGO Alternative Cote D’ivoire. It is an organisation that fights against STIs, HIV and AIDS and also promotes the human rights of sexual minorities, in this case LGBT+ people. His collaboration with AMSHeR started at ICASA 2017 in Ivory Coast.

Ezéchiel works so that LGBT+ people feel happy and have the desire to live in a heterogeneous world where they are accepted and can freely live, think, express their gender identity and sexual orientation. “A very large number of human rights associations in African countries refuse or are reluctant to consider mainstream LGBT+ issues”, he explains. “At the state level, there are no structured policies on LGBT+ issues; the reception of these questions is very random and often depends on the whims of the person to whom they are addressed.” To justify their lack of opposition to LGBT+ discrimination, Ezéchiel feels that states often resort to a perverse argument, especially in spaces such as the Human Rights Council. “They say that they cannot do anything because of the opinion in their country. But at the same time, they do not do anything to reduce this stigma or hostility and there is no outreach. So not only does the state fail to reduce the stigma against LGBT+ people, but it also prevents associations that could do so from carrying on their activities.

“States often resort to a perverse argument, that they cannot do anything because of the opinion in their country.”

Yet he finds satisfaction in the fact that he, and others like him, can live a fulfilling life: “It empowers me to know that I am not only gay, but also a person living with HIV-HBV co-infection that has effective treatment that enables me to live with the disease. I can tell LGBT+ youth like me to be faithful to their gender identity and sexual orientation while taking into account that STIs, HIV and AIDS are a reality. We must take care not only of our sexual health but also of our rights and duties.”

Ezéchiel believes a unifying vision for LGBT+ youth in Africa can be found through solidarity, closely united in love and tolerance between the LGBT+ networks, organisations and associations fighting for the same cause.

This is his message:

• Living in community means living with minorities.
• Living with minorities means accepting oneself as different.
• Accepting oneself as different means loving others as they are.
• Loving others as they are means living free and equal.
• Open Up the Future. I am AMSHeR.
Name: Irwin Iradukunda  
Country: Burundi

Irwin got involved in AMSHeR through the Sexual Health & Rights Institute at the 19th International Conference on AIDS and STIs in Africa (ICASA) held in Abidjan, Côte d’Ivoire in 2017. “My foray into human rights activism in Burundi is almost unintentional,” he explains, “I landed there accidentally, by working at the very first newly established (at that time) LGBT+ community centre in Bujumbura, Burundi in 2011. I have been working on Advocacy for Human Rights and Social development in the areas of LGBT+ and Sex Workers’ rights in Africa, drawing my experiences from both local and regional organisations for the past nine years.”

Irwin’s work focuses on delivering programmes on documentation and surveillance of human rights violations on the basis of real or perceived sexual orientation and gender identity, research and advocacy and capacity strengthening for emerging LGBT+ activists and groups in Burundi, Rwanda, the Democratic Republic of Congo and the Republic of Congo. He’s most passionate about equality and non-discrimination in leadership, governance and development: “I believe in civic participation,” he says, “the right to the realisation of the full potential and equal opportunities for young people in Africa.

He’s most concerned about the shrinking civic space in Africa. “Given the actual African politics around human rights, sovereignty is often invoked to deny allegations on in-country human rights violations or denying basic human rights to the most vulnerable, such as LGBT+ communities. The existing set of legal norms, standards and mechanisms lack accuracy in addressing accountability and protect the States’ citizenry from violence, discrimination, access to public health care, education based on real or perceived sexual orientation and gender identity.”

“Follow your dreams, do not give up, improve on yesterday’s efforts.”

So, what are the biggest challenges for LGBT+ communities in Africa? Irwin believes they can be found on various levels. The public discourse fuelling hatred and intolerance from the general population, propelled by political and religious opinion leaders towards LGBT+ communities in Africa, for one. Also, the criminalisation of the work of LGBT+ Human Rights Defenders through a vague mention of ‘homosexuality’ in the law: This has institutionalised the discrimination and human rights violations based on real or perceived sexual orientation and gender identity in Africa.

“And the psychological well-being due to high levels of pressure and discrimination,” he adds, “the under-representation of LGBT+ young people in decision making, and within the high-profile stakeholders driving social change within the larger LGBT+ movement in Africa. There is a gap in youth leadership within the continental leadership where ageism prevails.”

But Irwin remains positive and believes there is hope to be found despite the circumstances. “Being able to achieve milestones and changing lives with extremely limited resources, overcoming the many barriers put by our Governments and still exist and operate as activists, communities and groups is what gives me the most satisfaction.” He believes a unifying vision for LGBT+ communities in Africa can be achieved through intergenerational, honest and open discussion and by harnessing the demographic dividend through gender-sensitive investments in the African LGBT+ youth.

His advice to young LGBT+ individuals? “Fight for your life, follow your dreams, do not give up, improve on yesterday’s efforts. Never say no to hope!”

Name: Joseph Ssemmanda  
Country: Uganda

Joseph, through his leadership at the Masaka KP HIV Prevention and Support Organization (MAHIPOSO) became involved and benefited from AMSHER projects such as SOGI through Sexual Minorities Uganda (SMUG). He has also been involved in LGBT+ issues at local and national level through MAHIPOSO. “I collaborate with different partner organisations who share the vision of SMUG, Lady Mermaid Bureau (LMB) among others, to advance protection through advocacy on delayed policies, such as the Draft Adolescent Health policy (ADH), Draft school health policy and the implementation of resolution 275 on sexual orientation and gender identity,” he explains.
He also represents the southern region of Uganda at the Uganda Key Population Consortium (UKPC) on the board of directors, which unifies the voice of the LGBT+ communities and collaborates with organisations such as Accountability International.

Joseph’s passion drives him towards serving the LGBT+ community, stemming from a sense of belonging: “The community is part of me,” he says, “and we are united through the different colours of the rainbow, which inspires me to help influence and motivate people around me and the community. It is my payer that all LGBT+ people can become part of an inclusive environment in society, free from stigma and discrimination.”

“Appreciate yourself, accept yourself and, above all, know your rights and have a positive mind.”

It is for this reason that he’s most concerned about the rights of LGBT+ being respected, protected and fulfilled by the African states. He sees unfavourable laws and policies as a great challenge, combined with stigma and discrimination, blackmailling, rejection by family/clan, friends and church, mental health, exclusion from services, LGBT+ asylum seekers, and the high rates of violence and persecution.

But he also sees progress, which he finds encouraging. “There are good coordination mechanisms through the formulation of the Uganda Key Population Consortium that unites all LGBT+ organisations in Uganda,” he explains, “and continuous dialogue with service providers has increased friendly service delivery to the community members. That, and an increased awareness about human rights amongst the LGBT+ community members.”

Hence Joseph’s belief that a unifying vision for LGBT+ people in Africa can be found in pursuing the ideal of a society free from stigma and discrimination through celebrating their value in both their differences and inclusivity. His advice to young LGBT+ individuals in Africa is to “appreciate yourself, accept yourself, join other networks and organisations that serve LGBT+ in your community and, above all, know your rights and have a positive mind.”

**Name: Natasha-Ivy Chama**  
**Country: Zambia**

Natasha-Ivy got involved with AMSHer in 2017 when the YKP project was first introduced in Zambia. “It was a great opportunity for me when I was invited as participant by our in-country coordinator,” she remembers. “This was a start in harnessing what I knew about LGBT+ activism, which I had been involved in for two years before my first interaction on the YKP/LPP project. I first got involved when a friend invited me for a focus group discussion that took a beautiful turn for me and I wanted to continue getting engaged in the movement. It’s been wonderful ever since!”

Natasha-Ivy works for a Transgender and Intersex organisation in Zambia as Gender and Development Officer. While the name sounds fancy, it’s a lot of work trying to create an enabling environment for humanity. “I usually find myself eager and excited to getting things done,” she says. “My favorite part of my job is interacting with the community and seeing how positive everyone is about the future. That should keep everyone going.”

What motivates and drives her? “I remember a time in my life when I had no one,” she says. “I was alone battling with my sexual orientation at the age of 16 with no one to seek counsel about how I was feeling and the negative feedback I got from family and friends. I wanted to harm myself in ways I can’t imagine right now. All I needed was hope, a friend that was like me or understood me. I seek to be that person to other people. I seek to be able to speak for the voiceless, I seek to help people in whichever way I can. I am motivated at how solidarity can enable change. I am motivated by the hope that exists in our movement.”

“All I needed was hope, a friend that was like me or understood me. I seek to be that person to other people.”

What concerns Natasha-Ivy the most is the inability of people to look and see other people as human beings, to witness the way some people are frowned upon. “From basic things to just accessing SRHR services or allowing one to fully express themselves and the right to life. Taking one’s life isn’t just by death; it’s by denying an individual
to live their best life. It’s allowing an individual to have and enjoy a good mental health, free from bullying, stigma and discrimination.”

She considers the biggest challenges for LGBT+ in Africa as gender norms and expectations infiltrated by cultural and traditional beliefs, inadequate information and understanding of LGBT+ communities, division of the LGBT+ amongst themselves, marginalisation and inadequate safe coping mechanisms to deal with these challenges. She implores young LGBT+ people in Africa to explore: “Get a passport and allow your brain to absorb information! There is so much in the world to learn from. Sometimes being in one space can limit your ability to further capacitate yourself.” But it doesn’t end there, information must be brought home: “We as young people have identified in various spaces that there is a huge gap in information. But what are we as young people doing to generate the information we want that has the power to inform our needs and challenges? Young person, claim your space!”

Name: Simeão Zava Hanhane Júnior (Mitho)
Country: Mozambique

It was the Linking Policies Project that started Mitho’s involvement in AMSHeR and LGBT+ issues, where he is the national project assistant of LAMBDA, the only LGBT+ organisation in Mozambique. He works with YKP and LGBT+ youth in response to their needs for access to services.

Mitho is a law student at Sao Tomas University of Mozambique, and juggles his studies and LAMBDA activities every day, which typically start at 5am. “I don’t consider that I have ‘normal days’,” he laughs. “Each day brings new opportunities, new challenges and new achievements. My daily journey is composed of a morning workout in the gym, followed by my work to carry out my tasks for the fight for the rights of LGBT+ in the Lambda Association. Only at the end of the day do I catch up with the intellectual challenges of my studies.”

What motivates him and makes him want to get up so early each morning is his hope that one day life will get better in terms of service access for the marginalised LGBT+ community. “There are many LGBT+ people in my country who need to be empowered, to know their rights and learn to fight. I see myself as a young leader who has the ability to influence other young people to empower themselves, participate more and become more represented in the areas that concern them.”

Mitho says he will not stop fighting for the causes of sexual minorities and the Young Key Population until he sees that there is balance and equity in the provision of rights. “Let us fight for the rights we have and deserve. This battle belongs to all of us, when you are part of a minority you are obliged to be an activist,” he says. “Let us not be fooled by the way people think and talk about us. We are bright and light-filled people, let’s shine and be happy as we are.”

“Let us not be fooled by the way people think and talk about us. We are bright and light-filled people.”

Seeing the progress of personal and professional projects gives Mitho the most satisfaction, especially considering the core challenges he believes LGBT+ in Africa are facing: “A low African cultural identity in the LGBT+ community is a great concern,” he says. “I have seen that there is huge difficulty for LGBT+ in Africa to characterise themselves as African in their advocacy activities. I think that apart from raising the LGBT+ flag, we should highlight our Africanness a little more, that would give us more originality.

“I think we have to start raising deeper debates focusing on African identity at the continental level, looking more at our origins as LGBT+ of Africa. Discussions should be a little more appropriate to our culture.”
Achieving the vision of LGBT+ rights as human rights for all depends on relentless, committed and effective advocacy on many levels, including health, protection from violence and discrimination, access to services and engaging local and global policy makers in addressing the needs of LGBT+ people across Africa.

Advocacy is the act or process of pleading or arguing in favour of a cause, idea, group or policy. It includes multi-faceted and multi-leveled goals, programmes and activities that can bring about societal or broad change. It is about influencing people, policies, practices, structures and systems in order to bring about such change. It can include work that focuses on one specific issue, campaigns that span a specific period of time or ongoing work that addresses a range of issues.

Zimbabwe, for instance, has an ideal programme that targets adolescents/youth and is designed to improve the sexual and reproductive health of the young key population. In Kenya, the global Health Policy Project (funded by the United States Agency for International Development) in partnership with AMSHeR, has provided advocates, policymakers and service providers with tools to advocate policies that govern the accessibility and sustainability of services for key populations.

AMSHeR’s 15 Member Countries are continuing to advocate for change, each of them achieving their goals and making a difference in their own countries and abroad. To be reminded of the different programmes conducted in these countries and the real change they bring about, here are some of the highlights:

Cote d’Ivoire
Organisation: Alternative Ivory Coast

Goals:

• Prevent and sensitise against STI/HIV/AIDS proliferation and support LGBT+ living with HIV/AIDS.

• Fight for the respect of human rights such as the right to access to medical services, information, training and education for vulnerable people or victims of discrimination and stigmatisation (particularly homosexuals, lesbians, bisexuals and transgender).

• Effectively represent discriminated groups both on national and international level to raise public awareness on issues related to their conditions.

Programmes and activities:

• Educational talks at the headquarters of the organisation.

• Group talks.

• Thematic talks under specialists’ supervision (of health, nutritionists, etc.).

• Mass outreach activities.

• Door-to-door proximity outreach.

• Prevention activities via the internet.
Ghana
Organisation: Centre for Popular Education and Human Rights (CEPEHRG)

Goals:

- Strive for the attainment of equal rights and the removal of all forms of discrimination in all aspects of life for gay, lesbian, bisexual, and same gender loving people in Ghana, West Africa (where same-sex relationships are still criminalised).
- Strive to inform, educate, counsel and support people in matters relating to law, health (specifically HIV/AIDS in same-sex relationships) and socio-economic well-being.

Programmes and activities:

- CEPEHRG works actively on human rights, HIV/AIDS programmes and services for LGBT+ people living in Ghana.
- They also have an interactive theatre group, which performs interactive theatre performances in schools and communities to create awareness on basic and fundamental human rights of young people, including the marginalised.
- Member of the UNAIDS Technical Working Group (TWG) for most-at-risk populations in Ghana.
- UNAIDS/UNDP Red Ribbon Award winners in 2008 for offering HIV/AIDS prevention programmes and services to MSM communities in Ghana.

Kenya
Organisation: Ishtar

Goals:

- Advocate for equal access of healthcare for MSM.
- To identify and develop a referral system for MSM health needs.
- To create, raise and promote public awareness about MSM.
- To use different media e.g. drama, dance and skits, flyers, brochures, newsletters & media, to pass messages regarding sexual health and safer sexual practices for the MSM community.
- Capacity building of members to instill life skills to help with living with oneself.
- To offer peer education services to members.
- To create, plan and manage different support groups for members.
- To emphasise life skills and develop positive attitudes and values.

Programmes and activities:

- Ishtar has been at the forefront of advancing LGBT+ health rights in Kenya.
- Involved in several research programmes, the most remarkable being their 2004/2005 partnering with Nairobi University Institute of African studies and the Population Council in understanding the HIV/STI risk and prevention needs of MSM in Nairobi.
- This research presented the key findings and acknowledgement that MSM are not a negligible population in Nairobi and that their sexual behavior has an implication on both men’s and women’s reproductive health, hence the importance of inclusion of MSM in the holistic approach to fight the pandemic.

Malawi
Organisation: Centre for the Development of People (CEDEP)

Goals:

- Address the needs and challenges of minority groups
OUR COUNTRIES

in Malawi in the context of human rights, health and social development.

• Create a legally and socially accepting environment where minority groups have an improved livelihood.

• Advance the human rights of minority groups through advocacy and lobbying.

• Promote human rights and health of minority groups through civic education, training, capacity building, networking and research, and provide support services for the improvement of the welfare of minority groups in accordance with their needs.

Programmes and activities:

• Sexual health programme, which involves sexual health workshops, distribution of condoms and lubrication, an MSM friendly VCT clinic and a resource centre.

• Research forms the basis for CEDEP’s advocacy programme. In 2008 CEDEP in collaboration with Open Society Institute and the Sexual Health and Rights Project, USA, Johns Hopkins School of Public Health, USA, Center for Public Health and Human Rights, USA, and Open Society Institute of Southern Africa (OSISA), RSA conducted an epidemiological study of HIV prevalence among 200 men who have sex with other men (MSM) in Malawi. The study revealed an HIV prevalence of 21.4%, which is twice the national prevalence.

Nigeria
Organisation: International Center for Advocacy on Right to Health (ICARH)

Goals:

• To provide interventions that meet the sexual health needs of sexual and gender minorities.

• To carry out awareness on human rights and its linkage to HIV/AIDS as it relates to the sexual minorities, with the aim of reducing discrimination and stigmatisation.

• To advocate against harmful laws affecting sexual and gender minorities and to document subsequent human rights violations borne of hostile environments and such hostile laws.

Programmes and activities:

• Administer a clinic for HIV and other STI screening, palliative care and support groups.

• Sexual Health Programmes for STI prevention through peer education.

• Human Rights & Advocacy focusing on documentation, mediation, advocacy and stakeholder engagement.

South Africa
Organisation: OUT-LGBT Well-being

Goals:

• The focus is on health and rights

Programmes and activities:

• Dedicated LGBT+ community centre.

• Counselling (face to face, telephonic and electronic), groups (gay men, lesbian women, book club, trans group, group for parents, alcoholics anonymous, group for therapists).

• HIV prevention programmes focusing on substance use, strengthening of community norms and electronic based prevention.

• Clinic with ARV service and holistic HIV care.

• Research into sexual risk factors.

• Advocacy to protect and further inclusive and progressive LGBT+ legislation.

Togo
Organisation: Afrique-Arc-En-Ciel

Goals:

• Advocate for good access to adequate prevention, treatment, care and support in HIV and AIDS.

• Strive for a social environment free of stigma and discrimination.

Programmes and activities:

• Works in partnership with the NGO Medical Aid and Charity (MAC).

• Makes available to the gay public in Lomé a meeting space and a place for free discussion and prevention where one can address without any taboos the issues of homosexuality, HIV/AIDS and human rights.

Uganda
Organisation: Frank & Candy

Goals:

• To work with and empower other Kuchu groups. It aims to be a professional link between programmes and service delivery.

• An empowered and informed community of Men who have Sex with Men (MSM) and Women who have Sex with Women (WSW) and Transgenders in Uganda, free from the threat of HIV/AIDS, functioning freely in society without prejudice and stigma.

Programmes and activities:

• The Frank & Candy Newsletter, a weekly HIV prevention and care informational electronic newsletter.

• The LGBTI Health Africa Listserve, an e-group, which was formed with the aim to connect all those in Africa who work in the fields of HIV health and health care for Kuchus all over Africa. Its aim is to connect, gather and disseminate information, get discussions going and share experiences.

• The Safe Space Initiative: A virtual secret group on a popular social networking site, which aims to create a safe space that is for Kuchus, administered by Kuchus to discuss any and all topics of interest to Kuchus.

• Kuchus Living with HIV/AIDS group (KULHAS). Frank & Candy Uganda is the parent group of KULHAS, a group of Kuchus living with HIV which was formed as a self-support group to take care of the needs of Kuchus living with HIV.

Zambia
Organisation: Friends of RAINKA (FoR)

Goals:

• To champion the rights of sexual minorities in Zambia through advocacy, information dissemination, legal reform, research and direct service provision.

• Engage law and policy makers on legal reform, build capacity to undertake effective advocacy, establish member services based on identified needs and priorities, and to research, gather, analyse and disseminate information.

• Work towards a system based on social and economic justice, interdependence, solidarity and respect rather than competition and exploitation. A Zambia without the systems of oppression.

Programmes and activities:

• In the recent past HIVOS International, a Dutch organisation (Humanist Institute for Cooperation with Developing Country) provided funding that has greatly assisted the organisation in meeting its financial commitments.
• The organisation has informally provided psycho-social support for members of the community, providing counseling, education on sex, sexuality, gender, safe sex practices and HIV/AIDS.

• Held an organisational development and capacity building workshop in February 2009 and a follow-up workshop on advocacy and human rights in March, 2009.

• FoR has strived to collaborate with human rights and health-based NGOs but the existing laws have limited their number of partners domestically and has denied them access to traditional sources of funding.

Zimbabwe
Organisation: Gays and Lesbians of Zimbabwe (GALZ)

Goals:

• To promote, represent and protect the rights and interests of lesbians, gays, bisexuals, transgender and intersex people.

• Advocacy through lobbying, empowerment, education, research and provision of safe spaces.

Programmes and activities:

• Provide membership-driven services to the LGBT+ community and work to increase availability of relevant services that are responsive to the needs of members.

• Ensure that LGBT+ people have access to safe and non-discriminatory spaces and facilities.

• Work to strengthen the capacity of LGBT+ people to exercise their rights in different forums.

Work to raise awareness and understanding by the public of LGBT+ issues, interest and rights.
THE ONLY WAY FORWARD IS HUMAN RIGHTS FOR ALL
Staying closely aligned to their Key Strategic Pillars, AMSHeR will continue their journey and success story into 2020 and beyond.

**DELIVERING RESULTS RELATED TO CHAMPIONING RIGHTS**

AMSHeR will simultaneously advocate for appropriate action by human rights “duty bearers” and facilitate empowerment and action by “rights holders”. AMSHeR’s secretariat and members have become increasingly skilled in recent years at drawing on different tools to influence duty bearers. These include:

- The preparation and submission of shadow reports within sub-regional, African and global human rights monitoring bodies, an approach that AMSHeR members including Arc-en-Ciel Afrique have used to secure relevant commitments from their governments.
- Advocacy to include specific recommendations and action plans related to gender and sexual diversity, such as Resolution 275 of the African Court of Human and People’s Rights.
- Strategic litigation in national courts that typically focuses on advancing and solidifying the least controversial freedoms and protections first (such as freedom from violence and the right to assembly), before tackling criminalisation of same-sex conduct.
- Conduct high-level dialogues with judges and human rights commissioners. At country level, AMSHeR members frequently partner with other institutions with similar values in this work, including human rights commissions and groups of progressive lawyers.

**Opportunities and constraints** vary from country to country, but lessons can and should be shared, such as the success of Lambda in Mozambique in advancing decriminalisation of same-sex relations as part of a much wider review and reform of criminal law. Some AMSHeR members, such as GALCK in Kenya, have effectively requested Amicus Curiae status as part of strategic litigation and the AMSHeR secretariat may do likewise in the future, when national partners indicate that this would be a useful contribution.

Similarly, within regional institutions, the AMSHeR secretariat has learned the importance of partnering with other relevant coalitions and networks. The Coalition of African Lesbians worked closely with AMSHeR in advocating for Resolution 275 and continues to collaborate in calling for appropriate follow-up action to that resolution. A broad range of other civil society groups are leading the overall defense of the African Commission and the African human rights system, with AMSHeR playing a modest but important supportive role.

AMSHeR also contributes to these results by educating and empowering rights holders. Most significantly, AMSHeR’s capacity strengthening work with members and partners includes specific attention to rights-related issues, so that a growing number of CSOs in Africa can in turn educate
LGBT+ rights holders, support them in documenting and reporting violations, and call for appropriate redress.

There are also important opportunities to link this work with AMSHeR’s celebration of diversity, including the use of cultural, political and other champions as spokespeople for acceptance and as advocates for rights protection. Whether advocating for advances in law and policy or supporting rights holders to demand accountability from duty bearers, there is a large scope for AMSHeR to facilitate learning in this area, particularly as more and more African courts cite judicial precedents from other countries.

DELIVERING RESULTS RELATED TO CELEBRATING DIVERSITY

As reflected in the outcomes and outputs described above, AMSHeR will use three parallel and mutually reinforcing approaches to deliver results related to this Strategic Objective.

- First, AMSHeR will work through the media and other public communications channels, both traditional and social. There has been considerable success at increasing neutral or positive media coverage of sexual diversity in Africa in recent years, benefiting from sympathetic coverage of real people, from the voices of celebrity champions and from changing attitudes among young social media influencers. These successes can be reinforced and extended, by training and sensitising journalists, communicators and other influencers, by facilitating access to appropriate people and stories, and by directly producing content.

- Second, AMSHeR will produce training materials and other relevant resources, as well as running sensitisation and dialogue programmes, that are designed to directly increase understanding of sexual and gender diversity among leaders in key sectors, including at community and political levels, of cultural and spiritual/religious institutions, of private sector enterprises, and of academics. The AMSHeR secretariat will focus on identifying and sharing, as well as developing, materials and methodologies that can be used by multiple members and partners (as well as by other relevant organisations). The secretariat will also organise and deliver training and sensitisation programmes on inter-country, sub-regional and regional levels, for example with Pan-African meetings of religious leaders.

- Third, AMSHeR’s secretariat and members will seek to nurture, grow and diversify leadership from within Africa’s LGBT+ communities. A strong emphasis will be placed on identifying, supporting and celebrating the next generation of leadership through youth training programmes and inclusion of young leaders as spokespeople at events and in boards and advisory groups of AMSHeR itself and its members. Emerging and established community leaders will also be celebrated through awards programmes, social media profiles and support to participate in key influencing and networking opportunities.

Opportunities and constraints we are mindful of is that some of AMSHeR’s member organisations are particularly skilled at direct content production, such as TIERS Nigeria’s production of Nollywood movies with LGBT+ characters and plots. Those materials can be used and disseminated by other members and by the AMSHeR secretariat, and those skills can be shared with other members working in other languages or cultural contexts. Other AMSHeR members advance this agenda through events such as Pride celebrations and film festivals.

AMSHeR members and partners are best placed to work country by country, as reflected in the pioneering work of Friends of Rainke in Zambia and CEPEHRG in Ghana with religious and spiritual leaders within their respective countries, as well as the work of Lambda and GALZ with Mozambican and Zimbabwean politicians respectively.
DELIVERING RESULTS RELATED TO INCLUSIVE DEVELOPMENT

The AMSHeR secretariat and a majority of its members have considerable experience working at policy and programme levels to improve HIV responses, promoting inclusion of and attention to SOGI communities. AMSHeR will continue its proven approach to these issues, including:

- Advocacy that draws attention to the HIV-related needs of LGBT+ populations.
- Research that documents inclusion and attention to these issues in governance policies and funding (or lack thereof).
- Advocacy for the inclusion of LGBT+ on decision making bodies such as the Global Fund’s “Country Coordination Mechanisms”.
- Development and use of training tools aimed at both public health leaders and front-line health workers.
- Alliance building and joint programming with networks representing other key populations affected by HIV.

Particular attention will be paid to prioritisation of LGBT+ needs as HIV-dedicated funding declines and to inclusion of LGBT/MSM in areas of increasing investment, such as the roll-out of PrEP. The AMSHeR secretariat will continue its work at regional and global levels, drawing attention to African priorities and experiences, increasingly accompanied by relevant AMSHeR members. AMSHeR members including OUT in South Africa, Arc-en-Ciel Plus in Cote d’Ivoire, and Ishtar in Kenya will lead such work at country level, benefiting from tools and peer learning from the AMSHeR coalition.

AMSHeR’s role in influencing other relevant sectors and development priorities to include attention to sexual and gender diversity will be more limited but still important. A first priority will be to consolidate evidence about the relevance of LGBT+ to different priority sectors and to map opportunities for changes to policies and programmes.

Opportunities and constraints: AMSHeR will invest in sharing experiences and approaches across sub-regions, as different parts of Africa have had varying degrees of success at incorporating LGBT+ sensitivity into their HIV policies and programmes. While AMSHeR’s previous strategic plan referred to ‘health services’ rather than health programming more broadly, AMSHeR has also developed expertise in understanding and promoting action on social determinants of HIV-related health outcomes, and that work will be continued and expanded.

HIV expertise and networks with health policy makers and health workers will be leveraged to increase action on other health-related priorities for people of diverse sexual orientations, gender identities and gender expression, including TB, STIs, reproductive health and mental health, learning from health sector work beyond HIV currently being implemented by AMSHeR members including Alternative Cameroon (with reproductive and maternal health) and Outright Nambia (with mental health).

Nascent experience of AMSHeR members in influencing issues and sectors beyond health to become more LGBT+ responsive will be an important resource, including the experience of CEDEP in Malawi with poverty alleviation, and OUT in South Africa addressing the links between violence and low educational achievement for young lesbians and bisexual women.

Given that neither the AMSHeR secretariat nor most members have in-depth expertise in sectors like education or social protection, an emphasis will be placed on creating and/or deepening alliances with civil society organizations and movements with more relevant expertise. AMSHeR will review its experiences working productively with Health Ministries and with Justice Ministries and Human Rights Commissions to identify approaches that might be transferable to other ministries and sectors. Work beyond health will initially focus on areas where Members or the secretariat have at least some initial relevant skills, particularly in addressing violence.
DELIVERING RESULTS RELATED TO THE LGBT+ SOCIAL MOVEMENT IN AFRICA

AMSHeR was first established by African gay and bisexual men and other men who have sex with men (GBMSM), drawing attention to their human rights and their needs for equitable and inclusive health services. As a result, AMSHeR has a unique depth of experience and legitimacy with African GBMSM, and AMSHeR will continue to represent and draw attention to the particular needs and perspectives of African GBMSM, with special attention to relevant HIV issues.

At the same time, from the beginning, AMSHeR’s coalition included LGBT+ as well as MSM groups and it quickly became obvious that there were synergies between making progress for GBMSM, making progress for other specific communities within the African LGBT+ movement, and making progress for African LGBT+ people overall.

AMSHeR quickly found itself working on broader LGBT+ issues as well as those that are specific to GBMSM and AMSHeR’s staff and board were diversified to include trans people and bisexual and lesbian women. At the same time, other communities such as lesbians and bisexual women and trans people need their own organisations and networks to draw attention to their own priorities and views. The various constituencies within the African LGBT+ movement all stand to benefit from many of the same laws, policies, programmes and social attitudes – and are all threatened by many of the same forces.

In many cases, driving progress requires a common front and joint action. As such, AMSHeR will continue its longstanding practice of working particularly closely with lesbian and trans networks, as well as with other networks of key populations affected by HIV, such as sex workers.

Opportunities and constraints: Many organisations within the movement are fragile but strengthening individuals to become effective advocates can contribute to the movement, even as those individuals move from one role to another, or one organisation to another.

There are challenges that have received insufficient attention to date and that require more concerted action, including sexual harassment within the movement. AMSHeR recognises that the LGBT+ movement in Africa has rapidly grown and diversified since AMSHeR was first established. Other networks now exist that convene almost all relevant actors, most notably Pan-African ILGA. AMSHeR will not try to emulate or compete with Pan-African ILGA in its broad and inclusive convening but AMSHeR will grow and diversify its membership to better reflect the diversity of African LGBT+ experiences and capacities. AMSHeR will invest much more attention to sharing the products, insights and expertise of its secretariat and members more broadly, to other LGBT+ focused groups and also to civil society and other allies who are seeking to become more understanding of and responsive to sexual and gender diversity.

Several AMSHeR members are themselves networks of different NGOs or organisations with multiple branches across their country, including GALCK in Kenya and GALZ in Zimbabwe. This offers the opportunity to document and leverage their experience in coordinating and strengthening broader movements in their countries, to widen such efforts across the AMSHeR coalition.