



DRIVE FOR INCLUSION

ANNUAL REPORT 2021



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OUR IMPACT IN 2021

- ✓ More than 100 journalists equipped with accurate and human rights-based information on SOGIE

- ✓ More than 25 progressive media reports on human rights of LGBTI persons

- ✓ More than 120 local leaders equipped with information on human rights with focus on rights of LGBT persons, rule of law, and SOGIE

- ✓ More than 60 healthcare providers empowered on legal provisions related to non-discrimination and stigma-free services

- ✓ 765 MSM and 691 sex workers were sensitized on human rights, prevention and treatment of HIV and other sexually transmitted infections

- ✓ More than 10,000 condoms and lubricants distributed to MSM and Sex Workers

- ✓ More than 120 teenage mothers received training on sexual and reproductive health and rights with focus on family planning and use of contraceptives;

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- ✓ More than 600 LGBT people were supported with food relief, shelter and access to COVID-19 prevention equipment such as masks, hand washing facilities and many more

- ✓ One of LGBT organizations, well known as Feminist Action Development Ambition (FADA), was granted the legal personality – making it a second LGBT organization registered in Rwanda

- ✓ AHR was elected to chair the Human Rights Steering Committee of the Rwanda MenEngage Network (RWAMNET) which is a network for men engaged in the promotion of gender equality.

MESSAGE FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Dear readers,

On behalf of the Board of Directors, staff and volunteers of Amahoro Human Respect (AHR), I am pleased to present to you the 2021 annual report. We shall always remember 2021 as a difficult year in which we suspended many times our field activities in order to comply with government measures, put in place with the view to mitigate the spread of COVID-19.

Restrictions related to the prevention of COVID-19 taught us some powerful and important lessons including resilience, flexibility and solidarity. The passion and commitment of our team allowed us to be adapted to all of the changes that came along our ways. It was in that context that we were able to get closer and help our communities who were facing various problems including the lack of food, shelter and other human rights related abuses.

In the last year we have seen the rise of stigma and discrimination fueled by the perception that COVID-19 is a punishment of God because of homosexuality.



There are other LGBT people who have been exploited, because of hunger and poverty, and used to testify on social media that they voluntarily become homosexuals, and committed desperately to change their sexual orientation and become heterosexuals. Despite challenges we faced, 2021 was also a year of strategic growth – AHR welcomed new partners including AmplifyChange, UHAI-EASHRI, HIVOS and the Embassy of German in Rwanda.

These new and existing partnerships strengthened our ability to continue raising awareness of the general population on sexual orientation and gender identity, advocating for the human rights and well-being of our communities as well as overcoming the challenges imposed by the pandemic. We were elected to chair the human rights steering committee of the Rwanda Menengage Network (RWAMNET) which is a network for men engaged in the promotion of gender equality in Rwanda.

All of this has been achieved through the strong

commitment, professionalism and dedication of our staff, interns, volunteers and partners who have all worked together with the same goal of leaving no one behind though improving the well-being as well as human rights of communities we serve. Allow me to take this opportunity to thank the Government of Rwanda for its support, collaboration as well as maintaining a conducive environment for constructive community dialogues and advocacy on emerging issues affecting citizen including issues related to sexual orientation and gender identity expression (SOGIE).

As way forward, we are keen to continue maintaining and strengthen our new and existing partnership as well as continue combatting all forms of stigma and discrimination in Rwanda.

Let's ensure that no one is left behind.

Geoffrey Mwesigye
Executive Director



About AHR

Amahoro Human Respect (AHR) is a non-governmental organization based in Kigali-Rwanda and registered under the Rwandan law with the registration number N0438/RGB/NGO/LP/02/2019. AHR strives to promote human rights education through empowering underserved communities on human rights as well as building the capacity of decision makers to know and meet their human rights obligations.

AHR works to ensure Lesbians, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender and Intersex (LGBT), teenage mothers, People Living with HIV, People who inject Drugs (PWID) and other vulnerable and marginalized groups can fully enjoy their rights as well as combating all forms of gender-based violence throughout the country.



VISION

A healthy and prosperous generation-free from all forms of injustice including on basis of sexual orientation and gender identity expression.

Striving for the respect, protection and fulfillment of human rights through research, advocacy, capacity building and provision of legal aid.



MISSION

OUR PROGRAMMATIC AREAS

GENDER EQUALITY AND SOCIAL INCLUSION

Sexual and gender inequalities are the main root causes of sexual and gender based violence including stigma and discrimination. Through facilitating constructive community dialogues, evidence-based advocacy and provision of legal aid, AHR contributes to building a Rwandan society where all women, men and other individuals have equal opportunities in the national development agenda.

QUALITY AND STIGMA-FREE HEALTH CARE

Stigmatization and discrimination are social determinants of health and can affect one's mental and physical health and well-being. Stigma and discrimination can affect whether or not a person, particularly vulnerable and marginalised groups to seek or are able to receive health services. It can also affect the quality of the services they receive. Through evidence-based advocacy and capacity building of health care providers on human right to health as well as provision of inclusive and stigma free services, AHR contributes to the establishment of more enabling environment for all individuals to fully access available high quality of health care services.

ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT

Poverty associated with stigma and discrimination are leading factors that prevent vulnerable and marginalised persons from fully enjoying the human rights to development. AHR works towards supporting vulnerable and marginalised groups to access Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET), capacity building on entrepreneurship and provision of financial support to start and run small and medium business with the view to improve access to opportunities and equal distribution of resources.

OUR CORE VALUES



GENDER EQUALITY AND SOCIAL INCLUSION (GESI)



COVID-19 pandemic reminded us that stigma and discrimination on basis of sexual orientation and gender identity are serious concerns that need to be addressed. It is within that context that AHR has taken the lead in educating the public on gender equality and social inclusion.

After observing that stigma and discrimination against LGBT members in Rwanda was on the rise, especially in the face of the COVID-19 epidemic, AHR undertaken the lead in the sensitization of the general public on sexual orientation and gender identity expression (SOGIE) from a human rights perspective. In that regard, AHR produced two comprehensive booklets with accurate and evidence-based information on SOGIE.

One booklet contains information to train LGBT members and others on human rights of LGBT persons while the other booklet contains comprehensive information for a journalist to report stories based on scientific proven and human rights-based information.



**“...More than 100
journalists equipped
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AHR invested in the capacity building of journalists and media houses on SOGIE issues from a human rights perspective. Following the production of the handbook for journalist titled “reporting accurate and objective information on the human rights and inclusion of LGBTI persons in Rwanda”.

More than 100 journalists received accurate and human rights based information packs enabling them to report objectively and accurately on sexual orientation and gender identity.

Although there is no balance between harmful and supporting media reporting, we have seen an increased media reporting with focus on accurate and human-based information. There is a hope that the situation will keep improving.

**“...More than 25
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persons...”**

AHR organized a football match between the journalists and members of LGBT community members. The football match was very instrumental in networking and building larger support of journalists on LGBTI issues.

AHR look forward to continue engaging media houses and journalists on issues affecting lives and human rights of LGBTI persons in Rwanda

AHR was able to reach more than 10,000 individuals with accurate information on SOGIE through community dialogues, radio and TV talk shows. The community dialogues brought together LGBTI leaders, non-LGBT persons, faith leaders, local leaders and security officers. Community dialogue have been a great way to educate the public about SOGIE because it has brought together LGBT people and other community members.

The conversation focused on constitution provisions that states that all Rwandans are equal before the law as well as the prohibition of all forms of discrimination. We also conducted radio and TV talk shows with the view to inform the general population on SOGIE. Basing on feedback collected from the audience, it comes out clear that homophobic attitudes and practices are grounded on limited knowledge on SOGIE.





“...Basing on feedback collected from the audience, it comes out clear that homophobic attitudes and practices are grounded on limited knowledge on SOGIE...”

AHR built the capacity of members of LGBTI community on their human rights with the view to strengthen their capacity to collect, document and report cases of human rights violations against LGBT persons in Rwanda.

The LGBTI community capacity was also strengthened in areas of human rights advocacy and awareness on legal provisions protecting rights of all individuals including LGBTI persons in Rwanda.



“...More than 120 local leaders equipped with information on human rights with focus on rights of LGBT persons, rule of law, and SOGIE...”

AHR built the capacity of local leaders on human rights, rule of law and SOGIE. The training was an opportunity to remind local authorities about their responsibilities, as duty bearer, in relation to respect, protection and fulfillment of human rights according to national, regional and international human rights instruments.

Globally, AHR was able to reach and equip more than 120 leaders with information on human rights with focus on rights of LGBT persons, rule of law and SOGIE. These trainings served as platforms for experience sharing where transformed local leaders were invited to share experience with their peers.

QUALITY AND STIGMA-FREE HEALTH CARE

Stigmatization and discrimination are social determinants of health and can affect one's mental and physical health and well-being. Stigma and discrimination can affect whether or not a person, particularly LGBT persons, sex workers and adolescents, to seek or are able to receive health services.





In an effort to reduce stigma and discrimination against LGBT, sex workers and teenagers when they go for medical consultations and treatment, AHR has organized a variety of activities aimed at building the capacity of health care providers as well as community we serve on legal provision related to non-discrimination and the provision of inclusive and stigma-free services.

In addition to the training, AHR facilitated inter-face meetings that brought together healthcare providers and representative of communities we serve to discuss about emerging issues related to stigma and discrimination when accessing health services as well as discussing on effective remedies.



**“More than 60
healthcare providers
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More than 60 health care providers have been equipped with information on human rights and legal provision prohibiting discrimination as well as the provision of quality and stigma-free services. This interaction with healthcare providers was also an opportunity to remind them on the impact of non-discriminatory services in the fight against HIV/AIDS and sexually transmitted infections.

AHR took the opportunity to reiterate that homosexuality and prostitution are not punishable under Rwandan law, and that men who have sex with men (MSM) and female sex workers are the key populations in the national responses against HIV infection.

765 MSM and 691 sex workers were sensitized on human rights, prevention and treatment of HIV and other sexually transmitted infections

With the support of peer educators, we raised awareness of 765 MSM and 691 sex workers on human rights, prevention and treatment of HIV and other sexually transmitted infections. They also received commodities that include condoms and lubricants.

As for their rights, the AHR informed them that they have the right to non-violence and are entitled to all medical services including HIV testing and treatment. They were also informed about existing judicial remedies they can use whenever their rights are violated.




**“More than
10,000 condoms
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and Sex Workers”**

The AHR reached out to teenage mothers with information on child rights, the importance and the use of contraceptives as well as the prevention and treatment of HIV and sexual transmitted infections.

They were also equipped with information on the law protecting rights of children in Rwanda, most particularly on legal provisions related to rights of children in relation to registration, family support as well as the right to education.

Teenage mothers have been also trained on sexual and reproductive health including family planning methods. Efforts have also been made to help teenage mothers to register their children before civil status offices.



“More than 120 teenage mothers received training on sexual and reproductive health and rights with focus on family planning and use of contraceptives”

ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT

Discrimination is one of the main causes of backwardness and poverty. It is in this context that AHR is supporting LGBT people, sex workers, teenage mothers and other disadvantaged groups, in accessing TVET training and financial resources to run businesses.





The Covid-19 epidemic has caused a number of economic and social problems. In particular, the epidemic has had a devastating effect on the LGBT community, with members losing their livelihoods, being evicted from their homes and subjected to various forms of violence. It is in this context that AHR supported more than 150 LGBT people access food, shelter and access to equipment that allowed them prevent against the spread of covid-19 including masks, hand washing commodities and many more.

AHR supported more than 200 LGBT, sex workers and adolescents to undergo an intensive training in tailoring and shaving. This training is a great opportunity for our communities to create their own jobs and become more resilient. In the future, AHR has plans to extend these services to other community members located in rural areas.

“More than 600 LGBT people were supported with food relief, shelter and access to COVID-19 prevention equipment such as masks, hand washing facilities and many more”

A close-up photograph of two people shaking hands. They are both wearing dark blue business suits. The person on the right is also wearing a silver metal link watch. The background is a bright, out-of-focus indoor space with large windows.

PARTNERSHIP AND STRATEGIC DEVELOPMENT

AHR values and privileges partnerships opportunities with non-governmental organizations. We see partnership as a good strategy to attract the attention of civil society organization on issues related to SOGIE.



“He called on representatives of civil society organizations to join AHR in various activities aimed at making a difference in the lives and rights of LGBT people in Rwanda.”

In this regard, AHR participated in a retreat that brought together high level civil society representatives of organizations working in justice and human rights sector in Rwanda. During the meeting, the Executive Director of AHR reminded participants of the various issues facing LGBT people including violence and lack of fair justice. He called on representatives of civil society organizations to join AHR in various activities aimed at improving lives and rights of LGBT people in Rwanda.

Through Isange, the Coalition of LGBT Organizations that we currently chair, we have undertaken various initiatives aimed at strengthening the LGBT movement's capacity to influence development agenda in Rwanda. These initiatives included the capacity building of LGBT leaders on laws and policies, human rights, proposal writing, project management as well as NGO management.

“AHR is glad that one of LGBT organizations, well known as Feminist Action Development Ambition (FADA), was granted the legal personality – making it a second LGBT organization registered in Rwanda”

We also supported 10 LGBT community based organizations through hosting them in our office, hosting finances as well as in the process of registration. In that context, we are glad that one of LGBT organization, well known as Feminist Action Development Ambition (FADA), was granted the legal personality – making it a second LGBT organization registered in Rwanda.

We also have been elected to chair the Human Rights Steering Committee at the Rwanda MenEngage Network (RWAMNET) which is a network of men engaged in the promotion of gender equality

We also have been elected to chair the Human Rights Steering Committee at the Rwanda MenEngage Network (RWAMNET) which is a network of men engaged in the promotion of gender equality. We see this space as an opportunity to contribute to promotion of gender equality beyond gender binary as well as an opportunity to sensitize and build strong alliances and support on advocacy issues related to human rights of sexual minorities in Rwanda.



Omar Daair ✓
@omardaair

Tonight I hosted a celebration of diversity and inclusion. Despite the rain in Kigali it was such a warm event, full of energy, positivity and action.

Thank you 🙏 to those who attended.



AHR joined the British High Commission in Rwanda in the celebration of diversity and inclusion. The event was a great opportunity for members of the LGBT community in Rwanda to celebrate their achievements, sharing experience on current challenges as well as discussing strategies for better engagement.

Conclusion and Recommendations

Although last year we faced many challenges that affected our activities on the ground, we were able to implement activities that changed the lives of communities we serve. We were able to get closer to them and support them get their livelihoods when the community was required to stay at home in order to avoid the spread of covid-19.

The past year has been a great time for us to learn and take the initiatives that aligned our activities with the difficult times we were facing. These include teaching and training our employees, volunteers and interns on virtual working. This has been productive because we have continued to work and support our communities virtually. In order to improve performance, we thought of

setting up a hotline that allows our communities to continue to seek and receive services.

We have also been able to build the capacity of various individuals including local authorities, journalists and other communities on the fight against stigma and discrimination. These interventions were useful as it was demonstrated that acts of discrimination are often caused by limited knowledge of the law.

In order to continue improving our interventions and the impact we make in the community, we need to continue to focus on the following areas:

- ✓ To continue raising awareness of local leaders, journalists, and religious leaders on legal provisions related to discrimination as well as human rights of sexual minorities.

- ✓ To continue sensitizing the general population on human rights of LGBT persons and sex workers through regular community dialogues.

- ✓ To build and strengthen a national LGBT movement for unifying voice in the national conversation on issues regarding LGBT

- ✓ To build the capacity of mainstream non-governmental organizations on sexual orientation and gender identity

- ✓ To support LGBT-led organization to register before the Rwandan law

- ✓ To continue supporting adolescents, teen mothers and the youth to access accurate SRHR information and stigma-free services.

- ✓ To establish and operate a toll-free for reaching more communities members across the country

- ✓ Revise and adopt a new strategic plan adapted to the current trend of COVID-19

- ✓ To continue supporting LGBT community-based organization through providing officer spaces, fiscal host as well as the registration processes.

- ✓ To continue strengthening LGBT movement's capacity to effectively participate as well as influence the national development agenda.

Our partners

- AIDS HEALTHCARE FOUNDATION (AHF)
- AMPLIFY CHANGE
- ANSP+
- BRITISH HIGH COMMISSION IN KIGALI
- CAVARIA
- CERULA
- COC NEDERLANDS
- FRONTLINE AIDS
- GERMANY EMBASSY IN KIGALI
- GREAT LAKES INITIATIVE FOR HUMAN
- RIGHTS AND DEVELOPMENT (GLIHD)
- HEALTH DEVELOPMENT INITIATIVE (HDI)
- HIVOS
- HUMAN RIGHT FIRST RWANDA (HRFRA)
- ISANGE RWANDA
- LGBT DENMARK
- NETHERLANDS EMBASSY IN KIGALI
- POSITIVE VIBES
- RNGO FORUM ON HIV/AIDS AND HEALTH
- PROMOTION
- RRP+
- RWAMREC.
- RWANDA BIOMEDICAL CENTER
- SWEDISH EMBASSY IN KIGALI
- TFAM GLOBAL
- UHAI-EASHRI
- WE ACT FOR HOPE- RWANDA



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