

THE ROCK OF HOPE ESWATINI



# NEWSLETTER

FEBRUARY 2021



**Do Physical Characteristics & Genitals Define Manhood?**

**GHANA  
LGBT+ Community  
Centre Raided &  
Shutdown**



**MONTH  
OF LOVE**



Co-funded by the European Union

**T**he Rock of Hope Eswatini's newsletter turns a year old. Welcome news readers for those who don't know us. The Rock of Hope is a Manzini based organization that deals with the rights of the lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and intersex (LGBTI). The Rock of Hope Eswatini is hard at work nationally to ensure that the LGBTI community gains acceptance within the communities in which they reside. The Rock of Hope's main area of focus in the past has been on health advocacy, working to eliminate all non-financial barriers that prevent LGBTI people from accessing high quality health care. The scope of this work eventually expanded to creating safe social spaces in the broader community through religious advocacy and community engagement, as well as legal advocacy through sensitization and coalition building with lawyers and police officers in an effort to eliminate barriers to protections by the state

### **The organization's mission is;**

"The organization is here to build a society in Eswatini that is free from the stigmatization, discrimination and the oppression of gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender people (this also include prisoners and sex workers who fall under the listed categories). The organization through its activities aim to create a very strong and proud society of gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender people in the entire kingdom of Eswatini."

To all our loyal newsletter readers, we are grateful for the pleasure of keeping you informed, educated and entertained. We appreciate your loyalty. We Serve...

### **What can you say about the organization?**

People in the different communities face violence and inequality and sometimes torture, even execution because of who they love, how they look, or who they are. Sexual orientation and gender identity are integral aspects of our selves and should never lead to discrimination or abuse. The Rock of Hope Eswatini works to serve Human Rights for lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender peoples' rights, and with activists representing a multiplicity of identities and issues. The Rock of Hope advocate for laws and policies that will protect everyone's dignity. The organization is the voice of the voiceless. Lastly, The Rock of Hope Eswatini's vision is to create a society in which every LGBTIAQ+ individual attains full health rights, freedom to be themselves and social wellbeing resulting in a high quality life.

### **What is it that you have learnt from the organization?**

Given that I work for a The Rock of Hope Eswatini, LGBTIQ organization, I am required to interact with people of different ethnicities. Not only do these people come from different communities, but their cultural backgrounds, gender, experience, beliefs, methods of interactions, physical and mental characteristics are different too. I find working with such a diverse workforce to be an enriching learning experience and one that makes me a well-rounded person as a result.

Same problem, different solutions: Because of the different upbringings and values, teaching methods, and experiences. I find that a diverse workforce looks at things from different perspectives and tends come up with more innovative ideas and thinking out-of-the-box because of the difference that everyone brings to the table. However, some people would disagree with me. People can feel confused, threatened or annoyed by people with different views and backgrounds. It can lead to ego battles and power struggles. Learning fine cultural nuances: Initially, working and interacting with people from various ethnic backgrounds is a bit like tiptoeing through a minefield. It is difficult to understand their different expectations relating to the various gender and beliefs I am interacting with. I am constantly mindful of saying the right words to every different member.

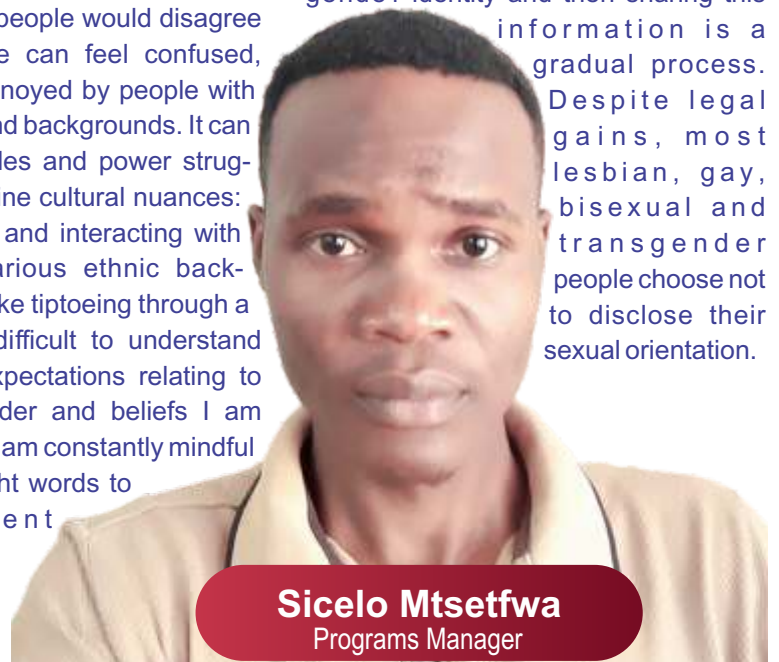
### **What projects do you enjoy working on and why?**

I have no preferences when it comes projects but I just adapt and learn on the go.

### **How is it like working for an organization that has a diverse culture?**

As societies across many parts of the world are making legal and cultural progress to embrace the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Tran's community, my country is still lagging behind in this process. But in my personal view and experience our culture influences the way in which we think. Multiple voices, perceptions, and personalities bouncing off one another gives a rise to thinking-out-of-the-box. Working for The Rock of Hope Eswatini enhanced my thinking capacity, knowledge, confidentiality at large and sometimes to mind my own business. In conclusion: Realizing one's sexual orientation or gender identity and then sharing this

information is a gradual process. Despite legal gains, most lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people choose not to disclose their sexual orientation.



**Sicelo Mtsetfwa**  
Programs Manager



# MONTH OF LOVE

February is a month dedicated to love, people know it as a month of lovebirds but it is only for lovebirds, it is month that can be dedicated to fostering relationships with loved ones, it can also be a month of self-care and self-love. Love is a universal language that has to bring the world together and we have been bombarded with so many love definitions because people experience love in so many different ways. Love is not just a feeling, but an act of that involves self-sacrifice which is willingness and determination to make someone your priority and abiding by each other no matter the circumstances.

## **What does Love mean to the LGBTQI+ community?**

An ocean of words have been used to define same sex relationships, forgetting that we all have freedom to love whom we want to love. Free love is associated with social movement that accept all forms of love, all forms of love including same sex love which means that same sex and heterosexual couples matte equally regardless of what the law says about same sex acts. Homosexuality is a romantic attraction, sexual attractions or sexual behavior between people of the same sex.

For most LGBTQI+ people freely expressing their love is very hard, especially in public because same sex relationships are criminalized and discriminated. Even in countries where same sex acts have been decriminalized, LGBTQI+ people still

Same sex relations have been and still are condemned, that undermines their sense of belonging and makes them feel like they have no place in the world. The general public's opposition to same sex marriage or relations and religious beliefs and criminalization are a major factor affecting contributing to discrimination, homophobia and transphobia.

Even though same sex couples or acts are pushed, they still blossom no matter the obstacles either in public or away from the prey's eyes. Gay conversion therapies or reprogramming of homosexual feelings with a mixture of psychotherapy and prayers must come to an end. Always remember that in same sex couples

there's love that's all there is to it, it is the same as male to female.



have a tough time when it comes to publicly embracing their love and this is because in most countries being part of the LGBTQI+ community means living with daily discrimination Simple expression such as holding hands in public is avoided in order to avoid chaos such as name calling, harassment in the streets or being beaten which might go as far as being murdered. People need to accept the public display of affection from homosexual people especially when it is not public indecency, such as holding hands.



# GHANA

## LGBT+ Community

## Centre Raided &

## Shutdown

## The International Outlook

**M**any LGBTQI+ people in Ghana fear for their center on Wednesday. It was reported that was carried out on the orders of the owner of the rent. The community centre was launched during a festive and color occasion on the 31st of January by the group LGBT+ Rights Ghana.

The event was met with a flood of negative media reports and that led to a backlash and even death threats against members of the organization and the LGBTQI+ community. Moses Foh-Amoaning Executive Director of the National Coalition for Proper Human Sexual Rights and Family Values accused foreign governments for of attempting to impose western values in their country. He mentioned that the practice of homosexuality is deadly and the potential to spread sexual transmitted infections. He also called on the government to shut down the centre, arrest and prosecute those involved in it. Mr Moses was applauded by Catholic Bishops who mentioned that they condemn all those who were in support of homosexuality in Ghana.

However, Amnesty International has commended the police's action and Frank Doyi, the Acting Country Director mentioned that the circumstance under which the facility was invaded is what they consider to be clear violation of the law that they seek to uphold. "The question we like to ask again is whether or not the individuals who were found in the particular facility were seen engaging in any act, if they were no then clearly it is an issue of the security agencies engaging in an act that is not supported by our laws." alleged Frank.

Alex Donko, Director of LGBTQI Rights Ghana, in his own words on social media said "we had expected some homophobic organizations would use the opportunity to exploit the situation and stoke tension against the community, but the ant-gay hateful reaction has been unprecedented. At the moment we no longer have access to our safe space and our safety is being threatened.

We call all human rights organizations and allies to speak out against this attack." Alex further encouraged all members, and queer Ghanaians to stay calm, not panic as they will triumph. "The police may have raided our office, but our real office is in our hearts." alleged Alex. In as much as the country's laws do not recognize same sex unions and sexual relationships between LGBTQI+ persons. Ghana has committed to provide Equal Protection of the Law from violence and discrimination to all persons including LGBTQI+ persons under the United Nations Universal Periodic Review mechanism.

lives after police raided their community police officers stormed the place and the shutdown facility who gave it out to the leaders of the LGBTQI+ last year for



## Angola Decriminalizes Same Sex Acts

**H**omosexuality has been criminalized for 113 years, but finally after passing new law decriminalization of same sex relationships has finally enacted its new penal code which is against criminalization of same sex relationships.

The new law legally protects the rights of Angolas who are part of the LGBTQI+ community. The new penal code does away with the contentious vices against nature. Moreover, LGBTQI+ people will now have full acces to healthcare services, education and obtaining employment.

Congradulations to the LGBTQI+ people of Angola for finally obtaining their freedom to freely embrace their love. To all the countries where same sex relationships are still criminalized, we are looking forward to Decrim.