

DEMANDING FRIENDLY HEALTH SERVICES FOR MARGINALISED PEOPLE

**PHOTO CASE STUDY
UGANDA**



PITCH Partnership to Inspire, Transform
and Connect the HIV response

 **aidsfonds**

**FRONTLINE
AIDS** 



Ministry of Foreign Affairs

ABOUT FRONTLINE AIDS

Frontline AIDS wants a future free from AIDS for everyone, everywhere.

Around the world, millions of people are denied HIV prevention, testing, treatment and care simply because of who they are and where they live.

As a result, 1.7 million people were infected with HIV in 2018 and 770,000 died of AIDS-related illness.

Together with partners on the frontline, we work to break down the social, political and legal barriers that marginalised people face, and innovate to create a future free from AIDS.



"When young people go to school, they go to learn share and meet other youth.

But if you are transgender, you can find yourself thrown out of school because of your gender identity. These decisions often don't come from the school itself, but from the religious leaders who hold influence over education and health provisions.

More sensitization with religious leaders is needed with the involvement of trans people themselves. It is only then that they will understand what it is to be a trans person.

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Design: HD design

Cover photo: © Ariane 2018

| PhotoVoice | Frontline AIDS

| 'PITCH' | Uganda

INTRODUCTION

Frontline AIDS has partnered with PhotoVoice to deliver a series of participatory photography projects in Myanmar, Nigeria and Uganda to support marginalised communities to advocate for improved HIV prevention, treatment and care, and sexual and reproductive health services and rights.


The project is part of the Partnership to Inspire, Transform and Connect the HIV Response (PITCH) programme, a strategic partnership between Frontline AIDS, Aidsfonds and the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs. PITCH aims to strengthen local organisations' capacity to advocate, generate evidence and develop robust policy solutions for upholding the rights to HIV and sexual and reproductive health services for lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) people, men who have sex with men, sex workers, people who use drugs, and adolescent girls and young women.

Advocates and young emerging champions from PITCH partner organisations in Myanmar, Nigeria and Uganda were supported to explore the use of photography and storytelling in their work, and to use the resulting messages as tools for advocacy.

PhotoVoice is a UK-based charity with a vision for a world in which everybody has the opportunity to represent themselves and tell their own story. Its mission is to promote the ethical use of photography for positive social change, through delivering innovative participatory photography projects.

For more information visit: www.frontlineaids.org/pitch



A person with dark skin is holding a white rectangular sign with both hands. The sign has the text 'WE OFFER FRIENDLY HEALTH SERVICES FOR ALL' written in black, hand-drawn capital letters. The person is wearing a dark-colored shirt with a 'McCafé' logo and some colorful patterns visible at the bottom. The background is a solid light green color.

WE OFFER FRIENDLY
HEALTH SERVICES
FOR ALL

Friendly Health Services for all?

Many transgender people have a negative experience at SRHR and HIV services. They are humiliated by health professionals – sometimes they are made to wait in a separate queue for LGBTI people or staff will not respect their confidentiality and expose them to their friends and families. If they experience this, they simply won't go back. Many are already traumatized by their situation, which will only get worse because they can't access these vital services.

Health providers need more information to build their understanding of transgender people's health needs.

Ariana is 20 and a Young Emerging Champion for PITCH. As a transgender woman, she began working as a Peer Educator for Transgender Equality Uganda (TEU) in 2016, and now works as an Outreach Officer in Kampala.



After being rejected by my family I had no friends to run to, I had no people to associate with - nobody. I met friends who were not transgender people, but part of the LGBTI community so they introduced me to TEU. I have been with TEU for two years and now and work as an Outreach Officer.

I do sexual health training, including condom and lubricant distribution. I also do counselling for girls that I meet in urban areas, where they are not accepted and where they are threatened and sometimes beaten. These are 14-15 years-old transgender girls living in a small communities, where they don't even have money to buy themselves lunch. Most likely, they will begin selling sex. They might try negotiate but ultimately, men are going to pay them a lower price for using a condom - that's what is actually happening.



"Why do transgender people struggle to access HIV and sexual health related health services? It's fear."



At that age, many of them lack information on what causes HIV. Through this outreach, I see change in these girls who used to do live (unprotected) sex with their clients and now are using condoms. They now have information and feel more safe as they are not exposed to HIV and sexually transmitted diseases.

Why do transgender people struggle to access HIV and sexual health related health services? It's fear. They believe that they're not accepted - they know that they're not accepted. It's hard for them to approach health providers because they know that when they speak to them, they are going to be exposed to the communities where they come from.

When people hear the word 'transgender' in Uganda, they tell you to explain what it is. I say to them, "I was assigned male at birth, but I feel like I'm a woman." Straight away their minds go to anal sex, something that is not allowed in this country. The public believes that it should be male to female, not male to male. As a result, transgender people are exploited. When they visit a clinic, health providers will actually call in people into the consultation room and start telling them "this boy is acting like woman, this boy is pretending to be a woman, this boy is having anal sex with people. He came to get an HIV or STI test." They say "these are the types of people that spoil our people." So that's how the trans community end up living in fear. Many of them they end up dead because they didn't find the right people to approach. I am an example of this discrimination. I was rejected by my family and I didn't have anywhere to go.



We all live behind doors. When it gets to be night, we start moving on the street. We fear arrest because when a transgender woman is arrested, the first thing the police and cell mates try hard to do is find out if you're a man or a woman. Then they put you in male cells, with men who have been in there for two weeks, for one for one month... one year – they only want one thing and so they take advantage. They sexually abuse you. They all use you because of who you are and because they don't understand you.



"These people do not have the information – changing this has to start with us as transgender people. No one is going to understand you before you tell that person."

The police will exploit you too. They pull you aside and tell you that you are now here at the station and if you don't go through them, they will not help you. "Let's negotiate" they say, "If you can't pay me, give me instead."

These people do not have the information – changing this has to start with us as transgender people. No one is going to understand you before you tell that person. We have to make sure that where we live, in our communities and in our families, people know who a trans person is.



The streets are not safe for transgender people during the day – hiding away from harassment, judgment and the police, but also unable to access the health services and support that we need. It is only at night that we can feel comfortable to come out in public.

My hope for the future is that LGBTI people can walk freely, express ourselves, our gender and our sexuality without being harmed.


Before we can do this, the government must recognise our rights and end criminalization - LGBTI Rights are Human Rights.



In my community where I stay, I used to get a lot of trouble. I would be thrown out of every home that I go to. When I rented this house, the next day, I was evicted. I kept on moving from one place to another until I woke up one day and realised that these people are going to make me miserable.


So I decided to be confident. I was able to approach our leader in the community and I talked with him and I explained who I was. I asked him to let me talk to the community. They held a meeting and I shared my experiences and explained what has been happening in my life, what I'd been through and what has been good and bad. Some understood and some did not. They asked me to give them time and told me that they will understand me the more I stay with them. It's a process. It's just like transitioning. It takes you years to accept it yourself as a trans woman. Otherwise if you do everything in a rush you end up making mistakes, you end up in trouble.

The trans community are people who want to work hard to gain acceptance. I believe there is going to be change and I believe one day transgender people are going to be able to go to school, to walk freely, and to be accepted by their families, religious leaders and by the government. I really want to see change with them. I want to fight so hard.





Just because I am a sex worker
I am not here to be sexually abused
My body is not for free
I am not here just to have sex with anyone
- it is my job
I am a mother
I am a sister
I am a son
I am a professional
I want to be protected by the police
I want my rights to be recognised



"I was forcibly kept in the house by my own family because they couldn't accept who I was. For two weeks I was locked there with no food and little water. I was scared and alone. When no one was home, I managed to get free, cutting myself on the fence as I made my escape. I now have this scar as a reminder of those time."

Before the wider community can accept transgender people, families must be the first to try to understand and support us."

Acceptance starts at home."



JOIN US. END IT.

www.frontlineaids.org