



PARTNERS IN PRIDE

Impact Report
2022



the Stephen Lewis
FOUNDATION



Thank you for your support

We cannot thank you enough for your commitment to defending human rights and equality for LGBTIQ individuals in sub-Saharan Africa. Widespread discrimination, pervasive stigma, and lack of access to social and legal support all exacerbate the threat of HIV for LGBTIQ communities. The complexity and intensity with which LGBTIQ communities face the HIV pandemic means men who have sex with men are at 28 times greater risk of transmission than other adult men, and puts transgender women at 14 times greater risk than their peers.

These staggering statistics only reinforce what we already know: that if we want to cut the AIDS pandemic off at its roots, we cannot overlook LGBTIQ individuals. That is why your support for our 15 LGBTIQ partner organizations, who are all dedicated to building hope and solidarity, is critical.

Thanks to you, the SLF's Partners in Pride campaign allows these organizations to provide essential health care, advocate for their rights, and mobilize funds. Your support ensures that they have the tools to provide holistic HIV and AIDS services.

This year, we celebrated our African LGBTIQ partners on International Day Against Homophobia, Biphobia, and Transphobia (IDAHOBIT), throughout Pride Month, and year round. We could not have done this without you.

Please enjoy a recap of the inspiring impact of your contributions to Partners in Pride.



State-Sponsored Persecution in Uganda

On the morning of August 5, 2022, the Stephen Lewis Foundation learned from our colleagues at Sexual Minorities Uganda (SMUG) that the country's National Bureau for Non-Governmental Organizations had shut them down for "non-compliance." The offense is officially documented by the NGO Bureau as an incomplete registration. However, it is well documented that SMUG's previous applications for registration had been rejected, based on the Bureau's decision that the organization's name is "inappropriate."

Frank Mugisha, executive director of SMUG and recipient of the 2022 Civil Rights Defender of the Year Award, knows better than to accept this rejection at face value.

“*This is a clear witch-hunt rooted in systematic homophobia that is fuelled by anti-gay and anti-gender movements that have infiltrated public offices aiming to influence legislation to erase the LGBTQ community,” he says.*

This is not the first time the Bureau has investigated SMUG, and according to Civil Rights Defenders, is not the first suspension of a civil society organization on controversial administrative grounds. The suspension of 54 civil society organizations in August 2021 by the Bureau was criticized for being restrictive and politically motivated.

Police and government authorities had continually harassed SMUG and its members prior to the shutdown. In May this year, when two of SMUG's staff turned to the local police station to report an attack on their office, they were arrested, held in custody for four days, and charged with "promotion of ... and recruitment of people into homosexuality." Since then, police have opened investigations on three additional SMUG staff members, including Frank Mugisha, for "recruitment to homosexuality."

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"This suspension means that our life-saving work is on hold, that we cannot protect LGBTI+ people who are in danger," says Mugisha.



The Stephen Lewis Foundation is appalled by the Ugandan government's actions, which threaten SMUG's crucial work to support the health and human rights of LGBTIQ Ugandans. It is just one more example of the persecution that LGBTIQ communities face in the region.

SMUG is a network organization that supports several other LGBTIQ groups in Uganda, which, now, are all at risk of Bureau investigation. The SLF continues to monitor the situation and has joined the Council for Global Equality and more than 100 global advocacy organizations in calling on the government of Uganda to reopen SMUG. We also released a statement standing in solidarity with SMUG and all LGBTIQ Ugandans as they face challenges following the shutdown.

At times like these, your support is more critical than ever. Your dedication to the SLF's Partners in Pride campaign helps to sustain and preserve the important work that SMUG and similar organizations are doing to protect and champion the lives of LGBTIQ communities in Uganda. It has never been more important that we grow our support for LGBTIQ partners across sub-Saharan Africa — and with your help, we can continue to protect and expand their life-saving work.



"On Wednesday, 3rd August 2022, the National Bureau for Non-Governmental Organizations (NGO Bureau) the government body that regulates NGOs in Uganda, halted the operations of Sexual Minorities Uganda for non-registration with the NGO Bureau."

Read the full version [here](#)

"The SLF reaffirms our solidarity with Sexual Minorities Uganda and is among a growing number of international organizations — including fellow members of the Dignity Network Canada — who have signed a letter that condemns the shutdown of SMUG's operations by the government of Uganda."

Read the full version [here](#)



Photo Credit: FARUG

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[A] study conducted in 10 sub-Saharan African countries found that severe criminal penalties for same-sex sexual relations were associated with an almost eight times greater risk of HIV infection among gay men and other men who have sex with men compared with places without such laws.

– In Danger: UNAIDS Global AIDS Update 2022

Forging a path for trans people in Kenya

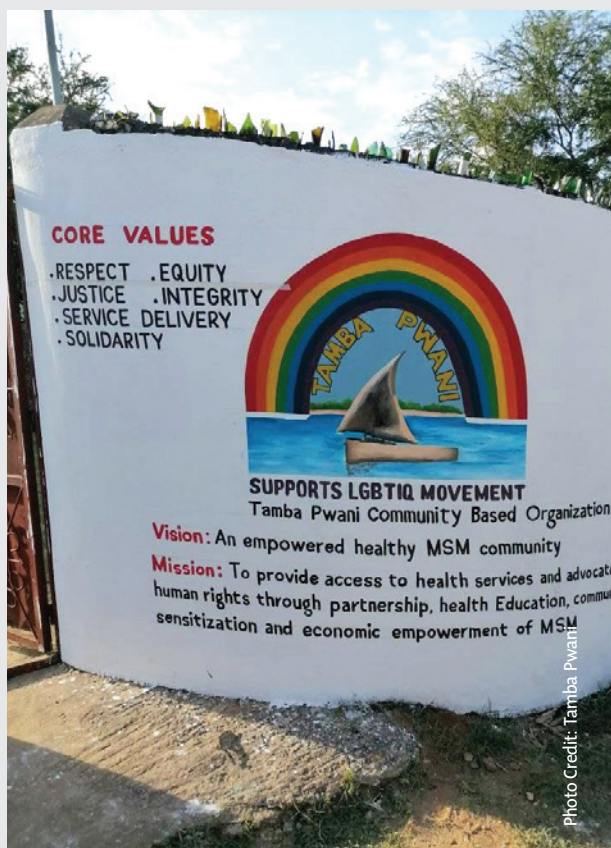
As a trans woman, Samia is no stranger to gender-based discrimination and inequity — much of which she encountered in her own childhood home. Her nine younger siblings joined with community members who bullied and physically abused her. Once, they attempted to set her on fire. From a place of strength and resolve, Samia has forged her own path forward. After studying internal medicine in Cape Town, South Africa, she returned to Kenya where she now works to increase access to sexual health services for gender and sexual minorities. Today, she is director of Tamba Pwani in coastal Kenya.



Samia adopted her son, Yassin, at two months old. “When he was about 10 years old I made a decision to tell him about myself because I knew that I wanted his education about diversity to start at home with me,” she recalls. “I wanted to talk to him about the stigma and discrimination he might face and to protect him.” Now, she calls him her best friend and says he is very protective of her — aware of the heightened risk of sexual assault and other forms of gender-based violence faced by trans women around the world.

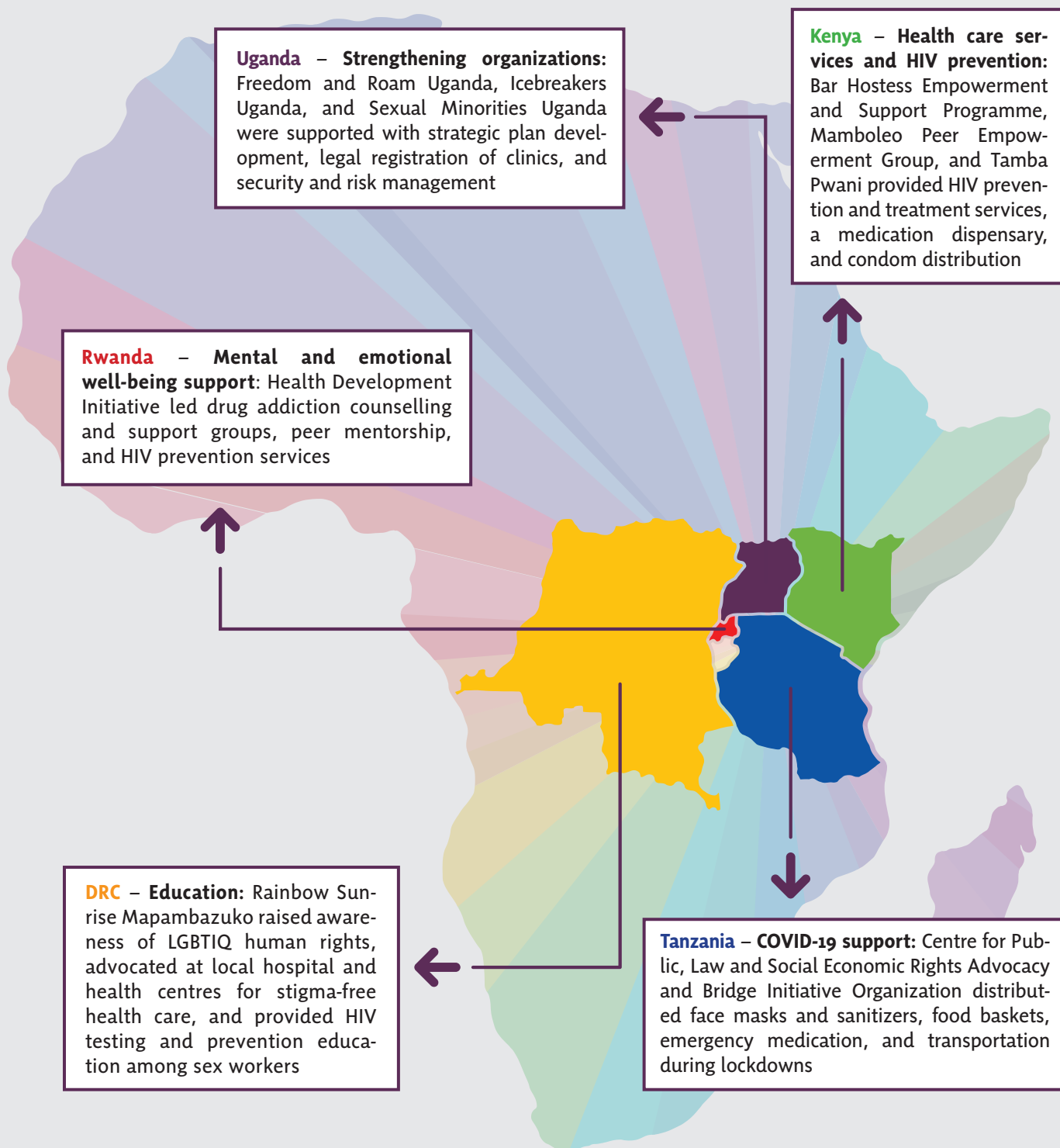
Trans women face a significantly heightened risk of acquiring HIV, and access to sexual health services is essential to preventing its transmission.

When you support the SLF's Partners in Pride campaign, you are amplifying the voices of women like Samia, who are making their mark in their communities.



Impact Highlights

Some of the work you supported in 2021



Over **40,000 people** were reached by **15 LGBTIQ organizations** in **five countries**

Safe spaces at Ishtar MSM in Kenya



Photo Credit: Jennifer Fowler

For many in Kenya's LGBTIQ communities, creating spaces that provide them with the ability to safely express who they are is an act of resistance as well as joy. For Jeffrey Walimbwa Wambaya, Program Manager at Stephen Lewis Foundation partner Ishtar MSM, they are also filled with pride.

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One of the things about centres like ours is that when people come and they see people who are like them, there's that interaction, there's that pride," says Jeffrey, highlighting the importance of spaces where the LGBTIQ community in Kenya can be their true selves, among friends who provide support and guidance.

Outside of the safety of Ishtar MSM, things can be different for members of LGBTIQ communities in Kenya. Jeffrey himself has faced discrimination from his family since he came out to them, but now that he works as a program manager at Ishtar, he says his family has changed their perspective because of the money he earns to help them.

“As gay people, we kind of buy our families to love us,” explains Jeffrey. “I’m sure if I didn’t have a job or I didn’t have a way of maintaining my life, I would be a burden. You know, and [my family] wouldn’t want to hear anything about me.”

Stigma and discrimination against LGBTIQ communities create significant barriers to accessing health care and social services, with critical implications for HIV testing, care, and treatment, and the safety of LGBTIQ individuals. In the face of oppression and discrimination, African LGBTIQ organizations like Ishtar have become a lifeline for their communities by offering holistic programs and services, including access to HIV testing and counselling, legal services, and mental health support.

Today, Ishtar still struggles in a volatile social climate, exacerbated by the widespread cuts in global funding for HIV and AIDS-related work. But Jeffrey and his colleagues have multiple strategies to keep the organization’s programs impactful and long-lasting.

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“Right now, we are discussing so much about economic empowerment and social enterprise because we want to have a sustainable community,” says Jeffrey. “If we teach them how to invest, if we teach them how to at least save their resources, and at least they can have a way of earning, they make a living out of that.”

Jeffrey and his colleagues at Ishtar, with support from the Stephen Lewis Foundation, work every day to create the safe space and resources needed for LGBTIQ communities to thrive. Jeffrey has many dreams for a society that “accepts gay, bisexual, and men who have sex with men for who they are, and gives them an opportunity to exist without fear,” and Ishtar’s work is part of that vision.

How we celebrated Pride with you in 2022



IDAHOBIT

The SLF's Partners in Pride community honoured International Day Against Homophobia, Biphobia, and Transphobia (IDAHOBIT) with a celebration of diversity and creativity. Host and Drag Star, Paddy Booboo, guided us through performances of singing, dancing, spoken word, and more, all meant to capture the dynamic experiences of LGBTIQ individuals living in sub-Saharan Africa.

Watch the video [here](#)

As Pride Month approached, we took inspiration from our LGBTIQ partners' holistic approaches to promoting well-being by collaborating with local wellness leaders in Toronto, who led us through self-care sessions. During these sessions, we got to know three of our inspiring partner organizations and shared their current projects with our community.

Dare to Self Care



Pride Talks



Photo Credit: HOYMAS, FARUG, IBU

The SLF Pride Talks returned on May 31 to tackle the topic of health care and well-being among LGBTIQ communities in sub-Saharan Africa. The SLF was joined by panelists from Freedom and Roam Uganda (FARUG), Health Options for Young Men on HIV/AIDS & STIs (HOYMAS), and Icebreakers Uganda (IBU) to discuss holistic models of mental health care, the intersectional needs of their communities, and their impact on LGBTIQ lives in Uganda and Kenya.

Watch the video [here](#)



We were thrilled to raise the visibility of our LGBTIQ partner organizations, march for health and human rights, and meet our supporters in person this year at Toronto Pride. Along with hosting a booth at the Street Fair, we also marched with a coalition of advocates calling on the Canadian government to commit its fair share to the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria.

Pride Booth



Photo Credit: Alanna Wallace

Thank you for your ongoing solidarity and support.

Together we are cutting the AIDS pandemic off at its roots.

Donate Today



Photo Credit: FARUG

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