

A BRIEF REVIEW

# HARM AT HOME

LGBTIQ+ in Botswana

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Home is meant to be an enjoyable, happy place of residence for many LGBTIQ+ youth. A place for laughter, nurturing and learning with family or loved ones. Respect and care should be the norm in a household; however this is not the case. For many LGBTIQ+ youth, their place of residence is more of a building. A shelter that they have not much choice or control over. LGBTIQ+ youth create homes for themselves among those they can belong and become with. Some are in co-habituating relationships, student accommodation or independently renting as a collective with peers.

COVID-19 has presented challenges never experienced before. Having to endure distancing measures for precaution meant many young LGBTIQ+ Batswana had to return to their family homes. Although virtual spaces have enabled some form of connecting, this cannot replace the power of presence. Although changes in freedoms of movement, the rights to education, expression and health have been curtailed; violence and harm have not. Even more invisible are the subconscious and long lasting impacts of abuse and/or coercive medical procedures (OHCHR, 2020) experienced in earlier childhood.

Exasperated by economic and social uncertainty (Organisation, 2020), LGBTIQ+ Youth are left to navigate homes they have escaped with no prospect of an exit during Botswana's state of emergency. Although precautions taken by government by the pandemic are important; they do not address the emergent issues impacting young people across the country. Internet connectivity remains a challenge at infrastructural, residential and socially. The impact of the rapid shift from community engagement central to African identity and belonging to extreme distancing could only mitigated by privilege.

Inequalities and economic exclusion remain prevalent even under a state of emergency. Although government has provided some safeguards for the formal economy, prevalence on injustices is likely to remain even post state of emergency (IASC, 2020). Domestic Violence is a pandemic on its own, globally and in Botswana. Having to remain at home within a high prevalence of social norms only exasperates the situation ( Biddlecom, et al., 2020). Intersections or vulnerabilities of race, disability, sexual orientation, gender identity, caste, or class mean less resources (MADRE, 2020).



There is no clear way for civil society to support COVID-19 prevention and mitigation efforts (MADRE, 2020). A presidential task force of four elderly men have largely relied on themselves for addressing the crisis in country. This has reflected in shortcomings of regulations from a gendered, differently abled, queer and disability perspective. More glaringly, the delays and misalignment of addressing poverty or sexual abuse (Mosetlha, 2020). Dependency on breadwinners has only compromised issues of consent and agency in homes (OXFAM, 2020).

Start: Violence prevention and mitigation efforts should be accelerated, comprehensive and resourced. There should be extensive sensitisation efforts and clear community level infrastructure for survivors to exit their situations with relative ease and safety.

Continue: Amplifying the needs of communities to be included in precautions, regulations and possible solutions.

Stop: Business as usual. We're living in a crisis.

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