

WHO IS AFRAID OF GENDER?

Study on “gender ideology” and the anti-gender campaigns that support it in Burkina Faso, Ghana and Senegal

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Queer African Youth Network (QAYN) a queer feminist organization founded in 2010 with the aim of establishing an extensive support network to promote the well-being and safety of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer people in West Africa. QAYN is committed to building an autonomous movement led by lesbian, queer women, trans* and gender non-conforming young activists through advocacy, movement building and strengthening, research and documentation to achieve its mission. These efforts are built on feminist organizing and research methodologies that are relevant to our realities and shape our conceptual analysis and methods of action.

Initiative Sankofa d’Afrique de l’Ouest (ISDAO) is an activist-led fund dedicated to strengthening the West African movement for sexual diversity and sexual rights through a flexible approach to grantmaking, and building a culture of philanthropy committed to human rights and social justice. Led by activists, ISDAO’s work is guided by principles such as feminism, transparency, accountability, empowerment, self-determination, inclusion, diversity and intersectionality, self-determination, power analysis, documentation, movement building, flexibility, equity and sustainability.

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GLOSSARY

Definition of key terms

Anti-gender: Encompasses a variety of actors, discourses and actions that are in opposition to gender equality and sexual rights. Anti-gender entities mainly attack the reproductive rights, marriage and parental rights of gay, lesbian, bisexual and trans people, as well as the sexual and reproductive rights of women (e.g. abortion).

Anti-LGBT: Refers to specific opposition to LGBTQ+ rights.

Cisgender: A person whose gender identity and expression correspond to the gender assigned to them at birth.

Sexual rights: A set of rights related to sexuality. They include, among others, the right to equality, to equal protection under the law, to be free from discrimination on the basis of sex, sexuality or gender. They also include the right to life, liberty, security and body integrity.

Feminism: A political movement aiming at full equality in rights and practice between the sexes.

Gender identity/expression: Gender identity refers to each person's inner and personal experience of their gender while gender expression is how a person expresses their gender. While conventional norms teach that there are only two genders, male and female, in reality, some people experience and express their gender in much more varied and complex ways, i.e. outside the conventions of the male/female binary.

Gender ideology: A concept constructed by organizations and individuals opposed to a critical conception of gender inequalities. The term is mostly used by anti-gender campaigners.

Sexual and gender minorities: The WHO, UNAIDS and the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria consider sexual

minorities to be people who do not behave “exclusively heterosexually or who do not define themselves as male or female”. This category includes men and women who have sex with people of the same sex as well as trans people. Built on the assumption that heterosexuality is the norm and therefore the majority, the notion of minority reflects relations of domination and inferiorization in the categorization of sexual behavior.

Patriarchy: A system of social organization based on the dominant authority of the father. For feminists, patriarchy is synonymous with “male domination” in all aspects of life.

Queer: A generic term to signify non-conformity to heterosexuality and/or gender binary. The term queer+ (Q+) in this text actually embraces all the subtleties of identity in relation to gender and sexuality (asexual, pansexual, intersex, etc.)

Transgender: A person whose gender identity does not correspond to the gender assigned to them at birth, or whose gender identity does not fall within the gender binary.

Acronyms

SGM: Sexual and Gender Minorities

LGBTQ+: Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans, Queer and + for Asexuals, Intersex, etc.

LILO: Looking In, Looking Out

PAREN: Parti pour la Renaissance Nationale (Party for the National Renaissance)

WANEP: West Africa Network for Peace Building

NCPHSRFV: National Coalition for Proper Human Sexual Rights and Family Values

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Through their multidisciplinary approach, gender studies have made it possible to address and provide solutions to numerous problems related to social relations between the sexes. Progress on gender equality, the promotion of the rights of sexual and gender minorities, and international mobilization for equitable access for all to economic and social opportunities and inclusive sexual and reproductive health and rights services, among others, are a perfect illustration of this. In response to these advances, fierce opposition serving a socially conservative and religious ideology is growing around the world, and West Africa has not been spared.

This opposition, also known as the anti-gender movement, intends to denounce what they call “gender ideology” with conspiracy theories such as “gender is an invention of a secret society whose goal is to destroy the family unit or religions”. It is in this context that the present study on gender ideology in West Africa, more precisely in Burkina Faso, Ghana and Senegal, has been undertaken.

The findings of this report indicate that although the concept of “gender ideology” is little or poorly understood in the three countries, various discourses, actions and stances against the recognition of rights for LGBTQ+ people are indicative of the anti-gender politics observed around the world.

Main conclusions and recommendations

1. Gender ideology

In the three countries of the study, “gender ideology” appears to be a vague and non-controversial concept that refers more to the gender approach (i.e. sensitive to the differences between men and women) in use in development programs. In fact, this understanding is far from the one that prevails in other contexts according to which “gender ideology” is a (diabolical) undertaking to challenge the man/woman binary, sexual and reproductive rights, and conventional representations of marriage and the family.

2. Nuances

The difficulty to position themselves against “gender ideology” nuances the mapping of actors and invites us to make a distinction between “anti-gender actors” and “actors with a restrictive vision of gender” or “anti-LGBT actors”. Indeed, although opposed to LGBTQ+ rights, some actors nevertheless

campaign against sexual violence and for the inclusion of gender and sexuality in the school curriculum. However, their understanding of gender and sexuality excludes trans people and same-sex sexuality. This category includes Muslim or Christian faith-based organizations, as well as political actors, traditional leaders and civil society organizations otherwise engaged in human rights or women’s rights advocacy, peace-building processes, etc.

3. Modes of action

The modes of action of anti-LGBT actors vary according to time and context, and are structured around five strategies: denunciation, professionalization, the formation of political alliances, the organization of public events and the instrumentalization of the law. Their agenda is to impose a social and legal framework unfavorable to the respect of the rights of LGBTQ+ people. This ranges from criminalizing or increasing penalties for homosexuality, to banning meetings, demonstrations or even the simple

expression of LGBTQ+ identities. However, far beyond this, opposition to LGBTQ+ rights is a means of gaining public sympathy, useful for reaching important decision-making positions. In other words, the most vocal actors clearly have a political agenda.

4. Resources

It is difficult to identify the source of funding of anti-LGBT actors. However, although their connections with international networks claiming to defend family values are important (American, Russian, Turkish or Iranian networks in particular), there is a strong local mobilization from which they benefit by means of membership systems and various contributions.

5. Consequences on the LGBTQ+ community

Whether they hold a restrictive view of gender or are anti-LGBT, these actors participate in the elevation of a system of exclusion, discrimination, and strong opposition that has significant consequences for the mental health, sense of safety, and access to services of LGBTQ+ people. $\frac{3}{4}$ of the LGBTQ+ participants to this study live in a state of “permanent fear”, irrespective of the country. More than 60% had been victims of verbal or physical aggression in the 12 months preceding the study, the vast majority of whom were in Ghana and Senegal. Moreover, LGBTQ+ organizing is inevitably affected, ranging from a reduction

in the volume of activities to the suspension of certain programs and services, or even a complete halt, plunging members of the community further into isolation.

6. Hostility

The three contexts present many similarities in terms of the unpopularity of the issue of homosexuality, both in terms of state policies and religious or media dynamics. However, the levels of tension vary between Burkina Faso and the other two countries. Because of the unequal dynamics of mobilizations, in Burkina Faso, there is no media frenzy, apart from a few scattered and uncoordinated events, whereas in Senegal and Ghana, the animosity seems to be uninterrupted and the climate of hostility is far from subsiding.

7. Civil society involvement

In addition, the organizational modes of intervention from actors involved in the defense of human rights present some differences in the Anglo-Saxon (direct government) and Francophone (indirect government) cultures. In Senegal and Burkina Faso, for example, there has been no memorandum to parliament, let alone a public appearance by human rights defenders advocating for the respect of constitutional principles, whereas in Ghana, the state of mobilization and support from civil society organizations is more pronounced.



8. Live to fight

In spite of this hostile environment, resistance initiatives are being organized, with varying degrees of success. The first victory is to continue to live and this is a major marker of resistance because it implies that the struggle continues. The will to fight can also be seen in the strengthening of community ties and the creation of strategic alliances with other human rights defenders, capacity building with an emphasis on training and building internal expertise, online mobilizations, and the development of emergency response mechanisms (exfiltration, refuge, asylum).

9. Resisting

Resisting also means counter-attacking and this takes the form of infiltrating anti-LGBT networks and denouncing homophobic leaders internationally. In Senegal, several such leaders have already been refused visas to enter the Schengen area following public appeals by LGBTQ+ leaders to consular authorities. Similar initiatives are underway in Ghana, with strong involvement from diaspora activists.

10. Recommendations

At the end of this study, we have identified multiple priority areas for action, but we have grouped them into 6 areas:

- **Investing in mental health:** Implementing specific mental health studies and programs are important for the well-being, safety, and health of LGBTQ+ people.
- **Strengthening family ties:** For study participants, family rejection is the greatest fear, greater than the fear of

being assaulted or imprisoned. Family is the first safety net and certainly the level of intervention that can have the greatest impact.

- **Investing in solidarity and community engagement:** This is an avenue that should facilitate access to services for largely marginalized populations.
- **Improving access to services:** Technical and financial partners must ensure the inclusion of LGBTQ+ targets in the signing of agreements with civil society organizations in their various fields of intervention (peace and security, urban development, the fight against pandemics, etc.)
- **Investing in legal training:** Given the high unpopularity of the issue of homosexuality, only through the law can LGBTQ+ people be protected and made safe. This means training them on the legal tools appropriate at the national as well as the international contexts, to ensure compliance with basic legal principles.
- **Encouraging dialogue:** Lastly, social dialogue is one of the non-confrontational ways of discussing and ensuring non-discriminatory access to basic social services.





INTRODUCTION

Background

The visibility of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans and Queer people has increased considerably in Africa over the last twenty years. Social and political mobilizations against HIV/AIDS have played a determining role, as well as the transnationalisation of struggles for sexual and reproductive rights carried out in part by feminist activists. Some countries have even changed their laws to decriminalize same-sex relationships - for example, Botswana (2019), Angola (2019), Gabon (2020) and Mozambique (2015) - thus enabling LGBTQ+ people to access health services adapted to their needs. While these advances are significant and important, they do not mask the difficult reality faced by sexual and gender minorities (SGM) in the majority of African countries, including in countries where legislation is silent on same-sex relationships.

Without denying the colossal work done by human rights organizations, including HIV/AIDS organizations, this visibility is also the product of anti-progressive discourses and actions against women's rights, and especially against LGBTQ+ people. Under the pretext of fighting against "gender ideology", or the "gay lobby", various actions are undertaken in the name of "defending the family", or of "African values" to be preserved and protected. These actions happen both locally and globally. Thus, in parallel with mobilizations for social justice that take into account gender and sexuality (gender

justice), anti-gender politics have also emerged. The anti-gender movement brings together a diversity of political, religious and social actors who consider that there is a "gender theory or ideology" that promotes a distorted vision of the difference between the sexes and of the sexual order.¹ It covers a plurality of discourses, actors and individual and collective actions (public statements, scandalous denunciations, arbitrary arrests, marches and rallies among others) whose aim is to counter mobilizations for the recognition and implementation of women's and sexual rights. Examples of opposition to an inclusive vision of gender are growing in the West African context: from the modification of family codes in Senegal and Mali (year 2019), to the arrest of 21 activists in Ghana during a workshop in 2021, through the publication of lists in several countries (tabloids exposing various personalities as homosexuals as in Cameroon in 2006, in Uganda in 2014, etc.), as well as various convictions. Conferences, marches and demonstrations are organized with the aim of upholding conservative positions under the guise of defending the right to life or the fundamental values of the family. The COVID-19 pandemic has provided further fertile ground for a campaign of hatred against people on the basis of their gender and sexual identity. Conspiracy theories have made dangerous associations comparing COVID-19 to a divine punishment against the degradation of moral values carried by homosexuals².

¹ David Paternotte and Roman Kuhar. "Disentangling and Locating the "Global Right": Anti-Gender Campaigns in Europe," *Politics and Governance* 6, no 3 (September 14, 2018): 6-19. <https://doi.org/10.17645/pag.v6i3.1557>.

² <http://opiniojuris.org/2020/12/10/covid-19-and-africa-symposium-the-intersection-of-lgbt-rights-in-africa-and-the-covid-19-pandemic/>

These actions, often highly publicized and often funded by conservative religious organizations from outside the continent, push already marginalized groups further to the margins. They create a strong climate of insecurity for women's rights and human rights defenders as well as for SGM. Threatened, attacked, and condemned by a large part of public opinion, how do SGM manage to organize? What impact does this have on their daily lives and their organizational capacities? Research on this subject, particularly in francophone countries, is limited. With this in mind, QAYN and ISDAO commissioned this study to better understand the existence and implications of these campaigns in three West African countries: Senegal, Burkina Faso and Ghana.

Research Questions

Given the context detailed above, including arrests of LGBTQ+ leaders, outrageous denunciations, protests, petitions, proposed legislation and public condemnations, several questions arise:

- **What are the driving forces of such rhetoric in the three countries?**
- **How, through which intermediaries and according to which mechanisms have these anti-gender campaigns or counter-mobilizations been implemented in West Africa and particularly in countries like Senegal, Burkina Faso and Ghana?**
- **Who are the actors of these campaigns? What is their discourse and through which channels is it conveyed? What are their strategies of action, their resources, their agenda?**
- **What are the political drivers of these campaigns and what are their consequences on LGBTQ+ people/mobilizations/activities?**

- **How can the LGBTQ+ community respond to these campaigns?**
- **What means and resources must be mobilized to resist and project ourselves?**

Objectives

This study had five main objectives:

1. **Produce a comprehensive analysis of the anti-gender movement in West Africa**, what constitutes its essence and what differentiates it from other international contexts.
2. **Map the organizations and leaders of the anti-gender movements** in the three countries, the actors who initiated them, the resources available to them, and their possible interconnections in the sub-region.
3. **Analyze the perceptions of leaders affected by the rise of these anti-gender campaigns**, and the impact on their daily lives and community activities.
4. **Document and analyze the different response strategies** used by LGBTQ+ organizations and their partners.
5. **Propose relevant strategies for countering and resisting** these campaigns, as well as avenues of reflection and engagement for technical and financial partners at different levels (local, regional, international).

METHODOLOGY

Approach

To achieve these objectives, we adopted a mixed method (quantitative and qualitative approach) and implemented 4 research activities, including a knowledge sharing process.

Phase 1: Landscape analysis of mobilizations and counter-mobilizations related to gender and LGBTQ+ populations in each country

This phase involved a review of current and relevant literature on the issue of anti-gender mobilizations or on “gender ideology”, in order to deepen the understanding of national contexts. The literature reviewed included academic publications, blog posts, reports, radio and/or TV broadcasts and news articles. This exercise allowed us to identify key actors to interview, whether they were opposed to the recognition of the rights of sexual and gender minorities, or advocates for the respect of human rights for all people, regardless of gender and sexuality.

Phase 2: Quantitative survey of LGBTQ+ community leaders

The quantitative method aimed to investigate, through a standardized questionnaire, LGBTQ+ leaders’ understanding of the rise of anti-gender discourse and its consequences. This method also allows for comparison of different realities and interpretation of the data collected on the basis of concrete facts rather than perceptions. Most questionnaires were administered face-to-face in order to ensure the safety of the study, the researchers and the participants, but also to maintain the qualitative nature of the study, attentive to the emotions, experience and immediate environment of the exchange. When this was not physically possible, the questionnaires were completed by a phone interview.

The questionnaire was administered to a total of 63 community leaders, 23 in Burkina Faso, 20 in Senegal and 20 in Ghana. The criteria for participation were simple: to be part of the LGBTQ+ community and to be known as a leader by peers. The selection of community leaders was sensitive to the diversity of gender identities and sexual orientations. Although it is difficult to speak of representativeness given the very small number of participants, every effort was made to ensure that there was a balance between the different categories represented in LGBTQ+ (Table 2). After initial contact with one or two community leaders identified through activist networks, participants were recruited using a snowball approach. Quantitative data was downloaded from Google Forms in Excel format and analyzed using the SPSS software.

Phase 3: Qualitative survey of actors identified as either pro-gender or anti-gender in Phase 1

The aim of the qualitative method was to explore discourses, perceptions and attitudes, as well as personal experiences that are otherwise difficult to access. The objective was to answer the following questions: **what understanding do leaders in civil society (human rights activists, political leaders, religious leaders, traditional leaders, journalists, etc.) have of gender and LGBTQ+ people? What actions have been taken in support of or against gender and sexuality rights? Who are their partners? What are their projects?** These interviews were conducted both with profiles that were openly against the rights of LGBTQ+ people and with profiles that were in favor of respecting the rights of LGBTQ+ people. This allowed us to bring out the complexity of the understanding of “gender ideology”,

to cross-reference and analyze in depth the essence and agenda of anti-gender politics.

A total of 18 interviews were conducted, 7 in Burkina Faso, 5 in Senegal and 6 in Ghana. These interviews lasted an average of 1 hour. Most of the interviews were recorded and transcribed manually.

Phase 4: Deliberative workshop

Reporting is a necessary step in research for two reasons. First, for ethical reasons of accountability, and second, to confront the analyses with criticism and thus improve the final product. In addition to reporting, the purpose of the deliberative workshop was to bring together LGBTQ+ community leaders and their allies (actors engaged in the defense of women's rights and GSM) in order to review the provisional results, discuss response strategies to anti-gender politics and develop avenues of engagement for partners. The workshop was initially planned by country, but the COVID-19 crisis, and security concerns especially, led to the organization of a single virtual workshop. This workshop saw the participation of 22 activists : Burkina Faso (6), Senegal (8), Ghana (4), in addition to the research team. The workshop, translated simultaneously, lasted a little over two hours and provided additional data.

Limitations

The main limitations encountered in this study are described below.

The use of the snowball method for the questionnaires is certainly important for involving individuals who meet our selection criteria. However, it is not sufficiently representative of the diversity of the populations we are studying because it excludes people who are not known to the first contacted participants.

The sample size (63 people) is also not representative enough of the LGBTQ+ population, in terms of gender, sexuality,



place of residence. We are also aware of the disparities between rural and urban areas. That said, the qualitative side of the research helps to compensate for this limitation in that, what matters first is the lived experience. These experiences are valid, regardless of their representativeness. The sum of these experiences therefore provides a fairly clear picture of the impact of anti-gender politics.

The length of the deliberative workshop (2 hours and 20 minutes) did not allow us to complete the planned agenda, especially the last point on the avenues of reflection and action for international partners and donors. Nevertheless, we were able to collect additional data through follow-up emails.

The time frame of the study also proved insufficient for what we proposed to do. For a pioneering study of this type, we would have needed more than three months, or even a year, to follow the evolution of the situations in an analytical and cross-sectional way. Moreover, some high profiles, although important, could not be involved in the study due to lack of time.

The security situation in Ghana in particular, but also in Senegal, has significantly affected data collection. Suspicion and even fatigue on the part of LGBTQ+ people is legitimate, given the harassment they face from the media, police, and religious actors, but also over-solicitation for studies of this type.



WHO IS AFRAID OF GENDER ?

Study on gender ideology and anti-gender campaigns in West Africa

The objective of this report is to contribute to the understanding of what is happening in Burkina Faso, Ghana and Senegal relative to the anti-gender movement. To do so, we have favored a deductive analysis, based on empirical facts, allowing us to move from the general to the specific. Thus, the first part of the report sets out the theoretical framework and highlights the contrast between the conceptual definition of “gender ideology” and its concrete reality on the ground (Part 1). In the second part, we mapped anti-gender actors as well as their activities, resources, and action strategies (Part 2). The third part puts everything into context, taking into account the current situation in each country, its history and its specificities (Part 3). In the fourth part, we outline the different strategies used by activists to counter the anti-rights discourses and actions they are victims of (Part 4.1). We conclude with suggestions for engagement for donors and international partners (Part 4.2).

PART 1: PERCEPTIONS AND UNDERSTANDING OF “GENDER IDEOLOGY” AND ANTI-GENDER CAMPAIGNS

According to researchers Kuhar and Paternotte (2018), the term “gender ideology or theory”, which is always written in brackets or in italics to mark its singularity, is a pejorative way of naming initiatives undertaken in favor of justice and equal rights.³ Indeed, by replacing terms such as “women’s rights”, “equal rights”, “LGBT rights” with the term “gender ideology”, organizations and actors with a restrictive vision of gender (faith-based groups but also political and civil society actors) discredit human rights efforts towards more equal societies. For them, these initiatives are dangerous and aim at imposing the values of a (sexual) minority on the rest of the world. The term “gender ideology” is increasingly used at different national and regional levels to oppose advances in sexual and reproductive health rights, but also in political rights. In Europe, for example, discourses on “gender ideology” aim to prohibit marriage equality and the right to adoption for same-sex couples.⁴ In some cases, such discourses have even led to the banning of gender studies, as in Hungary. In Latin America, these discourses have crystallized around the prohibition of sex education in schools, associated with pedophilia, as well as the penalization of abortion and the pathologization of trans identity.⁵ What is the situation in Africa, particularly in our three countries of interest?

³ David Paternotte and Roman Kuhar 2018, op cit.

⁴ Idem

⁵ Sonia Corrêa. “Anti-Gender Politics in Latin America. Country case studies summaries” (Brazil: Sexuality Policy Watch (SPW)/ABIA, 2020).

1.1 Between immateriality of concept...

From the outset, the majority of people who participated in this study are not familiar with the term “gender ideology”, whether they are actors involved in gender-related activities or those whose discourse is openly anti-feminist and anti-LGBT. Even among LGBTQ+ leaders, the term is not that familiar. While it is vaguely known among the first two groups, it is completely foreign among the latter. When we say that it is vaguely known, we are referring to the content of their answers to the question regarding whether they had ever heard of “gender ideology” and what their understanding of it was. For 3 out of 4 actors, it was necessary to repeat the question and specify “gender ideology”, to finally talk about the “concept” of gender. In any case, if half of respondents had already heard of “gender ideology”, only 3 people out of 18 were able to accurately describe this term, including 2 in Ghana and 1 in Senegal, at least in its anti-rights dimension. For these people, gender ideology is a Western current of thought intended to blur the “normality” of the biological dispositions and aspirations of each sex:

“Yes, we hear more and more about gender. The state is responsible for this concept which is and continues to be a source of misunderstanding and controversy in the country. We must avoid importing everything from the West (...) In Germany, there were persistent demands in 2018 by LGBT lobbies to vote for the legalization of the use of a third gender, meaning people who do not recognize themselves as male or female. These lobbies won (...) All this happening in the West only increases the suspicions of the Senegalese society towards this new term, “gender”, that we hear more and more (...) A perfect example is the scandal on the UNESCO document that recently caused controversy among teachers and in the country. This document was advocating sex education for children as young as 5 years old. Does a 5 year old need to know what goes on in a matrimonial room? The document also talked about tolerance, freedom of expression, and openness to sexuality, diverse gender identities, etc. It was clearly an attempt to progressively trivialize sexual deviance in the minds of children.”
(V, civil society leader, Senegal)⁶

“What other animal is that? I don’t care about gender theory or whatever you call it, and I don’t care about it, even if you try to explain it or theorize it, it won’t work. You know why? Because it deviates from the norms of society, and it deviates from the word of God.”
(X, religious leader, Ghana)

“Yes, I’ve heard of it. Gender ideology is basically Western ideas of gender that say gender is not just about men and women, but about everything a person might feel. It is a way of legitimizing these immoral practices and making them acceptable in the public domain. From what I know, this movement started in the West and gradually tried to spread to other countries like Ghana. I don’t know too much about it, but I know that it is ideas about gender that say there is more than man and woman and that they are used to promote homosexuality”.
(XM, Civil Society Leader, Ghana)

Apart from these three people, the understanding of “gender ideology” remains very limited and refers, for the majority, to the inclusion of women and their specificities in development projects. Consequently, actors mobilized against LGBTQ+ rights are the one who mostly use the term

⁶ All names have been changed to preserve anonymity

Table 1. Cross-tabulation. Have you ever heard of gender ideology? x Country of residence

		Country of residence			Total
		Senegal	Burkina Faso	Ghana	
Have you ever heard of gender ideology?	No	12	7	10	29
	Yes	8	16	10	34
Total		20	23	20	63

“gender ideology”. This confirms the reality of a transnationalization of the anti-gender movement as developed by the literature.

Regarding LGBTQ+ community leaders, the survey shows that more than 50% have heard of the term “gender ideology” (Table 1).

While many LGBTQ+ leaders have heard of “gender ideology” through workshops, social networks, most associate it with gender studies, or to the experience of living out their gender identity.

Therefore, the term “gender ideology” does not seem to have the same scope depending on the context, which may pose the problem of its use during interventions or discussions with different local actors. However, if the understanding of this term is limited, even biased, its materiality is nevertheless very present, and confirms the existence of dynamics that could be qualified as anti-gender.

1.2 ...And materiality of consequences

To capture the impact of homophobic, anti-feminist and nationalist discourse on the LGBTQ+ community, we conducted a survey with community leaders. The following table shows the characteristics of our sample.

Table 2. Description of the sample

Questions	Senegal	Burkina Faso	Ghana	Total	
Gender	Woman	12	6	2	20
	Man	1	8	5	14
	non-binary/ trans	7	7	11	25
	queer	1	1	1	3
	Intersex	0	0	1	1
	Total	20	22	20	63
Sexuality	Gay	3	5	8	16
	Lesbian	11	9	2	22
	Bisexual	5	4	4	13
	Queer	0	3	5	8
	Other	1	1	1	3
Religion	Unbeliever	0	1	3	4
	Christian	1	12	13	26
	Muslim	19	9	2	30
	Other	0	0	2	2
Education	Did not go to school	3	1	0	4
	Primary	6	0	0	6
	Secondary	10	9	11	30
	Higher education/ university	1	12	9	22
	Total	20	22	20	62
Do you live?	Alone	3	9	7	19
	In a shared flat	6	2	5	13
	With partner	1	2	2	5
	With family	8	9	6	23
	Homeless	2	0	0	2

Table 2. Description of the sample

Questions	Senegal	Burkina Faso	Ghana	Total	
Heard of gender ideology?	Yes	9	7	10	26
	No	11	17	10	38
Level of hostility against LGBTQ+ people?	Low	1	4	0	5
	Strong	1	8	5	14
	Extremely strong	18	10	15	43
Do you think there is a campaign against women's rights?	Yes	6	9	7	22
	No	12	12	1	25
	Don't know	2	1	1	4
Do you think there is a campaign against LGBTQ+ rights?	Yes	20	16	20	56
	No	0	5	0	5
	Don't know	0	1	0	1
Do discourses against LGBTQ+ people have an impact on your life?	Yes	18	7	18	43
	No	2	15	2	19
Impact at the community level	Yes	17	6	10	33
	No	3	16	8	27
	Don't know	0	0	2	2
Are you afraid of being discriminated against?	Yes	14	12	19	45
	No	6	10	1	17
Have you been physically or verbally aggressed in the last 12 months?	Yes	16	12	10	38
	No	4	10	10	24

Fear and Insecurity

With the ongoing fear, insecurity, and restrictions on freedom of association and assembly, Table 2 shows the extent to which LGBTQ+ people are affected by transphobic and homophobic discourses and demonstrations in their countries. The psychological impact is considerable. More than 70% live in constant fear of being rejected, assaulted or arrested:

“It’s a general state of psychosis that doesn’t say its name. You have to pay attention to everything, all the time, it’s exhausting” (M, Burkina-Faso)

“I was one of the 21 people who were arrested in Ho. Now I have a criminal record” (R. Ghana)

“My family has abandoned me and society does not accept me either. I ran away from my hometown and I am homeless” (R2, Ghana)

This has serious consequences on the mental health of LGBTQ+ people and is exacerbated by real-life assaults and arrests. More than 60% of participants had been verbally or physically assaulted in the 12 months preceding the survey. Of the 38 people who had been assaulted, only 9 sought help from health professionals, and only 6 reported to the police.

“Once, I was attacked by a group of young people; they called me goordjiguen⁷, provoked me and at one point I answered and their friends came to hit me; I only knew one of them” (F, Senegal)

“We live in a situation of collective anxiety” (E.R, Ghana)

“Whenever LGBT people are mentioned, I feel very hurt, depressed and I don’t even know what words to use anymore. I’m one of them and I work in the community and sometimes I get so hurt that I can’t go to the office. I am afraid that people will rush and attack me there” (L, Ghana).

When asked about their greatest fear, answers were all similar:

“My greatest fear is to die away from my family”; “Being rejected by the family”; “Being rejected professionally”; “Being murdered”; “I am afraid for my life”; “I am afraid that someone will find out who I am and attack me”; “That someone will find out who I am, because that would mean social death”.

Table 3 shows that the majority of respondents perceive the situation of women as being much better than it was before. This is not the case for other indicators such as LGBTQ+ inclusion, personal security or the influence of religious actors in public life

Impact on community activities

The consequences of this hostile environment are also felt at the collective level with the shutdown or slowing down of community activities, as well as at the mobilization level, including online:

“We have to be more careful about security. This complicates things, especially in Ouaga where it is difficult to find a safe space (...) People are afraid. Often, the activity doesn’t even end because as soon as there is a small alert, everyone runs away. It’s clear that this affects the quality of our mobilization. We find it difficult to find spaces for our recreational activities even though we can pay. No one wants to rent us their space” (K. Burkina Faso)

⁷ Homophobic slur in wolof

Table 3. Cross-tabulated observations on social changes in gender, sexuality and religion indicators

Please indicate whether the following things are worse or better now than they were a few years ago, or whether they are about the same.

	Better	Same	Worse	Much worse	Don't know	Total
Country	How religious leaders or religion affect daily life					
Burkina Faso	6	7	3	5	1	22
Ghana	0	5	10	4	1	20
Senegal	2	2	8	7	0	19
Total	8	14	21	16	2	61
	Equal opportunities and treatment for women					
Burkina Faso	17	2	1	1	0	21
Ghana	1	6	10	2	1	20
Senegal	1	10	5	4	0	20
Total	19	18	16	7	1	61
	Your personal safety and that of your organization					
Burkina Faso	7	9	6	0	0	22
Ghana	1	5	8	2	4	20
Senegal	4	1	2	10	3	20
Total	12	15	16	12	7	62
	Inclusion of LGBTQ+ people					
Burkina Faso	10	4	4	4	0	22
Ghana	0	5	12	3	0	20
Senegal	0	1	0	18	1	20
Total	10	10	16	25	1	62

“As a safety measure, when tempers were still very high on the issue of homosexuality, we stopped our activities” (E. Ghana)

“I used to meet with LGBT members who were not empowered, give them information, go door to door, and it has affected the people I work with. We can't meet, we can't have a group discussion, it's now always one-on-one and it has to be in a safe place” (G, Ghana)

Isolation

The survey also shows that while they can easily name actors with a non-inclusive view of gender, more than half of respondents (35 out of 63) are unable to name a single leader who has spoken positively about LGBTQ+ people. This illustrates the level of isolation, the weakness and even the lack of support for sexual and gender minorities in the public arena in all three countries.

PART 2. ANTI-GENDER ARGUMENTS AND POLITICS: MAPPING OF KEY PLAYERS

The first part of this report demonstrated that the term “gender ideology” is relatively unknown and often misunderstood in our three contexts. However, the rhetoric and actions of some civil society and religious leaders, as we will see in the present section, are very real and have tangible consequences on the lives of LGBTQ+ people. Thus, anti-gender politics do exist, whether or not they are linked to the manipulation and instrumentalization of the term “gender ideology”.

First, it is important to develop some semantic precisions before presenting the different actors who have been identified as contributing to the rise in discrimination and stigmatisation of LGBTQ+ populations. Here, anti-gender politics refer to discourses and actions that encourage discrimination, incite punishment (or even hatred) and exclusion, and violate the physical and moral integrity of LGBTQ+ people. These politics are certainly carried out by leaders who are easily identifiable because of their positions, but they are also the work of civil society actors who are otherwise committed to promoting gender equality in the public space. This is why we make a distinction between anti-gender actors and actors with a restrictive vision of gender.



“ We make a distinction between anti-gender actors and actors with a restrictive vision of gender. ”

2.1 Anti-gender / restrictive or non-inclusive view of gender vs Anti-LGBTQ+

The anti-gender category often includes all kinds of actors whose discourse clearly advocates a return to conservative and patriarchal values, values according to which there is only one “natural” conception of gender, and this conception is fixed by the biological order. Moreover, according to this conception, the place of women is inferior (often nuanced with the term *complementary* to hide the implicit inferiority) to that of men, and sexuality is only allowed between men and women, preferably within the framework of marriage. These actors are opposed to gender studies and to feminism, which they accuse of diverting people from family values and the “natural order” of things.

Given the diversity of understanding that people have about the concept of gender, it would not be fair to mix everything up. Indeed, for the majority of actors interviewed, gender does not cause fear. Apart from three civil and religious leaders openly opposed to the very use of the term gender, our respondents do not seem to be at war with gender. On the contrary, it is considered

“**Apart from three civil and religious leaders openly opposed to the very use of the term gender, our respondents do not seem to be at war with gender.**”

a major development issue. On several occasions, expressions such as “gender inequality”, “women’s autonomy”, “breaking social barriers”, “promotion of gender and

women’s rights”, “equal opportunities” or “gender-based violence” were mentioned to illustrate understanding of gender. However, even if this perception has an emancipatory vocation (for cisgender women only), it is a restrictive view of gender which recognizes only two genders (men/women) and only one sexual orientation, namely heterosexuality. In this category, we will find leaders whose commitment to human rights or to women and girls is considerable and commendable, but whose attacks on trans people or homosexuals are reprehensible. Thus, on the part of people fighting against gender-based violence (incest, rape, pedophilia), it is not uncommon to note a resistance to the extension of this understanding beyond women’s bodies, and beyond heterosexuality. Below are three excerpts from interviews that are indicative of the complexity of this situation:

“There is a lot of ink and debate and a lot of confusion between the approach, the concept and the analysis (...). According to national policies and donors, gender analysis should take into account other variables such as age and so on. This is not the conceptual definition. We are getting away from it. Gender must remain what it is, taking into account girls and boys, and focusing on vulnerable groups (...) We have our own realities. We cannot apply this western concept to our contexts like that. The gender approach needs to be redefined” (Ms S, Burkina Faso).

“Gender inequalities are always taken into account in everything we do (...) Girls and boys must be given the same opportunities (...) We must improve the status of women. But it is difficult because of socio-cultural constraints (...). If we based things on our values and social norms, it is a deviance⁸(...) Here, we refuse that. Our society refuses (...) Of course they are human beings who also have rights. But are these rights consistent with our values? I say no. It isn’t.” (Mrs D. Burkina Faso)

⁸ Referring to LGBTQ+ people

“We work on a lot of issues related to women and gender (...) I think that things must be equitable in terms of treatment and opportunities in all aspects between men and women (...). There are still many institutional constraints to achieve this, with the State not respecting its commitments (...) There are also socio-cultural constraints that force women to remain at home, invisible, and society that labels any woman who tries to go against social norms as a feminist and a non-conformist (...). I start from the principle of human rights to say that respecting the dignity of all is important. But then, we live in a society with its own realities, its own customs, rules, sociology, etc., and we cannot deny that. I am a human rights defender, of course, but I am also a guardian of my country’s values. These are two hats that are not always easy to wear. So I am in favor of protecting their dignity⁹, but not at the expense of our values and cultures”.
(F, Senegal)

“ **Rather than talking about anti-gender actors, we prefer the term actors with a restrictive vision of gender.** ”

“

It therefore seems simplistic to mix actors who hold a very patriarchal discourse on women’s place in society, with those who militate for more autonomy for women, even if both parties are united in their refusal of a gender justice that would benefit sexual and gender minorities. Unlike their European and Latin American counterparts who publicly denounce the imposition of a “gender ideology”, for actors in Burkina Faso, Senegal and Ghana, whose vision of gender contributes to the exclusion and

marginalization of people on the basis of their gender identity/expression and sexual orientation, the concept of “gender ideology” seems to be misunderstood. This reinforces the idea that LGBTQ+ rights are not human rights, and that they are a threat to the balance of society. In fact, rather than talking about *anti-gender actors*, we prefer the term *actors with a restrictive vision of gender*.

This is not to say that there are no anti-gender movements, politics or campaigns in which these actors participate, either willingly or by default. **Anti-gender is an analytical category that covers a diversity of social and political actors (Table 4), discourses and actions in opposition to gender justice¹⁰, and thus, an opposition to the transformations enabled by the struggles that have resulted from it (feminist struggles, struggles for the decriminalization of homosexuality and abortion, struggles for the extension of marriage to same-sex couples, etc.).** The actors of these anti-gender politics can be classified into 5 categories:

1. **Religious organizations and their leaders** (Imams, Bishops, Pastors);
2. **Civil society organizations** engaged in women’s rights issues;
3. **Political leaders and elected officials** (senators, deputies, leaders of political parties);
4. **Public authorities** such as university professors, journalists and state officials;
5. And finally **the media**, public or private, traditional (TV, radio, press) or digital.

To these 5 categories, we can add **international actors** whose role is important in shaping anti-LGBTQ+ mobilizations as well as strategic orientation, and financial support.

⁹ Referring to LGBTQ+ people

¹⁰ For the Global Fund for Women, gender justice takes into account the diversity of needs, experiences and leadership of those most affected by discrimination and oppression - women, queer people, migrants, etc. <https://www.globalfundforwomen.org/what-we-do/gender-justice/>

“**Anti-gender is an analytical category that covers a diversity of social and political actors, discourses and actions in opposition to gender justice.**”

“

These different categories do not form a homogeneous group, and it is important to note that there are profound differences between them. Naming them (in a non-exhaustive way) is important to avoid confusion with actors who fall into the same categories but who support human rights regardless of gender identity or sexual orientation. It is also important to note that several leaders with a restrictive view of gender made a point of speaking on their own behalf and not on behalf of their organization. Indeed, we can see that the organizations to which they belong have, as technical and financial partners, international organizations and institutions committed to the promotion of gender justice (ie. UNFPA, UNWOMEN, GLOBAL FUND, IPPF, AFD, IDRC, GRET, etc.).

Many actors recognize the anteriority of homosexual practices in African societies and the fact that they are not imported practices. However, they consider them at best as a pathology or deviance that can be cured, and at worst as a satanic practice that perverts the world order:

“I agree with helping to facilitate women’s access to safe abortion. But personally, gays are people who scare me” (S, Burkina).

These actors also classify homosexuality in the same way as rape, femicides or sexual violence.



Table 4: Mapping of actors and organizations involved in the anti-gender movement

Actors / Country	Ghana	Senegal	Burkina Faso
Religious/traditional leaders	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The Christian Council of Ghana - Ghana Muslim Mission - The Catholic Church - The Pentecostal Church of Ghana 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Sheikh Lô Ngabou, leader of the Safinatoul Amane militia - The Islamic NGO Jamra and its leader Mame Mactar Gueye - Mame Mactar Gueye - Safinatoul Aman (police of morals) that uses social media to trap LGBTQ+ people. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Archbishop Phillipe Ouedraogo, Metropolitan Archbishop of Ouagadougou - Center for Islamic Studies, Research and Training (CERFI) - The Moog o Naba of Ouagadougou - Coordination of Islamic Associations of the West - West African Pro-Life Movement (Pro-Vie) - Pastor Karambiri and his wife (well known internationally)
Political leaders/public figures	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The President, Nana Akufo-Addo - Moses Foh-Amoaning, president of the National Coalition for Proper Human Sexual Rights and Family Values - The 8 members of Parliament who introduced the Anti-gay bill : Samuel Nartey George, Emmanuel Bedzrah, Della Adjoa Sowah, John Ntim Fordjour, Alhassan Sayibu Suhuyini, Helen Adjoa Ntoso, Rita Naa Odoley Sowah, Rockson Nelson Dafeamekpor One of them is the parliamentarian spokes person - National Democratic Party (former ruling party, strongly opposed to comprehensive sexuality education programme) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - President Macky Sall - Serigne Babacar Sy Mansour (General Khalif of the Tidianes), - Imam Dame Ndiaye (President of the Islamic Association of Senegal), - Imam Moustapha Gueye, - Dame Mbodji (President of the teachers' union in Senegal), - Imam François Mbodjian (Imam of South Bignona), - Sheikh Rhim Seck (General Khalif of Tianaba), - Omar Diagne, Cledor Sène (President of the New Vision movement), - Assane Diouf (a priori repatriated by the US Government for terrorism), - Cheikh Omar Diagne, - Sheikh Bekay Bekay (Khalif of the Khadres). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Mr. Bachirou Mohamed Waongo, Accountant and member of the office of a Muslim community. - Hato Mare, Programme Officer for Youth and Peace Education - Dr Zeynabo Coulibaly, President of the National Council of Women of Burkina Faso - Mr. Zongo Mathias (radio host) - Pr Stanislas Ouaro, Minister of National Education and Literacy - Dr Nestorine Sangare, former Minister for Women - PAREN and Prof. Laurent Bado, former president of PAREN, retired university professor - Tahirou Barry (former minister, presidential candidate in 2020 and initiator of a

Actors / Country	Ghana	Senegal	Burkina Faso
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Abdou Karim Gueye (polemicist) - Omar Diagne (economist), - Ababacar Mboup (theologian), Dame Mbodj (trade union teacher) 	proposal to criminalize homosexuality)
Media¹¹	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - TV3 Ghana - GhanaWebTV - Daily Graphic - Daily guide - Adom FM - AsempaFM - And most of the media, TV, radio, newspapers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Website seneweb - Xalat tv (youtube channel) - 2STV - Lamp Fall TV - Touba TV - Most newspapers (L'Obs, l'Enquête) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Radio Bobo - Oméga FM (these two radio stations have on several occasions organized free radio programmes against homosexuality with the obvious aim of building up an audience)
Civil society	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - National Coalition for Proper Human Sexual Rights and Family Values - Coalition against LGBT Ghana ¹² - Journalists Against LGBTQ+ Ghana ¹³ 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The And Sann Jikko Yi collective (together for the preservation of morals) - Mbañ Gacce (No to shame) ¹⁴ - Teachers' Union - The Movement "Y'en a Marre" - Nitou Deug movement whose leader is a candidate in the next presidential elections 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - WANEP - National Council of Women of Burkina Faso - Association of Women Lawyers of Burkina Faso - Fatimata Sinare, association leader, expert in gender and development
Regional and international partners	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The World Congress of Families-Ghana - Family Renaissance International - Citizen Go 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Turkish and Iranian Islamic organizations - Family Help 	

¹¹ The general trend is towards very stigmatizing media coverage, regardless of the country. There is not really any neutral coverage, let alone positive. In fact, the media presented here are non-exhaustive and only partially cover the data collected during the study period. Media coverage of LGBTQ+ issues could be the subject of a separate study.

¹² Civil society organizations that are openly anti-LGBTQ+ are not easily identifiable. The last two organizations mentioned are fairly recent, having been established in 2021, and do not appear to be very structured. The most prominent organisation is the National Coalition for Proper Human Sexual Rights and Family Values which is backed on religious principles.

¹³ <https://www.ghanaweb.com/GhanaHomePage/NewsArchive/Every-Ghanaian-should-get-involved-and-let-s-kick-against-LGBTQ-Leader-of-Journalist-Against-LGBTQ-1189648>

¹⁴ Defines itself as an observatory for the monitoring and defense of senegalese cultural and religious values

2.2 Strategies and capacities for action

To ensure that their voices are heard, actors with a restrictive view of gender have developed different strategies to organize, communicate and take action. These strategies vary according to the political situation (election period especially), but also according to international support and backing. The study identified the following strategies:

Denunciations

This is the most popular mode of communication and the most common way to identify those opposed to the recognition of LGBTQ+ rights. Denunciations take many forms, the most classic of which is the use of print media and social media. The consequences of these denunciations are considerable, both individually and collectively (see section above on the materiality of consequences).

In Senegal, pompous headlines denouncing the “homosexual threat” sell:

“Not a week goes by without a newspaper publishing something about homosexuals. It’s all the time. It doesn’t stop. It’s because it sells. Otherwise, who’s going to buy the paper?” (F. Senegal).

Some detractors do not hesitate to mention names, or even to display pictures of people they accuse of satanic and deviant practices. For example, one of the co-investigators discovered that her image had been shown on television, in flagrant violation of her rights.

In Burkina Faso, Nestorine Sangaré attacked the “trans and homosexual phenomenon” on her Facebook page, scorning the work of feminists in the process, and defying international partners who appealed for

restraint and respect. According to LGBTQ+ leaders from Burkina Faso, the director of the national TV station was reportedly replaced following a TV show sequence showing two women kissing. The government reportedly bowed to pressure from religious leaders who demanded his dismissal.

In Ghana, LGBTQ+ leaders were arrested in the city of Ho during a workshop, and an organization’s office was closed down just a few weeks after it opened, all on the grounds of denunciations. Some activities are no longer organized for fear of being denounced. But above all, the majority of respondents live in fear of being denounced by their neighbors or families (nearly half of the respondents still live with their families). The experiences of forced or precipitated relocation are numerous in all three countries.

The consequences of public denunciations in the press, the radio or social media are often dramatic in the hours/days following these denunciations. Above all, they are beyond the control of the denouncers:

“I showed the video of an attack on men accused of homosexuality to a colleague you know very well. He was very surprised. He himself is still saying that we should file a complaint because this is not normal. The level of violence was extreme. So you can imagine, he says one thing on the one hand and on the other he doesn’t realize the consequences. But he can’t go back on his words now.” (W.S, Senegal)

“With what Nestorine did online¹⁵, we were all afraid. Nobody dared to publicly defend Solange. People took the opportunity to insult us without restraint. Usually, her posts don’t get as many likes, but with this, people liked, shared, and everything. We were scared. We had to send Solange away for a while” (R. Burkina Faso)

¹⁵ About the denunciation by former minister Nestorine Sangaré of the “trans phenomenon”

“With the arrest of the 21 in Ho, I didn’t dare participate in activities anymore. We even stopped for a while until the situation calmed down. But with the law in parliament, people only talk about this. They insult you publicly in the street (...) So we keep a low profile”
(E., Ghana)

“Whenever there are public statements like that, there are always consequences. These denunciations encourage insults and attacks. You see people hunting homosexuals. People who say we deserve hell. Children who are chased out of their home sometimes in the middle of school. Where are they supposed to go ? You see landlords who kick their tenants out even though they pay their rent on time, or others who lose their jobs. Every time”
(N, Senegal)

Professionalization

By professionalization, we mean the internal transformation or restructuring of an organization towards a model whose goal is to produce more efficient results. This includes the creation of salaried positions for example, a specific recruitment or membership policy, an operation adapted to the market (in this case the gender market), the development of links with the media and marketing networks, and financial strategies¹⁶. This is undoubtedly the case of And Samm Jikko Yi in Senegal, which has developed an entire system of membership, contributions and internal and external communication. In just a few months of existence, the collective’s Facebook group has nearly 20,000 subscribers. Individuals also have the possibility to acquire a membership card for a fee of 1,000 FCFA and to join designated Whatsapp groups. These fees are not negligible and can be used to organize campaigns or spontaneous demonstrations.

Building political alliances

The formation of political alliances is also part of the professionalization process. On one hand, these alliances can be timely, i.e. formed on the occasion of a major event, with actors who are not necessarily allies. On such occasions, the discourse evolves rapidly to adapt to the context and gain some legitimacy. In Senegal, *Jamra* intervenes on a variety of themes. For instance, the organization takes a stand against sectarianism. It also holds a unifying discourse in the fight against drugs, unemployment and even violence against women. *Jamra* even participated in the feminist protests organized in 2019 for the criminalization of rape. On the other hand, these alliances can be formal and long lasting, with a very specific agenda, that is, to position themselves as a key player in decision-making processes. This is the case of the *Pro-Vie* movement in Burkina Faso, *And Samm Jikko Yi* in Senegal, and the National Coalition for Proper Human Sexual Rights and Family in Ghana. The number of these groups varies according to the issues at stake.

Organization of large-scale public events

Another strategy by actors with a restrictive view of gender is the organization of public events, from conferences and seminars lasting several days to public gatherings, including preaching in churches, mosques or in the street. This was the case in Ghana in 2019 with the World Congress of Families organized by the US-based international NGO, The World Congress of Families. In the same year, the *Pro-Vie* movement, which preaches the protection of human life, held a session in Ouagadougou. Led by the Archbishop of Ouagadougou, Cardinal Philippe Ouédraogo, the session focused on the themes of life and

¹⁶ Anne Le Naëllou. “Pour comprendre la professionnalisation dans les ONG: quelques apports d’une sociologie des professions”, *Revue Tiers Monde* 4, n o180 (2004): 773-98.

family, bluntly condemning what it considers a threat to these values, namely terrorism, but also abortion and homosexuality. In Senegal, several demonstrations against homosexuality took place in different cities in May 2021. These demonstrations brought together several hundred people, with the aim of strengthening the existing law against homosexuality, defending the family unit against the “LGBTQ+ agenda”, fighting against Western imperialism and for national sovereignty. One of the characteristics of these demonstrations is the youthfulness of the demonstrators, but also the anger and violence expressed through them. This raises the question of whether this anger does not hide deeper frustrations linked to the economic and social situation of these young people who are often underemployed, unemployed and relegated to the rank of spectators in public life:

“I went to the march. It was really violent. But you wonder what causes so much anger. Is it just homosexuality or is it something else?” (L, Senegal).

University halls, churches and mosques are other favored venues for anti-LGBT rhetoric.

Instrumentalization of the law

Lastly, organizations or movements with a restrictive view of gender are also active in the legal field. This is evident in how they propose bills to penalize same-sex relationships and any person or organization that defends them, how they draft and get signatures on petitions addressed to the highest political authorities and how they attack school educational content.

In Ghana for example, 8 MPs, including 7 from the opposition, submitted an anti-gay bill to Parliament in July 2021. In Senegal,

¹⁷ <https://africa.la-croix.com/au-senegal-polemique-autour-de-lintroduction-dun-programme-deducation-sexuelle-et-reproductive-dans-les-ecoles/>

¹⁸ idem

in late December 2020, in an open letter, a teachers’ union formally spoke out against sex education in schools, arguing that Western mimicry should be avoided and the traditional values of Senegalese¹⁷ society respected. The controversy created by this open letter made President Macky Sall intervene:

“We have our values and nobody can dictate us what to do. Neither UNESCO nor the United Nations can impose on us to change the programs in our schools. This is not even an debate”¹⁸.

The organizers of the march against homosexuality in May 2021 have also circulated a petition to pass a law banning homosexuality in the country.

In summary, there is indeed a nuance between anti-gender actors and actors with a restrictive or non-inclusive view of gender. Their discourses, practices and treatment of women’s rights and sexual and gender minorities’ rights do vary, but are characteristic of what constitutes anti-gender politics. In the next section, we present the three contexts and their specificities in more detail.



PART 3: CASE STUDIES

This section aims to put anti-gender mobilizations and campaigns into context. We propose an analysis that takes into account the historical, political and social dynamics of each country.



3.1 Senegal: Towards the institutionalization of an anti-gender movement?

Background

Senegal, a secular republic with a Muslim majority (95%), is a country in which LGBTQ+ populations do not openly live their sexuality and/or gender identity. Article 319.3 of the Senegalese Penal Code, inherited from colonial times, penalizes same-sex sexuality with a sentence of 1 to 5 years in prison and a fine of 100,000 to 1,500,000 CFA (USD 200 to 3,300), referring to it as “an indecent or unnatural act”. Technically, a person must be caught having homosexual intercourse to be arrested, but generally, arrests are made on suspicions.

The news about LGBTQ+ people is dominated by harmful and violent caricatures and stereotypes that impact the growth and safety of the community. In recent years, we have witnessed an upsurge in anti-LGBT rhetoric and attitudes justified by religious, conservative and cultural arguments. This is evidenced by the formation of anti-LGBT coalitions, the proliferation of anti-LGBT media communications, and actions aimed at achieving what seems to be the ultimate goal of this lobbying: the criminalization of homosexuality in Senegal¹⁹. The years 2020 and 2021 in particular have been marked by increasingly insistent rhetoric in favor of the criminalization of homosexuality in Senegal, justified by the argument that Senegal belongs to the Senegalese and that, as a sovereign people with a Muslim majority, it should decide its own laws. What makes this anti-LGBT discourse different from previous years is that it seems more organized than the sporadic attacks that used to make

headlines in the country. To illustrate this organized anti-LGBT lobbying, we can cite the existence of organizations such as the *And Samm Jikko Yi*²⁰ collective, *Mbañ Gacce*²¹, *Jamra*, to name a few.

The And Samm Jikko Yi collective

And Samm Jikko Yi (a Wolof phrase meaning “together for the preservation of morals”) is a collective that brings together a number of Islamic associations, civil society organizations, and political figures. Its mission is to fight against homosexuality and freemasonry. The collective uses a targeted and well thought-out communication campaign to get its message across to state authorities as well as to Senegalese society in general. It stands out from other anti-LGBT organizations by its strong presence on social media (Facebook in particular) and the implementation of a very effective digital campaign.

Added to this are interviews on television, press releases and a coordinated mobilization of the population through a membership system. In addition to the multiplicity of platforms used in this anti-LGBT campaign, there is also the conscious and intentional choice of the language used to convey these messages. Indeed, all of the collective’s communications, from Facebook posts to official press releases, are available in Wolof, but also in Arabic and lastly in French. The TV interviews and other audiovisual materials are also often disseminated in Wolof. Beyond the fact that Wolof is one of the most widely spoken languages in the country, its almost exclusive use (as opposed to French) could be interpreted as a way of standing up to the Western colonial language and claiming a certain sovereignty. It should also be noted that the decision of the French Council of

¹⁹ Senegalese law already punishes homosexuality.

²⁰ Translation from Wolof: “Together for the preservation of morals”.

²¹ Translation from Wolof: “No to shame”; defines itself as an observatory for monitoring and defending cultural and religious values

State to remove Senegal from the list of countries safe for LGBTQ+ people²², as well as the pressure from the French LGBT organization (ADHEOS) on the government to deny access to French territory to certain openly anti-LGBT Senegalese actors²³, has contributed to exacerbating the anti-French sentiment, already strong in the country.

The collective's discourse is unequivocal: either you are against LGBTQ+ people or you are one of them. In a country where community support is important, this leaves little room for nuance, discouraging any outpouring of solidarity towards those under attack. Among the slogans used by the collective in its divisive campaign, we can cite: *"Anyone who behaves, speaks, or dresses like a homosexual, regardless of status, is a homosexual. Anyone who supports or defends homosexuals is also a homosexual"*²⁴. We can also quote: *"Will you keep quiet just to be accepted?"*²⁵ (understand here "accepted by the West"). This sentence is also the one frequently used to invite internet users to join the collective by acquiring a membership card for 1000 FCFA and to join the whatsapp group of their city. This membership system as well as the creation of interactive platforms such as whatsapp groups or a Facebook page not only reflect a desire to extend the actions and influence of the collective beyond the capital city, Dakar, but also a willingness to put in place coordinated actions to achieve their goals.

We are therefore faced with a seemingly very organized collective, with a clear objective of massive mobilization. One of the most historic

actions of this collective to date is the march for the criminalization of homosexuality organized on May 23, 2021. This march was coupled with a petition putting pressure on the government to pass a law criminalizing homosexuality and, in the language of the collective, anyone who would venture to defend LGBTQ+ people. Many religious authorities, including representatives of the Catholic Church, supported this initiative.

During the May 23rd march, many demonstrators wore T-shirts prepared for the occasion. This illustrates a certain professionalization in the strategy and raises the question of resources to finance such activities. There was of course an attempt to collect donations via mobile money and the sale of membership cards. However, it is not excluded that these organizations receive aid from international Islamic organizations, especially from Turkey and Iran. In fact, President Erdogan has never hidden his intentions to finance homophobic organizations in the world, Africa in particular.

Beyond this march, however, there are rumors that a more stringent law is being prepared by one of the deputies of the party in power:

"This law is still buried in the drawers and that's all the better because it proposes to criminalize homosexuality based on stereotypes: clothing, hairstyle, gait, etc. and according to it, it will condemn those who receive money [from LGBTQ+ people, editor's note], even the neighborhood shopkeeper who takes money from the gay man who buys from him"
(community leader).

²² https://www.lemonde.fr/societe/article/2021/07/02/immigration-le-conseil-d-etat-retire-trois-pays-africains-de-la-controversee-liste-des-pays-surs_6086777_3224/

²³ <http://www.adheos.org/senegal-adheos-exige-l-interdiction-du-territoire-francais-au-khalife-generaux-des-tidianes-khadres-imams-ainsi-qu-aux-autres-instigateurs-salafistes-de-la-manifestation-contre-l-homosexualite>

²⁴ Wolof: Képp kuy jëf, walla ngay wax waxi ngóor-jigéen walla ngay sol solliinu góor-jigéen ak koo man a doon góor-jigéen nga. Kuy jàpple góor-jigéen it góor-jigéen nga.

²⁵ Wolof: Ndaax noppi nga nguiir bokk

Other anti-gender actors and events

During the month of July 2021, Senegalese singer Wally Seck was at the center of yet another controversy according to which he was an advocate of the LGBT agenda taking place in the country. Indeed, the scandal erupted because of the presence of rainbow colors during one of his concerts (these colors were projected on a screen and he himself wore a T-shirt with rainbow colors). A few weeks earlier (June), two of his dancers, Amath Thiou & Amady Badiane, allegedly exchanged a kiss on stage during a party hosted by the singer. The kiss was described as being a “mouth-to-mouth” by the dancers. This also caused an outcry across the country and led to the dancers being summoned by the authorities after a complaint was filed by the organization *Jamra*.

In June 2021, a high school English test on homosexuality²⁶ also caused outrage across the country. The text of the exam, which was about a man revealing his homosexuality to his mother, had as one of its reflection questions: “*Are you for or against the social exclusion of homosexuals in Senegal?*” In the face of the scandal and pressure from various anti-LGBT actors, the author of the exam was sanctioned in order to discourage any future attempt to “promote homosexuality”.

This anti-gender vision is also impacting freedom of the press. Indeed, anti-LGBT actors in Senegal have asked for a revision of article 18 of the Press Code²⁷, which they believe should not include the term “sexual orientation” because, since homosexuality is penalized, there should be no provision for it in the Press Code.

In Senegal, people seem to be increasingly opposed to the use of the term gender. They are more comfortable with the term sex and feel that when we talk about gender, we are talking about LGBTQ+ people, which was not the case a few years ago. In June 2021, an event entitled “Awareness Day against gender-based violence in schools”, held in the religious city of Tivaouane, was hijacked by students after being labeled an “LGBT conference”²⁸. The reaction of a civil society leader interviewed for this study illustrates perfectly this aversion to the term “gender”: “*Why gender-based? All forms of violence are despicable! So why this focus on gender? These are just techniques that lobbies use to impose their agenda*”. The suspension of this event, aside from being worrying because 1) it was led by students and 2) had clearly not been carefully thought out since the event in question was not about LGBTQ+ people, confirms the existence of an anti-gender rhetoric and actors, which is not necessarily the case elsewhere, such as in Burkina Faso

“ **Why gender-based? All forms of violence are despicable! So why this focus on gender? These are just techniques that lobbies use to impose their agenda** ”

“

²⁶ <https://www.rfi.fr/fr/afrique/20210602-s%C3%A9n%C3%A9gal-un-sujet-de-bac-blanc-autour-de-l-homosexualit%C3%A9-provoque-un-toll%C3%A9>

²⁷ <http://www.jo.gouv.sn/spip.php?article11233>

²⁸ https://senego.com/tivaouane-des-eleves-ont-annule-une-conference-sur-la-promotion-de-lhomosexualite_1290395.html?fbclid=IwAR079IM1D9uuusw7U63Mlk2TofRYAyP4VCsQkcBjkcLOuzrZzIbNYvKWlc

for example. This rejection of gender as an approach and as a category of analysis creates a confusion that some gender specialists regret: “*Gender has always been an operational category in Senegal without it being a problem. But now, we are under attack from all sides*”. More importantly, this shows that from now on, the struggle for women’s rights should be linked to the struggle of LGBTQ+ people with whom they share a precarious situation.

“ **More importantly, this shows that from now on, the struggle for women’s rights should be linked to the struggle of LGBTQ+ people with whom they share a precarious situation.** ”

The media, especially print media, appears to be a major player in anti-gay campaigns:

“*Just look at press releases every morning. As soon as there is the slightest event about a gay person or whatever, they put it in the headlines. They do that to sell. It sells. People buy these.*” (K. Senegal).

Between 2015 and 2020, there have been about a dozen TV programs about homosexuality, but those were often one-way discussions focused on condemnation:

“*It’s relentless. They refuse to debate, they just talk among themselves*” (Idem).

And with social media, LGBTQ+ people are more exposed than ever to blackmail, extortion and harassment. For example, the *Nitou Deug* militia has repeatedly

distinguished itself as an anti-LGBT actor by setting traps to people online by posing as members of the LGBTQ+ community to extort information and publish degrading and humiliating pictures of their victims.

Rejection of the law against homosexuality: A false victory?

In December 2021, the collective *And Samm Jikko Yi* succeeded in sending to the national assembly, through the intermediary of a dozen deputies committed to its cause, a bill aimed at toughening the penalties for homosexuality in Senegal. While homosexuality is already punishable by law, members of the collective want to go further and criticize the current text which, according to them, is too vague to effectively punish offenders. In lieu of “unnatural acts with an individual of his or her own sex”, they propose that terms such as lesbianism, homosexuality, bisexuality, transsexuality, intersexuality, be clearly mentioned, on the same level as zoophilia, necrophilia and other similar practices. Furthermore, they propose that these acts be punishable by 5 to 10 years in prison (as opposed to 1 to 5 years in the current provisions), and a fine of 1 to 5 million FCFA (as opposed to 100,000 to 1,500,000 FCFA currently). Two paragraphs of this proposal provide for the withdrawal of the civic, civil and political rights of any person found guilty, and for the punishment of the promotion of homosexuality through any public broadcasting or through financing of any activity related to it, by 3 to 5 years in prison and a fine of 1 to 5 million FCFA.

Despite strong public support for this proposal, the National Assembly rejected the proposal in its first review²⁹. In the press release issued on this occasion, it stated that there was no need to amend the current legislation as the current provisions are clear on the matter since 1966. Given the pre-

²⁹ <https://lequotidien.sn/rejet-de-la-loi-sur-la-criminalisation-de-lhomosexualite-les-initiateurs-determines-a-continuer-leur-combat/>

electoral context in Senegal, the national assembly invokes a “false debate” and denounces a hidden political agenda from the bill’s sponsors.

While we can be pleased that this law was ruled inadmissible, and salute the political courage of the party in power, which did not give in to popular pressure, this is nonetheless

not a victory given that the law remains unchanged and that the party insisted that Senegal was not ready to revise this law. In fact, the law is regularly used to punish, discriminate and stigmatize LGBTQ+ people, keeping them as second-class citizens.



3.2 Burkina Faso: Gender, depoliticized

Background

For several decades, Burkina Faso has included gender in its development policy agenda. To this end, authorities have adopted several resolutions at the institutional and operational levels, including the creation of a Ministry for the Promotion of Women in 1997, and a Ministry for the Promotion of Human Rights in 2002. To guide government actors in the promotion of gender equality, a manual on the integration of gender into development policies, programs and projects was drawn up in 2004 and serves as a pedagogical framework at the national level. At the basic sector level, there is a certain willingness to take gender into account in sectoral policies and the creation of gender focal points and units. In October 2009, Burkina Faso adopted a national gender policy. However, it must be noted that this gender policy is not inclusive and does not take into account sexual and gender minorities. It is mainly a generic term to mark the will to take into account young people, women, girls and vulnerable people, but not people exposed to rejection and discrimination such as the LGBTQ+ community.

In fact, although there is a clear political will on the part of the government to work towards the elimination of gender discrimination, this is done through a very technical approach, without questioning the factors that create the conditions for the exclusion of women. Thus, the issue of LGBTQ+ rights is not part of the government's preoccupations and each time it is raised, it is always in a dynamic of condemnation, in the name of the same principles that maintain women and girls in an inferior status. At the

international level, we remember the position of Burkina Faso, at the head of a group of African states opposing the appointment of an independent expert on issues of violence and discrimination based on gender identity and sexual orientation at the United Nations Commission on Human Rights.³⁰

Major events

Several events attest to the precarious situation of LGBTQ+ people in Burkina Faso. In October 2013, a group called *Mouvement des Jeunes pour la Paix* (Youth Movement for Peace) organized a demonstration against the “practice of homosexuality and same-sex marriage in Burkina Faso”, opposing a municipal project on HIV/AIDS specifically targeting men who have sex with men, considered a key population in HIV/AIDS policies. In April 2014, Cardinal Philippe Ouedraogo, archbishop of Ouagadougou and president of the Symposium of Episcopal Conferences of Africa and Madagascar made a media appearance. He expressed his concerns about the current social changes that contradict African family values³¹. According to him, “*Christian and African families should rebel against the imperialism of certain lobbies and associations that advocate and want to impose homosexual marriage, sexual libertinism, divorce, etc.*” The Coordination of Islamic Associations of the West, that bring together 40 Muslim associations, also initiated a meeting in September 2015 during which, the wish to “*prohibit and penalize homosexuality and all unnatural sexual deviations*” was expressed to the authorities. The same year, Tahirou Barry, a candidate of the National Renaissance Party (PAREN) in the presidential election, introduced a bill in parliament on behalf of his party to “*prohibit and repress animality, pedophilia and homosexuality*”³². He is

³⁰ https://www.lgbti-era.org/sites/default/files/pdfdocs/Defending_IE_SOGI_UNGA71.pdf

³¹ Guy Aimé EBLOTIE, Au Burkina Faso, le cardinal Ouédraogo s'insurge contre “la culture de la mort” et le mariage homosexuel, La CroixAfrica, 2014: <https://africa.la-croix.com/au-burkina-faso-le-cardinal-ouedraogo-sinsurge-contre-la-culture-de-la-mort-et-le-mariage-homosexuel/>

³² <https://burkina24.com/2015/02/09/le-paren-propose-une-loi-contre-lhomosexualite/>

said to have had the support of the Moogo Naaba, an important traditional authority figure who met with him³³. According to the leaders of this party, LGBTQ+ people are “sick people” who should be treated, and those who want to claim their rights should be “shot in public”³⁴.

2013 through 2015 were pivotal years for anti-LGBTQ+ discourse, with several spontaneous demonstrations and administrative decisions unfavorable to the community. In the city of Ouagadougou, for example, there was a spontaneous march by residents of a neighborhood in response to a UNDP-funded HIV project. The budget allocated to key populations was higher than that of the general population, which created an uproar. In addition, a community organization, Alternatives Burkina, was attacked and ransacked twice, once in 2015 and again in 2020. During the last attack, the offices had to be closed and a new location found.

Most recently, there have been worrying media appearances, including those of the former Minister for the Promotion of Women and Gender, Dr. Nestorine Sangare, and the current Minister for National Education, Professor Stanislas Ouaro, in April 2021. For Dr. Sangare, it is not possible to consider homosexuality as a lifestyle because it goes against Burkinabe values and morals³⁵. For Professor Ouaro: *“The issue of sexuality in schools is a rather serious phenomenon, but especially the attempts of some technical and financial partners who want to get us to accept comprehensive sex education. What they mean by comprehensive is to make us accept homosexuality, and that goes against*

our morals, beliefs and customs. That’s inadmissible”.

In the course of the year, particularly in September 2021, a controversy over a TV series rekindled tensions over sexuality issues. Indeed, individuals captured the image of two women kissing in a soap opera broadcast on national television and relayed it extensively via social media, calling for the resignation of the Director in the name of religious principles. The ministerial decision to replace him in the aftermath can only raise questions. If this decision is related to this event, as the majority of respondents in Burkina Faso seem to think, it shows the stranglehold of religious and traditional leaders on secular issues. More importantly, it is the first time that the government has taken such a decision, sending a message about any attempt to (positively) publicize LGBTQ+ issues.

By all accounts, Burkina Faso does not have as much permanent tension related to LGBTQ+ issues as Senegal or Ghana, but this calm is deceptive. Although the law is silent on homosexuality, legal authorities have the possibility to receive cases of “indecent exposure”. This was the case in April 2021 in Ouagadougou, where two young men were arrested for allegedly having sex near a school. During their hearing, the judge reportedly said: *“So, you are aware that what you are doing is not normal?”*³⁶ Relaxed with the benefit of the doubt, this case is a reminder of the precariousness of the rights of LGBTQ+ people in Burkina Faso. The social context and the lack of a real political will constitute a dangerous mix for the living conditions of LGBTQ+ people in the country.

³³ <https://lefaso.net/spip.php?article63416>

³⁴ Publication of the 2015 Burkina 24 newspaper: <https://www.burkina24.com/2015/11/26/laurent-bado-les-homosexuels-sont-des-malades-quil-faut-soigner/>

³⁵ NetAfrique, March 2021 issue: <https://netafrique.net/burkina-faso-nestorine-sangare-en-guerre-contre-une-transgenre-de-linstitut-goethe-elle-compte-porter-plainte/>

³⁶ <https://www.zoodomail.com/fr/devant-le-tribunal/devant-le-tribunal-deux-homosexuels-comparaissent-pour-outrage-la-pudeur>

3.3 Ghana: When religion and power defy the law

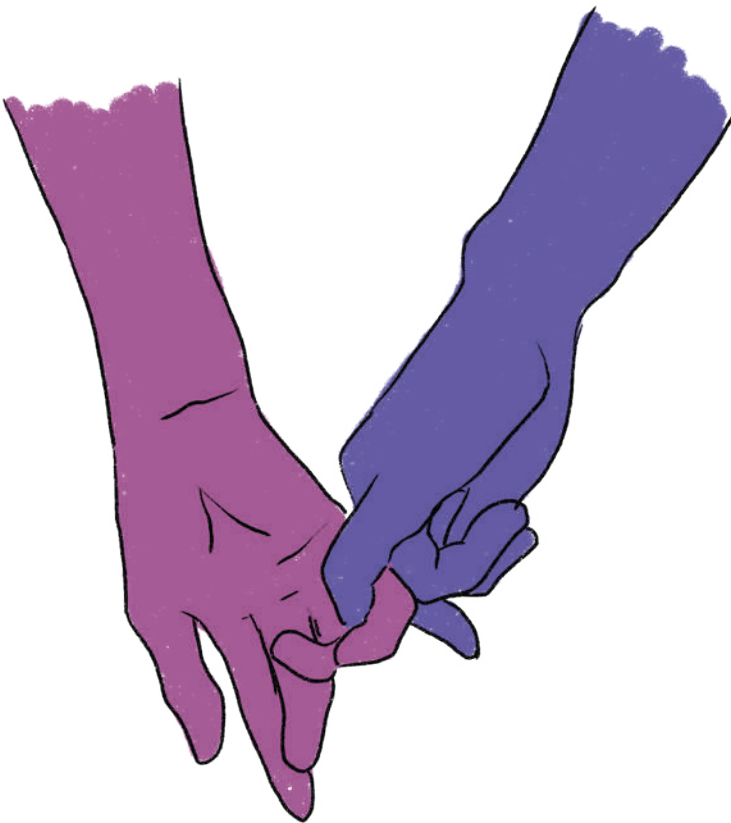
Background

Section 104 (1)(a) of the Ghana Criminal Code (1960), as amended in 2003, prohibits “carnal knowledge against the order of nature” (defined as “sexual intercourse with a person in an unnatural manner”) with another person of sixteen years of age or over with his or her consent. This offense is considered a misdemeanor and carries a maximum penalty of three years imprisonment. In addition, Article 278 on sexual offenses criminalizes acts of “public indecency”. These two legal provisions are often invoked to delegitimize and criminalize same-sex relationships, as well as the expression of a gender identity that does not conform to the gender assigned at birth.

In 2017, Ghana was one of the strongest human rights advocates at the Commission on Human Rights in Geneva (Gemma-Maé Hartley, 2017). Ghana’s record in this commission shows that the country supports and defends civil and political rights. Ghana has co-sponsored nine resolutions on civil and political rights, and has voted in favour of most of the human rights resolutions (against torture and degrading treatment for example, against attacks on human rights defenders, against human trafficking, against violence against women and girls among others).³⁷ In the same year, Ghana co-sponsored the resolution “Protection of the Family: The Role of the Family in Supporting the Protection and Promotion of the Human Rights of Older Persons”, a resolution that indirectly targeted LGBTQ+ rights. As a sponsor, Ghana refused to include language that recognizes the diversity of family forms as requested by the EU and Swiss amendment in the resolution. The Ghanaian state’s position on sexual and gender diversity has since deteriorated considerably, culminating in the discussion of a bill to punish same-sex relationships and to ban LGBTQ+ human rights advocacy.

Major events

It is between 2019 and 2020 that the situation deteriorates considerably, due to four major events that have had an impact both on Ghanaian political life and on the daily lives of LGBTQ+ people: 1) the cancellation of the regional conference of the association Pan Africa ILGA (International Association of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans and Intersex People) that was to take place in the city of Accra; 2) the international meeting of the World Congress of Families that was held for the first time in Africa; 3) the opposition to the government’s proposed comprehensive sex education program; and 4) the introduction of an anti-homosexuality bill in Parliament. The links between these four events are not clear. However, the context that has prevailed



³⁷ Special Report. African States and the UN Human Rights Council in 2017

in Ghana over the past two years may have played a catalytic role.

The announcement of the Pan Africa ILGA (PAI) conference to be held in the course of 2020 caused much controversy in a context already marked by fierce debates on the introduction of comprehensive sex education³⁸. ILGA had chosen Ghana for its role in pan-African ideology. The announcement of the conference provoked a public outcry from both religious and political circles, urging the Ghanaian state to act and suspend such an undertaking as an affront to Ghanaian and pan-African values. The conference was indeed suspended by PAI, officially for reasons related to the COVID-19 health crisis. However, there is no doubt that its holding would have been seriously compromised in view of the high political and media tension caused by the announcement of the conference.

It must be said that the World Congress of Families, which was held in Ghana for the first time in 2019, has created a climate conducive to the postponement of the PAI conference. One might even wonder whether Ghana was chosen precisely to challenge PAI. The World Congress of Families was used as a platform for all kinds of rhetoric against LGBTQ+ rights and even against women's rights; but it was also used as a lever to amplify opposition to the Comprehensive Sexuality Education program, which many faith-based groups accused of being "satanic" and an attempt to impose a "gay agenda" by the "LGBT lobby". The World Congress of Families brought together political authorities, media, public figures and academics with the aim of positioning Ghana as a key player in the global movement to reinstate heteronormativity and the patriarchal family at the center of society. The central message of the conference was family-centered: "*Strong*

families create strong societies". Throughout the conference, the opposition to a "gay agenda" that the West wants to impose on the world in order to depopulate nations and destroy the family was repeated at will. The events that followed the conference show an unprecedented assault on LGBTQ+ people.

On February 20th 2021, the headquarters of LGBT+ Rights Ghana was attacked and closed down shortly after the organization's inauguration in January. The group faced an outpouring of hatred from the Ghanaian media as well as from religious and political leaders after information about the center's activities was shared on social media. Traditional leaders threatened to close the center. Led by figures such as Moses Foh Amoaning, the Catholic Bishops of Ghana organized a press conference to force the government not to succumb to pressure to legitimize LGBTQ+ rights in Ghana. The authorities relented and the police closed the center's premises in February 2021.

In May 2021, 21 people who had gathered in the city of Ho to hold a conference on LGBTQ+ rights were arrested and held in prison for three weeks. This event led to a strong online mobilization to demand the release of these activists with the hashtag *#ReleaseThe21*. It also created a lot of tension within community led organizations, which had to review their work plan and strategies.

On August 2nd, the *Ghana Sexual Rights and Family Values Promotion Bill 2021*³⁹ was introduced in Parliament and is currently being debated by legislators. The bill is being carried by a committee of 8 MPs, 7 of whom are from two opposition parties, and the spokesperson for the ruling party: Samuel Nartey George, MP, Ningo-Prampram, Emmanuel Bedzrah, MP, Ho West, and

³⁸ Juliana Martinez et al. « Manufacturing Moral Panic: Weaponizing Children to Undermine Gender Justice and Human Rights » (Elevate Children Funders Group/Global Philanthropy Project, mars 2021).

³⁹ <https://www.parliament.gh/epanel/docs/bills/Promotion%20of%20Proper%20Human%20Sexual%20Rights%20and%20Ghanaian%20Family%20Values%20Bill,%202021.pdf#viewer.action=download>

Samuel Okudzeto Ablakwa, North Tongu, all members of the National Democratic Congress (NDC) parliamentary minority; the members of the New Patriotic Party (NPP) parliamentary majority are Andy Appiah Kubi from Asante Akim North district, John Ntim Fordjour from Assin South district, and Kwaku Asante-Boateng from Asante Akim South district.

Under the bill, public displays of same-sex affection and cross-dressing would be punishable by imprisonment. It would be illegal to set up LGBTQ+ organizations or disseminate information perceived to support LGBTQ+ people or rights. Certain types of health care would be prohibited and “conversion therapy” could be mandatory. It would even be illegal to identify as LGBTQ+ and advocacy for LGBTQ+ rights could result in a 5-10 year prison sentence. Same-sex marriage and adoption by same-sex couples would also be banned. The proposed law will even criminalize LGBTQ+ advocacy while imposing longer prison sentences for same-sex relationships and their advocates, and any person non-reporting a person for being LGBTQ+. The scope of this bill is considerable and poses a clear danger to the majority of civil society organizations working on issues of sexual and reproductive rights.

In the media, countless biased and sensational articles continue to put gay people at risk. These articles also feature “gay converts” who speak repentantly, in an effort to protect themselves, but who in the process promote the churches’ growing power.

The rise of Christian religious radicalism

Like Senegal and Burkina Faso, Ghana is a fairly religious country (73% Christian). Although Christianity is not the only religion in the country (17.5% Muslims), it is in fact considered the national religion to the extent that many leaders associate African values with Christian values (Bob-Milliar &Lauterbach, 2018)⁴⁰.

In March 2021, Christian clerics in Ghana organized a national day of prayer against homosexuality⁴¹. The prayer was organised by the National Coalition for Proper Human Sexual Rights and Family Values, in collaboration with the Ghana Christian Council and other Christian bodies such as the Ghana Pentecostal and Charismatic Council (GPCC), the Ghana Catholic Bishops’ Conference (GCBC), the Ghana Charismatic Bishops’ Conference (GCBC), the National Association of Charismatic and Christian Churches (NACCC), and several other churches and Christian organizations in Ghana.

A recent report on gender justice and human rights in Peru, Bulgaria and Ghana⁴² details extensively how faith groups are forming alliances across religious differences and using child (and family) protection rhetoric to create moral panic among the population, thereby pushing them to oppose human rights discourses, particularly those related to gender justice. The report highlights how these groups advocate for a certain worldview and aggregate different political actors in a movement that leaves little

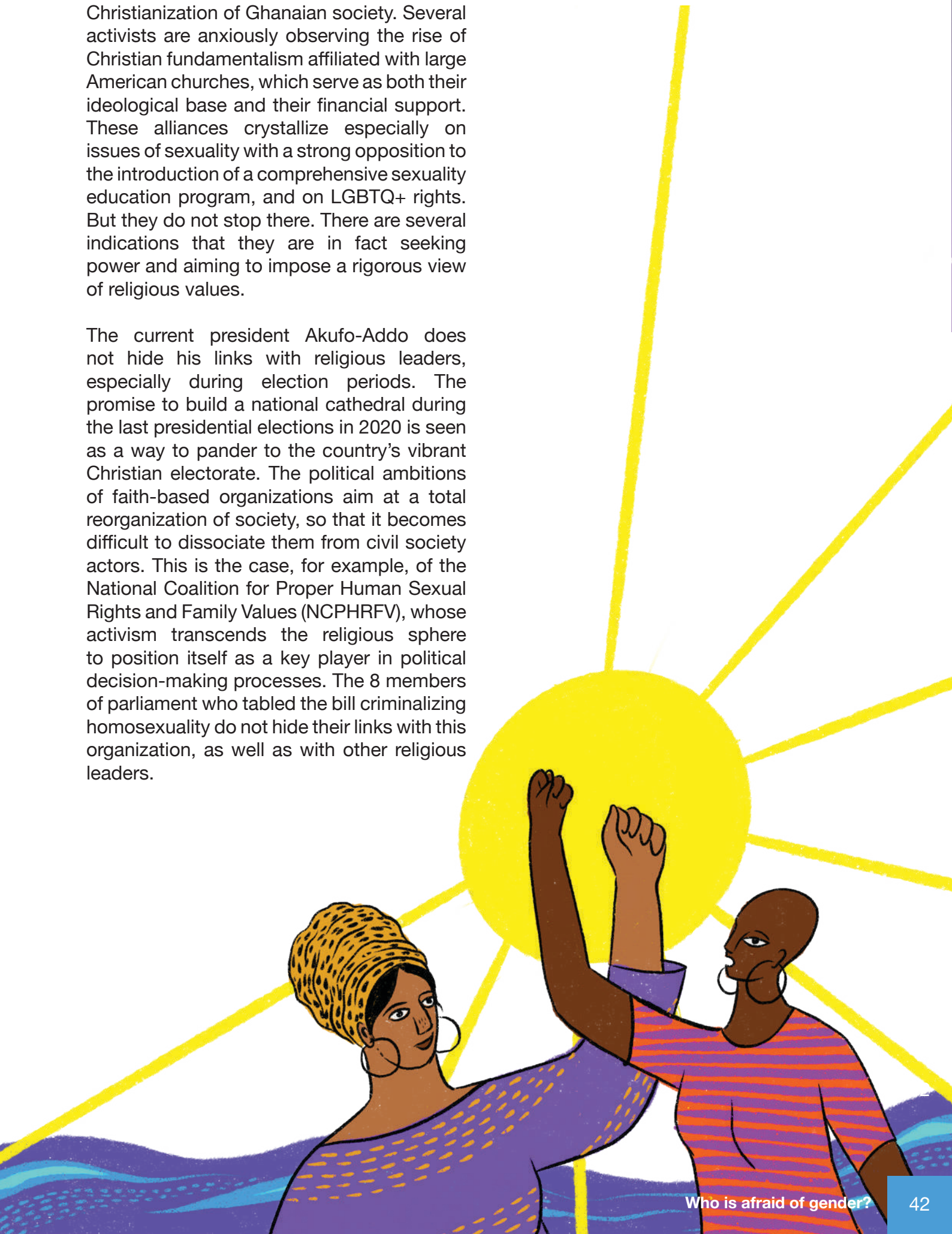
⁴⁰ Karen Lauterbach et George M Bob-Miliar. « The Politics of a National Cathedral in Ghana: A symbol of a Corrupted Government, or Reaching Wakanda? », LSE Religion and Global Society Blog, 2019. [https://teol.ku.dk/cas/publications/list_of_publications/publication_list/?pure=en%2Fpublications%2Fthe-politics-of-a-national-cathedral-in-ghana-a-symbol-of-a-corrupted-government-or-reaching-wakanda\(d8638061-12af-4477-8a86-28552c14ec3b\)%2Fexport.html](https://teol.ku.dk/cas/publications/list_of_publications/publication_list/?pure=en%2Fpublications%2Fthe-politics-of-a-national-cathedral-in-ghana-a-symbol-of-a-corrupted-government-or-reaching-wakanda(d8638061-12af-4477-8a86-28552c14ec3b)%2Fexport.html)

⁴¹ <http://saharareporters.com/2021/03/23/christian-clerics-ghana-organise-national-prayer-against-same-sex-union>

⁴² Juliana Martinez et al. « Manufacturing Moral Panic: Weaponizing Children to Undermine Gender Justice and Human Rights » (Elevate Children Funders Group/Global Philanthropy Project, march 2021).

room for deliberation and leads to a Christianization of Ghanaian society. Several activists are anxiously observing the rise of Christian fundamentalism affiliated with large American churches, which serve as both their ideological base and their financial support. These alliances crystallize especially on issues of sexuality with a strong opposition to the introduction of a comprehensive sexuality education program, and on LGBTQ+ rights. But they do not stop there. There are several indications that they are in fact seeking power and aiming to impose a rigorous view of religious values.

The current president Akufo-Addo does not hide his links with religious leaders, especially during election periods. The promise to build a national cathedral during the last presidential elections in 2020 is seen as a way to pander to the country's vibrant Christian electorate. The political ambitions of faith-based organizations aim at a total reorganization of society, so that it becomes difficult to dissociate them from civil society actors. This is the case, for example, of the National Coalition for Proper Human Sexual Rights and Family Values (NCPHRFV), whose activism transcends the religious sphere to position itself as a key player in political decision-making processes. The 8 members of parliament who tabled the bill criminalizing homosexuality do not hide their links with this organization, as well as with other religious leaders.



Summary

In Ghana, Senegal and Burkina Faso, constitutional provisions in all three countries guarantee respect for the human rights of all citizens. However, hostility towards LGBTQ+ people is on the rise, amplified by conservative and religious discourse and deliberate stigmatizing media coverage. In each of these countries, there has been at least one public anti-gay demonstration in the last 10 years, which has had an impact on the daily lives of LGBTQ+ people.

While the forms of opposition are similar, there are however certain differences specific to each context. These specificities take into account the political context in which these anti-gay demonstrations emerge, but also the trajectories of the various actors opposed to what they call the Western gay lobby. It is clear that the main arguments put forward to oppose the recognition of human rights for LGBTQ+ people are religious and cultural arguments. The growing importance of these discourses and the actors who support them show the political ambition behind this movement: social control. This control is achieved through access to the highest decision making spheres (the state). But to achieve this, it is necessary to gain a certain political legitimacy. This is why they invest in other public sectors, starting with the influence and even the control of the education system.

This rather bleak picture should not obscure the fact that in each of the three countries, LGBTQ+ activists and their allies are mobilizing, and resistance initiatives are gradually being organized and bearing some encouraging fruit.

PART 4. “IT’S BECAUSE YOU ARE ALIVE THAT YOU CAN FIGHT”: RESISTING AND LOOKING AHEAD

4.1 Resisting

The research identified several strategies for resisting anti-gender politics and campaigns. The focus is on traditional strategies such as community building, communication, and advocacy, but also on more innovative strategies such as self-defense through direct action.

Staying alive

In such hostile situations, the first instinct is often to keep a low profile. This is what many community members choose to do individually. As N., who was supported by her peers during the workshop, explained: “*You have to adapt your safety measures because you have to stay alive to fight*”. Staying alive, a resistance strategy. Continuing to hold on despite the attacks. The leaders interviewed are determined to live and to prove to the world that they exist and are neither an import from the West, nor an abomination: “*We are here, we continue to exist*”. As a proof, almost all community associations are still functional, although with reduced organizational capacities. In the face of attacks, organizations take measures to adjust: “*we have changed the way we operate or even communicate. We have adopted a strategic communication approach to get our message across*”.

“ Staying alive, a resistance strategy ”

Strengthening community ties

One way to ensure safety is to form networks or collectives in order to pool skills and capacities for action. In every country, there is at least one network of LGBTQ+ organizations.

In Burkina Faso: The collective Arc-en-ciel Burkina brings together LGBTQ+ organizations and drug users. The collective was born out of frustration and a desire to flourish within the community. “*We were treated like sub-persons within HIV/AIDS networks. With the least consideration and resources possible. We said no, we will organize ourselves*”. The collective has succeeded in organizing at-home medical visits for people in the community who need them. These visits are provided by health professionals, a doctor and two nurses. There is also the *Solidarity Coalition* network, which brings together transgender organizations. Lastly, we note the presence of the Burkinabe coalition of human rights defenders which, on several occasions, has succeeded in providing shelter to LGBTQ+ people rejected by their families.

In Senegal, in addition to G21, which brings together key populations engaged in the fight against HIV/AIDS, there is *Collectif Free Senegal*⁴³, which was founded in August 2020 in the aftermath of a violent attack on two gay men in the city of Thies. The collective aims to help Senegalese LGBTQ+ youth at risk and has, among other things, opened a shelter for these youth. Its actions have an international scope (open letters to Presidents, Ministers, Ambassadors, facilitation of asylum requests, etc.).

⁴³ <https://www.collectif-free-senegal.org/>

In Ghana, given the escalation of tensions in recent months, activists have formed *Coalition for Support* to strategically organize in order to ensure the safety of people in the community, to calm the debate and to block the bill. The coalition is made up of several associations working for sexual and reproductive rights, human rights, women's rights, etc. During a two-day work session, the coalition was able to put together a documentation plan with three components: health, economy and human rights. This plan documents the impact of anti-gender policies on LGBTQ+ people and highlights the unconstitutional nature of the proposed legislation. It has been distributed to several organizations and civil society leaders and served as the basis for a memorandum⁴⁴ submitted to Parliament against the proposed anti-gay bill.

Alliances are also formed with other civil society actors, although these are few in number and rarely take a supportive stance in highly sensitive situations:

"We are victims of swindling by civil society actors. They make money on our backs. Today, everyone wants to protect the rights of sexual minorities, but as soon as there is the slightest issue, they are all silent. We must no longer allow people to continue this"
(C. Senegal).

This observation must be put into perspective in Ghana where for the first time, human rights organizations have formally spoken out on the unconstitutionality of the anti-LGBTQ+ bill, as well as on its implications in terms of freedom of assembly and association.

However, there is a slight divide between mobilizations in the Anglo-saxon context and mobilizations in the Francophone context. Indeed, the former have a more direct relationship with the government,

which they confront publicly, while the latter are somewhat more moderate. Neither in Senegal nor in Burkina Faso has there been a memorandum addressed to parliament, let alone a public statement by human rights defenders on the issue of homosexuality, whereas in Ghana, the state of mobilization and the support of civil society organizations are more pronounced.

“ **There is a slight divide between mobilizations in the Anglo-saxon context and mobilizations in the Francophone context. Indeed, the former have a more direct relationship with the government, which they confront publicly, while the latter are somewhat more moderate.** ”



⁴⁴ <https://cddgh.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/10/ANTILGBT-BILL-PRESS-STATEMENT.FINAL-1.pdf>

Building internal capacity and expertise

In the survey, 84% of respondents expressed frustration with media coverage of LGBTQ+ issues in their country. 97% felt that political leaders promote hate speech and have no understanding of the LGBTQ+ experience. However, within the community, capacity building activities are ongoing: “*There is a real need*”. As much as they contribute to the professionalization of LGBTQ+ organizations, these activities also aim at the protection, development and well-being of LGBTQ+ people. Participants mentioned the LILO (*Looking-In, Looking-Out*) strategy training, which is an advocacy strategy already underway in Senegal and Burkina Faso. This strategy has been initiated with external actors such as journalists, law enforcement officers, healthcare personnel, parliamentarians, etc. It consists of a series of workshops that aim to create change in attitude by bringing out empathy towards others. This strategy can be adapted to any profile.

Training in web media and digital security is also organized to protect community members on digital networks, and to enable them to use these tools to organize and communicate efficiently on issues that concern them. Human rights and physical security trainings have also been increased to give community members the tools to defend themselves against threats from the police, social media, the street, family, etc. Capacity building is also aimed at outsiders such as journalists, law enforcement officers, legal personnel, or city hall staff.

Online Mobilizations

After the arrest of the 21 activists participating in a training workshop in the city of Ho in Ghana, several organizations called for their release using the hashtags **#ReleaseThe21** and **#JusticeForTheHo21**. A hashtag is a label, a tool for identifying and referencing an idea, an event or a brand. It is useful to measure the public reach of an event. For example, the hashtag **#MeToo** was the beginning of a historic moment in the denunciation of gender-based violence in the world. **#ReleaseThe21** was one of the most popular hashtags in Ghana. The popularity of **#KillTheBill**, currently underway, is a testament to the vibrancy of online mobilizations as a strategy for fighting back against anti-gender politics. Some feminist and other advocacy groups, both in the diaspora and in Ghana, have come together to denounce the bill. Groups such as *Silent Majority Ghana* and *Young Feminist Forum*, whose members are both from the diaspora and in the country, have



used social media to amplify the voices and collective action of sexual and gender minorities silenced by an oppressive state, religious elite and media landscape. They have written solidarity statements and helped organize protests, both digitally and in person, in various countries. Online, several feminists are speaking out against the bill and its supporters. Many Ghanaians in the diaspora have also organized collectively to write articles and hold protests in Harlem, New York, Oakland and London. In Ghana, academics, lawyers, and professors such as Anthony Akoto Ampaw, Takyiwaa Manuh, H Kwasi Prempeh, Kwame Karikari and Audrey Gadzekpo, etc have come together to oppose the bill. The use of digital tools is therefore an essential means of mobilization and communication.

Moreover, information circulates more quickly thanks to the creation of whatsapp groups. In all three countries, unlike the early days of associative mobilization when groups accepted everyone, access to these groups is now strongly conditioned on the sponsorship of a member, for obvious reasons of digital security:

“If someone is in this group, it’s because they went through someone who is already in the group and whom they know personally. It’s to avoid being spied on” (N, Senegal).

Emergency responses

Emergency responses involve providing refuge to people under the threat of arrest or detention. For example, several people have been able to leave their city or even the country thanks to a network of solidarity between community leaders. Some organizations also help people in danger leave the country. In a few (rare) cases, they

have been able to benefit from institutional support, as was the case with the French consulate in Burkina Faso. Indeed, a person interviewed for a TV program produced by the channel TV5 Monde had been identified and their information disclosed on social media. Given the serious threats that this represented for their life and the pressure from *Solidarity Coalition*, they were able to obtain a visa and leave the country.

Infiltration

As we have seen in Senegal, we are witnessing the institutionalization of an anti-LGBT movement with groups that are professionalizing to achieve their goals. This is the case of *Nitou Deug*, the *Safinatou Amal* movement and *And Samm Jikko Yi*. Because the activities of these anti-LGBT groups sometimes require the contribution of members, members of the LGBTQ+ community in Senegal have managed to infiltrate these organizations. They are thus integrated into whatsapp groups where they are informed of what is going on and can alert their peers when needed.

“With Nitou Deug, for example, which specializes in tracking down gays online, generally when they track down, they send a message to the group [Whatsapp, editor’s note]. When we see that a person is targeted, we inform them and tell them not to pick up the phone or reply if someone sends them a message” (N. Senegal)

Also in Ghana, a member of the LGBTQ+ community has infiltrated the World Conference of Families despite the high security barriers, and has written a blog about this experience⁴⁵.

⁴⁵ <https://www.opendemocracy.net/en/5050/god-has-a-new-africa-undercover-in-a-us-led-anti-lgbt-hate-movement/>

Counter-attacking

*“It is necessary that LGBTQ+ leaders take responsibility and stop being executors”
(B. Senegal)*

In one year, *Collectif Free Senegal* has written about twenty letters to foreign consular authorities to denounce anti-gay leaders and to expose the threat that these people represent for the lives of many people. These letters have been relatively successful given the fact that some of these leaders have been refused visas for the Schengen area. This is the case of *Jamra’s* leaders, Mame Mactar Gueye and his brother, who did not obtain a visa from France. The president of the *Nitou Deug* movement was also denied a visa.



4.2 Looking Ahead: Priority Areas of Support

A number of suggestions were made during the course of the study, whether through the interviews, the survey or the deliberative workshop. These have been grouped into five major areas: mental health, family mediation, solidarity between organizations, access to services, and decriminalization. To these five main areas, we can add social dialogue.

Mental health

The general level of anxiety is alarming. Living in fear of everything (of being exposed, rejected, assaulted, or imprisoned), loneliness, shame, and denial make up a difficult situation that necessarily affects mental health. Informal initiatives of educational talks or discussion groups already exist, but they are embryonic, not systematic and the needs are considerable. The first avenue to explore would be to conduct a study on the mental health of LGBTQ+ populations to understand the issues they face, and provide concrete responses. At the same time, professionals could provide psychological support and follow-ups to members of the community. A permanent hotline could also be provided as a space for community members to be listened to.

“ The first avenue to explore would be to conduct a study on the mental health of LGBTQ+ populations to understand the issues they face, and provide concrete responses. “

Family mediation

Family rejection was cited as the greatest fear by respondents. Some even considered suicide as a result of family rejection. In general, this rejection plunges the victim into a circle of extreme precariousness. Given the importance of family AND community ties in the three contexts, there is no doubt that action at the family level will have a considerable impact on the well-being, security and sense of safety of LGBTQ+ people, especially the youngest. We propose that the development of a family mediation plan be considered for LGBTQ+ organizations, but also for civil society organizations. At the same time, LGBTQ+ organizations could create family mediation units with LGBTQ+ allies. This is already done informally, but would benefit from being institutionalized in the long run.

“ We propose that the development of a family mediation plan be considered for LGBTQ+ organizations, but also for civil society organizations. “



Solidarity and community involvement

LGBTQ+ leaders do not feel sufficiently supported by the civil society organizations they work with. Most of the existing networks (outside of the HIV/AIDS focus) are new and need both financial and material support. These resources could be used to strengthen the coordination of actions, recruit qualified human resources capable of taking action and taking a public stand for LGBTQ+ rights when they are under attack. Levels of solidarity vary greatly depending on the context and need to be improved. This could include the development of joint collaborative projects on issues such as “social inequalities”, “peace and security initiatives” or “sexual violence”.

Access to services

In view of the discrimination or fear of discrimination reported - discrimination that sometimes leads to death - we believe that access to basic social services is a major avenue to be strengthened. Beyond a change of mentality in society, which takes time and is unlikely to happen in the short term, what community members want is at least to be able to access basic services. The need to train health providers in non-discriminatory care is shared among many. Not all LGBTQ+ people’s health needs are related to their gender identity and/or sexual orientation.

“ **The need to train health providers in non-discriminatory care is shared among many.** ”



However, staff are discriminatory once they understand who they are dealing with. This creates profound health inequalities. Improving the quality of services at the health system level will have an impact on the whole chain of care, from central to local level, and LGBTQ+ people will feel safer accessing other existing services. While this strategy is time-consuming and costly because it involves strengthening an entire health system that is failing and burdensome for most users, technical partners supporting health reforms (but also urban and food reforms) should include LGBTQ+ issues in their interventions. When we talk about access to services, we do not only refer to health, but also to justice. The Sustainable Development Goals are a great tool for the inclusion of LGBTQ+ people in various national policies and programs, and it is the mandate of international partners to insist on this with their country recipients. With regard to access to health services specifically, it is necessary to create and/or strengthen community health centers, extending the supply of care not only to other cities, but also to other health issues beyond HIV/AIDS and sexual health (i.e mental health, addictions, etc.).

“**Technical partners supporting health reforms (but also urban and food reforms) should include LGBTQ+ issues in their interventions.**”

The law

“**We must not tire of reminding people of the fundamental principles of the law.**”

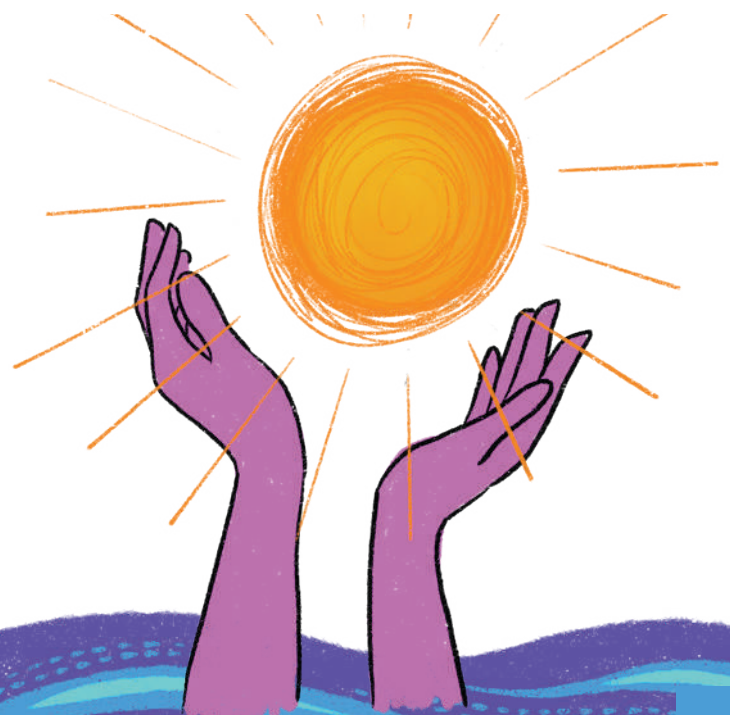
“*We have lost the public opinion battle.*”

This statement by an LGBTQ+ leader from Burkina Faso echoes the sentiment of the vast majority of respondents involved in this study. Far from signifying discouragement or the end of the struggle, it shows that the strategies used should take into account the extreme unpopularity of the homosexuality issue.

“*Confrontation is useless. It's a waste of time*”
(G, Sénégal).

In Ghana, for example, some community leaders believe that the damage caused by the debates on the anti-gay bill is considerable and will produce negative effects in the long term, whether the law is passed or not.

If the battle in the court of public opinion is difficult because of the demagogic strategies of political and religious leaders, resorting to the law to protect victims and prevent abuses



“ **In Senegal for example, three young men were sentenced to one month in prison and a fine for assault and battery... This is the first time that homophobic acts have been condemned by the court, even though the climate remains very hostile.** ”

is necessary. **We must not tire of reminding people of the fundamental principles of the law. The right to life. The right to health. The right to dignity. The right to privacy. These rights apply to everyone and are enshrined in the constitution.** That is why LGBTQ+ people should not only be educated on legal issues at the national level, but also on existing legal avenues at the international level. In other words, through lawsuits, petitions, open letters, hearings at the national and international level, it is possible to achieve positive results. In Senegal for example, three young men were sentenced to one month in prison and a fine for assault and battery. They had physically assaulted two other young men in their neighborhood whom they accused of being homosexuals. The latter filed a complaint and won their case. This is the first time that homophobic acts have been condemned by the court, even though the climate remains very hostile. This conviction shows that recourse to the law is possible - provided that it is accessible - and the political context is decisive in allowing debates and the expression of counter-arguments. The recent events in Ghana and Senegal illustrate well the complexity of a democratic system instrumentalized for the reinforcement of a traditional authoritarian sexual order instead of a tool of emancipation for all.

Social dialogue

Several respondents highlighted the issue of awareness and communication as a major challenge in the struggle for gender justice. We believe that social dialogue is an interesting avenue that deserves attention. This would allow for a calm discussion on an issue that is often debated in a unidirectional mode without the possibility of counter-arguments. This dialogue could begin in municipal councils, which are the political units closest to the people. It would involve bringing together representatives of political parties, associations, unions, etc., identified beforehand, with LGBTQ+ leaders and allies. This is already done in the HIV/AIDS field, which means that it is possible to extend this model to other issues such as security in the city or neighborhood, housing, access to basic public services.



CONCLUSION

The purpose of this study was to provide insight into the rise of attacks on LGBTQ+ organizations and individuals in West Africa. Using Ghana, Burkina Faso and Senegal as case studies, we attempted to highlight the subtleties of the different contexts and understandings of “gender ideology.” This concept is still relatively vague, perhaps because of the lack of gender studies, and the weight of the gender approach in development programs. We have mapped out actors opposed to an inclusive vision of gender and developed several avenues for reflection and action to deal with the rise of anti-gender politics. This study evidently presents time constraints. Several events are underway in the three countries, and the outcome of the proposed legislation in Ghana will be critical. Anti-gender politics and violence against LGBTQ+ people are part of an ongoing process and call for further study, mobilization and advocacy. The findings presented in this report are the reflection of a collaborative and participatory work rooted in the experience of team members. Indeed, as women, feminists and queer people, this report is a call to action, an invitation to all justice-minded people, but especially to all human rights actors, to work together to defend human dignity and create a culture of peace and justice.



APPENDIX

1. Interview guides

A. For actors identified as anti-gender

1. Can you introduce yourself? (background, functions, motivations)
2. What do you think about the situation of women in your country?
3. Have you ever heard of gender ideology or gender theory? If so, what is your understanding of this term?
4. In your opinion, should women be treated in the same way as men?
5. Have you organized or participated in any activities related to gender issues? If so, which ones and with what objectives?
6. For these activities, have you benefited from local, national or international partners? If yes, which ones?
7. If you had the power to decide how gender issues should be addressed in our country, what would you do? What would be your priorities?
8. We hear more and more about sexual minorities or LGBT people when we talk about gender issues. Have you ever heard of sexual minorities? What do you think it refers to?
9. How do you think the issue of LGBT people should be addressed?
10. Do you have a strategy to respond to this phenomenon? Have you already organized any activities in this respect? How do you intend to slow down this phenomenon?

B. For actors identified as pro-gender

1. Can you introduce yourself? (Background, functions, motivations)
2. What do you think about the situation of women in your country?
3. What do you think about the situation of sexual minorities or LGBTQ people?
4. Have you ever heard of gender theory or gender ideology? What is your understanding of this theory?
5. Have you organized or participated in any activities related to gender and sexuality issues? If so, which ones and with what objectives?
6. Have you benefited from local, national or international partners? If yes, which ones?
7. Are you aware of any public events, laws or activities against women's rights and sexual rights?
8. In your opinion, what are the main challenges facing women and LGBT people in our country?
9. At a community and strategic level, what do you think can be done to address anti-gender mobilisations?
10. If you had the power to decide how gender issues should be addressed in our country, what would you do? What would be your priorities?

2. Standardized Survey

A. Personal details

1. How old are you ? (give exact age)
2. How do you identify your gender ? (male, female, trans, non-binary, queer, intersex)
3. How do you identify your sexuality ? (lesbian, gay, bisexual, queer, other)
4. What is your religion, if any? (non religious, traditionalist, Catholic, Muslim, other)
5. What is your highest level of education? (primary school, secondary school, college/ university, other)
6. A. What is your living arrangement ? (I live alone - With a flatmate - With family members - With my partner - I'm homeless - Other)
B. Do you have a job that provides you with an income? (No, I am a student - No I am unemployed - I have an income but irregular - I have a regular income)

B. Gender: ideology, theory, campaign, etc.

7. Have you ever heard of gender ideology? yes/no
8. What do you think it is? Tick the right answers (It is a body of research on gender - It is a way of thinking that denies sexual differences and encourages homosexuality - In reality, gender ideology does not exist. It's a made up phrase to stigmatize research on women and minorities - I have no idea)
9. If yes, how often do you hear about it? (once - more than once - once in a while - very often - all the time)?
10. Through which channels did you hear about it (Radio - TV - Social media - Press - Friends - Other)
11. How would you rate the level of hostility towards LGBTQ+ people in your country? (Low - High - Extremely high)
12. Do you think there is a campaign against women's rights in your country? (yes/no)
13. Do you think there is a campaign against LGBT people? (yes/no)
14. If yes, can you identify the main actors or events in this campaign?
15. Can you name an activist, journalist, religious or traditional leader who writes/speaks positively about LGBT+ people?
16. A. Have public statements and actions against sexual and gender rights had an impact on your life? yes/no/don't know
B. If yes, how?
17. A. Has your activism been affected?
B. If yes, how?

C. Personal and collective security

18. How open are you about your identity/orientation? (No one else knows - Only a few people around me know - Everyone knows)
19. In the past year, how often (if ever) have you been personally discriminated against or harassed? (Once or twice - A few times - Regularly - Never)
20. If you have been harassed or discriminated against, do you think that any of these incidents or attacks were motivated by your gender or sexual orientation? (no / yes / don't know)
21. Are you afraid of being discriminated against because of your sexual orientation or gender identity? (yes/ no)
22. Has your sexual orientation ever made you feel unsafe walking around your neighborhood or afraid of crime in your own home?
23. Has your gender identity or expression ever made you feel unsafe walking around your neighborhood or fearing crime in your own home?
24. Do you think that incidents against LGBTQ+ people have increased in recent years? (no, not at all - yes, a little - yes, a lot - yes, considerably)
25. In your opinion, for what reasons have these incidents increased?
26. Please indicate whether the following things are worse or better now than they were a few years ago, or whether they are about the same: (Much worse - Worse - Same - Much better - Don't know)
 - Your ability to get medical care when you need it
 - Your personal safety from crime and violence
 - The effectiveness of government in meeting educational needs
 - The ability of the general population to get help from the police when needed
 - The ability of ordinary people to get help from the government to solve their problems or those of their community
 - How well political leaders listen to what ordinary people have to say
 - How religious leaders or religion affects everyday life
 - Equal opportunities and treatment for women
 - Inclusion of LGBTQ+ people
27. Have you been a victim of verbal or physical assault in the last 12 months? yes/no
28. If you were a victim of assault in the last 12 months, did you seek medical attention or report to the police? (No, neither - Yes, I sought medical attention - Yes, I reported to the police)
29. If you did not report an assault or an incident of discrimination, what was the reason for this? (Did not think the offense was serious enough - Did not trust the police; Did not trust the medical staff - Fear of retaliation - I was not a victim - Other reasons)
30. In general, when dealing with administrative officials (private sector/public sector), how respectful do you think they are of you? (Not at all - A little - No more, no less - A lot - Don't know)
31. In general, when dealing with administrative staff (private/public sector), do you think they treat you the same or worse than other people? (Much worse - Worse - Same - Better - Don't know)

32. If you are treated badly by civil servants, do you think it is related to your sexual orientation, gender identity or expression? (no, yes, don't know)
33. Do you think public officials and other social leaders understand the issues faced by LGBTQ+ people? (Not at all - A little - They know very well - Don't know)
34. Do you think that public officials and social, religious and media leaders encourage hate speech against LGBTQ+ persons? (no, yes, don't know)
35. Would you say that the coverage of LGBTQ+ people in the media is : (positive, negative, neutral)
36. What is your greatest fear as an LGBTQ+ person living in this country?
37. What is your greatest hope as an LGBTQ+ person living in this country?
38. In which country do you live? (Senegal, Burkina Faso, Ghana)





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