

Anti-Homosexuality Bill Threatens MSM Access to Health Services

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Problem

In February 2014, Uganda's Parliament passed and signed into law the Anti-Homosexuality Act. Although annulled due to technicality, the speculation of its reintroduction in October 2019 led to a spike in violence and arrests against LGBTQ communities. The reintroduction of the Act would reinforce and sanction continued stigma and discrimination (S&D) against LGBTQ people, and potentially further threaten health-seeking behavior. This evaluation examines MSM experience with S&D and knowledge of this bill.

Response

The JSI-led USAID RHITES-N, Lango project used project and qualitative data from focus group discussions with 33 MSM and interviews with seven peer leaders to document S&D experiences across the Lango sub-region. Participants identified ways to improve MSM health service delivery in the event that the bill was reintroduced and approved.

“I cannot easily discuss all my medical concerns with health care providers.”

- “I’m comfortable here. I’d rather receive my care from the community provided by other peers, if possible.”
- “I feel like everybody knows or suspects me, I’d rather keep indoors.”
- “I keep moving and shifting my residence for my safety.”
- “I am better off on the move.”

Results

MSM prefer **community-based approaches** to care through drop-in centers, routine camps, peers, and already-identified LGBTQ-friendly health care providers. Peer leaders **expressed fear of being arrested** and reported an increased suspicion of client activities from health care workers.

Conclusion

MSM seeking health services in Lango experience a high level of S&D. **The Anti-Homosexuality Bill, if passed, will increase institutional barriers to access and continuity of health care services for the LGBTQ population.**