



# ***Voice and Choice Summit 2026-***

Change Strategies-Strategic Litigation  
Category

**Namibia: Dismantling Harmful social and cultural  
Narratives towards the LGBTIQ+ community**

# Synopsis– brief overview what this is about



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<b>Organisation</b>	Women's Leadership Centre
<b>Country</b>	Namibia
<b>Category/ sub category</b>	Communication and outreach
<b>Summary</b>	Namibia: Dismantling Harmful social and cultural Narratives towards the LGBTQI+ community through activism using Film and poetry.

# WLC

Women's Leadership Centre

Programme:

LESBIAN EMPOWERMENT  
PROGRAMME

Country:

NAMIBIA

Towns where the strategy was implemented:

WITVLEI

WALVIS BAY

KEETMANSHOOP

TSUMEB

OTJIWARONGO

Focus on rural and semi-urban communities where LGBTIQ+ people face higher levels of stigma and isolation.

## Background



# Background

## The problem we found was:

LBQ women in many Namibian communities' face:

Sexual Violence and discrimination

Hate speech and harmful stereotypes

Family rejection and social isolation

Forced marriages

GBV unrecognised in same sex partners

Mental health

The invisibility of LBQ women's sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR).

*After the High Court ruling on the sodomy law, public backlash intensified, increasing hostility towards LGBTIQ+ people.*



# Background

## NO SAFE SPACES (Isolation/Rejection)

### LBQ women in Otjiwarongo

*From left to right*

Pia, Antolin , Taleni and Mildred.

Quote Antolin:

*It hurt when my own mother rejected me, but I am happy when I am in a relationship with a women.*

*From left to right*

Rose, Delmocha, Grace , Taleni and Nasiefa

Quote Delmocha:

*I will never make my son feel*

*Rejected, even though that's how my family makes me feel right now.*



# Background

## Public event in Keepmanshoop



***Ouma Adelheid : My son was chased out of the home over 20 years ago due to family pressure. I wish I had chosen him over fear. If I could see him again, I would tell him he is loved.***

## Community Advocacy and Research meeting in Tsumeb.



***Quote Mee Maria : I choose to love all three of my queer kids because my own mother rejected me.***

# Background

## The strategy focused on:

Violence and discrimination against LBQ women

Harmful community narratives about sexual diversity

Lack of safe spaces for LBQ women

Community misinformation, shame and fear towards LGBTIQ+ people

Isolation of rural LBQ women



# Background

## The key objectives:

- Create safe spaces for LBQ women
- Build the confidence, leadership and feminist consciousness
- Amplify LBQ voices through creative expression
- Engage families and communities in dialogue
- Challenge harmful narratives and stigma



# Communication strategies employed

The programme used a **community-based activism approach** that focused on:

Dialogue with families and community members.

*“mama do not carry my shame I will carry it for the both of us, protect me with a cloud of love for I carry our shame already ”*



# Communication strategies employed part 2

**Storytelling and lived experiences**

**Creative engagement to build empathy**

**Grassroots leadership by LBQ women**

The goal was to transform attitudes through conversation, reflection, and connection.



# Communication tools used

Community film screenings  
(Uno & Hatago)  
Poetry and performance



# Communication tools used Pt 2

## Safe space group meetings Educational booklets and resources

These tools helped communities reflect on stigma and understand lived experiences.



# Target groups

	Number of participants
LBQ women – Direct beneficiaries	72
Male – Direct beneficiaries	44
Female – Direct beneficiaries ( )	172
Male – Indirect beneficiaries (e.g. through other networks)	The man that helped set up the space for public event
Female – Online beneficiaries (e.g. website access, mailing lists, scholarly articles)	WhatsApp used due to safety reasons.
Male – Online beneficiaries (e.g. website access, mailing lists, scholarly articles)	WhatsApp used due to safety reasons.
<b>Total</b>	<b>288</b>

# Impact

## The strategy created meaningful change:

LBQ women gained confidence and visibility

Parents began forming support groups

Communities started having open conversations about  
violence and stigma

New LBQ groups formed in small towns

This helped shift narratives towards empathy, dignity, and  
belonging.

# Impact



Witvlie LBQ women

# Impact Part 2



Walvis Bay LBQ Women

# Impact Part 3



Otjiwarongo LBQ Women

# Challenges

1. Fear and hesitation among LBQ women to participate due to stigma and safety concerns.
2. Lutheran church is approachable.  
(We are not alien (we are you) Ubuntu)
3. The dangerous areas we live in is exactly where we showed ourselves.
4. The rain was a challenge in Tsumeb and Otjiwarongo
5. Created safer dialogue spaces, stronger LBQ networks, and growing community understanding.
6. Dialogue allowed to research about empathy.



# Lessons learnt

## Key lessons include:

- Safe spaces are critical for building confidence and leadership.
  - Art and storytelling open difficult conversations.
  - Parents can become powerful allies.
- Community change requires dialogue, compassion, and patience.
  - Deep social change takes long-term engagement.
    - Sharing with each other.
    - Creating allies with our families.

*Deep social change takes long-term engagement.*

# Sustainability

The work will continue through:

Ongoing support from WLC to local LBQ groups.

Additional donor funding to maintain safe spaces.

Strengthening parent support groups.

Continued use of educational materials and booklets.

We can give funds for 2 meetings.

Local facilitators will keep the momentum in each town with out funds, and they take that ownership of their group.



# Next Steps

Expanding safe spaces to more towns in Namibia.

Developing new educational resources.

Strengthening parent networks.

Increasing grassroots advocacy and visibility.

The long-term vision is strong LBQ leadership and inclusive communities across Namibia.

**Warm gratitude for the support.**

