



Workplace
Pride

THE INTERNATIONAL
PLATFORM FOR LGBTIQ+
INCLUSION AT WORK

FREE TO
BE ME

NAIROBI

2022

ROUNDTABLE
DISCUSSION AND
WORKSHOP REPORT



**FREE TO
BE ME**

 Workplace
Pride

Hivos
people unlimited

NL Netherlands

SUMMARY

The one-day event was organized by Workplace Pride under the theme Building the future for Diversity and Inclusion in Kenya. The event brought together over 35 civil society and business representatives to build awareness, start conversations, and build a commitment to future dialogue around LGBTIQ+ inclusion.

Representatives from civil society organizations (Galck+, Hoymas, Bold Network Africa, Amkeni Malindi, LEHA, Cosmopolitan Affirming Community Church, Open for Business among others) local and multinational businesses in Kenya (Philips, Royal Flora Holland, SGA, Google among others), policymakers, influencers, and academics participated in the event.

Levis Nderitu, Workplace Pride Africa Strategic Advisor, the moderator for the day welcomed everybody to the event and oriented them on the

day's program. Thereafter the Dutch Ambassador made opening remarks followed by remarks from the Executive Directors of HIVOS and Galck+. Levis then introduced the team from Workplace Pride followed by introductions from the audience. Afterwards Graham Sparks, Program Manager Workplace Pride, Moses Wasike, Africa Regional Coordinator Workplace Pride and Saida Ali, Global Program Manager, HIVOS made presentations.

Graham's presentation was on the Civil Society Business toolkit which is a guide to help civil society organizations work more closely with the businesses. Moses and Saida's presentations focused on the why, what, and how of Workplace Pride's mentorship platform for LGBTIQ+ inclusion at work. Each presentation was followed by a breakout session of three groups where participants engaged in discussions on LGBTIQ+ inclusion at the workplace and submitted feedback on their deliberations. Finally, representatives from the business community shared their experiences and made a business case for why inclusion matters in the workplace. The Ambassador made closing remarks after which guests went for a networking session over lunch and left at their pleasure.



Opening Remarks

Maarten Brouwer, Ambassador, Netherlands Embassy in Kenya:

The ambassador reiterated the commitment of the Netherlands Embassy in Kenya to protecting and promoting human rights and gender equality, including LGBTIQ+ rights. He added that they do this by among other strategies, collaborating with partners to bring together businesses and civil society players. He expressed optimism that the roundtable will be a space to listen and learn from each other, expand networks, and forge new partnerships. While recognizing the importance of partnerships in making progress on the challenges that persist, he commended the creativity, courage, and perseverance of the members in attendance. Moreover, ambassador Brouwer acknowledged that everyone must take steps to improve, and that he looked forward to learning more about new tools available to build on the progress made in building inclusive spaces. He added that there are always opportunities for improvement and that everyone should be open to learning how the people sitting next to them are already working on making their workspaces inclusive and borrow from their experiences. He wrapped up by stating that as a country and an embassy, the Netherlands will be there as a champion and support wherever it can.

Kennedy Mugochi, HIVOS East Africa Executive Director:

The Executive Director, Kennedy Mugochi talked about HIVOS's mission to building movements for just, inclusive, and life-sustaining societies. He apprised participants on the goals of the Free to be Me program and how they are going about achieving these goals. He stressed the importance of working together, keeping doors open and having open discussions on strategies and creatives ways for building a world that respects and advocates for LGBTIQ+ people's human and socio-economic rights.

Lorna Dias, Executive Director, Galck+:

Lorna Dias stressed the importance of dialogue and businesses working together with the civil society to build inclusive workplaces. She sounded a warning on the rapidly shrinking human rights space and the need to find ways of pushing back to ensure that we do not lose the ground we have gained.



Civil Society Business Toolkit

By Graham Sparks

What it is: A go to guide to help civil society organizations work more closely with the business world. The kit provides practical, goal driven and sustainable approaches for empowering LGBTIQ+ civil society organizations (CSOs) to create lasting changes for the LGBTIQ+ community

Why it matters: While social movements have heightened awareness of intersectional justice, populism continues to have a negative effect on the LGBTIQ+ community around the world. Additionally, ideological challenges to LGBTIQ+ inclusion are being enshrined in legislation in various parts of the world. Although, some businesses have been vocal about creating inclusive environments for their employees worldwide, they face dilemmas in moving forward both locally and globally. CSOs can help businesses with these dilemmas through amplifying the voices of LGBTIQ communities.

Graham's presentation on the toolkit which can be found [here](#), was an interactive session that included a question-and-answer session and sharing of experiences from the audience.

Key Takeaways

The key takeaways from the session were:

- A lot of conversations about equality remain in conferences and discussions such as the current one. Few businesses move to act on the recommendations provided in such sessions. More needs to be done to ensure that these actionable recommendations move from meeting halls to workplaces.
- The forces fighting against LGBTIQ+ inclusion are organized, influential and have very deep pockets. CSOs working in isolation cannot hope to effectively push back. Only by partnering with the private sector can we scale our impact.
- Businesses can have the influence but CSOs must be ready to catalyze initiatives by the private sector
- Businesses cannot do everything at once, there are no "one shoe fits all" solutions. Businesses should pick what works for them and kickstart the process.
- In countries where it is still difficult to have conversations on LGBTIQ+ inclusion, CSOs should be careful not to push government's backs to the wall. The result of which will be shrinking spaces, not expanding spaces.



Workplace Pride Mentorship Program & Shaping Narratives

By Moses Wasike and Saida Ali

The mentorship platform will create opportunities for businesses and CSOs to connect, build community and drive impact.



Breakout sessions:

From the breakout sessions, the following were the key highlights

- Most businesses are not willing to stir things up, they are in business for profit and if things are working for them, they see no reason in working towards LGBTIQ+ inclusion. CSOs must be more strategic with their messaging in making the business case for inclusive workplaces.
- Businesses listen to businesses; things are a lot easier if one company speaks to another about LGBTIQ+ inclusion than if a CSO does it. Companies already bought in can be used as a bridge to reach out to others and kickstart the difficult conversations.
- Most companies have inclusive policies in writing only. They, usually, take no proactive action to implement these policies. It is the role of CSOs to demonstrate why and how these policies should be enforced. Expert trainings can be provided for businesses.

- Global campaigns and international days such as International Day Against Homophobia, Biphobia and Transphobia (IDAHOBIT), Pride month, 16 days of activism provide good opportunities for companies to come out in support of the LGBTIQ+ community. Businesses can partner with CSO in hosting these events.
- Legal frameworks create challenges for multinational companies that are trying to create inclusive workplaces in countries where there are anti-gay laws. However, there are measures businesses can take within the organizations four walls to create inclusive spaces. Local laws shouldn't be an impediment for open and willing businesses.
- Dominant negative narratives against LGBTIQ+ inclusion can and should be countered. Many dominant narratives are built on quicksand and LGBTIQ+ rights campaigners can easily dismantle them with counter arguments. Deliberate steps must be taken to counter harmful dominant narratives.
- Affirmative action hiring policies that are biased in favor of LGBTIQ+ persons can go a long way in demonstrating that community members are just as able and talented as heterosexual individuals at the workplace. However, care should be taken so that such individuals don't become targets of discrimination. Hiring more than one individual under such initiatives is recommended.
- Diversity and inclusion trainings are in themselves not enough. Often, businesses don't take the knowledge gained from such trainings back to their organizations for implementation. The conversations end at the training rooms. CSOs must find creative ways of holding businesses accountable after training to ensure they implement the recommendations given to them.
- The argument that that local laws don't allow companies to create inclusive workplaces for LGBTIQ+ individuals shouldn't be an impediment to CSO's working in the sector. Companies can still create inclusive workplaces and advocate for equality even in such situations. However, context matters, and conditions differ from country to country, workarounds should be tailored to fit each unique situation.

Quotable Quotes: "I have travelled to different countries and encountered different cultures, in many places you hear arguments about values, legality and culture, but in all my experience I am yet to find a country or culture where it is illegal to show respect", Graham Sparks.

FREE TO BE ME ROUNDTABLE AGENDA

Wednesday, Nov 23, 2022 • Nairobi, Kenya

Time	Description
10:15	Registration
10:30	<p>Welcome and Orientation -Moderator, Levis Nderitu</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Levis welcomes everyone, introduces Iris, then Amb. Maarten • Opening remarks and welcome from the Dutch embassy • Remarks by HIVOS Executive Director -Kennedy Mugochoi • Welcome remarks by galck+ Executive Director, Lorna Dias • Introduction to Workplace Pride team: Levis, Graham, Moses.
11:00-11:15	Participants Introductions: Name and organization
11:15	<p>Civil Society Business Toolkit-Facilitated by Graham Sparks Presentation (15 mins)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What is it? • Why it matters? <p>Audience discussion (30 mins)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How to use it • Usage and promotion • Local considerations
12:00	Break
12:10	<p>Mentorship Platform-Moses Wasike Presentation (10 mins)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What is it? • How will it work? <p>Audience discussion -Moses, Saida (30 mins)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How mentoring can support your community • Understanding community needs • Q1 2023 pilot
12:50	<p>Business Speakers -Remarks -Open-mic for business leaders in the room</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Speakers will share their business case for why inclusion matters in the workplace
13:20	<p>Lunch and Networking</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Closing Remarks by Saida (Hivos), Amb. Maarten (or his designate) and Levis
14:30	Guests leave at their pleasure.



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