



Workplace  
Pride

THE INTERNATIONAL  
PLATFORM FOR LGBTIQ+  
INCLUSION AT WORK

FREE TO  
BE ME

# FREE TO THRIVE FELLOWSHIP

WORKPLACE PRIDE REPORT



# MAPUTO

June 12-16, 2023



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# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

**Hivos hosted the inaugural Free to Thrive Fellowship in Maputo, Mozambique from June 12th to 16th, 2023. The fellowship, conceived under the transformative Free to Be Me program, aims to provide the fellows with an experience focused on learning, connection, and reflection. It is a year-long program that combines in-person and virtual training sessions, centered around key learning modules that aim to deepen knowledge and practice in LGBTIQ+ advocacy for economic justice.**

The fellowship brought together participants from over 10 Free to Be Me countries for the first of four modules scheduled over the course of 12 months. This fellowship promises to offer fellows access to learning and professional training opportunities, networks, and other types of support that will amplify their voices and enhance their impact. Additionally, fellows will have access to small competitive grants to advance their economic justice advocacy in their home countries and receive support for travel to select regional and global advocacy spaces.

During the five-day event, participants engaged in interactive and intensive sessions that included group discussions, presentations, and speeches. The workshop featured a diverse group of facilitators who delivered presentations on a wide range of topics. Some of the topics covered included decolonizing macroeconomics and an intersectional feminist economics agenda to address economic inequalities, the impact of anti-gender rights movements on LGBTIQ+ economic well-being, the power of storytelling as an advocacy tool, the concept of economic inclusion and the role of workplace pride in driving economic change. Additionally, the workshop featured the presentation of the results from the Free to Be Me economic survey conducted by Positive Vibes. The Fellows were also informed about a new economic development pilot project aimed at funding direct interventions in socio-economic rights. The sessions encouraged active engagement and included breakout sessions, group discussions, brainstorming sessions, and audience performances, creating a healthy and comprehensive forum for exchange.

Representing Workplace Pride at the forum were Alvin Anyambu, the Africa Community and Programs Lead, and Levis Nderitu, Strategy Advisor, both based in Nairobi. The forum provided them with an opportunity to network with a

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## The broad objectives of the fellowship were to:

Foster an understanding of LGBTIQ+ economic justice as a catalyst for other rights.



Empower participants with skills in LGBTIQ+ economic justice advocacy.



Provide clarity on the interconnection between the economic pathway and other pathways in Free to Be Me.



Define the role of the fellows in supporting their communities' economic agenda at the country level.



diverse team of fellows from the countries where Workplace Pride is implementing activities under the project. It also allowed them to understand the specific conditions and priorities of the community members and align Workplace Pride's strategies with their implementation plans. Additionally, the forum facilitated the establishment of strategic partnerships and alliances for Workplace Pride as it prepares for round table discussions and the rollout of its mentorship program across the project countries.

The sessions and presentations touched on diverse topics relevant to Workplace Pride's interventions and roles in the Free to Be Me project. The following section will explore the training modules that were of interest to Workplace Pride, highlighting audience discussions and contributions that can inform strategy and planning for the next phase of Workplace Pride's interventions.



## INTERSECTIONAL FEMINIST ECONOMICS AGENDA TO ADDRESSING ECONOMIC INEQUALITIES

**Lebohang Liepollo Pheko, Senior Research Fellow, The Trade Collective, Johannesburg - South Africa.**

In an interactive and participatory six-hour session, Liepollo delivered a presentation on intersectional feminist economics, which focuses on how various social categories such as gender, ability, age, race, sexuality, nationality, religion, and class intersect and reinforce each other to marginalize individuals. The concept of intersectionality challenges the practice of categorizing people into binary groups, as it has created a complex system of hierarchies.

Liepollo emphasized that single-issue struggles do not exist because individuals do not live single-issue lives. Participants were encouraged to reconsider how exclusions and oppressions are constructed and perpetuated in our societies, highlighting that these are the outcomes of intricate historical and dynamic power relations and hierarchies that cannot be dismantled through binary thinking. Participants were urged to recognize the interconnections between different forms of oppression that operate simultaneously and understand that inequalities are not solely caused by one system alone. Liepollo further discussed how an intersectional feminist economics approach examines how these systems of oppression manifest in both the productive and reproductive spheres of the economy.

During the session, participants were prompted to reflect on their various identities and how they impact their lives. They were asked to consider how these multiple identities can function as advantages or barriers to their economic progress and well-being. Submissions revealed that the multiple identities we hold have different impacts on each individual, and identities considered disadvantageous in one sphere may be advantageous in other spheres.

The session highlighted the diverse and complex struggles individuals face even within the field of socio-economic development. Activists were urged to carefully tailor their interventions and choose their battles wisely. Recognizing the interconnectedness of struggles, participants concluded that the multiple challenges faced by LGBTIQ+ individuals are interconnected with other struggles that are not exclusive to the LGBTIQ+ community. To effectively address these challenges, they acknowledged the need to collaborate with other partners and stakeholders. Additionally, within the community itself, people possess multiple identities and experience exclusion and marginalization due to diverse factors.

These realizations prompted participants to rethink their approaches to activism and advocacy for the socio-economic rights of the LGBTIQ+ community.



## ANTI-GENDER RIGHTS MOVEMENTS AND THEIR IMPACT ON LGBTIQ+ ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT.

### Chioma and Reverend Dhadla

Chioma and Reverend Dhadla conducted a session on anti-rights groups, organized entities that have existed for as long as civil society organizations and campaign against the inclusion of traditionally marginalized demographics in society. While their activities span across various sectors, their current focus areas are women's reproductive health rights, LGBTIQ+ rights, and comprehensive sexuality education. These groups mobilize across religious beliefs, countries, continents, and political parties, with their main ideology rooted in conservatism and the preservation of the patriarchal status quo.

The session provided an overview of recent activities undertaken by anti-rights movements and how they have contributed to rolling back LGBTIQ+ accommodations in both Free to Be Me project countries and non-project countries. Examples such as the Same-Sex Marriage Prohibition Act (SSMPA) in Nigeria (2014), the Anti-Homosexuality Law in Uganda (2023), the Family Values Bill in Ghana, the Family Protection Bill in Kenya, and the US Supreme Court Decision on Roe v Wade were cited to illustrate the potential threat these groups pose to the progress made in securing equal rights for the LGBTIQ+ community. It was emphasized that these groups are an existing and prevailing danger to LGBTIQ+ rights activists.

The session also explored major anti-rights groups globally, allowing participants to identify local groups operating in their respective countries. Additionally, participants gained insights into the key tactics employed by these groups and how they secure funding for their activities.

During group discussions and audience contributions, participants acknowledged the constant threat posed by these groups, which has hampered their work and made activism

challenging. As members strategize about deliberate engagement with employers in the private and public sectors, they need to be aware of the opposition they face and incorporate this understanding into their advocacy and mobilization strategies. Participants recognized the importance of presenting convincing arguments to employers for them to weather opposition from anti rights groups and stand in support of the LGBTIQ+ community, drawing examples from instances where companies have been targeted for their support of the LGBTIQ+ community. The vital role played by Workplace Pride was acknowledged, with participants encouraged by the organization's extensive membership and expertise, which can guide them in approaching employers amidst pressure, intimidation, and organized campaigns by anti-rights groups seeking to further marginalize LGBTIQ+ individuals. Considering these groups will be a crucial factor as fellows develop project ideas and campaign plans for engaging with businesses and employers.



## POSITIVE VIBES SURVEY ON ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT

### Benjamin Janse van Rensburg, Positive Vibes.

Benjamin shared with participants the findings of the socio-economic survey conducted by Positive Vibes, which focused on the needs, priorities, barriers, and required interventions for securing economic rights within the LGBTIQ+ communities in various Free to Be Me project countries. The survey was initiated after discussions with Workplace Pride, recognizing the challenges faced by civil society organizations in navigating the new and complex pathway of socio-economic rights. Additionally, there was a lack of information regarding the lived realities of the individuals targeted by the interventions under the Free to Be Me project, particularly regarding the socio-economic status of LGBTIQ+ persons in Africa, East Asia, and the Middle East, where most project countries are located.

During subsequent discussions, participants acknowledged the scarcity of data on the economic struggles of the LGBTIQ+ community, emphasizing the need for further studies in this area. They recognized that data serves as a powerful advocacy tool, capable of persuading partners to take action in addressing the challenges faced by the LGBTIQ+ community. The survey data was considered eye-opening, shedding light on the challenges experienced by the community, and shaping interventions in the field of socio-economic development. The data reinforced the lessons on intersectionality, highlighting the importance of tailoring interventions based on the specific challenges individuals face.

Moreover, the data revealed the significance of mentorship platforms, as many respondents expressed the need for mentorship programs to enhance their advocacy efforts and professional development. Civil society respondents identified the necessity of mentorship to improve their workmanship and advocacy skills.



## NEW PROJECT – SCOPE AND CONTENT OF ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT PILOT PROJECTS

During the workshop, it was shared that the Free to Be Me project had secured additional funding to support direct interventions by CSOs in the field of socio-economic rights for LGBTIQ+ persons. These funds will be allocated to implementing two projects in each of three pilot project countries (Kenya, Nigeria, and the Philippines), totaling six projects over a three-year period. To generate

ideas for these pilot projects, fellows were divided into groups and tasked with discussing potential project ideas that could be implemented under the pilot program.

Furthermore, as part of the next steps, each participating country team was required to develop potential interventions they aim to implement over the next 12 to 24 months, drawing from the lessons learned during the fellowship. Some of the project ideas and suggestions shared for the new pilot projects and interventions within the next 24 months, which could be of interest to Workplace Pride, include:

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### PILOT PROJECT IDEAS:

1. Building alliances with companies and connecting LGBTIQ+ community members to job opportunities.
2. Establishing a resource center to educate LGBTIQ+ individuals about their labor rights.
3. Creating a certification body to endorse LGBTIQ+ inclusive businesses in various regions.
4. Building an ecosystem that promotes trade within the community, prioritizing tenders, and contracts for LGBTIQ+ persons and businesses.
5. Providing training and mentorship programs to equip LGBTIQ+ individuals with entrepreneurial skills and enhance their employability.
6. Conducting country-specific research on the economic needs of LGBTIQ+ persons.
7. Engaging with trade and labor unions to develop frameworks for LGBTIQ+ inclusion.
8. Reviewing organizations' Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) policies to ensure coverage of the LGBTIQ+ community and providing guidance on implementation.





## COUNTRY-SPECIFIC PROJECT IDEAS:

1. Mozambique: Implement activities focusing on social entrepreneurship, income generation, and professional training and education.
2. Kenya: Establish connections between individuals and organizations, leveraging the understanding of the economic needs of the community by the CoAs.
3. Uganda: Conduct a baseline survey on the impact of the Anti-Homosexuality Act on the economic conditions of LGBTIQ+ persons in Uganda.
4. Zimbabwe: Form queer business forums through the CoAs and existing strategic labs, linking them with established businesses. Engage trade unions and business associations to include the LGBTIQ+ community in their activities and advocacy efforts.
5. Ghana: Establish a database of LGBTIQ+ run businesses and identify the problems and barriers they face. Conduct capacity-building workshops in areas such as marketing and financial literacy.
6. Nigeria: Establish queer business incubation hubs with support from existing businesses and multinational companies willing to engage with the queer community.
7. Indonesia: Create events and spaces for LGBTIQ+ business owners and professionals to network. Host training and capacity-building programs tailored to their specific needs.

From these project ideas, it is evident that Workplace Pride can play a significant role in supporting and advising the fellows during the implementation of their activities. The roundtable discussions and mentorship program align with the vision of the fellows, presenting an opportunity for Workplace Pride to facilitate interventions under the Free to Be Me project.



## ECONOMIC INCLUSION – WORKPLACE PRIDE’S ROLE

### Levis Nderitu and Alvin Ambunya, Workplace Pride, Nairobi.

Levis discussed the importance of economic inclusion for LGBTIQ+ individuals and shared insights from his first Workplace Pride conference in 2015. He emphasized the significance of representation and how seeing queer professionals can positively impact the dreams and aspirations of other LGBTIQ+ individuals. Levis provided an overview of Workplace Pride’s activities, membership structure, and its role in creating open and inclusive workplace policies.

Following Levis’ presentation, Alvin briefly explained Workplace Pride’s involvement in the Free to Be Me program. He informed participants about the roundtable discussions and the recently launched mentorship program that will be implemented across the Free to Be Me countries.

The participants expressed their enthusiasm for leveraging Workplace Pride’s experience and expertise in engaging with employers. They recognized the potential impact of the roundtable discussions and mentorship program on their advocacy efforts.



## COLLABORATION MEETINGS AND NEXT STEPS

The workshop provided an excellent opportunity for networking and establishing connections with activists from various countries. Leveraging on this opportunity, Levis and Alvin held meetings on the sidelines of the conference with fellows from African countries where Workplace Pride intends to host roundtable discussions in the coming months.

During these meetings, the duo engaged with fellows from Zimbabwe, Ghana, Rwanda, and Uganda. The delegates shared valuable information about their country contexts and discussed the best approaches to hosting the roundtable discussions and mentorship

programs. They also provided insights into the structure of the LGBTIQ+ rights movements in their respective countries and outlined their strategies for advancing socio-economic rights advocacy.

Based on the discussions, it was determined that the next Roundtable discussion would be hosted in Kigali, followed by either Harare or Accra in 2023. Delegates from Ghana acknowledged the challenging LGBTIQ+ rights landscape in their country but expressed their willingness to explore possibilities for hosting the discussions.

All the country delegates expressed enthusiasm for the roundtable discussions and mentorship platforms and reaffirmed their commitment to collaborating with Workplace Pride to organize successful and impactful events.





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