

2023

LGBTI VIOLATIONS REPORT



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ABOUT GALZ

GALZ's work is centred on four strategic pillars: **Membership and Community Development; Knowledge, Documentation, and Ideas; Policy, Law, Human Rights, and Access to Justice; and Governance, Institutional Innovation, Systems Adaptation, and Resources.**

GALZ believes that the journey toward equality and the capacity-building necessary for lobbying and advocating for greater tolerance, acceptance, and inclusivity of LGBTI individuals in the broader community is an ongoing process. By empowering communities to demand and advocate for social justice, GALZ aims to enhance equity and rights for all LGBTI individuals in Zimbabwe.

The violations report serves as a crucial indicator that intersects all strategic pillars. It provides essential data that informs Membership and Community Development by highlighting the specific needs and challenges faced by LGBTI individuals, thus guiding community engagement efforts. In the realm of Knowledge, Documentation, and Ideas, the report creates a factual basis for advocacy, fostering a deeper understanding of human rights violations within the community.

Moreover, it plays a vital role in shaping Policy, Law, Human Rights, and Access to Justice by identifying gaps in legal protections and advocating for necessary reforms. Finally, the report supports Governance, Institutional Innovation, Systems Adaptation, and Resources by offering insights that can lead to improved organisational practices and resource allocation.

Through legal advocacy, counselling, community outreach, and collaborations with stakeholders in the legal and health sectors, GALZ seeks to improve access to essential services and promote understanding and acceptance. Overall, GALZ is committed to creating a safer and more equitable society for all LGBTIQ individuals in Zimbabwe.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The GALZ LGBTI 2023 Violations Report reveals a decrease in reported human rights violations from 27 in 2022 to 16 in 2023. This reduction may be attributed to increased awareness and education, improved reporting mechanisms, and the disqualification of some cases that did not qualify as human rights violations. However, blackmail incidents spiked by 30%, indicating a potential worsening environment or greater victim awareness. Reports of sexual assault remained steady, suggesting effective protective measures, while slight increases in denied access and disownment highlight emerging issues that require monitoring.

A concerning trend regarding the disclosure of HIV status raises questions about stigma and confidentiality, underscoring the need for targeted campaigns. Notably, over 50% of reported violations in 2023 were against transgender individuals, indicating their heightened vulnerability. Low rates of sex trafficking and threats of physical violence suggest these issues are less common, but vigilance is necessary.

The report employs ethical methods, using pseudonyms to protect identities and confidentiality. Overall, while the reduction in violations is promising, the rise in certain incidents and the significant challenges faced by transgender individuals emphasise the need for continued advocacy and targeted support within the LGBTI community. The report employs a rigorous methodology to ensure accurate data collection and analysis. Pseudonyms are used to conceal the identities of individuals involved, maintaining confidentiality and protecting victims from potential repercussions. This ethical approach ensures that the report reflects genuine experiences while safeguarding the dignity and privacy of those affected.

While the reduction in reported cases serves as a positive proxy indicator, suggesting fewer incidents among LGBTI individuals in Zimbabwe, it also necessitates further investigation before drawing definitive conclusions. GALZ is committed to conducting ongoing surveys to ensure that reporting channels remain accessible and friendly for the community. This proactive approach aims to enhance the protection and promotion of human rights for LGBTI persons in the country.

OVERVIEW

A systematic and active monitoring and documentation process by GALZ was imperative to track the level of public acceptance and tolerance towards the LGBTI community in Zimbabwe. This process sheds light on the discrimination, stigma, and human rights violations experienced by LGBTI individuals. It was widely recognized that individuals who identified as lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and intersex faced pervasive violence and discrimination based on their actual or perceived sexual orientation, gender identity, or sex characteristics (SOGIE). These abuses manifested in various forms, including disownment, extortion, threats of violence, murder, physical assault, torture, sexual assault, arbitrary arrest and imprisonment, and discrimination in areas such as employment and healthcare.

To lend credibility to advocacy and policy-related efforts, it was crucial to compile data and maintain a record of human rights violations against LGBTI individuals. However, data alone did not suffice as an indicator; it needed to be translated into actionable measures for change at different levels (national, regional, and global) and across various domains (legislative, policy, societal attitudes, and behaviours), as distinct challenges persisted in each sphere. Furthermore, both the analysis of the issue and the identification of solutions were complex and multifaceted.

In reality, discrimination based on other characteristics, such as sex, gender, nationality, race, ethnicity, indigeneity, language, age, religion, beliefs, political or other opinions, disability, health status (including HIV), economic or social status, migration status, family status, or being a human rights defender, often intersected with discrimination based on actual or perceived SOGIE characteristics. Consequently, it was often essential to adopt an intersectional approach to SOGIE advocacy, acknowledging and addressing the fact that biases arose from the intersection of multiple aspects of identity.

METHODOLOGY

A standardized template was developed for consistency in data collection and distributed across all GALZ resources- Harare, Mutare, Masvingo and Bulawayo centres. It contained the following: Type of violation (e.g., blackmail, outing), gender and demographic information, location of the incident, date and description of incident, description of the incident, actions taken (if any) by GALZ, law enforcement or support organisations. Collected reports were entered into a centralized database, organized by site to facilitate analysis. This included both quantitative data (e.g., number of violations by type per location) and qualitative descriptions.

The dataset was reviewed for accuracy, removing duplicates and correcting inconsistencies in the reporting and eliminating reports that do not qualify as rights violations. Statistical analysis was performed to identify trends, such as: Total number of violations reported in each site, breakdown of violations by type and location, Demographic analysis (e.g., age, gender identity) of victims from each city. Narrative descriptions from reports were analyzed to identify common themes and patterns in the nature of violations, considering the context specific to each location.

All reports were anonymized to protect the identities of individuals involved. Sensitive data was stored securely to ensure confidentiality.

HANDLING PROCEDURE

GALZ takes a strategic approach to addressing human rights violations based on sexual orientation and gender identity and expression. The organization operates within the framework of the law and the constitution to ensure that cases are resolved amicably and legally.

The first step for all human rights violation cases, such as sexual and physical assault, is to report the incident to the nearest Zimbabwe Republic Police station. Once a report is made, a case is opened, and a legal document, or docket, is created, assigning a number for investigation purposes. The survivor is then directed to the nearest health facility for medical attention if there is any bodily harm. In some cases, survivors may be referred to a medical facility for a forensic examination to gather evidence of the violation.

GALZ collaborates with human rights defenders, such as Zimbabwe Lawyers for Human Rights (ZLHR), who assist in expediting cases and providing legal representation to survivors in court. Additionally, survivors receive psychosocial support to help them cope with the aftermath of the violation. This support is crucial for maintaining both physical and mental health, serving as an important coping mechanism for LGBTIQ individuals who may experience post-traumatic stress.

The support provided is long-term, allowing survivors to continue receiving counselling to monitor their recovery progress. GALZ systematically compiles and archives all cases of violations in a comprehensive manner, ensuring a thorough record of incidents and responses.

KEY TERMS

Blackmail: Coercion through threats to reveal personal information, often related to an individual's sexual orientation or gender identity, typically used to extort money or favours.

Sexual Assault: Any non-consensual sexual act or behavior that violates an individual's bodily autonomy, including harassment and violence.

Denied Access: Instances where individuals are unjustly denied entry to services, facilities, or opportunities due to their sexual orientation or gender identity.

Disownment: The act of rejecting or cutting off contact with an individual by family or community members due to their sexual orientation or gender identity.

Outing: The act of disclosing someone's sexual orientation or gender identity without their consent, often leading to discrimination or violence.

HIV Status Disclosure: Situations where an individual's HIV status is revealed without their consent, contributing to stigma and discrimination.

Sex Trafficking: The illegal trade of individuals for sexual exploitation, often involving coercion or deceit, disproportionately affecting vulnerable populations.

Threats of Physical Violence: Intimidation or threats directed at individuals based on their sexual orientation or gender identity, which can lead to actual physical harm.

BLACKMAIL

SEX TRAFFICKING

“ In February, GALZ received information that **Tatenda** (pseudonym) - a **15 year old transgender** girl had been trafficked for sex work and also subsequently expelled from school based on her sexuality. GALZ officers’ were informed that sometime in January, Tatenda and 6 of her friends were kidnapped for 2 weeks by a certain woman in Karoi and then taken to Chitungwiza where they were forced to engage in unpaid sex work. Tatenda, with the assistance of her mother, reported the ordeal to the police, but unfortunately, the alleged perpetrator was never brought to book. The Social Welfare Department social workers managed to provide counselling to her to assist her in getting over this traumatic experience. ”

“ In February, **Greg** (pseudonym), a **32-year-old gay** man, reported how John (ex-partner) was threatening to expose his nude pictures unless and until he took him back and resumed their usual sexual activity. The GALZ counsellor and legal officer managed to summon both Greg and John to the GALZ offices and hear them out. After much deliberation over their matter, an agreement was reached to delete any potentially harmful nude pictures from John’s cellphone. Further, John also agreed not to expose and/or distribute this pornographic material. ”

“ **Yusuf**, a **gay** man from **Rutenga**, reached out to GALZ in March regarding his boyfriend, Chikomborero, who was demanding money from him. Chikomborero claimed he needed funds for medical treatment for anal cancer, requesting USD 50.00 regularly and later asking for USD 800.00 for an additional procedure. After a confrontation, Chikomborero took Yusuf’s phone and threatened to out him unless he provided the money. Yusuf managed to borrow USD 200.00 and negotiated to get his phone back, but Chikomborero continued to demand more. Seeking assistance from GALZ, Yusuf was advised against succumbing to blackmail, and GALZ warned Chikomborero about his actions. Ultimately, Chikomborero agreed to cease the blackmail and promised to reimburse Yusuf. ”

“**Sasha**, an elderly gay man, became friends with a younger man he encountered daily on his way to work. After the younger man, Divine, visited Sasha's house and they were intimate, Divine demanded money from Sasha. He threatened to report Sasha for aggravated indecent assault if he didn't comply. Sasha sought help from GALZ in July, where he was advised not to give in to the extortion and educated about the legal consequences. Sasha was instructed not to encourage Divine to involve the police, not to pay any money, and to block him to prevent further harassment. The incident was not reported to the police, and no money was given to Divine.”

“In August, Riley (pseudonym), a senior gay man in his 70s, reported being blackmailed by Tanaka (pseudonym) after they had consensual sexual encounters. During their time together, Riley shared nude photos, which Tanaka later used to blackmail him. Tanaka claimed to have contracted an STI and demanded \$50.00 for treatment, which Riley reluctantly paid. Weeks later, Tanaka requested an additional \$150.00 for a "further medical procedure," threatening to out Riley to his wife and children if he didn't comply within seven days. In distress, Riley contacted GALZ, which advised him against giving in to the blackmail and warned Tanaka about the potential legal consequences of his actions. Subsequently, Tanaka agreed to cease his demands and cut off all communication with Riley.”

“In September, Farisai, a gay man, allowed his ex-boyfriend Stix to stay in his rented apartment after their breakup while he moved in with his uncle. However, Farisai inadvertently left his laptop behind, which Stix used to access Farisai's WhatsApp account and capture explicit conversations with other men. Stix then threatened to publicly expose these conversations on social media unless Farisai reconciled with him and let him continue living in the apartment. Desperate for help, Farisai contacted GALZ, which intervened using the Data Protection Act to prevent Stix from leaking the sensitive information. As a result, Stix was evicted from the property.”

INTIMATE PARTNER VIOLENCE

Chris, a 24-year-old gay man, sought assistance from GALZ in March after being waylaid and raped by Thomas on New Year's Eve in a nearby bush in Norton. Despite Chris's cries for help, no assistance was received due to the darkness. Chris went home and informed his mother, who agreed to accompany him to make a police report the next day. Legal proceedings began, and GALZ provided Chris with psycho-social support and had a legal officer present during court hearings. However, the accused, Thomas, fled the country and could not be located, causing the proceedings to come to a halt.

INDECENT ASSAULT

In mid-March, GALZ's legal officer received a distress call from Charity, who had been physically attacked by her partner, Felix, following a disagreement. The officer arrived at the scene and found Charity injured, so he took her to Parirenyatwa Hospital for medical treatment and to report the incident to the police stationed there. Charity received stitches for the cuts on her face caused by a bottle attack from Felix. She filed a report at the hospital's police post, leading to Felix's arrest three days later on assault charges. However, due to their close relationship, Charity decided to engage the state and dropped the charges against Felix. Eventually, they broke up and started living separately.

Vongai, a lesbian woman, visited her partner Audrey in Domboshava. They went to a bar where a man showed interest in Vongai and bought them drinks. Audrey left the room assuming Vongai had gone out, but Vongai called her back. Later, Vongai caught Audrey kissing the man she introduced as her uncle. Vongai got angry and decided to leave the bar. Audrey and the man confronted Vongai, and Audrey hit her. Vongai retaliated, and during the fight, Audrey bit off part of Vongai's finger. Vongai reported the incident to the police and stayed overnight at the police station. Audrey was arrested, and the case was scheduled for an initial hearing on April 13th, 2023. The trial did not kick off since Vongai withdrew the matter. Vongai sought medical attention at a local clinic.

PHYSICAL ASSAULT

“ In March, **Brendon**, a **gay** man in his late **30s**, visited the GALZ **Mutare** office to report an assault. Brendon and three friends were at a local council bar in Chikanga when an unidentified man followed Brendon outside and asked to kiss him. Brendon refused, and the man proceeded to slap him multiple times while hurling homophobic slurs. Brendon screamed for help, and people from inside the bar came to his aid, causing the assailant to flee. Brendon chose not to make a police report out of fear of being targeted by the police. However, he sought medical attention at a local clinic, where he was found to have no significant injuries.

“ During the election period, **Spiwe**, a **transgender** woman, was attacked by a group of men on her way from a local bar. Before assaulting her, the group accused her of engaging in homosexuality and not conforming to the ‘natural order’ or life. After the assault, she went home for the night, albeit her injured face. The next morning, she reached out to GALZ for assistance. Spiwe received medical, psychosocial and legal support from GALZ during her ordeal. A police report was lodged and she also managed to recover from the gruesome assault.

“ **Sarudzai**, a **lesbian** woman, and her partner Trish faced discrimination and threats in their neighbourhood. The chairperson of the ruling ZANU PF party threatened Sarudzai, demanding that she move out of Chitungwiza due to her sexual orientation. Another person, Kumbirai, knew about their residence and expressed interest in staying with them, causing discomfort. A masked person accused them of being lesbians, but fled when Sarudzai threatened to involve her father and the neighbourhood watch. Their landlady increased the rent, possibly as a means to force them out. As a result, Sarudzai and Trish now live in Zengeza 3, Chitungwiza, but continue to fear for their safety.

OUTING

“

Craig, a **gay** man, sought help from a GALZ officer in **Mutare** after his friend Paradzai outed him to his parents. They went to a bar together, and Paradzai, heavily intoxicated, lost his phone. The next day, Paradzai accused Craig of stealing the phone and revealed to Craig's mother that he was gay and part of the LGBTI community. Craig denied the theft and being gay, but his mother believed Paradzai and expelled Craig from their home due to her discomfort with his sexuality. Despite intervention from a GALZ officer, Craig's mother remained firm in her decision to sever ties with him.

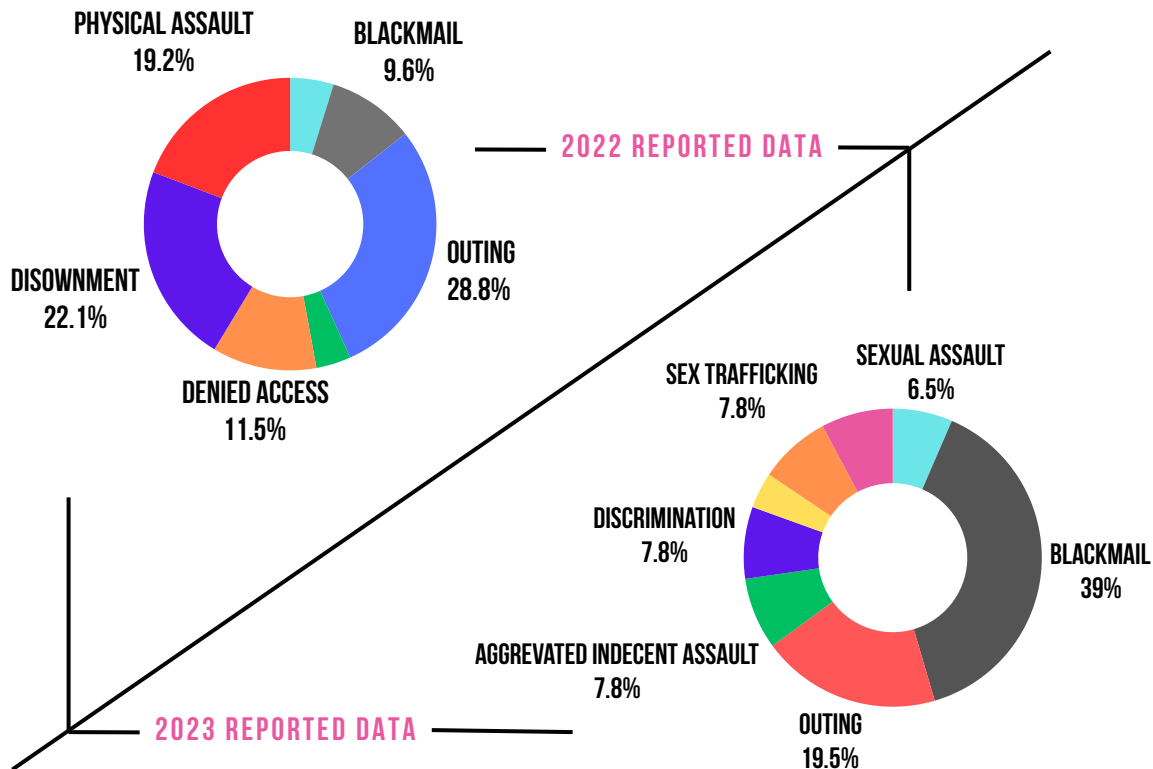
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Bree, a **transwoman**, approached the **Mutare** office for help after being outed by a friend. While playing volleyball in Dangamvura, some of Bree's mates began using homophobic slurs towards her and distanced themselves from her because of her sexuality. Bree discovered that Takunda, her friend, had been spreading the word about her being part of the LGBTI community. The Mutare officer summoned Takunda and warned him about the potential legal consequences of exposing Bree's sexuality. Takunda accepted the advice, apologised to Bree, and acknowledged the breach of her right to privacy.

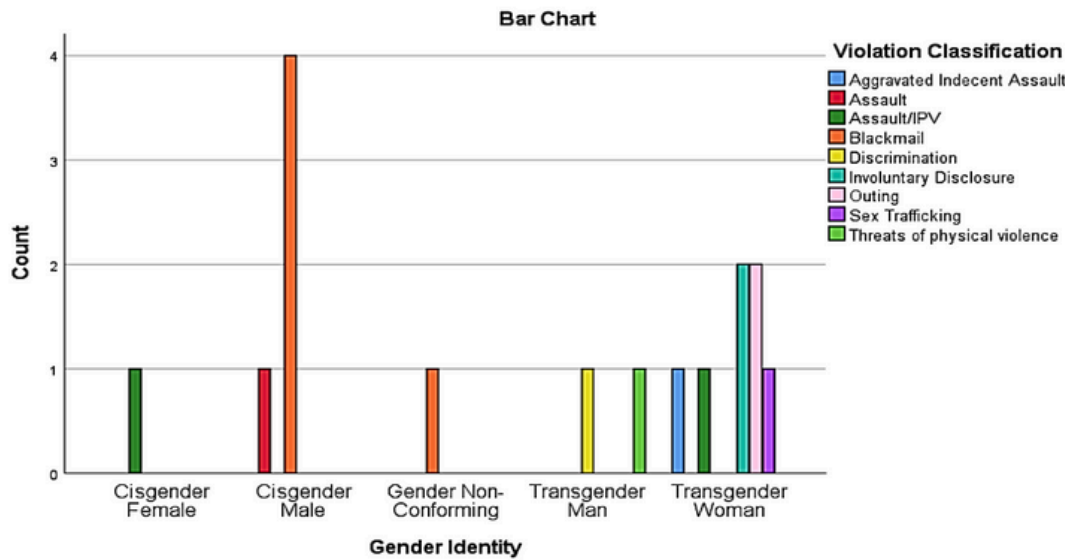
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DATA ANALYSIS



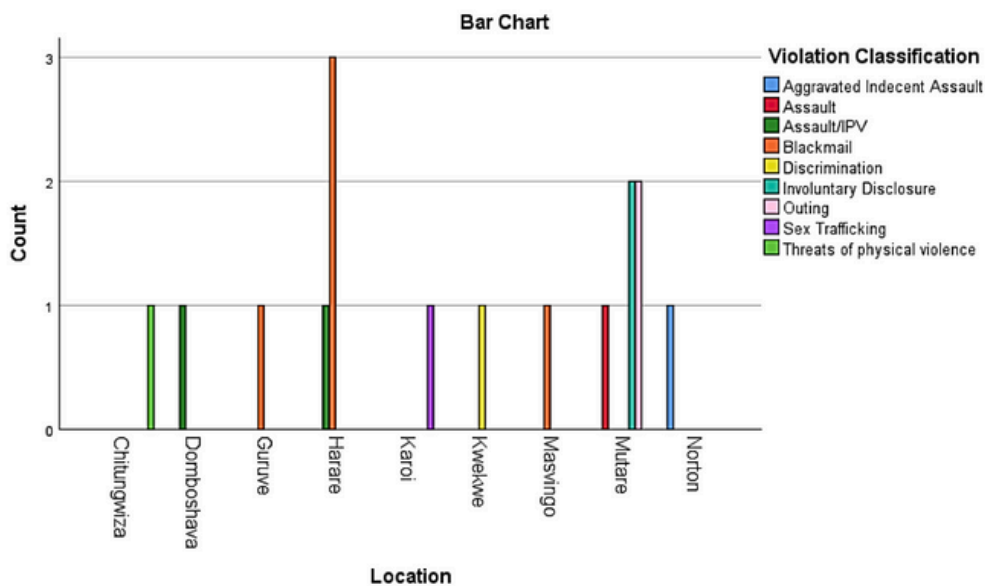
OVERALL TRENDS:

- Contrary to previous notes, blackmail spiked by 30% in 2023, making it the highest percentage violation for both years. This rise could suggest a worsening trend or an increase in awareness and reporting mechanisms that encourage victims to come forward.
- Sexual Assault remains steady, indicating consistent reporting. This stability may suggest that existing measures are effective, but further examination is needed to ensure that this reflects true incidence rates.
- Denied Access and Disownment show a slight increase in 2023, although they remain low overall. This trend could point to emerging issues that warrant closer monitoring and potential interventions.
- Outing was significant in 2022, but in 2023 an almost new trend emerged of HIV status that is concerning, there is need to campaign against HIV stigma and introducing measures for patient confidentiality and privacy
- Sex Trafficking and Threats of Physical Violence continue to show consistently low percentages, suggesting they are less common or reported violations. Continued vigilance is essential to ensure that these issues do not escalate.



PREVALENCE OF VIOLATIONS AGAINST TRANSGENDER PERSONS:

- In 2023, over 50% of reported violations were against transgender individuals. This significant percentage may indicate heightened vulnerability within this community, underscoring the critical need for targeted support and intervention.
- The increase in reported violations can be attributed to capacity-building initiatives that enhance human rights literacy and improve access to reporting services. Such initiatives likely empower individuals to come forward, leading to more accurate representation of the issues faced by transgender persons.



VIOLATIONS DISAGGREGATED BY LOCATION

- Harare reported the highest number of violations in 2023, particularly in its affinities, indicating increased risks in urban environments.
- Blackmail was the leading violation in Harare, reflecting significant societal issues and exploitation of vulnerable individuals.
- There were 2 recorded cases of outing and 2 cases of involuntary exposure in Harare, highlighting ongoing challenges related to privacy and consent.
- In Mutare, only 2 cases of outing and 2 cases of involuntary exposure were recorded, suggesting either lower incidents or potential underreporting.
- The situation in Mutare emphasizes the need for outreach and education to raise awareness about violations and support available.
- Overall, targeted interventions are crucial in Harare, while continued efforts are necessary in Mutare to protect all communities and enhance reporting mechanisms.

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ACTION PLAN

COMMUNITY MEMBERS

1. Organize workshops and training sessions focused on human rights literacy, reporting mechanisms and available support services to equip community members with the knowledge to advocate for themselves.
2. Establish peer support groups to foster a sense of community and provide a safe space for individuals to share experiences and resources.
3. Launch campaigns to raise awareness about violations, highlighting reporting processes and available legal protections to encourage more individuals to come forward.

LAW ENFORCEMENT

1. Create outreach programs to build trust between law enforcement and the LGBTI community, ensuring that individuals feel safe reporting violations without fear of discrimination or retaliation.
2. Continue to build rapport and strengthen allyship with law enforcement for improved crisis management and enhancing protection by law

GALZ AND STAKEHOLDERS

1. Support initiatives for comprehensive data collection on violations against LGBTI individuals to inform policy decisions and resource allocation effectively. This also includes collaboration with intersex and trans organisations for coherence of reporting violations
2. Implement regular monitoring and evaluation of initiatives aimed at supporting the LGBTI community to assess their impact and identify areas for improvement.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, violations in 2023 reveals significant trends and areas of concern across different demographics and locations. The high prevalence of violations against transgender and gay individuals, particularly in urban settings like Harare and other affinity areas like Domboshava underscores the urgent need for targeted interventions and support systems. The lower number of violations in Mutare, while encouraging, suggests the necessity for enhanced awareness and reporting mechanisms to address potential underreporting.

Conversely, the absence of reported violations against intersex persons calls for proactive measures to ensure their rights are recognized and protected, as well as continued efforts to document and advocate for their issues. Low reportage of cases among LBQ women is also concerning as it may indicate hesitation or reluctance due to fears of stigma. There is also a need to engage community on reporting channels and how to be able to identify if their rights are being violated. In that regard, it is apt to note that the only recorded violations in this report were those that were appropriated as befitting of violation, while a majority others were excluded as they did not qualify.