

PHOTO VOICE

TESTAMENT

OF

AFRICAN LESBIAN, GAY, BISEXUAL, TRANSGENDER
QUEER AND INTERSEX (LGBTQI) ASYLUM SEEKERS
AND REFUGEES IN SPAIN, FRANCE AND BELGIUM

“My Voice Count”



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Pride Equality International (PEI) is a non- governmental, non-profitable and non-religious organization that advocates for the promotion and protection of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer and Intersex human rights. PEI was established 2007 in Freetown, Sierra Leone and 2014 in Barcelona, Spain, Monrovia, Liberia and Conakry, Guinea. PEI is devoted to creating a vibrant and proactive network of LGBTQI asylum seekers and refugees in Europe and ending violence and all forms of discrimination against African LGBTQI people in Africa and across. PEI promotes, protects and provides services on human rights and access to sexual reproductive health for people regardless of their age, gender, ethnicity, race, belief, sexual orientation and gender identity in Africa and Africa.

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CREDITS

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some names and images have been changed and adjusted on request.

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FOREWARD

One of the world's most eminent social theorists, the Polish sociologist Zygmunt Bauman (1925), who has written on issues as diverse as modernity and the Holocaust, stated in his essay *"Wasted Lives: Modernity and Its Outcasts"* (2005), that modernity is producing human waste. More precisely, wasted lives, a superfluous population of migrants, refugees



and other outcasts (pariah, stateliness and others), are an inevitable outcome of modernization. It is an unavoidable side effect of economic progress and the quest for order which is characteristic of modernity. Those populations are now confronted with the need to seek - in vain, it seems - local solutions to globally produced problems. The global spread of modernity has given rise to growing quantities of human beings who are deprived of adequate means of survival and the planet is fast running out of places to put them. Hence the new anxieties about immigrants and

asylum seekers and the growing role played by diffuse security fears on the political agenda, unravels an impact of this transformation on our contemporary culture.

Global forced displacement due to wars, conflicts, persecution and violation of human rights, with more than 60 million souls affected all around the globe, is one of Humanity's toughest challenges. In order to ensure that refugee's issues are not reduced to simple numbers and statistics, depersonalizing human beings affected by this global problem, it's crucial to give them a voice and the opportunity to demonstrate that Bauman's theories about wasted lives can be overcome.

"My voice count" intends to establish a dialogue between twelve African LGBTQI asylum seekers and refugees testimonies, key actors of this photo voice project, and readers like you, with the objective to make you empathize with the protagonists and their circumstances. It's a collective endeavor to raise awareness on key issues affecting the LGBTI African community. By documenting the experiences of human rights violations perpetrated against them, Pride Equality International is giving visibility to those who have been depersonalized, to humanize what is being considered as a wasted life.

Joan Reventós
Director
UNHCR Catalan Committee Association



LIST OF ACRONYMS

| | |
|---------------|---|
| PEI | Pride Equality International |
| PRF | Planet Romeo Foundation |
| UNHCR | United Nations High Commission for Refugees |
| LGBTQI | Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer and Intersex |
| GBM | Gay, Bisexual and Men who have Sex with Men |
| MSM | Men who have sex with Men |
| UDHR | Universal Declaration of Human Rights |
| INGOs | International Non Governmental Organizations |
| CSOs | Civil Society organizations |
| SOGI | Sexual Orientation and Gender identity |
| ECHR | European Convention on Human Rights |

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report is a collection of testimonies documented by PEI staff and volunteers in Spain, France and Belgium initiated in 2015 as part of PEI project titled “Why Me”. All the stories contained in this report are testimonies shared by African LGBTI people who participated in PEI’s first photo voice workshops in Barcelona, Montargis and Brussels which brings about 40 African LGBTQI people between the ages of 18 – 35 years. PEI conducted 70 personal interviews and published 12 cases with African LGBTQI asylum seekers and refugees in Belgium, France and Spain.

Most of the participants declined for their stories to be published as they are afraid of deportation and negative backlash. After the workshops, interviews and focus group discussions were held in the three countries to discuss the challenges and further make recommendations to start advocacy for policy and structural changes. PEI had a validation session in each country wherein the participants and contributors made amendments to the final draft prepared by the committee and agreed for their testimonies to be published. After several deliberations we decided that “**My Voice Count**” is the title of this report.

Based on the testimonies documented we observed that African LGBTI asylum seekers and refugees are subjected to inhumane and degrading treatment which is a violation of Article 3 of the European Convention on Human Rights, Article 5 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and other international instruments listed on page 21 to 23 of this report.

By documenting the lived realities of African LGBTQI asylum seekers and refugees in terms of the experiences of human rights violations perpetrated against them, this report adopts the multi-pronged approach of raising awareness on key issues affecting the LGBTI African community, while seeking to influence policy makers and human rights bodies to take action by way of effectuating policies that advance the interests and rights of African LGBTQI communities in Europe.

1 Spain Testimonies

Spain

George's Story

I am George Reginald Freeman, born in Sierra Leone, Founder and Director of Pride Equality International. I left my country where sexual orientation was persecuted and landed on a continent where the color of their skin was not always welcome. Being a refugee, "legal status unknown, full of taboos." Liked men rather than women, and that is something that nearly cost my life in 2013 when two men stormed into his car in the capital, Freetown. A day earlier, a local newspaper had interviewed him and the headline "I was born gay" <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-africa-23033423>

"My life was in danger, so in August 2013 came to Spain via Ghana. Here I found other problems, bureaucratic, much paperwork, going here and there tomorrow".

Seeking asylum in Spain was the most difficult decision I had made in my life. When I came to Spain everything was like a nightmare to me. I was so depressed, worried and felt it so difficult to integrate as it was difficult to gather the pieces of my life together. When I arrived in Madrid with the support of Fundacion Triangulo in August 2013, I thought I will have a starting point in my life. I asked for asylum in Madrid and was sent to Las Palmas. I was also worried and had nightmare every night and could not sleep wondering about the future and all that. I heard several stories like "I will be deported for submitting my passport" etc....

I had a nice time at the asylum centre as I met good social workers who were friendly, but I was struggling with so many things like language barrier, customs and traditions. After staying in the asylum centre for 6 months I was asked to leave the centre and I moved to Barcelona in search of a new life. On my way to Barcelona, I was interrogated by the Police as they do not know what an asylum seeker Red Card is. When I moved to Barcelona, I face a lot of discrimination and xenophobia, for instance, in the metro and train stations people treat me as if I am disgusting, whenever I want to ask people for direction they openly treat me in a disgusting and offensive manner.

Most importantly, it's difficult to find a job as most interviews that I have attended people ask what is "refugee status"? and they told me they don't have any employment for refugees. I know the people don't intend any harm, I will tell you that most employers and company don't understand what refugee status is? Imagine how complicating it is to be a refugee.

I suffered a lot when I came to Barcelona, I had to queue on the street to get a social house to sleep for several weeks and if you are lucky you will get a place to sleep and very early in the morning they will ask you out of the center. Imagine how difficult and inhumane it is for people like me who came from a country with tropical climate. I was so frustrated and stopped sleeping at the Albergue (social hostel) and slept in the metro stations, banks and on the street several times.

I went to several organizations for support and they keep turning me down and giving me long appointments and request so many documents. Now what is even frustration is that when you submit all the documents for help, the social services and most organizations who work with asylum seekers and refugees will say "sorry to inform you, you are not qualified for the funds and we don't have any support".

It's a pathetic situation being a refugee has a lot of negative baggage (people label us as we are lazy, uneducated, thief, beggars etc...).

On several occasions I want to go back to study in the University and also learn professional Spanish, but there is no access to scholarship opportunities for refugees. There are no accommodation facilities for refugees as well.

As an LGBTI activist I have registered Pride Equality International in Barcelona and we are advocating for the rights of African LGBTI asylum seekers and refugees. I decided to create the platform as most LGBTI organizations told me openly they don't have a program for Africa and they can't help. I spent most of my time helping other LGBTI asylum seekers and immigrants from Africa who lives in Spain, France and Belgium to assist them with attestation letters and also going to court proceedings and advocating for them to get their legal status. And so far we have won all the cases we have worked on for the past two years.

I also do advocacy work with other organizations to better the situation of asylum seekers and refugees in Spain, France and Belgium. What kept me going is that I always strive to succeed and with the support of the Director of ACNUR in Barcelona and so many other people has encouraged me to move on. I always read books, do researches, organize trainings sessions and attend educational forums that have helped me to integrate. Most important, I try to search for a solution rather than complaining, but we should know that not everyone will be like me, because we are different. And I have seen so many people being frustrated and so angry with the asylum process. My dream is to set up an Academy that will provide access to professional skills training for asylum seekers and refugees to be able to create their own jobs or find jobs to be self-reliant.

"Together we can stop discrimination and embrace diversity and equality"

Charaf's Story

I knew I was gay from a very young age. In Morocco, my home country, homosexual acts are punishable by law. As a teenager my life at home and work became very difficult. I decided to leave Morocco for Spain a more tolerant place to live openly as a gay man.

Moving first to Spain and then France, Charaf found he still couldn't be open about his sexuality. With large North African communities in both countries, he was still afraid to be himself. I claimed asylum in Spain, but was immediately detained. I didn't expect to be treated like a criminal.


I was released after few months and applied for asylum but life outside was not better as I had to sleep on the street and even getting a day's meal was difficult. My asylum claim was refused after 1 year. I was staying in the homeless shelter in Barcelona for 3 months where I was allowed to pass the night. I met my partner Med one afternoon in a Park in Barcelona.

Med is four years older than me, but his journey was very different. He fled Tunisia during the Arab Spring after coming under threat for his political activities. He came to Spain on one month visa, not realizing he could claim asylum. Eventually he did, but on the grounds of his political activities not his sexuality. Med is afraid as he never felt comfortable to discuss about his sexuality so he felt he could be discriminated against. When he told the authorities about his sexuality they told him he is a liar and will not be granted refugee status.

As asylum seekers, we have no choice about where we live or who we can live with. In the homeless shelter we had homophobic residents who make comments like gays are disgusting people and when I reported to the social worker he told me to be discreet about my sexuality as most of the people staying are religion people.

We are not allowed to work and study as our asylum had been rejected. Most times Africans especially Moroccan people openly make homophobic comments whenever I am walking on the street with my partners or in the metro. I have been to several LGBTI organizations in Barcelona and all of them told me they don't have support for African LGBTI people. PEI has been a family for me as they are trying their best and always welcoming. I am worried as I don't know when I will become legal, but also very hopeful that things might change. I can't go back homes as Morocco is very hostile towards LGBTI people.

Papy's Story



I am Papy Valerie a gay man from Mali. I am a fashion designer by profession. I left my country because I suffered aggression and violence to live in Spain. I live in Valencia and currently involved in fashion designing and also marketing my products in festivals and exhibitions across Spain.

The challenges I faced are people discouraging me that I am not good enough as I do not study in Europe so I am not a professional.

Even in the asylum centre where I stayed for couple of months, the social workers advised me to be more focused and choose another career that will earn me money like cleaning or farming.

I constantly being discriminated against during fashion exhibitions, but I always ignore them and concentrate in promoting my designs. People make homophobic comments against me, but I don't care, because I am proud of whom I am.

My dream is to own a fashion line, create access to trainings that will enable African LGBTI people creating their own businesses and jobs to be self reliant.

I am awaiting my decision on my asylum. I am also a human rights activist for PEI advocating and defending the rights of African immigrants including LGBTI people in Valencia.

Johnie's Story

My name is Johnie, 22 years and originally from Guinea. I relocated to Spain for fear of persecution because I am gay, and has since entered a system that has left me with no place to live and no way of supporting myself. I came to Spain in 2011 and left for Belgium, I was arrested in Brussels and detained. After few weeks I was granted access to apply for asylum. After 6 months I was relocated to Spain as that was my first port of entry and the country responsible to process my asylum application.

When I got back to Spain, I was sleeping in the metro stations and the street and went to several organizations for support and all of them turned their backs on me. Some organizations told me that, sorry we are not working with African, we work with Latin Americans. On the street people treat me as if I am a criminal as most times they called me black monkey and refer to me as "negro" which means black in Spanish, but very derogatory to me. To survive in Spain I have to beg at supermarkets and also pick things from the dustbin to sell for my survival.

I have been arrested by the Police several times and detained. I have been rejected in the asylum process as they did not believe that I am gay, because I don't look feminine.

I'm staying with a friend at the moment, and he has just told me that maybe soon I'll have to leave. He let me stay for a month but it's been six months now. He never knew me before. If he asks me to leave at any time I will end up again on the street and that will make things worse.

I'm definitely disappointed by the system here. When I came I didn't even know that I could apply for asylum, I went myself to the police station looking for help. While I'm here in Spain, everything is just going backwards. I'm not able to get any healthcare so the minute I fall sick that's the end.

2 France Testimonies

FRANCE

Anonymous Kenyan bisexual woman's story

I am a bisexual woman from Kenya where same-sex relationships are illegal and LGBT people face serious violence. I have been living in France for one year and never knew I could claim asylum, because I thought being a refugee you need to be poor or coming from a war country. I went to the Police and claimed asylum and got arrested. I was released after 3 months and then moved in again with my partner. I told the asylum office that I am a bisexual and I am not a lesbian. During my interview they asked me why cant I reframe from being with women and stick to men? I was so angry and I replied them this is who I am and I am comfortable to be bisexual woman. I left Kenya because; I've already received death threats on social media, people say I'm making the country look bad. If I go back I will be tortured, I will be killed for sure. Because my case has been covered in the media there will be no way for me to hide.

Immigration officials refused to accept that I am bisexual, despite currently being in a relationship with a woman, because I told them I had a son and was a victim of force marriage.

It was extremely disappointing and heart rending for the authorities not to believe me.

In my neighborhood, people spat on me several times from their windows and make comments that I should go home back. The facial expression of people in public is quite devastating in my work place they give me more work and get paid less simply because I do not have legal papers. I had to work to earn my living. My boss usually called me black baboon and I have nowhere to report as I will be at risk of being deported.

Bilkisu's Story

My name is Bilkisu and I am a Sierra Leonean. My partner and I left Sierra Leone because homosexuality is illegal and we suffered torture and other forms of violence. When we arrived at the airport in France we were detained for couple of weeks. I felt like I was guilty of committing a crime by being a lesbian seeking refuge in France.

When I applied for asylum I was separated from my partner throughout my asylum process, but we usually visited each other which was quite challenging to me. At the asylum center we are not allowed to bring our partners which does not gives us right to privacy. I was also told to behave normal and stop doing things like men by other residents. I refused to compliant as I was so worried and impatient with the bureaucratic asylum procedure.

I remember one morning on my way to language school; an elderly man spat on me from the window and started making comments in French, which I did not understand. So I brushed it aside, but it was not ok for me. Even in the language school, most people will change their seats and treat me as if I am a disgusting person, even though they never made a comment, but I can sense the discrimination based on their facial impression and body language.

Pride Equality International is a family that creates the platform for me to interact and meet with other African LGBTI people in France through programs and events. PEI also wrote an attestation letter to support our asylum applications and we are granted Refugee status. I am now studying language and integration courses and will enroll for nursing course in France.

Eddie's Story

I am Eddie from Cameroon. I left Cameroon, because homosexuality is illegal and the community is hostile for LGBTI people. I travelled to Morocco and started my journey to enter Spain. I spent 3 years in Morocco to jump the fence and was tortured by the Police and being treated brutally.

The Moroccan Police attack our camps and flogged us with sticks and other objects. I had to hide in the booth of a car in order for me to enter Spain. I was caught and arrested by the Police at the border and then I claimed asylum. I was detained at the border and was denied and I appealed and was granted access to enter Spain. When I arrived in Spain I was in Madrid and I asked for asylum and to get a shelter was a problem.

I spent one year roaming different cities in Spain in search of shelter and food. In the homeless shelter asylum seekers can only stay for 3 months. After 1 year, I did not receive any information from the Spanish government concerning my asylum application. I decided to move to France. I stayed for a year in the asylum center and they detected I have asked for asylum in Spain.

When I was asked to returned to Spain I rejected as life in France is better than Spain. In Spain I was treated as a slave as the homeless shelter was just to pass the night. I have been arrested by the Police several occasion and returned to Spain and I always return back to France. In France I never faced discrimination based on the color of my skin like in Spain. I am now working without papers in France.

Abubakarr's story

I am Abubakarr from Guinea. I left Guinea and travelled on another person's passport. When I arrived at the airport in France, I was arrested and detained for three months because I do not have identity documents to prove my nationality. In the detention centre, people were deported every day and I was so afraid because I could be deported.

After I was released, I applied for asylum and got support from NGOs helping refugees. I was rejected two times and I filed another appeal and was finally granted refugee status.

I am now working as a gardener in a farm, but face discrimination based on the color of my skin as people make indirect racist comments. Most times people refer to me as black monkey and even amongst my colleagues who are African, I am frowned at because I am a gay man. They avoid me completely as they consider being gay a sin because of their religious beliefs. I have left several jobs and still get the same treatment. At times some people I work with tell me that being gay is disgusting, I should reframe and start up a family and get married to a wife.

I am now actively advocating for equal rights and joining hands with PEI to sensitize people that being gay is alright as we are all human. Human lives matter no matter the race, color, gender, sexuality, sexual orientation and gender identity we are all equal.

Blessing's Story

Being an asylum seeker is not an easy life. I was a nurse in Nigeria, working in the local hospital in Delta State. I had to leave Nigeria because I am a lesbian. I was caught by my neighbours with my girl friend inside my room. I escaped from my house and the next morning my girlfriend was killed.

In 2007 I fled Nigeria to France, because people were after me because of my sexuality. When I explained my situation to the Police at the airport in Paris, they didn't believe me. It's so frustrating; as an asylum seeker you're not allowed to work, you're not allowed to do full-time courses... it can make you crazy.

Most times, I face discrimination from other African people as they see me as deviant and the African Pentecostal churches are homophobic towards LGBTI people. In public transportation, especially in trains most white people will get up when I sit closer to them and their body languages is negative most of the times.

After spending couple of months in and out of detention, I came to Leon. I have been rejected asylum so I decided never to re-appeal as I am afraid of deportation. In December 2015, I joined Pride Equality International African LGBTI Network. I have re-appealed and waiting for a decision.

3 Belgium Testimonies

Belgium

Helen's Story

I'm Helen proud to be a lesbian woman from Liberia. I arrived in Italy on a one week visa and moved to Belgium where I applied for asylum. During my asylum procedure, I was granted a place to stay. After one year I received my decision and my asylum was rejected.

I was so angry because during my interviews I was asked several questions relating to my private life to prove I am lesbian. The interviewers were very homophobic and do not understand the issues of sexual orientation and gender identity. When I left the asylum centre, I had to sleep in different places every night and at times slept in the metro stations and parks. I also beg people to survive before getting a job.

At the moment, I am staying with my girl friend and also working without paper in a hotel to earn my living. Most times my boss treat me as a slave and overwork me and get paid less, but there is no where I can compliant as I don't have papers.

After attending PEI photo-voice workshop I decided to appeal and now awaiting a decision.

Vera's Story

I left Uganda because I was very different. I found out that there was something quite not right about me. I live in Brussels. I had my first same sex experience and was caught by a family member and was badly punished.

So I was aware that how I was and how I behave was not considered to be right. The more I rebel the more I get beaten up. I decided to live and came to Belgium, because I could not survive in a homophobic country.

Seeking asylum is a very hard demeaning process. The moment I walked into the Police station to claim asylum they made me feel like I was a criminal. I was detained for one month which has been the worst situation of my life.

I was later on released and allowed in the asylum process.

Chris' Story

I am Chris an openly gay man from Ghana living in Belgium. I left Ghana because my life was in danger and being gay is illegal in Ghana. I moved to Belgium and applied for asylum, I was rejected and I contacted PEI who helped me with an attestation and my refugee status was granted shortly after submitting the attestation.

In the asylum centre I was ridiculed by other people because they were not ok with the way I behave. I joined an advocacy organization in Belgium and I have been actively involved in helping other LGBTI asylum seekers with advises and referrals.

I am grateful to the Belgian government for protecting my life and giving me a new beginning. My passion is to help other people like me to get protection and continuing advocating for the decriminalization of homosexuality in Africa.

4

INTERNATIONAL INSTRUMENTS THAT CAN BE USED TO PROTECT HUMAN RIGHTS OF LGBTI PERSONS

1. Right to Life

Universal Declaration of Human Rights

- **Article 3:** Everyone has the right to life, liberty and the security of person.

International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights

- **Article 6:** Every human being has the inherent right to life. This right shall be protected by law. No one shall be arbitrarily deprived of his life.
- **Article 9:** Everyone has the right to liberty and security of person.

European Convention on Human Rights

- **Article 2:** Everyone's right to life shall be protected by law.

Convention relating to the Status of Refugees

- **Article 33(1) :** No Contracting State shall expel or return (*refouler*) a refugee in any manner whatsoever to the frontiers of territories where his life or freedom would be threatened on account of his race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion.

2. Prevent torture and cruel, inhuman and degrading treatment of LGBTI persons

Universal Declaration of Human Rights

- **Article 5:** No one shall be subjected to torture or to cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment.

International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights

- **Article 7:** No one shall be subjected to torture or to cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment. In particular, no one shall be subjected without his free consent to medical or scientific experimentation.

European Convention on Human Rights

- **Article 3:** *No one shall be subjected to torture or to inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment.*

Convention against Torture

- **Article 1(1):** For the purposes of this Convention, the term “torture” means any act by which severe pain or suffering, whether physical or mental, is intentionally inflicted on a person for such purposes as obtaining from him or a third person information or a confession, punishing him for an act he or a third person has committed or is suspected of having committed, or intimidating or coercing him or a third person, or for any reason based on discrimination of any kind, when such pain or suffering is inflicted by or at the instigation of or with the consent or acquiescence of a public official or other person acting in an official capacity. It does not include pain or suffering arising only from, inherent or incidental to lawful sanctions.
- **Article 2(1):** Each State Party shall take effective legislative, administrative, judicial or other measures to prevent acts of torture in any territory under its jurisdiction.

3. Prohibit discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity

Universal Declaration of Human Rights

- **Article 2:** Everyone is entitled to all the rights and freedoms set forth in this Declaration, without distinction of any kind, such as race, colour, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, property, birth, or other status.
- **Article 7:** All are equal before the law and are entitled without any discrimination to equal protection of the law. All are entitled to equal protection against any discrimination in violation of this Declaration and against any incitement to such discrimination.

International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights

- **Article 2(1):** Each State Party to the present Covenant undertakes to respect and to ensure to all individuals within its territory and subject to its jurisdiction the rights recognized in the present Covenant, without distinction of any kind, such as race, colour, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, property, birth or other status.
- **Article 26:** All persons are equal before the law and are entitled without any discrimination to the equal protection of the law. In this respect, the law shall prohibit any discrimination and guarantee to all persons equal and effective protection against discrimination on any ground such as race, colour, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, property, birth or other status.

International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights

- **Article 2:** The States Parties to the present Covenant undertake to guarantee that the rights enunciated in the present Covenant will be exercised without discrimination of any kind as to race, colour, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, property, birth or other status.

4. Respect freedom of expression, association and peaceful assembly born free and equal

Universal Declaration of Human Rights

- **Article 19:** Everyone has the right to freedom of thought and expression; this right includes freedom to hold opinions without interference and to seek, receive and impart information and ideas.
- **Article 20(1):** Everyone has the right to freedom of peaceful assembly and association.

International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights

- **Article 19(2):** Everyone shall have the right to freedom of expression; this right shall include freedom to seek, receive and impart information and ideas of all kinds, regardless of frontiers, either orally, in writing or in print, in the form of art, or through any other media of his choice.
- **Article 21:** The right of peaceful assembly shall be recognized. No restrictions may be placed on the exercise of this right other than those imposed in conformity with the law and which are necessary in a democratic society in the interests of national security or public safety, public order (*ordre public*), the protection of public health or morals or the protection of the rights and freedoms of others.
- **Article 22(1):** Everyone shall have the right to freedom of association with others, including the right to form and join trade unions for the protection of his interests.

RECOMMENDATIONS TO THE GOVERNMENT OF SPAIN, FRANCE & BELGIUM

During the focus group discussion in Belgium, France and Spain African LGBTQI asylum seekers and refugees agreed on the following recommendations:

- ❖ Provide more training on SOGI issues to officials conducting interviews, social workers and Police officials in order for them to understand the situation of LGBTI asylum seekers and handle cases with dignity and respect;
- ❖ Access to social help (food, housing, basic allowance and transportation) for African LGBTI asylum seekers under the same criteria, fairly and enough for a decent life;
- ❖ Support to integration program by providing access to educational and professional training courses for LGBTI asylum seekers and refugees;
- ❖ Access to internship opportunities after studying and more job opportunities for refugees in order for us to be independent and pay taxes that will contribute to the economy of Spain, Belgium and France;
- ❖ Assess cases effectively as well as reducing long period of waiting in the asylum process.
- ❖ Public inclusion and support for the promotion and protection of all human rights including the rights to non discrimination and equality based on sexual orientation and gender identity;
- ❖ Public awareness on asylum seekers and refugee issues for better understanding.
- ❖ Provision of medical aid for refugees

ABOUT PRIDE EQUALITY INTERNATIONAL

Pride Equality International (PEI) is a non-governmental, non-profitable and non-religious organization that advocates for the promotion and protection of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer and Intersex human rights. PEI was established 2007 in Freetown, Sierra Leone and 2014 in Barcelona, Spain, Monrovia, Liberia and Conakry, Guinea. PEI is devoted to creating a vibrant and proactive network of LGBTQI asylum seekers and refugees in Europe and ending violence and all forms of discrimination against African LGBTQI people in Africa and across. PEI promotes, protects and provides services on human rights and access to sexual reproductive health for people regardless of their age, gender, ethnicity, race, belief, sexual orientation and gender identity in Africa and Africa.

Vision Statement

PEI visualizes a society that respects and promotes fundamental human rights, ensuring that every person has equal rights regardless of sexual orientation and gender identity

Mission Statement

Our mission is to minimize discrimination, stereotypes, homophobia, transphobia, patriarchal system and raise awareness in order to achieve equal rights for all people.

Core Values

INTEGRITY: Consistent, committed and transparent in our decisions and conduct. Fulfilling our mission and conducting ourselves in a way that is true to our identity.

DIVERSITY: We seek to learn from the different ways of life in the African communities, with opinions as represented by LGBTQI persons in Mano River Union itself. We respect and actively encourage the participation of LGBTQI and non-LGBTQI alike in order to achieve our aims. This aims to raise awareness and promote a developed understanding of sexual diversity. It provides information in relation to appropriate terminology and definitions, the legislative framework in the area of sexual orientation and gender identity history.

PARTICIPATION: We seek to create a dynamic environment, where everyone can get involved in the building up of the community and the African society. We believe that the participation of everyone in the struggle for human rights is paramount in its achievement.

DIALOGUE: Engage in dialogue with community leaders, political office holders, legislators, civil society groups, religious and spiritual leaders for better understanding of the rights and needs of LGBTI people within the Mano River Union (Sierra Leone, Guinea and Liberia).

ARGON BUSTER

An asylum seeker is someone who has applied for or is in the process of seeking asylum from the government of the country of asylum, but who has not yet been granted that status.

A refugee is a person "who owing to a well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion, is outside the country of his nationality and is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail himself of the protection of that country.

Bisexual refers to an individual who has the capacity for profound emotional, affectional, and/or sexual attraction to and/or intimate and sexual relations with people regardless of their gender or sex.

Gender Identity is each person's deeply felt internal and individual experience of gender, which may or may not correspond with the sex assigned at birth.

Gay refers to a self-identifying man who has the capacity for profound emotional, affectional and/or sexual attraction to and/or intimate sexual relations primarily with other men.

Homophobia refers to a hatred or fear of homosexuals – that is, lesbians and gay men – sometimes leading to acts of violence and expressions of hostility.

Intersex refers to a person who is born with reproductive or sexual anatomy and/or chromosome patterns that do not fit typical definitions of male or female.

Lesbian refers to a self-identifying woman who has the capacity for profound emotional, affectional, and/or sexual attraction to and/or intimate and sexual relations primarily with other women.

LGBTI is the acronym for "lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and/or intersex." Sexual Orientation refers to a person's capacity for profound emotional, affectional, and/or sexual attraction to and/or intimate and sexual relations with individuals of a different gender, the same gender, or more than one gender.

Sexually and Gender Non-conforming (SGN) is an umbrella term used to refer to individuals whose sexual practices, attractions, and/or gender expression are different from the societal expectations based on their assigned sex at birth.

Transgender is "[a]n umbrella term for people whose gender identity, expression, or behavior is different from those typically associated with their assigned sex at birth."

A transgender woman is a person who was assigned male at birth but identifies as a woman.

A transgender man is a person who was assigned female at birth but identifies as a man.

Transphobia refers to negative attitudes and feelings toward transgender people. Transgender people feel that their gender identity (self-identification) does not correspond to one's assigned sex (identification by others as male or female based on genetic sex). people feel that their gender identity (self-identification) does not correspond to one's assigned sex (identification by others as male or female based

PHOTO GALLERY



RESOURCES

ECHR:

http://www.europarl.europa.eu/charter/pdf/text_en.pdf

UDHR:

http://www.ohchr.org/EN/UDHR/Documents/UDHR_Translations/eng.pdf

Refugee Convention:

<http://www.ohchr.org/EN/ProfessionalInterest/Pages/StatusOfRefugees.aspx>

www.unhcr.org

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