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I write to you in a jovial mood. I was in November 2010 bestowed with an International Award by Junior Chamber International for being amongst the 10 finest young people of the world who have done outstanding and notable work. In Africa we were only two. The award basically emanates from the sterling job that BONELA does. BONELA too received recognition in its name by being a finalist on awards presented by Southern Africa Trust. We were named as an Agent of Change. All these achievements come against the backdrop of my meeting with United States of America President, Barack Obama at the White house. It is therefore not an exaggeration to say that BONELA is doing tremendously well and the world is taking note and appreciation.

I am also heartened to note that BONELA has adopted a Revised Strategic Plan that runs from 2011-2014. The strategy was carefully debated and adopted by the BONELA members at our AGM. I must say that I was very impressed by the way the board conducted the AGM business. They showed astute leadership.

At the said AGM the members resolved to increase membership subscriptions fees to P100.00 and P500.00 annually for individuals and organizations respectively. Furthermore, the members also resolved to mandate the board to review the BONELA constitution. Pursuant to the adoption of a new strategy, BONELA is developing a new implementation plan aimed at breathing life to the new strategy. Moreover, there is need to develop a new structure in line with our new strategy.

It is also important to observe that government has passed a law prohibiting dismissal on the basis of one’s sexual orientation. This is a remarkable move as it embraces that we have sexual diversity in our country. As to why we still have the anti-sodomy law beats me.

In the spirit of establishing useful and strategic partnerships, BONELA and some lawyers in private practice entered into an agreement in terms of which the lawyers will do pro bono work for us. We also intend to use the same vehicle to refer people with cases falling outside our mandate. We are hopeful that this initiative will go a long way in improving access to legal aid in Botswana, especially access to justice by indigent persons.

In a bid to reach out to the communities we went to Moshaneng village to donate to an elderly woman who is taking care of 24 orphans. The donation, which we received from Da Heng Group of companies, consisted of groceries, bedding, clothing and curtains. This gesture shows that BONELA is equally concerned about the plight of the indigent in matters concerning socio-economic rights.

On the whole, 2010 was a very good year for BONELA and we are looking forward to an even greater exciting 2011.

Brela, an academic journal that seeks to bring to the fore ethical, legal, cultural, economic and political issues as well as other parameters in relation to HIV/AIDS as a human rights issue, was officially launched by Mr. Chris O’Connell, the Botswana Country Coordinator of the United States President’s Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR).

Figure 2 Uyapo Ndadi (left) and Christopher O’Connell (right) launching BRELA

In his address to more than 30 media practitioners, academics and representatives of non-governmental organizations, attending the launch, Mr. O’Connell said; “Until everyone has access to the health services they need -- free from fears of stigma and discrimination – then we will still have gaps in Botswana’s national response to HIV and AIDS. That is why, for us to continue to make efforts in prevention, and other areas of HIV/AIDS, we need organizations like BONELA, and scholars at institutions like the University of Botswana to continue their important research and advocacy work. And this work needs to be shared widely, through publications such as Brela.”

The Director of BONELA, Mr. Uyapo Ndadi spoke on the importance of the journal to Botswana. “Brela was mooted to stimulate research, and the publication of academic and research-based papers on ethics and law. Whilst this move in its own right would enjoin the academicians to finding solutions to mitigate the HIV and AIDS epidemic in Botswana, it was also the hope of BONELA at the time for Brela to be a guide to policymakers, advocates and implementers on key issues for consideration in ensuring a balanced response to the HIV and AIDS epidemic”, he said.

The Editor of Brela, Dr. Sethunya Mosime from the University of Botswana added that the country had emerged as a leader in Africa in instituting a meaningful response to HIV and AIDS, and should continue to lead by example in ensuring an evidence-based approach to all programming geared to mitigate the epidemic. She thanked the US Embassy for the financial support that made the production and printing of Brela possible, as well as a capacity building workshop for BONELA staff to improve their writing skills held from the 20th to
the 21st of October 2010.

BONELA has in previous years published two issues of the Brela journal to encourage an evidence-based approach to holistically addressing ethical, legal and human rights issues pertaining to HIV and AIDS in Botswana. Brela is further envisioned to be a guide to policymakers, advocates and implementers on key issues for consideration in ensuring a balanced response to the HIV and AIDS epidemic. It is supported by the US Embassy in Botswana and HIVOS, whilst past issues have also been financed by the European Commission.

Although strides have been made in the quest to reduce prevalence of HIV/AIDS, there is still need to pay particular attention to ensuring universal access and human rights are realized as prescribed by the World AIDS day theme for this year.

In his World AIDS Day 2009 address, the President Lt. Gen. Seretse Khama Ian Khama outlined key achievements attained in Botswana’s response to HIV/AIDS despite the negative consequences brought about the global financial crisis. President Khama said: “Significant achievements were made in the ARV programme. With over 151000 people on treatment, we are virtually covering almost all those who have been registered and in need of treatment.”

The president further revealed that the government had launched, in February 2010, the second national strategic framework for HIV/AIDS (NSF2). NSF 2 articulates four priority areas, that is, preventing new infections, systems strengthening, scaling up treatment care and support and strategic information management. “These are the areas that require our attention over the coming years in order to maximize the impact of our national response to HIV/AIDS”, he said.

The president however made a perturbing observation that there is a huge gender difference in HIV prevalence where males 15 to 19 years recorded 3.1 percent in 2004 as opposed to the 9.8 percent for females in the same year. In 2008, the prevalence was 2.4 percent for males and 5.0 for females. He said: “This is all the more reason why our programmes should be gender sensitive.”

Despite the wide gender difference in prevalence, Khama sighed in relief at the decline of prevalence among young people. “The declines among youth may be an indication that the message is reaching them and they are gradually changing”.

While Khama went on about the achievements made so far -and appreciated mainstreaming a human rights approach in response to HIV/AIDS, some non governmental organizations noted that the fight against HIV/AIDS will continue to be a losing battle should some groups of the society be neglected from HIV/AIDS programming and interventions.
THE PREVENTION AND RESEARCH INITIATIVE FOR SEXUAL MINORITIES

The Prevention and Research Initiative for Sexual Minorities (PRISM) is a partnership programme of the Botswana Network on Ethics, Law and HIV/AIDS (BONELA) and Lesbians, Gays and Bisexuals of Botswana (LeGaBiBo). Established in 2007, the programme is aimed at developing and implementing an HIV and Sexually Transmitted Infections (STI) prevention and human rights programme related to sexual minorities in Botswana.

Objectives

The programme has two main objectives:
1. To ensure the public and personal health of all by supporting public health efforts towards preventing new HIV infections by 2016. This will be achieved through:
   - Protecting the physical, mental, spiritual and sexual health of men who have sex with other men (MSM) and women who have sex with other women (WSW);
   - Building and expanding the comprehensive support, treatment and care of MSM/WSW by enhancing capacities of service providers offering services to people living with HIV, particularly sexual minorities, and
   - Strengthening psychosocial support and working with families and communities to ensure ongoing support for MSM/WSW and Lesbians, Gays, Bisexuals and Transgendered (LGBT) people.
2. To promote and strengthen a human rights culture for all by:
   - Advocating for non-discrimination, equality and dignity for MSM/WSW in general and MSM/WSW living with HIV in particular;
   - Sensitizing and educating policy makers and service providers on the prevention needs and issues affecting MSM/WSW, and
   - Minimizing and removing stigma and discrimination and ensuring justice to mitigate and redress discrimination affecting MSM/WSW, LGBT and those living with HIV.

Programme Areas

PRISM has four (4) scopes of operation derived from BONELA's 2007-2012 strategic plan to ensure that the aforementioned objectives are met. These are:

i. Research – there is little research on sexual minorities generally and this component focuses on researching various subjects relating to sexual minorities to inform evidence-based interventions or programming.

ii. Advocacy – one of the largest components of PRISM; falling within BONELA's overall mandate of advocating for better policies and laws that respect human beings, accord dignity to people by removing stigma and discrimination, as well as allowing free and responsible access to services in turn. The right to health and information are encompassed in this aspect, including information on transmission of STIs/HIV in same sex relationships, safe sex, prevention methods and health services as well as issues of multi-concurrent partnerships. This component also deals with lobbying different stakeholders including sexual minorities in policies and/or laws, for example, on the HIV National Strategic framework, in HIV couple counseling policies, Operational Plans of prevention and Botswana AIDS Impact Survey (BAIS).

iii. Training and Education – trainings and education target different people in the society including the MSM/WSW community itself, mainly for sensitization and appreciation of issues and how to deal with them. BONELA in partnership with LeGaGiBo thus conducts training workshops, focus group discussions, presentations and also develops and distributes information, education and communication materials and

iv. Networking and Partnerships - there is a recognition that PRISM can not be implemented by the two organizations only, and that there is need to collaborate with other organizations with different mandates to optimally achieve the set goals and mitigate HIV and AIDS in Botswana and beyond, hence, forging of new partnerships and strengthening existing ones.

The Operational Context of PRISM

Closeted LGBT/MSM/WSW

Most LGBT community members in Botswana are in the closet and this is an obstacle to reach out to them as a result of stigma and discrimination. Stigma and discrimination can be experienced both internally (self) and externally (the general community/environment) as well as institutionally through laws that criminalize certain populations such as LGBTI which culminates in poor access to existing services due to lack of information. This leads to violations of rights and inhibits access to quality health care services.

Legal context

Homosexual sexual activity in Botswana is illegal. Section 164 (cap 08:01 – 17) of the Penal Code stipulates that a person shall not have carnal knowledge of another person which is against the order of nature, regardless of whether this is done with the consent of the other person. The Act therefore criminalizes the sexual activity and not the relationship and this has pushed sexual minorities underground and contributed to public stigma and discrimination of individuals.

Mainstreaming MSM/WSW in Service Provision

Lack of knowledge and/or insufficient resources as well as criminalization of carnal knowledge against the order of nature as stipulated in the Penal Code makes it difficult for service providers to mainstream MSM and WSW in their programming and/or services.

Implementation of Activities

As a baseline, BONELA conducted a needs assessment in 2007 and a study on MSM HIV prevalence in 2008 to inform the PRISM programme which has a life span of 4 years (2007-2010). PRISM will mainly focus on:

- sensitization and social marketing of the programme;
- dissemination of MSM study findings to all stakeholders;
- training and education of different people in the society;
- collaboration meetings with other key players/stakeholders (for example government and non governmental organizations (NGOs));
- sensitization of policy makers, and
- utilization of different forums to advance advocacy on MSM/WSW/LGBTI

PRISM Partners in Botswana

To effectively integrate sexual minorities in the national response to the HIV/AIDS pandemic in Botswana, the PRISM programme, works in collaboration with national NGOs, government departments as well as regional and international players in the LGBTI movement.

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Ndadi went on to say that the journey he took “is not a bed of roses as he is working under difficult circumstances as the issues he grapples with are not popular.” He dedicated his award to his late father whom he said always urged him to do more.

Mr Tshiamo Rantao, Botswana Network on Ethics, Law and HIV/AIDS (BONELA) chairperson, who is accompanying him in Japan for the award ceremony, had this to say:

“Mr Ndadi was honored in front of thousands of delegates from the four corners of the world. His award is a great achievement, not only for Batswana in general, but for the young generation in Botswana. It shows what difference young persons can make in our community in various fields, be it human rights, medicine, development, sports, etc. BONELA is proud to have produced, not only for itself, but also for our beautiful country, an achiever in Uyapo. He is no doubt an inspiration to the young persons of Botswana. There is no reason why young Batswana should not emulate him.”

Part of Ndadi’s citation for the award reads: “Ndadi has challenged preexisting stigmas and pushed for increased equality among all Batswana, regardless of medical condition or sexual preference. By working with BONELA, Ndadi advocated policy changes within the government that abolished employment discrimination based on HIV status. He is also fighting Botswana’s decision to deny foreigners and inmates antiretroviral drugs for HIV and AIDS. Being a member of the National AIDS Council, Ndadi has used his experience and success to advocate policy changes in front of a broad audience. He has been...
IN PURSUIT OF HUMAN RIGHTS – TAKING STOCK OF PROGRESS MADE AND HURDLES TO OVERCOME

DORIS N. KUMBAWA

Human Rights day commemorations are held every year world wide to reflect and take stock of the individual, national and global challenges posed by HIV and AIDS as well as the successes and gaps in the programmes to combat it. The Botswana Network on Ethics, Law and HIV/AIDS (BONELA) thus led commemorations for Human Rights Day 2010 under the theme: Human Rights Defenders Who Act to End Discrimination.

The theme takes cognizance of the fact that human rights defenders act against discrimination, often at great personal risk to both themselves and their families are being recognized and acclaimed on this day. On the day, the expectation is also to highlight and promote the achievements of human rights defenders and it will again emphasize the primary role Governments must play in enabling and protecting their role.

BONELA thus used this day to hold a public discussion at the Main Mall in Gaborone to remind the nation that the elusive nature of human rights and how they featured throughout Botswana on radio and television programs, speaking on sensitive issues and legal matters, including HIV/AIDS and recently participated in a panel discussion organized by JCI Botswana about HIV and human rights policy. His advocacy for those affected by HIV/AIDS is a challenging journey as he strives to provide medical interventions to all in need.”

JCI (Junior Chamber International) honors ten outstanding young people under the age of 40 each year. These individuals exemplify the spirit of the JCI Mission and provide extraordinary service to their communities. Whether through service, innovation, determination or revolutionary thinking, these young active citizens create positive impacts in their communities.

However, letting go of deeply entrenched prejudices and stereotypical beliefs and/or biases is a difficult and arduous task. It requires not only a multi-sectoral approach, but a huge investment on information dissemination and education campaigns to sensitize the public as well as fight stigma and discrimination and remove existing barriers to full uptake of essential services around prevention and treatment. Only then can public health goals of universal access to prevention, treatment, care and support be achieved.

Panelists which included BONELA; the Botswana Network of People Living with HIV and AIDS (BONEPWA+); National AIDS Coordinating Agency (NACA) Ethics, Law and Human Rights sector and Women’s Affairs Department in the Ministry of Labour and Home Affairs, alluded to the fact that the fundamentals of human rights, as articulated in the international bill of rights and the constitution of Botswana, recognize non discrimination; the right to life; the right to dignity and the right to privacy as key inalienable rights inherent in each individual.

Given the fact that HIV and AIDS remains a stigmatized disease, and that stigma is conferred upon people living with HIV, it is even more important to uphold and respect these rights to ensure that the disease does not relate to HIV and AIDS, and more specifically, universal access call for a unique but wide-scale sensitization of the public, who are ultimately the claim holders and duty bearers in ensuring that human rights are respected and upheld and demand civil and legal recourse.
2010 Human Rights Day Commemoration in Pictures

Figure 1 MISA Botswana Information Officer, Mpho Mathlabani (foreground) at the 2010 Human Rights Day Commemoration

Figure 2 Members of the public collect information, education and communication materials on human rights from the BONELA stall

Figure 3 Mr. David Ngele, the Director of the Botswana Network of People Living with HIV/AIDS (BONEPWA+) delivers his message on stigma and discrimination at the Human Rights Day Commemoration

Figure 4 From left to right: Bright Motsu (BONELA Treasurer); Thapelo Ndlonhu (MISA – Botswana Director) and Tshiamo Rantao, BONELA Chairperson at the Human Rights Day commemoration.

Figure 5 BONELA staff member (from left to right) Mpho Puoeng, Tebogo Ngwankommony and Nana Gleeson in BONELA human rights day regalia

Figure 6 Members of the public at the Human Rights Day Commemoration
Cervical Cancer Can be Prevented.

Go for a Pap smear today and every year after. Your cervix will thank you.

Cervical cancer does not cause any symptoms until it has advanced to a very late stage. That is why it’s important to get screened regularly even if you feel healthy.

Get a Pap test from your nearest Clinic or Hospital.

For more information please visit www.bonela.org or contact (+267) 3932516
take away the right to a life of dignity which can only be assured where there is no stigma and discrimination, and where the right to treatment regardless of colour, creed, nationality, age, gender sexuality and social status is guaranteed. This entails greater advocacy on the part of civil society and concerned citizens to ensure that the right to health itself is enshrined and guaranteed in the constitution of Botswana so that it is not compromised on flimsy grounds, be they economic or otherwise.

In addition, human rights is crucial to the achievement of public health goals as approaches such as the meaningful involvement of PLWHIV which also place value on individual and collective rights to life and dignity in the formulation and implementation of HIV and AIDS related policies and programmes will be incorporated.

The unique challenges posed by the HIV and AIDS pandemic propel government, civic and political leaders and the society at large to be more tolerant and cognizant of subtle realities in human nature, which if ignored, can adversely detract from the gains made in significantly reducing the debilitating nature of HIV through provision of life-prolonging treatment for people living with HIV. In appreciating the context of human rights and ensuring access to prevention, treatment, care and support services, considerations should be made for populations that remain criminalized, discriminated and marginalized. These include women and girls; youth; sex workers; lesbians, gays, bisexuals, transgendered and inter-sexed communities; prisoners; refugees; immigrants and people living with disabilities. The perpetuation of violence, stigma and discrimination of these communities has drastically reduced their ability or willingness to access evidence-based, scientifically-proven prevention methods.

Ensuring universal access therefore means that firstly, everyone is treated as a human being with inalienable rights regardless of their sex, gender, sexual or social context or actual or perceived HIV status. Secondly, targeted interventions will be instituted as opposed to a one-size fits approach.

Specific issues that continue to plague our country and indeed other countries in the region, such as violence against women, access to sexual and reproductive health services for girls and women who are HIV positive and stigma and discrimination of people living with HIV in general and women living with HIV in particular in workplaces still require commitment to redress at a national level through the review of existing laws and the promulgation of protective and prohibitive legislation as well as at a personal level, hence need to be brought to the attention of society at large.

In conclusion, HIV and AIDS does not pander to the whims of expediency, but demands of us a deep introspection of even those beliefs and cultural practices we hold dear. These relate to issues of access to post-exposure prophylaxis for survivors of rape within marriage, discordant couples and sex workers; issues of provision of prevention information and services such as condoms for prisoners and sex workers; access to information on prevention of sexually transmitted infections including condoms and lubricants for gay communities and MSM and barrier methods [dental dams’, ‘fingerdom’, latex gloves] for LBTT and WSW; access to information for HIV positive women of child-bearing age who wish to fully explore and exercise their right to procreation in a safe and healthy manner and adhering to international best practices of one national programme for accessing treatment in respect to refugees, migrant workers, foreign prisoners and even the highly contentious issue of illegal immigrants.
The Botswana Network on Ethics, Law and HIV/AIDS (BONELA) applauds the Government of Botswana for amending the Employment Act which previously permitted sexual orientation and health status as a basis for dismissal from one’s employ. This is a progressive move on the part of government, which is likely to uproot stigma and discrimination within the workplace on the basis of one’s sexual orientation or health status such as HIV.

This move by the Government of Botswana shows that our leaders are determined to fight institutional discrimination targeted towards sexual minorities and will go a long way in eventually eliminating discrimination of this ‘at risk population’ within society and other service oriented institutions. Tolerance and acceptance of sexual minorities will ensure universal access to prevention, treatment, care and support, crucial for Botswana to achieve its Vision 2016 goal of zero new HIV infections by 2016.

BONELA is also excited that Section 23 (a) of the new Employment Act removes health status as a basis for dismissal from employment. BONELA has evidence that some employers were previously using HIV status as grounds for dismissal from employment, however, the Act will now curb this worrisome trend which only serves to prevent employees from voluntary testing; knowing their status and pursuing a healthy lifestyle, for fear of losing their jobs.

“As an organization, we are motivated by this move by government. Since the inception of the organization we have tirelessly worked to lobby government to include sexual minorities in policy and legal frameworks to ensure a holistic HIV and AIDS intervention, so BONELA’s advocacy efforts have been rewarded. In addition, the removal of health as a basis for dismissal is a giant leap for BONELA as a human rights organization as it is our opinion that discrimination on the basis of one’s HIV status in particular is retrogressive for any country that seeks to effectively respond to the HIV/AIDS pandemic. Once again Botswana has proved that it is a trend setter in Africa, and we hope to see more of this kind of leadership,” said Felistus Motimedi, BONELA’s Coordinator of the Prevention and Research Initiative for Sexual Minorities.

In addition, BONELA’s Legal officer, Dikeledi Dingake, said: “It is the hope of BONELA, however, that the Government of Botswana will go a step further and enact a specific HIV Employment Act. The HIV/AIDS Employment Law, as envisaged by BONELA should pay attention to matters of reasonable accommodation for those who are HIV positive, ensuring they have a safe and supportive environment to access treatment, care and support. A reasonable accommodation could be a modification or adjustment to work duties, schedule, or environment, or to the initial application process, that would enable the employee to perform...
the essential job duties without imposing an undue hardship on the operation of the business.”

As a human rights organization, BONELA contends that while the amendment to the Employment Act included crucial provisions that are prohibitive to employers terminating the employee's contract on the basis of sexual orientation, health, status or disability, it falls short on providing a protective environment specifically for people living with HIV/AIDS in the workplace. The absence of a law in the private sector prohibiting employers from testing potential employees also gives them a lee-way to test people before hiring and subsequently disqualify them on the basis of their HIV/AIDS, despite the fitness and capacity of the job seeker. This practice is not only discriminatory, but puts productive people who may contribute meaningfully to the country’s development at an arm’s length.

BONELA therefore calls on the government to swiftly enact a law that specifically HIV/AIDS in the workplace, if the rights and dignity of people living with HIV/AIDS are to be realized. BONELA believes that stigma and discrimination are drivers of the HIV/AIDS pandemic as they discourage the public from actively seeking voluntary counseling and testing if it will result in the loss of one's employment. In 2006, the organization thus launched an HIV Employment Law Campaign to lobby the Government of Botswana to enact legislation that will protect employees from stigma and discrimination within the workplace setting. Efforts are still under way to ensure that eventually, HIV positive employees have adequate protection from discrimination and reasonable accommodation for accessing prevention, treatment, care and support. This will remove a significant barrier in knowledge of one's status through voluntary counseling and testing as a means of prevention of transmission of HIV.

This is also in light of the fact that BONELA has two registered cases of this nature before the Industrial Court and we are in the process of registering more than 10 such cases before the courts. In September, BONELA also successfully settled a case on behalf of a client who was suing her employer for unfair dismissal on the grounds of her HIV Positive status. The client was awarded a 10 month salary settlement as compensation.

The organisation’s legal officer Dikeledi Dingake said this case is one of many that continue to highlight the significance and urgency of BONELA’s call for the enactment of an HIV/AIDS employment law which will address such issues. “In the absence of such a piece of legislation, employers will continue to dismiss employees on the grounds of the actual or perceived HIV status.” Dingake said.
BONELA Refocuses its Strategy

The Botswana Network on Ethics, Law and HIV/AIDS (BONELA) held its 2010 Annual General Meeting on the 19th of November in Gaborone. Chief on the agenda of the AGM was to present the draft strategic plan for endorsement by members.

Prior to presentation to the general membership, the Board and Secretariat of BONELA had undertaken a process to refocus the organizational strategy for the next four years. The clarified strategic direction would guide the organization to:

- Determine and articulate the problems being solved, ensure alignment and systematic results monitoring and evaluation. The strategies identified will be dully clarified in terms of their purpose regarding results to be achieved.

- Ensure development of people’s capacities to lead, manage and implement the change.

- To align human resources, financial management and knowledge management systems to strategy, facilitate effective implementation and reporting and create synergies in both systems and the program.

- Prioritise the focus on implementation and achieve results through partners and networks.

- Integrate monitoring and evaluation to enable BONELA to effectively document and analyze the previously undertaken needs assessment activities and utilize the data to inform basis for awareness raising and advocacy initiatives towards the intended goals.

- Develop a performance measurement system, based on stated indicators for achievement of results. This will enable clear target setting with milestones.

The strategic review was informed by desk reviews, an external environment review and analysis of the organisational strengths, weaknes, opportunities and threats. Following this process the organisation thus reviewed its Vision, Mission and Values which now read:

Vision

The Board of BONELA has retained the current vision which reads:

“Making human rights a reality in the response to the HIV and AIDS pandemic in Botswana”.

Mission

The mission has been modified to read:

“BONELA is a national network of individuals and organizations that promotes a just and inclusive environment to ensure the quality of life for people affected by HIV and AIDS through advocacy and capacity building”.

Values

- Botho (as defined by the government of Botswana, loosely translated means “humane behaviour”. It defines a process for earning respect by first giving it, and to gain empowerment by empowering others. It encourages people to applaud rather than resent those who succeed. It disapproves of anti-social, disgraceful, inhuman and criminal behaviour, and encourages social justice for all.)
- Integrity
- Accountability and Transparency
- Passion

Strategies: Advocacy and Capacity Strengthening of Partners and Networks

As a non-governmental entity advancing a rather unusual agenda of human rights surrounding HIV/AIDS, BONELA’s ability to reach the targeted MARPs countrywide is hampered by the lack of presence in every town and village. Further, BONELA has no mandate to change policies and laws; its capacity is insufficient and skills are limited to mitigate this environment and achieve the intended results for its beneficiaries.

Therefore, BONELA has decided to continue to advocate for its mission as well as ensure national coverage through building capacities of its partners and networks to strengthen its advocacy.
Meeting with President Obama was an historic and rare privilege that I never imagined I could have, even in my wildest dreams. I guess many people, including business and political leaders, would have relished the opportunity that I had. It was a momentous occasion in my life, which I shall forever treasure.

The primary purpose of the meeting was to reflect on the future of Africa, together with young leaders from African countries, and also craft innovative solutions to challenges facing Africa. We also had to map ways with which America can improve partnerships with young leaders. That was the first conference of its kind to be convened by an American president and I am delighted to have been part of such a significant moment.

I had numerous unforgettable experiences and I will just give a summary of them below. I enjoyed my unguided tour of the Whitehouse, yes the Whitehouse, and the talk by President Obama. What struck me the most from his address is his belief and confidence in young people as he said we have already distinguished ourselves as leaders and that we now have to shape the future and destiny of Africa. The latter part of the afore-going resonates well with what I see in Botswana because many young people with potential have a sense of inadequateness in them and feel that they are not cut out to do great things. We do have boundaries that we have set for ourselves and I urge all young persons to think big of ourselves and believe that ‘WE CAN’, individually and collectively.

It is a fact that the majority of Batswana are young people and it is, therefore, proper for us to be shaping the path and destiny of our country.

President Obama challenged us to be the change that we seek; I guess he drew his words from the humble yet powerful Mahatma Gandhi. President Obama further put emphasis on transparency, accountability and strong civil society if positive transformation is to be achieved. I imagine our not so active civil society in Botswana is taking heed. It is through a powerful, coherent and united civil society that swift and necessary change is often realised.

Sadly, we lack that in our country. President Obama went on to caution us against migrating to other countries, especially overseas for greener pastures, but rather remain in our countries as it is relatively easy to make greater and meaningful impact locally. I couldn’t agree more because, in part, I felt validated after having a similar conversation with my fellow Botswana delegate Itumeleng Ramsden, when we were flying to Washington, DC. I had intimated to her that I turned down a tempting opportunity to work in New York because I felt I can be much more useful locally.

Barack Obama is in my view very organised, tactful, shrewd and moving when he speaks. He is a true son of the soil and he is proud of his African heritage. I also met Senator Dick Durbin, who was the first senator to endorse Obama when running for president and coincidentally he mirrored my description of how I see Obama. What still perplexes me is that senator Durbin’s endorsement was seconded by another senator 12 months later. I wonder whether his fellow senators were sceptical about Obama’s credentials or colour or that they took an inordinate time to notice talent. A gem.

The downside of my trip is that I didn’t
get to see Michelle Obama, what an amazing and powerful woman she is. She has contributed significantly to making Barack Obama the firebrand he is today. Anyway, I take solace in the fact that I met with Hillary Clinton, who is also by any measure astute and powerful. I guess Bill and Barack chose wives’ carefully and wisely. Oh, and happy women’s month to all the women out there. I cherish you.

Hillary Clinton said that America wants to partner with us young African leaders and that they are rooting for our success. That’s heartening. She went on to underscore the importance of free press, independence of the judiciary and rights of minority groups. All these issues are relevant to us and pertinent. We are at a time that the media and activists in Botswana are unflinchingly condemning the Media Practitioners Act as it seeks, in part, we argue, to abridge the freedom and autonomy of the media. I was taken aback by the level of unawareness by most Americans that I met about Africa. They don’t know a thing about us. It seems the 2010 soccer World Cup was not very helpful in profiling us. Hillary Clinton acknowledged this fact. She indicated to me that one of the American journalists once asked her what the capital city of Africa is.

Anyway, I guess meetings like the one we recently had with President Obama will help create and/or raise awareness about Africa.

Lastly, although most black people perceive white people to be generally individualistic, I was humbled by the spirit of volunteerism at play in America after visiting several non-governmental organisations. Young and old, male and female alike do get involved and do great work in their communities for their communities. This is in sharp contrast with what obtains here. I challenge young people to get involved and cause change even at no pay. BONELA is currently mooting ideas of how to get people involved in community work/activism by either donating their time or resources. I personally joined BONELA as a volunteer during my law school days and the rest is history as I am now at the helm of the organisation.

Uyapo Ndadi
Executive Director
BONELA

**BONELA ENDS AS FINALIST FOR DRIVERS OF CHANGE AWARD**

The Botswana Network on Ethics, Law and HIV/AIDS was a finalist for the Southern Africa Trust and Mail and Guardian Drivers of Change Award in the Civil Society Category, at a ceremony held on Thursday 28 October in Johannesburg, South Africa.

Although the organization did not clinch the coveted award, it was awarded with a certificate. As motivation for selecting BONELA as a finalist for the award, the judges commended the organization for promoting the rights of homosexual men and women in a region hostile towards homosexual citizens.

“It is working towards legislation to recognize gay and lesbian relationships in Botswana. Its work has great potential to shift attitudes and practices towards HIV-positive workers and the rights of homosexual citizens. BONELA is a driver of change for advocating against the discrimination and stigmatization of people and strengthening the integration of human rights into the development of national policy and programmes,” the citation said.

**STAFF - PROFILE**

**Caine Jason Kaene Youngman**

Caine Jason Kaene Youngman or CJKY as he would prefer joined Bonela in September 2010 as programme assistant in the Prism programme. CJKY has however worked very closely with BONELA through LEGABIBO since 2005.

He holds BA in Social sciences, specializing in Demography and Environmental Science. Before CJKY came to BONELA he worked at the University of Botswana in the Sports department as a lifeguard and first aid provider then joined the public service as an intern at the department of social services for 13 months. He then went to work at the ministry of local government- applied research unit.
About BONELA

Who Are We and What Do We Stand For
The Botswana Network on Ethics, Law and HIV/AIDS (BONELA) is a non-governmental organization established in 2002. It is dedicated to creating an enabling and just environment for people infected and affected by HIV/AIDS through the integration of ethical, legal and human rights dimensions into the national response to HIV/AIDS in Botswana.

Mission Statement
• BONELA promotes a just and inclusive environment for people affected by HIV and AIDS through education, legal assistance, research and advocacy.

Vision
• Making human rights a reality in the response to the HIV and AIDS pandemic in Botswana. To achieve its vision, BONELA works within the following five programme areas:
  • Advocacy
  • Legal Aid
  • Training
  • Media
  • Research

Through these programmes, BONELA carries out activities that ensure that ethics, law and human rights are made an essential part of the national response to fighting HIV and AIDS in Botswana. This is done through a focus on Goal 5 of the National Plan of Action on HIV and AIDS as articulated in Botswana’s National Strategic Framework on HIV and AIDS.

To contribute to this publication please write to:

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Call for submissions
The Botswana Review of Ethics, Law and HIV/AIDS (BRELA) welcomes contributions on a wide variety of relevant issues from a broad range of disciplinary backgrounds. Each contribution sent for publication will be reviewed by a peer review committee.

Submission guidelines
* Short articles should be up to 5,000 words long. Long articles should be up to 10,000 words including footnotes.
* Recent Development and Events should be up to 2,500 words.
* Reviews of books and articles should be up to 2,500 words

Format
All manuscripts should be submitted in their final form and should conform to the following guidelines:
* Submissions must be typed, 1.5-spaced with pages numbered.
* Contributions should include the name(s), professional details (including affiliation), and contact information of the author(s).

You can:
* share your opinions on controversial issues like providing condoms in prisons
* exchange ideas about HIV and human rights
* engage in debate about topics important to Botswana

Join BONELA’s online community forum today in 3 steps:

2. Register (it’s free)
3. Inform and be informed. Involve and get involved. Discuss and create discussions