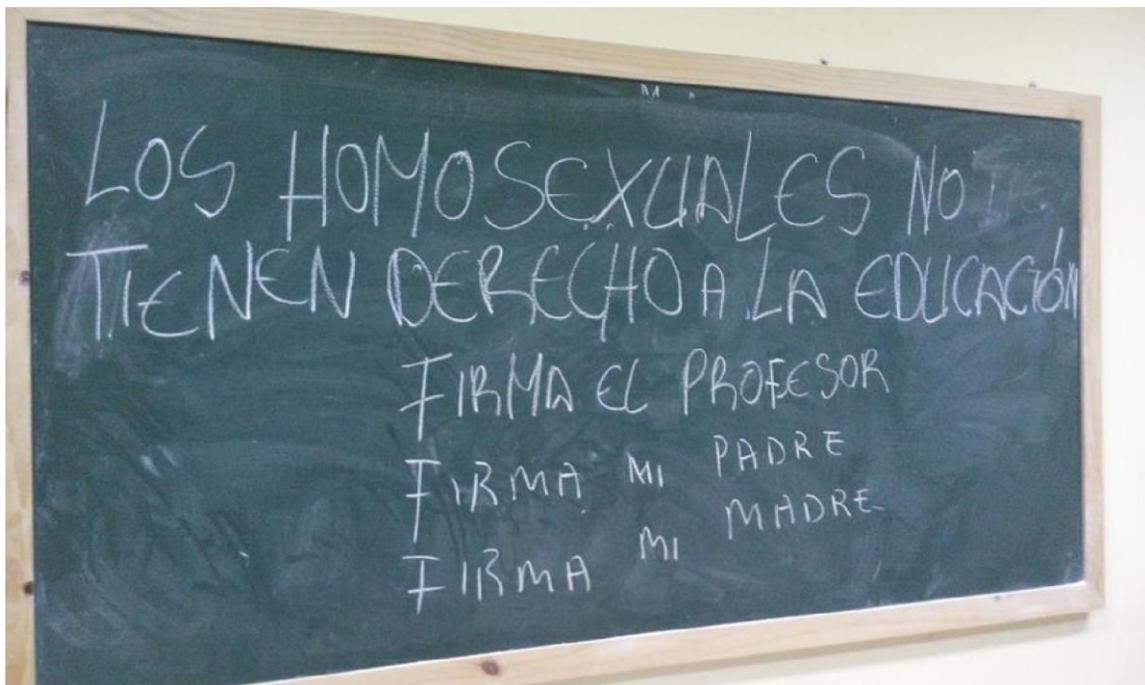




**STUDY ON THE ACCESS OF
SEXUAL MINORITIES TO
THE FUNDAMENTAL RIGHTS
IN EQUATORIAL GUINEA.
ANALYSIS ON THE RIGHTS TO EDUCATION AND
THE RIGHTS TO SEXUAL REPRODUCTION
*RESULTS AND RECOMMENDATIONS REPORT***

Somos Parte del Mundo Equatorial Guinea

*Commemoration of the International Day against Homophobia, Transphobia and
Biphobia 2020*





Index

1. - Introduction	2-5
2. - How did the idea of the study started	6-7
3. - Abandoning school	7-8
4. - Self-esteem and acceptance	8-10
5. - Enabling environment	11-13
6. - Family and tolerance of diversity	14-15
7.- Abuse at school	16-17
8. - Sexual harassment and violence in classrooms	17-18
9. - Analysis of the results	18-25
10. - Conclusions	26-27



1.- INTRODUCTION

The collective Somos Parte del Mundo (We are Part of the World) promotes gender equality and the social integration of gender (women) and sexual minorities (lesbians, gays, transsexuals, bisexuals, and intersexes, hereinafter LGTBIQ+ in Equatorial Guinea. Somos Parte del Mundo initiates for the first time a study at the national level on the access of sexual minorities to fundamental rights: the right to education, sexual and reproductive rights.

The study, sponsored by the Embassy of the United States of America in Equatorial Guinea and the Fundación Triángulo de Madrid (Spain), consists of a survey among two hundred people of Equatoguinean nationality, conducted by a team that includes two sociologists, one political scientist, and fifteen volunteers. It took place in October 2019 through March 2020.

The survey includes forty-eight questions, and a margin of error of $\pm 5\%$. The survey collects, among other information, data on personal character, education, issues related to gender identity, sexual and reproductive rights, etc. *The project was carried out exclusively in private homes and entertainment venues in the cities of Bata and Malabo. This is due to two reasons: economic limitations and tolerance to sexual-affective diversity in the environment (mainly rural).*

Equality before the law and the right to non-discrimination are standard legal instruments that the United Nations uses within the entire legal framework to regulate the political behavior of member states. Equatorial Guinea is a Member State of the United Nations, a status that the country acquired after ratifying the Charter of the United Nations. Equatorial Guinea has also ratified the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, in addition to other instruments of international law, whose backbone is the universality of human rights.

International law stipulates that human rights are for everyone and are acquired at birth, so that no person should be excluded from their enjoyment without a duly verifiable reason.



Equatorial Guinea, as a Member State of the United Nations, has a nourished constitution of liberties that includes a set of fundamental rights.

The constitution consecrates *the protection of the human person from conception, protects the minor so that she/he can function normally in her/his integrity, and guarantees the right to health for the proper development and growth of the minor. Education is a primary duty of the State. Every citizen has the right to primary education, which is compulsory, free, and guaranteed.* With this forcefulness, article 24th of the Magna Carta includes the universal right to education.

Along these same lines, Equatorial Guinea has ratified the Convention on the Rights of the Child, and in compliance, Law 14/1995 on Education and subsequent reforms came into force to put into practice the postulates included in the Convention. The Committee on the Rights of the Child was equally introduced under these premises. It includes a set of competences aimed at protecting universal access to education. Therefore, *the universality of the right to education includes, by law, homosexual people, since the constitution prohibits “any act of partiality or discrimination duly verified for tribal, ethnic, sexual, religious, social, political, or corruption reasons. or other analogues”.*

After confirming discriminatory practices in the exercise of LGTBIQ+ people to the right to education, Somos Parte del Mundo decided to carry out a survey based on a representative sample and available resources.

It should be noted that the World Health Organization (WHO) eliminated homosexuality from the list of mental illnesses in 1990. Thirty years later, *in Equatorial Guinea, homosexual people are classified as mentally ill and socially dangerous* according to current regulations (Ley de Vagos y Maleantes of July 15, 1954).

Bantu ethnic traditions also identify homosexuality as a *contagious virus, an evil spirit, a demonic possession* (Yo no queria ser madre, Egales, 2019).

The stigma of homosexuality excludes LGTBIQ+ people from most rights, starting with a fundamental one: the right to education. In addition to the right to education, LGTBIQ+ people lack the right to access information on sex-affective identities and gender expressions defined by the WHO. This information would facilitate the



construction of their human identities, and the exercise of the right to sexual health and reproductive.

Considering that everyone has the right to education as a development tool (according to indications of the United Nations Development Program, hereinafter UNDP), and that one of the objectives of the group is to fight homophobia, transphobia and any form of discrimination suffered by LGTBIQ+ people, the priority was to make visible a social problem such as “the lack of access of LGTBIQ+ people to the right to education in Equatorial Guinea: a right truncated by the exercise of discrimination based on sex and analogous motives”

The survey collected information regarding:

- Age.
- Self-esteem and personal acceptance: knowledge about gender identities, sexual identity and sexual-affective orientation.
- Favorable environment and internalized gender roles during socialization.
- Family reaction when they discover that their child is a LGTBIQ+ person.
- Knowledge learned about homosexuality during childhood.
- Age of initiation of sexual relations.
- LGTBIQ+ couples: stability and conflict related to their social context.
- Definitions learned during socialization. What is a lesbian? What is a fagot?
- Education, training centers, and the last school year.
- Homophobic bullying at schools.
- Sexual harassment and violence at school in exchange for tuition assistance and good grades.

In Equatorial Guinea, when referring to homosexual people, the names that are frequently used include fagot and lesbian, whose connotations imply: *strange, neocolonialist, foreigner, witch, evil, extraterrestrial, being of low morality, enemy of the homeland, illiterate, exhibitionist, vicious, white, disrespectful to culture and public morals, external and internal enemy, dangerous, antichrist, from the European continent and not Africa, etc.*



In Equatorial Guinea, a homosexual person is not considered a person. They are individuals defined as a fabrication not of God, a BEING from another world (it is precisely from this premise that the collective takes its name and identifies itself as Somos Parte del Mundo). It is the strangest state that can exist on Earth. The terms bisexuality, transsexuality, pansexuality, asexuality, *queer*, etc., remain dismissed in the usual vocabulary. The symbolic burden of the homosexual condition gathers all these indicators of exclusion.

2.- HOW DID THE STUDY IDEA START?

The collective's Achilles heel is change of mentality. The consciousness of the collective recognizes that homosexuality is related and mistaken with transsexuality, transgender, and transsexual people, and that they are the main victims of homophobia and transphobia, due to the dissent manifested by their bodies not adapted to the gender norms based on patriarchy.

The group has incorporated an access to education program thanks to the voluntary contributions of committed people. This represents an institutional strengthening strategy that contributes the return to school of many LGTBIQ+ people, except for transsexual people, who feel fear to go back to school. The collective knows that, to a certain extent, transgender and transsexual people's access to public spaces can be difficult.

This situation worsened when the study aid program was devised. Most transgender and transgender people who are of school age do not have identification documents (literal certificate and/or birth certificate, faith of life, personal identity document, school card, etc.).

The collective discovered that *the ministries, whose access doors are guarded by civil servants, prohibit, and hinder the access of transsexual and transgender people through discursive practices and symbolic violence*. Then, a plan was devised: they required the accompaniment of LGTBIQ+ cisgender people to facilitate the process. The strategy did not work and led to the question “Where are you taking this.”

A civil servant that works at the ministry buildings questions a cisgender person when discovered accessing a government building and accompanied by a



transgender or transsexual person. The first question is “where are you taking this.” By the term “this” they are referring to the transsexual or transgender person, who, even when wearing women's or men's clothing, they maintain physical characteristics of sex/gender dissent that are difficult to hide. In addition to this reality, *the families of transsexual or transgender people have their documents requited usually by the way they frequently leave their homes, either because they flee or because they are expelled. Family communication is especially conflicting.*

At the government offices, such as ministries, a transgender person must be accompanied by another cisgender person willing to fight and endure the insults originated from the civil servants stationed at the front door and those in the departments that handle documentation, normally located several floors up in the buildings.

In Equatorial Guinea, as in other parts of the world, transgender and transsexual people go out to the street at night to prevent episodes of violence. The first signs of attention that the group received since its foundation took place in the discotheques. “The boss has said that people like you do not enter here, I mean, people with these looks, this body.”

Access to discotheques, to a nightlife establishment not rented by gay people, is restricted and to access, most pay the double or triple than the regular price. On the weekends, the members of the group began to cross-dress to investigate. Some carried a cisgender appearance and mingled with others dressed in clothing not adapted to the socially assigned gender-sex.

The door people at the discotheques and leisure places located in the cities of Bata and Malabo have precise indications: the entrance to transsexual people is prohibited, especially transsexual men and lesbians, whose physical features are dissident with the socially assigned gender.



3.- EDUCATION CENTERS AND SCHOOL WITHDRAWAL

Where did the respondents receive education? Where do the respondents continued to receive education? There are two kinds of educational centers: public and private.

Data about dropping out of school rates is as follows:

- 8% of respondents dropped out of school at the primary level.
- 36% of respondents dropped out of secondary school.
- At both levels, 42% of those who dropped out of school are transgender/transsexual men and women, whose physical features do not correspond with the assigned gender identity and begin to manifest in puberty and/or early adolescence.
- The average age at the time of school leaving ranges between ten and seventeen years old (in the case of transgender or LGBTIQ+ people out of the closet), when they start conversion therapies.

In addition to the above, the results of the survey conclude that school dropout does not start in a planned way by families, respondents acknowledge, because the diagnosis of homosexuality and the duration of conversion therapies do not depend on these, but on healing institutions (*curanderías*, Protestant churches, the Catholic Church, police stations, etc.). The practices last for days, weeks, months, years, until cure is achieved, if at all.

About 42% of the people surveyed admit that when homosexual people do not get cured, families stop financing their studies. They are no longer productive in the short and long term. In the discussion groups, participants indicated: “offspring is understood in our country as an investment. Offspring will take care of dad, mom, and the family when the child grows up, completes studies, and starts working... Dad and mom will get older and the social security system in Equatorial Guinea, with its notable deficiencies, does not respond to the needs of the elderly. Therefore, studies paid for a son or daughter who is homosexual are ultimately not profitable: he or she will never work, he or she will never have a place in society”.



The team interviewed gay people who are either still in or out of the closet (voluntarily or forcedly) after late adolescence. They are also cisgender people, usually women who can go unnoticed. Almost half of this group is made up of people with higher vocational training (university) and whose families are unaware that they are homosexual.

This data seemed relevant at a comparative level because it reveals the stigma of being transgender, the privilege of belonging to the prevailing heteronormativity and the need to approve public policies aimed at incorporating LGTBIQ+ people into the national educational program, which according to Education Law no. 14/1995 and subsequent reforms, it is universal and free.

4.- SELF-ESTEEM AND ACCEPTANCE: KNOWLEDGE ABOUT GENDER IDENTITY, SEXUAL IDENTITY AND SEXUAL AFFECTIVE ORIENTATION

The terms concerning homosexuality in Equatoguinean ethnic traditions and heterosexual sexuality are taboo. Even the textbooks standardized by the Ministry of Education do not include in depth the subject of heteronormative sexual and reproductive rights. To this opacity in knowledge, ethno-cultural diversity is added. The country of just 28,000 square kilometers is made up of at least six recognized ethnic groups.

The construction of heterosexual and homosexual sexuality as taboos also promotes the denial of homosexuality as part of human life, and the introduction of the lesbian, fagot, and gay terms as neologisms.

The ideal moments to acquire knowledge about the names that refer to homosexual people, participants explain, have been those in time of crisis: when families discover that they have a homosexual person at home; when the cycle of repression (conversion practices) begins in churches and sects; when the healing and



conversion therapies begin in the *curanderías* (present in all the ethnic groups of the country); when people denounce a homosexual person at police stations for being a homosexual and the commissioner on duty (usually male) and who is over forty-five years old, has solid knowledge of the undisclosed tradition; when conversion therapies are practiced in churches, sects and *curanderías* and the representative of the institution is an older person of some ethnicity, etc.

And finally, names related to homosexuality in ethnic traditions are disclosed when an LGBTBIQ+ person has been expelled from home and both the family and the neighborhood insult and bully that person.

Even though approximately half of the people surveyed in this study identify as transsexual and transgender, only 7.3% acknowledge that they are. The lesbian and fagot sex-affective orientations, with all their derogatory symbolic load, found an acceptance of 20%.

The significant number of people who identify as bisexual (43%) is outstanding data that reveals at the same time several problems. The first and foremost: internalized hatred and homophobia, and fear of marginalization.

Gabriel J. Martín, Spanish psychologist and author of the book *Quiérete mucho maricón*, a manual of psycho-emotional success for homosexual men (Roca Ed. 2016), narrates the problems involved in mental health and acceptance, and that affect the LGBTBIQ+ people who visit his clinic. In general, psychology establishes six stages as cycles of sexual-affective identity and acceptance among non-heterosexual individuals:

First stage: confusion. The person begins to be attracted to people of the same sex. The first reaction is rejection. “No, I am young, I was experimenting.” “I was drunk”. “Okay, the person is attractive, but I am not gay or in love.” It is time for self-deception. “I may be bisexual, it's not that bad either.” “Love is universal, without limits.” In this period, it is common to say, “I'm having a good time, sex between people of the same sex is exciting.”

Psychology indicates that this stage coincides with early adolescence and lasts until adulthood. This is the stage of fear of violence. The person thinks about the treatment



that homosexual people receive from their environment; the social rejection involved and the wounds that may resurge. Consequently, the person assumes that this may be a temporary stage of his or her life and takes refuge in the hope that, at some point, he or she will fall in love with a person of the opposite sex.

Second stage: comparison and loss management. “Maybe I am gay and if it's true, dammit, what a scare. My mother will stop loving me. They will kick me out of the house. People will laugh at me as they pass. My family will reject me. I will not be normal. Never. I will never get married. I will not have children. I will not have the real family.” “I will not freely express affection.” Psychology defines this period as “fear of becoming second-class citizens.” The next four stages represent a very long road towards acceptance.

The survey reveals that 43% of the people interviewed are probably in the first stage of acceptance: denial. About 41% identify as gay and lesbian, so they have internalized the stigma attached to belonging to a group composed by sexual dissident people, and 2.5% answered “I do not know what I am”.

The difference between sexual identity, sexual-affective orientation and gender identity created debate. Most asked for help to answer the questions, and specially to acquire knowledge. The process of completing and filling out the survey took longer because of this blockage encountered.

5.- AGE, FAVORABLE ENVIRONMENT, RESIDENCE, AND INTERNALIZED GENDER ROLES

Regarding the age of the people surveyed, the researchers identify two large groups: people between twenty-eight and forty-three years old (approximately half of the people surveyed), and people between fourteen and twenty eight years old (the other half).

The study personnel contemplated to carry out the survey among people aged fourteen years old and under, but the idea was rejected for two reasons:



- First, the protection of children: no excuse proved to be valid to convince the people who exercise guardianship over the minors.
- Secondly, difficult access: the children contacted were going through healing sessions at institutions that practice conversion therapies, or in some cases, live in seclusion at their homes and under strict surveillance to protect them from “bad influences”.

Where and with whom do Guinean homosexual people live in the cities of Bata and Malabo? About 14% of these people live with their mother, 24.5% live with their mentor and the remaining 22% live alone. Other highlighted options are: “I live where the night meets me” and “I rent, my mayor/*chobanda*/mature pays”. These last two options correlate to 12% of the people interviewed.

Where do Guinean gay people live in the cities of Bata and Malabo? The answer to this question is an enigma. They do not even have stable places to live. About 10% of the surveyed people live together as a couple, usually women. The strategy defined for the fieldwork was intended to guarantee the greatest possible privacy for those who agreed to collaborate with the survey: something that was impossible.

Guinean LGTBIQ+ people have a family: they are almost always together. The most effective way to locate one is through the others. The first problem that arises is the place of residence. Staying in a rented dwelling lasts the time it takes the neighborhood to discover that they are not heterosexual, and that time usually means between one and three months. The expulsion, once it is known that they are not heterosexual, comes from the person who owns the house, the neighborhood, from the police, the person who chairs the Monitoring Committee of the Democratic Party of Equatorial Guinea, etc. Therefore, today they reside in one neighborhood, tomorrow in another.

The information disclosed about their sexual and gender identities comes from anywhere, according to participants, including the family, who visits the neighborhood to report the sexual-affective condition of their descendant and



encourages them to kick the person out, encouraged even with payment given to the owner of the propriety.

The accommodation/residence problem is more serious in the case of transsexual women. In addition to eviction problems, they suffer sexual harassment and violence at night. They complain that men do not let them sleep and after 10 pm, any man can knock on their door to demand sex in exchange for money. If they do not agree, they cannot go outside on the next day because the people who requested sexual services from them the night before, mistreat them during the day. For this reason (in addition to rejection), some do not go out to the street during the day.

The surveys were carried out in leisure places owned by homosexual people and in other cases they were carried out at homes where groups of people live in overcrowded conditions.

The places of residence are those where they sleep some nights, and not always, because they are always running away from someone: starting with the family. At the time of the appointment to participate in the survey, most of the participants did not want to go to the group headquarters because they considered it stigmatized: they believe the Government can break in at any time. They did not turn up during the day in public spaces such as cultural centers to avoid meeting with the black and African staff that works at the offices.

When participants received the invitation to collaborate in the survey, they were almost always at a recently rented home of a homosexual person, or at a bar, at work (with the added refusal to receive visits from an effeminate person or someone who is out of the closet). *Among all the people surveyed, only 8.5% live with their father and mother (heterosexual couples), and 1.5% live exclusively with their father. About 90% live outside the family home.* Even people in the closet leave the family home before they can be discovered due to fear of violence.

What household chores were assigned to you at home when you lived with your family? The team that conducted the survey failed to address this question. The people surveyed pointed out in the discussion groups that the question should have



been divided into two parts because the commissioning of housekeeping tasks has three stages:

- *First:* when they are under the age of ten, families entrust them with tasks adapted to the traditionally assigned genres.
- Later, in early adolescence, when physical traits begin to differ from the socially assigned gender (in the case of transsexual and transgender people and mannered homosexual people or those who have been discovered), conversion practices do not start in the *curanderías* and sects, but through gender roles. Families become alarmed and as punishment, they force the person to carry out tasks traditionally assigned to the rejected gender.
- *Third:* it focuses on the performance of all household chores, regardless of gender, and the confinement at home.

In the case of transsexual, lesbian, bisexual, and pansexual men, whose physical features do not match the socially assigned gender, the family stops financing their studies for two reasons:

- They consider that they are men and that men pay their own expenses and those of their partners, therefore, if they define themselves as men, they must work to be independent.
- The majority of girls (sexual identity) in Equatorial Guinea, from the time they start menstruating, pay for their own expenses and their families' expenses through men who look for them, or these girls themselves look for, therefore, these girls represent a fraud for hanging out with other women (since money is in the hands of men), and for rejecting men.

Transgender men and lesbian, pansexual, and bisexual women out of the closet (at least half) acknowledge that they flee home due to abuse, mistreatment, or expulsion.



They run away from home because discovered gay people tend to spend 24 hours a day under the control of family members, at home, in healing spaces or at school with the assistance of the school board of directors. They do all the jobs (of different genres) as a punishment strategy. In this context, transsexual women live immersed in human trafficking: they stay connected with the family (the relatives who accept to host them) in exchange of labor. *Families who have a transsexual woman living with them do not hire domestic servants. Neither enroll them in schools and if they do it themselves, the bullying they experience in the streets and at school forces them to drop out.*

When schools require family members to attend a school meeting, they arrive and make it clear that they are tired of keeping up with the counseling, the hitting, and conversion therapies for transsexual healing, and that there is nothing else that can be done. In these cases, transsexual women carry out household chores for both genders in exchange for a plate of food and a bed to sleep, and when they decide to disagree or dissent, they are thrown out to the streets.

In these cases, families impose two different strategies as a condition to allow residence at the family home:

- Transgender men and well-mannered LGTBIQ+ women should get pregnant to normalize their status, find a man as partner (they can change partners, but they should always be with someone), and limit their outing in public spaces.
- Transsexual women can perform household chores as a condition for them to remain at home, and they also must avoid cross dressing and public spaces in exchange for a bed and a plate of food.
- The transgender and transsexual people who participated in the study explain that families do not throw them out to the street forever. It is a punishment strategy. In fact, when their place of residence is reported, family members land there to compel the hosting person to expel them. If transgender and transsexual people live in the surroundings, family members denounce them at a local police station.



6.- FAMILY AND TOLERANCE TOWARDS DIVERSITY

Approximately half out of the two hundred individuals that participated in the survey stated that their family knows that they are LGTBIQ+ people. Another 18% lack information about what their family know or think about them and the rest (about 32%) said emphatically that they remained inside the closet.

About 13% expressed the experience of tolerance from family members towards gay people only if gay people suppress their tendency in public spaces.

About 20% of the participants indicated “the family gathered with me to find out if I am gay, I denied everything and since then I do my things in secret.” This percentage described above differs in ten points with respect to the percentage that ensured that the family does not know that they are homosexual, so they are in the closet.

The most common and often repeated scheme is as follows:

- First, relatives hold a meeting with the LGTBIQ+ person to verify if their suspicions are true
- After the family reunion, when the family members are sure that their descendant is gay, the most frequent statements are:
 - *They took me to the police, and I was ... hit on the ass.*
 - *They kicked me out of the house.*
 - *They took me to curanderías and churches to cure my homosexuality.*
 - *They took me to jail.*
 - *They took the children away from me so that they would not get infected by my homosexual spirits.*



- *The media was summoned to record me so that the whole country would find out (respondents mention at this point informative spaces, and the program *Vivencias* aired on the television channel TVGE, the public television of Equatorial Guinea)*
- *I left home because I was afraid of being mistreated.*
- *My mother undressed herself in public to curse me.*

About 90% of people surveyed know at least one person LGBTIQ+ aged between 15 and 25 years old who has been expelled from the family house because he/she is gay. Information so frequently obtained about homosexuality comes from media (26 %), groups of friends (30.5%), family (23%) and school (19%). Only 7% learned that a LGTBIQ+ person is a person and not a sick person.

After being interviewed with open questions (possibility to answer more than one option) about how to explain what a person LGBTIQ + is, about 93% of the respondents defined as (answers sorted according percentage punctuation) follows:

- *A person sick with witchcraft and evil spirits.*
- *A person who has destroyed her/his life.*
- *A specie from another world.*
- *A pity for the family.*
- *A person with the vices of the whites.*

Half of the people surveyed knew a LGTBIQ+ person before entering late adolescence; about 7.5% indicates that society tolerated their sexual dissent and 87.5% describes the social reaction received in three words (by order of importance): abuse, exclusion and discrimination.

More than half recognize that they have a partner, that they had their first sexual intercourse in early adolescence with family members, and/or with people close to the family (87%) without the use of contraceptives (it is cited specifically the condom).



About half of the people who were asked about who they talked to about their first sexual relationship, responded that they did not speak to anyone “because I was embarrassed”, and 29% responded that they spoke with friends. At the time of the survey, almost 50% of the people surveyed had a stable relationship of at least one year.

The team conducting the survey wanted to know about the knowledge participants have of themselves as homosexual people, besides the knowledge learned elsewhere. The answers given were clear and precise: “I am a woman who loves other women, I love my girl.” “I am a man who loves other men, I love my boy.” However, to the questions about *what a gay is, what a lesbian is*, the answers varied according to socialization terms (the answers are indicated in order):

A gay is:

- *A boy who gets screwed by other boys.*
- *A woman trapped in a man's body.*
- *A boy who fucks other boys.*
- *An unfortunate, deviant, and demonized man.*
- *A man with the spirit of a mermaid in his body.*

A lesbian is:

- *A woman transformed into a man.*
- *A man trapped inside the body of a woman.*
- *A woman who sucks other women's vaginas.*
- *They are women who have a vagina during the day and a penis at night.*



7.- SCHOOL HARASSMENT

About 52% of the respondents did not need to come out of the closet during the school year: their physical appearance spoke by itself. This physical appearance refers not only to the dissidence of the body with regards its socially assigned gender, but also to clothing, gestures, color school supplies, images on school supplies, etc.

About 23% of the respondents say that “family and education centers informed the new school that I am queer/lesbian”.

The procedures involved in the transferring between schools in Equatorial Guinea, require the presentation of academic documentation (academic certification and grades), and a document that confirms the good behavior of the student: record of good conduct. In the case of homosexual individuals, the file transfer does not collect gender identity and sex-affective orientation - as indicated by most people surveyed - but information about their sexuality reaches the receiving schools through a list of names and surnames that circulates among the schools.

Schools explain these allegations with the following words: “The centers want to keep a name, a reputation, and more students, etc. If news about the presence of homosexual people in our classrooms spread, families will believe that the students will get infected.”

The practice of stripping LGBTIQ+ people, especially transsexual and transgender people, is very common, recognizes 15% of the participants. The spaces chosen by the students who carry out these bullying practices are usually bathrooms, classrooms prior to the arrival of teachers, and the street (outside school hours).

None of respondents know of centers and Guinean education centers that punish harassment and homophobia. Public or private centers that hire Cuban as teachers and support management may be the exception. This exception ends with the return of these people back to Cuba once their official mission concludes.



Bullying is not limited to student spaces. About 25% of the respondents can cite at the least the name of a school where teachers, on occasions (when passing list, encouraging participation in class, delivering tests, etc.) do not mention people LGBTIQ+ by their name: they call them *lesbian* or *fagot* out loud. The students usually react to this with laughter and in this manner, teachers become accomplices in these situations.

Faculty is also responsible for changing the names of transgender people, male to female or vice versa. This strategy of harassment, as 40% of the respondents indicate, consists, for example, in the change of personal names into nicknames with a derogatory intent. A transgender teenager born as Antonio (name given by the family) is renamed as Antonia. And a transgender boy born as Antonia (name given or by the family) is renamed as Antonio. The name changing extends across the entire school, and then reaches out the family house, the neighborhood, and the city (Bata and Malabo).

Names and nicknames provoke after class fights between LGBTIQ+ people and students who decide to practice homophobic harassment. About 13% of the respondents know at least one school based in Equatorial Guinea where after singing the national anthem and the praying in the morning, the school board delivers speeches that force enrolled queers and lesbians to “kindly abandon the school and if not, they must suffer the consequences, in order to save the health of minors and adolescents not yet infected by the virus and/or the evil and/or satanic spirit of white homosexuality.”

In any case, respondents recognize that at peak times, teachers (30%) and students (28%) show empathy, and specially Cuban teachers and those Equatoguinean teachers who have been trained in the West or Latin American countries with relative levels of development, such as Argentina. Likewise, empathizing students are mostly girls who even accompany LGTBIQ+ people up to the door of the family home to prevent possible attacks.



More than half of the people surveyed indicated that bullying lasts if they remain in school. They do not tell about the bullying at home and sometimes, when the school board summons the family, the “conversion” of the homosexual becomes a pressing issue to the school.

8.- SEXUAL HARASSMENT AND VIOLENCE IN THE CLASSROOMS

“Other people purposely flirt with me to find out if I am homosexual,” acknowledge about 32% of the respondents. They say that is a strategy that allows them to know sexual-affective orientation. Once they follow the game, some of these people tell about it, and if they want sex, they get naked and summon others to watch.

About 38% have suffered sexual violence from students and/or teachers.

About 60% explain that the profile of a person who harasses LGBTBIQ+ people is usually a hypersexual homosexual male. This is a teenager, or a troubled man who also harasses girls, and/or obese students, and/or someone who is part of an ethnic and/or religious minority, etc.

To get good grades (pass) and free enrollment, about 29% of participants state that they have suffered sexual harassment by teachers and 38% have suffered some type of sexual violence.

About 33% know that at least one homosexual person who has been class leader, but in all cases, they are not effeminate people and people that remain inside the closet.

About 26% of the participants suffer from sexual harassment, and the *siñé* which is the extraction of consumer goods by minor thieves without giving the victim time to react: “They ask us for money, because they say that we homosexuals have money, since we dress elegantly”. Teasing (25%) and insults (32.5%) are other forms of harassment.



9.- SURVEY, ANALYSIS OF RESULTS

1. Acceptance and tradition. Rejection to sex-affective orientation and gender identity represents a normalized behavior, however, *gays, lesbians, bisexual and pansexual women who are cisgender people, manifest one internalized homophobia that results to be much more pronounced.* This is the group that refused to participate in the survey after sharing a few statements.

This group believes that LGBTIQ+ non-effeminate people are not homosexual, while others are transsexual men (called lesbians) and fags (which in their opinion are not gay but queers). These two groups are responsible for the debate about homosexuality in Equatoguinean public spaces.

This group explains that these two groups (lesbians and gays) should not go to public spaces to avoid being seen by people and government officials, they do not have create chaos or social conflict. They insist that, if they form partnership with them, they wait at home and especially at night.

Complaints come in two ways:

- The presence of transsexual people in public spaces creates problems of all kinds.
- Gay respondents that declined participation in the survey, define the trans woman as fag, shame, an effeminate person that allows to be penetrated by the ass; and they identify themselves as heterosexuals who penetrate men from behind, and women from the front.

These people have low *self-esteem issues and narrate very traumatic experiences.* Most must manage their leading a double life (they have two houses, one that allows them to develop as heterosexuals and another that leads a secret life). They do not feel that they have reached their goals, and they are constantly the target of repeated forms of scolding such as “the collective is a group of crazy people because nothing will change in Equatorial Guinea to favor the protection of homosexuals. You are wasting your time.”



The tradition: Bantu and Christian-Catholicism traditions are deeply rooted in beliefs systems and those beliefs have a negative influence on self-esteem and acceptance. They feel that they have failed their traditions, so any moment is an ideal opportunity to achieve merits and socially reintegrate. *They feel guilty when they suffer family and social rejection because they have not been able to respect social norms that directly apply heteronormative sexuality,* and consequently, they undergo any necessary conversion practice so that they can recover from “sin”. They are identified as individuals who have committed abominable acts.

2. The education level. The education level of most LGTBI+ people surveyed presents serious deficiencies. Some surveys were translated into ethnic languages and completed with the help of the team, especially for transsexual and transgender people over the age of thirty. With them, the surveys were carried out in the absence of other homosexual people.

3. Religion. The issue of religion is decisive. Most people in the country belong to a religious group: Christian (Catholic, Protestant), Muslim, etc., especially in the Continental Region. Most of the people surveyed belong to a church, and daily they feel rejected because they are something unforgivable and God cannot love them for being sodomites.

4. The politics of the nation. Most of the people surveyed have suffered physical assaults, as well as imprisonment and denouncement. To this we must add domestic abuse and rape. Most people who suffer rape are young people aged between 11 and 19 years old, female and/or trans women.

5. Hunger and overcrowding. Transsexual people have difficulty having their basic needs covered. It is advisable for them to collect food from some charity *while it is also expected that families and the government offer solutions to family abandonment and the suffering that underage LGBTIQ+ people go through.*

6.- Violence. Women who are no longer in the closet and cannot work for different reasons, are the ones who freely go out and earn their income through various sources. They manage bars (the clientele is mostly homosexual) and get involved in sex trade. They use their profits to support people living in their home.



Most transgender men, lesbians, bisexual people with physical traits traditionally attributed to the masculine gender, are abandoned by their families or have fled their homes because of the abuse they are constantly subjected to.

In some cases, their bodies suffer from trauma due to the physical assault that comes because of a breakdown of expectations. They suffer mistreatment when they are found to be gay, and when they do traditional men's jobs. Families hope they do not fix the house's electrical breakdowns; they hope that they do not clear the back yard; they hope that they do not play soccer, that they do not cook, etc. From the moment people detect behaviors not adapted to their gender, the abuse begins. They insist on this aspect: “families consider that playing soccer means the start of homosexuality. And they exert pressure through physical mistreat, so that you do not go to play.”

Violence does not end at home but continues in the streets after the expulsion from home since an early age.

They are not accepted within the prostitution market either. And employers do not want to hire them for fear that customers will abandon them or that they will turn their businesses into shows to which people would come to laugh or watch, since everyone would know that lesbians work there. And lesbians, they themselves explain, understand that in society they are those women whose physical characteristics do not match the gender or their socially assigned sex.

In cases when transsexual men and lesbians with masculine appearance live in the same household, they live in groups of about four people. Very often they lack basic resources and have problems accessing to food. When they go out to the street, they take refuge in entertainment venues (bars) owned by other homosexuals and access alcohol and other unhealthy substances. They return home without money.

However, most of the customers in the sex market are black African foreign males. They are people who migrated to Guinea Equatorial to work, earn money, and return to their countries of origin. They are not looking for women who are going to represent a high expense or too much cost: housing, deaths of relatives, the health of the woman and their relatives, the food of the girl and her relatives, the bride's hairdresser, the nails of the bride, bride alcohol and friends, purchase of land, matrimonial commitments, etc. They run away from problems with the police and



society. They do not want problems with their families, much less with the police and other authorities. They don't want to have nothing to do with their families.

Instead, they insist, Guinean males gather to rape them. Rape is those men's way to revenge because "they take away their girls everywhere." *And when they don't rape them, they hire their sexual services to learn how to make love because lesbians make love using witchcraft at night, when they take out their penis and the vagina.* Thus, males, hire two or three lesbians, bisexual and pansexual people, they observe them making love, they use them to meet their lurid needs, pay, and learn. In this way, they do with their women what they have seen, so that their women do not abandon them for lesbians.

Participants explain that the Guinean man pays for the sexual services of a heterosexual woman amid humiliation. However, if he sleeps with a transgender man, a lesbian or a pansexual or bisexual person, he not only pays if he wants to, he also humiliates that person and tells about it everywhere as "an act of conversion from homosexual to heterosexual".

Transgender men and lesbians with the physical appearance of a traditional male, do not want others to talk about their lives. Therefore, lesbians that have not male traits often have access to the sex market and are able to acquire economic means. With this kind of economic power, they abuse transgender men and lesbians with traditional masculine physical traits.

The money these women earn through prostitution helps them maintain a cordial relationship with their family of origin, so it seems they live with one foot inside and the other outside the home. The family claims that, if she was not sick from lesbianism and therefore sleeping with men, these women would be able to support their family, her offspring, and even themselves.

Throughout the survey, it was especially difficult to bring lesbians and transgender men together. The problem they have in common is ignorance about gender identities and respect. Transsexual men recognized themselves as men, not as transsexual men. Lesbians remind them that they are not men, because the first characteristic of a man is having money. They have no money and therefore they are not men. Men have a penis, they do not, therefore they are not male and "they can



never get a woman pregnant.” This debate arose while completing the survey. *The ministers for the pretty ones, the poor men for the ugly ones* is a phrase that, as they explain, they heard from childhood.

The problem of non-acceptance is especially registered in women. They believe that *at any moment they will stop loving other women because they are in a stage of fun that, over time, they will overcome. Some women that are over thirty years old, insist that they are in a time of change, and that within a short time they will overcome homosexuality.*

Transsexual men remember that cisgender homosexuals are not women, because the first trait of a woman is fidelity, as in ancient times, and cisgender women are not, neither with them nor with the men they are in a relationship so that they appear to be normal. To the above *it should be added that they must break the cycle of sexual exploitation that they maintain with their families of origin because it constitutes a source of disease, and when they become ill, they abandon them and they are in charge of taking care of them.*

Some LGBTIQ+ cisgender women define the collective Somos Parte del Mundo as a humiliation to their womanhood. The collective promotes education among homosexual people, free access to health, psychological support, and treatment, and provides empowerment to women, etc. *However, a good woman is one who receives the payment for all her expenses from a man, and if she works, her salary belongs to her and her family. If she establishes a relationship, the partner's salary belongs to her and her family. Other women (the activists of the collective are mostly women and transgender women) and gays (who are not men in their opinion), should not pay their expenses. If this happens, how would they demonstrate to society that they are women and therefore, how can they live off men because the money earned by a man and spent on women is the real money?*

The collective aims at the economic independence of women, and that defies a fundamental element of the Guinean patriarchy, and it also implies constant conflict.

On the other hand, the transsexual men collective do not have good reputation either. The Achilles heel: feminism. Transsexual men define themselves as men, and they reproduce the behavior of a man of his environment, so the collective, they insist,



teaches women things that are not good such as “speaking when a man does,” “be independent”, “not tolerate gender violence”, “study”, “be able to go out without permission”. The collective, they consider, breaks their romantic relationships because once their partners become part of their life, they stop being normal women and learn nothing but nonsense.

The work of the collective collides against a major wall: patriarchy. This means that romantic relationships among gay people do not take patriarchy into consideration, as heterosexual relationships are often founded on the roles of heteronormative gender so a person in the partnership must be identified as the man (male role) and the other person as a woman (feminine role), to make God's work on earth a reality.

This study has been, in many cases, a complicated job. For most of the people that participated in the survey, this study represents a threat to their hidden identity. The majority of LGTBIQ+ people who declined participation in the survey also alleged that the collective is out of the closet, they speak openly about homosexuality and the government (through visibility), and this produces fear.

Homosexual people fear the government: because it can easily access to their personal data, identity, place of accommodation, etc. Government officials can trace homosexual individuals through families, the Ministry of Social Affairs and Gender Equality, police stations, and churches (they specifically cite the Catholic church).

Meanwhile, cisgender women and gays blame the collective for the repression exercised by the authorities over them: the collective brought to light the homosexual theme: “We know it's a sin, but we will leave it as it is. That is one thing we do. We know it is wrong, but we will leave it as it is, there is no need to say it out loud.” “Heterosexual people say that we can do it, but secretly, there is no need to say anything, and Melibea (Melibea Obono, the collective coordinator) keeps saying it publicly, what a shame.” “There was no law that condemns us, now the government is going to put us all in jail, because of Melibea.” When asked about Ley de Vagos y Maleantes, and the Code of Military Justice (*Código de Justicia Militar*), laws that penalize with up to six years in prison and with the expulsion of homosexuals from the army, they deny these exist.



They maintain that in the past they were in a better situation and that the coordinator, Melibea, exploits them economically, since the money that whites give them for homosexuals, “she eats it alone.” “A job as dangerous as the one she does cannot be done without anything in return, without money in return, a lot of money. She doesn't give us this money that whites offer her every month.”

On the other hand, they insist, the collective does not have a social function as it is a space filled with boredom. The collective does not organize parties, or fun gatherings, neither offer a place to find romantic partners, even if it is only occasionally. It does not organize outings to the beach, etc. And what is more, the collective forbids alcohol and drugs use of any kind inside their headquarters. People cannot have sex inside the headquarters and to be a member, one must study and/or work. Emotional relationships between individuals among the collective are not allowed, and having more than one partner is also not allowed, etc. They wonder why there is so much protocol in place if homosexuality is a phase in one's person life, a fun time that will end in adulthood and/or at any time.

The complaints are endless. The collective, they insist, separates people from their peer group because they prohibit alcohol consumption, fights, and public scandals, while promoting acceptance. They also insist why accept yourself if everything will end in adulthood and each person will marry another of the opposite sex.

The collective, in addition to being boring, is an unconscious space where people talk about the future and psychologists (things from crazy people), when one must live day to day. Also, mental health is a thing from white people.

The team that conducted the surveys found it difficult to recruit enough people willing to participate in the survey. The team also found it difficult to find those willing people during moments of sobriety, because most of them start drinking from dawn and stop drinking at bedtime. They do not have a daily life program. They live by the minute. If alcoholism is a social problem in the country, it is even more pronounced among an excluded group.

8.- The survey, controversies. Participants mainly complained about the questions themselves: they *have a very negative approach*, they highlighted. Specifically, transgenders and transsexuals people found the survey to be *soft* and recommended



that in the future, the team can elaborate a survey adapted to the reality of transgender people because the life they have not is reflected in the survey questions.

9.- **The inheritance of repudiation.** Conversion therapies applicable in the Republic of Equatorial Guinea include liberations, exorcisms, sexual violence against lesbians, forced pregnancies, etc. Families take motherhood as a pill that transforms their daughters from homosexual to heterosexual (*Yo no quería ser madre*, Egales, 2018).

Likewise, each descendant of a lesbian inherits from her mother the family, social and national repudiation (citizenship rights). If the first pregnancy does not correct her homosexuality, families force those mothers to have a second baby. If they do not heal with the second, they go for a third child, etc. If “medication” (i.e. babies) does not work, families decide on the following:

- A very frequent decision is the expulsion of the mother to the street along with all her offspring, and once in the streets, those children lose their rights of childhood (school, family, friendly environment). The mother becomes traumatized, and the offspring follows the same path. The sons and daughters of lesbians are mostly rejected, remain unschooled, and unprotected. Mothers cannot take care of them because they carry physical and mental health problems originated from the conversion therapies.
- In other cases, the decision is to forbid mothers to access their offspring except when they can bring money home, the offspring is sick or other similar factors. The money the mothers bring to the family home is not routinely used for their offspring, but for other purposes. Most recognize that, in this second case, mothers cannot enter their home without money in hand. And they cannot touch the offspring to avoid the spread homosexuality to them.



10.- RECOMMENDATIONS

- 1.- To approve and implement a comprehensive law that protects sexual minorities –a transversal approach– based on the *Principles of Yogyakarta*. These are 29 principles contained in a document prepared in 2006 at the request of the OHCHR (Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights of the United Nations) which includes recommendations for governments, intergovernmental institutions and civil society for the implementation of the international legislation of human rights in relation to sexual orientation and gender identity.
- 2.- Prohibit conversion practices by law and criminalize violence against sexual minorities as a hate crime.
- 3.- Reform the Law of Education to consider bullying as a harmful practice that promotes school dropout among ethnic, gender, religious, sexual minorities, obese adolescents, etc.
- 4.- Raise awareness through campaigns and public policies about the declaration of the 43rd General Assembly of the World Health Organization (WHO) in 1990, the content of which eliminates homosexuality from the list of mental illnesses. The conversion practices in force in the country have their origin in the belief that homosexual people are sick.
- 5.- Include sex education and sex education in diversity into school curriculums.
- 6.- Protect the rights of childhood of lesbians, bisexual and pansexual individuals, and their descendants, heirs of the repudiation their mothers suffer from.
- 7.- Include as sexual violence the conversion therapy LGTBIQ+ women must go through, in the Plan National de Lucha Contra la Violencia Género (legislation pending of approval). LGTBIQ+ women are citizens of Equatorial Guinea.
- 8.- Train civil servants in matters of sexual-affective diversity and gender identity.
- 9.- Press the government to act seriously upon sexual harassment and sexual violence in classrooms.



10.- Create a department within the Ministry of Social Affairs and Gender Equality that offers solutions to the social problems that affect homosexual people: acceptance, health, education, family conflicts and sexual violence against minors at home and their environment, intra-gender violence, etc.

11.- Create a collaborative network between the Ministry of Justice, Worship and Penitentiary Institutions and the Ministry of Health and Social Welfare to respond to problems of sexual violence related diseases that affect LGTBIQ+ people, such as HIV/AIDS.

12.- Enable, within the Ministry of Health and Social Welfare, accessible services to mental health that help those homosexuals who have undergone conversion therapies and who have as a result, current problems related to alcohol and drugs use.

13. Develop public policies to combat discrimination of women and their empowerment, and that promote their access to education and employment.

14.- Promote, through concrete measures, the inclusion of homosexual people in society: support families so that they are not expelled from their homes, promote conversation about acceptance within social contexts, environment and neighborhoods to avoid evictions, and promote campaigns that favor inclusion through cultural tools (theater, painting, cinema, literature ...), etc.

Somos Parte del Mundo, National Coordinator

Trifonia Melibea Obono

