

## Botswana's Rainbow Identity

Humanity must make room at the table for everyone. No exceptions. As a result, the Rainbow Identity Association was initiated at the Coalition of African Lesbians General Assembly in Maputo, Mozambique in 2007. Based in Gaborone, Botswana, this non-profit organisation of transgender people challenges transphobia and transphobic laws in Botswana. Gender Dynamix is playing a huge role being a mentor to Rainbow Identity and recently Tebogo Nkoana, Outreach Officer at GDX, was guest speaker at the Transgender Day Of Remembrance Memorial held in Botswana.

Skipper Mogapi, Director of the Rainbow Identity Association said, "We aim to create open and safe spaces for transgender communities where human rights values are respected and upheld so that transgender people can find their voices. We want to educate the general public on issues of sexuality, gender identity, and to facilitate the creation of stakeholder forums nationally to assist in the dissemination of information."

He added that one of their objectives is to research the human rights situation of transgender people in Botswana and to network with stakeholders in the region in order to establish and maintain a response to human rights and legal challenges.

The organisation's vision is to create a democratic society that recognises, respects, protects and values the rights of the transgender and intersexed community in Botswana. "The inclusion of transgender and intersexed people as respected and valued members of society, brought about through partnership building, advocacy, training and education within and across the region is what we ultimately aim to achieve," Mogapi said. Rainbow Identity has a number of programmes on the agenda which they wish to see get off the ground. These include programmes dealing with health, social wellbeing, capacity building, legal assistance and advocacy.

Membership in the organisation is two-tiered: A Full membership which is open to all transgender persons and friends over the age of 18, and Associate membership, open to all interested transgender-friendly organisations and individuals. The main value of these memberships is that members receive vital communication on transgender related issues through the organisation's magazine, brochures and posters.

Members also have the opportunity of deepening their understanding of the vital link between sexuality and gender identity, as well as gaining access to the resources for conversation about sexuality and gender identity.

For more information, contact Rainbow Identity Association at P.O. Box 502328 Gaborone, Botswana. Tel: +267 72595878.