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Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity in Liberia

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Abstract

Purpose
This paper examines the social, cultural, and legal environment surrounding sexual orientation and gender identity (SOGI) in Liberia, with particular focus on the work and challenges of the Lesbian and Gay Association of Liberia (LEGAL),one of the leading civil-society organizations advocating for LGBTQ+ rights. The objectives are to analyze barriers faced by LGBTQ+ individuals, assess the impact of existing laws and social norms, and identify pathways toward improved protection, inclusion, and dignity for all.
Methodology
A qualitative research approach was employed, drawing on document analysis, policy review, and secondary data from human-rights reports, LEGAL's advocacy activities, and relevant social research. The study interprets patterns in social attitudes, legal constraints, and community responses using thematic analysis.
Findings
Findings indicate that same-sex sexual activity remains criminalized under Liberia's Penal Code, reinforcing stigma and limiting access to healthcare, justice, and employment. LEGAL and other rights groups play a critical role in increasing awareness, offering support services, and fostering dialogue, particularly in urban areas where youth engagement is growing. However, traditional beliefs and religious teachings continue to restrict acceptance in rural communities. Despite these obstacles, gradual shifts in public discourse suggest emerging opportunities for advocacy and policy reform.
Conclusion
The study concludes that Liberia requires legal reform, nationwide public-education initiatives, and stronger support systems for at-risk LGBTQ+ individuals. Strengthened collaboration between government bodies, health partners, and organizations such as LEGAL is vital to advancing inclusion and ensuring safety and equal rights for all citizens.

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Keywords: Sexual Orientation, Gender Identity, Liberia, Human rights, LEGAL (Lesbain and gay Association of Liberia)