

International Centre for Sexual Health and Reproductive Rights (INCREASE), Nigeria: Battling the Proposed Bill on the prohibition of sexual relationships and marriage between people of the same-sex, 2006

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On 19th of January, 2006 the Honourable Minister of Justice and Attorney General of the Federation, Chief Bayo Ojo, presented to the Federal Executive Council “A Bill for an Act to Make Provisions for the Prohibition of Sexual Relationships Between Persons of Same Sex, Celebration of Marriage by Them and for Other Matters Connected Therewith” hereinafter referred to as “The Same Sex Bill.” On 11th of April, 2006 the bill received its first reading and the provisions were further widened by the Senate of the Federal Republic of Nigeria.

Policy background

During advocacy for language on sexual orientation and gender expression and identity at the International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD) in Cairo in 1994 and at the Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing in 1995, women’s human rights and reproductive health activists teamed up with other groups from the globe to challenge all forms of discrimination and visibilise LGBTI rights and related issues within the UN. Back home in Nigeria, LGBTI rights were not a burning issue. They did not even featuring in the list of key issues of concern while analyzing the sexuality of adolescents. This does not mean that there were no LGBTI persons or groups in Nigeria. It also does not mean that there was recognition of LGBTI sexualities. Nigeria at the time was struggling to unseat the military totalitarian dictators and institute a democratic government. The military

governments were violating human rights with impunity. They had taken an IMF loan and subscribed to Structural Adjustment Policies despite outcry and debates that condemned the IMF loan. This led to withdrawal of subsidies from social amenities resulting in widespread poverty, disease, and corruption. Maternal mortality and morbidity was ranking one of the worse in the world, and was continually on the rise. The military junta refused to recognize and manage the surging HIV/AIDS cases, while the infection continued to creep into the productive force of the country. Gender based violence was equally on the rise. Education was falling as the institutions were deteriorating, unemployment was soaring at an all high. Surely, activists at that time were committed to redeeming the nation from failing and as it is usual in these times, sexual orientation and other related matters were the least important things to be considered by activists at the time. Lesbian and gay and bisexual social networks and individuals were living closeted life styles, only very weakly connected to any forms of activism. The transvestite communities in most parts of the North of Nigeria were going about their business, where no form of organized violence was targeted at them, and where they were not identified as any kind of target of human rights violators.

In 1999, Nigeria experienced a transition from military to civil rule. A hard earned democracy was born. This coincided with the 5 years review of the ICPD conference which revealed huge gaps between the gains made in the operationalisation of reproductive health and rights provision of the Programme of Action when compared with the provisions of sexual health and rights. The gap triggered discourse on many emerging issues and the subsequent conceptual separation of reproductive health and rights from sexual health and rights. This marked the genesis of activism for lesbian gay bisexual transgender queer rights in Nigeria to the “embarrassment” of the policy makers and community gatekeepers and religious leaders who claimed that homosexuality was non-existent in Nigeria, and that if it happened anywhere in the country, it was an imported behavior from the west. Mobilising and organizing sexual minorities and LGBTI rights advocacy began in earnest with the establishment of INCREASE in 2000.

In that same 2000, the shari’a law was expanded to include sexual offences among others. It criminalized same sex sexual relationships with up to death sentence by stoning and forcefully closed down spaces, including night clubs, which were known or suspected to be frequented by transvestites and other sexual minorities. This, in addition to the penal and criminal

codes that provide up to 14 years imprisonment to those found guilty under the sodomy and the unnatural offences law, drove LGBTQ persons further underground.

It is important to state that at the time the same sex marriage prohibition bill was introduced, very little was going on Nigeria in terms of LGBTI rights advocacy, definitely not to the point of advocating for marriage for same sex loving people. Nigeria has been able to accommodate MSMs in some of its national policies such as the national policy on HIV/AIDS and the national policy for the health and development of adolescents and youths. Despite this, policy makers continued to deny the existence of same sex loving people. This policy stance has remained until date causing sexual orientation and gender identity and expression to stand out as some of the top most controversial issues in Nigeria.

The legal attack

Before the proposal of the Bill, the LGBTI community had come under attack in Nigeria. The attacks had worsened in the past five years ignited by the debates caused by the ordination of the openly gay bishop led by the Anglican Church, Nigerian. The Anglican Church took the front line position in opposing this progressive development. The Church leadership in Nigeria mobilized many key opinion leaders to make public statements condemning homosexuality. The president of the Federal Republic of Nigeria at the time was aired on a national broadcast saying that homosexuality was unnatural, immoral and ungodly". For the first time we observed consistent media attention on the issue of sexual orientation, even though most of the articles and reports were homophobic and hateful, it was interesting to see a nation that has over the years claimed it is a taboo to discuss sexuality related issues in the public space, do so in the pages of its dailies.

Even though there were different events at around this time that stirred debates on issues of sexual orientation with particular focus on homosexuality, with majority of holding homophobic opinions, the rationale for the introduction of the Bill Prohibiting Same Sex Marriage in Nigeria at the time it happened can only be speculated. This is especially so because the Penal Code Law (applicable in all the States in Northern Nigeria) and the Criminal Code Laws (applicable in all the States in Southern Nigeria) have provisions on unnatural offenses with draconian sentences (Section 284 of the Penal Code Law and Section 214 of the Criminal Code Law refer). The

Sharia Codes of the States that have deemed it fit to introduce them are even more draconian. Chapter III “Hudud and Hudud related offences”, Part III “Sodomy (Liwat)”, Section 128-129 of the Kano State Shari’a Penal Code Law 2000 refers.

The Criminal Code Law has been in force since 1945 and the Penal Code Law has been in force since the 60s while the Sharia Codes at the time of the introduction of the Bill had been in force for more than half a decade in some of the States. Yet in all of these years same sex relationships had not attracted the attention of government as it happened in 2005 / 2006.

Widespread speculation proposed that political rivalry may have triggered the Bill because general elections were looming and campaigns were becoming intense. It was believed by many that there were plans to indict some aspirants of the presidential and gubernatorial elections that had fallen out of favour of the ruling party, believing that the accusation of involvement in same sexual relationships would tarnish their image and render them repugnant and unable to contest for public office. It is impossible however to tell a clear story right now, however, about why this bill, at this point; the information is just not freely available.

The content of the bill, however, was under scrutiny from the moment it was introduced in the National House of Assembly but to do an analysis that would inform advocacy, we at INCREASE needed a copy of the bill - always a challenge. Thankfully, we had colleagues who had a long history of working on law reform. We requested them to use their contacts at the National House of Assembly and obtain the bill for us. We also contacted the EU and the Human rights Desk at the Embassy of the United State of America to use their connections to get us a copy of the bill.

Eventually, we had it! And was it shocking! We immediately disseminated the bill among members of the coalition and allies within and outside Nigeria. This effort was coordinated by a practicing lawyer and a human rights defender working with the Civil Liberties Organisation.

The collated views revealed that the short title of the bill was misleading: it was the Bill prohibiting Same Sex Marriage in Nigeria. This gave the impression that same sex relationships were not already penalized in Nigeria, and suggested that there had been some clamour that sought to legalize unions in the form of marriage. This was misleading to the international communities and to the population at large.

The Bill

The Same Sex Bill was divided into 9 sections. Section 1 gives the Act a short title while Section 2 provides for the interpretation of certain words used in the Act. A section 3 asserted the validity and recognition of only marriages entered into between a man and a woman under the Marriage Act or under Islamic and Customary Laws.

Section 4(1) prohibited same sex marriage between persons and adoption of children them. Section 4(2) voided any marriage between persons of the same sex entered into elsewhere. Section 4(3) deprived persons of the same sex who entered into any marriage of recognition or entitlement to the benefits of a valid marriage. Section 4(4) made any contractual or other rights accruing as a result of any same sex marriage unenforceable in any court in Nigeria. Section 4(5) deprived any Court of Law of the jurisdiction to grant any divorce to persons of the same sex involved in a marriage.

Section 5 provided for the non – recognition of same sex marriage and mandated all arms of government and agencies of government not to give effect to any public act, record or judicial proceeding within or outside Nigeria, with regard to same sex marriage or relationship. Section 6 prohibited the celebration of same sex marriage by places of worship and the issuance of marriage licenses to parties of the same sex.

Section 7 prohibited the registration of Gay Clubs and societies in all institutions and publicity of same sex sexual relationships. The section further prohibited publicity, procession and public show of same sex amorous relationship through the electronic or print media physically, directly, indirectly or otherwise. This section punished any person who was involved in the registration, sustenance, procession or meetings, publicity and public show of same sex amorous relationship directly or indirectly in public and in private with a term of 5 years imprisonment if found guilty.

Section 8 created the offences and punishment for going through same sex marriages, performing, witnessing, aiding or abetting the ceremony of same sex marriages. All the offences carried 5 years imprisonment as punishment.

Section 9 conferred the jurisdiction to entertain all matters, causes and proceedings arising from same sex marriages or relationships on the High Court in the States and the Federal Capital Territory.

Legal Implications

We agreed at INCREASE, and with some allies, that the bill carried enormous potential for the political destruction of individuals. We found it frightening in its possibilities for doing great damage to the fundamental rights of citizens. The provisions of the bill are in clear violation of the Constitution and international instruments to which Nigeria is a State party. The Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, 1999 in Chapter IV certain fundamental rights to all citizens. Section 34 guarantees the right to the dignity of the human person. Section 34(1) provides-

Every individual is entitled to respect for the dignity of his person, and accordingly-

- a) no person shall be subjected to torture or to inhuman or degrading treatment;

To single out any person for punishment or public ridicule amounts to inhuman and degrading treatment and therefore a violation of the provision guaranteeing freedom from this. The Constitution equally guarantees the right to private and family life in Section 37. This right is to the privacy of the person of the citizen, their home and their correspondence. Section 7(3) is a clear violation of this right and therefore unconstitutional.

Section 38 guarantees the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion. This right in particular entitles everyone to hold and impart opinions and ideas. The right includes the right to belong to a religion or not. Whatever some proponents of a religious group might have to say about its participants' identities and behaviours cannot override the constitutional right to freedom of thought. The Constitution also guarantees the right to freedom of expression and the press in Section 39, which would clearly be taken away if the Same Sex Bill was passed into law! Section 42 of the Constitution guarantees the right to freedom from discrimination. The bill if passed into law would amount to an incitement to persecute persons on the basis of their sexual orientation.

Mobilization

The international community was horrified by the content of the bill and taken aback that Nigeria in all its efforts to present herself as the Giant of Africa would go down this path. In March, the International Lesbian and Gay Alliance international meeting was held in Geneva. The Nigerian Same Sex Marriage Prohibition Bill received a lot of attention, and there and then,

members were asked to lend support in any they could. It was agreed that it was safe and effective to do an alert protesting against the bill and to solicit the government of Nigeria to withdraw the bill from the National house of Assembly. At ILGA 2006, we were able to obtain over 70 signatures for the alert. We also prepared a letter and there was a protest march to the Nigerian High Commission in Geneva, and even though they refused to open the gate to let delegates in, the march was able to deliver the letter addressed to the High Commissioner. In choosing this strategy, there had been a long meeting with the Nigerian delegation who decided that it was safe for them to participate in the march. The tactics developed around this were very careful not to create the perception that INCREASE was being 'controlled' by international allies, and we also worked very hard to develop local alliances.

A Strategic Meeting aimed at winning more allies and gaining a critical mass of activists to fight the bill was held in Abuja. This was not without its own surprises. It was a meeting called to expand the activism beyond the LGBTI rights Defenders and core human rights NGOs that were openly against the bill. We recognized that this was not enough to kill the bill. After a meeting with the European Union, the three NGOs present and the Alliance Rights Nigeria, then led by the founder, Oludare Odumuye, agreed to form a consortium, this consortium was charged with the responsibility of mobilizing more NGOs especially women's NGOs and mainstream human rights NGOs, to join in this advocacy effort. Our goal: *to kill the bill*.

Invitations had been sent to over 30 non-governmental organizations including those doing renowned work on sexuality, health and development of young people and HIV/AIDS. Most leading NGOs in these fields did not show up. Some did not want to be associated, even remotely with our advocacy work because they thought that it would discredit the work they have done in the past many years. Some said that openly antagonizing the passing into law of the bill would jeopardize their relationship with the communities they served.

After introductions and objectives of the meeting, we conducted a values clarification exercise at the beginning of such a task to ensure that everyone understood why we were there. Participants were asked to arrange the following in order of preference: oral sex, anal sex, vaginal sex, masturbation, sex with same gender, sex for money, forced sex, bestiality and celibacy. Of the 31 participants who were present, 25 scored sex with same gender very poorly, it was the least in order of acceptance of the 9 various sexual behaviours that were

given for them to rank. Only Forced sex and Bestiality were scored higher than having sex with a person of the same gender. The six who scored having sex with a same-gender partner differently were either gay or from NGOs that are LGBTI friendly. This was the first shocker for us, and it had to be tackled.

The question was why were we there if the notion of having sexual relationships with partners of the same-gender was perceived so poorly? We had a heated debate; most held a hard line position at first arguing that they were there to “kill the bill” but not to encourage homosexuality. Some participants maintained that homosexuality constituted sin because the two major religions in Nigeria are argued to have it so. Some said homosexuality was unAfrican; some said it led to very risky sexual behaviours. Some said allowing homosexuality was too permissive and that this was responsible for the growing number of gay people, and that they were “recruiting” children and raping innocent citizens. The Ugliest of the shocks was the fact that two participants actually came to the meeting thinking or rather hoping that we were going to advocate against LGBTI sexualities. Some of these participants were from highly reputable institutions with a sound track record of human rights. As we proceeded systematically to challenge these positions, it was clear to us that we had a Herculean battle to fight in the House, and that our strategies for the Public Hearing had to be well defined for maximum impact. The questions we asked that stirred debate and probed the minds of the participants to understand why we must advocate for the protection the rights of LGBTI persons included:

- What is scud missile, browsing, mobile phone, submarine, in the local dialect of the participants? After this, we asked for local terminologies, labels, names for homosexual behaviour / persons, transgender, transvestites, and traditional ways of addressing issues related to homosexuality?
- What is African? Does the entire continent have one culture? Why would the law legalizing same sex marriage in South Africa fail to apply to the entire continent? Why does the culture of women marrying women in some Ibo cultures not apply to all Africans? Is anything really African?
- Are there gays who are African? Are there gays in Africa? Is being gay African? On the other hand, what is the origin of Christianity? What is the origin of Islam? Where is the source of the criminal and penal codes? Are these African?

- Is heterosexual vaginal sex risky? What are the health risks? What is the rate of HIV transmission attributable to heterosexual sex in sub-Saharan Africa? Are there ways of reducing or preventing transmission in heterosexual sex for safer sex? Are there ways of reducing or preventing transmission in homosexual sex for safer sex?
- Is heterosexuality natural or not? What makes it so? Is homosexuality natural or not? What makes it so? If one sexual orientation is natural, what makes the other un-natural? And if they are both learned why would one be superior to the other (s)?
- Do people have sex only for procreation? Are there heterosexual who engage in unprotected sex and desire to have children but do not get pregnant? If homosexual are held uncountable for not procreating, what do we do to reverend fathers and sisters who have chosen to be celibate?
- Is oral sex natural? What about froterosexuality (sexual pleasure derived through rubbing of genitals)? How natural is kissing? Do heterosexuals have anal sex?

These enabled us to clarify values, using human rights and health grounds to define what is an “acceptable” sexual behaviour or practice and the debate enabled us to differentiate between consenting sexual relationships among adults, straight or queer, and forced sex or rape. And we clarified what pedophilia and pederasty are.

The second shocker was that apart from the members of the consortium and some to new partners (Global Rights and Community Development and Democracy, and the representatives of the Human Rights commission, no one else had seen the bill or read the bill. Their opinions, which were sympathetic towards the bill, were formed from newspaper reports and rumours. Despite the initial tension of the debate, relief set in as participants shared their appreciation for the forum which had given them in-depth and accurate insight into human sexual behavior, and all registered to be members of the Coalition for the Defense of Sexual Rights in Nigeria with its secretariat at INCREASE. This was a huge achievement.

The Public Hearing

The strong mobilization around the public hearing was made possible for me, as Executive Director of INCREASE, by modern communication technologies

and was coordinated from Senegal where I was rounding up a conference and mobilising resources. I was in Dakar, preparing to board a flight back to Nigeria with a looming threat of the ground staff at the airport commencing a demonstration that very night. If the Government did not move to resolve the conflict, the airport would be closed and I'd be trapped in Dakar while the Public Hearing would continue. I resolved that mobilization for funds and for allies to participate in the Public Hearing had to be done from where I was, including whatever it would take to get the participants to Abuja for two nights, prepare statements, and present statements at the house.

The announcement for the Public Hearing fixed for the 14th February 2006 was seen in a Nigerian daily newspaper on Monday morning 12th February 2006. I took a hotel room and paid for half day internet connectivity to allow communication with INCREASE office in Minna and the Staff, providing them guidance; and to connect with with the office of Global Rights, Abuja, who were partnering with us to organize towards the Public Hearing. The home office communicated with members of the coalition to see how many members of the coalition and additional allies from the women's rights and mainstream human rights NGOs were willing to team up with us. We opened the invitation to list-serves like the E-forum, The FOI list, which have huge numbers of subscriptions with a clearly stated mission to kill the bill on the prohibition of same sex marriage in Nigeria. I sent the Email below out to international colleagues looking for direction for accessing funds.

"Hello friends, the most unpleasant expectation seems to have arrived! I just received a call that said the bill banning same sex marriage in Nigeria is coming up for public hearing on Wednesday.

That gives us only today and tomorrow and mobilise. That is tight though predicted.

We are open to advice.

I don't think this is the time to start dialogue on what is responsible for this sudden action. We must just focus our energies on what our response should be.

We do not have funding to support participation of allies. Urgent funds that can be accessed, at least in principle within these 2 days is welcomed.

Hugs,
Dotty"

It looks casual to me now, but that the urgency was not lost in the brief email. We got a few quick responses – Urgent Fund for Africa, Open Society Institute, and Astrea Foundation reached out to us. With their pledges, we contacted the Chair of the Board of Trustee of INCREASE for permission to use funds raised from consultancies and replace the funds when the grant process is concluded and transfers are effected by these institutions. With the jitters down my already aching spine from this alert, I sat in the hotel room all day propped with pillows on all sides and my lower back that was hurting real badly and periodic contractions from my six months old pregnancy – now Adel (!)– to continue to plan. It was a period of pressure and nothing else mattered but the thousands of lives at risk of regular rights violations as a result of perceived or real sexual orientation and gender identity and expression.

We planned for a workshop for Capacity Building for Advocacy and Legal Reform to commence at 12 noon in Harmonia Hotel in Abuja on 13th February 2006. This was to give us room to travel to the meeting venue from all over Nigeria and Dakar. We had concluded before I checked out to board the flight to Lagos that the objectives of the forum would be to take stock of events since the introduction of the Bill, refresh memories on the public hearing process, share tips on the art of public speaking, tips on impactful statements, assign tasks, develop and produce statements, discuss tips for effective media interviews. Messages had come in regarding who was available provided there was funding. With the three donors' commitment, I was able to give a go ahead for invitation letters to be sent out to colleagues. We also notified other networks of our upcoming participation at the public hearing and post hearing within and outside Nigeria and asked those who could to send in statements which would be read on their behalf and or submitted to the committees hosting the Public Hearing. We also agreed that we would host a press briefing post public hearing. We assigned the task of mobilizing reporters from various Nigerian dailies and prepared invitations for those at the public hearing to participate in the post hearing media event. Finally, we agreed that we would have an evaluation session that would conclude on which way forward.

The capacity building for advocacy and legal reform closed at 5am on the 14th February 2006. We had prepared all the statements to be presented, we had downloaded statements from our international friends, Global Rights volunteered to print the statements for us, there were statements

from the coalition for the Defense of Sexual rights in Nigeria, Civil Liberties Organisation, Lawyer Alert, humanist Movement of Nigeria, Queer Alliance, Alliance Rights Nigeria, House of Rainbow, Youth Net, and statements from Human rights Watch, IGLHRC, Global rights Washington were designated to some members to present on their behalf.

We also worked out strategies around arrival within the National House of Assembly. It was rumoured that the hearing would commence at 0900hrs, but avoid any unpleasant surprises, we decided to be at the House at 6.30am. We also agreed that it was not beneficial to sit clustered on one side of the hall, but to be dispersed so that if there was a show of hands for comments or questions we would stand the chance of being heard from different corners of the hall. After wishing each other a fun Valentine day, some went to refresh for the movement to the House of Assembly while others went to print and photocopy statements.

At 6.30am, we were at the entrance of the National House of Assembly. We observed four buses that arrived after us, one labeled concerned Mothers of Nigeria, a school bus with adolescents in school uniforms belonging to a catholic school, a bus with traditional rulers in attires like those of Eastern Nigeria, and a vehicle with an Islamic inscription. While signing in to obtain the gate passes, we discovered that they had invitation letters from the Chair of the Committee of Women's Affairs who was coordinating the Public Hearing. We were stunned to know that the House had sent out invitation letters. They had passes and went in while we remained outside answering questions from the security on what our mission to the House of Assembly entailed. It became so frustrating as time ticked past. We called Global Rights Minority desk Person and complained. He got in touch with the member of the EU parliament of Italy, his home country, who called the Nigerian Mission, and got in touch with contacts in the national assembly who authorized our entry.

Some highlights from inside the House

The Reverend of the House of Rainbow was asked to say the opening prayer before the commencement of the hearing. When he eventually presented the statement of the House of Rainbow, the Pentecostal Church movement and the Christian Association of Nigeria stood up during comments and made statements dissociating themselves from him.

The UNAIDS country representative made a very strong statement against

the bill as did the Human Rights Commission, who went a step further to call for the abrogation of the existing laws that criminalise homosexuality and gender expression and identities because he said everyone has a right to be and that the criminalization only helps to drive risky behaviour under ground, making HIV/AIDs intervention strategies ineffective. The presentations by members of the coalition were well done and the sleepless night was worth every second of it.

However, things were not at all rosy! The first statement to be presented after the introduction of the bill was by an ardent abortion rights advocate and renowned reproductive health researcher gynecologist who at the time was the Special Adviser to the President. He presented data that showed that gay people also engage in heterosexual relationships, that they have high rates of HIV/AIDS, engage in excessive use of alcohol, substance abuse, and have high rates of violence and have a high suicide rate. He said the statistics came from “various websites that anyone could check”. He said every population had between 4 – 10% homosexual population, and concluded that any “unbridled” sexuality is prone to health risks and various forms of social vices.

Human rights defenders challenged the partiality of the gynaecologist's data, but one of the Muslim clerics asked the House to permit the “execution of the 4% of the population to allow the survival of the rest 96%”. He said it was right in Islam to do so. To say the Human rights activists in the hall were horrified by this request would be an understatement. The other awful experience was during the presentation of the representative of the Women's Affairs Minister, who called on people at the hearing to shout some hate slogans. The Chair of the Committee of Human Rights called the forum to order and said that was inappropriate in a public hearing and asked participants to desist from heckling and booing while others spoke. This was a warning to protect the presenter from the Humanist Movement of Nigeria who said there was a culture in his community in Eastern Nigeria that allowed a woman to marry another and said the bill was an affront to his culture and that the presidency was trying to upturn the cultural values of those communities and the benefits of the culture. He almost got assaulted by the members of the house.

It was in this forum that we learnt that those we consider form afar to be allies and friends may in fact be the ones loading ammunition for the execution of LGBTI rights defenders. The most vocal and most aggressive of the members was a media reporter who had done great work while in the

television House to bring to light various forms of human rights violations including acid baths, teenage pregnancy, child abuse, serial and ritual killings, harmful widowhood practices. LGBTI rights were however a step too far for this reporter.

Fortunately, the long standing human rights activist and former president of the Civil Liberties organization in his capacity as the chair person of the House Committee on Human rights was on the high Table. We had established contact with him not long before the Public Hearing. He had said he understood the issues and was also concerned about the bill but required Nigerian protest voices to give him the impetus to challenge the bill in the house.

He kept to his word. He did not hesitate to call for order addressing his colleagues when they grew hostile towards the Human Rights Defenders. He apologized to us and urged us not to feel intimidated. He assured us that our contributions will be considered along with others towards a decision on the bill. Indeed, after the committees went back to deliberate, there were only two of them who were viewing the implications of the bill outside moral confines. The Committees failed to reach consensus. On the day the report was presented the national House of Assembly, the human rights defender's views had been dropped and he stood up and presented a minority report that led to the Senate asking them to go and harmonise their report. They failed to do so resulting in the expiration of the proposal to ratify the bill, otherwise referred to as *death of the bill*, notably also with the end of the Obasanjo Regime.

Concluding..... only for a moment

The battle against this bill was intense and challenging, and we were required to use every ounce of our strategic intelligence and courage. There is no doubt in our mind that the forces in support of the bill remain powerful, and we will be faced with similar legislation again. We have learned a great deal from this battle, and are ready for the next...

At the time of going to print, a second bill prohibiting same-sex sexual relationships and marriages had been passed by the Nigerian Senate (7 Dec, 2010) and now goes to its House of Representatives for final ratification and signature by President Jonathan Goodluck. It faces stiff opposition from the activists already gathered together through the struggles described in this Profile.