

PRESS STATEMENT

Botswana High Court rules in favour of registration of LGBTI civil society organization

GENEVA, 18 November 2014—UNAIDS welcomes the recent ruling by the High Court of Botswana upholding the right of an organization that supports lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex (LGBTI) people to register in the country.

In its groundbreaking judgement, the court held that the refusal by the government in 2012 to register the organization known as LEGABIBO (Lesbians, Gays and Bisexuals of Botswana) violates the rights to freedom of expression, assembly and association protected by the country's constitution. The ruling represents the first time a high jurisdiction in Africa has upheld the freedom of assembly and association for LGBTI people.

“Through the courage of civil society organizations and the boldness of its judiciary, Botswana is sending an important message of inclusiveness and freedom,” said Michel Sidibé, UNAIDS Executive Director.

A valuable lesson learned in over 30 years of the HIV response is that civil society, particularly organizations of people living with and vulnerable to HIV, is essential to advancing health, dignity and development.

While Botswana has sharply increased access to antiretroviral therapy in the past decade, HIV prevalence in the country is still one of the highest in the world, at 21.9%. In response, Botswana is implementing a national strategic framework that includes the protection of human rights for all as a guiding principle.

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The Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS) leads and inspires the world to achieve its shared vision of zero new HIV infections, zero discrimination and zero AIDS-related deaths. UNAIDS unites the efforts of 11 UN organizations—UNHCR, UNICEF, WFP, UNDP, UNFPA, UNODC, UN Women, ILO, UNESCO, WHO and the World Bank—and works closely with global and national partners to maximize results for the AIDS response. Learn more at unaids.org and connect with us on Facebook and Twitter.